XÉNIA FARKAS

VISUAL POLITICS: VISUAL POLITICAL COMMUNICATION ON SOCIAL MEDIA

DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE
CORVINUS UNIVERSITY OF BUDAPEST

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Supervisor: Márton Bene, PhD

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VISUAL POLITICS: VISUAL POLITICAL COMMUNICATION ON SOCIAL MEDIA

ARTICLE-BASED DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

Xénia Farkas

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Abstract

Visuals are an integral part of our life, and it is also true for political communication. Political posters and advertisements are not only visible on television, and on the streets but everywhere on the Internet, especially on social media. It is highly unlikely to go through our Facebook newsfeed without seeing any political visuals, such as photos, videos, or gifs. These visuals have a huge influencing impact, as they are processed quicker than verbal and textual information, sometimes even unconsciously, which is well-known by the political actors as well, and they are using images as part of their strategic toolkit to influence voters. However, political communication research did not reflect on these processes for long. Fortunately, this tendency started to change in the last decade, and research on visual political communication, or as Bucy and Joo (2021) calls it, visual politics, gained momentum. The dissertation aims to contribute to this emerging research area, as due to the relative novelty of the research field, several research questions remain to be answered. The thesis provides insights into three related studies that apply visual content analysis. To better understand visual political communication on social media, visual personalization strategies, and their effects on different social media platforms are studied. Further, the similarities and differences between populist and non-populist parties' visual communication are described. The populist style of an exemplary populist leader is also tested across different periods and modalities. Additionally, portable coding instruments that allow visual, and bimodal investigations related to political communication strategies, personalization, and populism were created and published to increase research in the field.

1. Introduction[1]

A decade ago, Schill (2012) published a review article on visual political communication (VPC) research aiming to increase scholarly attention in the field. By describing the functions of visuals in politics, the main argument of the study was that due to the prominent role of visuals in political communication, research should also focus on them. As Schill (2012) stated,

> "One myth that must be challenged is that visuals have limited importance in politics, operate superficially, or are of trivial consequence. Not only is this myth incorrect, it has exerted a chilling effect on research in this area. When scholars only examine written or verbal texts, they are only seeing a small part of the political communication process." (p. 133)

Indeed, visuals of politics remained "one of the least studied and least understood areas" (Schill, 2012, p. 119) for a long period. As Bucy and Joo (2021) strengthen it, "only in the last decade or so have social scientists begun to take visuals seriously" (p. 5). Accordingly, in the last ten years, scholars seem to react to this call, and the number of studies on VPC has grown markedly. Articles on the topic have been published in journals such as *Political Communication, Visual Communication, Political Psychology, Social Media + Society, New Media & Society, American Behavioral Scientist,* or *The International Journal of Press/Politics,* and books with a specific VPC focus, such as *Election Posters Around the Globe Political Campaigning in the Public Space* (Holtz-Bacha & Johansson, 2017), *Visual Global Politics* (Bleiker, 2018), or *Visual Political Communication* (Veneti et al., 2019) have been published.

As Schill's (2012) article could capture scholarship that mostly predates the rise of social media in political communication, its main arguments were derived from the prominent role of television as a source of political information. Although television is still an important source of news (Newman et al., 2022), in the age of the Internet and social media platforms, different questions are formulated regarding visually constructed political messages. As Lilleker and colleagues (2019) argue, the new communication platforms are widely used in political communication by campaigners, as "they offer to deliver compelling visuals directly to their target audience. In turn, citizens seek to

[1] The introduction is partly based on a manuscript titled "Visual Political Communication Research: A Literature Review from 2012 to 2022" that has been submitted to the Review of Communication Research and is currently under revision and resubmission.

consume, understand and influence the political reality using various visual representations" (pp. 5-6). Social media has not only increased the importance of VPC (Lilleker, 2020) but has contributed to the (1) distinguished attention on individual political actors instead of parties (Enli & Skogerbø 2013); (2) highlighted the role of emotions in politics (Coleman & Wu, 2015); (3) application of new communication strategies (Russmann et al., 2019).

Hence, this article-based dissertation focuses on VPC on social media and aims to provide a synthesized understanding of different political actors' social media-based VPC strategies, the external factors that shape these strategies, and their effects on citizens.

For that, first, after the description of the key concepts of the dissertation, the thesis provides an overview of the literature on visual aspects of politics that predated social media. As the chapter demonstrates, the first studies that acknowledged the important role of visuals in politics 1) were mainly based on televised political news and debates, 2) their theoretical background was embedded in varied fields from communication studies through visual studies, or psychology, 3) and they described the importance of VPC through the demonstration of the functions and effects of visuals in politics.

Then a combination of a systematic and narrative review describes general and specific, content-related trends in the last ten years of VPC – the social media era. This chapter lists the most influential studies in the field and connects the findings of VPC to current political communication trends. The results showed that visuals in politics are often used for personalization, and populist actors can also often benefit from the visually created messages on social media.

In the next chapter, the general research questions of the thesis are presented in three main points. First, the examination was focused on social media-based visual political communication strategies of different political actors. Second, the external factors that might affect these strategies are also investigated. Finally, the effects of social media-based VPC are examined in terms of user engagement.

After a methodological overview, qualitative and quantitative content analysis, as the applied methods of the dissertation are described. In the following parts, summaries and findings of the individual publications are presented, then conclusions and future research directions are delineated. In the appendix, all three individual publications' accepted manuscripts are attached.

1.1 Visuals in political communication

The first sub-chapter starts with the introduction of the key concepts of the thesis: visuals, visual political communication, personalization, and populism. Then the importance of visuals in politics is highlighted by the overview of the literature that predated the social media era and is mainly based on visual studies research. The sub-chapter ends with a chronological overview that leads to VPC on social media.

1.1.1 Key concepts: images, visuals, visual political communication, personalization, populism

There are different approaches to defining visuals. Scholars from different visual research fields highlight different aspects of the notion, and there is a huge variation of visual research that is based on different theories. First of all, the terms of images and visuals are distinguished and defined by Müller (2007): the term *image* refers to all kinds of visible representations, but it denotes immaterial meanings, such as metaphors or representations in the mind as well, while the *visuals* denote material visual products. Accordingly, visuals can be "tv programmes, advertisements, snapshots, public sculpture, movies, surveillance video footage, newspaper pictures, paintings" (Rose, 2001, p. 6), or "drawings, paintings, photographs, videos, films, computer graphics, animations, and virtual reality displays" (Kenney 2008, p. 1). According to Emmison and Smith (2000), visuals are everything that is seen and observable: photographs, buildings, clothing, body language, or eye contact can also be considered visual data. Indeed, the thesis considers body language, gestures, and facial expressions as important visual communication tools.

Additionally, it needs to be noted that although the dissertation is built on the definitions of *visuals*, it differentiates between moving and still images. While the theoretical part of the thesis has a wide focus, and both kinds of visuals are included in the literature review, the individual publications focused only on still images. The decision on focusing only on still images is based on methodological considerations: the examination of moving images, such as videos or gifs needs different methods that focus not only on visual but audio-visual messages as well (Rose, 2001).

Further, the area of VPC was hardly defined in the literature. In short, VPC can be described as a field of political communication, related to visuals. However, as political communication has no exact definition (for various descriptions see Norris, 2001; Perloff, 2013), neither does VPC. There is no widely accepted or applied definition of the area of VPC. Aiming to provide a definition that can help outline the topic of the thesis, one of the various definitions of political communication can be a useful starting

point. Like other authors' approaches, de Vreese's (2006) definition is built on three types of actors–political actors, the media, and citizens. These actors and the interactions between them are the focus of political communication, while political communication research is concerned with these actors' messages, and their constructions and effects. Still, as Bene (2020) suggests, to have an empirically manageable definition of political communication, it is worth limiting the broad theoretical definition to interactions connected in some way to the institutional world of politics. Accordingly, "something is considered to be political communication if it is part of interactions related to institutional (e.g. voting) or organized forms of political participation (e.g. demonstration, collective product boycott, etc.), political institutions, institutional political actors (parties, politicians) or binding decisions forms"[2] (Bene, 2020, p. 23). In the following, the thesis applies these approaches when defining VPC. Because political messages are communicated not only through written or spoken but through nonverbal channels as well, VPC can be understood as the visual part of the interactions between the three actors, while VPC research is concerned with the construction and effects of visual political messages. Therefore, in the thesis, any kind of visual communication, such as nonverbal communication, appearance, and visual depiction of issues, related to institutional or organized political participation, political institutions, institutional political actors, or binding decision forms are considered part of VPC.

Moreover, as personalization and populism are two main concepts of the thesis, it is worth describing the concepts here shortly, then the individual publications offer detailed definitions and their connections to VPC.

Personalization is understood as a trend in political communication, where "individual political actors have become more prominent at the expense of parties and collective identities" (Karvonen, 2010, p. 4). Although it is not a new phenomenon in political communication (Balmas & Sheafer, 2015), our knowledge on the topic was mainly based on verbal communication research for a long period. Nevertheless, as the literature review will demonstrate, in the last decade, scholars turned their attention to the visual aspects of personalization and broadened our understanding of the different kinds of personalization, both individualization, and privatization (Van Aelst et al., 2012). Furthermore, personalization of politics, and visual personalization touch upon celebritization as well, which trend is connected to the spread of popular culture, and the

[2] Translated by the author.

articulated need for entertainment in politics (van Zoonen, 2006). Celebritization's main effect is that political contents in themselves became less interesting, they are mixed with political performances, media appearances, and celebrity events (Ekman and Widholm, 2017), and these trends are connected to visual performances.

Unlike in the case of personalization, there is no widely accepted definition of the concept of populism (see Mudde, 2004; Weyland, 2001; Hawkins, 2009). Nonetheless, from the competing approaches, visuals can be examined only from two of these. First, de Vreese and colleagues' (2018) approach defines populism as a communication phenomenon, built around (1) people-centrism, (2) anti-elitism, (3) and reference to out-groups. Second, Moffitt (2016) argues that populism is a political style, which refers to a "symbolically mediated performance" that unquestionably contains visual aspects as well. Accordingly, considering populism as a communication phenomenon or a style, the relevance of visuals is undoubted, thus, it seems to be necessary to investigate populist VPC to better understand this trend.

1.1.2 Why do visuals matter in political communication?

As Bucy and Joo (2021) note, the works of Griffin (1991), Graber (1988), Masters and colleagues (1986), and Lanzetta and colleagues (1985) all described the need to examine visuals in politics. However, research on the field remained scattered until the last decade (Bucy & Joo, 2021). Political communication scholars often ignored the visually constructed messages, and even if a study mentioned the word "image", it often referred to the ethos of the candidate, and not to visual elements in their communication (Schill, 2012). Still, a smaller group of researchers started to pay attention to the visual aspects of politics, mainly from the fields of communication, psychology, and visual studies, and in a lesser degree from political science. Scholarly works before the social media era were mainly focused on the importance of televised political communication, and its effects on citizens.

The importance of visual politics was argued from several aspects. From the field of biopolitics, scholars (see Masters et al., 1986; Lanzetta et al., 1985), described the importance of politicians' facial expressions, as forms of visual communication. Facial displays of candidates' can express emotions such as anger or threat, fear or evasion, and happiness or reassurance (Masters et al., 1986). These nonverbal expressions on televised news are used as a source of information for voters which can influence and predict their voting behavior (Mullen et al., 1986). Further, not only facial expressions but the physical attractiveness of the candidates also serves as a VPC tool. As Sigelman and colleagues

(1987) described, the attractiveness of candidates can result in a higher number of votes. These findings on nonverbal behavior and the appearance of the politicians were strengthened and nuanced later from various aspects and approaches. For instance, Sullivan (1996) showed that leaders' positive nonverbal cues can mobilize voter support. Further, although positive facial expressions of leaders generate positive emotions in viewers, negative displays are considered more honest and credible (Bucy, 2000). As the results of these studies showed, there is a connection between visuals and emotions in politics, which was also examined from other perspectives as well.

Another line of scholarly works described the biological background and psychological background of this enormous power of images, which is based on the brain's different abilities to process information. Compared to written or spoken texts, people believe more about what they see (Schweiger & Adami, 1999). Further, visual information is not only processed faster but is easier to be remembered (Graber, 1996). These are strengthened by Grabe and Bucy (2009) as well, who dedicated a chapter to explaining in detail, from the very beginning of life, why visuals matter and how they are processed. As they put it, "visuals are equally processed in the thinking part of the brain and contain a great deal of nuanced social information important for political decision making" (Grabe & Bucy, 2009, p. 21). Thus, it can be said that VPC has powerful cognitive and emotional potential.

Moreover, the power of visuals was highlighted from the perspective of visual rhetoric studies, which represents a crucial field in the study of VPC. The reason for this is that "the most important function of images in political communication is that they can have rhetorical impact and make persuasive arguments to viewers" (Schill, 2012, p. 122). As Messaris (1994; 2012) described it in connection with visual literacy: compared to verbal language, visual communication images are easier to be understood, however, for this very reason, it is harder to detect visual manipulation or persuasion. In visual rhetoric studies, the focus is on the signs and symbols that construct messages (Foss, 2005). In politics, all kinds of symbols can create messages: the depiction of flags may increase nationalism (Kemmelmeier & Winter, 2008), colors can signal ideologies (Schloss & Palmer, 2014) and crowds can symbolize popularity (Schill, 2009). These findings suggest that visuals in politics have not only cognitive and emotional power, but political actors might apply visual messages to persuade voters.

Visual persuasion was investigated from another approach as well. Visual framing can be understood as another function of VPC, which has been studied mainly from the

perspective of the media. Research on issue framings, such as protests (Arpan et al., 2006), or war (Fahmy, 2005; 2010) showed that visuals can be, and are used by the media actors to influence citizens' emotions, attitudes, and opinions. At this point, it seems that VPC has cognitive, emotional, and influential power as well.

Additionally, Schill's (2012) review of the literature prior to 2012 marked 10 functions of visuals in politics in total. Accordingly, visuals in politics: "serve as arguments, have an agenda setting function, dramatize policy, aid in emotional appeals, build the candidate's image, create identification, connect to societal symbols, transport the audience, and add ambiguity" (p. 122).

These functions can be understood as overlapping strategies and their effects based on the cognitive, emotional, and influential power of images that is communicated through the depiction of nonverbal communication, symbols, and issues. The depiction of facial expressions, gestures, the appearance of the political actors, and symbols, such as flags and logos can shape arguments, build the political image, arouse emotions, symbolize broader meanings, help identification, and by documenting the present, they can transport the audience to different times and space, also to add ambiguity. Further, the depiction of issues such as wars, global warming, protest, or gender can be connected to agenda setting and policy dramatization. Here, the overlap between the strategies and their effects might appear because of the field's diverse background. As Barnhurst and Quinn (2012) put it,

> "Political communication and visual studies may seem not to intersect, given their independent growth and institutional separation in departments of art and government. But as multimedia communication via television, film and the Internet spread, scholars should pay more attention to the intersection." (p. 276)

It is clear that research on VPC emerged from completely different theoretical frameworks and research areas. Accordingly, the existing literature on VPC prior to social media was mainly based on visual studies for a long period. Considering the fact that VPC intersects not only with the fields of political and communication studies, but with media studies, sociology, and psychology as well, it needs to be acknowledged that visual elements that might touch upon politics have been studied separately, without building a connection to the different research areas, or visual theory (Barnhurst & Quinn, 2012).

Studies focusing not necessarily on VPC but visual communication in general, are based on visual theory and apply different research approaches. Barnhurst and colleagues' (2004) article gives a detailed review of the main currents of visual studies from 1999 to 2003 and identifies three major trends in the applied approaches: 1) visual rhetoric, 2) visual semantics, and 3) visual pragmatics.

The most widely used approach of visual studies is *visual rhetoric*: applied mainly in the field of mass media and popular culture, the focus of these studies is on persuasion by images, and the meanings of the visual messages (Barnhurst et al., 2004). This approach can be a useful tool to study images in political communication since images have a rhetorical impact to make persuasive arguments to viewers (Schill, 2012). On the other hand, as Martin (2011) argues, the approach is focused only on the viewers' side and does not pay attention to the intents of the creator. Indeed, visual messages that are interpreted by the audience can differ from the intentions of the creator.

The second identified theory by Barnhurst and colleagues (2004) is the *visual semantic* approach, which was dominant in the fields of arts, psychology, and visual literacy, but lately, media and technology studies also adopted the approach. Göransson and Fagerholm (2018) classify research with a primarily semantic approach as visual studies, which expression is often used in the literature as a synonym of 'visual culture' and/or 'cultural studies', despite the remarkable differences in their meanings (Elkins, 2000). While visual culture is about visually communicated, constructed values and identities, visual studies grew out from cultural studies and it is focused on the internal structures, the cultural construction of visuals that create meanings (Martin, 2011).

The *pragmatic* approach in visual research is mainly from the applied fields of journalism and engineering: studies about the practice, the production of images, and the sense-making during the reception (Barnhurst et al., 2004). This practice-oriented approach can be classified as empirical visual communication (Martin, 2011; Göransson & Fagerholm, 2018): a subfield of communication science that is based on a multidisciplinary background with its empirical, social scientific traditions and uses social scientific methods to understand and explain "current visual phenomena and their implications for the immediate future" (Müller, 2007, p. 24). Kenney (2008) also highlights the social aspects of visual communication and defines it "as a social process in which people exchange messages that include visuals" (p. 1). Further, the concept of visual communication can be connected to mass communication and mass media (Griffin, 1991).

Considering that the focus of visual communication is on the social aspects, and the approach is connected to mass communication, this approach can help to study visuals in political communication on social media platforms. Furthermore, as visual content analysis is embedded in visual communication, this approach is suitable to study how messages are created through visuals. Hence, the thesis applies the pragmatic visual communication approach to fill research gaps in VPC research.

1.1.3 VPC on social media

From a chronological perspective, visuals in political communication became critical with the technological advances: from the printed press to the television, and finally the Internet. Perloff (2013) refers to two memorable examples to certify the influential effect of visuals in political communication. First, the first presidential debate broadcasted on television and radio in 1960, the Kennedy–Nixon debate: while Kennedy had touch-ups on his face, highlighting attractive features, wearing an elegant, dark suit, Nixon refused to wear make-up, looked pale, fatigued, and ill. As a result, research after the debate found that television viewers believed Kennedy had won the debate, while radio listeners thought Nixon won. As a second example, one of Ronald Reagan's famous image-making techniques can also be mentioned: his well-known picture of having a beer in an Irish pub with blue-collar workers contributed to his "regular guy" image. Continuing the examples that strengthen the power of visuals, Lilleker (2019) describes the image of the youthful and relaxed Barack Obama and the "lurched, tongue out" John McCain during the final debate in 2008, to underline the influential impact of iconic scenes that went viral in the wide range of media outlets, including social media platforms as well: "an image, if viewed as representing a synthesis of the choice to be made, can lead to impressions being formed that can prove decisive at the ballot box" (p. 38).

As it is clear from the examples as well, even though the role of television in visual political communication is still prominent (Newman et al., 2022), digital media has highlighted visuals from new perspectives. Blumler and Kavanagh (1999), and later Blumler (2016) described the first, second, third, and fourth ages of political communication: the period after World War II until the '60s is considered as the first age of political communication with party-dominated communication, substantive messages and easy access to mass media; from the 1960s, the television became the main channel of political communication with a limited number of outlets; then from the 1990s the limited nature not only disappeared but communication channels multiplied; finally, the proliferation of the Internet, especially social media, resulted in the fourth age of political

communication. It is clear that through the ages, on all these channels, the television, and the Internet, especially social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, or YouTube, political communication became increasingly visual. Barack Obama's 2008 campaign was the first-ever campaign when social media platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn, and YouTube were integrated and used to communicate with voters, and for Obama, the Internet has become what TV was for Kennedy (Bimber, 2014). Apparently, both channels are highly visual, which means that to understand political messages, VPC has to be investigated, especially in the fourth age of political communication.

Further, the proliferation of the Internet and social media platforms has opened up new opportunities for political communication, especially for VPC. As Gerodimos (2019) described, after the 2008 Obama campaign and Trump's use of Twitter, social media platforms became inseparable from political campaigns and political communication research. Of 4.66 billion active Internet users worldwide (59.5 percent of the global population), 92.6 percent used it on mobile devices (Johnson, 2021). Hence, with the increased number of phones with cameras, the widely available Internet access, and the visual affordances of social media platforms, VPC also gained momentum.

Moreover, compared to television, social media provides different affordances than audiovisual media with a lesser role of media control (Stromer-Galley, 2014), the networked media logic (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013), and new communication genres (Kreiss et al., 2018). In televised VPC political actors can primarily control their appearance, nonverbal communication, and the symbols they apply, as media workers (e.g. news creators, reporters) have filtering and editing roles. In contrast, on social media political actors can carefully craft their visual messages that include, but are not limited to their appearance and nonverbal communication. So to say, social media-based VPC not only offers more opportunities for political actors to control their visual presentation and frame their messages but on these platforms, everything can be and presumably needed to be visually presented due to the highly visual nature of social media. Based on these changes, and considering the visual nature of these platforms (Lilleker et al., 2019), it can be expected that there are transformations in VPC as well, strategies and effects do not work in the same way on these new platforms. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the transformation due to the Internet as a medium is not necessarily limited to the territory of the Internet, since we live in a hybrid media system (Chadwick, 2013), where old and new media logics interact, and can be present on all channels. For instance, televised election debates can influence social media-based political communication (e.g.

Shah et al., 2015), or social media posts of politicians might have an agenda-setting role on television (Gilardi et al., 2021). Hence, a review of VPC research in the area of social media and television seems to be necessary.

In the last decade, VPC has become an emerging research area, but due to its relatively late rump-up, there are still several research gaps that will be described in the literature review. Further, it remained only among a narrow range of scholars, whose main research interest touches upon any kind of visual component of political communication, and the general political communication research still often ignores the visual messages. Hence, more research on the topic of visual politics is required.

For that, the dissertation examines social media-based visual political communication, with a focus on still images, uploaded by politicians and parties to Facebook and Instagram during different periods: election campaigns, COVID-19 pandemic, and cucumber periods without major political events.

1.2 Visual political communication: A Literature review[3]

In the following, the main findings of the last 10 years of VPC literature will be described to provide a theoretical and literature base to the thesis. The aim is to examine and summarize the findings of studies written in the last decade, compare the new trends with Schill's (2012) findings related to the functions of visuals in politics, and offer an empirical investigation of the scholarship in the emerging research area of VPC. To that end, a combination of a systematic and narrative review is provided to highlight the results and developments in this area.

Therefore, 455 articles, books, and book chapters –written in English and related to VPC– were collected through the application of the snowball sampling procedure (Wholin, 2014), and a systematic search in the Web of Science database. The starting date of the collection of the works is 2012 since Schill's (2012) review article covered a huge part of the preceding period, but from then until the present (2022), there is no systematic reflection on this productive period.

This fast-growing body of literature in the last ten years underlines the emergence of VPC as an area of research. A closer look at this scholarship also reveals noticeable differences regarding the focus on geography, media platforms, time periods, actors,

[3] The literature review is based on a manuscript titled "Visual Political Communication Research: A Literature Review from 2012 to 2022" that has been submitted to the Review of Communication Research and is currently under revision and resubmission.

methods, and the type of visuals. This chapter describes the diversity in general trends and discusses findings focused on the relationship between VPC and political communication trends, aiming to shed light both on the progression and the future directions of VPC research.

1.2.1 Review method

Considering the types of literature reviews, this chapter of the thesis is a combination of systematic and narrative reviews (Greenhalgh et al., 2018). Aiming to summarize the current status of VPC research, the first part of the examination offers a systematic review with a general overview of the number of the studies, their geographical focus, the applied methods, the investigated platforms, actors, and periods.

For this, the snowball method is applied as Wohlin (2014) describes. The start set of papers was identified as the chapters (N=14) of *Visual Political Communication* (Veneti et al., 2019). The selection of this book as the starting point of the snowball procedure was based on two factors. First, the book offers a unique, geographically and thematically comprehensive, both theoretically and empirically grounded overview of VPC. Second, this edited volume "is especially timely because of the growth and almost ubiquitous use of social media" (Stanyer, 2021, p. 1).

After the identification of the start set of papers, the criteria of exclusion and inclusion of further papers were set up on the reference lists of the chapters: (1) studies (articles, books, book chapters) had to be (2) published between 01/01/2012 and 07/31/2022; (3) written in English; (4) focused broadly on any area of visual political communication. Accordingly, works like conference presentations or theses, published sooner or later than this period, and written not in English were excluded.

The book chapters' references provided a huge tentative dataset (N=583) to evaluate for inclusion and exclusion. Works that met the criteria (N=178) were included in the snowballing procedure. With backward snowballing, the reference list of the included works was examined to identify new papers to include. As a next step, forward snowballing was conducted with the use of Google Scholar, to identify new papers that cite the collected papers. Iteration was closed when no new studies were found (N=240).

Additionally, in order to broaden the research into a systematic review, a Google Scholar search for "visual political communication" within the investigated period has been carried out. From the records (N= 426), with the additional snowballing procedure, 134 new works met the above-mentioned criteria and have been added to the database.

Moreover, as the Web of Science (WoS) collection is considered one of the most extensive database in social sciences (Chadegani et al., 2013), a WoS search was also carried out with filters on the topic of "visual political communication" and the investigated period. These found records (N=453) of the WoS Core Collection were further filtered into articles written in English (N=385). 64 works were identified as already present in the database built on snowball procedure and Google Scholar search, 229 studies did not match the criteria of the present investigation, and 92 new items were added to the database.

Finally, after cleaning the dataset, it includes 455 studies on the field of VPC, 358 articles, 13 books, and 84 chapters. All studies were coded by the author, according to the following criteria. A record in the database contains the author(s) of the paper, its publication year, title, the type of the work (article/book/chapter), its keywords (if provided by the authors), the journal, book or publisher of the work, its country/region focus, and the method that was applied. Moreover, the topic/focus of the research was categorized inductively after reading the studies. For instance, a paper's focus can be on migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, which are overlapping topics, thus, all were coded finally as refugees. Studies' full or partial visual content focus was decided on the basis of whether a visual analysis was carried out, or the presence of visuals is integrated into the investigation without their deeper analysis. The type of the investigated visuals was differentiated in terms of still and moving images as well. The media type and platforms where visuals were examined were also coded as specifically as the authors described them, e.g. television, Instagram, Facebook, newspaper, poster, or t-shirts, and stamps. The main actors of the papers were coded inductively: after reading the studies, their main actor(s) were categorized into the three actor types of political communication: political actors, media, and citizens (including movements and other civil actors). In the case of multiple actors in one study, all the examined actors were coded. Further, studies' empirical or theoretical, and qualitative or quantitative nature was also coded. The period of the investigation was coded based on the authors' description, and later these periods were categorized as campaign, protest, crisis, general, and other periods. Finally, the coding of the times a work was cited was based on Google Scholar data, then in order to obtain comparable data, the number of citations was divided by the number of years since the publication of the study.

The second part of the analysis provides a narrative review, aiming to promote research knowledge. Hence, it brings in the most cited studies, and in some cases, less

cited studies with important ideas as well, and focuses on their main findings, grouped by their content focus.

1.2.2 Findings

Data is analyzed in two sections: first, a systematic review outlines an overview of the general findings of all the collected works, then in the next part, a narrative review describes the content-related findings of VPC papers, separating theoretical and partly visual-focused works, and empirical and full visual-focused works. Findings of the latter group of studies are grouped according to their media platform focus: social media and television.

1.2.2.1 General trends

The number of studies shows a moderate growth until 2016, but the next year the number of works rapidly grew. However, it has to be noted that in 2017, two edited volume (Holtz-Bacha & Johansson, 2017; Holtz-Bacha et al., 2017) was published with 25 relevant chapters on political advertising and posters. Still, not counting these studies, this year, there was an increased interest in this area of research, then the number of studies falls back to the level of 2014. As Figure 1 shows, after 2018, the yearly number of studies is close to 50, which trend shows a slightly emerging interest in the field of VPC research.

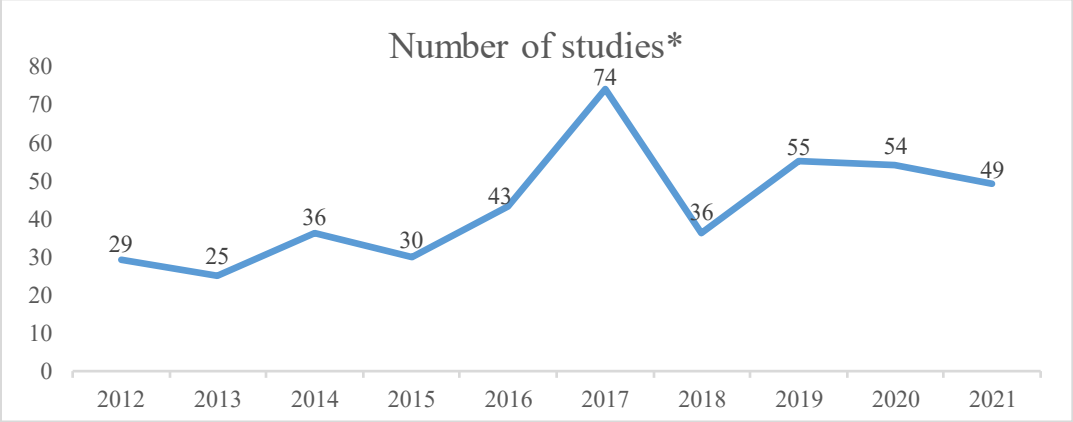

Figure 1. Number of VPC studies over time.
**As 2022 is not finished yet, data from this year is not depicted in the diagram.*

The top 10 most cited studies can be seen in Table 1. This shows that the most influential paper was Bossetta's (2018) study on social media affordances which had only a partial visual focus, while all the others examined visuals as the central element of their research. Eight studies focused on still images, one on moving, and one on both types of images. Each of the works is an empirical study, four of them used qualitative, three

quantitative methods, and three papers applied both approaches. Five of the ten papers focused on the United States, while the others examined Canada, the UK, Australia, Germany, and Europe. Considering the investigated topics, a wide range of political trends and issues stands out: celebritization, emotionalization, disinformation, technological aspects of communication, refugees, and ideologies. Political actors, the media, and the citizens are all examined in the top 10 cited papers. Half of the studies focused on social media platforms, three on newspapers, while two had no specific platform focus. Regarding the applied methods, three articles used content analysis, another three applied experiments, while in the remaining cases discourse, semiotic and multimodal analyses, and an interview was carried out.

Table 1. Top ten most cited studies

Author(s)	Year	Title	Times cited	Citation/year
Michael Bossetta	2018	The Digital Architectures of Social Media: Comparing Political Campaigning on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat in the 2016 U.S. Election	382	95.5
Lilie Chouliaraki, Tijana Stolic	2017	Rethinking media responsibility in the refugee 'crisis': a visual typology of European news	266	53.2
Mireille Lalancette, Vincent Raynauld	2017	The Power of Political Image: Justin Trudeau, Instagram, and Celebrity Politics	258	51.6
Ryan M. Milner	2013	Pop Polyvocality: Internet Memes, Public Participation, and the Occupy Wall Street Movement	451	50.1
Roland Bleiker, David Campbell, Emma Hutchison, Xzarina Nicholson	2013	The visual dehumanisation of refugees	405	45
Johanna Schindler, Philipp Müller	2017	Design follows politics? The visualization of political orientation in newspaper page layout	223	44.6
Andrew S.Ross, Damian J. Rivers	2017	Digital cultures of political participation: Internet memes and the discursive delegitimization of the 2016 U.S Presidential candidates	216	43.2
Michael Hameleers ,Thomas E. Powell, Toni G.L.A. Van Der Meer, Lieke Bos	2020	A Picture Paints a Thousand Lies? The Effects and Mechanisms of Multimodal Disinformation and Rebuttals Disseminated via Social Media	83	41.5
Thomas E. Powell, Hajo G. Boomgaarden, Knut De Swert, Claes H. de Vreese	2015	A Clearer Picture: The Contribution of Visuals and Text to Framing Effects	280	40
Cristian Vaccari, Andrew Chadwick	2020	Deepfakes and Disinformation: Exploring the Impact of Synthetic Political Video on Deception, Uncertainty, and Trust in News	79	39.5

Focusing on the whole database and all the collected works it can be said that in the case of articles where keywords were provided by authors, words were counted by an online word counting site (wordclouds.com). The three most common keywords are political, communication, and visual, which means that despite the diverse nature and

focus of the studies on VPC, authors are using VPC as a distinctive areal marker that underlines the emerging nature of the field, just like Bucy and Joo (2021) suggested. As the frequency of other keywords shows in Table 2, social media platforms are important channels to investigate VPC, especially Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter, which trend supports the idea of a new era in VPC. Keywords related to periods show that the election campaign is also common. The widely applied method, the content analysis also stands out from the word cloud of the keywords. Considering the focus of the research on VPC, images, nonverbal and facial expressions, populism, gender, and emotions are the most frequently highlighted keywords. In general, keywords show a tentative picture of the main research interests of the field, however, since 28 percent of the studies provided no keywords, conclusions can only be drawn cautiously at this point.

Table 2. Top fifty frequently applied keywords

Rank	Weight	Word	Rank	Weight	Word
1	146	Political	26	15	Perception
2	121	Communication	27	14	Debates
3	105	Visual	28	14	Discourse
4	92	Media	29	13	Twitter
5	78	Social	30	12	Behaviour
6	53	Analysis	31	12	Culture
7	34	Election	32	12	European
8	28	Framing	33	12	Online
9	28	Nonverbal	34	12	Research
10	28	Politics	35	11	Campaigns
11	27	Campaign	36	11	Communication
12	27	Content	37	11	Cues
13	27	Instagram	38	11	Facial
14	26	Visual	39	11	personalization
15	25	Political	40	11	Trump
16	21	Images	41	10	Campaigning
17	20	Elections	42	10	Digital
18	19	Gender	43	10	Effects
19	18	Advertising	44	10	Movements
20	18	Image	45	10	Posters
21	18	Populism	46	10	Protest
22	17	News	47	10	Public
23	17	Presidential	48	10	Semiotics
24	17	Social	49	10	Stereotypes
25	16	Facebook	50	9	Conflict

The scope of the investigated countries in VPC research shows that the majority of the studies focused on the United States (25%). As Figure 2 shows, from Europe, the

most frequently analyzed country is Germany (6%), and studies that focused generally on the EU (5%), and on the UK (4%) are also quite common. Generally speaking, it can be said that almost the whole European region is covered in the studies, however, there are significant differences considering the number of frequencies. While Spain, Austria, Sweden, Finland, and Romania are the focus of more than five studies, all the other European countries are studied to a lesser degree, especially the countries not visible in Figure 2, because they were examined less than 3 times. These are Netherland, Brazil, Denmark, France, Korea, Poland, Syria, Chile, Colombia, Cyprus, Hong Kong, Iran, Ireland, Jakarta, Japan, Jordan, Latvia, Mexico, New Zealand, Nigeria, North Korea, Norway, Peru, Portugal, Singapore, Switzerland, Thailand, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and Venezuela. Data show that from the African region, South Africa is more studied than the other parts of the region, while from Asia, India and China are more commonly examined. Australia and Canada are still less in the focus of research, compared to the well-investigated European areas, especially compared to the US. Finally, it needs to be noted that 11 percent of the studies had no specific country focus due to their experimental or theoretical nature.

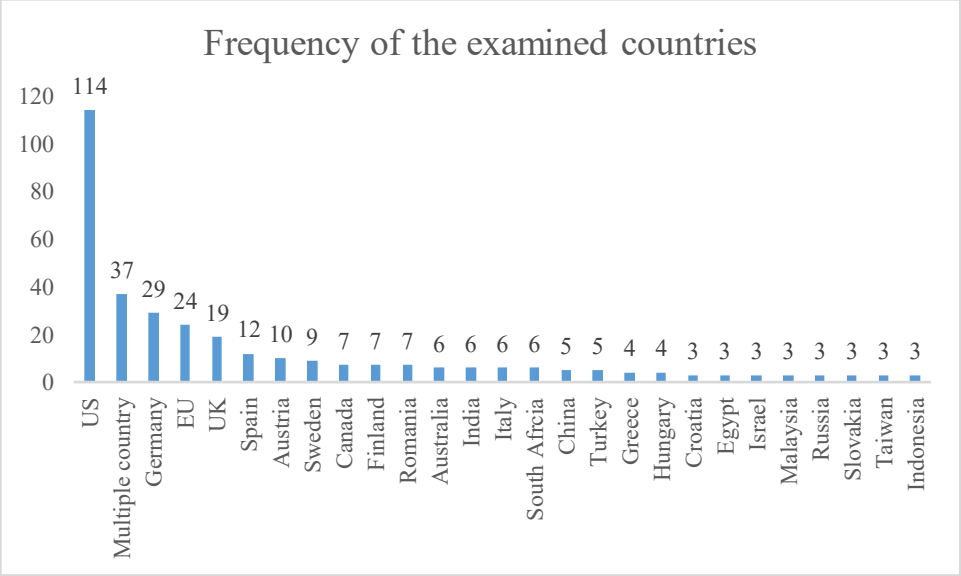

Figure 2. The frequency of the examined countries in VPC studies

Considering the type of visuals that were examined in the studies, in 293 cases still images were in the focus, and only 66 studies investigated moving images. In 80 works, both kinds of visuals were analyzed, while in 16 works, these options were not applicable because of their theoretical nature.

38 percent of the studies investigated visuals without a specific platform focus, for instance, due to their experimental nature (e.g. Dobber et al., 2020; Olivola et al., 2012), or being theoretical (e.g. Mendonça et al., 2020; Doerr et al., 2013) or methodological overview (e.g. Joo & Steinert-Threlkeld, 2018). However, 62 percent of the papers analyzed visuals on a specific media or platform type. As Figure 3 shows, television in itself is the most frequently (N=65) analyzed media type, which is followed by the visual communication-centered social media platform, Instagram, then Facebook. Twitter is almost as frequently examined as newspapers, while YouTube is ranked only on 8th place, and other social media platforms, such as WhatsApp or Snapchat are rarely examined. However, there are a few studies that focused their attention on social media in general, and all together, social media sites are twice frequently (N=130) analyzed as traditional media platforms, which trend supports the relevance of a literature review on the last decade of VPC. Finally, data shows that posters are analyzed as often as the uncategorizable platforms like t-shirts, or stamps, and cartoons and comics are still investigated.

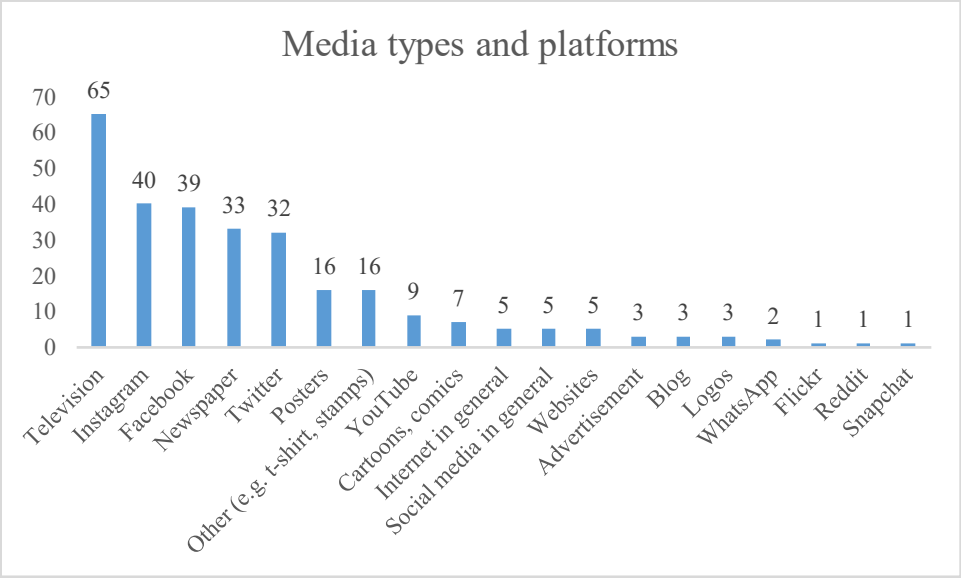

Figure 3. The investigated media types and platforms in VPC studies

Built on the actor-centric approach of political communication (de Vresse, 2006), the most commonly examined actors were the politicians and parties (276 cases), followed by the citizens (133 cases), and the media (64 cases). In the remaining 70 cases, this category was not applicable, or the actors were not unifiable into bigger categories, such as abductors or terrorists.

Considering the research design of the studies, varied methods are applied to analyze VPC. Half of the studies (50%) applied quantitative methods, 38 percent used

qualitative methods, 7 percent combined these, and in the remainder, the differentiation was not applicable (e.g. in the case of books). Turning to the specific methods, in 6 percent of studies, the applied methods could not be categorized into unified blocks, or this aspect was not applicable. As Figure 4 shows the number of the applied methods, with 30 percent, the most frequently applied method is content analysis, followed by experimental methods (20%). Theoretical overviews and discourse analyses were both present in 4 percent of the works. Social semiotic or semiotic analyses were applied in 4 percent, and qualitative descriptions were also present in 4 percent. Visual framing analysis and multimodal analyses were both applied in 3 percent, while interviews in 2 percent of the studies. In the remaining 11 percent of the works, reviews, visual analyses, automated methods, historical overviews, computer-based techniques, image type analyses, visual rhetoric analyses, eye-tracking methods, and iconographic analyses were applied, individually each counted in less than 2 percent of all works. In 20 percent of the studies, the applied methods category was not applicable, or cannot be categorized.

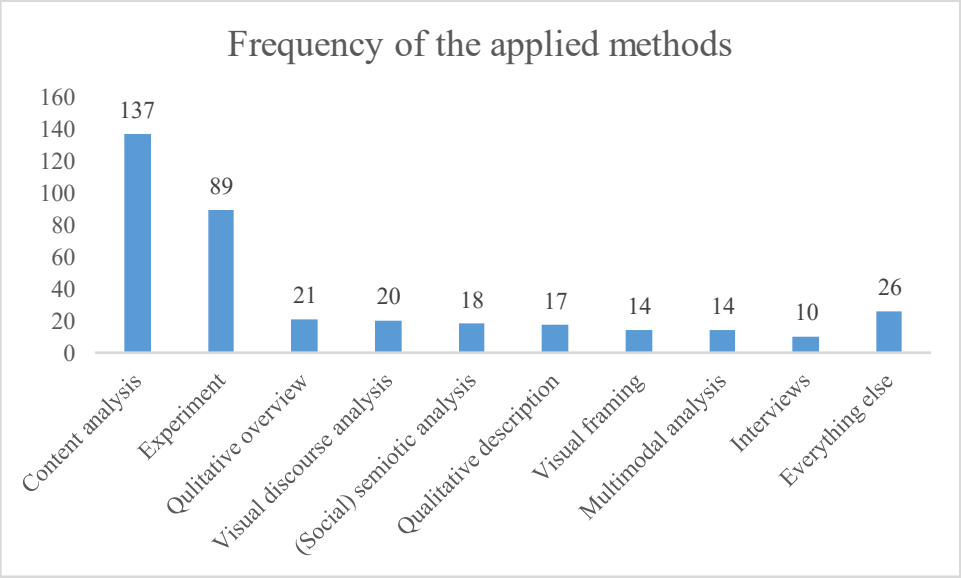

Figure 4. The frequency of the applied methods to study VPC

As Figure 5 shows, campaigns are the most frequently analyzed periods (4%). Protests, general periods, and any other periods (such as wartime, conflict, crisis, pre- and post-election periods) are each present in less than 7 percent of the works. However, 35 percent of the studies had no special period focus, or this aspect was not applicable.

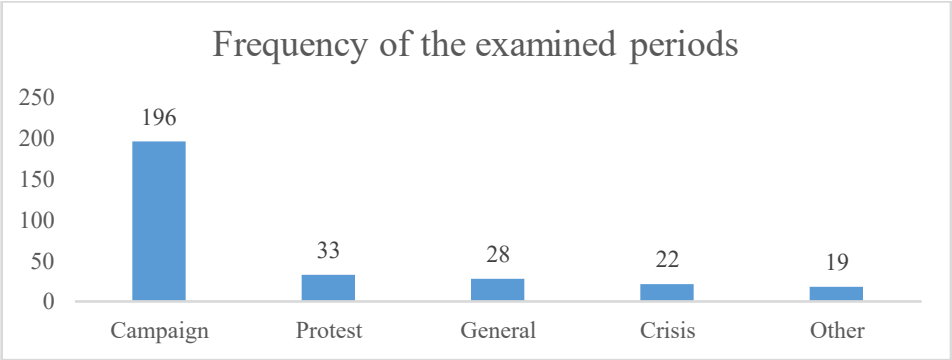

Figure 5 Frequency of the examined periods in VPC

1.2.2.2 Visual Political Communication Content

In the following, a schematic content review is presented on the empirical VPC studies, applying a full visual focus, based on the two most frequently investigated media platforms: social media and television. However, before this, a brief overview of the content of works that are not included in this scope—partly visual and non-empirical works—is provided.

Partly Visual-focused Works

Considering the content-related aspects of VPC studies, data show 414 papers with a full visual focus and 41 studies with a partial visual focus. Latter works are focused on other aspects of political communication and included visual materials in the analysis, however, the detailed examination of the visual elements is not part of these studies, rather their presence and effects on user engagement. The information value of these studies is still relevant to the area of VPC, as they described more general findings on visuals that can inspire deeper examinations. For instance, these findings show that social media platforms' affordances affect the mode of political communication on them: on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, photos are often used and edited to represent a more artistic VPC, however, videos are more frequently used on Facebook than on the other platforms (Bossetta, 2018). Still, photos are posted more often by political actors than videos (Magin et al., 2017). Further, Facebook posts that contain visuals are more popular among citizens (Koc-Michalska et al., 2021). Focusing on Republican and Democratic candidates' Instagram use, and newspaper articles during the 2016 US presidential primary, results indicate some intermedia agenda setting between Instagram and mainstream media (Towner & Muñoz, 2017). Studies with partial visual focus also reported on the connections between VPC and populism. For example, populist style elements include not only rhetorical but visual elements, such as nonverbal elements or

appearance (Ekstrom et al., 2018). Further, the comparison of visuals used by populist charismatic leaders can also signal differences in terms of ordinary and defiant styles (Kissas, 2019). Also, the frequency of visuals used by populist and non-populist parties shows significant differences: populists upload more visuals to Facebook than non-populists, and they can reach higher levels of user engagement in terms of shares, likes, and comments (Larsson, 2020). Accordingly, the findings of these studies underlined not only the various use of visuals by political actors but their popularity among citizens.

Theoretical Works

When considering the collected studies' methodological nature, 12 percent of the works applied a theoretical approach. These descriptions, reviews, and overviews provided useful information on several issues related to VPC. Articles provided insights and new theories on visual areas of politics that should be investigated, such as camera-witnessing through phones with cameras (e.g. Anden-Papadopoulos, 2014), iconic images that gained international political impact (e.g. Hansen, 2014), and the understudied role of visuals in social movements (e.g. Doerr et al., 2015). Connections between nonverbal communication and politics (e.g. Dumitrescu, 2016; Mendonça et al., 2022), technological aspects (e.g. Messaris, 2019), and different resources of VPC (e.g. Pauwels, 2019) were reviewed and overviewed. From a methodological point of view, studies offered descriptions of the application of frame processing theory to multimodal analysis (e.g. Geise and Baden, 2014), automated visual content analysis to study political science (e.g. Joo & Steinert-Threlkeld, 2018), and an overview of the applied methods to examine VPC (e.g. Gerodimos, 2019). Still, as Gerodimos (2019) also highlighted, from a methodological point of view, there is great need in VPC for widely applicable coding guides. Introductory works highlighted the presence of VPC on social media platforms (e.g. Russmann & Svensson, 2017), or connected the dots between the power of visuals and their application in political communication (e.g. Lilleker et al., 2019), aiming to urge more research on the topic of VPC.

Empirical Studies with Full Visual Focus

The main findings of the empirical studies with full visual focus will be presented based on the application of VPC on the most commonly examined platforms: social media (N=130), and television (N=65). Studies mentioned in each category have been selected based on their reference numbers, or special relevance.

Social media

On Instagram, visuals are often applied to personalize political communication. The analysis of Greek political leaders' Instagram posts showed that some politicians stick to presenting only their political self, however, Instagram VPC is often used to present a more personal and private side of the politicians (Poulakidakos & Giannouli, 2019). In the case of the leader of the Spanish party Vox, Santiago Abascal, Instagram posts also showed the presence of personalization (Sampietro and Sánchez-Castillo, 2020). Additionally, an investigation of Facebook posts of German parliament members showed that visual posts that include images are more personalized than only textual posts (Metz et al., 2019).

However, personalization can appear in different forms. Instagram was somewhat similarly used in the 2016 US election campaign as television was used in the '90s and early 2000s: depiction of the "ideal candidate" with family members, and patriotic symbols were common, but unlike in the case of Grabe and Bucy's (2009) earlier findings, the "populist campaigner" frame was not frequently applied (Muñoz & Towner, 2017). In the case of the Austrian leader, visual self-presentation was built around a biographical strategy, a team, and an incumbent strategy by depicting Alexander Van der Bellen in personal contexts, surrounded by young supporters, and popular soccer events (Liebhart & Bernhardt, 2017). In the Instagram posts of Justin Trudeau, personalization and celebritization techniques were combined to promote all kinds of policies from the issue of youth, to health or transport and infrastructure, e.g. by the depiction of Trudeau in front of metro cars (Lalancette & Raynauld, 2017). The emerging celebritization dimension of personalization through visuals on Instagram is strengthened by the examination of Swedish leading politicians' VPC as well (Ekman & Widholm, 2017).

Moreover, personalization seems to appear differently on the platforms. In Sweden, VPC on Instagram showed a strong presence of personalization's individualization dimension, but from an additional strategic approach, the platform was rather used as a "virtual billboard" for broadcasting purposes (Filimonov et al., 2016). On the contrary, mobilization through VPC on Instagram was Podemos' main strategy in the Spanish elections in 2015 and 2016, however, no other parties applied this strategy (Turnbull-Dugarte, 2019). These findings suggest that visual strategies are strongly shaped by contextual or cultural factors.

Visual political self-presentation elements on social media can be connected to populism as well. The case of Jair Bolsonaro showed specific clothing, facial expressions, and depiction of specific situations to build both ordinariness and extraordinariness on Instagram (Mendonça & Caetano, 2020). Focusing on several social media platforms in the 2016 US election, research showed that VPC is a useful tool for populist actors to highlight their anti-elite characteristics on Instagram by the application of an amateur production style with amateur/anti-professional image production (Baldwin-Philippi, 2018). An examination of the Finnish national-populist Facebook images, Hokka and Nelimarkka (2019) found that images are appropriate tools for spreading essential negative populist emotions, such as fear, anger, and resentment without country or language barriers. Further, in a multiplatform (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr, and parties' websites) VPC investigation, scholars described that with visuals, populist parties are able to differently depict their relations to 'the people'–populist parties can be parties for the people and parties of the people (Gimenez & Schwarz, 2016).

VPC research on social media investigated gender-related questions of visuals as well. A comparison of self- and media-presentation of female and male candidates during the 2019 European Election on social media and in the news showed that "female candidates are actually portrayed more often happy on SNS [social networking sites] than in the news, which echoes the interpretation of a visual communication strategy that is in line with the strategic stereotype theory" (Haim and Jungblut, 2020, p. 15). Examination of visual self-presentation of Dutch and American politicians on Instagram led to a result that visual depiction did not differ by gender, except in the case of clothing: female politicians appeared more often in casual clothing (Brands et al., 2021). In a study by Carlson and Håkansson (2022), visual party communication on Facebook in the 2019 EU election campaigns' national level showed that the depiction of smiling faces and casual clothing was more frequent among female than male politicians. It seems that positive facial expressions and casual clothing can be connected to the depiction of female candidates, which results suggest a gender-stereotypical VPC on social media.

Some research focused on the effect side of politicians' visual communication. Barack Obama's 2012 Facebook campaign showed that personalized visual Facebook posts could reach higher engagement with more likes, comments, and shares than posts without depicting him, (Gerodimos & Justinussen, 2014). Within visual Facebook posts, emotional self-personalization can generate even more reactions (Metz et al., 2019). Although there are only a few results available on the effects of different kinds of visual

personalization, it seems that the individualization dimension is more popular among users (Lindholm et al., 2020). Further, results suggest that not only the content of visual social media posts but the attributions of the posts' publisher are also relevant factors in the effects on users. For instance, on Instagram, Brands and colleagues (2021) found on Instagram that "female politicians receive more likes when they are present in a picture in comparison to male politicians" (p. 2027), while Turnbull-Dugarte (2019) showed that new challenger parties could reach higher user engagement levels with their VPC than old parties.

Turning to the VPC of citizens, it seems that these actors' visual communication is commonly examined on Twitter, especially connected to protests, and social movements. It seems that visuals can be used as forms of political engagement. By spreading Occupy Wall Street memes, VPC contributed to a vibrant public discourse (Milner, 2013). An examination of Twitter images of 2011 Egyptian revolution showed that visual content with the depiction of symbols and iconic figures can create unification "as a strategy to build consensus for future planning and preventing conflict in the absence of government" (Kharroub & Bas, 2015, p. 16). Further, citizens' VPC can be used for varied strategies as well. Just like in the case of the Black Lives Matter movement and ShutdownA14 protest in the US, emotion-evoking photos showed mobilizing effects among citizens (Casas & Williams, 2018), while citizens' visuals depicting violence during the Blockupy Frankfurt protests' were the most commonly retweeted by the media and police (Neumayer & Rossi, 2018).

Television

VPC in television is often examined through politicians' nonverbal communication and its effects on citizens. Although an examination of the 2005 German national election televised debate showed a smaller effect of nonverbal than verbal communication on viewers, (Nagel et al., 2012), a study on the real-time Twitter-based effects of the 2012 US presidential televised debates indicates that "nonverbal behavior of candidates is consequential in driving social media responses, rivaling what candidates actually say during debates" (Shah et al., 2016, p. 1837). Turning to more specific results, it seems that certain nonverbal expressions can generate more reactions than others. As Bucy and colleagues (2020) found during the televised presidential debate of 2016, Donald Trump's nonverbal populist communication style with the expression of anger, defiance, and aggression generated more attention on Twitter than Hillary Clinton's controlled, diplomatic, and reassuring nonverbal communication. Results also indicate

that televised VPC, especially nonverbal expressions contribute to candidate evaluation by citizens. Based on the 2012 US presidential debates' facial expressions, Gong and Bucy (2016) found inappropriate displays (nonverbal elements incongruent with the communication settings) arouse viewers' attention, and generate negative emotion. Results of a comparison of Richard Nixon's and Barack Obama's nonverbal expressions during their first televised debates showed that nonverbal behavior affected their negative results, suggesting that the "Look of Losing" exists (Bucy, 2016). However, the effects of smiling candidates were measured in the German local televised debate, and results showed that muted depiction of smiling politicians had positive effects on the viewer (Sülflow & Maurer, 2019). It seems like nonverbal communication can both positively and negatively affect candidates' evaluations by citizens. However, the evaluation might be shaped by politicians' gender as well: in the case of woman candidates, anger displays are punished by the voters, while happiness displays are rewarded (Boussalis et al., 2021).

It seems that the examination of nonverbal communication through television can shed light on gender issues as well. A visual and verbal comparison of gender stereotypes used by candidates in the US campaign ads showed that visual feminine stereotypes (such as the depiction of family, children, and locations indicating caring) are more often used both by female and male candidates than masculine visual stereotypes (like a formal attire-business suit or the presence of military), however, "female candidates air ads with a higher degree of feminine visual- masculine verbal conflict" (Carpinella & Bauer, 2019, p. 13). Results of research on the nonverbal communication of leaders from Western countries also support the idea of gender-specific nonverbal communication (Grebelsky-Lichtman & Katz, 2020). Thus, there seems to be a gender-stereotyped VPC not only on social media but on television as well.

Similar to social media VPC research, a further research direction of televised VPC is focused on personalization. The findings of Holtz-Bacha and colleagues (2012) on TV party ads broadcasted during the 2009 European Election campaign in France, Germany, Sweden, and the UK indicated that even in party-oriented political systems, personalization is a general feature of elections in terms of the appearance of politicians in the visuals. Data from Denmark and Germany also strengthens this (Zeh & Hopmann, 2013). Thus, results suggest that visual personalization on television does not depend on different political systems, it seems to be a general characteristic.

Although populist VPC on television is less investigated than on social media, a study described televised debates' nonverbal communication as part of the populist visual

communication toolkit, arguing that both negative attitudes towards 'the elite' and references to the 'the people' are often expressed by specific appearance, eye contact, facial expressions, or gestures, such as pointing fingers, long handshake with eye contact or trespassing the rival's territory (Piontek & Tadeusz-Ciesielczyk, 2019). This suggests that televised VPC research could be broadened in the direction of populism.

Finally, unlike in the case of social media, where political actors and citizens can create and control their own messages, media workers can decide what, and how to present on issues, politicians, and citizens. Accordingly, issues of the gender-based differences are shaped not only by the politicians but by the media as well. Female and male politicians' emotionality are portrayed differently in the television: female politicians can be seen more often with positive emotional facial displays than male ones (Renner & Masch, 2019). However, television news contribute to other issues as well. For instance, Dan and colleagues (2020) found, refugees and asylum seekers in German television news are framed negatively, most commonly by the application of the invasion frame with the depiction of faceless masses of people or illegal activities for instance. Further, although nonverbal political communication on television is a tool for politicians to shape their evaluation, television can make production decisions how to frame candidates as well. As Stewart and colleagues (2020) showed, the electoral status of politicians determine camera angles, perspectives, and camera time used by television, which means that candidates are treated differently by media in terms of VPC. These results suggest that varied issues are depicted by television as a media actor through VPC.

1.2.2.3 Discussion of the findings

The presented findings offered a systematic and narrative review of the last decade of VPC. This overview was timely because of the emergence of social media platforms that significantly changed the context of VPC, even beyond these specific sites.

General trends showed that there is a slightly emerging interest in the field of VPC research, considering both the number of studies and the use of a distinctive areal marker of the field. The 10 most influential papers of the last ten years examined a wide range of topics, which indicates the diversity of VPC research. Focusing on the whole database and all of the studies, it seems that in the applied research methods, there is a shift towards quantitative methods, especially content analysis. Still, as Gerodimos (2019) also stated, studies rarely offer codebooks that could facilitate research on the field. Further, examination more often focuses on still images, than moving ones, while comparisons between visual and verbal messages are scarce. Geographically, the vast majority of the

works focus on the United States, and while some European countries are quite commonly investigated, there are significant discrepancies in this manner, and international comparisons are rare. Moreover, campaign periods are the most frequently examined periods, which might be explained by the increased communication during the campaigns. However, to better understand social media-based VPC, the examination of non-campaign periods and comparisons of different periods would also be necessary. The most frequently investigated media platforms are social media sites, followed by television, which fact demonstrates the importance of the new communication platforms, and served as a base of the structure of the narrative review.

As the narrative review suggests, on social media platforms, such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter, VPC is often used for personalized communication, populist, and gender-stereotypical communication by political actors. Findings showed that social media-based visual personalization is connected to different self-presentation strategies, including the depiction of celebritization techniques or patriotic symbols. Although it seems that cultural and contextual differences shape VPC on social media, there might be other, non-investigated external factors that influence VPC, for instance the different affordances of the platforms. Moreover, the effects of social media-based VPC on citizens also remained a less studied field. Further, the depiction of certain clothing, facial expressions, situations, or emotional characteristic of populism, and the application of an amateur production style can all contribute to a populist VPC. It seems that populist actors can benefit from social media-based VPC, however, it is not clear whether populist actors apply a specific populist visual communication style that differs from their non-populist counterparts' communication. Findings on televised personalization are in line with social media-based VPC, as personalization appears on television also as a general characteristic of politicians' visual strategy.

Nonetheless, findings on VPC indicate gender-stereotypical use of visuals on social media with the depiction of mainly positive facial expressions and casual clothing of female politicians. In the case of televised VPC, television appears as a media actor that creates messages. By doing so, television-controlled VPC also covers the issues of gender-based differences, and other topics as well, such as refugees, and candidate framing by certain camera settings, compositions, and camera time. However, politicians' nonverbal communication is investigated as a means of influencing factors, independent of television. Findings suggest that nonverbal communication triggers social media responses and shapes candidate evaluation both positively and negatively, which depends

on several factors. For instance, as gender-stereotyped VPC appears not only on social media but on television as well, accordingly, the gender of the candidate shapes candidate evaluation.

It seems that similar topics appear in the television literature as in social media VPC literature, which shows both the convergence of these channels and the strong link of the VPC field to issues that are key concepts in contemporary political and communication science. Consequently, functions of visuals in political communication listed by Schill (2012) remained still relevant, however, research in the last ten years of VPC got closer to political communication trends. Comparing the results of Schill (2012) to the present examination's findings, the most remarkable difference is related to the role of television. As Schill (2012) argued, "despite the rising popularity of online news, television is by far the most important communication channel" (p. 119). Although television remained an important source of news, social media platforms provided a new impetus to VPC. Accordingly, scholars turned their attention to these new opportunities. Future research directions suggested by Schill (2012) put emphasis on the construction of visual symbols, their rhetorical operation and reception by viewers, and their normative implications in politics. Although these aspects were more or less analyzed in the past decade, the focus of VPC research turned out to be different on the new communication platforms: how visuals contribute to and construct political messages from the perspective of a less controlled media environment and a networked media logic. Thus, the rise of social media has brought changes to VPC, which started to be reflected in the literature, as the chapter demonstrated.

It is worth noting that Schill's (2012) main argument to study visuals in political communication seems to be heard by researchers, the number of studies on the field started to grow, and VPC became an emerging research area. However, as Bucy and Joo (2021) also argue, there is still a long way to go. Hence, the thesis put emphasis on the research gaps of VPC as described in the following sub-chapters.

1.3 The research focus of the thesis

The thesis focuses on image-based political communication on social media. At the beginning of the doctoral research program, the investigation had an open research interest and aimed to provide a better understanding of how visuals are used by political actors. Later on, it has become clear that two major, current political trends are inseparable from visual political communication on social media: personalization and populism. Hence, these two concepts are the focus of the research.

As the literature review demonstrated, there are several research gaps in the field of VPC. First, visuals in political communication are often investigated without a systematic approach, considering both visual and political communication foundations. Second, there is still a great need to provide more information on the research methods that can be applied flexibly to study visuals in political communication to facilitate scholars to include images in their investigations. Third, although the connections between personalization and VPC started to be examined, comparisons between different social media platforms are still rare. Fourth, research on populist visual communication on social media shows fragmented results. There is a lack of knowledge on whether a specific populist VPC exists, and findings are not connected to the theoretically grounded conceptualizations of populism. Finally, international comparisons, visual and verbal comparisons, and comparisons between different time periods are also limited.

Further, the increased role of social media both in verbal and visual political communication is clear. It is also known that social media is widely used as a source of information and news (Newman et al., 2022). The literature review demonstrated that political actors are building on this widespread use of social media by the voters, and use the platforms as part of their strategic toolkit. Hence, the articles of the thesis focus on the strategic use of visual political communication on social media. However, each article has a different actor focus: the first article investigates Hungarian candidates who are present both on Facebook and Instagram; the second article focuses on political parties from all EU countries on Facebook; while the third article examined the Hungarian Prime Minister's social media-based VPC on Facebook. With this wide actor focus, the thesis provides comparisons not only between different social media platforms but spatial and temporal comparisons as well.

1.3.1 Research Questions

Although all three articles of the thesis formulated specific research questions, based on the research gaps identified through the literature review, three overarching questions are drawn up as general interests of this article-based dissertation:

RQ1: What kinds of social media-based visual political communication strategies can be identified in the case of different political actors, such as:

RQ1a: In the case of politicians?

RQ1b: In the case of parties?

RQ1c: In the case of Viktor Orbán, the Prime Minister of Hungary, who is an exemplar case of populist leaders?

RQ2: Is visual communication strategy conditioned by external factors, such as:

RQ2a: Are there differences across social media platforms?

RQ2b: Are there differences between populist and non-populist actors?

RQ2c: Are there differences across different time periods?

RQ2d: Are there differences between social media-based visual and verbal political communication?

RQ3: What are the effects of visual political communication on social media in terms of user engagement?

2. Methodological overview

Research on visual materials might be challenging, as methods applied to textual materials cannot always be translated into visual data due to the complex nature of visual messages. Applying Gillian Rose's (2001) theoretical framework, this chapter gives an overview of visual methodologies and summarizes the main research techniques, how visuals can and should be investigated, depending on the aim of the analysis. This description is followed by the demonstration of the applied methods of the thesis.

2.1 Visual methodologies[4]

Not only in political communication but in general, a critical understanding of images is based on the three different sites "at which the meanings of an image are made: the site(s) of the production of an image, the site of the image itself, and the site(s) where it is seen by various audiences" (Rose, 2001, p. 16). All three sites have different modalities, i.e. aspects of how they can be understood: the technological, the compositional, and the social modalities. Practically this means that when deciding on the methods of how to investigate visuals, all the three modalities of each site have to be considered. Accordingly, the site of 1) the production refers to the way how the visuals are made technically, the genre in which its compositional features fit, and the social, economic, political circumstances in which the image was produced. The site of 2) the image itself concerns the formal components, what is depicted in the image, and how. The site of 3) the audiences is about how an image is seen by its spectators, how it affects the compositional structure, in what kind of contexts, and on which platforms.

[4] Based on Gillian Rose's (2001) book with the same title.

"Theoretical debates about how to interpret images can be understood as debates over which of these sites and modalities is most important for understanding an image. These debates affect the methodology that is most appropriately brought to bear on particular images" (Rose, 2001, p. 32).

Turning to the methods, first, the "*good eye*" technique or the *compositional interpretation* relates mainly to the site of the image itself and its compositional modality, while social aspects of the images are not investigated here. The technique's biggest disadvantage is the lack of an explicit methodology or theory. However, it offers a detailed vocabulary to describe what is depicted in an image. This detailed vocabulary is concerned with the colors of the image, and especially the hue, the saturation, the value, the harmonious combination of the colors, or the combination of hues, values, and saturation. Further, the "good eye" technique investigates the spatial organization also, how the volumes are arranged and what are the effects of these. So to say, the spatial organization is concerned with the perspectives, the way in which the picture offers a particular position to its viewers, and the "specific relation between image and spectator" (Rose, 2001, p. 45).

Second, the method of *discourse analysis* is built on Foucault's work. Rose (2001) argues that "discourses are articulated through all sorts visual and verbal images and texts, specialized or not, and also through the practices that those languages permit" (p. 136), visuality can be considered as a sort of discourse. Hence, discourse analysis can be applied to visual materials as well. By doing so, intertextuality and discursive formation have to be considered as key aspects of the investigation. In the case of images, intertextuality refers to the fact that meanings carried out by images that surround the investigated one, need to be considered as well, while the latter notion discursive formation refers to "the way meanings are connected together in a particular discourse" (p. 137). Accordingly, by applying this method, visual meanings and messages are identified through the analysis of images and their rhetorical organization but the investigation does not deal with hidden, not explicitly stated meanings. The first type of visual discourse analysis pays attention to the image itself, the social modality of the image site, and the social production and effects of discourses. However, social practices are not dealt with. The second type of visual discourse analysis focuses on the social institutional technologies, while does not pay attention to the image itself.

Another method that can be applied to investigate visuals is *semiology* or *semiotics*. As Rose (2001) describes it, semiology "offers a very full box of analytical

tools for taking an image apart and tracing how it works in relation to broader systems of meaning" (p. 69). This toolbox is based on the notion of sign, which is the smallest unit of meaning that consists of the signified and signifier. When looking for meanings, it is important that "there is no necessary relationship between a particular signifier and its signified" (Rose, 2001, p. 74), which allows research on the connections of signifiers, signified, and signs. It is clear that images are studied in semiology focused on the image itself, however, audiences are not analyzed here. Nonetheless, the *social semiotic* (van Leeuwen, 2004) approach that grew out from the same basics, keeps its focus on the image itself but broadened the investigation into the social and cultural aspects of the signs (Hodge, 2014). Social semiotics investigates the details of the images –such as the frames, metaphors, dis-courses, genre, style, modality, and composition– that create the meanings, but with special attention on the cultural and social landscape, the context where these signs exist. Hence, this approach allows research that focuses on the production and the image itself with a strong emphasis on the social and compositional modalities.

Finally, one of the most widely applied empirical methods in communication research is *content analysis* (Müller, 2007). Its main advantage lies in its rigorous rules, reliability, and objectivity, or as Rose (2001) puts it, in its explicit methodology. Content analysis that was originally applied to texts, "is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context" (Krippendorff, 1980, p. 21). Nevertheless, its rules can be applied to visuals as well, and while doing so, a large amount of data can be examined. Content analysis is "counting the frequency of certain visual elements in a clearly defined sample of images, and then analysing those frequencies" (Rose, 2001, p. 56). For that, a well-defined unit of the analysis, and a representative sample are essential. As a next step, an exhaustive and exclusive coding book is also inevitable, where all the investigated attributes are listed, and these attributes are mutually exclusive, i.e. one unit cannot be categorized into multiple groups. To ensure that categories are well-defined and the coding book is replicable, coder reliability tests should be run, which means that "different researchers at different times using the same categories would code the images in exactly the same way" (Rose, 2001, p. 62). After the application of the coding book on the sample of images, the frequencies are counted and analyzed according to the research questions. Although it is clear that content analysis is a critical visual methodology, it needs to be noted that the method's focus remains on "the compositional modality of the site of the image itself. It therefore has very little to say about the production or the

audiencing of images" (Rose, 2001, p. 56). However, content analysis on social media can be complemented with a focus on users' perspectives through the analysis of user engagement.

Further, Rose (2001) lists other visual methods, such as visual analysis in psychoanalysis, and mixed methods, and methods that focus specifically on the audience, such as interviews, ethnographic methods, and experiments. In the following subchapter, the most popular, and commonly applied methods and their application in the practice will be introduced.

2.2 Visual methods in practice

The literature review on the last ten years of visual political communication studies showed that the most frequently applied research method on visual materials is qualitative (e.g. O'Connell, 2018; Farris & Silber Mohamed, 2018) and/or quantitative (e.g. Russmann & Svensson, 2017; Meeks, 2019; Famulari, 2020) content analysis. Besides manual coding (e.g. Kharroub & Bas, 2015; Adi et al., 2018), the advantages of computational science have started to be used on this field as well, by the application of computer-based content analysis (e.g. Joo & Steinert-Threlkeld, 2018; Haim & Jungblut, 2020). Computer-based methods, such as machine learning methods (e.g. Garimella & Eckles, 2020), automatic facial expression analysis (e.g. Horiuchi et al., 2012; Joo et al., 2019), computer vision analysis (e.g. Peng, 2020), and data mining (e.g. O'Halloran et al., 2016) have become popular among VPC researchers. Interpretive methods, such as discourse analysis (e.g. Dumitrescu, 2017), semiotic and social semiotic analysis (e.g. Rovisco, 2017), multimodal analysis (e.g. Doerr, 2017), and visual framing (e.g. Bleiker et al., 2013) are also often applied in the study of VPC. Additionally, experiments are also conducted to investigate visuals in political communication, in the form of field (e.g. Matland & Murray, 2015), laboratory (e.g. Milazzo & Mattes, 2016), and survey experiments (e.g. Schmuck & Matthes, 2017; Powell et al., 2019).

Research on visuals on social media has further challenges (Quan-Haase & Sloan, 2017). As Rasmussen Pennington (2017) puts it, "visual data is perhaps more complex to decipher than printed text, but both are necessary and one informs the other" (p. 233). Messages in social media posts can be created through images (photos, videos, or gifs), tags (other users mentioned in a post), captions (description attached to images), post texts (the textual post), and links (an URL of a website). These components in a post can be grasped by the notion of intertextuality: the meanings of an image are created through

its visual elements but also through other images and texts that surround the given image (Hand, 2017). Further, user engagement forms –such as the viewers' comments (people's responses to a post), reactions (different "like" buttons), and shares (users broadcasting a post)– should also be considered when studying social media data.

Visuality in social media can be conceptualized by three main elements: images, circulation, and social practices (Hand, 2017). The focus of the research can be challenging due to the complex relationship between the peculiarities of platforms, the many types of images, the additional textual meanings, and the social practices. The existing methodologies for studying social media from visual perspectives can be challenging since social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram alter the methods of interpretation.

2.3 Applied methods in the thesis

As the thesis works with a large amount of visual data on social media and aims to provide reliable, replicable, and objective results, all three articles of the dissertation apply content analysis. The main features of the three content analyses are discussed in the section below, however, more details of the datasets are introduced in the articles. Further, as Gerodimos (2019) argues, there is a lack of studies that ensure systematic, portable, and adaptable analysis of visual data. Hence, each codebooks developed for the articles accompanies this thesis.

Article 1: Inductive and deductive visual qualitative content analysis

The first article relies on a combination of inductive and deductive qualitative content analysis. Inductive content analysis is a useful method in the case of is a literature gap (Elo and Kyngäs, 2008). Accordingly, the inductive part was created to study visual personalization both on Facebook and Instagram, as there was no previous systematic visual content analysis that could capture the essence of personalization through different social media platforms. For that, categories were created with open coding of a sample of the image-posts, then after the creation of an exhaustive coding scheme, it was applied deductively on the whole dataset of the research. Categories focused on the visual nature of the pictures, their content, feature, and sentiment, the depicted people, the depiction of the candidate, and the cultural and political references.

The dataset included all Facebook posts (N=2,925) and Instagram posts (N=858) containing pictures of those Hungarian candidates who owned both Facebook and

Instagram accounts at the time of the 2018 election (N=51). Coder reliability was ensured in the coding process: each post was coded by three undergraduates, and only those codes were accepted, which were recorded at least by two coders.

Articles 2 and 3: Quantitative visual content analysis

Both the second and third articles apply quantitative visual content analysis. However, the categories were devised differently. As the second article aims to compare populist and non-populist visual communication on social media, categories had to be able to capture general and populist communication as well. Accordingly, the coding instrument contained categories related to the visual types of the pictures, the applied visual tools, the context and content of the posts, the depicted actors, and the number of the people, also the depicted symbols, objects, connections, and clothing. The third article's focus is on the visual and verbal elements of populism. For that, Moffitt's (2016) theoretical work on the populist style has been translated into a coding scheme that can capture the bimodal populist communication. A group of categories was aimed to measure general visual features, while three groups of categories were derived from Moffitt (2016) to code 1) populist appeals to 'the people' versus 'the elite', 2) bad manners, and 3) crisis, breakdown, and threat communication.

The dataset of the second article contained a random sample of all EU parties' image-based Facebook posts from the last 28 days of the 2019 EP campaign (N=997). Coding was carried out by two coders. The inter-coder reliability showed acceptable Krippendorff alpha values for each category (>.69).

The third article was based on a dataset of all image-based Facebook posts of Viktor Orbán (N = 492) over a three-year period (2018-2020). Photos and their verbal post texts were coded by two coders, and the inter-coder reliability showed acceptable Krippendorff alpha values for each category (>.80).

3. Individual publications and findings

This chapter summarizes the aims and major findings of the three articles that together form the basis of this article-based dissertation. The full articles can be found in the appendix.

3.1 Article 1: Images, Politicians, and Social Media: Patterns and Effects of Politicians' Image-Based Political Communication Strategies on Social Media

The first article aimed to describe the visual political communication strategies of Hungarian politicians on Facebook and Instagram during the 2018 parliamentary election campaign, and their success in triggering user engagement. One of our main arguments was built on the fact that visuals in political communication were treated as illustrations to verbal and textual communication for long, and not as interests of their own. Hence, our article put the focus on the images and visual strategies. Our first Research Question was related to the visual political communication strategies.

(RQ1): What kinds of visual communication strategies are applied by political actors on social media platforms?

Built on the results of verbal political communication studies on social media– we had a special focus on personalization, the process in which "individual political actors have become more prominent at the expense of parties and collective identities" (Karvonen 2010, p. 4). We hypothesized that visual communication on social media is predominantly used by politicians to personalize their appearance (H1).

We differentiated two types of personalization: individualization and privatization. Individualization refers to the process in which the politicians are at the forefront of politics instead of parties, while privatization means that politicians' private and personal features are highlighted instead of their professional ones (Van Aelst et al., 2012). In our approach, individualization was treated as the depiction of formal political work, while privatization showed informal characteristics. We expected that both types of personalization are applied in social media-based visual political communication: e.g. settled images and the candidates' official clothes can be understood as rather formal elements, while spontaneous images and casual clothes are signs of informality. However, it is worth noting that the aim of the coding was not to identify individualized or privatized images per se but to describe the extent of the use of formal and informal visual elements.

Further, as the literature was limited to single platform studies, we put a special focus on the comparison of two social media platforms, Facebook and Instagram. Accordingly, the first Research Question was specified in two sub-questions related to our comparative approach in terms of the platforms.

(RQ1a) What features can be considered general characteristics of social media visual communication?

(RQ1b) What are the platform-specific strategies?

Based on the findings of single platform studies, we assumed that Instagram is rather a place for informal visuals and privatization (H2) by the depiction of family members and personal moments, while on Facebook, images are used to depict more formal and individualized visual elements (H3)[5], such as images depicting politicians in their office.

As we were interested not only in the visual communication strategies applied by candidates on the two social media platforms but in their success as well, our research focus was widened to the effects of their visual posts in terms of user engagement– reactions, comments, and shares. The second Research Question and two sub-questions were formulated accordingly:

(RQ2) What kind of images perform well on social media platforms?

(RQ2a) What types of visual tools trigger "likes" as the most widely used and comparable reaction form?

(RQ2b) What cross-platform similarities and differences can we identify in the liking response to politicians' visual communication?

Hence, the number of reactions, comments, and shares of the posts was also measured on Facebook and Instagram. As previous works (Bene, 2017; Heiss et al. 2019) demonstrated a stronger like-provoking potential of personalized posts than those without personal elements, we assumed that images with personalized aspects –either formal or informal– are more liked both on Facebook and Instagram (H4). However, we also expected differences between the two platforms: we also assumed that formal, individualized visuals are more liked on Facebook (H5), while informal, privatized image posts are preferred by Instagram users (H6).

To answer the research questions, inductive and deductive qualitative content analysis was applied on the still image-based Facebook (N = 2925) and Instagram posts (N = 858) of Hungarian politicians, who were active on both platforms in the period of the 2018 Hungarian parliamentary election campaign (N = 51).

Findings supported our first hypothesis, as visual political communication is highly personalized both on Facebook and Instagram. However, data showed that Instagram image posts are more personalized (95 percent of the image posts) than Facebook images (66 percent), in terms of depiction of the candidates and/or being self-

[5] In the published article, the third hypothesis was incorrectly described as „on Instagram images should be used to display more informal aspects of candidates' life, relevant to the individualization dimension of personalization (H3)" (Farkas & Bene, 2021, p. 125). The dissertation demonstrates the corrected version of the hypothesis.

made, original images by the candidates themselves. Images that are posted on both platforms are exceptionally personalized, which tells us that although Facebook images are not always personalized (44 percent), only the personalized pictures are posted on Instagram as well.

Further, results supported our second and third hypotheses also, as formal elements are more often depicted on Facebook than on Instagram, while informal visual features are more common on Instagram. However, this does not mean exclusivity. Formal visual elements are present on both platforms but on Instagram, informal images are also common. Hence, it can be said that individualization is present both on Facebook and Instagram, while privatization is rather an Instagram communication feature.

To reflect on intertextuality, the additional meanings of post texts and captions were also investigated. Results suggested, that although texts are frequently added to images on both platforms, these kinds of messages had no additional meanings on Instagram, and only half of the Facebook post texts contained other information than messages carried out by the images.

User engagement patterns of visual posts were examined by multilevel negative binomial regression models. Results of the analysis supported our fourth hypothesis, as personalized images had more likes on both platforms than pictures without personalized features. Further, the fifth hypothesis is also confirmed by the data: formal, individualized visual elements are more likely to be liked on Facebook, and less popular on Instagram. Nonetheless, although informal, privatized images are popular on Instagram, they are not more favored on Instagram than on Facebook. Consequently, our sixths hypothesis was rejected.

Nevertheless, our investigation contributed to the emerging area of visual political communication research by 1) focusing on visuals in political communication as objects of interest on their own; 2) creating a coding scheme that can be applied to study visual political communication strategies; 3) moving beyond the commonly applied single-platform approach; 4) examining engagement patterns of different visual tools.

3.2 Article 2: Strikingly similar: Comparing visual political communication of populist and non-populist parties across 28 countries

Article 2 had a special focus on visual populist communication. Unlike in the case of Article 1, where Hungarian politicians' VPC was investigated, this article examined the visual communication of 28 EU countries' parties. This allowed us an international

comparison between populist and non-populist communication on Facebook, which is the most commonly used social media platform in Europe (Newman et al., 2020). The investigation time frame stretched through the last 28 days of the 2019 EP campaign.

In this article, we contributed to the increased attention on visual political communication research: as the emerging number of studies on visual populist communication are based on single country analyses, we aimed to broaden our knowledge on the field through an international focus and more generalizable results.

From the various definitions of populism (see Mudde, 2004; Weyland, 2001; Hawkins, 2009) we applied a mixed approach. As we focused on the differences and similarities of populist and non-populist communication, Mudde's (2004) actor-centric approach was useful to focus on the question of *who* and identify populist and non-populist parties. However, as we were interested in the question of *what* as well, our hypotheses were formulated on the basis of the populist communication style approach (de Vreese et al., 2018). Nonetheless, besides the content elements, the question of *how* was also raised, and as visuals in populist communication can only be understood from the perspective of Moffitt's (2016) style approach, this was applied to describe symbolically mediated performance elements.

Although social media-based visual communication seemed naturally fit to populist communication (Kriesi, 2014), it was not investigated so far whether a distinct populist visual communication style exists. Hence, our Research Question was formulated as follows:

(RQ1) What are the differences and similarities between populist and non-populist actors' image-based visual communication on Facebook during the 2019 European Parliament election campaign?

Based on the concepts of populism and previous works' results, hypotheses were formulated to describe our expectations related to populist visual communication. Application of the codebook and the quantitative visual content analysis showed mixed results related to our hypotheses.

We assumed that photos without superimposed texts (text applied on the image) are less used (H1a), while photos with text are more common (H1b) in populist visual communication, as superimposed texts can specify the complex visual messages with simplification. Although this can be considered one of populism's main features, both hypotheses were rejected by the data. Populists are less likely to use photos with text than non-populists, while the use of photos without text showed no significant difference.

The second hypothesis was also rejected by the data. Based on populism's tendency to arouse negative emotions towards 'the elite' or 'the others' (Moffitt, 2016), we also assumed that compared to non-populist parties, populists upload more images with negative contexts (H2). However, images are mainly positive both in populist and populist communication.

Further hypotheses were formulated related to the depicted content of the images. Based on populism's ordinariness focus, and its anti-elitist claim that is in contrast to the traditional elite-like appearance, three hypotheses were formulated. We assumed that personalized, privatized images are more common in populist visual communication (H3a), while policy issues (H3b) and traditional political work (H3c) are more frequently depicted by non-populists. Built on populist anti-elitism, crisis, and threat-communication, it was also hypothesized that critical visual contents (unfavorable depiction of political opponents) are more frequently applied by populists than non-populists (H3d). Although H3a was rejected, as in the visual communication of parties, personal images are marginal both in populist and non-populist communication, H3b is confirmed by the data with more policy images in the case of non-populists than populists. H3c and H3d are rejected, as both traditional political work and unfavorable depictions of political opponents are rarely present in both cases.

Considering populism's leader-centric nature, we assumed that populist parties more frequently depict their own leaders (H4a), and this hypothesis was confirmed by the data. Further, based on anti-elitism and the creation of crisis and enemies, it was hypothesized that populists depict other parties' leaders (H4b), as well as other countries' leaders (H4c) more often than non-populists. Although H4b was rejected, as other party's leaders and politicians are rarely depicted in both cases, other country's leaders are significantly more often depicted by populists than non-populists, which confirms H4c. Nonetheless, as populism is about 'the people', we expected that populist images depict random people more frequnetly than non-populists (H4d), which was confirmed by the data. As part of the populist crisis and threat communication, armed forces were assumed to be present more often in populist images than in non-populist ones (H4e). We also expected that populist parties depict more people in their pictures than non-populists (H4f), as it can be a sign of people-centrism. However, both H4e and H4f were rejected by the data.

As signs of ordinariness, casual clothes (H5), politicians' interaction with crowds (H6a), or random people (H6b) were expected to be more often depicted in populist

images. The depiction of approving audiences was also assumed to be a populist visual element (H6c). As casual clothes were exceptional in both cases, H5 was rejected, however, politicians' interaction with crowds was more commonly depicted by populists, which confirmed H6a. Nonetheless, H6b and H6c were rejected by the data, as there is no significant difference between the populist and non-populists depiction of interaction with random people, or approving audiences.

Finally, hypotheses related to political symbols and election-related objects were also formulated. It was expected that political symbols, such as EU, country, and party symbols are more often depicted by populists (H7a) in order to trigger positive or negative reactions towards the in- and the outgroups. Data showed that although national symbols were more often depicted by populists than non-populists, there was no significant difference in the presence of EU and party symbols, rejecting H7a. Popular cultural symbols were also assumed to be used more often by populist parties (H7b) to express ordinariness, however, this was also rejected by our data. Media symbols, such as microphones and cameras were expected to be less frequently shown by populists (H8a) based on their negative communication about mass media. In lack of significant differences in populist and non-populist visual communication, this was also rejected by the data. However, election-related objects, such as ballots or ballot boxes were assumed to appear more often in populist images (H8b) as signs of their mobilization focus, and this was supported by our data.

To sum up, Article 2 showed little differences in populist and non-populist visual party communication on Facebook during the 2019 EP campaign. Although research on verbal and textual communication suggests a distinctive populist communication, the analysis of party visuals resulted in only a few remarkable populist features. Its leader-centric nature, ordinariness, and the important role of national symbols can be grasped in the visuals. However, our study suggests that based on populist party visual communication on social media, populists are very similar to their non-populist counterparts. Hence, Article 2 underlined that focusing on visuals of politics can contribute to a more nuanced knowledge on political communication.

3.3 Article 3: The visual and verbal populist style of Viktor Orbán on Facebook

Just like Article 2, Article 3 also focused on populist visual communication. However, as Article 2 showed only a few differences in populist and non-populist visual communication in the case of parties, in this article, we turned our attention from parties

to an exemplar case of populist leaders, Viktor Orbán, the Prime Minister of Hungary. Further, built on the results of Article 2 that contradicted the previous verbal results on populist communication, in Article 3, we created a bimodal coding scheme, which allowed us to focus both on the visual and verbal aspects of social media-based political communication. For that, Moffitt's (2016) populist communication style theory was translated into a measurement system with the use of a few categories from Article 2's coding system. This approach considers populism as a "symbolically mediated performance" (Moffitt, 2016, p. 46) that contains not only verbal but visual elements as well, thus we could compare these two modalities. Further, as both Article 1 and Article 2 focused on campaign periods, in Article 3, we broadened our investigation's period into different periods as well: from 2018 to 2020, besides election periods, we examined the whole first and the half of the second wave of COVID-19, and periods of slow news that is called cucumber time in the news industry.

Research on the visual aspects of populism has already shown a variety of visual populist characteristics, however, they could offer only fragmented results. Nonetheless, Moffitt's (2016) political communication style approach allows a more complex and amalgamated investigation by connecting the now dispersed findings into an integrated framework of a theoretically grounded approach.

As Moffitt (2016) describes it, the populist communication style is built on three main elements: 1) appeal to 'the people' versus 'the elite'; 2) bad manners; 3) crisis, breakdown, and threat communication. These dimensions have further sub-dimensions, such as people-centrism, closeness to 'the people', distance to 'the elite', the distinctive role of the leader, the leader's ordinariness and extraordinariness, the use of slang, coarse words, politically incorrectness, the creation of crisis and enemies, and oversimplification of complex issues. After translating these into visual and verbal categories, we applied the coding instrument on the posts of Viktor Orbán to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: Which dimension of Moffitt's (2016) populist style was applied most prominently in Viktor Orbán's Facebook posts?

RQ2: Are there differences between the image and textual messages of Viktor Orbán's Facebook posts?

RQ3: Were there differences in Viktor Orbán's Facebook communication across the campaign period, the COVID-19 crisis period, and the non-campaign period?

Results of the bimodal quantitative content analysis suggested that the Prime Minister is often presented in the pictures, which is not only in line with populism's leader-centric nature but the findings of Article 1 about the increased personalization of social media-based visual communication as well. However, verbal self-references were rare. Further, although the people-centric characteristics of populism would suggest the common presence of 'the people', results showed an only moderate visual depiction of and verbal reference to them. Nonetheless, 'the elite' was the second most commonly presented actor in the posts. Surprisingly, the valence of the posts where 'the elite' are present, was not predominantly negative, as populism's anti-elite feature would suggest. On the contrary, these posts were more frequently positive. Another striking finding is that the supposed enemies of Viktor Orbán, such as the migrants, George Soros, or Ferenc Gyurcsány were not present in the image posts of the Prime Minister.

Considering the first Research Question, it can be said that Moffitt's (2016) dimensions, in general, were applied differently: the appeals to 'the people' versus 'the elite' categories were applied often, the creation of crisis, breakdown, and threat was applied moderately, while the bad manners categories were hardly applied. The details of the dimensions show that closeness and ordinariness categories are often present through performative rituals, expressions, national symbols, and the informal clothing of the leader. Extraordinariness is mainly presented by the depiction of media interest around the leader and his accomplishments. Elites are presented not only by elite actors but through the depiction of a setting that signifies wealth.

To answer the second Research Question it can be said that closeness categories are presented rather verbally, while ordinariness and the elites are depicted more frequently visually. As national symbols and casual clothing of the leader are the main conveyors of ordinariness, it is not surprising that this dimension is predominantly visually presented. Extraordinariness is also more presented visually than verbally, while bad manners and threats appeared similarly verbally and visually.

Results showed only slight differences across the time periods. Closeness categories are more common during the campaign period than in the other periods, while threat categories are applied more frequently during the COVID-19 period than during the campaigns or the cucumber times. There are no remarkable differences during the periods in the application of ordinariness categories, but they are more common during the period of COVID-19 than during the cucumber period.

Hence, as a conclusion of Article 3's findings, it can be noted that the Hungarian Prime Minister's social media-based populist style can be only partially grasped by the application of Moffitt's (2016) approach. Viktor Orbán's communication on Facebook is mainly built on the appeal to 'the people' versus 'the elite' dimension, however, the presentation of the elites is far from negative. Orbán's communication does not truly differ across the time periods, it stays predominantly consistent across the campaign, crisis, and cucumber periods. Nevertheless, it is worth highlighting that some populist communication style elements were identified more commonly visually than verbally, which fact underlines the importance and necessity of visual political communication research.

4. Conclusions and future directions

Although visuals are important part of political communication, research on the field of visual politics just gained momentum only in the past decade. The dissertation aimed to contribute to this emerging research area, where a number of research questions are still unanswered. The thesis' general research questions are related to 1) the social media-based visual political communication strategies of different political actors, 2) the influence of external factors –such as the different social media platforms, time periods, modalities, or the identification as populist or non-populist– on visual political communication, and 3) the effects of social media-based visual communication. To this end, the thesis provides three related studies.

The three articles of the dissertation contribute to a better understanding of visual political communication on social media at least in three general ways: highlighted and compared visual personalization strategies and their effects on different social media platforms, described the similarities and differences of populist visual communication of parties, and tested the populist style of an exemplar populist leader across different periods and modalities.

The first article discussed visual personalization strategies and effects on two different social media platforms: Facebook and Instagram. Our results showed that personalization is an important visual political communication strategy on both platforms. However, on Facebook, its more formal dimension, individualization is present, while Instagram visual communication is characterized by its more informal dimension, privatization. Further, user engagement indicators showed that personalized visual contents are more liked on both platforms than images without personalization.

Nonetheless, on Facebook, individualized visuals are more likely to be liked than on Instagram, but privatized images are not more liked on Instagram than on Facebook.

The second article's results showed that there is no strikingly distinct populist visual communication in parties' Facebook communication. However, there are some features that might signal visual populism: the remarkably frequent depiction of the leaders, national symbols, and ordinariness in terms of the presence of 'the people'.

The third article's findings suggested that Moffitt's (2016) populist style approach is only partially able to describe Viktor Orbán's populist style. The Hungarian Prime Minister's Facebook posts mainly applied the appeals to 'the people' versus 'the elite' dimensions of populism, crisis and threat communication was somewhat relevant, while bad manners categories are not common. Further, the article showed only minor differences across the different periods, which result indicates the consistent communication of Viktor Orbán. However, we could describe that some populist features are predominantly depicted only by visuals, which underlines the need to examine visuals in political communication.

Although all three studies had a different research focus in terms of research questions, in general, some differences and similarities in the visual communication of the three examined actor types –a populist leader, Viktor Orbán, European parties, and Hungarian candidates– can be highlighted. One of the main similarities is personalization: all three actors often use images to depict individual politicians and leaders. A further similarity between the European populist parties and Viktor Orbán is the remarkably frequent depiction of national symbols, and ordinariness, however, not in the case of the presence of 'the people'. Also, positive valence was common in all three cases. Considering the differences, 'the people' are often depicted in the case of European populist parties, which is not true for Orbán, whose images depicted less often 'the people' than 'the elite'. Further, European parties do not depict leaders or candidates in casual clothes, while Viktor Orbán's shirt is almost always casual, unbuttoned at the top.

Furthermore, as the emerging research area of visual politics is still in great need of portable coding systems, the dissertation has an additional contribution to the field by providing three coding instruments that allow visual, and bimodal investigations related to political communication strategies, personalization, and populism.

Considering the findings of the dissertation on the strategic visual communication of politicians on social media, the following concluding ideas can be drawn. Personalization, the focus on the leader, and application of a positive tone, and certain

populist elements (e.g. depiction of ordinary people, the elites, and national symbols) are prominent visual political communication strategies. Further, visual political communication can be considered quite consistent. Although there are some differences in the use of the different platforms, between parties, and periods, these are not remarkable: there seems to be a kind of professionalization, thereby a standardization of visual political communication.

Nonetheless, besides the important contributions, the thesis has its limitations. First of all, there is a great need to broaden the research focus of VPC studies. Although the emerging area of VPC investigation encompasses works with a diverse research focus, there is still room for improvement. There are not only geographical disproportionalities considering the overwhelming extent of US-based VPC research, but there are shortcomings regarding the examined platforms, types of visuals, periods, and actors. The audiovisual-based YouTube, moving images, such as videos, and gifs, non-election periods, and citizens as actors are less examined from the VPC perspective. Amateur visual production can be also an important research area of VPC, considering its emerging role both in protests and populist communication. New directions in VPC research could also be set to the field of visual mis- and disinformation, which is especially timely in the era of fake news.

Further, although qualitative and quantitative visual content analyses are useful methods to provide reliable, replicable, and valid results, they can grasp the dynamics and context, where visuals are embedded, only in a limited way. Qualitative methods, such as the compositional interpretation or the semiotic analysis offer a nuanced and detailed analysis and understanding of the images, however, these can't be applied to a huge amount of data. Further, as Bucy and Joo (2021) also suggested, scholars of the field should broaden their focus both in terms of applied methods and interdisciplinary collaborations. The application of qualitative methods that help understand the details of visually constructed messages would be as welcome as methods based on the new technological advances. For that, cooperative works from the area of computational science and VPC would be necessary.

Moreover, although Article 1 had a cross-platform approach, this could be also continued in the future by the investigation of other platforms as well, such as YouTube or TikTok. Additionally, the thesis put more emphasis on the sites of production and the image itself, while the site of the audience was examined only in the first study, which might be a further future direction.

Further, as the narrative literature review suggested, new theoretical insights and concepts could be raised on the basis of VPC. The established concepts, such as personalization and populism, provide useful grips and VPC can indeed provide new insights in these areas, however, it would also be beneficial to notice and capture communicative specificities that primarily unfold in the field of visuals.

As Schill (2012) concluded, "not only is continued research vital and necessary in this area; it also provides fertile ground for understanding political communication" (p. 135). By the systematic and narrative review of the last decade of VPC, and by filling in some research gaps related to social media-based VPC, the thesis attempted to further increase the popularity of VPC research. Findings of the empirical review and the three articles, also the attached coding schemes might be useful for political communication scholars to widen their focus in the direction of visuals, and those who already contributed to the understanding of VPC, may find inspiration for new approaches.

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Appendix

Statement of Authorship

DECLARATION

related to the independent intellectual property and form,

for submission of the PhD dissertation

I the undersigned **Xénia Farkas**, PhD candidate of the **Doctoral School of International Relations and Political Science** (Program/Specialization: **Political Science Doctoral Program**) hereby declare that **the PhD dissertation** I submitted to the Doctoral Office of the Corvinus University of Budapest

at the **date**: 1 September, 2022

with the title: **Visual Politics: Visual Political Communication on Social Media**

having **197 pages**,

is the result of my research and the whole of my dissertation is my own, independent intellectual property using only the indicated sources.

Clearly, by indicating the source, I have marked all the parts, including my own previous work that I have taken from another source, literally or in the same sense, but reworded.

I also declare that I have not previously submitted my doctoral dissertation to another institution, it has not been rejected, I have not had an unsuccessful doctoral defence within two years.

Regarding the **form and structure** of my doctoral dissertation, it is (please underline the right one):

- an **article-based dissertation**

- a non-article-based dissertation

Date: 1 September, 2022

Signature: .....

Author's Own Contributions for Co-Authored Publications

Article 1

Title: Images, Politicians, and Social Media: Patterns and Effects of Politicians' Image-Based Political Communication Strategies on Social Media

Researchers involved: Xénia Farkas (XF), Márton Bene (MB)

	Limited contribution	Substantial contribution
Conceptualization (main idea, theory)	MB	XF
Methodology (design, operationalization)		XF, MB
Data collection	MB	XF
Data analysis		XF, MB
Writing (original draft preparation)		XF, MB
Writing (review and editing)	MB	XF
Conference presentations	MB	XF
Visualizations	XF	MB

Article 2

Title: Strikingly similar: Comparing visual political communication of populist and non-populist parties across 28 countries

Researchers involved: Xénia Farkas (XF), Daniel Jackson (DJ), Paweł Baranowski (PB), Márton Bene (MB), Uta Russmann (UR), Anastasia Veneti (AV)

	Limited contribution	Substantial contribution
Conceptualization (main idea, theory)	DJ, PB, MB, UR, AV	XF
Methodology (design, operationalization)	DJ, UR,	XF, MB
Data collection		XF
Data analysis	PB	XF, MB
Writing (original draft preparation)	PB, UR, AV	XF, DJ, MB
Writing (review and editing)	MB, PB	XF, DJ, UR, AV
Conference presentations		XF, DJ, UR
Visualizations	MB, DJ, UR, AV	XF, PB

Article 3

Title: The visual and verbal populist style of Viktor Orbán on Facebook. Submitted to the journal

Researchers involved: Xénia Farkas (XF), Márton Bene (MB)

	Limited contribution	Substantial contribution
Conceptualization (main idea, theory)		XF
Methodology (design, operationalization)		XF, MB
Data collection		XF
Data analysis		XF, MB
Writing (original draft preparation)	MB	XF
Writing (review and editing)	MB	XF
Conference presentations		XF
Visualizations		XF, MB

The co-authors herewith confirm the author contribution statement:

Wrocław, 16.08.2022 Location and Date	Paweł Baranowski
BUDAPEST, 31.08.2022 Location and Date	Márton Bene
Bournemouth, 16.08.2022 Location and Date	Daniel Jackson
Tel Aviv, 18.08.2022 Location and Date	Uta Rußmann Uta Russmann
Bournemouth, 30.08.2022 Location and Date	Anastasia Veneti

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Article 1

Images, Politicians, and Social Media: Patterns and Effects of Politicians' Image-Based Political Communication Strategies on Social Media.

Xénia Farkas, Márton Bene

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Images, Politicians, and Social Media: Patterns and Effects of Politicians' Image-based Political Communication Strategies on Social Media

Xénia Farkas[6], Márton Bene[7]

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Author Biographies:

Xénia Farkas is a Junior Research Fellow at the Centre for Social Sciences, Institute for Political Science (HAS) since 2015, and a PhD student at the Corvinus University of Budapest since 2018. Her research focuses on visual political communication.

Márton Bene is a Research Fellow at the Centre for Social Sciences, Institute for Political Science (HAS) and lecturer at Eötvös Loránd University. His research interests are in political communication, social media and politics, and political behaviour. His publications have appeared in refereed international journals such as *Information, Communication & Society*, *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, *Journal of Information Technology & Politics* and *Social Media+ Society*.

Abstract

Although images have always been part of politics, research on the visual aspects of political communication recently gained momentum, especially with the spread of social

[6] Centre for Social Sciences, Hungarian Academy of Sciences Centre of Excellence; Corvinus University of Budapest, Hungary
[7] Centre for Social Sciences, Hungarian Academy of Sciences Centre of Excellence; Eötvös Loránd University, Hungary

Corresponding Author:
Xénia Farkas, Centre for Social Sciences, H-1097 Budapest, Tóth Kálmán u. 4.
Email: farkas.xenia@tk.mta.hu

media-based political communication. However, there are still several significant research gaps in this field. The aim of this article is to identify and compare the patterns and effects of Hungarian politicians' (N = 51) image-based communication on Facebook (N = 2992) and Instagram (N = 868) during the Hungarian parliamentary election campaign in 2018. By doing so, we shed light on two important dimensions of personalization: individualization and privatization. This work is designed to fill three gaps in the literature. We argue that existing research of visual political communication (1) treats images predominantly as illustrations; (2) is limited to single platform studies, and (3) does not investigate the engagement effects of images. To move beyond these limitations, this study investigates images as objects of interest on their own, it adopts a cross-platform comparative approach and examines the engagement effects of visual cues by applying a combination of inductive and deductive qualitative content analysis. Our results show that images are often used to personalize communication. While on Facebook the individualization dimension of personalization is more common and popular, on Instagram its privatization dimension prevails. Furthermore, on Facebook, users like more politics-related candidate-centered images, but on Instagram we could not find similar effects for more informal visuals.

Keywords: visual political communication, images, social media, user engagement, personalization, Instagram, Facebook

Introduction

We are surrounded by visuals,[1] such as photos and other kinds of images in our daily life. Compared with written or spoken texts, people tend to believe more what they see, and visuals are easier to remember since they can transmit more specific messages that are more difficult to grasp in verbal communication (Grabe and Bucy, 2009). Although "political communication today is built on a visual foundation" (Schill, 2012, p.119), political communication research often ignores the visual aspects of communication, with the primary focus still on texts and text-based methods. Treated as illustration to textual or verbal communication, images are still rarely objects of interest on their own (Stocchetti, 2011). Over the last few years, visuals have been more at the forefront of political communication research (e.g. Veneti, Jackson & Lilleker, 2019), however, there are still numerous underexplored areas. Our research relates to the increasing scholarly efforts over the last few years that focus on politicians' visual communication strategies on social media.

We argue that from a strategic point of view visuals are strongly connected to the personalization of political communication. While social media-based political communication tends to be a popular research field and is often connected to personalization (e.g. Enli & Skogerbø, 2013), there is a lack of knowledge on its visual aspects. Our article aims to address this gap and highlights visual tools that are applied to personalize political communication. Furthermore, by differentiating between formal and informal personal visual contents, our research focuses on the individualization (i.e. focus on the politicians' political work) and privatization (i.e. focus on politicians' personality and personal background) dimensions of personalization.

At the same time, we intend to bridge three significant gaps in the field of visual political communication. First, our goal is to elaborate an extensive coding scheme that investigates images as objects of interest on their own rather than pure illustration to textual communication and is thus suitable to offer a detailed map of political actors' visual strategies. Second, while existing studies in the field focus on single platforms, we adopt a cross-platform approach as the architectures, affordances and norms of specific sites significantly shape communication strategies (see Bossetta, 2018). And third, no study seems to have investigated the effects of different images on user engagement. While the study of engagement effects of politicians' communicative efforts is an emerging subfield in the study of social media and politics (Bene, 2017; Heiss et al., 2019), most work is limited to textual content. To fill these gaps, our aim is to explore cross-platform similarities and differences in the patterns and effects of politicians' visual political communication strategies on Facebook and Instagram during the 2018 Hungarian general election campaign. On the one hand, we hypothesize that personalization is a prevailing and effective strategy of politicians' visual communication. On the other hand, we expect that on Facebook the individualization dimension of personalization will be more frequently used and stimulate higher user engagement, while on Instagram the privatization dimension is the more popular.

Since research currently lacks a portable and adaptable coding model on visual data (Gerodimos, 2019), we have applied a combination of inductive and deductive qualitative visual content analysis to create categories, and our variables focus specifically on the details of images. By images we refer only to still images, consequently moving images –such as videos or gifs– are excluded from our analysis due to their different visual nature that requires different methods of analysis. Our analysis draws upon a unique dataset that

includes each image-based Facebook (N = 2992) and Instagram (N = 868) post of candidates who were active on both platforms during the campaign (N = 51).

Results show that images are often used to personalize communication: while on Facebook the privatization dimension of personalization is more common and popular, on Instagram its individualization dimension prevails. Furthermore, while on Facebook users were more likely to like politics-related candidate-centered images, on Instagram we could not find similar patterns for more informal pictures.

Visual political communication on social media

Visuals have always been part of political communication, they have just become even more important with technological advances: from the printed press to the television, and finally the Internet. Hand (2012) argues that we live in the age of "ubiquitous photography," which is also underlined by statistics: each day people upload 300 million photos to Facebook, and 95 million photos to Instagram (Stout, 2019). This is not surprising, as it is now faster, easier and more motivating than ever before to take and share pictures on social media platforms. Due to the proliferation of mobile cameras, politicians are more visible than ever (Messaris, 2019). At the same time, visuals on social media have become part of political actors' strategic toolkit and are employed to influence voters (Russmann, Svensson & Larsson, 2019).

Although many scholars argue (see Veneti et al., 2019) that visuals have a huge importance when politicians communicate with their voters, only over the past few years has more intense academic attention turned toward them in political communication. However, political communication studies focusing on images have taken a particular approach to visuals and visual communication for a long time. Even though many scholars argue that research on political communication should pay genuine attention on visuals (Graber, 1996; Barnhurst & Quinn, 2012), the real focus is still predominantly on texts.

To understand the visual messages and strategies in social media, we need to move beyond the approach of traditional political communication research that investigates similar categories for visuals and texts, and instead analyze visuals as objects of interest on their own. While our methodology is based on traditional content analysis, to work out categories we rely on a comprehensive inductive visual analysis of the specific details of the images, such as their types or the persons depicted inside the frame, cultural and

political references, the sentiment projected by the depiction, and the visual character of the image. Candidates use these visual components as purposeful communication tools to create messages. Hence, we understand them as elements of strategic political communication for achieving candidates' political goals: influencing voters through visual communication. Consequently, our first research question is: What kinds of visual communication strategies are applied by political actors on social media platforms? (RQ1)

Therefore, the first step of our research strategy is to identify visual tools inductively, then to develop a coding scheme based on these tools, and finally to analyze the occurrences of our categories in politicians' visual communication.

When it comes to visual political communication, one of the major puzzles is what kind of political messages can be transmitted through visuals. Although our investigation is primarily of an explorative nature because most categories under investigation are not pre-determined, some hypotheses can still be formulated.

There are strong reasons to hypothesize that social media-based visual political communication is inseparable from personalization (Ekman & Widholm, 2017; Metz, Kruikemeier & Lecheler, 2019). Personalization can be described briefly as the process in which "individual political actors have become more prominent at the expense of parties and collective identities" (Karvonen, 2010, p. 4). Although personalization cannot be considered as a new phenomenon (Balmas & Sheafer, 2015), mediatization (Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999) and popularization of politics (van Zoonen, 2006), and especially the logic of new media –that highlights candidates instead of parties– have given rise to personalization as a "central feature of democratic politics in the twenty-first century" (McAllister, 2007, p. 585).

The focus of studies on personalization can be divided into three categories: voters' behavior, media coverage, and politicians' communication. The present study focuses on the latter aspect and understands personalization as a communication strategy (Hermans & Vergeer, 2012), which means that politicians intentionally highlight their personal characteristics rather than their parties'. Social media sites are ideal platforms for this strategy as they provide an opportunity for candidates to create their own personal profiles and address their followers directly (Enli & Skogerbø, 2013). Extensive opportunities for visual communication on these platforms can further intensify personalization: while it

may be difficult to express substantial policy messages through pictures, they are especially suitable to present politicians' personal images. Self-made visual content and images that highlight personal traits (Lalancette & Raynauld, 2017) or candidates' personal backgrounds (Liebhart & Bernhardt, 2017) are effective tools to foreground politicians while leaving their parties in the background.

In this study, we investigate the degree of personalization in politicians' visual communication on social media platforms. We argue that politicians are able to personalize their visual presence on these platforms by offering original visual content and images depicting themselves. On the other hand, a non-personalized visual communication would predominantly draw upon imported visual materials and pictures on parties or other political actors. We expect that politicians on social media platforms predominantly use visual communication to personalize their appearance (H1).

As many scholars argue (Poulakidakos & Giannouli, 2019; Ekman & Widholm, 2017), the real question is not about the presence of personalized political communication on social media, rather its prevalence and the way it is produced and shared. However, we have little knowledge on the role of visuals in this matter. Hence, to grasp these less studied aspects, we apply Van Aelst and colleagues' (2011) conceptualization that differentiates between two main dimensions of personalization. First, (1) individualization means that instead of parties, individual politicians appear as central actors in the political arena. The second dimension, (2) privatization means that politicians are presented as private individuals, their personal characteristics and lives are at the forefront of communication instead of their professional features. Interestingly, Keller & Kleinen-von Königslöw (2018) argue that in social media both dimensions are present as part of the entertaining political communication style, however, individualization is more common than privatization. Small (2016) also found that political leaders' personalization strategies on Twitter primarily rely on individualization, while privatization is rather marginal. These works, however, are focused on personalized textual content, but the visual aspects of personalization are rarely identified. Investigating Instagram posts, Russmann et al. (2019) and Poulakidakos & Giannouli (2019) highlight the presence of personalization on images, and although the visibility of top candidates is a crucial aspect of these studies, the visual differences between "personal and private" aspects are less emphasized.

Thus, to operationalize these two dimensions of personalization in terms of image-based political communication, our paper goes beyond existing research. In general, we expect that both privatization and individualization can be effectively pursued by visual communication on social media.

Based on the conceptualization discussed above, we argue that individualization relates to the more formal political work of the candidates, while privatization has an informal character. Visuals offer great opportunities to add more formal or informal layers to candidates' personalized communication. Hence, we describe (1) individualization in personalized visual communication as application of visual tools that highlight candidates in a rather formal way (e.g. settled image, official clothes etc.), and (2) privatization as employing visual tools that help depict candidates informally (spontaneous images, casual clothes etc.). In this research we will discover to what extent candidates use visual elements that make their communication more formal or informal. Formal and informal elements of visual communication are identified by inductive content analysis discussed in the methods section.

It is important to emphasize that we do not code whether an image is individualized or privatized per se. Instead, we focus on the extent of the use of visual elements that are able to make images more formal or informal. We argue that this approach offers a more nuanced understanding of politicians' personalization strategies. Numerous communication tools can be employed in one image, and a two- or three-category coding scheme that put the particular images into the exclusive categories of 'individualized' or 'privatized' would hide this diversity from our observations. Communication strategy is more complex as it may simultaneously apply several formal and informal visual elements to convey messages. An element-based approach is appropriate to unfold these strategies as it captures them by contrasting the overall level of usage of formal and informal visual elements.

Visuals in context. A cross-platform approach

Another gap in the literature is that existing research is limited to single platforms (Gerodimos, 2019). However, as all communication is context-dependent (e.g. Goffmann, 1956), studies on social media increasingly argue that the architectures (Bossetta, 2018), norms (boyd, 2014) and affordances of platforms (Bucher & Helmond, 2018) can shape the way communication is conducted on them. To understand political

actors' visual communication strategies, we specify our RQ1 and adopt a cross-platform approach to explore what features can be considered general characteristics of social media visual communication (RQ1a), and what the platform-specific strategies are (RQ1b).

In Hungary, politicians use two platforms intensively: Facebook and Instagram (Bene & Farkas, 2018). Therefore, our cross-platform investigation compares visual communication tools employed on these sites. Both platforms enable users to connect to each other, to post visual and textual content and to see their connections' posts on a news feed. However, there are several differences between the sites that may shape communication on them. Facebook is the most popular social media site in Hungary as 85 per cent of the online population use it, and 62 per cent of them consume news they receive from it. Instagram has a smaller, but still significant user base with 26 per cent of the online population registered on it, but only 7 per cent of them receive news from it (Newman et al., 2019). While demographically Facebook is a highly diverse platform, the user base of Instagram is more specific, as it mostly attracts younger people (see Perrin & Anderson, 2019). On Facebook, creating a connection between ordinary users requires reciprocity by default, while on Instagram one-sided following is the way to connect with someone. Due to this fact and the norms prevailing on these platforms, Facebook networks are more offline-anchored (Zhao et al., 2008) even if weak ties proliferate here, while on Instagram it is more common to follow users who are not known in person. Political actors' status also differs between Facebook and Instagram. On Facebook, there is a distinction between ordinary users and pages. The pages usually represent public actors (actual or fictional persons, organizations, causes, etc.) who can be one-sidedly followed. Political actors usually create public Facebook pages that are visually separated from ordinary users. On Instagram, political actors appear in the same way as ordinary users (Bossetta, 2018).

As for the role of visual communication, on Facebook it is a widely used tool, although it is only one of several forms of communication. When text is added to the post, visuals appear below it, suggesting it is more of an illustration to the textual message. In contrast, Instagram is built upon visual communication, since all posts must contain some visual content. Text can be added to them, but it appears below the pictures, and visuals still dominate the posts with their size. Further, on Instagram there is no option to share posts or publish hyperlinks. This fact relates to one more important difference between the

platforms. The dissemination logic of Facebook is virality, as user engagement with posts is able to extend their visibility beyond direct followers (Bene, 2017). On the other hand, on Instagram user engagement cannot distribute messages; the only non-paid way to make posts visible beyond followers is to use hashtags (Bossetta, 2018). Finally, it is to be stressed that in public discourse Instagram is strongly associated with celebrities and influencers, who visualize intimate details of their personal life for their followers.

The literature demonstrates that politicians use images to pursue personalization strategies on both platforms. Visuals have important added value to politicians' Facebook posts with their more personal and emotional features, and the presence of personalization is higher in the case of politicians' Facebook posts that contain visuals than those without visuals (Metz, Kruikemeier & Lecheler, 2019). Communication on Instagram is predominantly based on self-branding snapshots that typically aim to convey "immediacy, mobility and intimacy" (Ekman & Widholm, 2017, p.18). Since all these studies focus on single platforms, we have no knowledge regarding cross-platform differences and similarities in personalized visual communication.

While we expect that on both platforms visuals are primarily used for candidate personalization, based on the differences discussed above, we assume that visual political communication on Instagram is more informal and thereby more focused on the privatization dimension of personalization than on Facebook (H2), while on Instagram images should be used to display more informal aspects of candidates' life, relevant to the individualization dimension of personalization (H3). On Facebook, political actors are distinguished from ordinary users, as they appear as public figures; news consumption is common on the site; and politicians can draw upon textual cues more intensively to express political messages. Thereby Facebook is more suitable to highlight the candidate's formal, political self. In contrast, on Instagram politicians do not differ from ordinary users; political content rarely appears in the news feed; and due to the fact that users can rely less on textual or – because they are less likely to follow people they interact with offline – personal cues, visuals are extensively used to express something of the individual's personal character, similarly to the way highly followed celebrities and influencers represent themselves there. For these reasons, on Instagram politicians are under stronger pressure to exhibit their personal life and background rather than their political work.

The effects of visual tools on user engagement

Invariably, political actors' purpose is to influence voters through political communication. Hence, it is highly important to investigate how voters respond to candidates' visual communication on social media. There is a growing body of work that investigates the effects of different communicative elements of political actors' social media posts on user engagement (Bene, 2017; Heiss et al., 2019). User engagement is a proper outcome to measure the success of communication on both platforms, even if the reasons for engagement are different. On Facebook, triggering user engagement is a strategic goal in itself, as reactions, comments and shares can significantly increase the visibility of a particular post due to both the virality-based dissemination logic of the platform (Bene, 2017) and the engagement-centric operation of the filtering algorithm (Bucher, 2012). On Instagram, considering the lack of virality and the less invasive use of algorithmic filtering (Bossetta, 2018), the strategic relevance of user engagement is more limited, but it can still be perceived as a proxy of the popularity and success of a post. However, all previous research has focused on the content of the posts in general without a distinct attention on the effects of different visual cues. Therefore, we do not know what kind of images perform well on social media platforms. This is the third gap our research aims to address. Thus, we also focus on the questions of what types of visual tools trigger 'likes' as the most widely used and comparable reaction form (RQ2a) and what cross-platform similarities and differences we can identify in the liking response to politicians' visual communication (RQ2b).

Existing work extensively demonstrates that content that focuses on politicians' personal character and activity is more frequently liked on Facebook (Bene, 2017; Heiss et al., 2019; Gerodimos & Justinussen, 2015). In line with these findings, we expect that personalized images will be more liked on both platforms (H4), but based on the above discussion of cross-platform differences, we also hypothesize that on Facebook, users may be more open to formal, political work-related individualized images (H5), while on Instagram, privatized pictures should be more likely to be liked (H6).

Methods

Data

This research draws upon a unique dataset that includes all social media activities and several individual characteristics (gender, incumbency, etc.) of candidates who either reached at least 1 per cent of the votes in any of the 106 single-member districts or were

named in any of the first 30 places of a party list that received at least 0.5 per cent of votes (8 party lists) (N = 633)[2]. While the level of Facebook adoption was extremely high across Hungarian politicians (82%), Instagram use was at an early development phase (10%). Of this dataset, this project considers those candidates who owned both Facebook and Instagram accounts at the time of the election (N = 51). Oppositional politicians (72%) and men (79%), are overrepresented among politicians who use both platforms, whose median age is 41. Our research focuses on all Facebook posts (N = 2925) and Instagram posts (N = 858) containing pictures posted from the official starting day of the 2018 Hungarian general election campaign to polling day (17th February to 8th April, 2018).[3] On Facebook, 51 per cent of all posts included pictures, while on Instagram that proportion was 93 per cent (the remaining 7% was video content). The visual content and context of pictures were coded by undergraduates. As coding visual material may allow more space to subjective judgments than textual data, each post was coded by three independent coders, and we accept only those codes that were recorded by at least two coders. Figure 1 shows the activity distribution of politicians' image posting on both platforms.

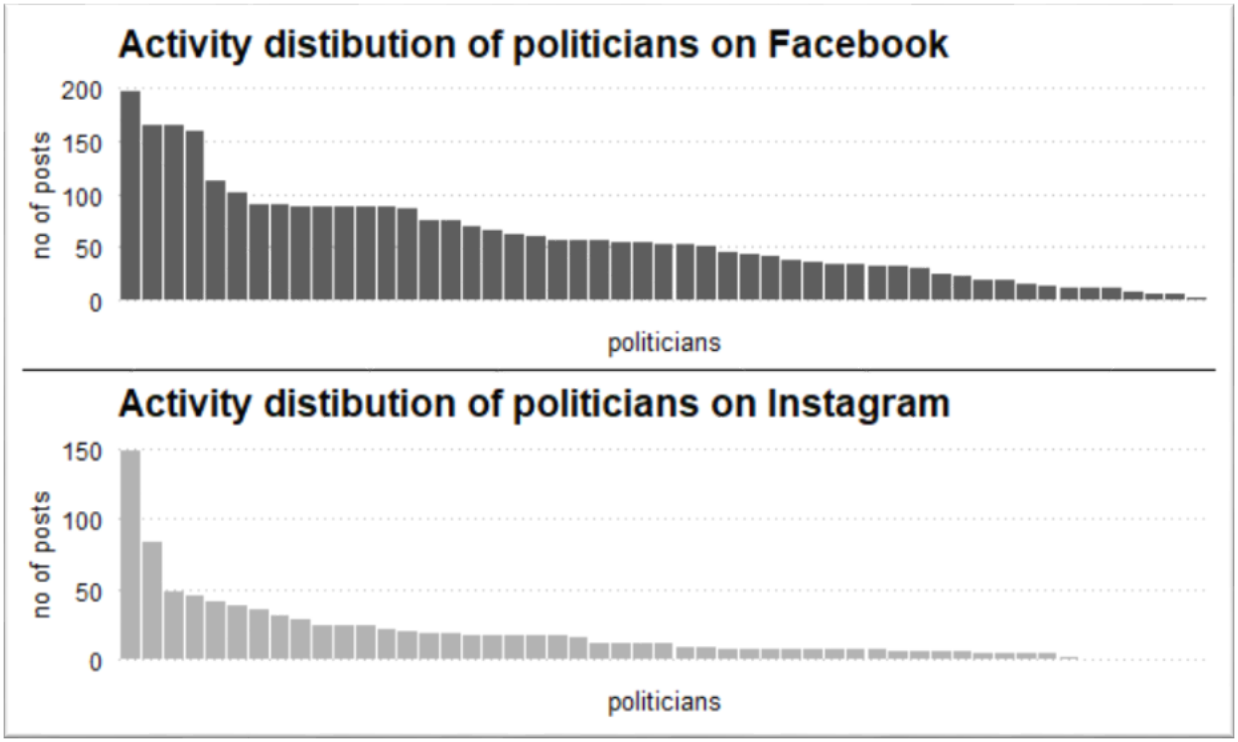

Figure 1. Activity distribution of politicians' image posting

Variables

Since there is a lack of studies that ensure portable and adaptable analysis on visual data (Gerodimos, 2019), we have applied a combination of inductive and deductive qualitative visual content analysis. Inductive content analysis is useful when there is a gap in the existing literature on the topic (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). We employed it on a random 10 percent of the images (N = 386) that were first open coded to create categories that focus specifically on the details of images, then these categories were grouped into higher categories. The aim of the inductive analysis was to formulate categories that describe the images in a detailed way and find the most appropriate groups of categories that help investigate as many aspects of the image as possible. After formulating a detailed and exhaustive coding scheme that covers the most evident characteristics of politicians' visual communication, we identified elements that made images more formal or informal. For this, we drew upon the experiences of the inductive analysis. Categories that we could not assign to the formal/informal dimensions are not removed from our investigation, as they still represent important indicators of visual political communication strategy, and they function as crucial control variables during the analysis. It is important to note that most categories are treated as non-mutually exclusive elements, and we coded them if they appeared in the pictures. Table 1 notes categories that are mutually exclusive.

Table 1. Conceptualization of categories

Groups of categories	Category	Interpretation	Indicator of[a]	Connection
Type	Photo	still image taken by a camera	G	mutually exclusive categories
	Screenshot	snapshot of a display	G	
	Image macro	image with text, without party symbol	G	
	Campaign flyer	image with text and separately indicated party symbol	F	
	Only text	although uploaded as an image, only text is visible	G	
	Cartoon	drawing/animation	G	
	Montage	an image consisting several photos separated by a frame	G	
	Album[6]	more photos per post	G	
	Selfie	a picture that someone has taken of oneself	I	
	Own content	a picture taken by the candidate or his/her staff	P	
	Meaningful capture	additional information in the caption	G	
Content	Official	official environment	F	
	Campaign	campaign event	F	
	Policy	visual representation of policies	F	
	Non-political	without political message and personal information	I	
	Personal	personal life	I	
People in pictures	Candidate		P	
	Other politician		F	

	Family member		I	
	Ordinary citizens		G	
Candidate in the picture	Official clothing	e.g. suit, shirt, tie	F	mutually exclusive categories
	Casual clothing	casual clothes, e.g. jeans, t-shirt	I	
	Campaign clothing	e.g. t-shirt, coat or cap with party logo	F	
Cultural/ political reference	Popular culture	e.g. movies, pop music, sport	I	
	Party symbol	official logo of candidate's party	F	
	Party colors	official colors of candidate's party	F	
	Hungarian flag	any appearance of the Hungarian flag	G	
Feature	Spontaneous	not pre-planned	I	mutually exclusive categories
	Settled	pre-planned	F	
Sentiment	Positive	optimistic tone, successes	G	mutually exclusive categories
	Negative	pessimistic tone, conflicts, criticisms	G	
	Neutral	neither positive nor negative	G	
	Mixed	both positive and negative	G	

Note: [a]= general visual communication feature (G), personalization in general (P), formal feature of personalization (F), and informal feature of personalization (I).

The aim of the first three groups of categories is to identify basic visual tools and their broader context. We identified the *type* of images to reveal their visual nature. First, we distinguished between different types of visual images, such as photo, screenshot, image macro, campaign flyer, only-text images, cartoon, montage, albums, and selfies. While most of these categories can be used both as formal or informal tools, selfies have a more informal nature, and campaign flyers are generally related to formal political objects. Second, we investigated whether the particular image is the candidate's own content.[4] In our conceptualization this is one of the two indicators of personalization: if politicians distribute their own self-made visuals on their own personal pages to their own followers, the visual communication is regarded as highly personal. By introducing the category of 'meaningful caption' we can investigate the role of images in the posts. As we are interested only in the effects of visual elements on user engagement, this variable is also used to remove from the multivariate analysis those pictures where the caption makes a significant contribution to the post. Regarding *content*, we concentrated on what the images are about: 'official' political context, 'campaign', 'policy' issues, 'non-political topic' or the candidate's 'personal' background. While official, campaign and policy-related content are used to present formal political objects, images of non-political and personal topics make posts more informal.

The category *people in pictures* shows the subjects of images. Furthermore, it refers to "connectivity" (Ekman & Widholm, 2017) through depicting 'candidates' on their own, with 'other politicians', 'family members', or 'ordinary citizens'. Our second crucial indicator of personalization is whether candidates appear in the images. Pictures of the politicians who own the social media profile are considered as personalized content in themselves. Images depicting politicians' family members are considered as informal, while pictures depicting other politicians are related to formal political work. It would be difficult to assess whether showing ordinary citizens in pictures contributes to convey a formal or informal image. However, as politicians are keen to apply this element in their visual communication, it is important for our coding scheme to be able to capture it. *Clothes* can also create connections: official and campaign clothing highlight the candidate's political role, while casual clothes create more informal impressions.

Cultural and political references help understand the cultural and political object of messages: through 'popular-cultural' references politicians can show their human face and create a more informal and ordinary atmosphere. 'Party symbols' such as colors and logos refer to the importance of the party, and thereby relate to the formal dimension. The use of the 'Hungarian flag' or its colors may aim to arouse national sentiments, but in itself this element cannot be connected to the formal or informal dimensions. *Features* and *sentiments* of the images are indicators of the overall nature of pictures. 'Spontaneous' pictures typically convey a more informal image than set-piece visuals. *Sentiment* is always an important aspect of any content analysis of politicians' communication. In order to identify 'sentiment', textual cues were also taken into account.

To investigate what features can be considered as general characteristics of social media visual communication (RQ1a) and what are the platform-specific strategies (RQ1b) employed by candidates on Facebook and Instagram, the shares of the presence of these categories are compared on the two platforms. To answer the second research question, namely what types of visual tools trigger 'likes' as the most widely used and comparable user reaction form (RQ2a), and what cross-platform similarities and differences can be identified in the liking activity (RQ2b), these categories serve as independent variables in multivariate models where the number of likes ($M_{FACEBOOK}$=219; SD_{FB}=734; $M_{INSTAGRAM}$=85 SD_{I}=226) are the outcomes. The meaning of liking content on social media is not straightforward at all, but its name and visual appearance (a thumbs-up icon

on FB and a heart icon on Instagram) indicate that liking is designed to express some sort of agreement with the content. This is an instant, easily available and widely used form of reaction on both platforms, but an important difference beyond their visual design is that on Facebook five other instant reaction buttons representing different emotions are at the users' disposal, while on Instagram a 'like' is the only possible prompt reaction. Despite the wider choice available to users, 'like' remained the dominant form of reaction on Facebook, as during the Hungarian campaign, 88 per cent of all reactions entailed liking (Bene & Farkas, 2018).

To account for other potential confounding factors, several control variables are entered into the models that are summarized in Table 2. As our dependent variables are over-dispersed count data and they are nested in the level of pages, we ran multilevel negative binomial regression models with a random intercept on the level of candidates.[5]

Table 2. Descriptives on the post- page- and candidate-level control variables.

Level	control variable	code	Facebook		Instagram	
			Mean (SD)	Share (of all posts)	Mean (SD)	Share (of all posts)
post level	day of the post		mode = 51		mode = 51	
	Length of the text		141 (388)		103 (134)	
	No. of hashtags		0.6 (1.64)		3.47 (3.86)	
page level	No. of followers		26515 (82972)		956 (1634)	
	No of posts		91 (51)		51 (48)	
candidate level	Gender	0=male 1 =female		female = 16%		female = 32%
	Party affiliation	0= opp. party 1 = gov party		gov.party = 40%		gov.party = 18%
	Incumbency	0 = not incumbent 1 = incumbent		incumbent = 33%		incumbent = 23%
	Local political position	0 = not have 1 = major or local rep.		local politician = 45%		local politician = 41%

Findings

Table 3 shows the extent to which our categories are present in the visual communication of each platform. To estimate the significance of differences between platforms, chi-squared tests are calculated for each category. As a robustness check, chi-squared tests are also performed on sub-samples without the posts of the three most active politicians by platform. Findings indicate that while the general patterns of visual communication are similar on the two platforms, significant variations exist in almost all categories. It is important to note that there is some overlap between the sites: 9 per cent of pictures posted on Facebook are also shared on Instagram, conversely, 30 per cent of Instagram pictures also appear on Facebook. The last column of Table 3 shows the characteristics of images that were present on both platforms.

Personalization in Politicians' Visual Communication

The findings show that the visual communication on both platforms is highly personalized, so our first hypothesis is supported. The majority of visuals on both platforms are self-made pictures depicting the candidates. However, visual communication on Instagram is much more personalized than on Facebook. While on Facebook only little more than 50% of images are self-made and depict the candidate, on Instagram 9 out of 10 visuals are original content, and two-thirds of them show the politicians who own the profile. Overall, on Facebook 66% of images can be considered personalized in terms of containing self-made and/or candidate-focused pictures, while on Instagram this is true for 95% of the posts. Visuals that were posted on both platforms are also extremely personalized, with very similar distributions as in Instagram posts. It seems that while candidates post numerous non-personalized visuals on Facebook, only the personalized ones are cross-posted on Instagram.

Another major difference between the platforms is evident when we turn to the informal and formal elements of visual communication. Beyond the overall distribution, we calculated the share of our elements for personalized posts separately (6th and 7th column in Table 3), but the main patterns are the same as in the total sample. With the exception of campaign clothing, each formal element is significantly more employed on Facebook than Instagram, while the informal elements are presented in larger degree on Instagram than Facebook. Therefore, our second and third hypotheses are supported. Visuals on Facebook are predominantly about the campaign, they are taken in official settings and

the candidates usually appear in official clothes. Many of them are campaign flyers, they often show official contexts or transmit policy messages, and other politicians, logos and party colors are also frequently depicted. On Instagram, the pictures are more often spontaneous and candidates are as often shown in casual as in official dress. A large number of images show family members, convey non-political or personal messages, and are frequently taken as selfies. However, it is important to stress that formal elements are also largely present on Instagram. Most posts are campaign-related, and even if their shares are lower than on Facebook, official clothing, other politicians, logos, party colors and settled design are still frequently employed on Instagram. It seems that while individualization has a strong presence on both platforms, it is dominant on Facebook, while on Instagram it is mingled with privatization. This conclusion indicates that beyond the common patterns, on Instagram visual communication is more of a tool to exhibit the 'human' sides of politicians, while on Facebook it is used to provide insights into candidates' political work. As for cross-posted images, the characteristics of these are more similar to Instagram than Facebook visuals, as they generally feature more informal and fewer formal elements.

Beyond Personalization: General features of Politicians' Visual Communication

Beyond the patterns of personalized communication, our results show several interesting characteristics of visual communication in general. Turning to the formal features, the large majority of pictures are photos on both platforms, but their percentage is much higher on Instagram. While pictures are usually posted separately, uploading several photos as an album is quite usual on Facebook, while exceptional on Instagram. Although texts are usually added to pictures (91 per cent on Instagram, and 88 per cent on Facebook), their function differs on the two sites. Text carries additional information beyond the pictures in almost half of the posts on Facebook, while on Instagram it usually only accompanies pictures without any meaningful contribution. Also, politicians are eager to post visuals of ordinary citizens on both platforms, and in about a third of these posts (39% on Facebook and 33% on Instagram) they are presented in the company of the candidates. Further, while national symbols frequently feature in pictures, cultural references are equally exceptional on both sites.

The sentiment of posts with pictures is predominantly positive, while content with negative or mixed sentiments is an exception. This is true for both platforms, but visual communication on Instagram seems to be somewhat more positive.

Table 3. Patterns of visual communication on Facebook and Instagram. (Occurrences in percentages) (significant deviations are in bold)

Groups of categories	Category	% Facebook (N)	% Instagram (N)	P (Chi-Squared test)	% in personalized posts (FB)	% in personalized posts (I)	Cross-posted
Type	Photo	**57.4%** (2925)	**91.6%** (858)	<.001	78.3% (1934)	95.9% (816)	89% (283)
	Screenshot	**2.2%** (2925)	**0.5%** (858)	<.001	0.7% (1934)	0.4% (816)	0.1% (283)
	Image macro	**6.3%** (2925)	**2.1%** (858)	<.001	1.2% (1934)	1.4% (816)	2.8% (283)
	Campaign flyer	**31.7%** (2925)	**5.5%** (858)	<.001	19.2% (1934)	2.3% (816)	7.5% (283)
	Only text	**1.1%** (2925)	**0.0%** (858)	<.01[a]	0% (1934)	0.0% (816)	0% (283)
	Cartoon	**1.3%** (2925)	**0.3%** (858)	<.05	0.2% (1934)	0.0% (816)	0% (283)
	Montage	2% (2893)	2.1% (858)	>.05	2.6% (1934)	2.2% (816)	2.5% (283)
	Album	**31.1%** (2893)	**5.9%** (858)	<.001	43.7% (1934)	6.1% (816)	23.5% (283)
	Selfie	**3%** (2893)	**11.1%** (858)	<.001	4.4% (1934)	11.8% (816)	13.2% (283)
	OWN CONTENT	**53.9%** (2893)	**91.6%** (858)	<.001	80.6% (1934)	96.3% (816)	86.5% (283)
	Meaningful caption	**47.4%** (2893)	**20.3%** (858)	<.001	52% (1934)	20.6% (816)	45.2% (283)
Content	Official	**9.5%** (2893)	**6%** (858)	<.01	13.5% (1934)	6.4% (816)	7.8% (283)
	Campaign	**69.4%** (2893)	**60.5%** (858)	<.001	66.9% (1934)	59.9% (816)	60.9% (283)
	Policy	**11.7 %** (2893)	**3.5%** (858)	<.001	10.3% (1934)	3.3% (816)	5.7% (283)
	Non-political	**8.5%** (2893)	**12.5%** (858)	<.001	8% (1934)	11.4% (816)	10.7% (283)
	Personal	**3.9%** (2893)	**16.6%** (858)	<.001	5.7% (1934)	17.4% (816)	13.2% (283)
People in pictures	**CANDIDATE**	**51.9%** (2893)	**67.8%** (858)	<.001	77.7% (1934)	71.3% (816)	77.9% (283)

	Other politician	**24.4%** (2893)	**15.6%** (858)	<.001	22.3% (1934)	15.9% (816)	21.7% (283)
	Family member	**1.7%** (2893)	**6.1%** (858)	<.001	2.5% (1934)	6.4% (816)	5.3% (283)
	Ordinary citizens	30.5% (2893)	27.5% (858)	>.05[b]	38.2% (1934)	27.9% (816)	31% (283)
Candidate in the picture	Official clothing	**73.1%** (1477)	**47.8%** (563)	<.001	73.1% (1477)	47.8% (563)	57.7% (215)
	Casual clothing	**23.7%** (1477)	**46.4%** (563)	<.001	23.7% (1477)	46.4% (563)	35.8% (215)
	Campaign clothing	**2.8%** (1477)	**5%** (563)	<.05[a]	2.8% (1477)	5% (563)	5.1% (215)
Cultural/political reference	Popular culture	1.5% (2893)	1.7% (858)	>.05	1.4% (1934)	1.6% (816)	1.4% (283)
	Logo	**34%** (2893)	**29.6%** (858)	<.05	32.9% (1934)	28.9% (816)	24.6% (283)
	Party colors	**34.2%** (2893)	**28.9%** (858)	<.01	27.6% (1934)	28.1% (816)	16.3% (283)
	Hungarian flag	**12.1%** (2893)	**7.2%** (858)	<.001[a]	73.% (1934)	5.9% (816)	8.9% (283)
Feature	Spontaneous	**43.6%** (2777)	**50.2%** (858)	< .001[a]	48.5% (1911)	52.1% (816)	38.7% (283)
	Settled	**56.4%** (2777)	**49.8%** (858)	< .001[a]	51.5% (1911)	47.9% (816)	61.3% (283)
Sentiment	Positive	**57.1%** (2604)	**64.4%** (825)	<.001[a]	63.7% (1805)	64.9% (774)	70% (266)
	Negative	**6.1%** (2604)	**1.2%** (825)	<.001	2% (1805)	1% (774)	1.5% (266)
	Neutral	28.6% (2604)	31% (825)	>.05[b]	29.5% (1805)	31.1% (774)	22.2% (266)
	Mixed	**8.2%** (2604)	**3.4%** (825)	<.001	4.8% (1805)	3% (774)	6% (266)

Notes: Formal elements are highlighted with dark gray and informal elements with light gray. Elements defining personalization is bolded and uppercased. The fluctuation of sample size across categories is due to the fact that for multiple choice items cases were removed where all three coders marked different values. [a] = it is not significant (p>0.05) when the three most active politicians for each platform are removed from the analysis. [b] = it is significant (p<0.05) when the three most active politicians for each platform are removed from the analysis.

Visual communication and user engagement

Turning to the engagement patterns associated with different visual communication tools, the results of multilevel negative binomial regression models are shown in Table 4. In order to avoid bias due to captions, the analyses have been limited to posts where textual content does not carry any additional information. This means that 47.4% of Facebook (N=1371), and 20.3% of Instagram (N=174) posts were removed from the original dataset for this analysis.

Results provide mixed support to our hypotheses. On both platforms, users are more likely to like pictures where the candidates are featured. Consequently H4, claiming that personalized images will be more liked on both platforms, is supported. On Facebook, where politicians use many imported pictures, candidates' own images are more popular. No significant relationship can be found on Instagram, but this may be due to the fact that on this platform almost all pictures are self-made, so the variance of this variable is low. Turning to the formal and informal elements, it seems that on Facebook people particularly like visuals where political work is more at the forefront, such as policy content and posts where logos appear, while on Instagram, these visual tools do not trigger more reactions. Further, campaign flyers are also significantly less frequently liked on Instagram. However, several results contradict our expectations, such as the higher popularity of non-political content on Facebook. Also, in some cases we found similar patterns on both platforms. Some informal elements exhibit the same patterns on both platforms. Depiction of family members is popular, while spontaneous pictures are unpopular among users on both platforms. Further, selfies, personal content and references to popular cultural objects show no significant relationship with likes on either platform. Overall, findings support H5, as formal elements are rather favored on Facebook but not on Instagram. However, this does not mean that informal elements are more popular on Instagram: actually, only one informal communication tool, the appearance of family members, seems to provoke more likes from Instagram followers, but this is also true for Facebook. Consequently, we need to reject our H6 as privatized images are not more popular on Instagram.

Table 4. Random-intercept (candidate-level) negative binomial regression estimates for the number of likes on candidates' posts

Groups	Category	Facebook	Instagram
Type	Campaign flyer[a]	-.10 (.09)	**-.34** (.09)***
	Image macro[a]	**.33** (.11)**	-.18 (.12)
	Montage[a]	-.28 (.17)	.05 (.14)
	Album	**-.33** (.07)***	-.00 (.08)
	Selfie	-.08 (.13)	-.08 (.05)
	OWN CONTENT	**.48** (.08)***	-.11 (.08)
Content	Official	-.01 (.13)	-.03 (.09)
	Campaign	**.**18 (.10)	.05 (.06)
	Policy	**.24** (.11)*	-.14 (.16)

	Non-political	**.43** (.12)***	-.12 (.07)
	Personal	.04 (.15)	.01 (.06)
People in pictures	**CANDIDATE**	**.32** (.06)***	**.23** (.04)***
	Other politician	.03 (.05)	.01 (.04)
	Family member	**.64** (.18)***	**.26** (.06)***
	Ordinary citizens	-.06 (.06)	-**.16** (.03)***
Cultural/political reference	Popular culture	.27 (.19)	.17 (.11)
	Logo	**.15** (.06)*	-.01 (.05)
	Party colors	**-.17** (.06)**	-.02 (.05)
	Hungarian flag	**-.17** (.07)*	.08 (.06)
Feature	Spontaneous[b]	**-.21** (.06)***	-**.11** (.04)**
Sentiment	Positive[c]	**.18** (.06)**	**.16** (.04)***
	Negative[c]	**-.43** (.12)***	-.11 (.16)
	Mixed[c]	-.07 (.10)	-.03 (.11)
Controls	Day	**.01** (.00)***	**.00** (.00)***
	Length of text	.00 (.00)	-.00 (.00)
	Number of hashtags	-.01 (.02)	.01 (.01)
	Number of followers	**.00** (.00)***	**.00** (.00)***
	Number of posts	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)
	Party	**1.70** (.54)**	.27 (.33)
	Gender	.41 (.34)	.22 (.23)
	Incumbent	**.92** (.37)*	.18 (.23)
	Local position	**-1.03** (.44)*	-.12 (.31)
	Constant	2.69 (.30)***	3.21 (.17)***
	Variance of random intercept	.81 (.90)	.30 (.55)
	Log-likelihood	-6806	-2631
	Disp. Parameter	1.919 (.076)	12.207 (.89)
	AIC	13682	5333
	N Level 1/Level 2	1277/49	629/46

Note: Formal elements are highlighted with dark gray and informal elements with light gray. Elements defining personalization is bolded and uppercased. Standard errors are in parentheses. #p < .10; *p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001. [a] Photo is the reference category. [b] Settled is the reference category. [c] Neutral is the reference category.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study has investigated Hungarian politicians' visual communication on Facebook and Instagram. The research was designed to bridge three gaps in the literature: (1) it investigates images as objects of interest on their own; (2) moves beyond the single-platform approach; and (3) explores the engagement patterns associated with the use of

different visual tools. Although the primary purpose of the study is explorative, it has also tested hypotheses regarding the personalized nature of visual communication and its cross-platform variations.

Our findings on political actors' visual communication strategies on social media are in line with those of text-based research (see Enli & Skogerbø, 2013): the presence of personalization in visual tools is highly significant, as politicians often upload images that depict themselves and their own visual content, and these images are also popular among their followers on both Facebook and Instagram. Thus, personalization can be considered as a general feature of social media visual communication. However, there are major differences in the level of personalization of visual communication between the two platforms, as images are much more personalized on Instagram than Facebook.

When it comes to the type of personalization employed by candidates, the results show further differences between the two platforms. Findings suggest that Instagram has a more informal character with more spontaneous, non-political and casual images, while on Facebook more formal, settled and 'political' visuals are used by politicians. As for the effects of visual cues, it seems that formal visual elements are more popular on Facebook than Instagram, however informal elements are not more likely to be liked by Instagram users. It can be said that visual communication on Instagram is related more to the privatization dimension of personalization, while on Facebook the individualization component is more frequently displayed.

Interestingly, images that were posted on both platforms are closer to a typical Instagram than Facebook post. It seems that politicians post their Instagram-compatible Facebook images on Instagram, too. This indicates that politicians strategically use visual communication on these platforms, based on a more or less definite notion about the types of visuals that conform to the norms and demands of the users of these social media sites. However, this notion does not seem to be particularly reflective to users' observable preferences: according to our findings, there is only a minor overlap between the visual elements preferred by politicians and users. Nonetheless, Instagram is a truly new phenomenon in political communication in Hungary. This was the first election when politicians intensively used it, therefore they may have lacked the relevant expertise needed to run an effective campaign on it. Future studies that specifically focus on

temporal dynamics of the supply and demand of visual elements could confirm this preliminary observation.

An important further step could be the investigation of differences in visual communication depending on party affiliation. Furthermore, it would be interesting to understand how politicians run their pages. An important question is if they draw upon external experts and their parties' guidelines or their social media strategy is shaped only by themselves in a more amateur or intuitive trial-and-error way. It would also be important to assess gender-specific differences in visual communication. Additionally, this study suggests that it is necessary to adopt a cross-platform approach when investigating visual communication, as specific features of the particular platforms have different effects on usage patterns (Bossetta, 2018). Future studies should expand the investigation to platforms that we cannot explore here, because in the Hungarian context they are not extensively used for political communication. Also, while this is a first attempt to measure the engagement patterns associated with different forms of visual communication, it would be useful to combine visual and text-based methods in future research on user engagement. While some studies take into account both textual and visual elements of social media posts when investigating effects on user engagement (Bene, 2017; Heiss et al., 2019), their conceptual framework and category system does not distinguish between visuals and texts. It could be a major move forward in the study of user engagement if visual and textual elements were distinctly categorized. We hope that our coding scheme can contribute to this endeavor.

This study has several limitations. First, we have ignored a crucial type of visual communication, i.e. videos. The reason is that we do not think that the same coding scheme can be applied for images and videos. However, as videos may be an even more neglected topic in political communication than images, it would be vitally important to focus on its role and usage in political communication. Second, we are aware that content analysis carried out by multiple coders cannot cover the wide array of visual elements and meanings conveyed by images. Third, this method cannot handle the connections between the elements of the images that shape the meaning and message of the image. Future application of qualitative approaches should help bridge these gaps.

Notes

1. Defining what visuals are is challenging, since authors from different visual research fields highlight different aspects of the notion (see Rose, 2001; Kenney, 2008). Our investigation is limited to images uploaded to social media platforms: photos, screenshots, drawings, campaign flyers, and image macros, while moving images are excluded from the analysis.
2. Data were collected by the authors and undergraduates from the University of Szeged under the administration of Norbert Merkovity.
3. Facebook posts were collected by using the Phyton-based facebook-page-post-scraper package (see https://github.com/minimaxir/facebook-page-post-scraper), while for downloading Instagram content we used the instagram-scraper package (see https://github.com/rarcega/instagram-scraper) via Facebook API. At the time of the data collection, the access to collect data from public Facebook pages were not limited or restricted.
4. An image is the candidate's own content if it has been taken by the candidate or his/her staff, and the candidate shares it as his/her own content that is usually related to the campaign or the candidate's weekdays. The originality of the image has been decided by paying attention to the whole post and the caption as well: if the candidate did not indicate that the image was shared from another source, e.g. other political actors, citizens or media, or it was not an obviously re-used image (widely-circulated photos about political actors, imported illustrations etc.), we coded it as an own content.
5. For the analysis, we used glmmADMB R package.
6. In the case of albums, only the opening pictures were coded.

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Article 2

Strikingly similar: Comparing visual political communication of populist and non-populist parties across 28 countries

Xénia Farkas, Daniel Jackson, Paweł Baranowski, Márton Bene, Uta Russmann, Anastasia Veneti

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Xénia Farkas[8], Daniel Jackson[9], Paweł Baranowski[10], Márton Bene[11], Uta Russmann[12], Anastasia Veneti[13]

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Abstract

Along with the recent boom in support of populist movements in Europe, social media seems to be the ideal place for their interaction with the public. While Facebook has been thoroughly explored for populist campaigning, there is still scarce research on visual aspects of their communication. Analyzing the 2019 European Parliament campaign, this study seeks to determine the distinct characteristics of a populist visual communication style and its differences in relation to the non-populist parties. Applying quantitative content analysis to the images (N=997) posted on Facebook by political parties from 28 countries enabled us to show that there is a predominance of similarities in both communication styles. Although populists demonstrated a higher propensity to depict their leader and use national symbols, these were exceptions to the overwhelming evidence of uniformity in campaigning methods. Hence, we argue that despite evidence

[8] Centre for Social Sciences, Hungarian Academy of Sciences Centre of Excellence; Corvinus University of Budapest, Hungary. https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9448-1471
[9] Bournemouth University, United Kingdom. https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8833-9476
[10] University of Wrocław, Poland. https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2916-4159
[11] Centre for Social Sciences, Hungarian Academy of Sciences Centre of Excellence; Eötvös Loránd University, Hungary. https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0177-9717
[12] University of Innsbruck, Austria. http://orcid.org/0000-0002-8684-6976
[13] Bournemouth University, United Kingdom. https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6449-9830

Corresponding Author:
Xénia Farkas, Centre for Social Sciences, Hungarian Academy of Sciences Centre of Excellence, Tóth Kálmán u. 4, H-1097 Budapest, Hungary.
Email: farkas.xenia@tk.hu

of textual differences, populist communication does not explicitly manifest through images.

Keywords: visual communication, political communication, populism, Facebook, elections

Introduction

As political communication research undergoes a 'visual turn' (see Authors, 2019; Bucy and Joo, 2021), increased attention has been paid to the resonant power of images to evoke strong emotions (e.g. Coleman and Wu, 2015), to act as a source of political information that are processed quickly (e.g Graber, 1996), and to shape attitudes and behaviours (e.g. Banducci et al., 2008). On account of these characteristics, some have argued that there is a natural fit between populists and visual communication (Kriesi, 2014), which recent empirical evidence would seem to support. For example, the Austrian FPÖ has its own TV-/video-studio (Author, 2021), the Sweden Democrats use visuals to share more private moments than non-populist parties (Ekman and Widholm, 2017), while populists such as Trump have privileged patriotic symbols in their visual campaigning strategy (Muñoz and Towner, 2017). Given the visual cultures that prevail on such platforms (Larsson, 2020), social media has been central to these debates. Indeed, some have argued that there are 'mutual affordances' between populism and social media that have facilitated the rise of populism in many Western democracies (Hopster, 2020).

It is therefore of growing importance to understand how populist politicians are using the visual affordances of social media, and whether a distinct populist visual communication style exists. This becomes more urgent when we consider that, so far, studies on populist communication have largely focused on textual elements which yield only "an incomplete picture of what populism is" (Bucy and Joo, 2021, p. 11). While an emergent body of work examines populist visual communication practices (e.g. Bast, 2021; Mendonça and Caetano, 2021), single-country studies still prevail, and only through further research across multiple national contexts and electoral settings will we understand the dynamics of populist and non-populist visual campaigning styles.

In this paper, we investigate the differences and similarities between populist and non-populist actors' Facebook-based visual communication. We apply a quantitative visual content analysis focusing on still images on a random sample (N= 997) of the image-based political communication of parties' Facebook pages from the 28 EU countries in

the 2019 European Parliamentary (EP) campaign. Despite the expectations of the literature, we do not find a strikingly distinctive populist visual communication style, which leads us to consider the explanations for this. In so doing, we argue that visually, populist parties more resemble non-populists than vice versa; a point that opens up a number of reflections on the nature of campaigning on social media. Among other explanations, this convergence may be the consequence of the increasing level of professionalization of digital campaigning that offers rather uniform patterns of visual communication.

Populism: approaches and features

Our work applies two key approaches in the study of populism: an actor-centric approach and a communication-centric approach. First, as we compare the communication patterns of pre-defined populists and non-populist parties, we follow the actor-centric approach that defines populism as a thin-centred ideology "that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite', and which argues that politics should be an expression of the volonté générale (general will) of the people" (Mudde, 2004, p. 562). Mudde's (2004) approach is often used to differentiate between populist and non-populist actors, and our empirical investigation draws upon such categorization. Nevertheless, while our research is designed to identify similarities and differences in populists and non-populists' communication, our hypotheses are motivated by the approach that considers populism a communication style. For this, we apply de Vreese and colleagues' (2018) communication approach, where the main dimensions of populist political actors' communication are (1) people-centrism, (2) anti-elitism, (3) and reference to out-groups (de Vreese et al., 2018). However, as these are all rather content-related dimensions, we supplement it with Moffitt's (2016) political style approach, which allows us to focus on the symbolically mediated performances, specifically the visual aspects. In line with that, these content-dimensions are supplemented with two style features, (4) bad manners, and (5) crisis-communication.

Beside these main dimensions, and beyond the conceptual debate about the definition of populism, research identified several additional characteristics and recurring elements that are not its constitutive features, but widely characterize populist communication. The role of the leaders is often emphasized in populist communication, who are one of 'the

people', but also represent them, thus they typically appear as ordinary and extraordinary at the same time (van Zoonen, 2005). The 'one of you' image is often conveyed by depicting the leader's physical proximity to ordinary people and involvement in ordinary activities. For the extraordinary image, the leader must show the ability to be the voice of 'the people' by showing their "strong, virile and healthy" character (Moffitt, 2016, p. 71). Further, crisis and threat communication involve emotionalization and simplification. Emotional and passionate performances can not only bring the leaders closer to 'the people', but by arousing negative emotions, populists can enhance the feeling of being threatened by 'the elite' or 'the others'. Simplification is also an important part of this toolkit: populists are often "offering simple answers for the crisis, and advocating the simplification of political institutions and processes" (Moffitt, 2016, p. 131). Crisis could be further emphasized both rhetorically and visually by representing military and armed forces.

Populism, social media and visuals

Previous studies have shown that social media platforms are particularly suitable for populist communication. Engesser and colleagues (2017) argue that social media platforms and the logic of connective action – identified by Bennett and Segerberg (2012) as a driver of political activity on these platforms – provide a great opportunity for populist actors to spread and articulate their ideas. Here, personal action frames that are under-specified and open to different interpretations and personal narratives can spread well, which fits well with the people-centric and anti-elite character of populist communication. Indeed, existing studies showed that populist appeals spread well on social media, and users are eager to react, comment on, and share populist messages (Authors, 2021). Also, the fact that social media messages can reach users without the interference of journalist gatekeepers creates an appropriate context for bad mannered-style communication, as well as oversimplified anti-elitist, and exclusionary messages. News media frequently present populist messages in a highly critical frame, highlighting their contradictions and adding important contextual details (Wettstein et al., 2018). On social media, populist messages can spread in an unfiltered way.

On the face of it, the extensive opportunities of image-based visual communication on social media may also benefit populist actors. Visuals[14], such as nonverbal displays, can effectively shape emotional attitudes (Coleman and Wu, 2015), thus images might be a powerful way of populist emotionalization on social media. As for negativity, visuals are suitable to express polarized topics in a pretended moderated way by applying a communicative camouflage through the creation of divergent and ambivalent pictures, instead of straightforward and recognizable symbols (Adami, 2020), and their meanings are not bound to language barriers (Hokka and Nelimarkka, 2019). Further, images can transmit messages that are easier to understand than verbal messages (Graber, 1996), they are able to cut down complex political issues into oversimplified visual messages (Zelizer, 2010), and hence, they might be highly useful tools of populist simplification. Indeed, Larsson (2020) finds that compared with non-populist parties, populists could achieve higher user engagement on Facebook with their visual posts.

While it seems that populist actors can benefit from the visual culture of social media, it is unclear if there is a distinct visual communication style characterizing populist actors. While for textual discourse there is an expanding body of literature documenting how populist communication differs from non-populist, and identifies the ingredients of populist communication (Aalberg et al, 2016), our knowledge is more limited when it comes to the visual aspects of communication. One strand of existing literature examines the visual framing that politicians (including populists) are subject to in mainstream media (while acknowledging that politicians are far from passive objects in this process). In the most comprehensive presentation of populist visual framing so far, based on US candidates' depiction in television coverage from 1992 to 2004, Grabe and Bucy (2009) define the visual elements of the "Populist Campaigner" frame (p. 291) and distinguish two broad categories: mass appeal and ordinariness. Mass appeal refers to the depiction of celebrities, large audiences, approving audiences, and interaction with crowds, while ordinariness contains visual categories of informal attire, casual dress, athletic clothing, ordinary people and physical activity.

A second strand of the literature focuses more on populist actors' visual communication styles and strategies. Gimenez and Schwarz (2016), for example, examine the visual communication styles of the French National Front and the Swiss People's Party,

[14] While visuals can be understood as both still and moving images, our research focuses only on still images (e.g. photographs), and when we use the term 'visual' we refer only to still images.

describing the different visual construction of 'the people' and 'proximity to the people' by differentiating between the depiction of "being with the people, addressing the people and representing the people" (p. 226). Wodak and Forchtner (2014) stressed additional performative elements of right-wing populist leaders, such as the celebrity culture-like self-presentation by the careful selection of meeting places, clothes and the people who are depicted with the politicians. Analysing the visual self-representation of Jair Bolsonaro, Mendonça and Caetano (2021) identify three main groups of populist images: (1) showing ordinariness by mirroring the people; (2) performing extraordinariness by bringing ordinary elements into extraordinary situations; and (3) presenting symbols of power. Investigating Trump's technological performance in the 2016 U.S. campaign, Baldwin-Philippi (2018) argues that amateur production techniques, such as the low quality of images, poorly shot or pixelated images are features of populist communication. Focusing on right-wing populist actors on Instagram, Bast (2021) showed that populist visual messages are similar to non-populist visual political communication in terms of showing expertise and trustworthiness, popularity, as well as private and positive content.

Finally, there are a few studies with a general focus on visual political communication that describe some specific populist features. Ekman and Widholm (2017) analyzed Swedish politicians' Instagram communication and found that right-wing populists are keen on sharing more private content than non-populists. Moreover, investigating election posters in online and offline campaigns, Johansson and Holtz-Bacha (2019) argue that posters are more used for negative campaigning in the case of populist parties.

Research question and hypotheses

Amidst this growing literature on the visual aspects of populist communication, a number of shortcomings still remain. First, studies often concentrate on a few specific elements rather than offering a more overarching understanding about populist communication. Second, these studies are mainly single-country studies focusing on a few, mostly right-wing populist leaders, thus it is very difficult to generalize their findings. Third, investigating solely populist actors' communication means that fundamental questions remain unanswered, such as what are the differences between populist and non-populist visual communication? Is there a specific way in which populists use images on social media? These are highly relevant questions given the extended visual affordances offered

by social media platforms. Since our knowledge on the distinctive features of populist communication is largely based on verbal and textual communication research, and populist visual communication is investigated mainly with a narrow right-wing populist focus, we need to go further and bridge these gaps. Hence, this paper carries out an exploratory research in a cross-country context, and applies an actor-focused approach in order to answer the following main research question:

RQ: What are the differences and similarities between populist and non-populist actors' image-based visual communication on Facebook during the 2019 European Parliament election campaign?

We address this research question through a focus on Facebook, as it is the most used social media platform in European countries (Newman et al., 2020).

To capture visual communication in detail we distinguished several elements that parties use when producing visuals for Facebook. While our research is exploratory in nature, based on the concept and characteristics of populism discussed above, some hypotheses are formulated related to the types of visual elements expected to be more often used by populists. For all other categories that are not related to specific hypotheses, open research questions are applied to find out whether their usage is similar or different across populists and non-populists.

The first aspect we address is the formal type of the images used by parties – these include text only, flyer, montage, and photo with or without text. Photos with text on them can simplify visual messages that can be blurred or too complex in the case of photos without text. Furthermore, multimodality – understood here as picture combined with text – is often used to create negative messages (Famulari, in press). Since simplification and negative messages are key features of populist communication (Engesser et al., 2017), it is hypothesized that photos without text are less used in populist communication (H1a), while photos with text are more common (H1b) due to their ability to create more specific, simpler and more negative messages. Without formulating hypotheses, we registered if an image was uploaded into an album, and if filters –such as sepia or black and white filter– were used on it, in order to better describe the applied visual tools. The second aspect is the valenced character of the images where positive, negative, neutral and mixed categories are distinguished. It is hypothesized that the context of an image is more often negative in the case of populist parties compared to their non-populist counterparts (H2),

due to the importance of arousing negative emotions towards ‘the elite’ or ‘the others’ (Moffitt, 2016).

In terms of the content of the images, we distinguish between images displaying political work, the campaign, policy issues, and personal/private matters. Due to the ordinariness of populist politicians and their aspiration to resemble ‘the people’ (Mendonça and Caetano, 2021), it is assumed that personal images focusing on the private life of politicians are more frequent in the case of populist parties (H3a). In contrast, images that emphasize policy issues (H3b) and demonstrate conventional political work (H3c) are assumed to be more common among non-populist parties as populists keep distance from the traditional elite-like political appearance. Apart from (general) negativity in party communications, critical visual content can depict specific political opponents in an unfavourable way. Given their tendency towards anti-elite sentiments and threat-communication, it is also hypothesized that critical visual content is more common among populists than non-populists (H3d).

Images are especially useful tools to personalize communication on social media (Authors, 2020). Here, it is assumed that due to the leader-centric character of populist communication, populist parties more frequently depict their own leaders (H4a). In addition, the anti-elite and critical character of populist communication suggests that other parties’ leaders (H4b), as well as other countries’ leaders (H4c) will be more often deployed by populists than non-populists. At the same time, it is expected that because of the people-centric focus, populist images will more likely include random people (H4d), and, due to their use of crisis and threat discourses, armed forces more often than non-populist parties (H4e). In terms of the number of the depicted people, it is assumed that populist parties are keen on depicting more people in their pictures than non-populists (H4f) as it can refer to “being with the people, addressing, and representing them” (Gimenez and Schwarz, 2016).

Beyond the specific actors depicted in pictures, a politician's self-presentation is crucial. Based on the results of Grabe and Bucy (2009) we expect that casual clothes are more often depicted in populists’ images (H5a) to emphasize the ordinary, people-centric character of populism. Further, in line with the people-centric nature of populism, and the visual populism literature discussed above, we expect that depicting politicians’

interaction with (H6a) crowds, or (H6b) random people, and (H6c) depicting their approval by audiences is more common among populist parties.

Symbols and objects, such as flags or coat of arms can refer to a variety of symbolical meanings and serve as subtle backdrop cues that can affect the recipient (Dan and Arendt, 2021). By recording a variety of symbols and objects, we aimed to shed a light on the populist-specific symbolism. We expect that political symbols (EU, country, party) play a more important role in populists' communication as they can easily trigger positive or negative reactions toward the in- and the outgroups (H7a), while popular cultural symbols are able to emphasise the ordinariness of populist actors (H7b). As populists use social media to bypass critical journalistic gatekeepers (Engesser et al., 2017), and they often attack mass media (Fawzi, 2019), mass media-centric image may be less important for populists, therefore we expect that (H8a) microphones and cameras are less often shown in populists' images. Nonetheless, as mobilization against the elite and "the others" is a key feature of populism (Canovan, 1999), the mobilization-focused populist communications are expected to put more emphasis on the act of voting, therefore (H8b) election-related objects appear more frequently on populists' pictures.

Research design

Data and methods

The research is built on a dataset that includes a random sample of parties' image-based Facebook posts published in the last 28 days of the 2019 EP campaign (UK: April 25 to May 23; Ireland: April 26 to May 24; all other countries: April 28 to May 26). Only parties reaching at least 5 percent of the votes in their respective countries were considered for analysis (N = 189), leading to the identification of 12,285 image-based Facebook posts. However, 13% of these posts belonged to a single party: the Italian populist party, Lega Nord. To avoid the potential skewing of our sample, a random sample of Lega posts was included to make its number of posts equal to the second most active party (N = 671), resulting in a sampling frame with 11,376 posts. Then, a random sample (N =1024, 9% of the total sample) was drawn. After removing deleted posts (N = 27) our final sample contains 997 images.

Populist parties were identified by using the categorization of The PopuList (Rooduijn et al., 2019). Our sample is representative of our sampling frame, i.e. the overall Facebook campaign of European parties in terms of both countries and party-type. The largest

deviance between individual countries' shares in our sampling frame and sample is 2% (Romania), and while the share of populist parties' posts is 37% in our sampling frame, it is 34% in our sample. To test our hypotheses, we performed a quantitative content analysis, which allows us to discover patterns, trends, and themes between populist and non-populist parties. We built a detailed coding scheme for the variables discussed above which includes 46 variables (see Table 1, 2, 3) and can be found in the Appendix. Coding was shared between two coders, and we tested the reliability of their work in a sub-sample of 113 posts. Krippendorf's alpha coefficients are acceptable for each category (>.69) (see Appendix).

Results

Visual nature – type, context and content of the images

Our findings are summarized in Table 1. Considering the type of image, photographs with and without text were the most commonly used by both types of parties, and were the only types of images with the usage exceeding 30%. Interestingly, the distribution of text-based visuals and flyers was identical and equaled, respectively, 17% and 10%. As for the differences between non-populists and populist parties, the former are inclined to multimodality (respectively 37% of non-populist and 30% of populist parties have used photos with text). Therefore, H1a and H1b have been rejected by our data: populists are less likely to use photos with text than non-populists, while in case of photos without text there is no significant difference. While montage is a rarely-applied visual element in our sample, populists use it more frequently than non-populists. Although previous academic inquiries proved that there is a positive effect of using filters for user engagement (Munoz and Towner, 2016), populist parties made significantly less use of them. Presenting pictures in albums is an equally popular tool in both sub-samples and is used in 22-23% of image-based posts. Regarding the valenced context, the analysis demonstrates that there is no significant difference between populist and non-populist parties. Pictures are predominantly positive in parties' image-based communication, while negative or mixed images are exceptional even for populist parties which lead us to reject H2.

Table 1. Visual nature – type, context and content of the images

Groups of Categories	**Categories**	**Non-populist parties**	**Populist parties**	**P**
Type	Text only	17%	17%	>.1

	Flyer	10%	10%	>.1
	Montage	2%	**6**%	<.001
	Photo with text	**37**%	30%	<.05
	Photo	34%	37%	>.1
Tools	Filters	**11**%	6%	<.05
	Album	23%	22%	>.1
Context	Positive	52%	57%	>.1
	Negative	5%	6%	>.1
	Mixed	4%	3%	>.1
	Neutral	38%	33%	>.1
Content	Political work	2%	3%	>.1
	Campaign	28%	31%	>.1
	Policy	17%	12%	<.1
	Personal	2%	0.4%	>.1
	Critical	6%	5%	>.1
	Other	23%	22%	>.1

As discussed above, personal images portraying the non-political aspect of life can serve as an effective vehicle for creating and maintaining the image of somebody who is embedded in society. However, the results of our study demonstrate that the use of personal images is marginal for both populist (0.4%) and non-populist (2%) communication therefore H3a has to be rejected. It was also assumed that the content emphasizing policy issues, e.g. images of factories, hospitals, or school visits, and traditional political work, e.g. pictures of politicians attending meetings, conferences, or working in their offices, would be more prominent in non-populist Facebook postings. Our findings show that the latter used this type of content in 17% of published posts, which was 5% more frequent than populists, and represent a marginally significant difference offering a cautious confirmation of H3b. Traditional political work was barely depicted in the posts of all analyzed parties, and no significant difference exists between populists and non-populists, rejecting H3c. The most frequently used image content type on both party groups was campaign-pictures, however no significant difference between populists and non-populists are found in this respect. Further, and in contrast with H3d, critical content, depicting other parties' politicians from a negative, unfavorable angle or perspective, is not more frequently used by populists (5%) than non-populists (6%).

Actor characteristics and personalization

When it comes to the actors depicted in the posted images, populist parties were significantly more likely to depict their own party leader and party candidates, which is in line with H4a. Top candidates were also often shown in the pictures, but there was no significant difference between populists and non-populist in this respect. However, depicting other party's leaders and politicians was a rather minor phenomenon, and did not differ significantly between populists and non-populists, contrary to H4b. Curiously enough, during the electoral campaign, European populists used the image of other country's leaders significantly more often than non-populists, which confirms H4c. It seems that populist leaders are keen on presenting their populist connections all around the world.

Figure 1. The depiction of other country's leaders. Images uploaded by the Czech populist Freedom and Direct Democracy (left) and Hungarian Fidesz (right).

Our findings support H4d by proving that populist political parties used the image of armed forces more often (2% vs. 5% of identified posts) even if it was a marginal phenomenon in their communication.

Table 2. Actor characteristics and personalization

Groups of Categories	**Categories**	**Non-populist parties**	**Populist parties**	**P**
	Own party's leader	23%	**30**%	<.05
	Top candidate	29%	24%	>.1
	Own party's politician	33%	44%	<.01

	Other party's leader	3%	4%	>.1
	Other party's politician	3%	4%	>.1
	Other country's leader	0.1%	**2**%	<.05
	Children	3%	2%	>.1
	Random people	25%	26%	>.1
	Crowd	16%	15%	>.1
	Armed forces	2%	5%	<.1
Number of people	0	13%	9%	<.1
	1	38%	38%	>.1
	2-4	17%	21%	>.1
	5-10	13%	13%	>.1
	10+	15%	15%	>.1
	100+	4%	4%	>.1

Given the fact that populist communication often relies on a personal connection of the leader with the electorate, the depiction of people in their visual campaign is an important element of their strategy. Surprisingly, the discrepancy between populist and non-populist parties in using the image of random people was not significant, rejecting H4e, and this is also the case for depicting crowds. Both elements are relatively common in parties' visual communication, but not specific to populist parties. Interestingly, the number of depicted people are also strikingly similar between both types of parties. Populists and non-populists were identical in their depictions of large crowds over 100 people (4%), minor gatherings (15%), groups of 5 to 10 people (13%), and single persons (38%), with minor differences in the depiction of 2 to 4 people (17% vs. 21%), therefore H4f is resoundingly rejected. However, depicting any people in images is slightly more common for populists, as only 9% of their images include no people, while this ratio is 13% for non-populists.

Figure 2. The depiction of leaders surrounded by crowds during the campaign. Polish populist Law and Justice (left) and Spanish PSOE (right).

Since it is easier for the average citizen to identify with someone of similar appearance and style, it was assumed that casual clothing would be more often used as an instrument of populist people-centric appeal. However, the results of the analysis do not prove this idea. Politicians in images of both populist and non-populist parties predominantly appear in official clothes, any kind of non-official clothing was exceptional. In this regard there is no significant difference between populists and non-populists, which rejects H5a. The emotional connection-building strategy of visual populist communication also assumes depicting politicians while interacting with random people and crowds, or receiving approval from audiences (Grabe and Bucy, 2009). Although both are rare in parties' visual communication, the first assumption proved to be in line with H6a as deploying interaction with random people is more common for populist parties, but H6b and H6c were rejected by our data, as no significant differences exist between populists and non-populists in images showing politicians in interaction with crowds or alongside approving audiences.

To sum up, while there are many similarities between non-populists and populists in how they present actors in their images, it seems that own party politicians and interaction with random people are more emphasized for populists' visual communication. This is also true for other country's leaders and armed forces, albeit to a lesser degree. However, the clothing of these actors are highly similar promoting a rather official image of campaigning.

Symbols and objects in visual communication

The last of the analyzed dimensions of visual communication during the 2019 EP campaign is the representation of symbols and objects. It was assumed that populists' visual communication would involve more political symbols, but this was true only for national symbols. The result of our analysis proves that populists are much more prone (27%) to using national symbols in comparison to non-populist parties (9%). However, this gap was not revealed in the case of EU symbols, where there was no significant difference between populist and non-populist parties. Party symbols were the most frequently used symbolic elements in both sub-samples, but their usage was not significantly different across populists and non-populists. To sum up, H7a is rejected, but it is important to note that it is supported for national symbols. Popular cultural references, however, were equally exceptional in both sub-sample, rejecting H7b.

Table 3. Symbols and objects in visual communication

Groups of categories	**Categories**	**Non-populist parties**	**Populist parties**	**P**
Symbols	EU symbol	11%	9%	>.1
	Country symbol	9%	27%	<.001
	Party symbol	66%	61%	>.1
	Popular cult symbol	1%	1%	>.1
Objects	Microphone/camera	19%	19%	>.1
	Election	5%	14%	<.001
Connections	Interaction with crowds	3%	1%	>.1
	Interaction with random people	2%	7%	<.001
	Approving audiences	3%	2%	>.1
Clothing	Official	91%	95%	>.1
	Casual	6%	4%	>.1
	Athletic	1%	0.4%	>.1
	Campaign	3%	1%	>.1

Showing a media-centric image, microphone and camera frequently appear in both populists' and non-populists' images, but no significant difference is found between them in contrast with H8a. However, election-related objects, such as ballot boxes, ballots, or crosses on a ballot are much more specific to populist parties underlining their strong focus on mobilization, and support H8b.

Discussion and Conclusions

Through a focus on the context, content and presentation of actors in the posts of European Parliamentary parties on Facebook, the ambition of this paper was to examine whether a distinct populist visual communication style exists on Facebook. Eight sets of hypotheses were tested based on the expectation that there would be consistent differences in the visual communication repertoires of populist versus non-populist parties. However, with the exception of a few, most of the hypotheses were rejected, suggesting that visual campaigning styles are largely shared. This is an important finding given the direction of previous studies where, discursively, populist political communication has distinct characteristics. Visually too, populist communication is, for example, more leader centric, with qualities of mass appeal and ordinariness (Gimenez and Schwarz, 2016; Grabe and Bucy, 2009); and prominent use of national symbols (Mendonça and Caetano, 2020). While we found elements of these differences, they were still outnumbered by the similarities in visual communication repertoires. This, however, does not make our findings any less interesting or significant, as they allow us to reflect on some important questions for the field.

First, what might explain the similarities over a range of visual forms? Is it that populist parties are adopting non-populist visual practices, or vice versa? On the whole we would argue that the former is more likely. For instance, previous research suggests populists are more likely to utilise negative communications, as they further facilitate the distinction between 'us' towards 'the elite' or 'the others' (Engesser et al., 2017; Moffitt, 2016). However, findings suggest that with a 10:1 ratio in favour of positive over negative posts, populist parties – visually at least – are more in line with what we might expect of non-populists in terms of emotional context. In terms of content too, findings suggested that populist parties would seem to adhere to existing conventions, mostly oriented toward informing audiences about the campaign process and criticizing political opponents, albeit slightly less focused on policy than non-populist parties. In contrast to previous research, there was almost no reference to personal life (e.g. Mendonça and Caetano, 2021), although our focus was on Facebook (rather than Instagram) and on party (rather than personal) accounts.

For the actors visible in campaign posts, it is a more mixed picture, though we would still argue they lean towards established non-populist practices. Populist parties are, for

example, more leader-centric, but still only in 30% of posts, perhaps suggesting that levels of personalization typically seen by populist parties at a national level do not translate to transnational contexts. Further, we saw little evidence of the "populist campaigner" visual archetype that has characterised TV coverage of populist leaders (Grabe and Bucy, 2009). With 68% of populist party posts depicting less than four people, and interaction with crowds or approving audiences barely registering, their visual campaign style did not communicate mass appeal. Neither did it project ordinariness through casual clothing (Grabe and Bucy, 2009; Muñoz and Towner, 2017). To the contrary, populist leaders looked highly formal.

Our findings do, however, demonstrate a considerable difference in the use of nationalistic symbols. Concurrent with other studies (Muñoz and Towner, 2017) our results show that populist parties use more national and patriotic symbols than non-populist parties. Drawing on ethno-symbolism – an area within nationalism studies – Schertzer and Woods (2021) argue that the deployment of ethnic myths, symbols, and traditions facilitate boundary making processes; they define the 'people' through "ethnic and cultural markers (and, in so doing also identify outsiders)" (p. 3). Various studies have demonstrated the widespread populist use of national symbols, from Trump's extensive use of patriotic symbols (Muñoz and Towner, 2017) to the former Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez's use of flags (Salojarvi, 2019).

Thus while there were exceptions, on the whole our study lends support to the emerging body of research suggesting that characteristics established in textual populist communication cannot necessarily be transferred to visual material, at least on social media (Bast, 2021). We offer three reflections that may explain these findings. First, populist leaders are often less the political outsiders that they would have us believe. Like their mainstream counterparts, they are mostly men in suits, who have come from the same elite schools and colleges, and mix with the same vested interests in business and finance. Discursively, they may be able to break from some established communicative conventions, especially through social media, but visually, it may be harder to break them, especially through a shared party social media account. Second, and relatedly, such campaigning conventions are established and reinforced by campaign professionals who work across all aspects of the campaign, and ensure that social media platforms are used in consistent ways, including visually (Authors, 2021). Importantly, studies show that across countries and the political spectrum, such professionals share a common

understanding of what counts as campaign professionalism and good practice (Tenscher et al., 2015). Furthermore, recent research has shown how social media firms themselves are actively shaping digital campaign strategy, content, and execution (Kreiss and McGregor, 2018): a process that might likely lead to common practices across party divides. Therefore our results may be interpreted in light of the development of parties as enterprises (Panebianco, 1988), and from the perspective of professionalization of political communication (Holtz-Bacha 2002): as political parties are adopting the logic of private companies' strategies and techniques, campaigns are organized by PR, advertising and digital agencies, whose main goal is efficacy rather than emphasizing populist features. These influences are not to be underestimated, especially in the context of a second-order campaign where few individual politicians have high profiles and the party machine plays an important role. Third, our findings are also a reminder that social media's direct nature does not automatically mean that either populist communicative strategies will prevail, or that populists will be necessarily good at using these sites. Rather, as with their mainstream political counterparts, there is unlikely to be a uniform populist use of these platforms. Together, we suggest that due to these logics, future research might not start from the hypothesis that populist parties have a distinct visual campaigning style to non-populists on Facebook. Further, while our study does not challenge those who find different discursive styles or policy focus between populists and non-populists, it does call for a careful and nuanced use of generic descriptors such as 'communication style' or 'campaign strategy' given that populists may be more distinct discursively than they are visually.

Our study opens up many questions for future research. For instance, maybe the type of election setting plays a role in the use of visual communication. In our case, European elections are second-order events with lower voter turnout than national elections (Reif and Schmit, 1980) which offer different electoral dynamics to national general elections, not to mention non-election contexts. This should be explored by future research. With their distinct affordances, genres and audiences, it is likely that platforms matter, too, and so we should hesitate to generalize findings from one platform (in our case, Facebook) to 'social media' as a whole (Kreiss et al., 2018). Here, it is important for future research to systematically compare different platforms for elements of visual populism, which may find that some platforms share more mutual affordances with populism than others. Finally, while we offer three explanations for the visual similarities between populists

and non-populists found in this study, interviews with key protagonists (politicians, party strategists and communication consultants) would likely reveal important insights about the extent to which this is strategic, or the result of other factors.

Author Biographies:

Xénia Farkas is a Junior Research Fellow at the Centre for Social Sciences, Institute for Political Science (HAS) since 2015, and a PhD student at the Corvinus University of Budapest since 2018. Her research focuses on visual political communication.

Daniel Jackson is a Professor of Media and Communication at Bournemouth University, United Kingdom. His research broadly explores the intersections of media, power and social change, including news coverage of politics, political communication, the mediation of sport and the dynamics of civic culture in online environments.

Paweł Baranowski is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Journalism and Social Communication at the University of Wroclaw, Poland. His research interests oscillate around political communication, new media and journalism studies.

Márton Bene is a Senior Research Fellow at the Centre for Social Sciences, Hungarian Academy of Sciences Centre of Excellence and an Assistant Lecturer at the Department of Political Science, Eötvös Loránd University, Hungary. His research interests are in political communication, social media and politics and political behavior.

Uta Russmann is a Professor at the Department of Communication at the FHWien der WKW University of Applied Sciences for Management & Communication, Vienna, Austria. Her research interests include digital communication, (visual) social media, public relations, strategic communication, political communication, and media and elections.

Anastasia Veneti is a Principal Academic at Bournemouth University, United Kingdom. Her research lies in the intersection of media and politics, including (visual) political communication, digital political campaigning, media framing of protests and social movements, and photojournalism.

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Supplemental material

This supplemental material contains the coding scheme for "**Strikingly similar: Comparing visual political communication of populist and non-populist parties across 28 countries**" by Xénia Farkas[15], Daniel Jackson[16], Paweł Baranowski[17], Márton Bene[18], Uta Russmann[19], Anastasia Veneti[20] in European Journal of Communication.

Coding scheme

The coding process:

1. This research is based on the visual communication, thus almost each and every variable is based only on the images and the visual elements. It is really important that all of the categories and variables needs to be decided on the basis of the images. However, it is indicated that textual messages ON the images should also be considered.
2. Hence, after opening a link, the first step is to use https://translate.google.com/ to translate every textual messages ON the images to English.
3. The next step is to decide the type of the given image (Text only, Flyer, Montage, Photo with text, Photo).
4. Images containing only text are not coded further. In the case of albums, only the first one is coded, which is often bigger than the others. If the first image of the album contains only text images, then indicate "Text only" and do not code further. Otherwise, it has to be decided what type of image is the first image.
5. Mutually exclusive categories: Type, Context, Content, Clothing, and Number of people, are mutually exclusive categories, which means that coders should choose only one variable that best describes the image. E.g. an image can only be Text only, Flyer, Montage, Photo with text or Photo, NOT both Flyer and Photo with

[15] Centre for Social Sciences, Hungarian Academy of Sciences Centre of Excellence; Corvinus University of Budapest, Hungary
[16] Bournemouth University, United Kingdom
[17] University of Wrocław, Poland
[18] Centre for Social Sciences, Hungarian Academy of Sciences Centre of Excellence; Eötvös Loránd University, Hungary
[19] University of Innsbruck, Austria
[20] Bournemouth University, United Kingdom

Corresponding Author:
Xénia Farkas, Centre for Social Sciences, Hungarian Academy of Sciences Centre of Excellence, Tóth Kálmán u. 4, H-1097 Budapest, Hungary.
Email: farkas.xenia@tk.hu

text. If an image is not "text only" type, then the mutually exclusive categories have to be coded in any case, while from the not mutually exclusive categories those ones should be coded which are visible.

6. On the other hand, Tools, Actors, Symbols, Objects and Connections categories can have multiple elements, e.g. both Filter and Contrasts can be applied on an image, Album option can be used as well in a post, and an Own party's leader can be depicted with Armed forces, Children, and a Crowd as well.
7. Actors: Not like in the case of other categories, where only the image and the text ON the image is important, here it is easier to identify politicians and other actors on the images by reading the whole textual messgae of the post. It is important that variables have to be coded according to the conditions of May 2019, which practically means that party leaders are coded if they were leaders in May 2019.
8. Clothing is only important in the case of politicinas, other actors' clothes are not relevant here.
9. Number of people: We count the main actors of the image, thus if 3 people (whether politicians or random people, it doesn't matter here) are depicted, but in the far background there are random passers, latter are not counted, only the 3. However, it is important, that only the far backround is not relevant, thus if politicians are the main actors of an image, but in the backround there is a crowd, it has to be coded as a "100+ approximately large crowd".

Visual nature

Groups of Categories	Categories	Description	Krippendorf's alpha coefficients
Type	Text only	Images containing only text, e.g. https://www.facebook.com/enhedslisten/posts/10156983371231023; https://www.facebook.com/GreenPartyIreland/posts/10158682912778066; Images depicting only stats, diagrams, screenshots about Twitter posts, or pictograms are also coded as "Text only". We do NOT code them further.	.89
	Flyer	Images with text, where the symbol of the party (logo or slogan) and a mobilizing word (e.g. Vote!/Come!/Join!) is also included in the image. It is important that a photo of a politician standing next to a flyer on the street is not coded as flyer. Images are coded as flyers in the case of this: https://www.facebook.com/USRNational/posts/2197265300364642;	

	Montage	More than one photos merged into one image, mostly separated by some kind of visible frame (however, there are montage photos where we cannot find any separating frames). If there are different types of images on the montage, simply indicate "montage" and try to code as many further variables as possible.	
	Photo with text	There is a text on the photo, but unlike in the case of flyers, party symbols (e.g. logo, slogan) are not necessarily visible on the photo. However, if a party symbol is depicted, it can be a "photo with text" category still, but it is important that there are no direct mobilizing words (e.g. "Vote for.."), rather citations from politicians, or describing facts. https://www.facebook.com/moderaterna/posts/10156169508136156; https://www.facebook.com/Sozialdemokratie/posts/10156849626050081	
	Photo	A simple photo without any text on it.	
Tools	Filters	Strong colour effects that change the colour of the whole image/a separated part of the image. We do not want to figure out whether a bit of light filter is applied or not, here we code only the evident filters, that blur the whole images, or give a green or pink effect, e.g. https://www.facebook.com/diegruenen/posts/10156310108628034; or part of the image, e.g. https://www.facebook.com/fpoe/posts/1348437291964203	.80
	Album	Indicate here if a post contains multiple images. Do not type the number of the images, only indicate the fact that it is an album.	.91
Context	Positive	The atmosphere of the image is positive due to positive facial expressions, backgrounds, actors or a textual message ON the image, e.g. it reports some success, expresses hope for something positive in the future, states something positive about someone, or says thanks for someone.	.91
	Negative	The atmosphere of the image is negative due to negative facial expressions, backgrounds, actors or a textual message ON the image, e.g. the image shows criticism of something or someone, expresses sadness, negative irony, or presents people with negative emotions.	
	Mixed	The atmosphere of the image is mixed due to a negative facial expression, background, actor with a positive textual message ON the image, or vice versa. E.g. the image shows an angry politician, while the textual message is something positive, or the textual message is negative, but the politician is smiling.	
	Neutral	The atmosphere of the image is neutral, there are no strong positive or negative facial expressions, backgrounds, actors or textual messages ON the image.	
Content	Political work	Political work content is coded when the image depicts politicians while doing political work (=NOT campaign), such as	.69

		meetings, conferences, work in their offices.	
	Campaign	Images about campaign events, e.g. collecting signatures, party events. Considering that we are investigating a campaign period, most images will fall into this category, but here we should try to list only those images that specifically depict campaign activity. In most cases, politicians are depicted on some kind of stage with a microphone, but sometimes they are handing out flyers on markets, or on the streets. Images depicting a podium with a microphone without any other context are always falling into this category.	
	Policy	By visual representation of policies we mean e.g. factories, construction sites, or hospital, school visits, anything that can have a policy message. If the textual message ON the image refers to a policy, it can also be considered as policy message, e.g. a stock photo-like image, depicting a family of random people, and the written message on the image is about family policy.	
	Personal	Images depicting non-political life, personal appearances: the politician's family members, photos of food, drinks, gym, or photos taken with celebrities, sport events.	
	Critical	Images depicting other parties' politicians from a negative approach, e.g. from a negative angle/perspective, or the textual message ON the image describes other parties'/politicians' critic.	
	Other	Anything that cannot be coded into political work, campaign, policy, personal or critical categories.	

Actor characteristics and personalisation

Groups of Categories	**Categories**	**Description**	**Krippendorf's alpha coefficients**
Actors	Own party's leader	It is important that variables have to be coded according to the conditions of May 2019, which practically means that party leaders are coded if they were leaders in May 2019. Check the parties' from every country before coding. Honorary leaders are also leaders, e.g. Traian Băsescu.	.83
	Top candidate	The first candidate on the EP list of the party. It is useful to check each countries' Wikipedia site on the 2019 EP election, e.g. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2019_European_Parliament_election_in_Hungary here is a table "Hungarian parties contesting the 2019 European Parliament election" where all of the top candidates are listed.	1.00
	Own party's politician	It is important that variables have to be coded according to the conditions of May 2019, which practically means that	.79

		politicians are coded if they were the given parties' politician in May 2019. Check the parties' from every country before coding.	
	Other party's leader	It is important that variables have to be coded according to the conditions of May 2019, which practically means that party leaders are coded if they were leaders in May 2019. Check the parties' from every country before coding.	.97
	Other party's politician	It is important that variables have to be coded according to the conditions of May 2019, which practically means that politicians are coded if they were the given parties' politician in May 2019. Check the parties' from every country before coding.	.97
	Other country's leader	It is important that variables have to be coded according to the conditions of May 2019, which practically means that other countries' leaders are coded if they were leaders in May 2019. Check the parties' from every country before coding.	1.00
	Children	Babies, kids, youngsters under 18.	.74
	Random people	Less than 10 persons we cannot identify as politicians, leaders, celebrity, police or soldiers.	.74
	Crowd	Crowd: 10+ person.	.80
	Armed forces	Police, soldiers, etc.	.80
Number of people	0		.85
	1		
	2-4		
	5-10		
	10+		
	100+		

Symbols and objects

Groups of categories	Categories	Description	Krippendorf's alpha coefficients
Symbols	EU symbol	EU flag, EU stars, but not as the party's logo	.93
	Country symbol	National flag, coats of arms, famous places (Eiffel tower, Brandenburg Gate, etc.)	.85
	Party symbol	Parties' logos (that can be on a pin, or on a hat, t-shirt, on in the background on a roll-up) and the colour of the party (on clothes or in the background on a roll-up)	.80
	Popular cult symbol	Visual reference to movies, music, books, sports	1.00
Objects	Microphone/camera	Visible microphone, camera or podium. Images depicting TV interviews can also be coded here, even if these objects are not visible, but it is somehow visible that the aim of the image is to highlight the fact of an interview.	.91
	Election	The most conspicuous symbol is a ballot box, but ballots, or crosses on a ballot are also coded here.	.92
Connections	Interaction with crowds	"Shots of the candidate giving rapid, anonymous handshakes, grips, or touches to groups of supporters without individualized or fixed engagement with anyone in particular" (Grabe & Bucy, 2009), or without touches but the	.97

		politician is depicted surrounded by a crowd.	
	Interaction with random people	Shots of the candidate giving rapid, anonymous handshakes, grips, or touches to couple of supporters (not a crowd, but some random people), or without touches but the politician is depicted surrounded by a random people.	.88
	Approving audiences	"Visual linkages to approving audiences shown applauding, waving, cheering, whistling, laughing, nodding in approval." (Grabe & Bucy, 2009)	.94
Clothing	Official	Men: e.g. suit, shirt and/or tie. Women: suits, blouse, dress, high heels	.77
	Casual	In general: jeans, t-shirt, sweater, sneakers. Men wearing sweater on shirt is also casual.	
	Athletic	"Short pants, jogging gear, or other athletic gear" (Grabe & Bucy, 2009)	
	Campaign	e.g. t-shirt, coat or cap with a party logo	

Article 3

The visual and verbal populist style of Viktor Orbán on Facebook

Xénia Farkas, Márton Bene

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The visual and verbal populist style of Viktor Orbán on Facebook

Xénia Farkas
(farkas.xenia@tk.hu)
Junior Research Fellow
Centre for Social Sciences, Budapest
and
Márton Bene
(bene.marton@tk.hu)
Senior Research Fellow
Centre for Social Sciences, Budapest

Author note

Xénia Farkas https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9448-1471
Xénia Farkas is a junior research fellow at the Centre for Social Sciences, Hungarian Academy of Sciences Centre of Excellence, and a Ph.D. student at the Corvinus University of Budapest. Her research focuses on visual political communication on social media.

Márton Bene https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0177-9717
Márton Bene is a senior research fellow at the Centre for Social Sciences, Hungarian Academy of Sciences Centre of Excellence, and a lecturer at Eötvös Loránd University. His research interests are in political communication, social media and politics, and political behavior.
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Corresponding Author: Xénia Farkas, Centre for Social Sciences, Hungarian Academy of Sciences Centre of Excellence, Tóth Kálmán street 4, H-1097 Budapest, Hungary. Email: farkas.xenia@tk.hu

The visual and verbal populist style of Viktor Orbán on Facebook

Abstract

The aim of this study is to contribute to the field of visual political communication by creating and testing a bimodal (visual and verbal) coding scheme, which can be applied to study populism as a style. For that, the paper translates Moffitt's (2016) theory on populist communication style into a code book that can capture not only the verbal but also the visual elements of populist style. Accordingly, the coding scheme is used to perform a quantitative content analysis on Viktor Orbán's image-based Facebook posts between 2018 and 2020. This three-year period includes election campaigns, the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, and some months without major political events. The results show that Moffitt's (2016) populist style is only partially present in the Hungarian Prime Minister's bimodal Facebook communication. Furthermore, the comparison of different communication periods does not reveal major differences. However, there are significant variations in verbal and visual communication: the populist style is mainly communicated by visual elements, which means that the study of populist communication requires the examination of visuals.

Keywords: visual politics, populism, multimodality, Facebook, content analysis, social media

The visual and verbal populist style of Viktor Orbán on Facebook

Viktor Orbán is clearly one of the most prominent figures of contemporary right-wing populism (see Mudde, 2016; Körösényi-Patkós, 2017). They embraced a populist political approach at least two decades ago and have represented it in government positions for 12 years. His academically acknowledged prominence in the right-wing populist field is visually well-depicted by the fact that they are one of three populist figures with Donald Trump and Marie Le Pen in the cover of Norris and Inglehart's seminal book about contemporary right-wing populism (Norris & Inglehart, 2019).

Orbán's populist communication style is also a model for several populist politicians worldwide. As for other populist leaders, social media, especially Facebook, is a central platform for Viktor Orbán's communication who is the most followed politician in the Hungarian political sphere (Bene & Farkas, 2018). On this platform, they can directly connect to their followers and via these followers' engagement with their posts they can reach many non-followers as well. However, if one takes a closer look at their Facebook page, they will most probably find posts with very short texts, but with images or videos included. On Facebook, Viktor Orbán's communication is largely visual, verbal messages rarely go beyond a few words.

Although there is increased interest among academics to study populist communication, most existing approaches to populism (e.g. Mudde, 2004; Weyland, 2001; Hawkins, 2009; de Vreese et al., 2018) define the concept in a way that can be applied mostly in verbal messages. Orbán's case, however, shows that this would be insufficient since populist leaders largely draw upon visual communication with a strong performative dimension that is hard to capture based on these approaches. The peculiarity of Viktor Orbán's social media communication cannot be grasped if only their short verbal components are considered while the gestures, scenes, actors, connections, or lookouts appearing in their visual components are ignored.

Luckily, a few studies take on investigating visual aspects of populist communication (e.g. Farkas et al., 2022; Gimenez and Schwarz, 2016; Herkman, 2019). However, in the lack of an overarching populist concept that is able to accommodate visual communication, they could offer fragmented findings of certain elements of visual populism. In this research, we argue, that Benjamin Moffitt's populist style approach with its strong emphasis on performative dimensions of communication, is suitable to be applied to multimodal communication. Therefore, the present study

applies Moffitt's (2016) political style approach and considers populism as a symbolically mediated performance in the study of Viktor Orbán's social media communication.

This study focuses both on the visual and verbal aspects of populist communication style when translating Moffitt's (2016) theory into a bimodal[21] (image-based and verbal) coding scheme. By this coding scheme, we analyze Viktor Orbán's Facebook activities over a three-year period that included elections (i.e., 2018 Hungarian Parliamentary election, 2019 Hungarian Local election, 2019 European Parliamentary election), the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, and a number of slow news months. First, we are interested in the extent to which Moffitt's populist style approach is able to describe the social media communication of an exemplary case of populist leaders. Second, we focus on the differences between verbal and visual components of the posts to see if populist elements are communicated differently across modalities. Third, we look at how the application of populist communication is conditioned by political situations by investigating similarities and differences in Orbán's communication under different political circumstances (campaign, COVID-19, cucumber time).

Findings indicate the partial viability of Moffitt's approach in the understanding of Viktor Orbán's social media communication, as one out of the three main categories, i.e. *Appeal to the People vs. the Elite* performed particularly well on Orbán's Facebook image posts, while *Crisis, breakdown, threat* had also a limited presence in their communication. Conversely, the third main component, *Bad manners*, missed almost completely from their social media presence. The most frequently used populist elements are more extensively communicated via visual cues than verbal expressions, but we found no remarkable differences across the investigated time periods.

Theoretical background

Populism and visual communication

Populism is a divisive phenomenon with a multitude of definitional approaches, varying in emphasis on populism as a *thin centered ideology* (Mudde, 2004), a *political*

[21] The term bimodal connected to the concept of multimodality. Multimodality "questions that a strict 'division of labour' among the disciplines traditionally focused on meaning making, on the grounds that in the world we're trying to account for, different means of meaning making are not separated but almost always appear together: image with writing, speech with gesture, math symbolism with writing and so forth" (Jewitt et al., 2016, p. 2). These connections are not studied in isolation from each other, but integrated in multimodality. Since the study focuses on visual and verbal communication, it can be considered as a bimodal, i.e. a study involving two perceptual domains.

strategy (Weyland, 2001), a *discourse* (Hawkins, 2009), a *communication phenomenon* (de Vreese et al., 2018), and a *style* (Moffitt, 2016). One of the most important common features of these conceptualizations is their emphasis on the opposition between 'the Elite' and 'the People'. However, the different approaches yield different analytical frameworks to study populism with varied ideas on who can be considered as populist, how populism appears, and what are the sources of populism.

With the application of Mudde's (2004) actor centric minimal definition, scholars were able to identify populist parties and leaders and compare them with non-populist political actors across countries (see Mudde, 2007; Akkerman et al., 2016) by investigating party manifestos, speeches, or content taken from the websites of political actors (Pauwels, 2017). The strategic approach focuses on how leaders pursue and sustain political power across different national, economic, and social circumstances (Weyland, 2001). By the application of the fuzzy-set theory (Weyland, 2017), it is possible to define the level of populism in the case of political actors. The discourse approach is primarily focused on the appearance of verbal messages that create a divide between ordinary people and elites across time and countries (Hawkins, 2009). Holistic grading methods, resembling content analysis, have been applied to speeches to categorize them as non-populist, mixed, or populist (Pauwels, 2017). According to de Vreese and colleagues (2018), populism as a communication phenomenon is the combination of ideological and discursive dimensions and focuses on the frequency of content and style features. By the application of content analysis, the degree of populism can be described on various platforms (Engesser et al., 2017; Ernst et al., 2017).

However, most of these approaches to populism are rooted in the operationalization of verbal communication: their empirical focus is mostly limited to the verbal content elements of communication. This is a crucial shortcoming as recently researchers have started to recognize the urgency to investigate visuals in political communication, or as Bucy and Joo (2021) call this area of study, visual politics. Scholarly efforts have recently been made to define and operationalize visual populism. Images –just like verbal messages– are used to negative emotionalization by the negative depiction of 'the Others' (Wodak and Forchtner, 2014), to amplify negative implicit social stereotypes (Arendt et al., 2015), and to broadcast symbolic and economic threats (Schmuck and Matthes, 2017). Further, visual depiction of negative emotions as fear, anger, and resentment can spread not only without country or

language barriers (Hokka and Nelimarkka, 2019), but images are able to blur and camouflage the explicit radical populist narratives by using no explanations to the cultural context of the depicted scenes (Freistein and Gadinger, 2020). Visuals are also used to highlight populists' closeness to 'the People'. However, the visual construction of 'the People' and 'proximity to the People' can be different since the former signify populist parties for the people, while the latter is the depiction of populist parties of the people (Gimenez and Schwarz, 2016). In addition, it is demonstrated that there are differences in the depiction of 'the People' by left and right populists', as the latter show more homogenous images of 'the People' than the former (Moffitt, in press). Another visual populist feature is the frequent depiction of the leader (Herkman, 2019), whose presentation –including clothing, facial expressions, etc.– symbolizes and embodies ordinary and extraordinary traits (Mendonça and Caetano, 2020). Piontek and Tadeusz-Ciesielczyk (2019) also strengthen this argument on nonverbal elements such as eye contact, facial expressions, or gestures, adding that both negative attitudes towards 'the Elite' and references to the 'the People' are often expressed in this way.

Useful as these fragmented results are, they do not offer a comprehensive or integrated understanding of populist communication. They highlight certain crucial visual elements related to populist communication, but they are less connected to any of the more general conceptual frameworks of populism. Naturally, this is understandable, since, as we argued, most of these conceptualizations do not accommodate visual communication, therefore they are difficult to apply to a multimodal analysis.

However, Moffitt's (2016) conceptualization of populism as a political communication style can fill this gap, when describes it as "the repertoires of embodied, symbolically mediated performance made to audiences that are used to create and navigate the fields of power" (p. 46). This includes not only substantive elements of communication but a focus on how it is performed, which offers a multimodal interpretation framework. In Moffitt's (2016) theory, populism is "not a particular entity or 'thing' but a political style that is done" (p. 155). Its three main features are: 1) appeal to 'the people' versus 'the elite'; 2) 'bad manners'; and 3) crisis, breakdown, or threat. These main dimensions include a variety of sub-categories of populism, such as its leader-centric nature, the leader's ability to perform both ordinariness and extraordinariness at the same time, showing closeness to 'the People' and distance to 'the Elite', creating crisis and enemies, and oversimplifying complex social and political issues. These features can be communicated via both verbal and visual cues.

Consequently, the style approach allows researchers to include both verbal and visual aspects of populism by focusing on the performers, audiences, stages, and the mise-en-scènes. A further advantage of this theoretical framework is that it does not interpret populism as a binary category –populist or not– but as a gradual scale on which changes in the populist communication style of different actors can be measured in different periods. In other words, this interpretation of the populist style allows us to look at the communication of actors previously defined in binary terms in a more nuanced way, which results in a broader interpretation of populist performance.

Research questions

So far, scholarly works show rather isolated findings on visual populism. We make an attempt to fill this gap by translating Moffitt's political style approach into a testable formal instrument of measurement for populist verbal and visual communication which cover all of the crucial aspects of their conceptualization of populism. By using this instrument, our goal is to describe multimodal Facebook communication of the Hungarian Prime Minister, Viktor Orbán who is one of the most prominent contemporary populist leaders enjoying longevity in power (Norris & Inglehart, 2019). Although for our testing purposes we could have chosen a case where populism is less clearly present, also, Orbán's right-wingness would not have been necessary, since one of the advantages of the style approach is that it allows for an analysis independent of binary definitions, by examining Orbán's case we can more clearly explore the extent to which Moffitt's (2016) conceptualization is suitable for capturing the bimodal communication of a particular case of populist political actors. Consequently, the first research question of the paper is as follows:

> RQ1: Which dimension of Moffitt's (2016) populist style was applied most prominently in Viktor Orbán's Facebook posts?

Moffitt's (2016) political communication style offers a stepping stone towards a more amalgamated investigation, allowing the now scattered observations to be integrated within the framework of a theoretically grounded approach. Observations both on rhetorical and aesthetic elements of communication can be treated as elements of the populist style Consequently, the populist style approach allows researchers to highlight visual aspects of a political actor's communication, including non-verbal behavior that could range from gestures and emotional displays to fashion and grooming. Collectively these visual cues have a central role in the construction of populist political communication (Moffitt, 2016). However, it is uncovered to what extent the

communication of different populist elements differs across verbal and visual communication. It can be that some elements are more frequently emphasized by visual cues, while others are primarily communicated via verbal messages.

RQ2: Are there differences between the image and textual messages of Viktor Orbán's Facebook posts?

Although the current political context may have an impact on the application of the populist style, there is little knowledge on the timing aspect of populist communication. Thus, a further research question is formulated based on the application of populist communication across different time periods. It is known now that verbal populist communication is often used as a strategic tool, and more actively applied before than after the elections (Schmuck and Hameleers, 2020). As for the COVID-19 period, populist communication was used to strengthen the context of the crisis, create and highlight enemies such as the media and the elites, (Burni and Tamaki, 2021), amplify the strong leadership, the leader's ordinariness, and emphasize the necessity of fighting for the national interests (Bene and Boda, 2021). However, this question has not been investigated in the case of specific political actors, moreover, there is little knowledge on populist communication in the period of non-campaigns. Thus, the third research question of the study is as follows:

RQ3: Were there differences in Viktor Orbán's Facebook communication across the campaign period, the COVID-19 crisis period, and the non-campaign period?

Method

This study can be described as a bimodal quantitative content analysis that assessed Viktor Orbán's use of populism in his Facebook image posts over the course of three years. As moving images (gifs and videos) need different methodological approaches (Rose, 2001), they are excluded from the present study. A coding instrument has been designed that comprised 92 verbal and visual categories. These are mostly deduced from Moffitt's (2016) conceptual work on populist leader styles supplemented with a few other descriptive variables, such as the valence of the posts, the number of people represented, and the actor types, which we adopted from a previous work, that examined populism by content analysis (Farkas et al., 2022), and we also considered the production characteristics of the images. The purpose of this supplement was to put the Moffitt categories in context and to study the basic visual characteristics. Our choice to focus on Orbán's Facebook profile is motivated by the popularity of this social media

platform in Hungary and the prominent role of this page in Viktor Orbán's communication (see, Merkovity et al., 2021). Eighty-one percent of the Hungarian online population uses Facebook and 59 percent of these users consume news on the platform (Newman et al., 2021). In Hungary, Viktor Orbán is the most followed political actor since they registered on the platform in 2010 (Bene & Szabó, 2021) and had 1.1 million followers at the end of 2020.

The sample

Given the goal to contribute insights into visual populism, this study treated the individual image post on Viktor Orbán's Facebook profile as the sampling unit. Text posts accompanying sampled image posts were included in the sample, therefore the sample frame did not include text posts that appeared without images or posts that include videos rather than still images. The sample was drawn using CrowdTangle, a public insights tool owned and operated by Facebook. A total of 495 still image posts were identified on Viktor Orbán's profile between January 1, 2018, and December 31, 2020, which is 46 percent of all the posts they published during this period. This three-year period was chosen for both convenience (access to archived material) and strategic reasons. The time frame included two major events (elections and the emergence of COVID-19) that posed challenges to leadership and thereby provided an opportunity to observe populist inclinations to surface on social media. As a baseline comparison, this period also provided ample opportunity to study quiet news periods, known in the media politics arena as cucumber time.

Three election campaigns occurred during the sample period: (1) Hungarian Parliamentary (02/17/2018 – 04/08/2018), (2) European Parliamentary (04/06/2019 – 05/26/2019), and (3) Hungarian Local (08/23/2019 – 10/13/2019) election campaigns. The sample also comprised the full first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic (03/04/2020 – 07/17/2020) and more than half of the second wave (07/18/2020 – 12/31/2020). COVID-19 periods were determined based on the work of Uzzoli and colleagues (2021), while campaign periods are the official, legally defined time frames of election campaigns. Time periods between elections and before the pandemic were treated as cucumber time. The Campaign Period produced 86 image posts, the COVID-19 Period 176, and Cucumber Time was represented by 230 posts.

Coding instrument

The units of analysis were the individual post from Orbán's Facebook account. An image post contained at least one image and mostly included an accompanying text content (96 percent with text). Most categories were applied separately for the image and textual content. Superimposed text on the image was treated as part of the image and coded accordingly.

A few categories were designed for descriptive insight, these include the valence (positive, negative, neutral, mixed) of posts as well as production variables related to camera shot angle (high, eye-level, low) and shot distance (long, medium, close). The category system employed to assess populism was based on three dimensions conceptually developed by Moffitt (2016): 'The People' versus 'the Elite', Bad Manners, and Crisis, Breakdown, Threat, but several individual categories which can easily be connected to this conceptualization were adopted from existing content analysis (Farkas et al., 2022). Table 1 offers a summary of how Moffitt's (2016) dimensions were operationalized into individual categories and the viability of these categories in capturing instances of populism. As mentioned above, most categories were operationalized to have visual and verbal equivalents, which made comparisons between the two modalities possible. In most cases, the presence or absence of a populist trait was recorded using yes and no options within categories.

Table 1. A summary of the coding system based on Moffitt's (2016) populist style.

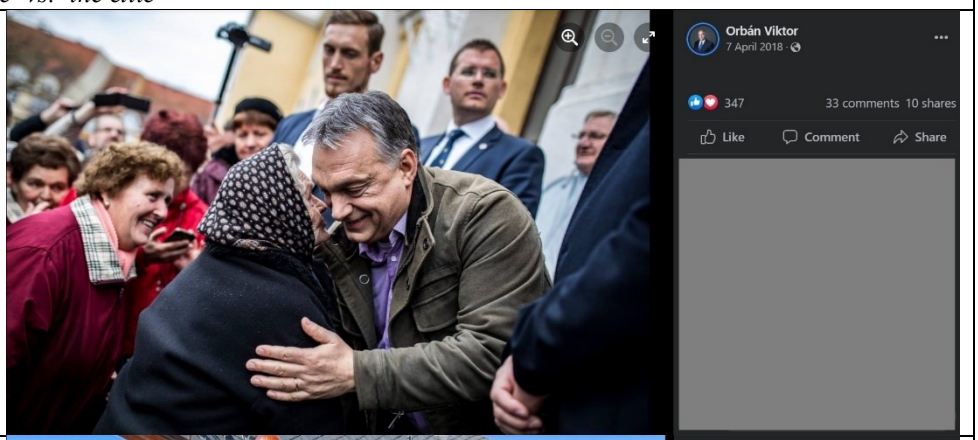
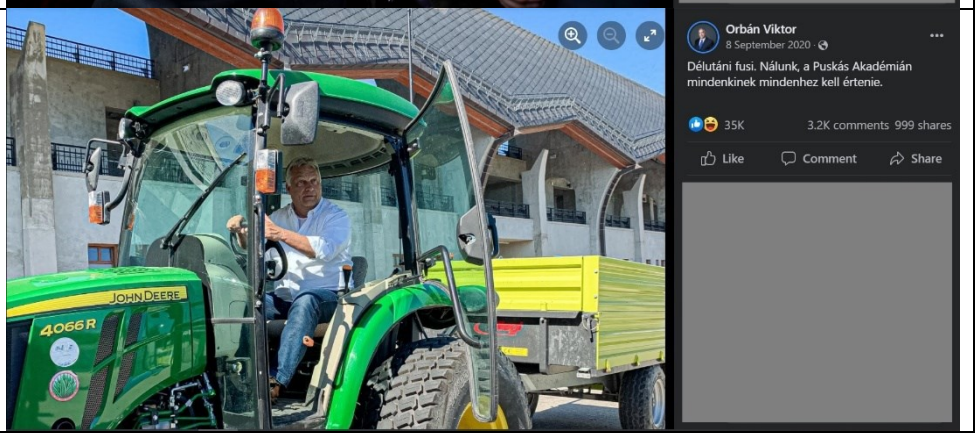
Category	**Variables (both visual and verbal)**	**Viability of categories**
Appeal to 'the People' vs. 'the Elite'		59 variables in total, 48 useable
Closeness to ordinary people (High frequencies indicate populist style)	Individualized physical attention to people, approving audiences, vox pops, performative expressions of the leader, leader engaged in performative rituals, leader visiting the people, leader attentive to children of ordinary people	14 variables in total No incidents of: ● vox pops (visual & verbal) ● visiting the people (visual & verbal) ● approving audiences (verbal) Useable number: 14-5=9 Useable visual: 7-2=5 Useable verbal: 7-3=4
Ordinariness (High frequencies indicate populist style)	Rural setting, ordinary food, ordinary leisure (only verbal), family of the leader, animals, sport events, humble personal background, agricultural activities, leader carrying a backpack, leader in informal	27 variables in total No incidents of: ● athletic clothing (verbal) ● backpack (verbal)

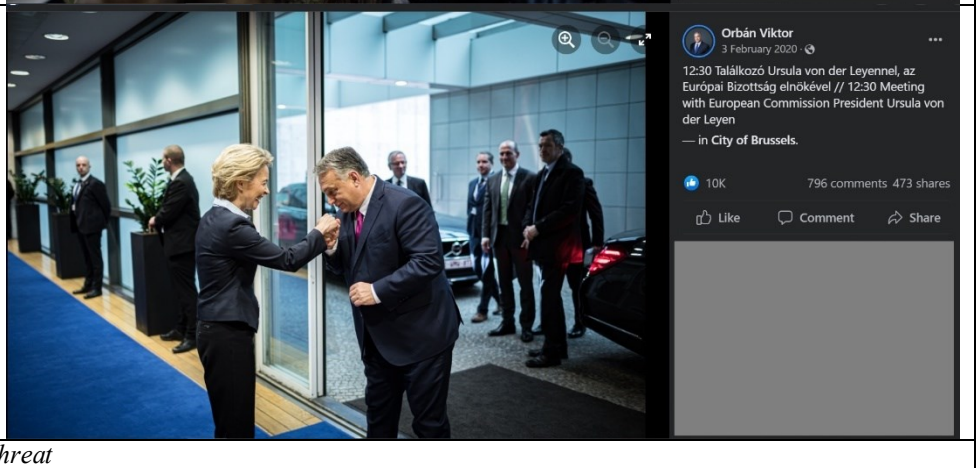
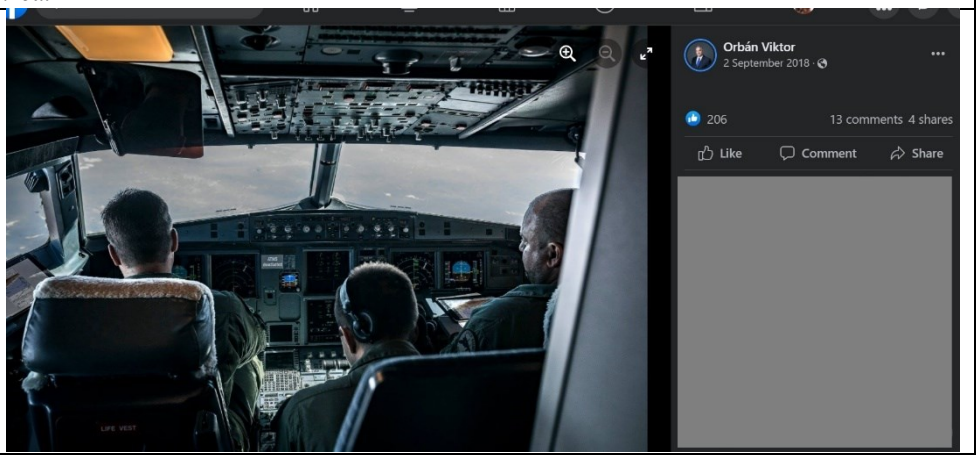
	clothing, athletic clothing, leader associated with national symbols, religious symbols, leader denying expert opinions	● agriculture (verbal) ● denial of experts (verbal & visual) Useable number: 27-5=22 Useable visual: 13-1=12 Useable verbal: 14-4=10
Extraordinariness (High frequencies indicate populist style)	Presence of celebrities, other populist leaders, fitness/health displays, masculinity, graphication, accomplishments of the leader, mediatization of the leader	14 variables in total No incidents of: ● graphication (verbal) Useable number: 14-1=13 Useable visual:7-0=7 Useable verbal: 7-1=6
Elites (Low frequencies indicate populist style)	Signifying wealth in setting, the presence of elite	4 variables in total Useable number: 4 Useable visual: 2-0=2 Useable verbal: 2-0=2
Bad manners (High frequencies indicate populist style)	Slang, swearing, political incorrectness	6 variables in total No incidents of: ● slang (visual) ● swearing (verbal & visual) ● political incorrectness (verbal) Useable number: 6-4=2 Useable visual: 3-2=1 Useable verbal: 3-2=1
Crisis, breakdown, threat		24 variables in total, usable 9
Enemies (High frequencies indicate populist style)	Presentation of the following entities as threats: migrants, Brussels, George Soros, Ferenc Gyurcsány, Gergely Karácsony, COVID-19 (only visual), elite, Other enemies (only verbal), media	16 variables in total No incidents of: ● migrants (visual) ● Soros (visual & verbal) ● Brussels (visual) ● Gyurcsány (visual & verbal) ● Karácsony (visual & verbal) ● media (visual & verbal) ● COVID (visual) ● elite (visual & verbal) Useable number: 16-13=3 Useable visual: 8-8=0 Useable verbal:8-5=3

Priming threat (High frequencies indicate populist style)	Reference to the border, armed forces, sounding the alarm, simplification	8 total categories No incidents of: ● border (visual) ● simplification (visual) Useable number: 8-2=6 Useable visual: 4-2=2 Useable verbal: 4-0=4

As mentioned above, most categories were operationalized to have both visual and verbal equivalents, which allowed for comparison between the two modalities. In most cases, we recorded the presence or absence of populist elements within the categories using yes and no options. Table 2 shows visual examples of each dimension.

Table 2. Visual examples of the coded dimensions

Dimension	Visual example
Appeal to 'the people' vs. 'the elite'	
Closeness (Physical closeness to the people)	
Ordinariness (Agricultural activity)	

Extraordinariness (Celebrity, Masculinity)	
Elite (Presence of the elite, Setting signifying wealth)	
Bad manners (Politically incorrectness)	
Crisis, breakdown, threat	
Protection from threat (Armed forces)	

As it can be seen from the examples, it is possible to code a post into several categories, for example, in the image of closeness, not only is Viktor Orbán's physical closeness to people depicted, but the ordinariness of the leader is also clearly visible in the simple, casual clothes of the Prime Minister.

The people versus elites.

To assess how Orbán represented 'the People' and 'the Elite', four sub-dimensions were identified, each measured through multiple categories. First, closeness categories assessed demonstrated comfort with regular people, signaling that the leader is one of them through physical access to him. Physical attention to regular people, being among them, visiting their homes and neighborhoods, paying attention to the children of ordinary people, giving voice to them, and using nonverbal gestures and expressions to acknowledge people were included here.

Second and third, to capture the complexity of populist leaders positioning themselves both as one with the people and exceptional compared to ordinary people, self-depictions of ordinariness and extraordinariness were documented. The ordinariness categories focused on the leader's plain folks personae, sharing the values of ordinary people. Accordingly, this includes the food and drink typically consumed by ordinary people, the leisure activities they enjoy (e.g. attending sporting events, spending time with family, caring for pets), casual dress (e.g. sportswear, jeans, backpack), and a rejection of pomposity and expertise or an appeal to common sense. Emphasis on a leader's humble personal background and a connection to or appreciation of agriculture also counted among the ordinariness categories. Furthermore, the categories of ordinariness include religious and national pride, national and religious symbols, as representations of the values of the people.

Extraordinariness items documented the self-representation of leadership and personal prowess. Familiarity with celebrities, physical fitness and masculinity, media interest in the leader, and accomplishments were coded.

Fourth, populist relations to the elites –political, bureaucratic, economic, religious and cultural elites– were tested through categories that measured their presence in posts as well as settings that signal wealth and privilege.

Bad manners

Three categories were devised to capture how populists distance themselves "from other political actors in terms of legitimacy and authenticity" (Moffitt, 2016, p. 60) by breaking unwritten rules. Using slang, swearing, and politically incorrect

statements were recorded in verbal posts. Visual images featuring written signs (e.g. held by supporters or shown in graffiti) or visual appearances of politically inappropriate behavior (e.g. inappropriate physical contact) were also counted.

Crisis, Breakdown, Threat.

This dimension comprised the populist tendency to create and maintain crisis with the communication of perceived or real threats. It was operationalized in four techniques: constructing groups and people as threats, reminding followers of how a crisis is mitigated, exaggerating threats, and offering simplified solutions to complicated problems. In the case of Orbán, people and groups who have the potential to be on his enemy list are migrants, George Soros, Brussels, two Hungarian oppositional party leaders, Ferenc Gyurcsány (ex-PM) and Gergely Karácsony (Mayor of Budapest), the media, and elites. COVID-19, and other enemies without specifics were also added to capture threat appeals. Threat mitigation involved signals of protection against danger. Visual or verbal references to the border and armed forces were recorded. Alarmist posts that dramatized or exaggerated crises and danger, as well as simplified and sweeping fixes for threats, were also coded.

Data collection

Image and text posts were coded by two coders, one undergraduate student in political science and one of the authors of this article. Two coder training sessions were followed by pre-tests of coder reliability which resulted in Krippendorff's alpha values for individual variables within a range of 0.66 to 1. More coder training ensued before data collection started. A random subsample of 187 posts (38 percent of the full sample) was subjected to an intercoder reliability test that resulted in a mean value of Krippendorff's alphas in 0.91. Three variables that did not achieve the acceptable level of 0.8 value (visual leisure, verbal COVID-19, visual other enemies) were excluded from data analysis. Data were collected over the course of 4 weeks.

Results

Preliminary descriptive findings

From the 495 sampled image posts, three images contained only text (e.g. only statistics, diagrams, screenshots of laws and regulations) and were therefore excluded from analyses. Of the remaining 492 image posts, almost 96 percent were accompanied by a separate text post and another 1.8 percent featured text superimposed on the image posts.

Descriptive insights about the depicted actors, production features, and valence of the image posts show that the leader is presented in 77 percent of the posts, which means visual depiction in all cases, verbal self-references are present only in five posts. The second most frequently depicted actors are the elites (57 percent), while 'the People', other populist leaders, and Brussels appear only in 10 percent of the posts. Supposed enemies of Viktor Orbán, such as George Soros, Ferenc Gyurcsány, and Gergely Karácsony do not appear in the posts neither verbally nor visually at all, and even migrants are present in less than 1 percent of the posts.

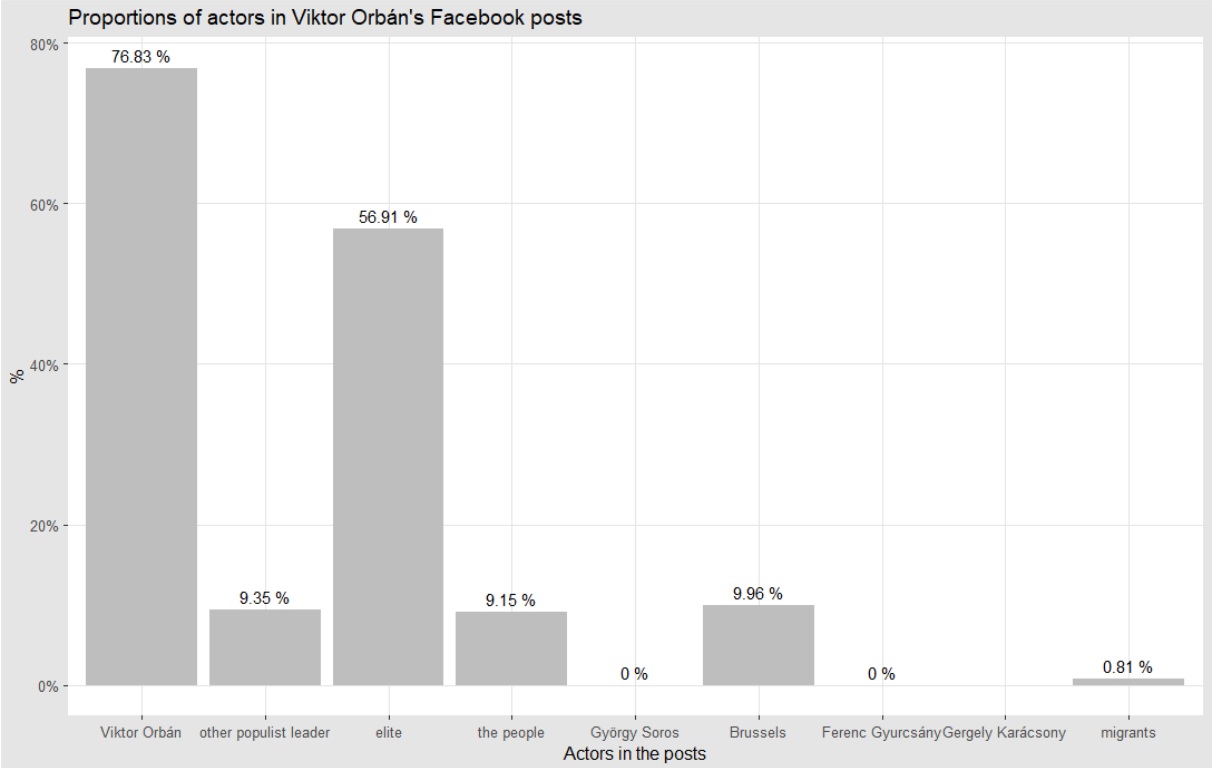


Figure 1. Actors presented in Viktor Orbán's posts

In posts where Viktor Orbán is present, these actor types appear in very similar proportions. The only significant difference is related to the elites: 68 percent of the posts depicting Orbán present some elite actors as well.

In terms of valence, the majority (63 percent) of posts were positive. Negative and neutral posts each made up 15 percent of the total and 7 percent of posts comprised a mix of positive and negative tones. However, posts depicting the Prime Minister are significantly more emotional ($\chi 2=25.006$, df=3, $p < 0.001$): while 55 percent of the posts not depicting Orbán are positive and 9 percent are negative, 65 percent of the posts where he appears are positive and 17 percent is negative.

The majority of images where the leader is depicted were framed as medium shots (77 percent), suggesting a personable but not intimate personal distance (see Meyrowitz, 1986). About 20 percent of the shots where Orbán is present were long, which are often used as scene-setting or establishing shots without much opportunity for advancing personal connections between a leader and social media users. Only 1 percent of shots were close-ups, indicating Orbán's reluctance to use close para-proxemic cues in his posts.

Eye-level was the most common (90 percent) angle used in images of Orbán, followed by low (6 percent) and high (3.5 percent) angles. It can be said that Orbán's posts did not tend to show either empowering people through low, or diminishing people through high angle shots (Meyrowitz, 1986).

Viktor Orbán's populist style

To answer our research questions, data were collapsed along the major dimensions of conceptual interest and sub-themes such as people vs. elites (closeness, ordinariness, extraordinariness, elites), bad manners, crisis communication (enemies, threats) (see, Table 1). This approach afforded statistical analyses on aggregated dimensions despite low-frequency counts for many individual categories.

The first research question prompted an investigation of the extent to which the three dimensions of Moffitt's (2016) populist style are used by Viktor Orbán's bimodal Facebook communication. In general, as Figure 8 shows the presence of each element in the posts, either visually or verbally, the categories of *Appeals to 'the People' versus 'the Elite'* were applied remarkably often, the creation of *Crisis, breakdown, and threat* was less frequently applied, while the Bad manners category was hardly used by Viktor Orbán.

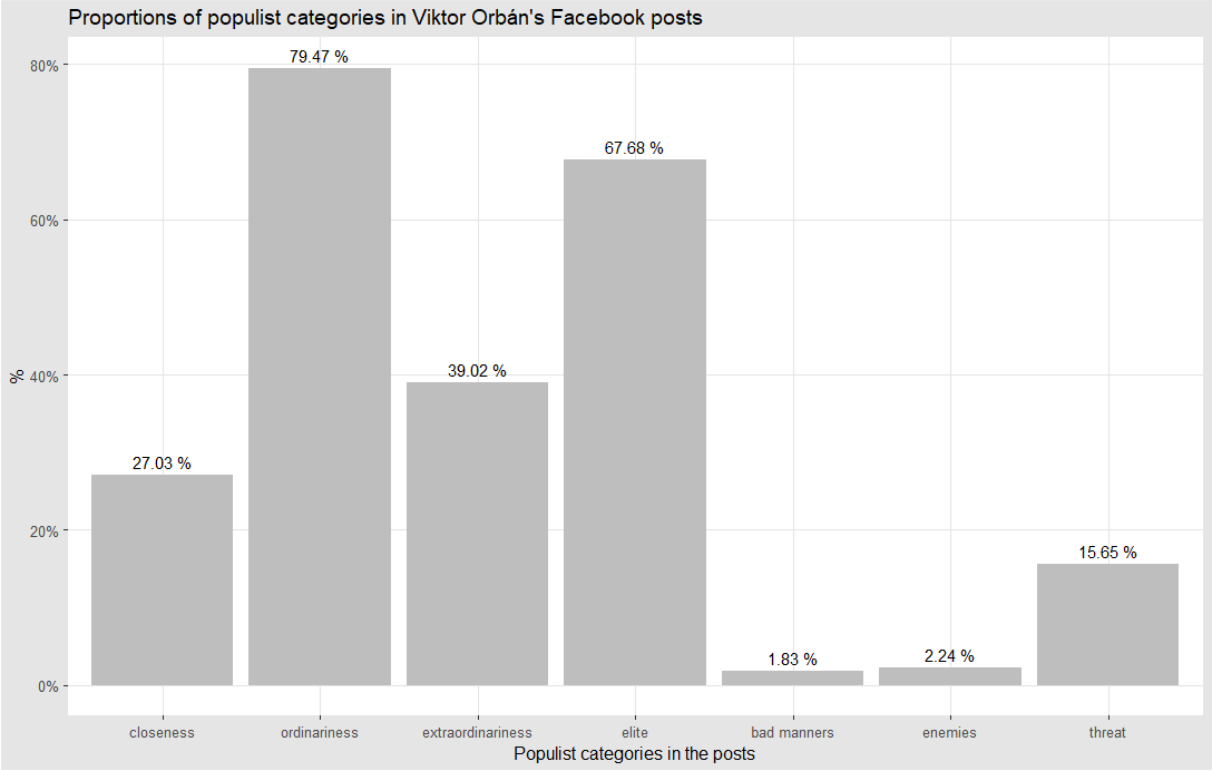


Figure 2. Proportions of populist categories in Viktor Orbán's posts

Unpacking details about the subthemes of the most frequently applied *Appeal to 'the People' versus 'the Elite'* category, results show that ordinariness and elites are present in the majority of the posts – ordinariness in four out of five posts and the elites in three out of two posts. The other two subtheme categories are also characteristic of Viktor Orbán's communication: extraordinariness appears in 39 percent of the posts and closeness in 27 percent. Overall, 97 percent of the posts contain some *Appeal to 'the People' versus 'the Elite'* elements.

However, as '*the People' versus 'the Elite'* category is built on the contradictions between 'the People' and 'the Elite', it is essential to investigate to what extent the elements related to ordinary people –such as closeness and ordinariness– appear together with the representation of the elites. Interestingly, this contrast is present in 56 percent of all posts, i.e. this proportion of posts featured closeness or ordinariness together with the appearance of the elites.

Nevertheless, 'the Elite' is not necessarily portrayed in a negative way in Viktor Orbán's communication. In fact, the elites are more frequently presented in a positive context. Nearly two-thirds (64 percent) of posts featuring elites have a positive valence, 13 percent are neutral, only 15 percent are negative, and 8 percent belong to mixed

valence. Negative or neutral posts where both the elites and people-centric closeness or ordinariness categories are present appeared in 14 percent of all posts. This means that the explicit contrast of ‘the People’ versus ‘the Elite’ is not general, but it is far from rare as one in seven posts applies this strong distinction.

All the other categories are less frequently applied, especially *Bad manners*, which is present only in 2 percent of all posts. *Crisis, breakdown, and threat* categories are present in 17 percent of all posts, which is based on the depiction of some kind of threat that appeared in 16 percent of the posts, while the enemies are not frequently depicted in the image posts of Orbán. In 18 percent of posts at least two main categories are present, and only in 3 percent of the posts is no populist element. There is only one post, where all three categories are present at the same time:

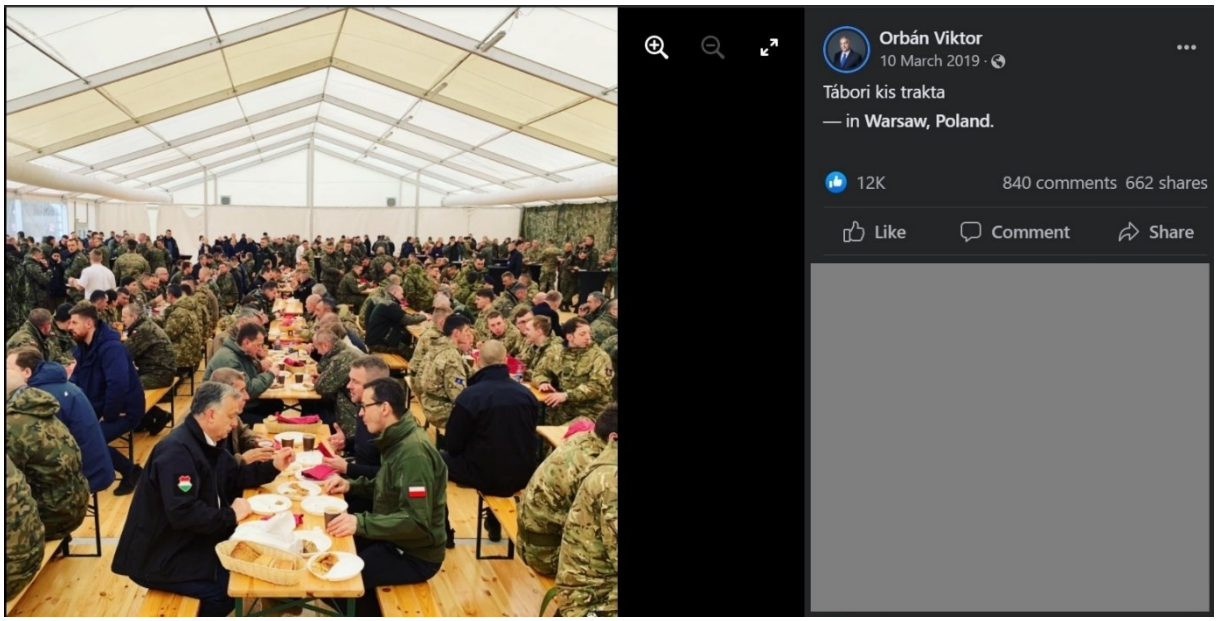


Figure 3. All three categories in a post. Viktor Orbán’s Facebook post, 10/03/2019

In this post, the post text says “short tract from the camp”, which is a term with multiple meanings. It is not only a reference to a study on military theory from Miklós Zrínyi, a Hungarian military leader and poet from the 17th century, but it also means a feast, which is visible in the photo. Thus, it can be understood as the application of slang (colloquial and jargon terms, informal words in the post text, e.g.). Further, Orbán is wearing informal clothes, which is a sign of ordinariness. At the same time, the soldiers are signifying both threat and protection from threat.

As *Appeals to 'the People' versus 'the Elite'* subthemes seem to be the most important part of Viktor Orbán's populist style, it is worth having a more detailed focus on variables in this general category.

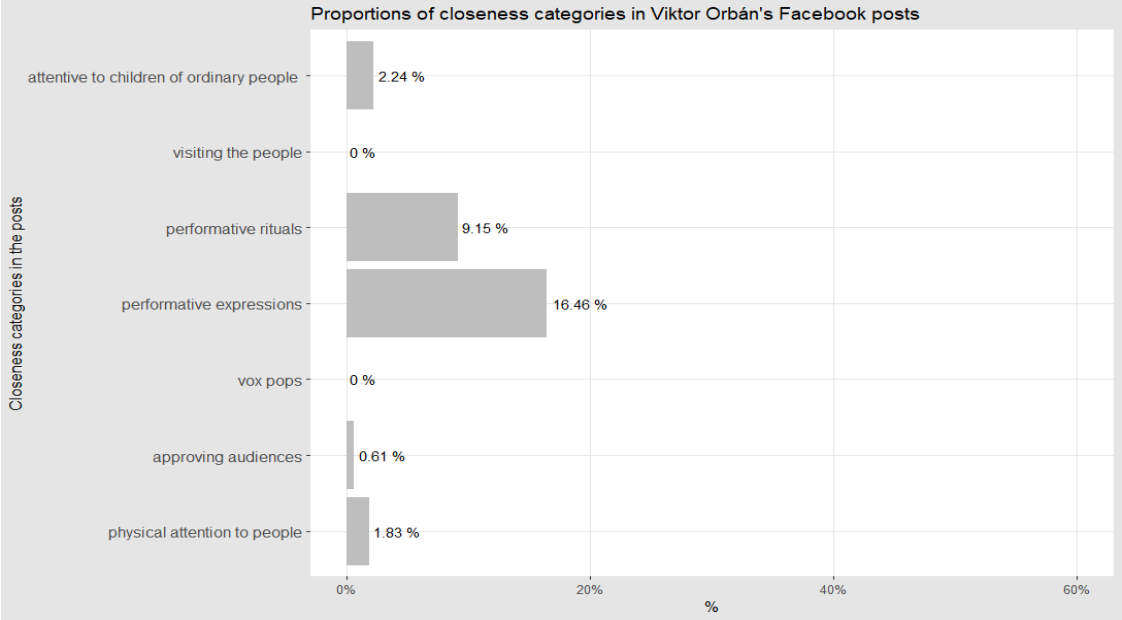


Figure 4. Detailed proportions of Closeness categories in Viktor Orbán's Facebook posts

Closeness categories in Orbán's posts appear primarily through performative rituals and expressions, the other categories are rarely applied. These show the Prime Minister's attendance at events such as funerals, memorial services, weddings or voting, and include verbal mention of these. It also includes the use of body language or expressions that create closeness with the viewer/listener/reader through the use of a consistent sign within the group, such as the thumbs-up, wave, or "go for it". The other categories are rarely used, while the ordinariness was depicted mainly through symbols, especially the representation of national symbols, casual dress, and the rural setting.

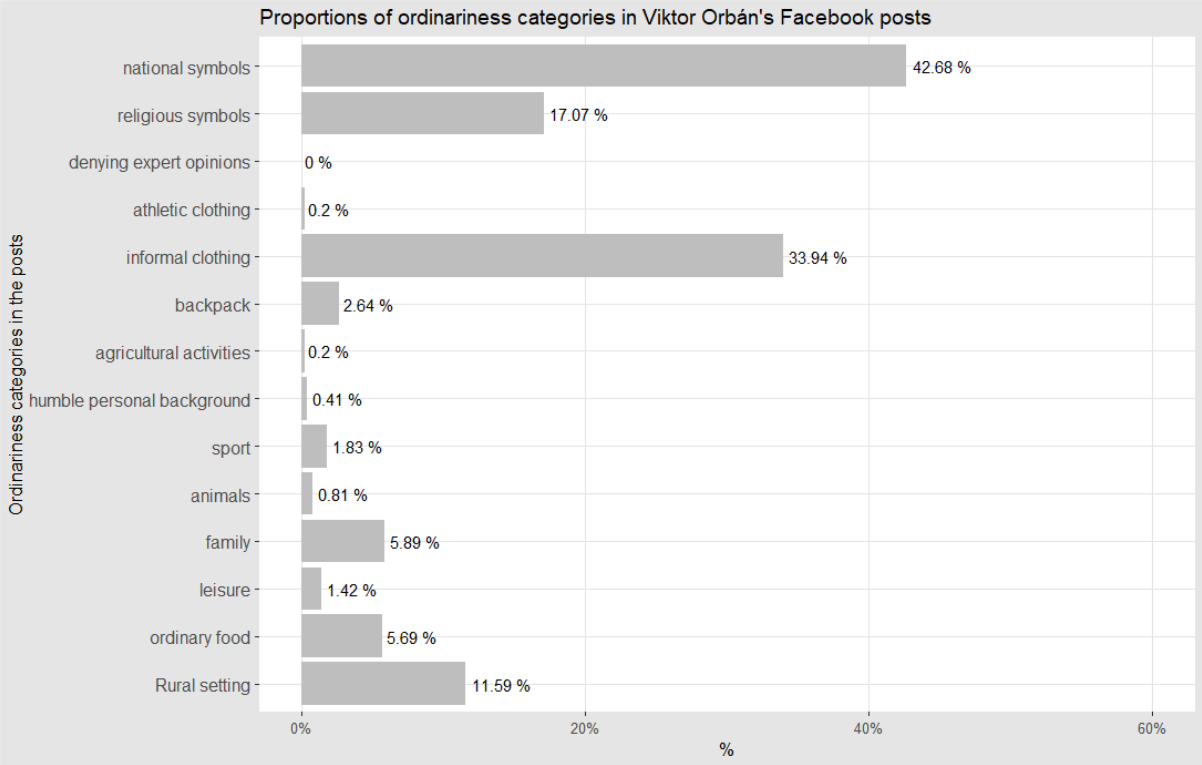


Figure 5. Detailed proportions of Ordinariness categories in Viktor Orbán's Facebook posts

Extraordinariness is primarily present by showing media interest around the leader and depicting his accomplishments.

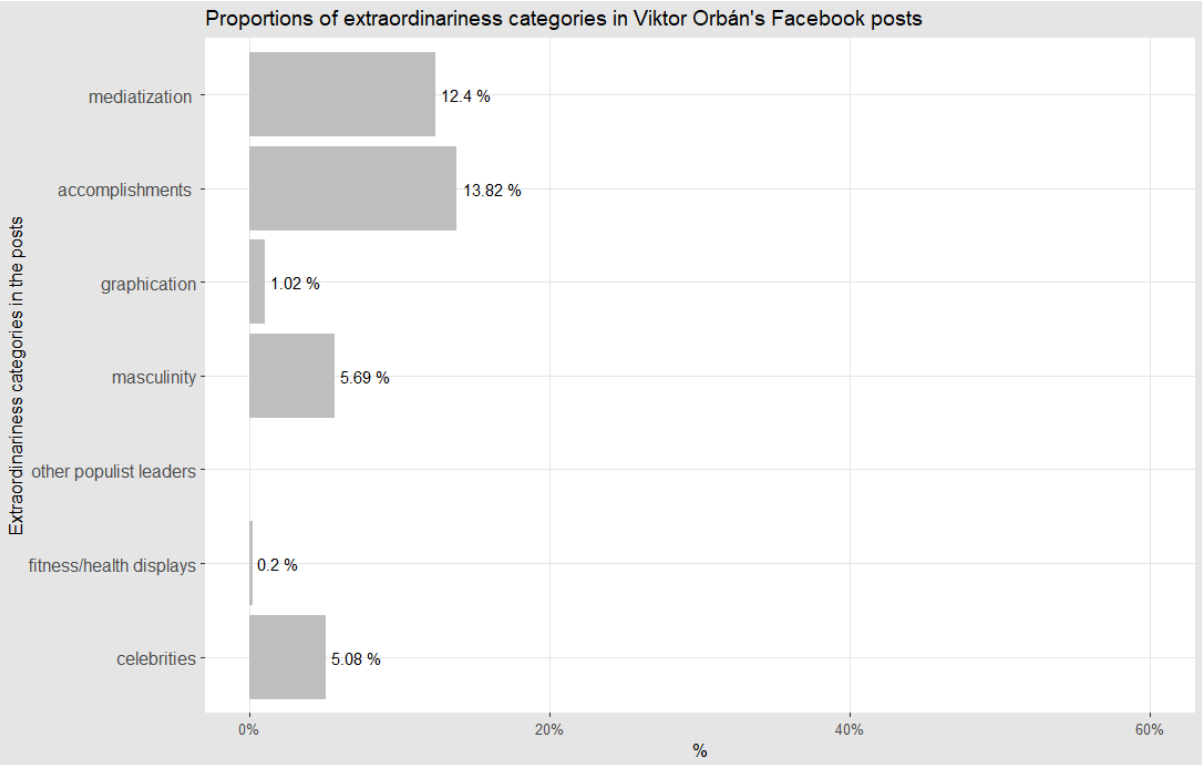


Figure 6. Detailed proportions of Extraordinariness categories in Viktor Orbán's Facebook posts

Both components of ‘the Elite’ category are commonly applied: in a significant proportion of posts (57 percent) some kind of elite actor appears in the post, while the depiction of a wealthy environment is present in every third post.

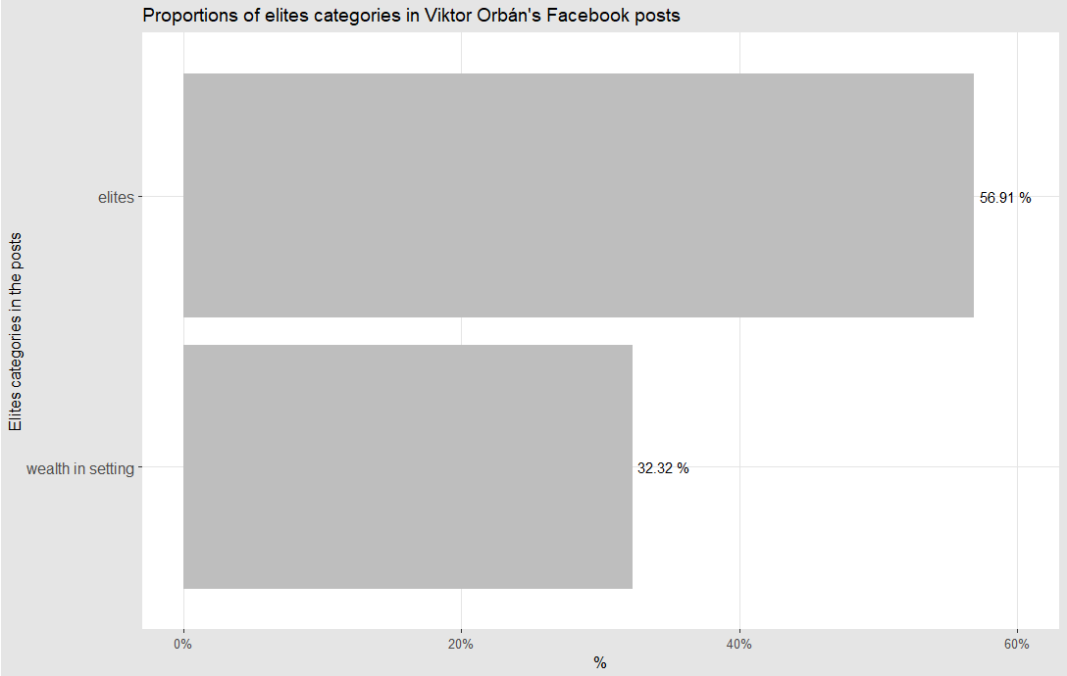


Figure 7. Detailed proportions of Elites categories in Viktor Orbán’s Facebook posts

To answer the second Research Question, we investigate our variables in verbal and image-based communication separately. As Figure 8 shows, there are differences in the application of the categories based on the modalities.

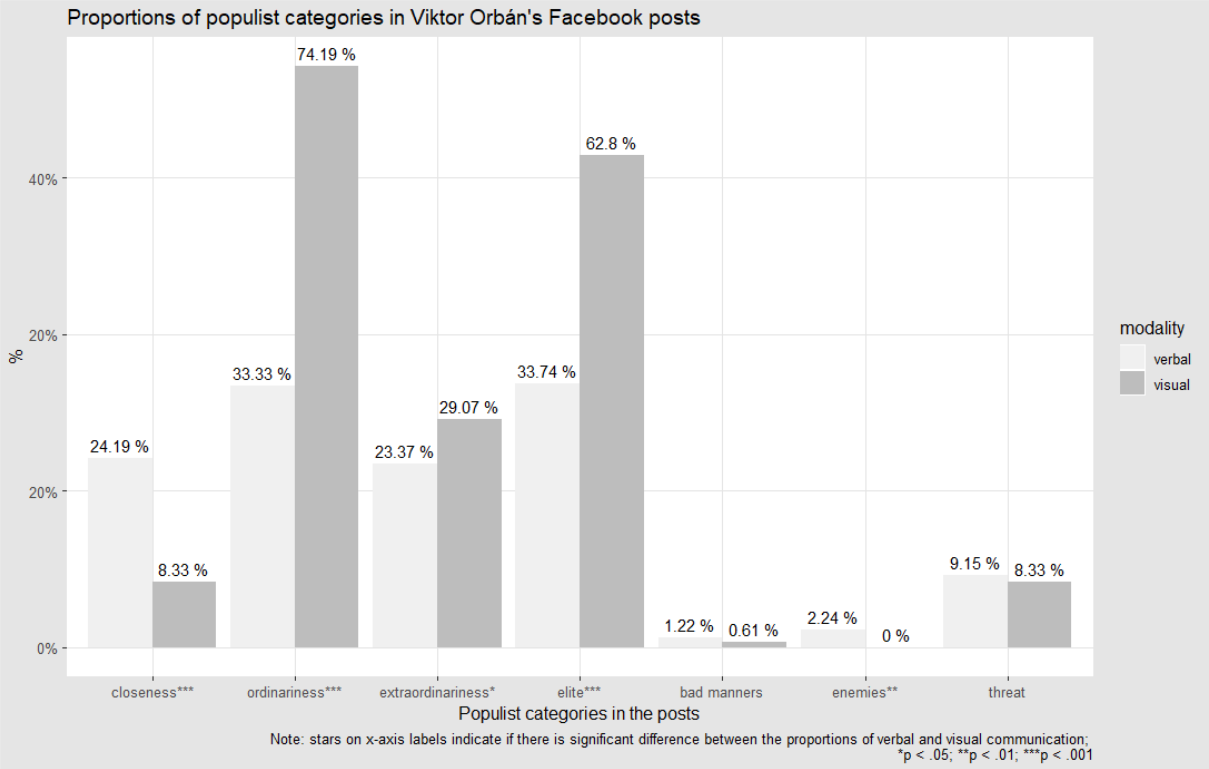


Figure 8. Proportions of visual and verbal populist categories in Viktor Orbán's Facebook posts

Closeness is conveyed primarily verbally by the Prime Minister, while ordinariness and elites are much more presented in their posts visually. Results on the visual ordinariness can be understood with the consideration of the fact that ordinariness categories are mainly present through symbols and clothing. Further, smaller but still significant differences can be perceived between the more visually depicted extraordinariness, and the only verbally represented enemy images, who, from this perspective might be considered as "invisible enemies". Bad manners and threats appear in similar proportions verbally and visually.

Considering the results across the three different time periods, data show relatively little difference.

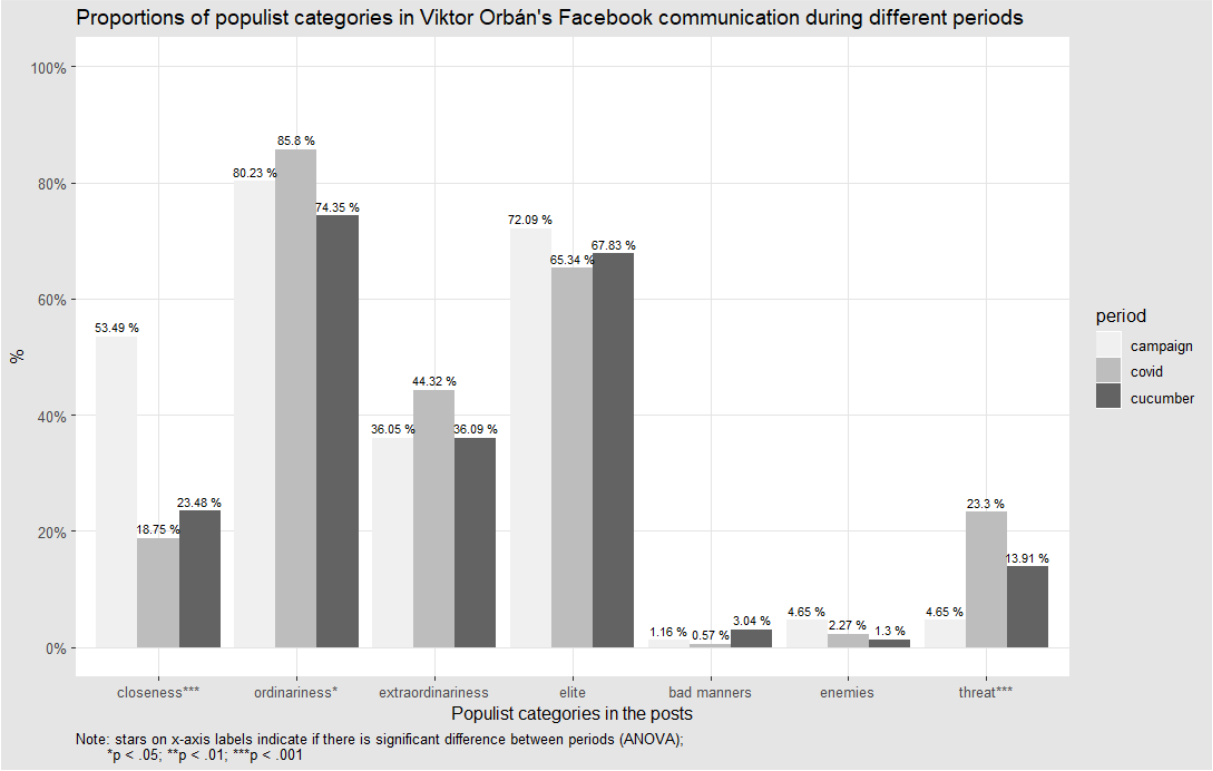


Figure 9. Proportions of populist style categories in Viktor Orbán's Facebook posts across the three different time periods

As Figure 9 shows, closeness categories are significantly more present in Viktor Orbán's image-based Facebook communication during the campaign period compared to other periods. When it comes to the campaigns, the leader's closeness to 'the People' appears in every second post. Unsurprisingly, the threat is much higher during the COVID-19 period than in the other periods. However, it is the least common during the campaigns, therefore it seems that it is less used to mobilize voters. There are only slight differences in the application of ordinariness categories, but it is worth mentioning that their proportion during the period of COVID-19 is a little, bus significantly higher than during the cucumber period.

Discussion

This study investigated Viktor Orbán's populist style on Facebook with the application of a coding instrument that operationalized Moffitt's (2016) notions of a populist style into a bimodal measuring system. There are conclusions to be drawn about how well Moffitt's populist style approach is able to describe the image-based social media communication of one of the leading European populist actors.

The Appeal to 'the People' versus 'the Elite' dimension captured by far the most

instances of the populist style. Crisis, breakdown, and threat categories are applied to a lesser extent, while Bad manners categories are rarely applied. Also, it should be highlighted, that within the Appeal to 'the People' versus 'the Elite' dimension, 'the Elite' is more highlighted than 'the People'. Further, the depiction of the elites is more positive than negative. This large emphasis on elites can also be observed in situational elements, as setting signifying wealth is more visible in the posts than the rural setting. Compared to the frequent presence of the elites, 'The People' as actors are relatively rarely depicted in the Hungarian Prime Minister's posts. However, the people-centric style is prominent in his self-presentation, as closeness and ordinariness play a significant role in his communication. While these elements are frequently presented in a fragmented way, it is not uncommon that the people-centric elements are directly contrasted with negative elite depiction.

Orbán's bimodal social media communication seems to be fairly consistent, with minimal differences across different periods. Depiction of the people-centric closeness increased during the campaign period, while extraordinariness during the period of COVID-19. However, differences between the modalities are more prevalent: the most frequently used populist elements are more pronounced in visual communication than in verbal communication. Ordinariness and elites are mostly presented visually, and the visual depiction of extraordinariness is also more prevalent than its verbal equivalent. These findings underline the necessity of studying visuals in populist communication. On the other hand, closeness is predominantly communicated by verbal cues.

Generally, results show that Orbán's social media-based populist style does not truly correspond to Moffitt's (2016) definition, his "populist toolbox" is narrower, and his populism is essentially based on 'the People' versus 'the Elite' dimension, specifically the people-centric self-representation and the mostly positive depiction of the elites. The latter can be an important strategy, as Orbán needs to represent an anti-elite position from an elite position with more than a decade of governance. Thus, this mixed depiction can be considered as a strategic tool. The stability and consistency of communication across the different time periods suggest that Orbán has already developed a populist style on Facebook that does not need to adapt to the actual events. Finally, an important finding is that populist style can be better grasped in visual messages, showing that populism research that focuses only on texts can only give an incomplete picture.

It is also worth noting that the study did not set out to examine Viktor Orbán's

interpretation of himself as a populist actor. Rather, the aim of our paper is to contribute to the understanding of populism as a communication style by translating Moffitt's (2016) theoretical framework into practice, by developing a more nuanced research direction that takes into account visual aspects as well. As a consequence, our results can be interpreted on a scale where the populist communication style and its elements can be applied by all political actors, populist and non-populist, even to varying degrees from period to period.

Nevertheless, the study has limitations. The research focused only on social media, but Orbán may communicate differently through other channels, e.g. crisis communication or bad manner may be grasped better on other communication platforms. Descriptive findings showed that Orbán uses Facebook predominantly for positive communication, thus crisis communication and bad manners do not fit here. Hence, it can be said that Moffitt's (2016) populist style definition can only partially grasp the Hungarian Prime Minister's social media communication. Future research should examine other channels and platforms by the application of the coding instrument.

It should also be noted that the populist Fidesz party's communication has a highly organized, multi-stakeholder communication strategy where a highly developed and organized system of task division operates (Metz & Várnagy, 2021). This means that certain populist elements may not be found in Orbán's communication but they may be highly present in the communication of other politicians, ministers, and media personalities. Future research may be worth examining the populist communication of Fidesz as a populist party separately.

It would also be worthwhile to examine and compare populist and non-populist leaders' communication from other countries to determine at a very general level how much Moffitt's (2016) populist style is inherent in the visual and verbal communication of populist leaders compared to non-populist politicians. Finally, another future direction could be the focus on moving images, as videos are also frequently used visual tools of Viktor Orbán, and they can convey different messages than posts with still images.

Overall, the coding instrument presented in this study can be a useful tool to study populism worldwide, as it has operationalized and translated Moffitt's (2016) theory into flexible verbal and visual frames, where cultural differences can easily be adapted to it by changing specific enemies, or clothes.

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The visual and verbal populist style of Viktor Orbán on Facebook

Coding scheme

The research has three main aims: (1) to test Moffitt's (2016) theory in practice; (2) to create a detailed and generalizable coding scheme based on the features of populist style; (3) to test whether the populist communication style differs in the three different periods (campaign period; crisis period; cucumber period).

As compared to parties, in performing populism the leaders have a distinctive role (Moffitt, 2016), the analysis focuses on the communication of populist leaders.

The method: multimodal quantitative content analysis.

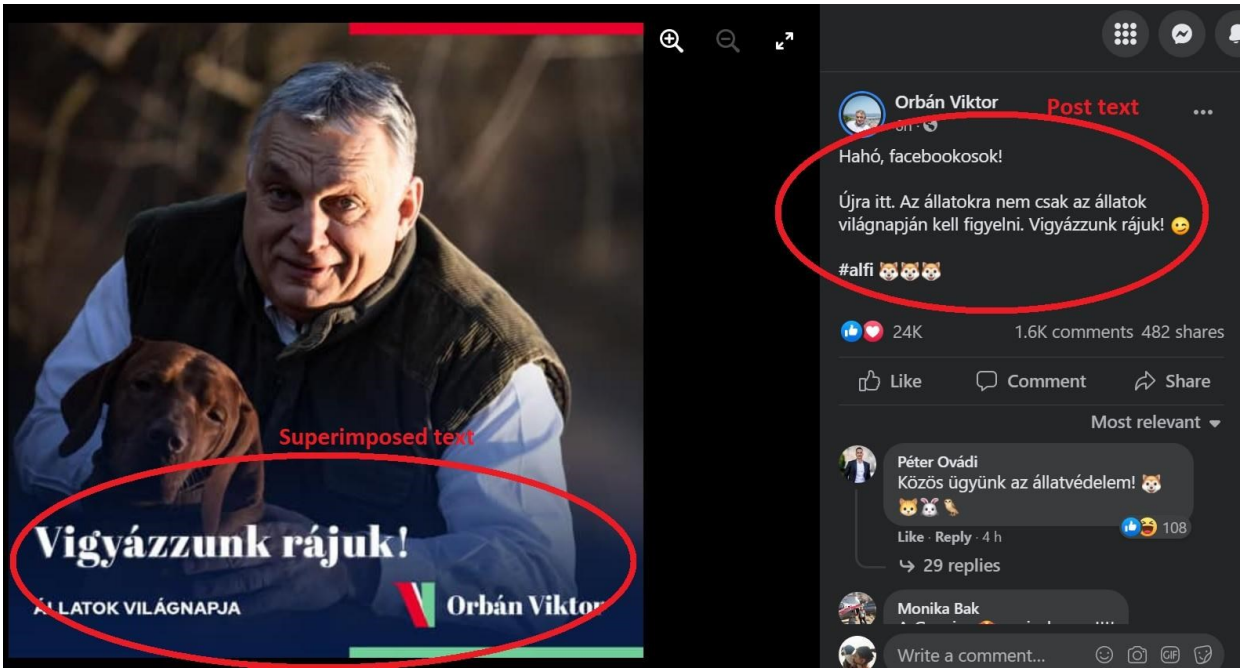
This coding scheme is based on Moffitt's (2016) work, which means that categories and variables are derived from the description of "Populism as a Political Style" (pp. 50-58).

The coding process, categories and variables

Coders receive an excel database containing all the Facebook image posts of the leader. Specifically, present research is focused on the Facebook communication of Viktor Orbán, hence the excel file contains his image posts from three different periods: the 2018 Hungarian Parliamentary election campaign; the first and second wave of Covid-19 (2020); a period of low activity between campaigns and crisis (2019-2020).

1. As a first step, coders should **open the link of the image post** from the excel column "Link".

   The **unit of analysis** is the individual image post from the leader on his/her account. An image post contains necessarily at least one image, and not necessarily, but possibly a post text, and/or a superimposed text on the image.



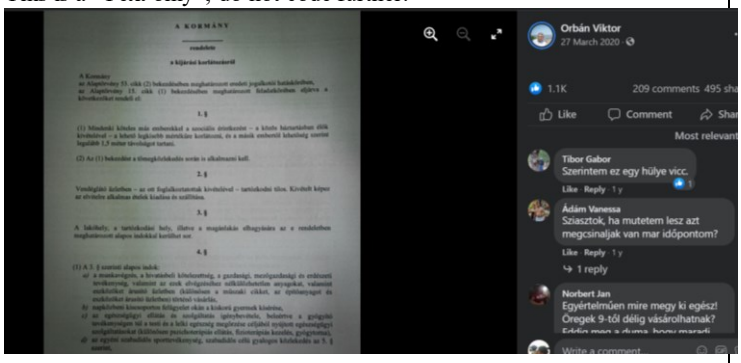
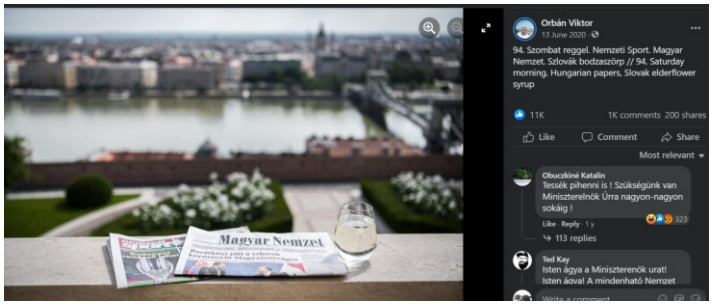
   This is a multimodal study, which means that both text and image are taken into account. The visual categories are about the individual image and the superimposed text on the image. Think of the superimposed text as part of the image and help to construct the visual message. Yet, when it comes to the presence of the leader please code him as present only when he appears in likeness. In other words, his brand logo superimposed on an image that he does not appear in, should not be treated as he is present. The verbal categories are about the text post. Posts should be coded accordingly: if there is only an image, with or without a superimposed text on it, code only the visual categories, but if there is a text post, code verbal categories too.

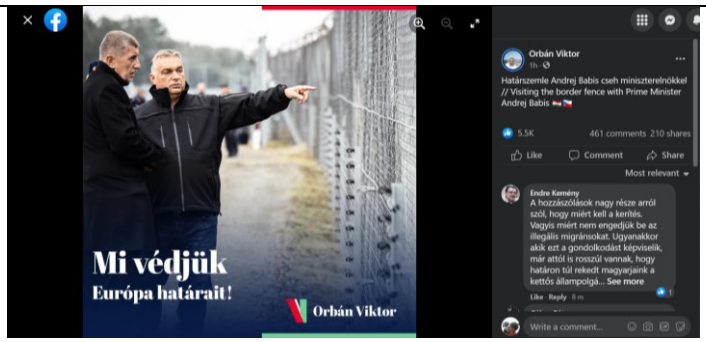
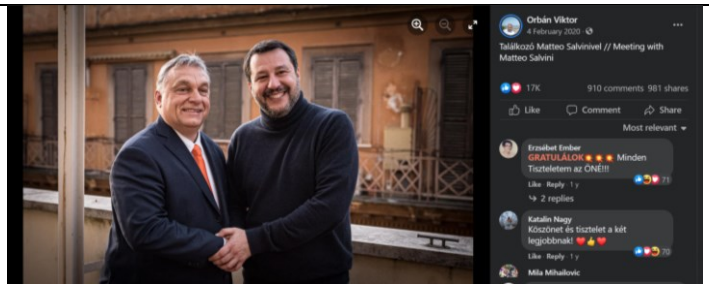
Emoji in the text post of the leader can serve as context for interpreting the text, e.g. smiley faces can help determine the valence of the text post. However, emoji are not coded as images.

2. The second step is to examine the whole post carefully. Coders are encouraged to scroll down follower comments to find context for the post if necessary and translate verbal messages if necessary (https://translate.google.com/). Coders should keep in mind that their personal views and interpretations should be put aside in applying the instrument. To do this, strive for applying the categories as they are defined and treat the images and words in the way that they are presented by the leader. The goal is to assess how the leader communicates with his/her social media audience. The goal is not to gain insight into coder evaluations or opinions of what the leader is communicating.
3. The variables are identified according to whether they are **fulfilled** (in this case, **enter 1** in the given excel cell or select the appropriate category from the drop-down list) or not (in case of **non-fulfilment, enter 0** in the given excel cell).
4. There are 5 main sections to this coding instrument: MODALITY, VALENCE, PRODUCTION (Camera angle and Shot distance), PEOPLE AND PLACE (Actors, Number of the people, and Setting), and THREE DIMENSIONS ADAPTED FROM MOFFITT (Appeal to 'the People' versus 'the Elite'; 'Bad Manners'; and Crisis, Breakdown, Threat.) All sections start with specific instructions relevant to that one, then categories are described in more details.

SECTION 1: MODALITY

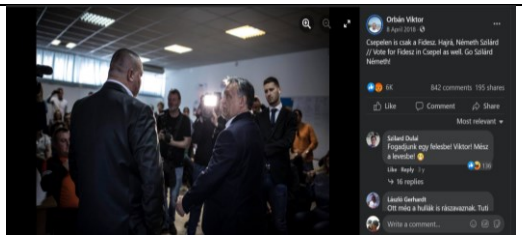
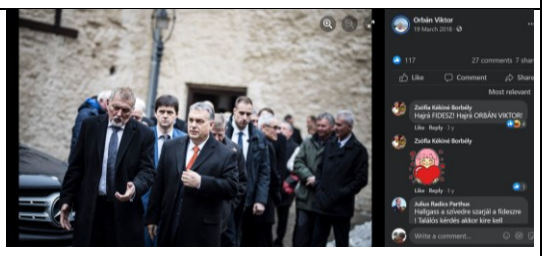
1. This section focuses on the visual and textual components of each post, which means that coders should take into account both the visual and the textual elements according to the instructions.

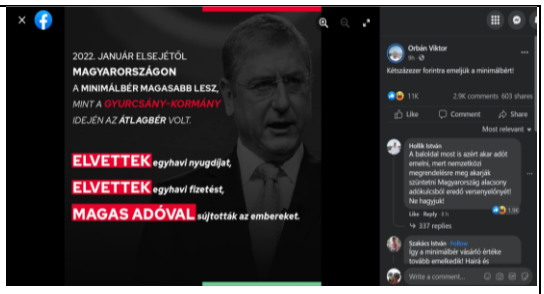
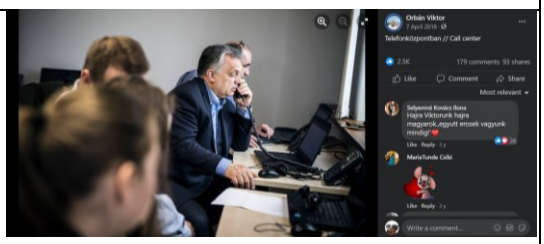
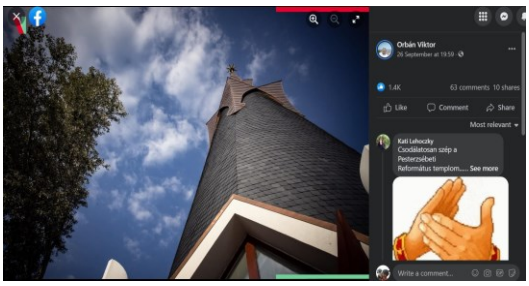
MODALITY		
Text only *1=yes* *0=no*	Images containing only text, e.g. only statistics, diagrams, pictograms, or screenshots about Twitter posts, laws and regulations are coded as "yes" here and will NOT be coded further. The idea here is that the image is entirely taken up by words--no contextual or background clues are visible. However, images that contain text but include people (e.g., holding a banner, a street scene with relevant graffiti) or newspaper headlines showing contextual surroundings should not be treated as "Text only." It should be coded as an image and the textual information should be treated as part of the image used in making coding decisions.	This is a "Text only", do not code further:  This is NOT a "Text only", should be coded further: 

Text on the image *1=yes (there is text on the image)* *0=no (no text on image)*	If there is text superimposed on the image after it was taken (e.g., banners, flags, logos, etc.) code "yes" here. Treat the text on the photograph as part of the image and use the information as part of the image for subsequent visual categories.	
Post text *1=yes* *0=no*	If there is a verbal message that accompanies the post next to the image*, please code "yes" here. If the post appears as an image only, code "no" here. *The excel file has a "Message" column that contains the post text, even if there's no actual post text visible after open the link – we can see the message in the excel file. Code this as a post text, because they are actually post texts. If there are different messages in the actual post text and the "Message" column, focus on the actual post text.	

SECTION 2: VALENCE

2. This section refers to the overall tone of the post in terms of positivity, negativity, and neutrality. This means that coders should focus on both the visual and textual components of each post when deciding the overall tone, as valence can be affected by the image itself, the text of the post, and the text on the image. Consider all of these dimensions for a global (all-inclusive) coding decision.

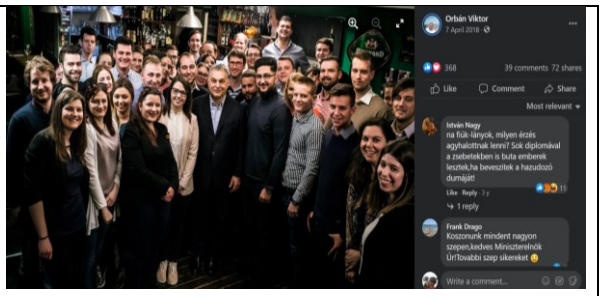
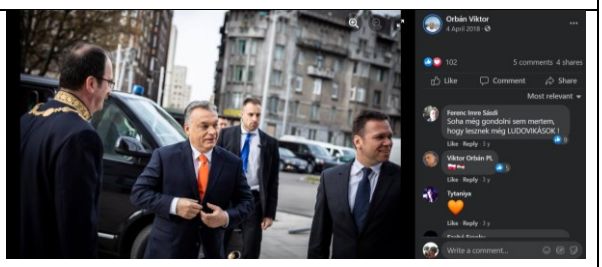
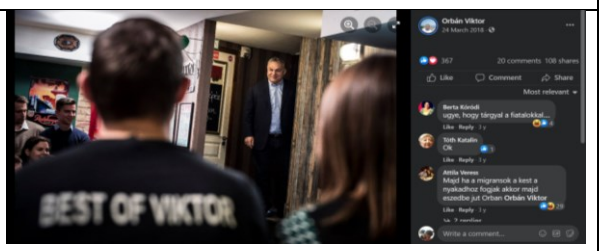
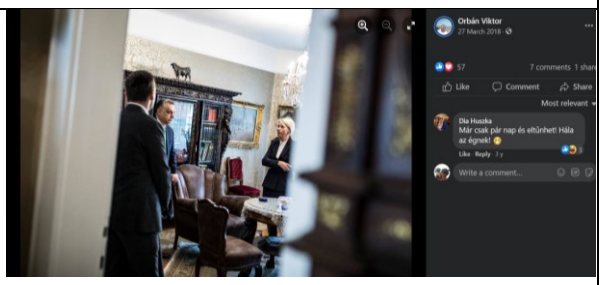
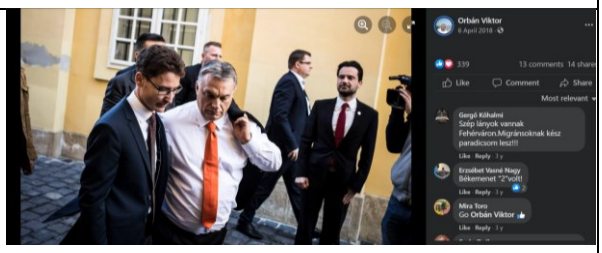
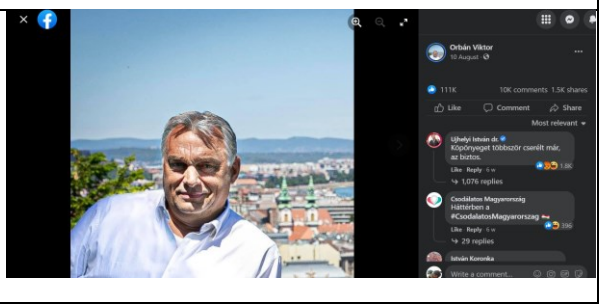
VALENCE		
Positive =1	The tone of the image could be positive due to positive facial expressions (smile, compassion) of the leader (take a specific look at the leader), or other people, or backgrounds (uplifting nature, patriotic, cheering crowds, bright colors, etc.). The verbal message could also contain positivity cues, (e.g. it reports some success, expresses hope for something positive in the future, states something positive about someone, says thanks for someone, or there is positive humor in the post.) If one modality's valence is positive and another is neutral, code the post as positive. For example: visual=neutral, text=positive, overall code will be positive. As the example shows, the visual valence is neutral due to the neutral facial expression of the leader, but the text post's valence is positive, due to the encouraging tone ("Go Szilárd Németh!") that refers to hope. Hence, the overall valence of the post is positive.	
Negative=2	The tone of the image is negative due to negative facial expressions of the leader (anger, sadness, fear, contempt, disgust), or other people (see the leader's frown and downcast eyes of people around him in the example), or backgrounds (somber and not uplifting). The textual message could set the negative tone with criticism of something or someone, expression of sadness, negative irony, or presents people with negative emotions. If one modality is negative and the other is neutral, code the overall tone of the post as negative. For example: visual=negative, text=neutral, overall code will be negative. As the example shows, the visual valence is negative due to the negative, concerned facial expression of the leader, and there is no text post'. Hence, the overall valence of the post is negative.	

Mixed=3	The tone of the image is truly a mix of positive and negative cues. This could be due to a negative facial expression (anger, sadness, fear, contempt, disgust) of the leader, or other people, or the backgrounds, with a positive text message or vice versa. E.g. the image shows a happy leader, while the textual message is something negative. As the example shows, the visual valence is negative due to the negative, angry facial expression of the depicted person, the dark colors, and the negative superimposed text, which is part of the visual message. However, the text post's valence is positive, as it is about the rise of the minimum wage (reporting success). Hence, the overall valence of the post is mixed.	
Neutral=4	The atmosphere of the image is neutral, there are no strong positive or negative facial expressions, nonverbal behavior, background cues, other actors and the textual messages also do not offer a specific valence direction, or there is no textual message that could help. Thus, both the verbal and the visual elements are neutral or factual without an emotional charge. The first image to the right offers an example of that: the visual valence is neutral due to the neutral facial expression of the leader, and the post has no specific valence direction either, as it is about a fact ("call center"). Hence, the overall valence of the post is neutral. It can also happen that there is not enough information contained in the post to make a decision about valence, use this option, just like in the second example on the right, there is no text post or superimposed text that could help decide the valence, and there are no facial expressions or any other contextual information. But use it sparingly. It might include a photo without a good view (e.g., back of head) of the leader's facial display, no other people present in the photograph, and no contextual information to assess valence.	 

SECTION 3: PRODUCTION--CAMERA ANGLE AND SHOT DISTANCE

3. In this section the focus is on the image alone--thus ignore the text post and text on image. This means that coders should focus only on visual components of each post when deciding the production details.

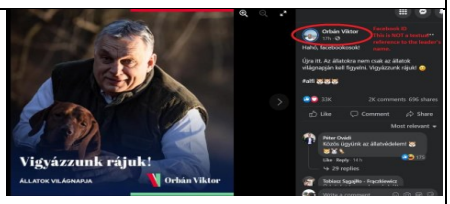
PRODUCTION: **Angle or camera perspective** (Code only for humans. If there is no human face in the picture, code 0 for both production categories.)

High=1	High angle shot looks down at the subject from a higher perspective. Keep an eye on the leader--the angle should apply to the leader, as it does in the example to the right.	
Eye-level=2	The leader is at eye-level with the camera. If the leader is not present, other people are at eye level with the camera.	
Low-angle=3	The camera angle is positioned below the eye line of the leader, looking up at the leader. The example above is a good example of the camera being at eye level with people in the picture, but at a low angle on the leader.	
PRODUCTION: **Camera distance** (Code only for humans. If there is no human face in the picture, code 0 for both of the production categories.)		
Long shot=1	Showing the full figure of the leader (or other people if he/she is not present) inside the frame, which signals an impersonal distance between the leader and the camera. Long shots might also include panoramic views of nature, skylines, or masses of unidentified people. The example on the right shows that the camera is far from the leader, thus his full figure is visible from this distance.	
Medium shot=2	When the figure of the leader inside the frame is cut off somewhere between the waist and the knee. This signals a social but not close distance to the camera. The example on the right shows that although people in the background are depicted from a long shot, the leader's figure is closer, his legs are not visible, thus this is a medium shot of him.	
Close-up shot=3	Only the head and shoulders (or even more facial prominence) of the leader are visible inside the frame, suggesting close distance from the camera and a personal relationship. In the example on the right, only the head and shoulders of the leader are visible, his face is close to the viewer of the image, which makes this picture a close-up shot.	

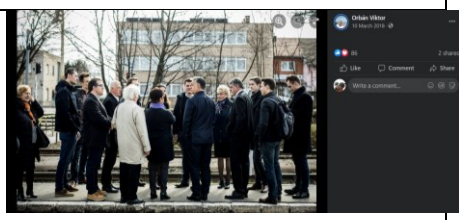
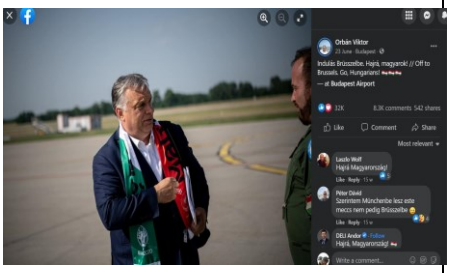
SECTION 4: PEOPLE AND PLACE

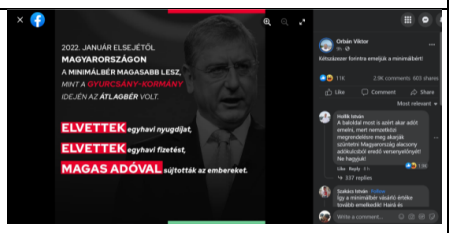
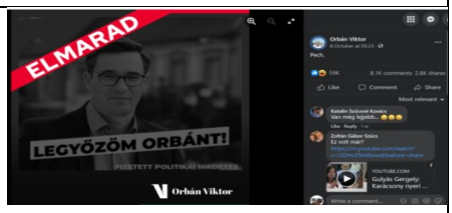
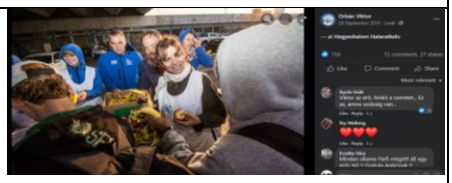
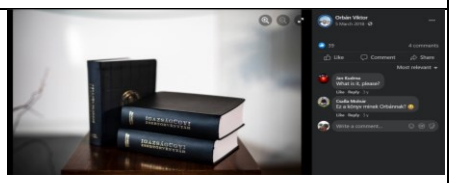
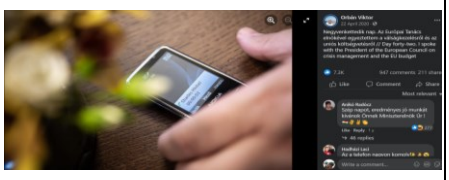
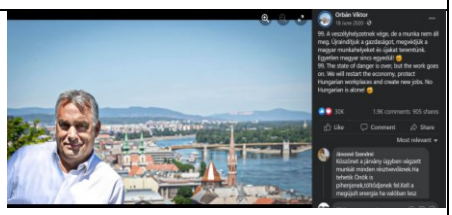
From this point forward, coding decisions have to be made for the image and text separately--please see the separation of visual and verbal coding decisions in the columns.

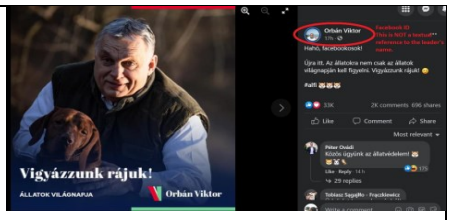
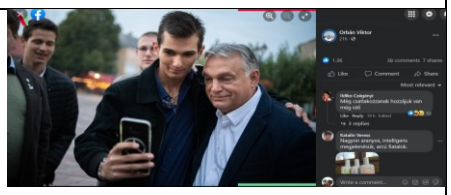
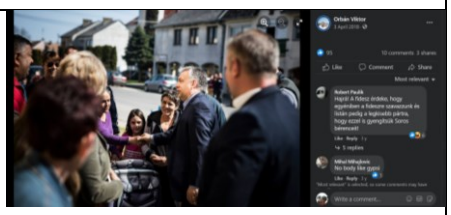
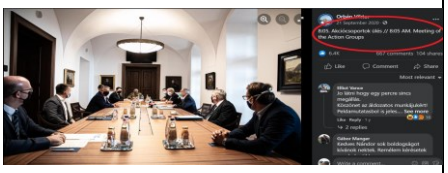
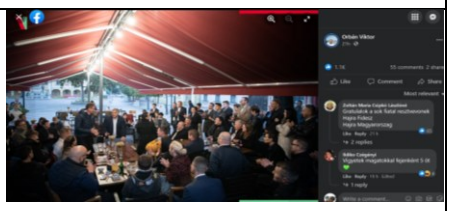
4. The following categories are designed to capture who is appearing in the post, the density of human representation, and the setting of the post.

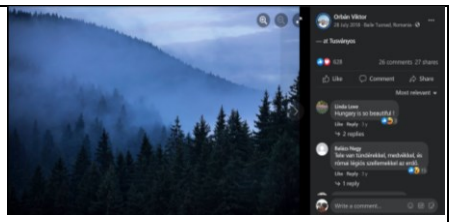
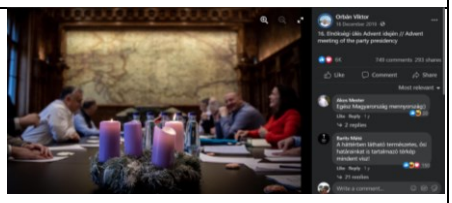
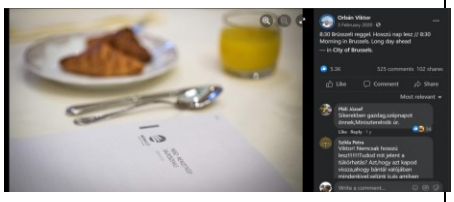
Who is in the post?	**Visual Description**	**Verbal Description**	**Examples**
Actors			
The leader *1=yes* *0=no*	If the leader is recognizable in the image code "yes." If the leader is not present visually, code "no." Again, be sure **not** to code the leader as present due to the branding logo superimposed on an image in which he is not appearing in likeness.	Textual reference in the post text mentions the name of the leader, or reference to him/herself in first-person singular (E/1 = én, engem, nekem, etc.). Pay attention that the Facebook ID is not part of the post text, just as the example on the right shows, do not code it as reference to the leader.	
Other populist leader *1=yes* *0=no*	A populist leader other than Orbán is visually present. Other populist leaders can be from the country of the leader (Hungary=Péter Jakab, Jobbik), but they can be from other countries too, as the example shows on the right: the Polish populist leader is depicted with Viktor Orbán. Dead populist leaders may not be visible (e.g. an image of the funeral) but they should still be coded visually if the image is of their funeral service. They may also appear in an old photo or in a painting or statue. In all cases code them as visually present. For populist leaders check: <u>The photos of the most important populist party leaders</u>, and the <u>Populists in Power Around the World (2018)</u>, at the end of the coding scheme.	Mention any other populist leaders. Other populist leaders can be from the country of the leader, but they can be from other countries too. For populist leaders check: Populists in Power Around the World (2018), at the end of the coding scheme.	
Elite *1=yes* *0=no*	Elites are people who have political, bureaucratic, economic, religious and cultural power. Although a good sign of an elite is formal attire (suit & tie, or its equivalent for women with pantsuits or	Elites are people who have political, bureaucratic, economic, religious and cultural power. Focus on the verbal references to the below listed groups:	

	dresses), focus on the identification of specific groups, that can be identified by: (1) recognizing by knowing the depicted elite, e.g., the pope as a religious elite; (2) cues in the context of the post as in the image example where the name of a large company is prominent behind the economic elite.. Here are the kinds of elites to be on the outlook for--code any of them as present in this category: **Politicians:** from the leader's home country, from other countries, and from supranational level, such as EU politicians. **Bureaucrats and public administration**: judiciary, state or supranational bureaucracy, such as elites from the judiciary system, the administration or the bureaucracy. **Economic elite:** large corporations, executives, managers, economic powers locally or from all around the world, including institutions such as rating agencies, IMF, WTO). **Religious elite**: priests, ministers, rabis, clergy or religious leaders from any other faith group **Cultural elite:** artists (=not celebrities, who are known for being known) who are highly appreciated painters, musicians, producers, etc. and academics, scientists, experts in power positions. If any of these group members are visually depicted, code "yes". In the example to the right, the leader is depicted with executives of a large company. But the leader presence with the elite is not necessary, code "yes" here if	**Politicians:** from the leader's home country, from other countries, and from supranational level, such as EU politicians. **Bureaucrats and public administration:** judiciary, state or supranational bureaucracy, such as elites from the judiciary system, the administration or the bureaucracy. **Economic elite:** large corporations, executives, managers, economic powers locally or from all around the world, including institutions such as rating agencies, IMF, WTO). **Religious elite**: priests, ministers, rabbis, clergy or religious leaders from any other faith group. **Cultural elite:** artists (=not celebrities, who are known for being known) who are, but highly appreciated painters, musicians, producers, etc.), and academics, scientists, experts in power positions. If any of these group members are verbally referred to, code "yes". Although Brussels, EU, Soros, Gurcsány and Karácsony can be considered as Elite, do not code them here, there are separate categories for them.	

	any Elite can be identified in the image. Although Brussels, EU, Soros, Gurcsány and Karácsony can be considered as Elite, do not code them here, there are separate categories for them.		
'The People' *1=yes* *0=no*	Regular or ordinary people. Their presence is central to the image--in other words, they are the "subject" of the photograph. They could appear with the leader or not. Look for signs of modest clothing, occupations and settings that signal ordinary people. The goal here is to identify non-experts and non-elites. Code "yes", if regular people appear prominently in the photograph as is the case in the first example to the right. However, if only kids or children are depicted, they are not coded as "the People", we have a separate category for them.	Verbal reference to 'The People' (Hun: magyarok, az emberek, a nép) should be coded as a "yes" here. General references to groups of "the People" as "the victims" are coded as "yes". The second example to the right shows that the post text refers to "suitable people", thus it doesn't matter that the image is not about them, they appear verbally, so code it here.	
LGBTQ+ people *1=yes* *0=no*	Code "yes" if members of the LGBTQ+ community are depicted. Look for signs like rainbow flags, banners, pins, posters, or a piece of cloth.	References to the LGBTQ+ community.	
George Soros *1=yes* *0=no*	Code "yes" if George Soros is depicted in the image.	Verbal references to George Soros.	
Brussels *1=yes* *0=no*	Code "yes" if Brussels or the EU appears visually. This can be a superimposed text on the image, which is part of the visual message, just like in the first example on the right, or a street sign. However, the second example on the right shows only verbal references to Brussels, code "no" here. EU flag, the building of the EU parliament, and the logo of the EU with stars are signs of Brussels – if any of	References to Brussels or the EU, Europe in the post text or in the check-in option. The first example shows only a visual reference to Brussels with the superimposed text, do not code it here. However, the second example on the right shows verbal reference in post text, code "yes" here.	 

	these are present code “yes” here.		
Ferenc Gyurcsány *1=yes* *0=no*	Code “yes” if Ferenc Gyurcsány is depicted in the image, just like in the example on the right.	Verbal references to Ferenc Gyurcsány.	
Gergely Karácsony *1=yes* *0=no*	Code “yes” if Gergely Karácsony is depicted in the image, just like in the example on the right.	Verbal references to Gergely Karácsony. The example on the right has no such a reference.	
Migrants *1=yes* *0=no*	Code “yes” if refugees and asylum seekers are depicted, may be presented as amorphous, faceless masses of people, or individually. The check-in can help identify the places where migrants may be depicted, like in the example on the right: “Hegyeshalom Border”.	Verbal references to migrants, migration, refugees, refugee camps.	
The number of people			
No people *1=no people* *2=not applicable*	Code “No people=1” if no people are present in the image. This includes when only a hand or a leg is visible. The presence of people means that a head is visible, thus as the second example shows only a hand, it should be coded as “No people”.	Code “No people=1” if there is a reference to empty streets, deserted landscapes, or other references to the absence of people. These kinds of references may appear during the Covid waves, when people were not allowed to go out. If there is no verbal reference to people, or there is no text post, like in the first example on the right. This option should be used as “Not applicable=2”.	 
One person=3	Code “One person=3” if only one person is visible--no crowds or others in soft focus background.	Code “One person=3” if there is a reference to one person, this might be self-reference of the leader to him/herself, maybe in first-person singular (E/1 = én, engem, nekem, etc.). Pay attention that the Facebook ID is not part of the	

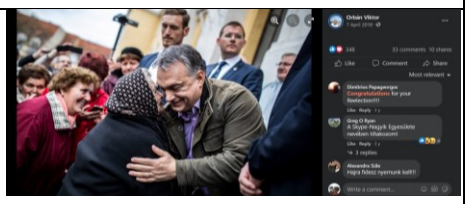
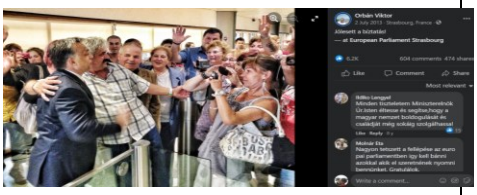
		post text, just as the example on the right shows, do not code it as reference to the leader.	
2-5 people=4	A countable group of people is visible--more than 1, no more than 5. Code "2-5 people=4" if the image contains 2-5 people, just like in the example image on the right.	Code "2-5 people=4" if there is a reference to a couple of people, inner circle, close advisors, etc. where one can assume a handful or a little more than one.	
6-15 people=5	Code "6-15 people=5" if there are clearly more than 5 people in the image but less tan 16. Some might be in soft focus but recognizable individual human bodies can be distinguished, as is the case in the first image on the right.	If the post mentions groups between 6 and 15, including a sympathy group, the cabinet, his staff, extended family, etc. Code "6-15 people=5" here. The second example on the right shows this reference to a small group with the text post "Action groups". This should be coded here.	 
16 and countable people=6	Code "16 and countable=6" if there are clearly more than 15 people in the image, but still countable. Some might be in soft focus but recognizable individual human bodies can be still distinguished, as is the case in the first image on the right.	Code "16 and countable=6" if there is a reference to the size of smaller crowd as "there are many of us", but clearly not a huge mass.	
Uncountable=7	If a mass of humans, indistinguishable at the individual level is visible, code "Uncountable=7". As the example on the right shows, no individual is distinguishable, only a large mass.	If there is a reference to the size of crowd as "as far as the eye can see" or a sea of faces, masses, etc., code "Uncountable=7". Also: verbal references to general groups as "the Hungarians", "the youth", or "the victims" are coded as "Uncountable=7".	
Setting			

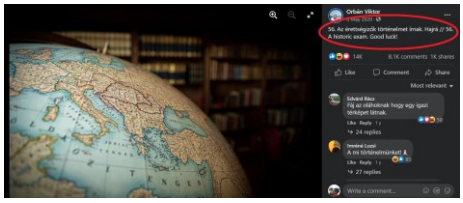
Rural *1=yes* *0=no*	Look for signs of nature and sparsely populated landscapes. This could be a landscape photo, just like the first example on the right, or this could be street scenes in villages without cues to suggest major urbanization, just like the second example on the right.	Verbal reference to rural life or specific rural areas. This could appear as simply mentioning "vidék" or "falu, falusi", or referring to the name of the rural area, either on the post text, or the check-in option. In Hungary, Budapest and county seats are coded verbally as "Urban", all the other places are coded as "Rural".	
Urban *1=yes* *0=no*	Major buildings, traffic, and pedestrians are visible as in the example to the right.	Reference to urban life or cities, just like in the example on the right, where the post text refers to London. In Hungary, Budapest and county seats are coded verbally as "Urban", all the other places are coded as "Rural".	
Signifying wealth *1=yes* *0=no*	Settings that are decorated with opulence or expensive minimalism. Expensive objects or architectural elements are visible and recognizable, just like in the first example image on the right, the architectural elements of the room, and the huge map on the wall. Further visual signs of wealth can be well-known expensive hotels (Hilton, Ritz) places that symbolize wealth (Wall Street, Andrássy street with the depiction of expensive shops), or well-known museums (Museum of Fine Arts), or the red carpet. The third example on the right signifies wealth by depicting fine-dining in a presumably fancy restaurant.	Reference to expensive, exclusive, and lavish environments, for example well-known expensive hotels (Hilton, Ritz) places that symbolize wealth (Wall Street, Andrássy street), or well-known museums (Museum of Fine Arts). The second example on the right verbally signifies wealth by the check-in option that shows Kapisztrán tér, which is located in the Buda Castle.	 

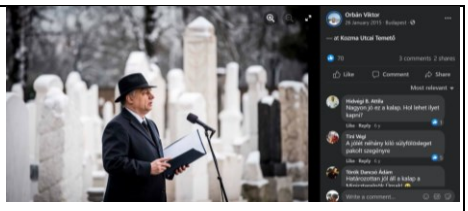
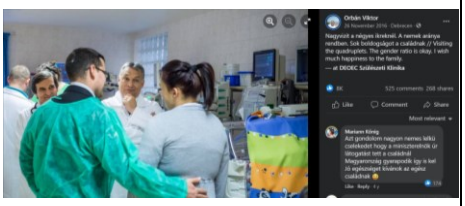
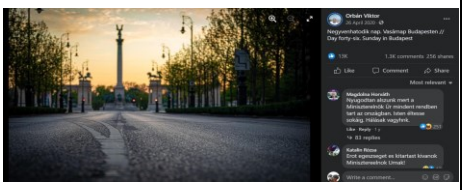
SECTION 5: THREE DIMENSIONS ADAPTED FROM MOFFITT

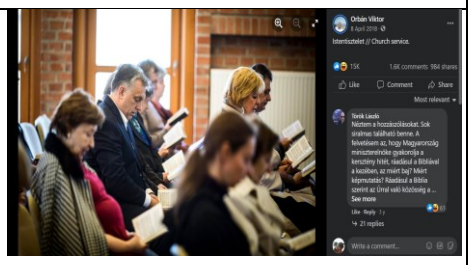
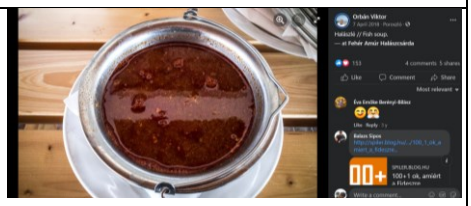
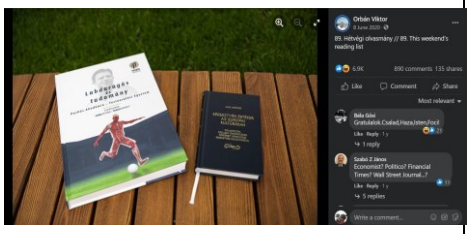
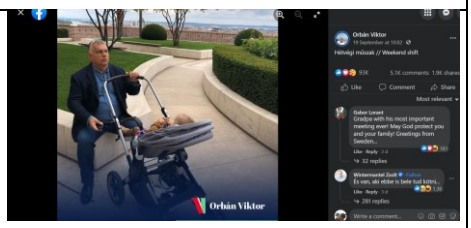
From here on categories are based on the three main "**Features of Populism as a Political Style**" from Moffitt (2016, 51-3).

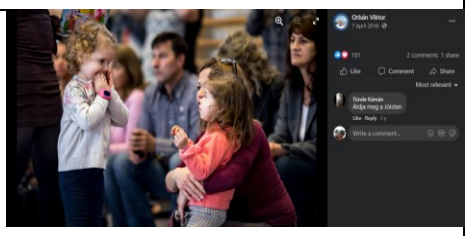
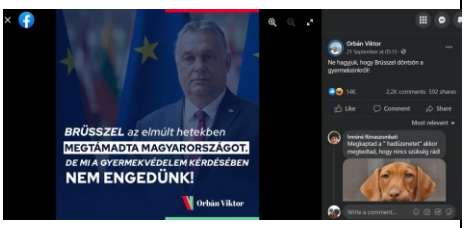
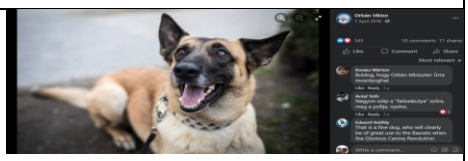
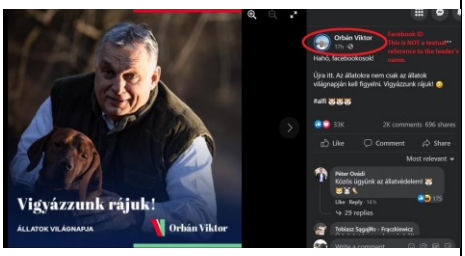
1. The following categories are designed to capture how the connection between "the People" and the leader is depicted, how the leader addresses "the People", and how he/she creates enemies and crises.

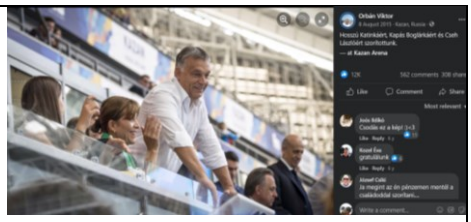
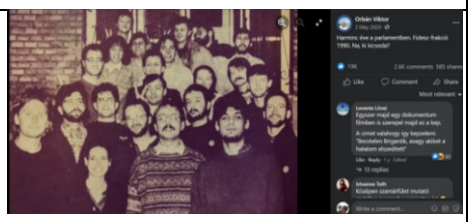
(1) Appeal to 'the People' versus 'the Elite' 2. This first Moffitt dimension has 4 sub-themes: closeness between the leader and the people, heartland symbols, ordinariness, and extraordinariness. 3. Each sub-theme contains a number of categories to capture the complexity of the leader positioning him/herself both as one with the people (and separate from elites) AND extraordinary compared to ordinary people.			
Closeness: Categories measure how approachable the leader is and to what degree the leader demonstrates **comfort with regular people,** suggesting he/she is one of them through physical access to him/her.			
Individualized physical attention *1=yes* *0=no* To code this, the leader must be depicted visually. If he/she is not visible, in likeness, code "no" here.	Touches, hugs, handshakes, bumps, or any physical closeness to 'The People' that is appropriate to the setting. Selfies are coded here too: images depicting taking of a selfie with the leader, just like in the second or the third example on the right. There might be instances where the arm of a person is visible in the foreground as a selfie is taken. Pay attention that one-person selfies (a person is taking a selfie him/herself), where the leader is not in sight, or only visible in the backrogund without individualized physical attention are not coded here, only selfies taken with the leader. This category refers only to 'the People', not to family interactions, and not to politicians. In case of physical closeness to politicians or family members, code "no" here.	Reference to personal connection and affection, e.g. "my dear/old friend", "people I immediately fell in love with". Also, if the post mentions making selfies with the people.	 
Approving audiences *1=yes* *0=no*	Code "yes" for the visibility of approving audiences. This might include showing them applauding, waving, cheering, whistling, laughing, showing thumbs up. Could also include people holding banners, posters that approve of the leader or his government. Reminder: The goal is to assess how the leader communicates with his/her social media audience. Thus if an image like the first example to the right is taken out of context in the post (which is a Charlie Hebdo protest in France not related to the Hungarian	Banners, posters or newspapers with words that approve the leader. Also, verbal references to pro-government protesters, or marches are coded here.	

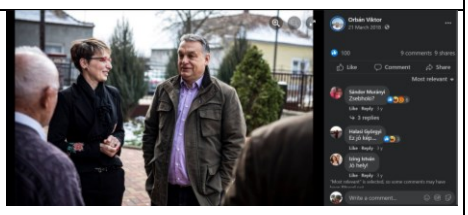
	government), code it as an approving audience. Depictions of pro-government protesters, marches are coded here too, as the second example on the right shows.		
Vox pops (voice of the people) *1=yes* *0=no*	If regular people are presented as endorsing/expressing approval of the leader code "yes." This might appear as an image of a person with text in quotation marks from that person either along or superimposed on the image. The idea is that the people's voice is heard, their words are deemed important by the leader.	The post text cites the people's opinion. There might be quotes from people or paraphrasing about what a regular person told the leader or wrote the leader. Again the idea here is that the leader gives voice to the people through his verbal post.	
Performative gestures/expressions *1=yes* *0=no* To code this, the leader must be depicted visually. If he/she is not visible, in likeness, code "no" here.	Specific expressions, gestures that go to the inner circle of 'the People', the followers, e.g. Sarah Palin winking; G.W. Bush hand-signaling a "W." This also extends to the leader clapping, showing "thumbs up", waving, "fist up", salute, or signaling V for victory. However, saluting soldiers are not coded as "yes", because we are interested in the leaders' performative gestures and expressions. The first example on the right depicts the leader showing his raised arm and fist (go team!) with the group of men as an expression of being part of this inner circle.	Verbal references to cheering someone on, like "Go for it!" or "Good luck!" (Hajrá!), just like in the second example on the right. Phrases like "illiberal" or "libernyák"should also be coded here as inner circle performative expressions.	 

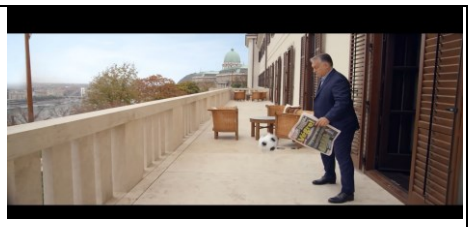
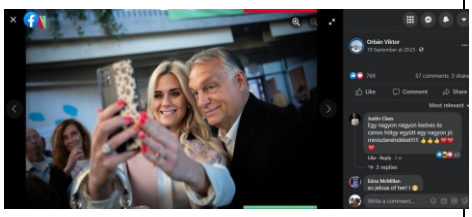
Performative rituals *1=yes* *0=no*	If the leader is shown attending rituals, such as funerals, weddings, laying wreaths at a memorial, church service, or the act of voting, code "yes." Focus on rituals suggest the leader believes and practices the rituals valued by the people. The example on the right shows both visual and verbal cues for this, by depicting the leader in a cemetery, and the check-in refers to a cemetery too.	Code "yes" if there is verbal reference to performing or attending rituals like funerals, weddings, church service, inauguration of a factory, or the act of voting, etc. The example on the right shows both visual and verbal cues on this, by depicting the leader in a cemetery, and the check-in refers to a cemetery too.	
Visiting 'the People' *1=yes* *0=no*	The leader is visiting ordinary people, victims at their homes, factory workers while working, etc. – but not the managers, experts, supervisors (they are elite). The example on the right shows the leader visiting quadruplets in the hospital – code "yes".	Verbal references to the visit of ordinary people, victims at their home, factory workers while working, etc. – but not the managers, experts, supervisors (elite). The example on the right refers to visiting a random family with quadruplets in the hospital - code "yes" here.	
The heartland symbols: Categories focus on national and religious symbols that signify the togetherness, the community of "the People" and the leader.			
National *1=yes* *0=no*	National flag, as in the first example on the right, coats of arms. Nationally significant places (Eiffel tower, Brandenburg Gate, etc.) In Hungary this can be any world heritage site, e.g. Andrássy street, the Banks of the Danube, Buildings along the Danube from the Margaret Bridge to Petőfi Bridge, the Buda Castle, The Széchenyi Chain Bridge, The Gellért Thermal Bath, the Liberty Statue, the Citadella, the Liberty Square. The second example shows the Andrássy street that leads to the Heroes' Square. Pay attention that Viktor Orbán's office is located in the Buda Castle, thus if the image depicts his balcony with the view of the Danube Bank, code "yes" here.	Verbal references to the nation, country, patriotism. This can be mentioning "nemzet", or just like in the first example, the post text sais "Respect for the brave!", which implies patriotism, or "the Hungarians".	 

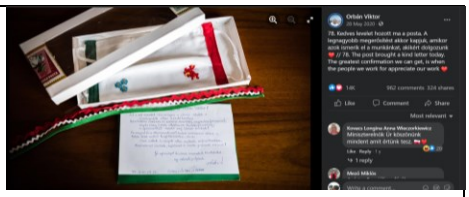
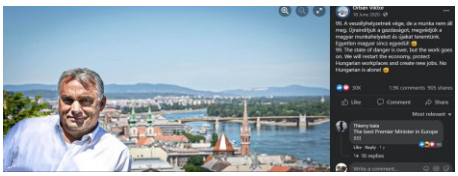
	However, if the image was taken in his office but no world heritage site is visible, code “no” here.		
Religion *1=yes* *0=no*	If the leader is visually associated with church, a cross, religious holiday celebrations, Christmas, religious books, code “yes.” As the example on the right shows, the leader is attending a religious ceremony.	Verbal reference to religion, church, faith, God, Christmas. Verbal references as “Isten Veled, Titi Bácsi! (God be with you, Uncle Titi!)” are also coded as “yes”. The example on the right shows verbal cues with “Church service”, thus it should be coded as a “yes” here.	
Ordinariness: This refers to being one of ‘The People’--living like them and sharing their values, passions, and interests.			
Ordinary food, drink *1=yes* *0=no*	Photo of any food or drink that is <u>not</u> fine-dining, expensive, e.g. homemade food, cafeteria food, fast food, traditional foods, a cup of coffee at a gas station. Pictures of restaurant foods can be coded here too, if it looks like a simple, non-expensive meal in non-expensive surroundings, just like in the example on the right.	Verbal references to ordinary, simple foods and drinks, or the act of eating/drinking these. The example on the right has verbal references to ordinary foods with “Fish soup”, thus it should be coded as a “yes” here.	
Ordinary leisure *1=yes* *0=no*	This category refers to everyday activities such as shopping, eating at a restaurant or café, cooking, gardening, etc. But not agricultural (food producing) activities. This also includes entertainment and visual reference to commercial movies, music, books (religious books are not coded here). The first example on the right shows the leader reading a book--thus code “yes” here. The second example shows only the books that he will read -- code “yes” here too.	Verbal references to doing any kinds of ordinary leisure (shopping, eating in a restaurant or café, cooking, gardening, etc). Verbal reference to commercial movies, music, books. The second example on the right shows verbal references with “reading list” thus code “yes” here.	 
Family *1=yes* *0=no*	A photo depicting the family members of the leader--own children, grandchildren are coded here too, as in the two examples on the right. The third example shows Viktor Orbán’s family	Verbal references to the leader’s own family (but not to families in general). The second example on the right shows verbal reference to the leader’s family - code “yes” here.	

	without his son, who is depicted on the second example on the right, while the fourth example depicts three from the five of his grandchildren. To identify them, the post text may be useful.		
Children *1=yes* *0=no*	A photo depicting the leader with children of other people--not his own, or only children of other people without the depiction of the leader. The first example on the right shows this, as from the previous category's examples coders can be sure that these children are not part of his family. The second example has a superimposed text about child protection, it's a general visual reference to children -- code "yes" here.	Verbal references to children in general in the post text. The post text of the second example on the right states "Don't let Brussels decide on our children!". This is a general reference to children.	 
Animals *1=yes* *0=no*	A photo depicting any kind of animal. The first example on the right depicts a dog-- code "yes" here. The second dog example also adds superimposed text reference to animals, another "yes" code.	Verbal references to animals in general. The first example on the right shows only visual depiction, the second example shows verbal reference in the post text to "animals" - code "yes" here. But don't forget, the superimposed text is part of the visuals, that's not a verbal reference.	 

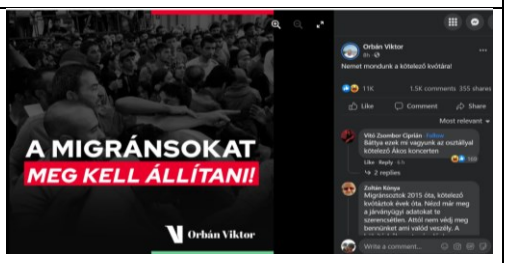
Sport events/language *1=yes* *0=no*	The leader is attending sport events, but not doing sport. Please pay attention that the symbol of the Olympic games does not necessarily means a sport event, e.g. it can be a press conference without a sport event. The first example depicts the leader on a stand - code "yes" here. The second example has no visual sport reference -- code "no" here. The presence of the leader is not necessary here -- if the image shows a sport event, it should still be coded as "yes" even if the leader is not seen at the event.	Using sport phrases, e.g. goal, play, etc. In the case of "Go!" it is important that the phrase has to be in a sport context to code it here as a "yes". Encouragements to candidates are not coded as sport language. Sport language can appear not only in sport related posts, just like in the second example: "Nearly a football team." - code "yes" here.	
Humble personal background *1=yes* *0=no*	Photos from the past of the leader, nostalgic pics are posted. The example on the right depicts the leader with the whole Fidesz faction 30 years ago - code "yes".	Verbal references to the humble personal background of the leader. The example on the right refers back to Fidesz, 1990 in the post text - code "yes" here.	
Agricultural activities *1=yes* *0=no*	Driving a tractor, using a scythe, harvesting, etc. (But not gardening, e.g. planting a tree/flower.) The example on the right shows exactly this - code "yes" here.	Using verbal phrases of agricultural activities (tractor, scythe, harvesting, etc.). The key here is that the reference is to growing or harvesting food. The example on the right has no verbal reference to agricultural activities, code "no" here.	
Denial of experts *1=yes* *0=no*	Visual images with superimposed text that questions or makes fun of experts or promotes the importance of common sense over learnedness.	Criticism of experts, academics, doctors, scientists. Reference to the superiority or importance of common sense. (Hun: "józan ész")	
Backpack *1=yes* *0=no* To code this, the leader must be depicted visually. If he/she is not	The leader is seen wearing a backpack, just like in the example on the right.	Verbal references to a backpack, just like in the example on the right, where the text post says: "New backpack".	

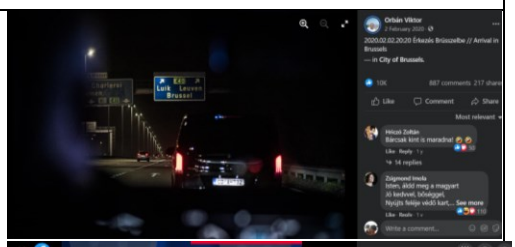
visible, in likeness, code "no" here.			
Informal clothing *1=yes* *0=no* To code this, the leader must be depicted visually. If he/she is not visible, in likeness, code "no" here.	Clothing is only important in the case of the leader, other actors' clothes are not relevant here. Generally, if the leader wears jeans, or t-shirt, or sweater, casual jacket, baseball hat or sneakers. Unbuttoned shirt, no tie, even if he wears a suit without a tie. The example on the right shows a casual jacket - code "yes" here.	Reference to clothing is only important in the case of the leader making reference to his own. References to other actors' clothes are not relevant here. Verbal references to casual clothing, e.g. jeans, or t-shirt, or sweater, or sweater on shirt, casual jacket or sneakers.	
Athletic clothing *1=yes* *0=no* To code this, the leader must be depicted visually. If he/she is not visible, in likeness, code "no" here.	Clothing is only important in the case of the leader, other actors' clothes are not relevant here. The leader appears in short pants, jogging gear, or other athletic gear", soccer/football jersey, like in the example image on the right.	Clothing is only important in the case of the leader, other actors' clothes are not relevant here. Verbal self-references to short pants, jogging gear, or other athletic gear.	
Extraordinariness: It shows the leader's ability to lead and represent the "the People" by presenting him/herself as the "embodiment of 'the People.'			
Celebrities *1=yes* *0=no*	The photo depicts the leader with celebrities (soccer players, athletes, pop stars, writers, etc.). Celebrities are people who are known for being known. The presence of the leader is not necessary here -- if the image shows celebrities, it should still be coded as "yes" even if the leader is not seen at the event.	The mentions the names of celebrities.	
Fitness *1=yes* *0=no* To code this, the leader must	If the photo highlights the leader's strong, virile and healthy physical state or athleticism, e.g. doing sport, code "yes." In the example on the right, the leader is kicking the soccer ball - code "yes" here.	If there is verbal reference to the leader's strong, sporty, virile and healthy physical state, code "yes." This can include reference to the health examination of the leader that shows he/she is healthy.	

be depicted visually. If he/she is not visible, in likeness, code "no" here.			
Masculinity *1=yes* *0=no* To code this, the leader must be depicted visually. If he/she is not visible, in likeness, code "no" here.	Visual depiction of masculinity and/dominance. This could be in clothing (unbuttoned shirt showing part of the chest) or in behavior that objectifies women such as appearing with scantily clothed women, touching women inappropriately, or signs that they are used as "props" to signal the leader's physical prowess. It could also be visible in depictions of women in traditional gender roles as caregivers or sex symbols. The first example on the right shows the leader in a group of strong men--it signals the leader is accepted in a group of macho men. The second example shows closeness to a woman that by general standards would be rated as attractive, of reproductive age, and eager to appear in close proximity with the leader. This signals the sexual prowess of the leader - code "yes" in both cases.	Verbal references to masculinity and manliness or denigrating another man as somebody less masculine. This also includes verbal references to women as objects or in their traditional roles as caregivers.	 
Graphication *1=yes* *0=no* To code this, the leader must be depicted visually. If he/she is not visible, in likeness, code "no" here.	Iconization of the leader, e.g. the Obama Hope poster, or any graphic design on the photo, e.g. a halo effect around the leader, just like in the example on the right.	This category is unlikely to emerge as a verbal category. References to the leader as a saint, hero, icon, knight, or having such qualities would constitute a verbal equivalence to be coded as "yes."	

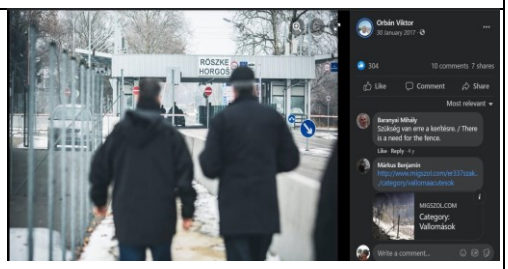
Accomplishments *1=yes* *0=no*	The photo depicts the leader's accomplishments, e.g. awards, results of elections, signings, policies, and/or celebration. The first example on the right shows accomplishments in terms of confirmation of his work with a letter from a voter thanking and praying for the leader's work. Images depicting the hard work of the leader, both in terms of physical and mental work, inauguration of a factory or a new route, or just like in the second example on the right, where the pile of paper symbolizes the huge amount of work.	The text refers to the accomplishments of the leader, e.g. "we did it", "we won" "we made it", winning. References to hard work or success of the leader. The third example on the right has a verbal reference to do hard work: "the work goes on". Code "yes" here.	 
Mediatization *1=yes* *0=no*	The presence of a media is clear and part of the subject matter of the photograph and their interest in the leader is shown. Both the first and second example on the right shows that the leader is facing a media interest. Depictions of the leader in newsrooms or at radio stations are also coded here. Pay attention that cameras and phones of "the people" are not coded as mediatization.	Verbal references both to pro- and non-government online or offline media attention to the leader, interviews given by the leader. The examples on the right has no such verbal references -- code "no" here.	
(2) 'Bad Manners' 4. We focus on 3 categories here: slang, swearing, and political incorrectness			
Slang *1=yes* *0=no*	Look for colloquial and jargon terms, informal words on clothes or banners, posters, or in the superimposed text on the image, which is part of the visuals. If it is present, code "yes." However, this category will most likely only be coded on the verbal side.	Colloquial and jargon terms, informal words in the post text, e.g. flaszter (=pavement), fusi (=working without a permit).	

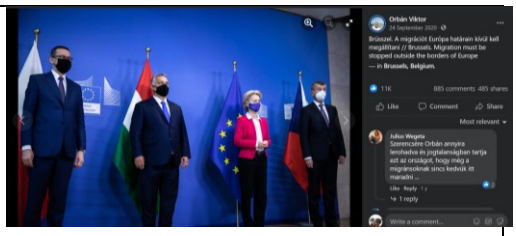
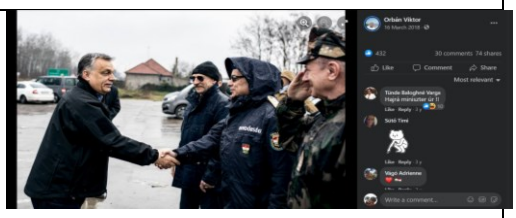
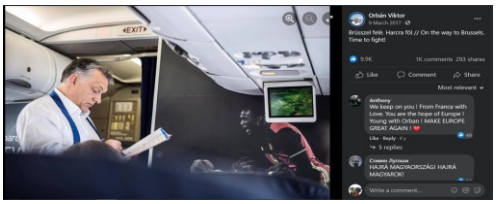
Swearing *1=yes* *0=no*	If swearing on clothes or on a banner, a poster, or in the superimposed text appear in the image, code "yes." This category will most likely only be coded on the verbal side.	'Coarse' and culturally vulgar expressions appear in the text post--code "yes."	
Political incorrectness *1=yes* *0=no*	This category might include socially inappropriate closeness (e.g. a hand kiss to a female politician) or visual appearances of the leader's defiance of politically correct attitudes about gender, sexual preference, religion, disability, age, race, etc.	To 'mention the unmentionable', presenting 'what everyone quietly thinks', claiming favoritism against Hungary, for example in the case of the EU/Brussels, treating Hungary unfairly. Slurs against minority groups, criticism of 'political correctness', taunting and mocking a group, individual, or ideas.	

(3) Crisis, Breakdown, Threat 1. We focus on 13 categories here. 2. The first 9 categories are about the depiction of/reference to potential threats, there are also 2 categories about signaling protection against threat and danger, and there are 2 categories measuring sounding the alarm, and simplification.			
Crisis, Breakdown, Threat: Groups and people			
Migrants as threat *1=yes* *0=no*	If refugees and asylum seekers presented as amorphous, faceless masses of people who are a threat, code "yes." Images of invasion, crossing borders illegally, overcrowding public spaces, posing a security threat in committing crime, individual refugees and asylum seekers wearing burkas, or poor, dirty clothes convey a negative and threatening depiction. The example on the right shows superimposed text about migrants as threat, also the image has a dark filter that refers to negativity, additionally the facial expressions of the refugees are somewhat negative – code yes here.	Code yes if there are references to migrants, migration, refugees, refugee camps as threats to the Hungarian way of life physically, culturally or economically.	
George Soros as threat	George Soros appears as a threat to Hungarian ideals and values by propagating and supporting the idea of	References to George Soros as posing a threat to Hungarian ideals by propagating and	

1=yes *0=no*	Open Society, liberal ideology, NGOs, and migration. Thus, he would appear as evil with a master plan to destroy conservative, Christian values.	supporting the idea of Open Society, liberal ideology, NGOs, and migration. Thus, he would appear as evil with a master plan to destroy conservative, Christian values.	
Brussels as a threat *1=yes* *0=no*	Depiction of Brussels, the EU Parliament, EU politicians, technocrats as agents of the threat to the well-being and independence of Hungary. The first example on the right shows a sign in the dark about Brussels - code "yes" here. The second example has a superimposed text "Brussels has attacked Hungary", which is a strong visual sign of threat - code "yes".	References to Brussels, the EU, EU Parliament, EU politicians, technocrats, who appear as agents of a threat,to Hungarian well-being and independence The first example on the right has no verbal threat reference, but the second has one in the post text: "Don't let Brussels decide on children!" - code "yes" here.	
Ferenc Gyurcsány as a threat *1=yes* *0=no*	Code "yes" if Ferenc Gyurcsány is depicted in the image as an agent of the threat, as in the example on the right. He appears as the embodiment of the left, who destroyed Hungary during his rule, and he has controlled all the opposition ever since. His goal is to destroy what Fidesz has built up.	Code "yes" if Ferenc Gyurcsány is referred to in the post text as an agent of threat. He appears as the embodiment of the left, who destroyed Hungary during his rule, and he has controlled all the opposition ever since. His goal is to destroy what Fidesz has built up. The example on the right has no verbal reference, only visual - code "no" here.	
Gergely Karácsony as a threat *1=yes* *0=no*	Code "yes" if Gergely Karácsony is depicted in the image as an agent of threat, as in the example on the right. He appears as the embodiment of the left, who destroys Budapest. The example on the right is coded as "yes" because of the dark and red colors that convey the negative message – a threat.	Code "yes" if Gergely Karácsony is referred to in the post text as an agent of threat, as in the example on the right. He appears as the embodiment of the left, who destroys Budapest. The example on the right has no verbal reference in this sense, code "no".	
Media as a threat *1=yes* *0=no*	Visual representation in the image or text on the image to suggest that news media are fake, biased, unfair, enemies of the people, anti- government or unreasonable.	References to"fake news" or any hostility towards news/journalism. This can be local or international news.	

The elite as threat *1=yes* *0=no*	Elites are people who have political, bureaucratic, economic, religious and cultural power. Elite can be: Politicians, Bureaucrats and public administration, from business or economic sectors, religious figures, or cultural experts. If any of the above mentioned groups or members of the groups are visually represented as threats or enemies (by dark and red colors or with the superimposed text), code "yes" here. Although Brussels, EU, Soros, Gurcsány and Karácsony can be considered as Elite, do not code their negative depiction here, there are separate categories for them.	Elites are people who have political, bureaucratic, economic, religious and cultural power, whose visual depiction can be various. Elite can be: Politicians, bureaucrats and public administration, from business or economic sectors, religious figures, or cultural experts. If any of the above mentioned groups or member of the groups are verbally referred to as threats or enemies, code "yes" here. Although Brussels, EU, Soros, Gurcsány and Karácsony can be considered as Elite, do not code their negative verbal appearance here, there are separate categories for them.	
	If the Elite is visually represented as threat, choose from the drop-down list, who they are: *Politicians*: From the leader's home country, from other countries, and from supranational level, such as EU politicians. *Bureaucrats and public administration*: Judiciary, state or supranational bureaucracy, such as elites from the judiciary system, the administration or the bureaucracy. *Economic elite*: Large corporations, executives, managers, economic powers locally or from all around the world, including institutions such as rating agencies, IMF, WTO). *Religious elite*: priests, rabbi, ministers, or leaders of any other faith group. *Cultural elite*: Artists (=not celebrities, who are	If the Elite is verbally referred to as threat, choose from the drop-down list, who they are: *Politicians*: From the leader's home country, from other countries, and from supranational level, such as EU politicians. *Bureaucrats and public administration*: Judiciary, state or supranational bureaucracy, such as elites from the judiciary system, the administration or the bureaucracy. *Economic elite*: Large corporations, executives, managers, economic powers locally or from all around the world, including institutions such as rating agencies, IMF, WTO). *Religious elite*: priests, rabbi, ministers, or leaders of any other faith group..	

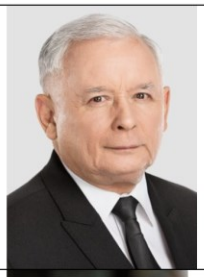
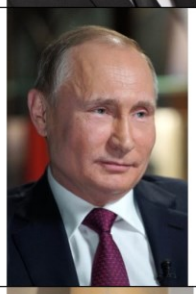
	known for being known), who are highly appreciated painters, musicians, producers, etc.), and academics, scientists, experts in power positions.	*Cultural elite*: Artists (=not celebrities, who are known for being known), who are highly appreciated painters, musicians, producers, etc., and academics, scientists, experts in power positions.	
Covid-19 as a threat *1=yes* *0=no*	Visual representation in the image or the superimposed text of the Covid-19 virus as a threat. This may appear e.g. as patients on breathing machine in hospitals, mass graves, dead bodies, or the picture of the virus itself. It is important to code images here as a "yes" if the tone of the image or the superimposed text refers to threat.	Verbal references to Covid-19 as a threat in the text post. It is important that the text not only describes the virus or its effects, it has to have a threatening tone to code it as a "yes".	
Other enemies as threat = write in the cell what kind of threats are depicted/mentioned in the post	Visual representation in the image or text on the image of any individuals or groups of enemies as threats that are not listed above, e.g. NGOs, or minorities. Please pay attention to "the People" as enemy, and if they appear like that, write "the People" here.	Verbal representation in the post text of any individuals or groups of enemies as threats that are not listed above, e.g. NGOs, or minorities. Expressions like this have an undefined enemy, code it as "undefined" – "We have to protect Hungary with the young generation. Their future is at stake." Please pay attention to "the People" as enemy, and if they appear like that, write "the People" here.	
Crisis, Breakdown, Threat: Mitigation			
Border *1=yes* *0=no*	Border signs, fences, barriers, stop signs. The border symbolizes the threat, but also the protection from it. The first example shows both the fence and the borders - code "yes" here.	References to the border, fence, barriers, stop signs. The border symbolizes the threat, but also the protection from the threat. The second example on the right shows verbal reference to the borders in the post text - code "yes" here.	

			
Armed forces *1=yes* *0=no*	The leader is seen with or showing off soldiers, police, border guards, or any armed forces as ready and eager to protect the country. This might manifest in images of formal military parades or informal mingling with people in uniform, as the two examples show. Thus, look for signs of people in uniform to make a coding decision. If they symbolize countering threat in the abstract or more concrete, code "yes" here.	References to soldiers, police, and border guards, or any armed forces. They symbolize the protection from the threat, countering the threat. References to military parades, welcoming ceremonies with soldiers, or informal greetings to/of armed forces. The second example refers to soldiers in the post text - code "yes" here.	
Crisis, Breakdown, Threat: Sounding the alarm			
Sounding the alarm *1=yes* *0=no*	Look for signs of exaggeration, attention grabbing, and tittelation to provoke fear and concern or to stir emotion. This might be visible in large and alarming red superimposed text on the image, darkend ominous images, negative compelling images (protests, migrant invasion, negative emotional facial displays) use of graphics to divide people or ideas into different conflicting camps within the image. There might be reminders from the past to provoke fear related to historical suffering. . The first example on the right shows exactly this: dark background, red letters, reminder from the past - code "yes" here. However, the second example does not have any	Words like: Emergency, breaking rules, alert, safety, victim, crisis, are good general indicators of this category's presence in the text post. Narratively, the text post might be disseminating information about a crisis or perpetuating a continuing sense of crisis. Also look for metaphors of conflict: e.g. war battles, sport or any other metaphors that signal crisis, conflict, threat. The second example on the right refers to a "fight" in the post text - code "yes" here.	 

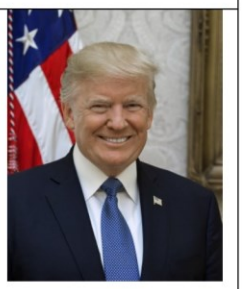
	visual signs, only verbal ones - code “no” here.		
Crisis, Breakdown, Threat: Simplification			
Simplification *1=yes* *0=no*	The idea here is that the leader offers simplistic explanations for problems and/or simplistic solutions for problems. Look for signs of the leader presenting him/herself as “the fixer” or the person who has the wisdom and will of a savior. Visually, this could happen through utopian (hopeful sunrises, sentimental human emotion, triumphant waving or high five) or dystopian (showing chaos or crises) images. Stock photos might be used to capture a simple, happy scene to suggest the quick fix for a crisis/problems. Most important-- the leader appears as the fixer who won’t let bad things happen by solving the problem. Large facial prominence of the leader, especially combined with a statement of the threat/crisis and claiming to be the fixer is a known way for communicating this idea. The point is here that a simple solution, and reassurance is offered for the problem. The example on the right shows superimposed text on a prominent image of the leader: “Brussels wants to tax the homeowners, wants to raise the utilities. Hungary insists on utility cuts.” This simplifies a problem and positions the leader as the guardian of Hungarians against unfair tax - code “yes” here.	References to simple solutions to complicated policy issues. The text post of the example on the right says: “large corporations should be taxed instead of families” which is a simplification of tax policies and the leader offering a quick fix- code “yes” here.	

Photos of the most important populist party leaders

Austria Harald Vilimsky		Macedonia Nikola Gruevski	
Belarus Alexander Lukashenko		Netherlands Geert Wilders	
Brazil Jair Bolsonaro		Philippines Rodrigo Duterte	

Czechia Andrej Babiš		Poland Jaroslaw Kaczynski	
Czechia Tomio Okamura		Russia Vladimir Putin	
France Marine Le Pen		Slovakia Robert Fico	

Germany Jörg Meuthern		Slovenia Janez Jansa	
Greece Alexis Tsipras		Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky	
Italy Silvio Berlusconi		UK Boris Johnson	

Italy Matteo Salvini		UK Nigel Farage	
Italy Giorgia Meloni		USA Donald Trump	
		Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdoğan	

Populists in Power Around the World (2018)

Country	Leader or Party	Years in Office	Type of Populism
Argentina	Carlos Menem	1989–1999	Anti-establishment
Argentina	Néstor Kirchner	2003–2007	Socio-economic
Argentina	Cristina Fernández de Kirchner	2007–2015	Socio-economic
Belarus	Alexander Lukashenko	1994–	Anti-establishment
Bolivia	Evo Morales	2006–	Socio-economic
Brazil	Fernando Collor de Mello	1990–1992	Anti-establishment
Bulgaria	Boyko Borisov	2009–2013, 2014–2017, 2017–	Anti-establishment
Czech Republic	Miloš Zeman	1998–2002	Anti-establishment
Czech Republic	Andrej Babiš	2017–	Anti-establishment
Ecuador	Abdalá Bucaram	1996–1997	Socio-economic
Ecuador	Lucio Gutiérrez	2003–2005	Socio-economic
Ecuador	Rafael Correa	2007–2017	Socio-economic
Georgia	Mikheil Saakashvili	2004–2007, 2008–2013	Anti-establishment
Greece	Syriza	2015–	Socio-economic
Hungary	Viktor Orbán	1998–2002, 2010–	Cultural
India	Narendra Modi	2014–	Cultural
Indonesia	Joko Widodo	2014–	Anti-establishment
Israel	Benjamin Netanyahu	1996–1999, 2009–	Cultural
Italy	Silvio Berlusconi	1994–1995, 2001–2006, 2008–2011, 2013	Anti-establishment
Italy	Five Star Movement/ League coalition	2018–	Anti-establishment
Japan	Junichiro Koizumi	2001–2006	Anti-establishment
Macedonia	Nikola Gruevski	2006–2016	Cultural
Nicaragua	Daniel Ortega	2007–	Socio-economic
Paraguay	Fernando Lugo	2008–2012	Socio-economic
Peru	Alberto Fujimori	1990–2000	Anti-establishment
Philippines	Joseph Estrada	1998–2001	Anti-establishment
Philippines	Rodrigo Duterte	2016–	Cultural
Poland	Lech Walesa	1990–1995	Anti-establishment
Poland	Law and Justice party	2005–2010, 2015–	Cultural
Romania	Traian Basescu	2004–2014	Anti-establishment
Russia	Vladimir Putin	2000–	Cultural
Serbia	Aleksandar Vucic	2014–2017, 2017–	Cultural
Slovakia	Vladimir Meciar	1990–1998	Cultural
Slovakia	Robert Fico	2006–2010, 2012–2018	Cultural
South Africa	Jacob Zuma	2009–2018	Socio-economic
Sri Lanka	Mahinda Rajapaksa	2005–2015, 2018–	Cultural
Taiwan	Chen Shui-bian	2000–2008	Anti-establishment
Thailand	Thaksin Shinawatra	2001–2006	Socio-economic
Thailand	Yingluck Shinawatra	2011–2014	Socio-economic
Turkey	Recep Tayyip Erdogan	2003–	Cultural
United States	Donald Trump	2017–	Cultural
Venezuela	Rafael Caldera	1994–1999	Anti-establishment
Venezuela	Hugo Chávez	1999–2013	Socio-economic
Venezuela	Nicolás Maduro	2013–	Socio-economic
Zambia	Michael Sata	2011–2014	Socio-economic