

POPULISM IN CROATIA: THE CURIOUS CASE OF THE BRIDGE (MOST)¹

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Abstract The main goal of the paper is to establish to which extent it is justified to label a newly established Croatian party The Bridge (Most) a populist party. In order to answer this question, the paper relies on theoretical, methodological and empirical insights from contemporary literature on populism. The study is based on inclusive approach to populism and accordingly developed categories for content analysis. The analysis only partially confirms the assumption that Most is a populist option. The authors suggest that Most is best described as a combination of centrist populism and an anti-establishment reform party. They suggest that populism research would benefit from distinguishing between anti-elitist and anti-establishment position of parties and politicians. Finally, they argue that the 'curiosity' of Most stems primarily from their awkward and paradoxical relationship towards Croatian political elite: Most's politicians criticise political elite for being incompetent and corrupt, while at the same time advocating alliance with this same elite in order to implement reforms and bring prosperity to Croatian society.

Key words Croatia, Most of independent lists (The Bridge), content analysis, populism, populist parties, anti-establishment reform parties

Introduction

The emergence of new political options in Croatia over the past couple of years has endangered the long-standing, stable political duopoly of the two strongest parties, the Croatian Democratic Union (Hrvatska demokratska zajednica, HDZ) and the Social Democratic Party (Socijaldemokratska

partija Hrvatske, SDP). The most important among them is the Bridge of Independent Lists (Most nezavisnih lista, Most), which won 19 seats in the 2015 parliamentary election and 13 in the 2016 early parliamentary election. The results of these two elections introduced Most as the third strongest political option in the country, both in terms of the number of received votes and the seats in the parliament, which consequently gave them the key to a

¹ The paper was presented at IAMCR conference in Cartagena, Colombia, in July 2017.

parliamentary majority and formation of the Government.

Numerous political analysts and journalists, as well as most of their political opponents, have labelled Most a *populist party*. Using recent theoretical, methodological and empirical insights from contemporary political science literature on populism, the goal of this paper is to investigate to which extent, if at all, it is justified to consider Most a populist option. Moreover, if Most indeed is a populist party, we want to establish the nature of their populism, especially in the light of an ongoing discussion about different *types* of populism, which permeates an important part of contemporary populism research.

In the theoretical part of the paper we first briefly present the most important contemporary approaches to populism, and then we elaborate our *inclusive approach* to populism. After that we describe the political context of parliamentary elections in 2015 and 2016. In the empirical section of the paper we explain the methodology used to establish if and in what ways Most could be considered a populist option. Then we present the results of the research and answer the main research question: is Most a populist party and what is the nature of their populism? Finally, we outline some of the insights that stretch beyond the specific case of Most that call for a more nuanced conceptualisation of anti-elitism, as one of the two key dimensions of populism.

Contemporary approaches to populism

Populism is one of the most promiscuous terms in contemporary political science which has been colloquially used to describe pretty much everything. Politicians frequently use it to attack the "demagoguery and unrealistic promi-

ses" of their opponents, while political analysts and journalists mostly use it to critically address the activities of different, usually new, political parties and politicians. In this paper we focus on contemporary scientific understandings of populism and we seek to answer the following questions: what is populism, what kind of political phenomenon is populism and when is it justified to label someone a populist? A review of contemporary literature on populism, which includes the studies published in the last two decades, indicates that there are several research approaches to the phenomenon, two of which have prevailed.²

The first approach understands populism as a specific form of political rhetoric or style available to different social and political groups. Proponents of this approach insist that populism is a "tactical device" (Jagers and Walgrave 2007) for attracting public support which is built around a rhetoric of simplicity and directness and that the only common feature of populist movements is people-centrism (e.g. Kazin 1995; Tarchi 2002; Jagers and Walgrave 2007; Moffitt 2014, 2016). A paradigmatic example of such understanding is the work of Jagers and Walgrave (2007: 322) who define populism "as a *political communication style of political actors that refers to the people*". They argue that "these political actors can be politicians and political parties, but also movement leaders, interest group representatives and journalists" who acquire a "communication frame that appeals to and identifies with the people, and pretends to speak

² For a detailed overview of different research approaches to populism that include understandings that stretch beyond the two dominant conceptions see Grbeša and Šalaj (2018a). These other approaches include, for instance, understandings of populism as a type of party organisation, strategies of political mobilisation, specific political discourse, particular economic model etc.

in their name" (2007: 322). Similarly, Kazin (1995) determines populism as a type of political communication used by those who claim to speak in the name of the people and who represent the interests of the "ordinary" citizens, regardless of their ideological views. Scholars who align with such approach believe that different populist movements lack common core values and the amount of common features required for populism to be treated as a political ideology.

On the contrary, the second dominant approach to populism believes that populism expresses certain ideas about how modern politics should look like, which is why it is reasonable to treat it as a political ideology. Such an understanding is engraved in perhaps the most influential contemporary definition of populism, provided by political scientist Cas Mudde. He claims that populism is "an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' and 'the corrupt elite', and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people" (2004: 543).

Most scholars who share this view of populism as a political ideology (for example, Canovan 2002; Akkerman 2003; Albertazzi and McDonnell 2008; Stanley 2008; Kessel 2015) rely on Michael Freedén's understanding of political ideology. According to Freedén (1996, 2003), political ideologies serve as conceptual maps of the political world that make it easier for citizens to think politically. Each ideology has a fundamental structure with several interrelated concepts. Thereby ideologies differ less in terms of the concepts they use and more in terms of the way in which they interpret and combine them.

So, to what extent does populism meet these conditions? Do different populist

movements have common features that allow for populism to be treated as a political ideology? The idea that society is divided into two homogenous, mutually antagonistic groups – honest people and corrupt elites – underlies all definitions that see populism as a political ideology. Populism emphasizes the unity and homogeneity of the people, but also the homogeneity of the political elite. The key feature of populism, as opposed to other political ideologies, is that it considers all differences between individuals, such as differences in class, race, social status, profession or any other socio-economic or socio-cultural characteristic, irrelevant in relation to the common antagonistic position towards political elites. Although it is acknowledged that there are declarative differences between particular political elites, the actual differences between them are non-existent. According to such understanding, populism can be both "left" and "right", progressive and reactionary, which largely depends on the political and economic context in which it is manifested, as well as on the values of the opposing elites. It is exactly these differences between populist actors and movements that make some researchers reject the understanding of populism as a political ideology and treat it merely as a political-communication style.

It seems obvious that populism does not have the same level of intellectual consistency, refinement, and comprehensiveness as is the case with "real" ideologies such as liberalism, Christian democracy or social democracy. However, this is where the concept of "thin ideology", originally coined by Michael Freedén's (1998, 2003) and adopted by a number of scholars (e.g. Mudde 2004; Stanley 2008), steps in. Freedén originally developed it in relation to nationalism while musing whether nationalism should be considered a political

ideology, since it does not respond to a number of important social and political issues to which "true" ideologies seek to respond. According to Freedon, "thin" ideology has, like mainstream ideology, a recognizable morphology, but, unlike mainstream ideology, this morphology is very limited. Applying the concept of "thin" ideology to populism, Stanley (2008) argues that populism differs from comprehensive or complete ideologies because it does not have a clear programmatic core and can thus take very different empirical guises. In spite of that, Stanley argues that populism can and should be regarded as a separate, "thin" ideology in which central and privileged position belongs to the people.

In order to avoid the style vs. ideology dilemma, and yet to emphasize that populism is a set of specific political ideas shared by all populist actors, a group of researchers has developed an *ideational approach* to populism (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2017; Hawkins and Kaltwasser 2018), which is essentially identical to the "thin" ideology approach. Hawkins and Kaltwasser (2018) claim that ideational approach sees populism as a specific set of ideas which evolves around central idea that politics is a "Manichean struggle" between the people and the elites. They believe that distinctiveness of the populist idea is in the combination of positive sentiments towards the people and people's will and negative sentiments towards the political elites.

Inclusive approach to populism³

One possibility to reconcile the stylistic and ideational approach is to suggest that populism is a "matter of degree" rather than to understand it exclusive-

ly as a style or as an ideology (see Pauwels 2011; Rooduijn and Pauwels 2011). Such grading approach typically revolves around a set of indicators that enable the identification of different levels of populism, ranging usually from "light populism," which pretty much considers populism to be a communication style, to "heavy populism" which embodies populism as an ideology.

We build on the idea that populism may be graded, but we move beyond the practice of investigating either "light" or "heavy" populism. We develop a research design that simultaneously investigates populism both in an ideational and stylistic sense. The value of such "inclusive approach" is that it can process both the "usual suspects" of populism and mainstream politicians who resort to populist communication, occasionally or frequently, depending on given social and political circumstances. In other words, it develops criteria to identify *true ideational populists* and to distinguish them from *populist-style* politicians.

At the centre of this *inclusive model* is Mudde's definition of populism, which suggests that populism has two main dimensions – a positive evaluation of the people and negative evaluation of political elites. In order for someone to be labelled populist, both these dimensions should be present. In other words, using Goertz's (2008) notion about constitutive features, we argue that the presence of both features represents a necessary and sufficient condition to identify someone as populist in an ideational sense. However, if references to people are present, but without clearly expressed resentment towards the elites, we cannot talk about populism in an ideational sense, but merely about populist style. There are, of course, cases in which anti-elitism is not accompanied by positive references to the people or is, conversely, complemented by negative

³ This chapter is based on the study Šalaj and Grbeša (2017) and the book chapter "Textual Analysis: Candidates and Parties in Croatia" (Grbeša and Šalaj 2018b).

references to the people. We argue that neither of these cases can be categorized as populism, but rather as "technocracy" or "anti-establishment politics". This anti-establishment orientation, along with demand for reforms and an innovative approach to party organization, represents a distinctive feature of *anti-establishment reform parties* (Hanley and Sikk 2016). We shall return to this later in the paper.

Conceptually speaking, populism understood as an ideology is "broader" than populism as a political-communicative style, because, apart from the positive reference to the people, it contains the dimension of diffuse, general political anti-elitism. However, it is clear that these two understandings "overlap" in one of the defining features: people-centrism. Therefore, we find it plausible to conceptually and operationally reconcile these two understandings so that the frequent positive mentioning of the people or the use of specific linguistic figures aimed at familiarising with voters (Jagers and Walgrave 2007; Šalaj and Grbeša 2017) point to the presence of populism as a political-communication style, while simultaneous presence of positive evaluation of the people and negative evaluation of political elites points to the presence of populism as a political ideology.

In sum, our inclusive approach is essentially based on an ideational understanding of populism, but it combines it with a stylistic understanding to make a clear distinction between *true* populist politicians and mainstream politicians who resort to populist style, but who are essentially not populists. People-centeredness and attachment to "ordinary people" is what these two understandings have in common. What fundamentally differentiates them is an antagonism towards political elites that is always present with true populist, but

is missing from the discourse of populist-style mainstream politicians.

The Context of the 2015 and 2016 elections

Parliamentary elections in Croatia are held every four years and they basically represent an interchange of power between the conservative Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) and the leftist Social Democratic Party (SDP).⁴ HDZ governed from 1990 until 2000 when it was replaced by a leftist coalition led by the SDP that was in power until 2003. The HDZ then took over again and governed until 2011, when it was again replaced by the SDP and its partners, who were in power until 2015. In the 2015 parliamentary election, the newly established party of Most, led by Božo Petrov, a psychiatrist and mayor of a small town of Metković in the south of Croatia, unexpectedly won 19 parliamentary seats and rattled the cage of the HDZ and the SDP.⁵

The media hailed them for breaking a long-standing political "duopoly" and achieving "what the third parties have been failing to do for the past 15 years". They called them "a sensation" and "the real winners" of the 2015 parliamentary elections.⁶ Since neither of the two major

⁴ Description of the context was derived from electoral analysis published by Grbeša and Šalaj (2017).

⁵ The Bridge of Independent Lists (Most) was established in 2012 in the small town of Metković, where the leader of Most, Božo Petrov, overthrew the long-time mayor and "local sheriff" Stipe Gabrić Jambo. By 2015, it had developed into a network of independent lists from all parts of Croatia, transforming itself into a strong political option, attractive to voters from both the left and the right.

⁶ N.N. *Most je najveće iznenađenje izbora: Najviše glasova je zapravo oteo HDZ-u. Jutarnji list*, 17 November 2015 (accessed: July 5, 2017).

parties, SDP and the HDZ, won the necessary majority to form a government, Most used its newly acquired blackmail potential to side with the conservative HDZ and decide the winner of the election. Most seemingly conditioned its support on the implementation of "reforms" and insisted on the appointment of a non-party Prime Minister. In the end, this leader materialized in the figure of Tihomir Orešković, a successful manager from multinational Israeli pharmaceutical cooperation Teva, and a member of the Croatian diaspora. Tomislav Karamarko, leader of the HDZ at the time, had to satisfy himself with the position of First Deputy Prime Minister. However, the ongoing conflict between the HDZ and Most inevitably led to the rapid collapse of a cabinet that, according to Raos (2016), "was built upon a structurally unstable quasi-coalition arrangement. The parties involved showed an utter lack of mutual trust and agreement on key policies". Karamarko consequently stepped down as party leader and soon afterwards he was replaced by Andrej Plenković, a promising career diplomat who had been a member of the European Parliament since 2013.

An early election, held in September 2016, resulted in a narrow victory by the HDZ which did not manage to establish a government on its own and had to come to an agreement with its disobedient partner – Most. The HDZ won 61 seats in this election, leaving it in a somewhat better position than in 2015 (when it won 59 seats). Most lost some of its support and returned 13 seats. The second deal between these two parties was closed by appointing Božo Petrov as President of the Parliament (*Hrvatski sabor*) and granting ministerial positions to four other prominent members of Most.⁷ The partnership between Most

and the HDZ remained tense, mostly due to Most's schizophrenic attempts to act as the opposition while in Government. In April 2017, only three weeks before the local elections, the so called "Agrokor affair" finally brought this troubled partnership to an end. Agrokor is a concern that employs around 60,000 people across Southeastern Europe.⁸ It was established by Ivica Todorić, a Croatian tycoon known as "Gazda" (The Boss), who owned 95 percent of the company. Under the weight of debts and dubious business philosophy, the company came to the verge of collapse. The Government swiftly passed a law, known as "Lex Agrokor", which enabled the state to intervene and save the company representing one of the backbones of Croatian economy. At that point, the opposing SDP demanded the resignation of the Finance Minister, Zdravko Marić, who used to be a highly-positioned manager in Agrokor before joining the Government in 2015. They claimed that Marić was familiar with the company's problems, but still said and did nothing about it. Although Marić denied any knowledge of the company's troubles, the SDP called a no-confidence vote in the parliament. Most supported their request, leading Plenković to fire three of Most's ministers from the Government, while the fourth voluntarily resigned. A no-confidence vote held on 4 May ended in a tie (75 MPs in favour

151 representatives are elected through a proportional electoral system. A parliamentary majority requires the support of at least 76 MPs. In 2016, HDZ's parliamentary majority included representatives from HDZ, representatives from Most, representatives of national minorities, representatives from Milan Bandić 365 – Party of Labour and Solidarity, a representative from the Croatian Democratic Assembly of Slavonija and Baranja (HDSSB) and a representative from Željko Glasnović's independent list.

⁷ Croatia has a unicameral parliament whose

⁸ <http://www.agrokor.hr>

and 75 against), keeping Marić in office but leading Božo Petrov to resign from the post of the President of the Croatian Parliament. "In this moment, I feel morally right in front of God and the people, because I was protecting their interests to the last minute", said Petrov upon resigning. Plenković then made a deal with the liberal Croatian People's Party (HNS) who had nine MPs who all entered the Parliament as part of the opposition People's Coalition (Narodna koalicija), led by the SDP. Four of HNS' MPs regarded the deal with the HDZ as political treason, refusing to support the Government. They were consequently expelled from the party, but the five MPs who were obedient were enough for Plenković to secure parliamentary majority.

Research design

Building on the premise that populist discourse is reflected in communication practices of politicians, parties and movements, the decision was made to base our study on a content analysis of *statements* given by the most prominent representatives of Most published in the country's major newspapers and magazines (see Appendix). Although most studies of populist discourse are conducted on party manifestos or other forms of official party materials (party election broadcasts, etc.), we argue that mediatized discourse is more revealing or generally, less guarded. Hence, it is reasonable to assume that statements will capture the fundamentals of politicians' discourse. On the other hand, the biggest limitation of statements as research materials is the immanent presence of the media filter which needs to be acknowledged and properly addressed by researchers.

The whole sample includes two sets of statements of the most prominent officials of Most. The first set includes 57

statements that appeared throughout the 2015 election campaign (from 1 September to 8 November 2015, the election day) and in the period after the election, until the constitution of the Parliament (9 November to 23 December, 2015). The second set includes 81 statements that appeared throughout the 2016 election campaign (from 1 July to 11 September 2016, the election day) and in the period after the election, until the constitution of the Parliament (12 September to 30 September 2016). The unit of analysis is *a statement*, whereas we differentiate between 1) interview (which is treated as one unique statement); 2) paraphrased statement (that includes all paraphrased words of a politician mentioned in the article) and 3) statement as a direct quote (that includes all quoted words of a politician mentioned in the article). The agreement between coders was strong across all categories. It ranged from Cohen's kappa = .769 to 1.00.

The codebook is structured around three analytical dimensions – people-centeredness, anti-elitism and the presence of "dangerous others". Within *the first dimension*, the statements are first coded for the presence of references to the people as homogenous collectivity (explicitly, "the people" or by using other words that were treated as its synonyms such as "the citizens", "voters" etc.) e.g. References to certain segments of the population, such as the youth, pensioners or women were not treated as a reference to the people as a collectivity and were not included in the analysis. Coders were asked to register if at least one such reference is made anywhere in the text. If yes, the statement was then coded as a positive for this variable. Then they were asked to identify all such references, to assign valence to each reference (positive, negative or neutral) and to count them. The predominant valence of all references to the people was then

recorded as the overall sentiment of the statement towards the people.

Building on Kumar's (2014) analysis of Barack Obama's 2008 campaign, we introduce the concept of "empty signifiers" as an indicator of "reaching out to the people" (next to the use of explicit, positive references to the people). The notion of "empty signifiers" was originally coined by Laclau (2005) and refers to a word, an idea, a phrase that is elusive and to which people with different ideologies may assign different meanings. Kumar, for example (2014), demonstrates how Obama successfully fostered empty signifiers in his speeches, such as "change" or "change we can believe in" and "hope" that were later uncritically reinforced by journalists. Coders were instructed to write down all empty signifiers on a separate sheet of paper which were then used to illustrate the interpretation.

The second dimension examines politicians' attitudes towards political elites. It is first examined through the presence of references to political elites ("politicians", "politics") and the valence of those references. References to specific politicians were registered only if a certain politician was mentioned as an example of politics or political elites as a whole. Coders were first asked to register if at least one reference to political elites is made anywhere in the text. If yes, the interview was then coded as a positive for this variable. Then they were asked to identify all such references and to assign valence to them (positive, negative or neutral). The predominant valence of all references to the people was then recorded as the overall sentiment of the statement towards political elites.

Most's relation towards political elites is then examined through six supporting categories that serve the task of de-

constructing their assumed anti-elitism more exhaustively. First we examine their efforts to reinforce the gap between "us" and "them" by suggesting that politics is not their core profession and that they should be perceived as non-professional politicians, which is something that, according to Heywood and Fieschi (2004: 302), all populists strive for. Then we introduce two categories that enable us to pin down some specific features of Mosts' populism. The first one establishes if its representatives advocate specific policies (measures) aimed at reducing power and/or privileges of political elites (such as introduction of preferential voting system, salary cuts or similar). The second codes the statements for the presence of a blackmailing discourse. Finally, the last three categories in this section examine if politicians from Most advocate coalition in their statements (cooperation, partnership) with one of the two major parties (the SDP or the HDZ) or, what is more, with both parties (through a "reform government" or similar). It is exactly this assumed paradox that an anti-elite party would promote a coalition with the two established parties that makes Most *the curious case*.

The third dimension looks at the presence of references to "dangerous others". "Dangerous others" are social groups who are perceived to threaten the unity and homogeneity of the average people because they promote certain interests, values and identities. Although political elites represent dangerous others by definition, they are not embraced by our concept of the "dangerous others." We use this label to refer to social groups other than political elites who are perceived to threaten the efforts to bring power and government back to the people. In some circumstances, immigrants are identified as a threat because they are thought to take away jobs

from the domestic populace; likewise, ethnic and religious minorities can threaten the way of life and culture of the majority. It is in these circumstances that the right-wing populism, intolerant of the rights of minorities and immigrants, arises. On the other hand, if big foreign businesses and entrepreneurs are perceived as a threat, then populism reaches for left-wing political messages and policies, such as the nationalization of the property of foreign companies. Some authors argue that the presence of "dangerous others" should be considered the third defining feature of populism (see Albertazzi and McDonnell 2008). Nevertheless, such conceptualization has not been broadly embraced mostly because it excludes and instantly eliminates certain cases that most researches have categorized as populism. There are several examples of the so called "centrist populism" (Ucen 2007) such as Ivan Grubišić in Croatia (Grbeša and Šalaj 2014) whose populism lacks "dangerous others." Therefore, we find it reasonable to dismiss "dangerous others" as a necessary condition for someone to be labelled populist, but we find it very useful as a tool for defining different subtypes of populism.

A complete Codebook and detailed coding instructions are available in the Appendix.

Findings

Analysis of the 2015 election

The first insight concerns the visibility of Most in the pre- and post-election period. In the pre-election period, only 16 statements from Most's prominent representatives were recorded, while in the post-election period the number of their statements rose to 41. This result is not surprising given the fact that Most unexpectedly won 19 seats and became a pivotal political option in the country. Neither the HDZ nor the SDP were able

to form a parliamentary majority without Most, which made them the number one political news in the country. On the other hand, it should be noted that Most had achieved a remarkable result despite its low visibility in the media throughout the election campaign.⁹ Most of the statements belonged to Božo Petrov, the leader of Most (31 out of 57).

The second important insight relates to our first analytical dimension – people centeredness. Table 1 one indicates that references to the people were detected in 44% of the cases (25 out of 57). Only 3 statements contained positive evaluation of the people while all the other references were neutral.

It should be noted that the share of the references to the people was higher during the election campaign (in 10 out of 16 cases compared to 15 out of 41 in the post-election period). This suggests that Most's politicians were less concerned with "the people" after the Election Day. Do the results related to the first dimension even qualify Most as a populist party? Although people-centeredness is present in their discourse, it is much more moderately represented than in the discourse of some other Croatian politicians, who were identified as true populists in previous studies, such as Željko Kerum or Ivan Vilibor Sinčić (Grbeša and Šalaj 2014, 2016).¹⁰ Most's politicians men-

⁹ A computer assisted analysis of electoral coverage in 2015 confirms the assumption that Most was significantly underrepresented compared to the mayor two parties (4.96% compared to HDZ's 20.66% and SDP's 14.36%). However, this changed right after the election when Most was mentioned in 24.37% of articles (compared to HDZ's 22.79% and SDP's 18.73%). Source: data set related to Korenčić, Grbeša and Šnajder (2016).

¹⁰ For instance, former mayor of Split and established populist Željko Kerum mentioned the people in 91% of the cases (73%

Table 1. People-centeredness of Most in 2015

		Pre-election period (01/09 to 08/11/2015)	Post-election period (09/11 to 23/12/2015)	Total
		n/%	n/%	
References to the people (presence and sentiment)	No people	6 (37.5)	26 (63.4)	32 (56.1)
	Positive	2 (12.5)	1 (2.4)	3 (5.3)
	Negative	0	0	0
	Neutral	8 (50.0)	14 (34.1)	22 (38.6)
Total		16 (100)	41 (100)	57 (100)

Table 2. Anti-elitism of Most in 2015

		Pre-election period (01/09 to 08/11/2015)	Post-election period (09/11 to 23/12/2015)	Total
		n/%	n/%	
References to political elites (presence and sentiment)	Positive	0	0	0
	Negative	14 (87.5)	14 (34.1)	28 (49.1)
	Neutral	2 (12.5)	27 (65.9)	29 (50.9)
Total		16 (100)	41 (100)	57 (100)

tion the people, but mostly in a neutral way and the expressions they use tell us something about the type of their populism. Although it is often argued that Most has a hidden right-conservative agenda, our analysis cannot confirm such assumption. Most's politicians most commonly talk about "citizens", and then about "men," "voters," or "the people".

The third insight relates to the second defining feature of populism, which is a general, diffuse anti-elitism. This feature was detected in 49.1 % of cases (28 out of 57 statements), although there is a significant difference between the pre-election and the post-election period (see Table

2). In the pre-election period, anti-elitism is present in as many as 87.5% of cases (14 out of 16) and in the period after the election in 34.1% of cases (14 of 41).¹¹ It is clear that anti-elitism is strongly present in the political discourse of Most, which is particularly true for the pre-election period when it had reached the level that matches the level of anti-elitism of politicians who were in the earlier studies identified as "true (strong) populists".¹²

¹¹ E.g. "We are not interested in HDZ or SDP, we don't see them as separate parties but as the same interest group and therefore we don't care who is going to win" (Božo Petrov in: *Jutarnji list*, 11 October 2015). "They should be forced into a coalition with each other, to denude themselves so that people can see who they really are. They destroyed the country and they showed what they are capable of in the last 25 years" (Stipe Petrina in: *Jutarnji list*, 31 October 2015).

¹² Kerum resorted to anti-elitism in 45% of examined interviews while the absolute Croatian champion of anti-elitism is Sinčić

of references were positive). The leader of *Živi zid* (Human Wall) Ivan Vilibor Sinčić mentioned the people in all the interviews he gave as the presidential candidate (44% of his interviews contained positive evaluation of the people).

Table 3. Supporting indicators of Most's anti-elitism in 2015

	Pre-election period	Post-election period	Total n (%)
	(01/09 to 08/11/2015)	(09/11 to 23/12/2015)	
	n (%)	n (%)	
Political non-professionals	3 (18.8)	2 (4.9)	5 (8.8)
Measures to reduce the power of elites	2 (12.5)	3 (7.3)	5 (8.8)
Blackmailing discourse	4 (25)	14 (34.1)	18 (31.6)

The analysis of the two key dimensions of populism suggests that Most combined a weak positive mentioning of the people with a strong anti-elitism. Anti-elitism was particularly present in the pre-election period, while it was toned down during the negotiations that followed the election. Table 3 shows that the use of the two supporting indicators of anti-elitism (identification as political non-professionals and proposal of measures aimed at reducing the power of elites) was very weakly represented.¹³ The blackmailing discourse was more strongly present, especially during the negotiation process with the HDZ and the SDP about government formation (e.g. "We are not going to cooperate with anyone who does not agree to implement reforms", Božo Petrov in: *Slobodna Dalmacija*, September, 2015).

The fourth crucial insight is related to the use of "empty signifiers". They are present in 75.4% of the cases. What is especially striking is their share in the post-election period. "Empty signifiers" appear in 85% of the cases (35 out of 41 statement), compared to 50% (8 of 16),

who criticised the elites in all the interviews he gave as a presidential candidate back in 2014 (see Grbeša and Šalaj 2014, 2016).

¹³ A rare example of such claims is for instance "I have never been interested in politics. I did this to express my revolt" (Božo Petrov in: *24sata Express*, 11 December 2015).

in the pre-election period.¹⁴ It is important to look at the type of detected "empty signifiers" here. The most frequently used, absolutely dominant "empty signifier" is the term "reform". The word reform was detected in 30 analysed statements and in almost all of them it was used several times. The champion of the use of "empty signifiers" in a single unit of analysis was Božo Petrov, who used the word "reform" 12 times in his interview in *Jutarnji list* on 11 October 2015. The second most frequent and related "empty signifier" is the phrase "reform government". It was detected in 16 cases. A simultaneous presence of both "empty signifiers" was found in 6 cases.¹⁵ Other "empty signifiers", such as "honourable people", "new political force", "change", "unity", "expert government" and "unified government" were also used but only sporadically.

The notion of a "reform government" points to the fifth insight that makes Most *the curious case* and that compli-

¹⁴ For instance, Croatian (strong) populists, Kerum and Sinčić, do not resort to empty signifiers at all while the *coryphaeus* of "moral populism", Grubišić uses them in 46% of the interviews (Grbeša and Šalaj 2014, 2016).

¹⁵ E.g. "We have to stick to what we have been advocating from the very beginning: reforms, not the SDP or the HDZ, but a joint reform government based on consensus" (Božo Petrov in: *Glas Slavonije*, 2 December 2015).

Table 4. Statements advocating coalition with the HDZ, the SDP or both in 2015

Coalition with mayor parties	Pre-election period (01/09 to 08/11/2015)	Post-election period (09/11 to 23/12/2015)	Total n/%
	n/%	n/%	
HDZ	0	8 (19.5)	8 (14)
SDP	0	4 (9.8)	4 (7)
Tripartite coalition	7 (43.8)	34 (82.9)	41 (71.9)

cates any unambiguous, straight-forward classification of this political actor. In our research, we tried to identify what type of political strategy and tactics were advocated by the leading Most politicians. We were especially interested in how they dealt with various possibilities of government formation in Croatia. The results presented in Table 4 indicate that Most, expectedly and in accordance with their established anti-elitist rhetoric, rejected and excluded any possibility of political coalition or co-operation with the HDZ or the SDP (in all 16 examined statements) in the pre-election period. However, in 43.8 percent of cases (7 out of 16) they mention the option of a "tripartite coalition" as a model of cooperation between all three parties, the HDZ, the SDP and Most.

The situation changed after the election when Most politicians accepted the possibility of a political coalition with one of the two major parties in some statements (4 out of 41 statements advocates the coalition with the SDP and 8 out of 41 with the HDZ). However, the statements that advocate the formation of the tripartite government were dominant. They account for 82.9% of all statements in the post-election period (34 out of 41).¹⁶ In most cases, the "reform

government" and the "tripartite government" are understood as synonyms. Yet, in some statements even the government that would have been formed with only one of the two major parties was considered a "reform government".¹⁷ We consider such political position of Most very unusual, strange and paradoxical: after all the criticism about the SDP and the HDZ in the election campaign, including accusations that they have destroyed Croatia, politicians from Most insist on forming a tripartite government with these two parties, claiming it is the only way to save Croatia. The strong anti-elitist rhetoric that had been soundly articulated throughout the election campaign was replaced by a demand for unity, harmony and homo-

reforms without constitutional changes which require absolute parliamentary majority" (Ivan Kovačić in: *Večernji list*, 17 November 2015). "We believe that the time has come to put all our divisions and differences aside and we are convinced that the reform government is the only way out of the difficult situation Croatia is in" (Božo Petrov in: *Glas Slavonije*, 27 November 2015).

¹⁷ Our decision to treat reforms as "empty signifiers" may be challenged by a choice of our research material, because statements do not, in fact, necessarily provide sufficient room to elaborate the content of reforms. However, the fact that the leading officials of Most cannot agree about the precise meaning and content of the term "reform government" allows us to consider our decision justified.

¹⁶ This is how Most's politicians justify their request for a tripartite coalition: "Reform government is the government which would include all the party from the two mayor coalitions. We cannot implement

Table 5. People-centeredness of Most in 2016

		Pre-election period	Post-election period	Total
		(01/09 to 08/11/2015)	(09/11 to 23/12/2015)	
		n/%	n/%	n/%
References to the people (presence and sentiment)	No people	42 (63.6)	11 (73.3)	53 (65.4)
	Positive	13 (19.7)	4 (26.7)	17 (21)
	Negative	0	0	0
	Neutral	11 (16.7)	0	11 (13.6)
Total		66 (100)	15 (100)	81 (100)

genicity of all relevant political elites in Croatia.

Finally, our analysis has detected almost no presence of the "dangerous others" in the discourse of the Most's leading politicians. The presence of the "dangerous others" has been detected in only two out of 57 cases (dangerous media and judiciary). Obviously, there was no systematic stigmatization of particular social or economic actors who, alongside political elites, threaten the well-being of the people. The absence of the "dangerous others" in their discourse also rejects the assumption about Most's predominantly conservative values and thus reinforces the findings from the previous section.

The first part of the story about Most's political profile ends with signing a deal with the HDZ, which lead to the formation of a coalition government of the HDZ and Most. However, Most started acting as an opposition within the government from day one, a situation that is not unusual for populist parties (Albertazzi and Mueller 2013). It was that situation that led to the government collapse and the new election in September 2016.

Analysis of the 2016 election

The trends detected in 2015 generally continued in 2016, yet with a few im-

portant turns. The media visibility of Most was expectedly much higher than in 2015 and, contrary to 2015, they were considerably more present before the election (66 statements) than after the election (15 statements). Most's most visible politician was by and large Božo Petrov with 51 statements, followed by Nikola Grmoja with 18 statements. Such personalized and centralized communication contradicts Most's declarative attempts to position themselves as an alliance of independent lists, which is characterized by a horizontal democratic organisation.

The results pertaining to two defining features of populism, people-centrism and anti-elitism, are generally consistent with previous findings. Positive and neutral references to the people are even less present than in 2015 (in 34.6% of the statements compared to 43.8% in 2015). Table 5 indicates that the share of references to the people was higher in the 2016 pre-election period than in the 2016 post-election period. However, if we compare the results to the 2015 campaign, we can observe that *the people* had a more central position in 2015, when they were mentioned in 62.5% of the statements, than in 2016, when they were mentioned in 36.4% of the statements.

Table 6. Anti-elitism of Most in 2016

		Pre-election period	Post-election period	Total
		(01/09 to 08/11/2015)	(09/11 to 23/12/2015)	
		n/%	n/%	
References to political elites (presence and sentiment)	No elites	28 (42.4)	12 (80)	40 (49.4)
	Positive	0	0	0
	Negative	38 (57.6)	3 (20)	41 (50.6)
	Neutral	0	0	0
Total		66	15	81

Table 7. Supporting indicators of Most's anti-elitism in 2016

	Pre-election period	Post-election period	Total
	(01/09 to 08/11/2015)	(09/11 to 23/12/2015)	
		n (%)	n (%)
Political non-professionals	3 (4.5)	0	2 (2.5)
Measures to reduce the power of elites	13 (19.7)	0	13 (16)
Blackmailing discourse	19 (28.8)	8 (53.3)	27 (33.3)

Most's politicians remained faithful to their 2015 discourse regarding labelling of the people. They mostly used terms such as "citizens," "ordinary people," and similar.

The findings for the second constitutive feature, anti-elitism, are generally in line with the 2015 results (see Table 6). Negative sentiments towards elites, primarily the SDP and the HDZ, were present in 50.6% of the statements, compared to 49.1% in 2015.

Table 6 suggests that anti-elitism was expectedly more present throughout the campaign in 2016 than after the election (in 57.5% of statements compared to 20%). However, Most's anti-elitism was overwhelmingly more present in the 2015 than in the 2016 campaign (87.5% compared to 57.6%). This could be explained by the fact that they were now

speaking from a position of a political elite and that their anti-elitism may not have sounded all that credible.

The 2016 results have conclusively confirmed that Most's politicians do not identify themselves as political non-professionals, which is another reason to think twice before labelling them "true populists". However, in 2016 they intensified their requests to introduce measures that would reduce the power of elites (nevertheless, this happened exclusively in the pre-election period), while maintaining the same blackmailing levels as in 2015 (see Table 7).

"Empty signifiers" were used in 29 or 35.8% of the statements, which is a significant decrease in relation to 2015, when they were used in 75.4% of the cases. Interestingly, the word "reform", as the dominant empty signifier in 2015,

Table 8. Statements advocating coalition with the HDZ, the SDP or both in 2016

Coalition with mayor parties	Pre-election period	Post-election period	Total
	(01/09 to 08/11/2015) n/%	(09/11 to 23/12/2015) n/%	
HDZ	19 (28.8)	9 (60)	28 (34.6)
SDP	15 (22.7)	1 (6.3)	16 (19.8)
Tripartite coalition	7 (10.6)	1 (6.3)	8 (9.9)

was gradually replaced by the word "assurance" in 2016: "Both the SDP and the HDZ will have to come up with great assurances if they want to talk about the prime ministerial position" (Božo Petrov in: *Glas Slavonije*, 26 August 2016). Reforms were still present in Most's rhetoric in 2016, but mostly when prompted by journalists.

An examination of the references to "dangerous others" in 2016 has conclusively confirmed that "dangerous others" were only rarely present in Most's discourse. Such remarks were found in only 4.9% of the cases.

Finally, the most important results for 2016 pertain to the relationship with the two main parties and the cry for the reform government that had made Most the curious case in the first place (see Table 8).

Contrary to the 2015 election, Most welcomed a coalition with the HDZ in 34.6 of their statements (28.8% in the pre-election period and 60% in the post-election period), while cooperation with the SDP was welcomed in 19.8% of the statements (22.7% before and 6.7% after the election). However, the idea of a "tripartite coalition", which was aggressively promoted in 2015, disappeared almost entirely.

Discussion

So, what do the results presented in previous chapter tell us about Most's political profile? Is Most a populist party? The results of this study suggest that there are reasons to consider Most a combination of a *moderate centrist populist party* and an *anti-establishment reform party*. *Moderate*, because their soundly expressed anti-elitism was accompanied by resentment to identify themselves as political non-professionals, and complemented by moderate mentioning of the people, with only some explicitly positive mentions; *centrist*, because almost no "dangerous others" were present in their discourse, and because the dominant expression used to refer to the people was "citizens"; *anti-establishment* because of their vocal anti-elitism, which, interestingly, targeted primarily the "established", and not all political elites, and, finally, *reform* because of their abundant use of the words "reforms" and "reform government" in the 2015. Evidently, their discourse embodies at least two of the three defining features of anti-establishment reform parties, as outlined by Hanley and Sikk (2016) – demand for reforms and clearly articulated anti-establishment orientation. Although the third feature – an innovative approach to party organization – was not the focus of our analysis, it seems quite convincing that Most, because of its continuous efforts to be perceived

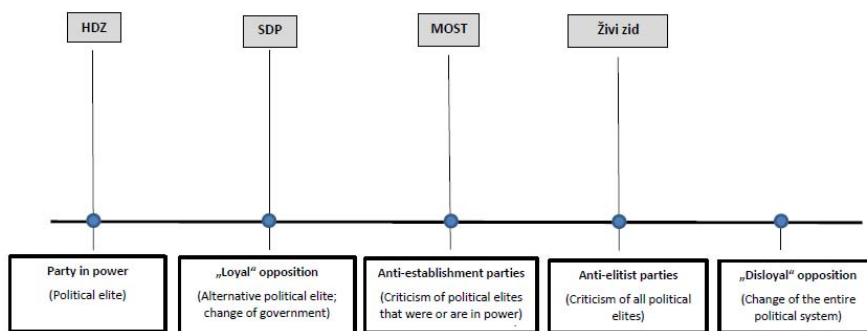


Figure 1. Barr's modified continuum of Croatian political parties

as a platform that connects independent lists from different parts of Croatia, matches all the criteria described by Hanley and Sikk.

The qualification of Most as an anti-establishment party points to another interesting discussion, which has not been given adequate attention, but which may have important implications for populism research, especially when it comes to parties that are rather difficult to unambiguously categorize, such as Most. Specifically, a detailed analysis of Most's discourse suggests that their political anti-elitism is not so general (diffuse) as the anti-elitism of some other political actors in Croatia, such as Sinčić's or Grubišić's. Most's criticism has been mainly directed at political parties that have been interchangeably governing Croatia since the 1990s – the HDZ and the SDP. Most's sentiment towards other members of political elites is "milder" than the sentiment of the true populists, to the extent that Most claims that even certain "reasonable people" from the HDZ and the SDP can be accepted as potential political partners. This all implies that we should make a stronger distinction between *anti-elitism* and *anti-establishment*. For instance, Drago Prgomet, who joined Most as HDZ's dissident and who later returned to HDZ, said: "We don't mind

people from SDP or HDZ, as long as they are hardworking. In addition to the people who are the backbone of Most, we are willing to cooperate with the people from other political options... Distinguished people can be found in other political options as well" (in: *Večernji list*, 16 October 2015).

A similar position was expressed by Božo Petrov who considered anti-elitism of Marijana Puljak, the leader of the party Pametno (Intelligently), too radical and blamed it for the collapse of their pre-electoral agreement: "She wanted to exclude anyone who had previously had anything to do with politics, no matter how capable they were. That was unacceptable for us because we believe that Croatia needs every capable and competent person" (in: *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 31 October 2015). In other words, anti-establishment represents a milder version of anti-elitism because it mainly targets options that are or were at some point in power. Most by no means represents a unique case in that respect. In the last couple of years a number of options have emerged across Europe whose categorisation varies between centrist populism and anti-establishment reform parties. The best-known examples are probably Emmanuel Macron and his party En Marche! in France (Meny 2017), Andrej Babiš and ANO 2011 in Czech Republic

(Hanley and Sikk 2016) and Albert Rivera with the Citizens (Ciudadanos) in Spain (Orriols and Cordero, 2016).

We believe that the distinction between anti-elitism and anti-establishment is relevant and that future research should acknowledge this difference and conceptualize it adequately. Robert Barr's (2009) modified continuum featured in Figure 1, represents one possible effort in that direction.

Barr's original model categorizes different political options in relation to political elites and the dominant political model (i.e. representative democracy). If we try to place political options on the spatial continuum, then the closest to the government (in our case the HDZ) are the political options that Barr calls a "loyal" opposition (in our case the SDP). These are the options that offer an alternative to the current government because they think it is incompetent, ineffective or corrupt, but they do not contest the idea that political elites should play a prominent role in representative democracies, nor do they question the model of representative democracy itself. At the very end of the continuum are the options that Barr calls the "disloyal" opposition, anti-systemic political options, who claim that the problem lies not only in the political elites, but in the entire model of representative democracy, which does not bring prosperity and wealth to the people for various reasons. Therefore, according to these options, it is not sufficient to change the political elite, but it is necessary to change the whole political system. According to Barr, all anti-elitist political options, including populists, are positioned somewhere between the "loyal" and "disloyal" opposition. They criticize all elites rather than just the ruling political elite, but, at the same time, they do not challenge the established political model. Although Barr's model seems plau-

sible, we believe that, in order to better explain the emergence of new political options in contemporary European societies, it should be complemented by the aforementioned distinction between anti-elitist (Živi zid)¹⁸ and anti-establishment positions (Most), as suggested in Figure 1. We believe that operationalization and application of this model can contribute to a more precise categorization of new political options that are continually emerging across the world.

Although Most's anti-establishment position represents a valuable incentive to differentiate between true populists and anti-establishment options, that position is not what makes it a curious case, since similar cases can be found in several other European countries. It is their paradoxical insistence on a tripartite government in 2015. Most's politicians insisted that only by achieving homogeneity and unity of political elites can the necessary reforms be made and that it was their Messianic duty to establish this unity: "Some analysts claim that Most's proposal to form the Government of National Unity is unrealistic because, allegedly, the HDZ and the SDP can reach an agreement without Most. Maybe this is true, but then the question remains what would happen with the SDP and the HDZ; what would happen with the implementation of reforms. Without Most as a moderator and a guarantor of the implementation of reforms, such coalition is not possible" (Nikola Grmoja in: *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 14 November 2015). The task that Most's politicians

¹⁸ Position of Živi zid on modified Barr's continuum (Figure 1) is based on populism research conducted in Croatia in the last couple of years, which identified Živi zid as a true populist party (Grbeša and Šalaj 2014, 2016, 2018b; Mustapić and Hrštic 2016). However, since Živi zid is a new political actor, there are still not enough studies to conclusively confirm this categorization, which thus remains open to further discussions.

had put forward was by no means an easy one: to transform (in their own words) inapt, incompetent and corrupt Croatian political elites into a united political force that will take Croatia, under the leadership of Most, on the right political and economic path. However, in 2016 Most swiftly abandoned its Messianic mission. The call for a tripartite coalition, or a union of the main political options, was first radically reduced to almost completely disappear from their rhetoric. This can be partially explained by poor electoral results of the SDP, which consequently made the coalition of the HDZ and Most the most realistic post-election scenario. However, even throughout the 2016 election campaign, Most's politicians rarely advocated this option, which suggests that they entirely abandoned the idea of reconciling political elites and uniting them in a mission of saving Croatia.

Conclusion

The political processes in contemporary Europe have been marked by a rise of the new political options that question the political dominance of mainstream, Christian-democratic, social democratic and liberal parties. Although the political duopoly of the main parties has not been terminated in Croatia, as it happened in France and Greece, the new political options have challenged the stability of the Croatian political system. The results of the 2015 and 2016 parliamentary elections suggest that the most prominent newcomer was Most, which decisively influenced the outcome of both elections. Most's success and its newly acquired political potential triggered discussions about its political profile and how to adequately categorize it. Although systematic scientific studies about their ideology, profile or organization are still missing, political analysts, journalists and different political opti-

ons routinely tend to label them as being "populist".

The main goal of this paper was to examine to which extent this assessment of Most as a populist option is justified. We based our analysis on insights from abundant contemporary literature on populism. We used set of categories to perform content analysis of populist cues in the statements of Most's most prominent politicians, in the periods surrounding the 2015 and 2016 parliamentary elections. All categories were derived from our *inclusive approach* to populism that distinguishes between populism as an ideology and populism as a political communication style.

The results of our research only partially confirm the assumption that Most is a populist option. Furthermore, they point to three important conclusions.

First, our analysis suggests that Most can best be described as a borderline case between a moderate centrist populism and an anti-establishment reform party. Their moderate centrist populism stems from their fairly prominent anti-elitism, reluctance to identify themselves as political non-professionals, relatively low share of positive mentioning of the people and general absence of the "dangerous others" in their discourse. The fact that they predominantly refer to the people as the "citizens", additionally reinforces this finding. On the other hand, their position of an anti-establishment reform party is built on the simultaneous presence of an anti-establishment rhetoric, insistence on implementation of reforms and innovative approach to party organisation. Our research confirms the presence of the first two features and, although we did not empirically investigate the third one, statements from Most's politicians suggest that the party meets this condition as well.

Second, the examination of Most's political profile implies that populism research may benefit from a more nuanced approach to measuring resentment towards the political elites. Our analysis has shown that Most's anti-elitism is not as diffuse as that of "true populists". Most's criticism of political elites is mostly focused on those elites who are or were at some point in power, i.e. the HDZ and the SDP, while they are much more benevolent towards other political options. They even leave room for cooperation with certain "reasonable people" from the HDZ and the SDP. We therefore propose a model that differentiates between the *anti-elitism* and *anti-establishment* positions, for we believe it can contribute to a more effective categorization of the new political options that have been emerging across the world.

Third, the "curiosity" of Most's case is not in its borderline position between centrist populists and anti-establishment reform party because similar cases

have emerged across Europe in recent years. Their peculiarity stems from their paradoxical position of an anti-establishment reform party that wants to build an alliance with incompetent and corrupt establishment in order to carry out reforms that would rescue the country. It is an awkward proposition, previously unknown in contemporary Europe.

Finally, our analysis shows that our approach to populism and its operationalisation may effectively differentiate between true populism and related phenomena, such as anti-establishment reform parties. Such approach enables us to make a distinction between the cases that are being put in the same category too easily, as is the case with Živi zid and Most. While available studies indicate that the first party fits the concept of true populists, Most should be considered a combination of an anti-establishment party and centrist populism.

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Populizam u Hrvatskoj: čudnovat slučaj Mosta

Sažetak Glavni je cilj rada utvrditi u kojoj je mjeri novu političku opciju u Hrvatskoj, Most, opravdano nazivati *populističkom*. Na to pitanje autori nastoje odgovoriti korištenjem recentnih teorijskih, metodoloških i empirijskih uvida politološke literature o populizmu. Analizu temelje na inkluzivnom pristupu populizmu i iz njega izvedenoj istraživačkoj matrici na temelju koje je provedena analiza sadržaja. Analiza samo djelomice potvrđuje teze o Mostu kao populističkoj opciji. Autori smatraju kako je tu opciju najprikladnije kategorizirati kao kombinaciju *centrističkog populizma* i *antiestablišmentske reformske stranke*. Tvrdi da bi istraživanja populizma trebala razlikovati antielitizam od antiestablišmentske pozicije stranaka i političara. Zanimljivost Mosta vide i u njegovu čudnom i paradoksalnom odnosu prema hrvatskoj političkoj eliti: mostovci kritiziraju političku elitu kao nekompetentnu i korumpiranu, a istodobno zagovaraju politički savez s tom istom elitom kako bi se provele reforme i donio prosperitet hrvatskom društvu.

Ključne riječi Hrvatska, Most nezavisnih lista, analiza sadržaja, populizam, populističke stranke, antiestablišmentske reformske stranke

Appendix: Codebook

Interview ID _____

1. Newspaper / Magazine:

1. Jutarnji list
2. Večernji list
3. Novi list
4. Slobodna Dalmacija
5. Glas Slavonije
6. Globus
7. 24sata Express
8. Nacional

2. Politician:

1. Božo Petrov
2. Nikola Grmoja
3. Miro Bulj
4. Ivan Kovačić
5. Drago Prgomet – only for period 1
6. Stipe Petrina – only for period 1
7. Robert Podolnjak
8. Ines Strenja Linić
9. Ivica Relković
10. Ivan Lovrinović – only for periods 1 and 2
11. Vlaho Orepić
12. Tomislav Panenić

3. Period:

1. 01/09 to 08/11/2015
2. 09/11 to 23/12/2015
3. 01/07 to 11/09/ 2016
4. 12/09 to 30/09/2016

References to the people

4. What is the predominant sentiment of the statement towards *the people*?

1. There is no reference to the people.
2. Positive
3. Negative
4. Neutral

Note 1: Include and code all collective terms such as *citizens, inhabitants, community, Croatian society, Croats, public, voters* etc. Do not include references to particular segments of population (e.g. youth, women, pensioners).

Note 2: Write down all references pertaining to the people on a separate sheet of paper.

5. Does the actor use "empty signifiers" (e.g. reform, justice, change, common good)? Write down all "empty signifiers" you were able to identify in the statement/interview.

1. Yes (which ones?)
2. No

Note1: Code 1. Yes if at least one such reference is present in the interview. You do not need to count the references.

Note 2: Write down all detected "empty signifiers" on a separate sheet of paper. Assign interview ID to your supporting sheet and attach it to your main coding sheet.

Anti-elitism

6. What is the predominant sentiment of the statement towards *political elites*?

1. There is no reference to political elites.
2. Positive
3. Negative
4. Neutral

Note 1: Include and code only if the reference pertains to elites as collectivity (politicians in general or 'politics'). References to actual parties, politicians or the government should be included only if a certain party, politician or a group of politicians (government, for instance) is used as a proxy for political elites.

7. Does the statement advocate specific policies (measures) that would reduce power and/or privileges of political elites (preferential voting system, salary cuts etc.)?

1. Yes
2. No

8. Does the statement contain blackmailing discourse?

1. Yes
2. No

9. Does the politician refer to himself/herself as a "political non-professional"?

1. Yes
2. No

Note: "Political professionals" are politicians who see their political activities as central to their professional life. "Political non-professionals" are politicians who see their political activities as something occasional, something which is not their core business and something that they will do for a limited period of time (because their core profession is something else, business or similar).

10. Does the statement advocate coalition (cooperation, partnership) with the HDZ?

1. Yes
2. No

11. Does the statement advocate coalition (cooperation, partnership) with the SDP?

1. Yes
2. No

12. Does the statement advocate coalition (cooperation, partnership) of the two big parties, the SDP and the HDZ, and MOST ("tripartite government", "reform government")?

1. Yes
2. No

"Dangerous others"

13. Does the politician make a reference to "dangerous others"?

1. Yes
2. No

Note: "Dangerous others" are individuals or groups who do not belong to the people and who represent the threat to prosperity of the people (e.g. the media, financial institutions [banks, corporations etc.], minorities, EU ...). Write down who these "dangerous others" are.