

ISSA Proceedings 2006 - The Dynamics Of Right-Wing Populist Argumentation In Austria



Right-wing populist argumentation is best analysed within the framework of a transdisciplinary, politolinguistic approach that connects concepts of political science, argumentation theory and critical discourse analysis. In the following, this claim will be justified and exemplified with a selective analysis of right-wing populist argumentation in Austria. I will especially focus on the question of how populist argumentation articulated by members of an opposition party differs from populist argumentation verbalised by members of a governing party. **[i]**

1. *The concept of populism*

There are many different proposals as to the meaning of the political fighting word “populism”. To mention just a few of them:

The German political scientist Dieter Nohlen (1998, p. 514f.) distinguishes among three different meanings of the word.

(1) First, “populism” denotes - according to Nohlen - a politics that is either judged negatively or positively.

(2) Second, Nohlen speaks of “populism” in terms of a social-political movement that concentrates on masses of people on the one side and on single politicians as leaders on the other side. The concentration on the appeal to masses here often relates to nationalism. If this is the case, we are faced with so-called “national populism”.

(3) Third, Nohlen conceives “populism” as a political strategy of mobilisation and unification.

The positive evaluation of the word is especially advocated by those who promote populism, who see themselves as populists; in Austria for example by Jörg Haider, who has repeatedly and proudly adorned himself with this predicate, as one can see in example 1, 2 and 3.

(1) “In case of doubt we have put a limit on the presumptuousness of the powerful

and have strengthened the back of the citizens. Although the ruling class has never forgiven us for this, the people has thanked us for this by supporting us. Our politics has thus thoughtlessly and condescendingly been denounced for being populist. But whatever.

Populism is nothing but a politics that is obliged to the people. Very unlike the politics of the rulers in the ivory tower, who like so much to speak of the 'people out there', in order to also express their distance from the people. With respect to the ruling class, one has often the impression that one's own people is a nuisance to the powerful and often stands in their way. But the citizens are not willing to be permanently abused as applauding and approving scenery. Also the citizens in the former German Democratic Republic have finally scanned every week during big demonstrations: "We are the people!" (Haider in his speech "On the state of the Republic and the situation of the FPÖ", November 12, 1999; the German original is quoted in Reisiogl 2002, p. 154)

(2) "For this we [= the FPÖ, M.R.] have gotten the reproach for populism, and we consider this to be definitely honourable. The people must be heard and taken seriously in a democracy! Issuing of orders coming from the ivory tower of the ruling class, whose contempt for the common people thus becomes visible, have nothing in common with a system of freedom. But especially state-political responsibility should demand to take seriously the worries and anxieties of the people and to keep away in good time dangers and threats by political action." (Haider 1994, p. 57; the German original is quoted in Reisiogl 2005, p. 64)

(3) "Populism is readily used as a swearword for politicians close to the people whose success consists of raising their voice for the citizens and in suiting their mood. Thus, I felt this designation always as an honour. We live in a mediatised democracy. Where much democracy is written on, there is, in reality, mostly very little democracy in it. For this reason the citizens who do not belong to the ruling class and their society need reliable advocates of their interests. I always considered this as my role." (Haider in Worm 2005, p. 9; the German original is quoted in Reisiogl 2005, p. 64)

Here, we have three examples of "populism" as positive flag-word (if we disregard the first sentence in example 3, in which Haider points out that "populism" is hastily used as a swearword). There is a notable difference between the first two examples and the third one. Whereas in 1994 and 1999 Haider assumes the "we"-perspective of the Austrian Freedom Party when characterising the term

“populism” as honourable predicate for politicians, he passes to the “I”-perspective in 2005. This change can be read as a linguistic indicator of decreasing party-cohesion within the Austrian Freedom Party, which was actually split into two parties in April 2005.

Furthermore, in the meantime some parliamentary politicians of Haider’s new party, the Bündnis Zukunft Österreich (BZÖ, meaning “Alliance for the Future of Austria”), use the political fighting term also as a stigma-word, designated to denounce political opponents. A recent example of this can be found in the debate that took place in the Austrian parliament on June 21, 2006, on the occasion of the discussion about the petition against the European Union and Turkey’s application for membership in the EU. The petition was initiated by the current Austrian Freedom Party and held in March 2006. It was titled: “Austria, remain free!” In the debate on June 21, 2006, Herbert Scheibner, ex-minister of the FPÖ and now leader of the parliamentary representatives of the BZÖ, criticises his former party-colleagues of the FPÖ for abusing the petition as a populist instrument in an election campaign (see Stenographisches Protokoll der 154. Sitzung des Nationalrates der Republik Österreich, 22. Gesetzgebungsperiode p. 56). Replying to the reproach for a populist petition campaign, Barbara Rosenkranz, a representative of the oppositional Austrian Freedom Party, contends that this accusation would not strike the FPÖ disparagingly, for the FPÖ could bear the accusation. Rather, the accusers would affect the “the citizen” derogatorily (by implication that the appeal to the citizens would be something bad; see Stenographisches Protokoll der 154. Sitzung des Nationalrates der Republik Österreich, 22. Gesetzgebungsperiode p. 69).

This and other examples (see, e.g., Stenographisches Protokoll der 112. Sitzung des Nationalrates der Republik Österreich, 22. Gesetzgebungsperiode. June 8, 2005, p. 76) show that the participation in the government has - at least partly - had consequences on the strategic use of the word “populism” on the part of some populists of the former FPÖ.

Pierre-André Taguieff, in his social-scientist stock taking of the chameleon-like phenomenon of populism (Taggart 2002, p. 220), maps out six different conceptualisations (Taguieff 2003, p. 101-109):

(1) First he tells us, and this explanation relates both to the second and the third conceptualisation mentioned by Nohlen, that some theoreticians understand populism as a movement or type of political mobilisation.

(2) Some regard populism, according to Taguieff, as an authoritarian or semi-

plebiscitarian regime with a charismatic leader at the top.

(3) Taguieff further explains that others see populism as an ideology or a doctrine

(4), that others take it to be an attitude

(5) and others comprehend it as a rhetoric, a specific form of communication or a so-called "polemism".

(6) Finally, there are also theoreticians who, according to Taguieff, regard populism as a form of provisional or temporary legitimisation in post-dictatorial and post-totalitarian times.

The fact that the word has the grammatical ending "-ism" seems to lead various authors to believe that - analogically to other "isms" - "populism" is an ideology or recurrent ideological scheme (among them are Mény and Surel 2004, p. 41, 202, 278 and Di Camerana 2004, p. 236f.). Taguieff (2003, p. 80) argues against this conviction and claims that populism is a political style, which can relate to various ideologies, not just to one.

This view is convincing to me, because one can observe that the phenomenon in question consists of a syncretistic combination of rather heterogeneous and theoretically inconsistent elements. Thus, populism can, among other things, be grasped as a political syndrome ("syndrome" not in a pathological sense), that is to say, as a variable cluster of single constituents that have not to appear all together at one and the same time in a concrete case (see Wiles 1969 and Altermatt 1996, p. 193). I therefore consider populism generally to be a political style in the sense of a complex syndrome and functional type of political expression.

However, more specifically, not just focussing on the formal-stylistic, technical and media-related aspect, but also taking content into consideration, one can, still today, maintain the conceptual distinction between "right-wing populism" on the one hand and "left-wing populism" on the other hand, although the traditional political categories of "right" and "left" have changed and somehow become blurred. In other words: There are many common features of style, form and media that link "right-wing populism" with "left-wing populism", but there are content-related differences that separate them. Among these distinctive features are the attitude towards National Socialism, fascism, racism, antisemitism, "xenophobia" and the understanding of social policy, migration policy and security policy.

There is also another distinction made in social scientist literature which, in the

case I am discussing here, is most important, namely the distinction between “oppositional” and “governmental populism”. Since in the present context I empirically concentrate on right-wing populism, this differentiation will be taken in consideration to distinguish between “oppositional right-wing populism” and “governmental right-wing populism”.

Generally, populist rhetoric is a matter of external political communication. The rhetoric of oppositional right-wing populism manifests itself in three fields of political action:

- (1) the field of political advertising,
- (2) the field of political control, and
- (3) the field of formation of public attitudes, opinions and will. The action field of political control is the classical place of oppositional right-wing populism, which develops itself as a form of protest against governmental policy.

In contrast, the rhetoric of governmental right-wing populism is first and foremost articulated in the field of formation of public attitudes, opinions and will. In part, it is also discursively realised in the field of inter-party formation of attitudes, opinions and will. Further, governmental right-wing populism sometimes also gains a certain importance in the field of political executive and administration, for example in the case of “issueless politics”, in which political action is simulated by symbolic rituals.

Populism involves, in the first place, the political dimension of politics (that is to say, political processes), and the dimension of polity (that is to say, the formal political dimension). Sometimes, however, it also touches upon the content-related governmental dimension of policy.

First, the rhetoric of right-wing populism – but also of left-wing populism – relates to politics, i.e. to conflicting and polarising processes among political actors centred upon the fight for power, influence and approval. This semiotic fight is held in the two fields of political advertising and of formation of public attitudes, opinions and will. Whereas the politics of oppositional right-wing populism strategically aims to achieve the power, populist politics of a right-wing government attempts to maintain and increase power.

Second, right-wing populism – as well as populism as such – involves the dimension of polity, especially where oppositional right-wing populists state a crisis of polity, referring to the “people” as the basis of the political “community” and demanding that the “people” should regain their right of being the source of

legitimation of political decisions (Mény and Surel 2004, p. 202). Populism in this sense is the reaction to a problem of political representation, a reaction that takes place in the field of political control. Such a reaction sometimes serves the democratic function of a corrective mechanism, but it cannot be considered as a sort of “auto-immune defence inherent in the political system of representative democracies” (Heinisch 2004, p. 248), which is at times suggested by systemic approaches (see, e.g., Taggart 2002).

On a third level, right-wing populism may also concern the dimension of policy, that is to say, of government’s political action. This has indirectly been the case in Austria in the 90’s of the 20th century when the oppositional right-wing populism perpetrated by Haider and its Freedom Party led to the consequence that many of the populist claims regarding security policy, migration policy and asylum policy were partly adopted by the SPÖ-ÖVP government.

2. Right-wing populism and democracy

The relationship between right-wing populism and democracy is a dynamic, variable and conflicting one. Very often, right-wing populism shows characteristics that endanger democracy, especially where it relates to authoritarian, racist, antisemitic and “xenophobic” bodies of thought. Sometimes, however, it expresses a crisis of democratic representation and justly criticises undemocratic political representation and political corruption.

The core of every form of populism is a generalised claim of representation. This claim is discursively realised by the linguistic reference to the imagined community of “the people”, which is very often formulated in the context of argumentation, by means of argumentation schemes such as the so-called “topos of the people” and its fallacious perversion, the “*argumentum ad populum*” (see Kienpointner 2002, p. 124-126; Reisigl 2002, p. 186 ff. and Taguieff 2003, p. 19).

Please note that I make an explicit terminological distinction between “topos” and “*argumentum ad*”, among others relying on the pragma-dialectical approach. If argumentation does not follow rules for rational dispute and constructive arguing such as the freedom of speech, the obligation to give reasons, the correct reference to previous utterances by the antagonist, the obligation to “matter-of-factness”, the correct reference to implicit premises, the respect of shared starting points, the use of plausible arguments and schemes of argumentation, logical validity, the acceptance of the discussion’s results and the clarity of expression and correct interpretation (see van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1992,

p. 102-217), then I follow the classical phrasing and name the employed argumentation scheme in Latin as “argumentum ad”. If the use of an argumentation scheme does not violate these rules, I prefer to speak of “topos”, which I understand, in accordance with Manfred Kienpointner (1992, p. 194), as those obligatory parts of argumentation that serve as “conclusion rules”. The topos links up the argument or arguments with the concluding claim.

Of course, it is often difficult and sometimes even impossible to concretely distinguish between the more or less plausible “topos of the people” and the fallacy of the “*argumentum ad populum*”. Douglas Walton (1999, p. 100-103, 229, 253-276) and Manfred Kienpointner (2002, p. 124-126) have shown this already. Nevertheless, the distinction can very often be justified. According to the pragma-dialectical approach, the fallacy of *argumentum ad populum* is committed if rule 4 (the obligation to “matter-of-factness”) or rule 7 (the use of plausible arguments and schemes of argumentation) are violated (van Eemeren, Grootendorst 1992, p. 134, 161). I would like to add that the *argumentum ad populum* is also committed by the infringement of rule 2 (the obligation to give reasons), which is the case if it assumes the character of an *argumentum ad verecundiam*. The distinction between fallacious *argumentum* and plausible *topos* can, among others, be facilitated by applying Douglas Walton’s (1999, p. 250-252) “four steps of evaluation”. They consist

- (1) in identifying the type of people-related argument[**ii**] and answering the two questions whether the premises of the argument are true or justified and whether the inference from the premises to the conclusion is warranted,
- (2) in judging the dialectical relevance of the argument in question with reference to the type of dialogue or interaction, to the given case and to the context,
- (3) in evaluating how strong or weak the argument in question should be taken, depending on the type, stage and context of dialogue or interaction (and especially in conjunction with other evidence to be found in the respective part of discourse and context), and
- (4) in judging how the argument appeals to the commitment of the audience in the given case (e.g. whether there is the possibility of open-minded deliberation and of asking critical questions).

The difficulty in sharply separating the topos of the people from the respective fallacy is due, among other things, to the fact that the collective anthroponym “people” - in German “Volk” - is a highly ambiguous category which can rhetorically be analysed as an alternating synecdoche (see Mény, Surel 2004, p.

171), strictly speaking, as *totum pro parte*. It is constituted by the representative manoeuvre that the whole stands for a part, that more stands for less, that the name of a whole entity of human beings, of a “collective”, stands for a smaller group that is included in the whole entity as a part.

The three most important synecdochic meanings of the collective “the people” can be ascribed to different forms of populism (see Mény, Surel 2004, p. 172-196):

(1) The concept of “the people as nation” (“nation” in a culturalist sense) is particularly connected with right-wing populism and national populism.

(2) The concept of “the people as class” (“class” in a socio-economic sense) is primarily associated with the rhetoric of left-wing populism, which shows an inclination to name the working class as “the people”.

(3) The concept of “the people as the political sovereign”, that is to say, as the final authority composed of a state’s citizens who decide upon the question of who is legitimated to represent whom within which political framework, of who is entitled to exert power over whom, relates to a form of populism which is especially realised in situations in which democratic mechanisms of representation are disturbed. This form of populism is certainly the one that is most compatible with the democratic system, since it fulfils an important function of political control. It is linguistically not exclusively linked with the collective nomination of “the people”, but can also be tied to anthroponyms like “the citizens” or “the population”.

One can frequently observe that Austrian populists such as Jörg Haider, Peter Westenthaler (the 2006 leader and top candidate of the new Austrian party BZÖ) and Heinz-Christian Strache (the 2006 leader and top candidate of the Austrian Freedom Party) invoke “the people” in a rather fallacious manner. They decide rather arbitrarily or depending on the respective political opportunity who belongs to the so-called “people” and who doesn’t (see Reisigl 2002, p. 190 f.). Thus, they often commit the fallacy of argumentum ad populum. An example of such an argumentum ad populum can be found in the following quotation, in which Haider reacts to the protest demonstrations against the xenophobic election campaign of the Austrian Freedom Party in October 1999:

(4) “Austria is a democratic republic; its right comes from the people. This state has to be re-established. It is our most pressing task to engage for this. It must be our aim to give the right of decision-making powers back to the people and not the parties or the street. In this endeavour we have found many new allies in the

last weeks and months". (Haider in his speech "On the state of the Republic and the situation of the FPÖ", November 12, 1999; the German original is quoted in Reisingl 2005, p. 190)

The first three sentences form a quite sound argumentation based on the warrant expressed in the first sentence: "Since Austria is a democratic republic, its right should come from the people". This warrant is easily reconstructed. The second premise of the argumentation is presupposed in the second sentence. This second premise says: "At present, the right does not come from the people". The claim to be concluded from the two premises is verbalised in the second and the third sentence. It can be paraphrased as follows: "Thus, one has / we have to take political measures in order to re-achieve the state that the right comes from the people". The fourth sentence transforms Haider's whole argumentation into a fallacious topos of the people's democratic participation (i.e. an *argumentum ad populum*), as the premise that the people should again be given the right of decision-making powers becomes incredible, because Haider decides from a party-political perspective who belongs to "the people" and who doesn't. He constructs an opposition between "the people" and "the parties" as well as "the street". This opposition implies that the demonstrators against the FPÖ, who are metonymically referred to as "the street", are excluded from "the people" who should have the right of decision-making powers. Thus, Haider refuses the citizens' democratic right to express their political will through a public demonstration against the FPÖ. He does not accept "the man and woman on the street" to be a part of "the people". This exclusion contradicts the democratic warrant that - in the Austrian republic - the right should come from the people and infringes the principle of open-minded deliberation and articulation of critique.

3. *Right-wing populist argumentation in Austria*

The topos of the people and the *argumentum ad populum* intersect with a series of classical topoi and fallacies, among others with the topos of quantity and *argumentum ad quantitatem*, with the topos of numbers and *argumentum ad numerum* (as subtypes of the topos of quantity and *argumentum ad quantitatem*), with the topos of authority and *argumentum ad verecundiam*, and with the fallacy of hasty generalisation or *secundum quid* (see also Kienpointner 2002). As conclusion rule, the argumentation scheme of topos of the people or *argumentum ad populum* can be explicated by various conditional or causal paraphrases.

Formulated negatively, it may be spelled out as follows: If the people / the majority of the people refuse(s) a specific political action or decision, then the action should not be performed / then the decision should not be taken. Verbalised positively, the argumentation scheme can be expressed by the following conclusion rule: If the people / the majority of the people favour(s) a specific political action or decision, then the action should be performed / then the decision should be taken. Among others, the above-mentioned examples 1, 2, 3 contain this argumentation scheme.

I though there is no doubt that the topos of the people and the argumentum ad populum are to be found in the centre of populist argumentation, populism cannot one-sidedly be reduced to this argumentation scheme. Such a narrow understanding of populist argumentation can be avoided by the politolinguistic and critical-discourse analytical approach I am trying to promote. This approach identifies a series of different argumentation schemes, of different characteristics of populism and of different rhetorical principles upon which populism relies (for more details see Reisigl 2002 and Reisigl 2005).

In addition to the topos of the people or the argumentum ad populum, there are several typical content-related argumentation schemes of right-wing populist argumentation in Austria. They may become subtypes of the topos of the people or the argumentum ad populum, if there is an explicit linguistic reference to “the people”, the population, the citizens and so on.

The topos of (the “people’s”) democratic participation or fallacy of (the “people’s”) democratic participation (see example 4 for an illustration) appears in various forms. It can take the form of the following conclusion rule: If a specific political decision, action or non-action concerns all citizens / the people, then the citizens / the people should be asked for their opinion. In example 4, the underlying argumentation scheme can abstractly be formulated as follows: If a state is politically organised as a republic, the people should have the right of decision-making powers. A populist version of this scheme often employed in election campaigns goes: If I or we have the power, the people, “the man on the street” will have the right to participate in political decisions democratically.

The populist topos or fallacy of the anger and displeasure (of “the man on the street”, the “ordinary people”) can be explicated as: If “the man on the street”, the “ordinary people” become(s) angry and displeased, then a political action has to be performed in order to resolve anger and displeasure. Another version of this

argumentation scheme means in its negative form: If a specific policy is not made (by the government) / if a specific political decision is not taken, then “the man on the street”, the “ordinary people” become(s) angry and displeased. The same version in its positive form goes: If a specific policy is made (by the government) / if the government abuses its power / if a specific political decision is taken, then “the man on the street”, the “ordinary people” become(s) angry and displeased. A combination of the positive and negative form of this second version can be found in the following example:

(5) “The delusion of the population is simply very great. There is no renovation, but the diligent citizen and the man in the street is dismantled.” (Haider in “Kurier”, September 27, 1987, quoted in Tributsch 1994, p. 184)

The topos or fallacy of burdening or weighing down (the “man on the street”, the “ordinary people”) can be reduced to the following conclusion rule: If a person, the “man on the street”, the “ordinary people”, “the Austrian” is burdened by specific problems, one should act in order to diminish these burdens. Example 6 contains this conclusion rule:

(6) “The coalition - the FP chef spoke about the ‘united red-black party’ - according to Haider commits a ‘policy of theft of comestibles for personal consumption against the man on the street’, who is burdened instead of gaining from structural reforms.” (Haider in “Die Presse”, September 16, 1987, quoted in Tributsch 1994: p. 182)

The topos or fallacy of exonerating (the “man on the street”, the “ordinary people”) can be summarised in the following formula: If a person, the “man on the street”, the “ordinary people” is (over)burdened or overloaded by political measures, one should do something in order to exonerate the person, the “man on the street”, the “ordinary people”. An example of this argumentation scheme is:

(7) “Over and above that, a good 800.000 Austrians regularly work overtime. Haider demanded a drastic reduction of the overtime tax, which he called pure tax vandalism, in order to let an overtime deduction sum of about 5.000 schillings per months take effect, in order to finally stop the penalisation of the diligent.” (Haider on June 10, 1993, quoted in Tributsch 1994, p. 250 f.)

Example 7 also realises the topos or fallacy of repaying the diligent and good workers / Austrians, which goes as follows: If you support / vote for my populist movement / if I or we will have the power, then the diligent and good workers will be repaid.

The populist topos or fallacy of liberty or of liberating (the “man on the street”, the “ordinary people”) shows a range of different versions. Two of them are:

(1) If you support us (our petition, our politics etc.), we guarantee you freedom.

(2) If I or we will have the power, we will guarantee the freedom and liberate or save the “man on the street”, the “ordinary people”. The first version is realised by the following political slogan:

(8) “To remain master in one’s own house!” (Heinz-Christian Strache during the Viennese election campaign in 2005 and during the campaign for the petition “Austria remain free!” in 2006; this androcentric, sexist topos of independence has an old tradition that goes back at least as far as 1945 or 1946, when the Austrian chancellor Leopold Figl used the same metaphor to ask for political independence of Austria in post-war times.)

Austrian right-wing populists regularly resort to the topos or fallacy of decency or respectability. Its two main versions are:

(1) If somebody is not decent and respectable, she or he should not be / become politicians.

(2) If I or we have the power, we will perform a decent or respectable policy and work for the decent and respectable. The first version is to be found in example 9:

(9) “Well, he [Christof Zernatto, a political opponent in Carinthia, M.R.] denies a lot, but one really cannot believe him anymore, because whenever he opens the mouth he tells lies, and this is the thing which also moves the people. They do not want anyone on the top who actually is not an honourable man.” (Haider in the Austrian TV-news “Zeit im Bild 2”, April 25, 1994, quoted in Tributsch 1994, p. 272)

The topos or fallacy of “dirty politics” and of the necessity of clearing up, cleansing and “mucking out the stable” is a populist argumentation scheme of which Haider often made use during his successful phase of right-wing oppositional politician. It means, among others: Since politics is a dirty business, one / we must clear up, have a clean-out, muck out the stable. Example 10 is an illustration of this argumentation scheme:

(10) “The leaders of this country are rotten, corrupt and avaricious. We’re doing spring-cleaning in this country.” (Haider in “Kleine Zeitung.”, January 12, 1998, quoted in Czernin 2000, p. 124)

The topos or fallacy of law and order is also a very common populist argumentation scheme. Among others, it says: If I or we will have the power, we

will provide for / guarantee law and order. It is very often employed in election and petition campaigns. Example 11 was used by FPÖ chef Heinz-Christian Strache 2005 during the Viennese election campaign and 2006 during the campaign for the petition "Austria remain free!":

(11) "Zero tolerance in the case of asylum abuse!"

The enumeration is a selection of salient populist argumentation schemes. It is far from being complete. As the Austrian case has shown in the last six years, many of these topoi are almost never credibly employed by right-wing populists belonging to a party of government, whereas oppositional populists - in situations of a crisis of democratic representation - sometimes legitimately fall back on these argumentation schemes.

General characteristics of an oppositional right-wing populism in Austria, but also in many other states of the European Union, are

(1) a strong mistrust of the "establishment", of "the powers that be" (in German: "die da oben"), especially of the government, of professional politicians, of lawyers, of bankers and of big business people,

(2) an undifferentiated, oversimplified picture of the society with strict distinctions between friends and enemies and with regressive, antimodernist, neoconservative and anti-welfare-state utopianism,

(3) a strong tendency of personalism and personalisation on the one hand, of collectivism and assimilatory identity politics for the purpose of "synchronising different group interests" (Reinfeldt 2000, p. 51) on the other hand,

(4) agitation, irrationalism and anti-intellectualism and

(5) a seemingly radical-democratic or grass-roots-democratic attitude on the one side; an anti-democratic, authoritarian, hierarchical and "leader"-oriented attitude on the other (Reisigl 2002, p. 153-160).

As the example of Austria demonstrates, the right governmental populism of the BZÖ and the former Austrian Freedom Party loses the first characteristic and transforms the fourth and fifth feature more and more since 2000. After the change of the Austrian government in February 2000, the FPÖ itself becomes part of the so-called establishment. As a consequence, the former anti-establishment party (Heinisch 2004, p. 249) can no longer criticise the powers that be. From 2000 on, the Austrian Freedom Party, and from 2005 on, the BZÖ find themselves in a position in which they are politically controlled and attacked by political opponents as well as actors of the civil society for the abuse of their power, for

example for allocating political offices according to party-political criteria. From 2000 onwards, the new political requirement to maintain the coalition discipline restricts the possibilities for FPÖ-politicians (and from 2005 onwards, for BZÖ-politicians) to attack the former political opponents who have now become coalition partners.

The loss of the classical populist projection surface and scapegoat of the government is partly compensated by identity politics and national-populist argumentation that evokes new dangers and threats in order to mobilise and unify followers and voters. The new “internal” enemy becomes the political opposition, and among the most important “external” enemies of national-populism are the European Union, so-called “foreigners”, the Turkey that aspires to join the European Union, “the Islam” and partly the United States. In Austria, the projective attack of the EU was most successful during the period of the so-called “sanctions of the EU-14 against Austria” (Reisigl, Wodak 2002).

The fifth populist characteristic mentioned above is often transformed by the governing populists in the sense that they transpose their (pseudo-)democratic claims to a supranational, European level and call for various political referenda, for instance with respect to the bilateral political measures already mentioned, or with respect to Turkey’s application for joining the European Union. Often, such claims are not legitimised by democratic procedures.

Since the FPÖ has become a governing party, Jörg Haider, in his capacity as the governor of the federal province of Carinthia, and several right-wing politicians of the FPÖ have still managed to make the Austrian government the target of populist criticism. The critique of the governing party colleagues undermined both the party cohesion and the coalition discipline. In 2002, the permanent tension due to party-internal conflicts led to the dissolution of the coalition between FPÖ and ÖVP. The problem, however, was not yet solved. In April 2005, the party-internal dissent led to the splitting of the Austrian Freedom Party into two parties. This splitting has not yet extricated the FPÖ and BZÖ from their problems, since Jörg Haider still does not conform to the government and has been shown to possess a great self- and party-destructive potential.

Heinz-Christian Strache, the new party leader of the Austrian Freedom party, seems to have learned that right-wing populist rhetoric is most successful if articulated from an oppositional perspective. Among the rhetorical principles of oppositional populists are

(1) the principle of subdividing the world of social actors into friends and enemies

by black-and-white portrayal, of rhetorically constructing “internal” and “external” scapegoats,

- (2) the principle of reducing complexity by drastic and simplistic illustration, hypostatisation, and personalisation,
- (3) the principle of “not mincing one’s words”, of “saying exactly what comes into one’s head”,
- (4) the principle of insulting the political opponent disparagingly,
- (5) the principle of assuming a “worm’s eye view”, a perspective of looking up from below,
- (6) the principle of suggesting that the speaking or writing ego “is one of yours and for you” (this principle closely relates to Walton’s “common-folks ad populum argument”; see Walton 1999, p. 214, 226),
- (7) the principle of pathetic dramatisation and emotionalisation,
- (8) the principle of insistent repetition,
- (9) the principle of calculated ambivalence, and
- (10) the principle of promising salvation and liberation (for more details see Reisigl 2002, p. 166-174).

Governing populists cannot usually fall back upon the principles (3), (4), (5), (6) and (10) in the same manner as oppositional populists. They suffer from a crisis of credibility, a crisis of ethos. Their ruling policy contradicts the former political announcements and claims. From 2000 until 2006, the Austrian Freedom Party lost all regional and European elections except for the election in Carinthia in 2004, where Jörg Haider is governor of the federal province (see Picker, Salfinger, Zeglovits 2004). The new party of the BZÖ is in danger of disappearing in autumn 2006 after the parliamentary election from the level of national policy and politics in Austria. The oppositional FPÖ with its leader Strache, however, tries to perfectly copy Haider’s former oppositional politics. It is to be feared that Strache’s racist, “xenophobic”, anti-European, anti-Turkish, anti-Islam populism verbalised from an oppositional point of view will be more successful than the governing populism of the BZÖ. But it will never be as successful as the FPÖ was in the 1990’s.

So the spectre of right-wing populism in Austria has shrunk for many reasons related to the FPÖ’s participation in the government, among others, for not having maintained election promises, for unprofessional policy and high consumption of personnel, for being co-responsible for political measures against the so-called “ordinary people”, but also for Haider’s destructive unpredictability (see also Pallaver, Gärtner 2006, p. 116 ff.). For the time being we can conclude

that governing right-wing populism seems to be a medium-term problem in Austria, but also in several other states.

NOTES

[i] I would like to thank Maura Bayer for correcting my English.

[ii] Walton (1999, p. 195-227) differentiates among eleven subtypes of “ad populum arguments”, which cannot be discussed in the present context.

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