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Public Communication of European Right-Wing Populist
Parties. A Critical Discourse Analysis of SVP Posters
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Abstract English:

The following thesis focuses on public communication of right-wing populist parties in Europe. Selected political posters by the Swiss People's Party (SVP) were analyzed using a critical discourse approach, with a focus on visual elements. Accounting for socio-political and legislative contexts, this thesis investigates whether political poster campaigns by right-wing populist parties contribute to the formation of a European Public Sphere (EPS).

Building on Hanspeter Kriesi's observation that Switzerland can be regarded as a model for a future Europe because of its linguistic heterogeneity, this thesis documents the appropriation of the SVP's thematic imagery by European right-wing populist parties and subsequently proposes a possible constitution of a European Public Sphere. Paradoxically, these transnational European public spheres are created through the exclusion of others – articulated as different ethnicity, religion or nationhood – by right-wing populist parties.

The appropriation of xenophobic SVP motifs by other right-wing parties such as the Lega Nord, Front National, Vlaams Belang and FPÖ convey that the SVP's visual language possesses a if not global, then at least European identity creating potential that seamlessly integrates into the national political realities of other European right-wing parties.

Abstract German:

Die vorliegende Arbeit beschäftigt sich mit der öffentlichen Kommunikation von rechtspopulistischen Parteien in Europa. Ausgewählte politische Werbeplakate der Schweizerischen Volkspartei (SVP) wurden einer kritischen Diskursanalyse unterzogen, wobei der Fokus der Untersuchung auf der visuellen Ebene liegt. Unter Berücksichtigung soziopolitischer und legislativer Rahmenbedingungen geht diese Arbeit der Frage nach, inwiefern die politischen Werbekampagnen der rechtspopulistischen Parteien zu einer (visuellen) europäischen Öffentlichkeit beitragen.

Basierend auf Hanspeter Kriesis Beobachtung, dass die Schweiz aufgrund ihrer linguistischen Heterogenität als Modell für ein kleines Europa fungieren kann, zeichnet diese Arbeit die Appropriation der thematischen Motive der schweizerischen Volkspartei durch europäische rechtspopulistische Parteien nach und zeigt auf, wie eine europäische Öffentlichkeit aussehen könnte. Paradoxiertweise wird diese transnationale europäische Öffentlichkeit durch die Exklusion von Minderheiten – seien diese religiöser, ethnischer oder nationaler Art – durch rechte Parteien geschaffen.

Die weitgehend identische Übernahme von fremdenfeindlichen SVP-Motiven durch andere rechte Parteien wie z.B. der Lega Nord, Front National, Vlaams Belang oder der FPÖ veranschaulichen, dass der Bildsprache der SVP eine wenn nicht universale, dann doch zumindest europäische identitätsstiftende Funktion zukommt, die sich fließend in die politischen Realitäten anderer Länder eingliedern lässt

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1. Introduction

This thesis focuses on the paradoxical notion that a European Public Sphere exists while Anti-European, nationalist voices have gathered strength on both a national and a European level. It discusses the electoral developments of the Swiss Right-Wing party “Swiss People’s Party (SVP)” as well as in a selection of member states. The nation-state, which can be seen as the cornerstone for nationalism, a concept closely related to national identity, will be examined critically. Moreover, the thesis suggests the existence of a visual Right-Wing European Public Sphere pertaining to the proliferation and appropriation of political poster advertisements of the SVP to other European right-wing parties.

It has been claimed that we live in a globalized, international world and that European citizens are part of a European Public Sphere (Habermas 1964). However, in an article entitled “An Emerging European Public Sphere”, Erik Odvar Eriksen (2005) notes that the concept of a public sphere is (historically) linked to the idea of “citizens of a state” that share sociocultural characteristics (Eriksen 2005:342): “Thus, it presupposes both a state, which can ensure the rights of the citizens, and a society than can make allegiance and a common ‘we-feeling’ – a collective identity” (ibid.:342). Eriksen continues by raising a pivotal question: “Can there be a public sphere when there is no collective identity?”, referring, of course, to the European Union’s status as being “neither a nation nor a state”, juxtaposing this with scholarly assumptions that the discussion around public spheres has traditionally been linked to what goes on within nations (ibid.:342). Ruud Koopmans and Jessica Erbe (2004) subscribe to the view that while policy decisions are increasingly being taken at the European level – which can be seen as a testament to Europe’s institutional development – debates about crucial issues still occur predominantly at the national level. A transparent, cross-EU debate is essential for the formation of a collective identity and citizenship, (the lack of) which the authors regard as being at “the core of Europe’s democratic deficit” (Koopmans/ Erbe 2007:97).

There seems to be consensus that a deepening European integration manifesting itself on a number of levels ranging from the free flow of people, trade, finance etc. leads to deterritorialization and a more mobile, transnational public. Considering these developments, it would be reasonable to assume that this would translate to wide support for this European “experiment” called EU. However, studies (e.g. Eurobarometer; Pew 2013) that give insight into European public opinion do not substantiate this claim. On the contrary: the precipitation of a growing Euro-skepticism among citizens in the member states, paired with a strengthened role of anti-European, nationalistic, right wing parties in the member states as

well as within the European parliament convey the paradoxical existence of an alleged European public sphere. As Gerhards (2002) notes, there are also a number of voices (cf. Klaus Eder/Cathleen Kanter 2000 (public sphere deficit empirically unjustified); Eder/Hellmann/Trenz 1998 (migration policy); van de Steeg 2002, cited in Gerhards 2002) that attest to the formation of a novel form of public sphere in Europe (Gerhards 2002:136).

The existence of “a vivid debate” (Tresch 2012:1) regarding the normative requirements for a European public sphere indicates that it is still hard to conceptualize what the term entails. Following Gerhards’ (1993) seminal paper, scholars “have more recently come to conceive of a European public sphere as the Europeanization of national public spheres through communicative flows that transcend the boundaries of the nation state” (Tresch 2012:1). This includes increased visibility of EU actors and institutions in national media (vertical Europeanization) with a shared European interpretation and a stronger, simultaneous interconnectedness of debates in European countries (horizontal Europeanization). The role of the media has always been regarded as a crucial factor in assessing the state of a public sphere. It should be noted, however, that the media is not identical with the public sphere but merely a medium to drive European issues into the open (Tresch 2012:2). While Gerhards’ (1993) claim that a European public sphere necessitates a national medium that considers issues from a European perspective (that extends beyond the interests of the country), Tresch rejects this as being “unnecessarily restrictive.” Instead, she emphasizes that it is vital that the media agree on which European issues are considered salient (Tresch 2012:5).

Juliet Lodge and Katharine Sarikakis (2013) note that the PR efforts of EU institutions aimed at escaping their opaqueness have failed, despite noticeable improvements in communicating their efforts regarding transparency: “The EU’s constitutional complexity inhibited and still compromises trust building” (Lodge / Sarikakis 2013:172). Moreover: “the negative votes and falling turnout at Euro election shows that information giving per se, transparency initiatives [...] have not meant that people see themselves agreeing with this version of European unity or identifying with the EU’s political goals” (Lodge / Sarikakis 2013:172).

1.1 Nations, Nationalism, National Identity

Michael Billig (1995) investigated the historical circumstances that contributed to the emergence of nationalism. Drawing on Ernest Gellner, Billig argues that contrary to common belief, nationalism is a fairly recent phenomenon that is inextricably linked to the emergence

of nation states in the 18th century: “there can be no nationalism without nation-states”(Billig 1995:19). Nowadays, wars are fought in the name of the nation. Citizens of “established nations” willingly sacrifice their life for their country (and that of other countries) for the sake of sovereignty. Defending the current “world order” of nation-states is the primary objective, whereas the people of the middle ages knew no such territorial allegiance. The concept of the nation takes precedence over individual lives, as Billig’s comparison to the Second World War conveys: “The Second World War had not been prompted by the German government’s mistreatment of its own citizens: no foreign government had committed its soldiery to rescue German Jewry. But once the German government started making national flags, rather than individual citizens, disappear, then war became inevitable” (Billig 1995:3). The recent developments in the Ukraine seem to challenge these assumptions.

Billig emphasizes that the notion of nationalism is commonly associated with something that occurs on the fringes (Billig 1995:5). The author further notes that nationalism is perceived to be a reality in conflict states or called upon by right-wing fractions on the periphery, where militants violently fight for independence. Billig refutes the idea of nationalism as something that occurs exclusively within (militant) separatist groups wishing to secede from governmental oppression, claiming independence for cultural reasons. Locating nationalism as something that is the problem of “others”, comfortably overlooks the symbols that surround us, perpetually reproducing our national identity, whether this be flags that are hanging “innocently” (Billig:1995:6) outside of postal offices, the Olympics, or the currency that we use, national anthems that can be found at the top of the music charts, or the passports we carry when we cross territorial boundaries. It is precisely this “flagging of nationhood” that allows for the activation of nationalist sentiments in times of war, because we are constantly exposed to national symbols. Nationalism is particularly visible in national elections. Billig shows, that nationalism is mostly banal. This perceived normality reinforces differences and as such, enters our daily discourse on who we are as citizens of a particular nation.

This thesis explores how Right-Wing Parties display nationalism in a graphic way by creating, fostering and building on fears of the “Other”, by highlighting differences in an exclusionary fashion that is mirrored throughout Europe and thus creates thematic solidarity among European Right-Wing groups. With digital platforms governing the online routines of our daily lives as well as revolutionizing the way political campaigns are carried out (cf. Panagoupoulos 2009), why would anyone still be interested in a comparably static medium such as the poster that, because of its lack of interactivity, appears heavily outdated? Despite its physicality, the poster, arguably one of the oldest media of political

communication, has retained its persuasive appeal. This is particularly true of a country like Switzerland, in which political advertisement on television remains prohibited (Art. 10 RTVG) and politicians' social media pages, unlike their American counterparts, fail to attract a viral audience. While the majority of prominent SVP politicians are represented on Facebook, their audience varies greatly in number: On August 23 2014, the fan page of the Swiss People's Party (SVP) was liked by 8286 people, Christoph Blocher who is regarded as the architect of the party received 2807 likes, Toni Brunner received 5,835 likes, while Barack Obama, President of the United States had more than 42 million "likes" on his fan page, which speaks to his universal appeal even if we adjust for the fact that the US has nearly 40 times as many inhabitants as Switzerland (Facebook 2014).

There is a distinctive difference between posters and other forms of political communication, namely the issue of immediacy (Schönbach 2009:102). Political flyers can be trashed, channels can be switched, sound can be muted, but it is hard to escape a poster, especially if it looms around the corner, ready to blow the unsuspecting passerby with a provocative slogan and an equally disturbing image. The element of surprise forces the audience to engage with the message and as long as it remains effective, the poster is unlikely to disappear.

Scholars have argued that we have entered a post-"Gutenberg-galaxy" (Klaus Sachs-Hombach 2009:9) in which the image has superseded the written word as the domineering form of communication, and the voices declaring a visual turn aim in the same direction. Whether this is truly the case is still subject of discussion (cf. Sachs-Hombach 2009:9), justifying another close look at a remarkable instrument of political communication: the political poster.

Within the political sphere, few posters have created such an uproar in the world community as that of right-wing, populist parties. Many will recall the poster of the SVP, depicting two white sheep on the backdrop of a Swiss flag, booting a black sheep over the Swiss border, accompanied by the slogan, "Creating Security". This highly controversial poster secured Switzerland's reputation as being "Europe's Heart of Darkness" (The Independent). This poster and others from recent campaigns in Switzerland serve as "cultural artifacts" in European Public Space that constitute the objects of analysis for the following thesis. Below is an example of how prominent these posters are during elections in Switzerland.



Figure 1: SVP posters depicting Islam as a threat with minarets emerging from the Swiss flag, hanging in train stations in 2009. © Arnd Wiegmann (2009).

Advertisements from other parties seem insignificantly small in size and in comparison to the glossy, over-dimensional billboards of the SVP, although there have been efforts to close the gap. Matthes and Marquardt (2013) have suggested that the success of right-wing parties in advancing anti-immigrant sentiments can be explained in part by the fact that a poster only allows for one-way communication and that competing parties have failed in offering compelling (visual) counter-arguments fostering a market of ideas that focus on inclusion instead of on racial, religious and other differences.

The visual rhetoric propagating a strong anti-foreigner stance raises questions about the democratic legitimization of European Right-Wing parties in general but even more so in a country with a high percentage of foreign residents. Within a European framework, Switzerland is governed by legal codes that have been established to protect citizens from discrimination. Is it legal what the SVP are openly suggesting by inciting hate of the “other” and where does a democracy draw the line?

Switzerland is particularly interesting as a case study, because the most radical party is also the most popular one. Due to the particular nature of the Swiss political system of direct democracy, the SVP is “staatstragend”, meaning that they are part of government, but can simultaneously take an oppositional stance by using the political instruments that direct democracy provides. The instruments, available to parties and interest groups to challenge the dominant position of the executive branch that come in the form of initiatives and referendums, are frequently employed and are often flanked by a comprehensive, emotional poster campaign. Despite the controversy that surrounds the SVP’s political agenda, the party undeniably exerts a strong visual appeal through their posters, which is a testament to the advanced professionalization of their political marketing. The main beneficiary of the

ability to launch initiatives is the Swiss People's Party. Since 1891, only 22 initiatives have successfully passed, nine of those in the last decade alone, all launched by the SVP (Federal Bureau of Statistics 2014).

In times in which media encounter an oversaturated and impatient audience, the Swiss People Party succeeds in dominating the news cycle with controversial messages. This thesis is the logical conclusion of continued interest in the visual aspects of right-wing European parties, which aims to convey the argumentation features within their advertisements and leads to a visual transnational alliance between right-wing parties in Europe.

Drawing on Switzerland as a model due to its heterogeneous linguistic composition, Tresch deviates from the standard debate by investigating whether a national "public sphere" exists in Switzerland. Building on Kriesi's comparison of Switzerland as a "pocket-size Europe" (Kriesi 1992:576, cited in Tresch 2012:2), Tresch assumes transferability of her findings to what a European public sphere might look like. Her findings are hardly encouraging for those alleging a shared public sphere in the EU:

[...] the openness of public debates towards actors from other language regions is relatively limited. Discursive exchanges virtually never reach across the language borders [...]. Horizontal integration, in other words, is largely missing—within Switzerland as much as between European countries. **In light of the relative absence of discursive exchanges in the Swiss case, whether such links will eventually emerge on the European level seems questionable.** (Tresch 2012: 9, emphasis W.K.)

Overall, if one evaluates public communication regarding the European integration policy in Switzerland based on the normative criteria applied to the European public sphere, the existence of an all-Swiss public sphere must be called into question. However, given that Switzerland is an old and stable democracy, I'd rather argue that these criteria, which implicitly seem to be derived from a deliberative public sphere model, **set the barrier for finding a Europeanized public sphere unrealistically high and should be reconsidered.** (Tresch 2012:10, emphasis W.K.)

The question as to whether we can even conceptualize a single public sphere gains legitimacy. It may be more appropriate to think of multiple sub-public spheres that exist and interact with other spheres in a society. This allows for the conception of a visual right-wing European public sphere that links national right-wing spheres with each other, with the SVP at its core.

1.2 Research Questions

The paradoxical development of deterritorialization and the formation of an alleged European public sphere calls for an investigation of how national identity is linked to our understanding of the nation, the symbolism that surrounds this concept and how we can grasp growing nationalism in an international world.

By examining existing literature relevant to the topic and adding my own empirical findings, this thesis aims to answer the following specific research question:

RQ 1: What is the place of the Swiss People Party's "black sheep" election poster campaign in a democratic public sphere?

RQ 2: In which ways and forms are the SVP's political posters responded to by Right-Wing parties in Europe?

RQ 3: Can there be a common public sphere in Europe when anti-democratic messages become common across Europe?

This thesis will discuss these questions from a theoretical and empirical point of view, considering the inherently genre-specific features of posters that make it an ideal vehicle for propagandistic communication. The theoretical framework draws on news value theory as an analogous indicator of potential impact. The additive hypothesis (Galtung and Ruge 1965) suggests that the more factors are attributed to an "event", in this case represented by thematically centered posters of right-wing populist parties, the more likely it will be considered newsworthy. Particular attention will be paid to the role of "negativity" and "controversy" as determining factors in modern, visual campaign rhetoric. Paired with a critical discourse approach, this thesis aims to elucidate the visual elements that define right-wing populist poster advertisements in Switzerland and investigate how these elements are mirrored in poster advertisements of other European right-wing parties. The SVP's posters consistently push the envelope regarding design and messaging and will be discussed within the respective national political climate. The sheer popularity of the SVP posters is such that numerous right-wing and extremist parties (Front National, Vlaams Belang, NPD) in other European countries have replicated them to fit their own political agenda.

1.3 Relevance

A strategic investigation of visual communication practices of right-wing parties is relevant to a variety of stakeholders including the scientific community, political parties, media practitioners and lastly, civil society.

To the scientific community, this thesis serves as a contribution to help demystify the explicit and latent visual argumentation strategies employed by right-wing parties by identifying and analyzing the symbolic references that help shape European, and Swiss identity politics in particular. This thesis allows for another perspective to be added to the current debate on political visual communication, which has been underrepresented to date. The intention of this thesis is to provide impetus for researchers alike to further explore a polarizing field in communication studies and act as a catalyzer to help set the agenda for future research.

Political advertisements are stigmatized as boring (Scammel and Lange 2006). While there is certainly more to a political party than a political ad, posters often represent the first point of contact with a party's campaign program to eligible voters during a heated campaign phase. A study carried out for the National Commission against Racism confirms a viable agenda setting function of political posters (cf. Udris 2007). It therefore follows that parties have a vested interest in providing voters with a stimulating visual experience suited to catch and bind their attention, instead of having their messages evaporate due to an uninspiring design.

2. Theoretical Approaches

Almost a century ago, way before the introduction of television as a mass medium and the emergence of arguments over the dominance of visual culture, Walter Lippmann already noted: "the world outside and the pictures in our heads." (Lippmann 1922:3) Lippmann expresses a very simple idea: While we live in the same world and perceive the same things, the way we experience things differs markedly from one another. The pictures in our heads refer to the way we construct reality and embed these experiences within our own experiences. Lippmann touches on the complexity of reality. In a sense he takes a constructivist approach to reality, individually construed but heavily influenced by the mass media. What was once the print medium has now shifted to visually oriented media and it is no surprise that visual studies have emerged as a strand of research in cultural studies, gradually branching out to other disciplines such as linguistics and political sciences as well. Radical constructivists emphasized that a depiction of reality is impossible and visual material is especially prone to criticism claiming that depending on intention of the author, reality is easily distorted to reflect the ideology and aim of the artist. While this applies to

photography (especially in a context of war photography) as pictures can only show a snippet of an event and often fail to deliver the necessary context, political posters are a different matter altogether.

Jörg Matthes (2013) states that political poster ads differ profoundly from classic media reporting in a number of ways. While journalists are more restricted in the way they depict foreigners (also visually), political advertisements are not subject to presenting counterarguments in the name of balanced reporting and can draw on the full spectrum of negative stereotypical representation of migrants.

2.1 News Values

Galtung and Ruge's (1965) taxonomy of what defines something as newsworthy, has led to an abundance of empirical content studies aimed at pinpointing the characteristics of a particular event. This has forced journalists to reassess their role as gatekeepers. Additionally, it has also changed the way people and institutions communicate, whether it is for the purpose of mediatizing a non-event or by optimizing the news value of a political issue.

Even though the research by Galtung and Ruge (1965) is clear to media and communication scholars, a reiteration of the main factors and claims is crucial in order to make this thesis more accessible to an interdisciplinary audience. Harcup and O'Neill (2001) give a succinct overview of the main implications, using murder as an example of a news event:

*F1: **frequency**: Social trends that take place over a longer period of time are less likely to be reported on than events that appear at a similar frequency as the news medium, e.g murders.*

*F2: **threshold**: events have to pass a certain threshold to be noticed by the press, following that, the greater the intensity of the murder, the more gruesome the murder and the more casualties in an accident, the greater the impact on those responsible for selecting the news.*

*F3: **unambiguity**: the less ambiguous an event, the more likely it is to become news. This relates to simplicity and clarity, the less room for interpretation, the more likely it is to become news.*

*F4: **meaningfulness**: events that are culturally similar to that of the "gatekeeper", the more likely that that incidence will become news. So, if a Swiss citizen is killed in Syria, the chances are higher that this story will be picked up by the Swiss media, contrary to a Syrian getting killed.*

*F5: **consonance**: the news selector may have certain pre-existent ideas of what he considers newsworthy, thus, his personal perceptions can shape what becomes news.*

*F6: **unexpectedness**: unexpected and rare events have a higher chance of becoming news, especially if these events occur within a culturally familiar frame.*

*F7: **continuity**: once an event has made the news, it will receive continued coverage, even if the amplitude has decreased considerably, largely because it has become familiar and easy to interpret.*

*F8: **composition**:*

*F9: **reference to elite nations**: the actions of elite nations are considered more consequential and thus more newsworthy than actions of other nations. Implies that there is a hierarchy of nations, actions of less elite nations must be of greater consequence to receive play in media.*

*F10: **reference to elite people:** the actions of elite people who are usually famous are considered more important than those that aren't, therefore, their actions have a better chance of making the news. Further, the audience of a medium may identify with the actions of an elite person.*

*F11: **reference to persons:** news tends to attribute events to the actions of named people, rather than as a result of social forces.*

*F12: **reference to something negative:** negative news can be regarded as unambiguous and consensual, likely to be unexpected and to occur over a shorter period of time, thus the chances of breaking the news barrier is increased.*

Schulz (2011) showed that the selection and presentation of events by the media determine the reception of political issues by the audience (Schulz 2011:195). He further shows that events largely reported on and presented by the media as salient issues, are equally seen by the audience as relevant. The issues selected for publication by the “gatekeepers”, are considered salient because they satisfy the criteria postulated by the news value theory. In turn, these news events are placed prominently in a medium, allocated more space and receive larger headlines. While Schulz clearly demonstrated that there is a causal relationship between saliency attributed by the gatekeeper and the audience, he also notes, that these constructed realities are not just adopted blindly, but the assessment depends on sociopolitical variables such as level of education, political competency, previous theme-specific knowledge on part of the individual, personal interest (ibid.:195).

Schulz draws on George Gerbner (2000) to illustrate the psychological dimension affecting the kind of news material individuals consume and process – albeit by relating to television – which in turn shapes their value orientation and thus, what they consider important issues. The so called cultivation analysis postulates that people who are frequently exposed to stereotypical depictions, will adopt perceived mainstream political positions, which of course affects their voting behavior (Gerbner 2000, cited in Schulz 2011:196)

These insights are relevant to this thesis because they convey that a communication strategy aimed at receiving wide play in the media, must satisfy the “barriers” imposed on by the news logic. It can be argued that the hurdles for political information are set even higher, as the public has increasingly become more disinterested in political affairs. This is in line with Ruth Wodak and Majid Khosravinik’s (2013) observation of a “growing apathy of the general public to mainstream politics as populist extreme discourses seem to fill the gap created by the public’s disenchantment with [mainstream] politics” (Wodak and Khosravinik 2013:xviii).

Tunstall (1971) criticizes that research neglects to account for the impact of visual material such as dramatic photographs on the direction of the newspaper’s reporting (Tunstall 1971:21, cited in Harcup and O’Neill 2001:265). As we will see later, the chief visual strategist for the SVP; Alexander Segert, builds on the superiority of visual images to evoke

fear and controversy, which by Galtung and Ruge's criteria lead to an increase in media reports.

2.2 In-and-Out Group

"The construction of in-and-out-groups necessarily implies the use of strategies of positive self-presentation and the negative presentation of others" (Richardson and Wodak 2009:47). The account below serves the purpose of showing how racism – a particularly severe form of exclusionary practice – is a reflection of an accepted and institutionalized way of perceiving differences in a distinct time period. It will further become clear that the notion of racial superiority has recently shifted towards a "hierarchy of ethnicities", which is visible within visual political campaigns of right wing parties in Europe.

The realities of 18th century America differed profoundly from Thomas Jefferson's declaration of independence in 1776 that "we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with unalienable Rights, that among those are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of happiness" (Howard Zinn 2003:71). Black Americans which were mostly indentured by white farmers, were obviously not regarded as enjoying these rights in Jefferson's declaration and thus, there can be no mention of equality. Both Jefferson and Lincoln subscribed to the view that whites were physically and intellectually superior:

There is a physical difference between the white and black races which I believe will forever forbid the two races living together on terms of social and political equality. And inasmuch as they cannot so live, while they do remain together there must be a position of superior and inferior, and I as much as any other man am in favour of having the superior position assigned to the white race (Abraham Lincoln 1858, cited after Stephen Jay Gould 1981:31)

Lincoln's plain words were in line with the then dominant scientific tradition of biological determinism. This line of thinking claimed that social and economic differences between races are inherited. The hierarchical, societal differences are therefore a reflection of their biology (Gould 1981:20). The white elite had no doubts that the white race was biologically superior. They thus nourished a societal climate, which regarded slavery as a natural consequence of black inferiority, legitimized by science. In his book entitled "The Mismeasure of Man", Stephen Jay Gould gives a riveting overview of the history of biological determinism and shows how the scientific elite (e.g. Agassiz, Morton, Broca) generated data through methodical bias and misinterpreted results purposely in order to fit their previous, racist hypothesis. Gould writes that science is always a reflection of our culture: "The history of scientific views on race, for example, serves as a mirror of social movements" (Gould

1981:22). This can also be seen as a warning. In retrospect, we can decidedly say that the scientific results were clouded by institutionalized racism and the scientific standards were insufficient, which is why we should always consider a plurality of views. Modern human genetics has determined that there are greater genetic differences within ethnic groups than between interethnic groups. This assessment has led to a collapse of classic racial theories.

Even though the assumptions of biological determinism have been declared false and largely discarded, some prominent scientists still cause great commotion by promoting arguments that claim their validity based on issues of race. James Watson, nobel laureate for discovering the structure of DNA said in an interview that black people are less intelligent than white people, and maintained, that the “equal power of reasons” cannot be upheld (James Watson 2007, cited in Cahal Milmo 2007).

Following the refutation of race as a biological concept, the notion of racism, which builds on the term race, has to be questioned as well. Contemporary literature has shown that with the absence of “races” which provided the scientific basis for biological determinism, the concept of racism has been replaced by a socio-cultural construction with real consequences for the people involved.

We would hardly declare Christianity, or religious intolerance, dead by establishing that God does not exist. That is, modern racism need not presuppose the biological notion of race or its associated racial hierarchies, but pre-supposes their continued socio-cultural construction as it is adapted to the current historical context” (Omi and Winant 1986, cited after Van Dijk 1991:25).

Van Dijk terms this societal development “Contemporary Racism”, in which dominance over other groups plays a pivotal role. “[...] contemporary racism is a complex societal system in which peoples of European origin ‘dominate’ peoples of other origin [...] this relation of dominance may take forms of economic, social, cultural and/or political hegemony, legitimated in terms of usually negatively valued, different characteristics ascribed to the dominated people” (Van Dijk 1991:24). This novel form of racism recognizes the sociocultural differences between groups of people, but denies the awarding of equal rights. These asymmetric power relations are a manifestation of a markedly ethnocentric society. Van Dijk draws parallels between contemporary racism in which one’s own culture is considered more sophisticated and the concept of biological determinism, which was based on genetic hierarchy.

We see that this ethnic positioning of self and others may underlie the same hierarchization as that based on race, which in turn give rise to and legitimize a system of ethnic dominance or exclusion, that is ethnicism. While seen as morale less

reprehensible, the emphasis on culture and cultural differences has become the modern variant of racial differentiation of earlier western ideologies. Hence, racism is being transformed into ethnicism (Van Dijk 1991:26).

If we consider racism to be a complex societal system as Van Dijk does, the question has to be asked as to the fundamental elements that help uphold such a system. According to Van Dijk, the media bear a considerable responsibility regarding this matter, as it is them who participate in the reproduction of xenophobic (and partly racist) stereotypes, which contribute to maintaining unequal power relations in favor of the white majority in western democracies.

The context-sensitivity of the chosen qualitative approach was modified to accommodate the pictorial nature of the posters. This allows researchers to identify the explicit and latent characteristics that define the visual discourse around migration as constructed by European right-wing parties, with a particular emphasis on the Swiss People's Party (SVP). Drawing on the idea that we live in a post-modern world in which a single dogma is insufficient to explain our actions, the research aims to pinpoint the suggested values embedded in the posters of the selected parties in a decennium, in which our identities are increasingly fragmented.

3. THE RISE AND FALL OF POPULIST PARTIES

Right-Wing Populist Parties have seen an increase in electoral support in established Western democracies such as Switzerland, Austria, France, Netherlands and Italy but are also gaining visibility in Eastern Europe through a common xenophobic agenda (van der Brug et al. 2005; Rydgren 2004, Wodak et al 2013). This section discusses the central elements shared by many right-wing populist parties and locates them in their respective national context.

3.1 Populism – We and the Others

According to Anton Pelinka (2013) “populism is based on Abraham Lincoln’s famous definition of democracy as government of the people, for the people, and by the people.” As such, populism favors direct democratic elements that are characteristic for Swiss politics. He notes that populism sees intermediate political structures such as parliaments and political parties as “secondary instruments at best and potential obstacles for true democracy at worst (ibid.:)”. Cas Mudde (2004:543) defines populism as “[...] an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous groups and antagonistic groups, “the pure people” versus “the corrupt elite” and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* of the people.” It becomes evident that populism seeks to distinguish between “we” and the “others.” Pelinka rightfully points to the dilemma such a definition of populism entails, namely that a clear differentiation of who belongs to the in-group and who does not is not easily realized conceptually. Populism based on an understanding of “the people” begs the question of who the “people” are. The declaration of independence in 1776 is used as a prominent example, when “a few Americans” chose to speak on the behalf of “we”, did it include the black slaves or the native Americans? (ibid.:) The author argues that “the people” which populism assumes exist as a unified, homogenous group, is inexistent as such. While people share commonalities based on nationality, ethnicity and linguistic characteristics, their identities are more fragmented than ever. This applies particularly to their political views, which cannot be reduced to a single ideology.

Thomas Wagner (2013) observed that Right-Wing parties periodically call for a more “democratic” allocation of power, transferring it from the political elite back to the people, modeled after the Swiss system. He notes, however, that not everyone who criticizes the political elite and advocates for the people to vote on political issues and more political participation, is genuinely interested in eliminating power structures and political inequality (Wagner 2013:304). While a direct democracy allows for more political participation, right-wing parties can also exploit it as an instrument to mobilize xenophobic resentments, for example against the building of minarets (ibid.: 305).

3.2 Identity

Geden's observations on populist parties in a postmodern time are the most notable aspect of his work. Populist parties, especially in relation to the discourse on immigration, rely on an understanding of culture grounded in essentialism. According to essentialists, culture is historically fixed. This view is contradictory to a post-modern view of society of a world that is getting increasingly complex. To an extent due to globalization, the world is getting more complex and geographical, linguistic and social barriers are blurring. As the symbols, signs and objects change in meaning over time, so do our identities. It is ultimately an issue of negotiation, an aspect that plays a prominent role in a symbolic interactionist approach to communication. This perspective serves as the foundation for Ruth Wodak's Historical Discourse Analytical methodology, which this thesis draws on.

Methodology

4. Populist Parties – Short List

European right-wing populist parties have a long tradition. Poujade in France, Boer Koekoek in the Netherlands, the Austrian FPÖ and the Front National in France, which emerged post WWII come to mind. Today, however, their status as legitimate political actors is markedly different from that of the immediate postwar era.

Right-wing populist parties have increasingly shaped the political landscape for the past twenty years (Geden 2006:11; Schönfelder 2013:96). They have gained particular traction in the last two decades during which they have – with varying success – been able to establish themselves as sizable actors within the political arena.

According to Sven Schönfelder, they have risen from being a short-term alternative (to established parties) in times of protest and dissatisfaction to representing a viable, long-term political orientation for a larger segment of voters (Schönfelder 2013:96). Schönfelder points to the recent success of right-wing parties in Europe, ranging from governmental participation (Austria), governmental toleration (Denmark, Netherlands), to governmental domination. This refers to the stark popularity of right-wing parties in countries such as Switzerland and Italy, in which the right enjoy the label of being mainstream. In 2008 Berlusconi led "Popolo della Libertà", and Umberto Bossi's Lega Nord accounted for nearly 50% of votes during the parliamentary elections. The Swiss national party (SVP) has consistently gained between 26-29% of votes (Federal Bureau of Statistics 2013) during the last three national elections between 2003, 2007 and 2011. The Austrian pendant FPÖ managed to claim 28% of the votes in 2008 and joined the ÖVP in a coalition government between 2000 and 2006. The

ensuing sanctions imposed by the European Union evaporated and had no consequences for the party, or as Meindert Fennema puts it: “The symbolic sanctions of 13 EU countries against the Austrian government that included the FPÖ not only had little effect, they also made clear how little popular support there is for sanctioning a government that has been democratically elected” (Meindert Fennema 2005:17).

Scholars (Geden 2007; Krzyanowski and Wodak 2008) have remarked that right-wing parties are particularly effective when acting out of opposition. On issues of immigration, they successfully create an atmosphere of “we” vs. the “corrupt elites”, referring to established parties, which in their view, have failed their citizens by taking a strong stance in favor of minorities. Characteristically, populist parties reduce complex issues by overgeneralization and establish causal links, where none exist. By oversimplifying, they ensure their messages to appeal to a large group of potential voters. It is striking, how successful right-wing populist parties are in Europe. However, they often lose credibility once they acquire a critical size to assume governmental responsibility (Geden 2006:).

Historically, the transition from being a successful party acting out of opposition to assuming governmental responsibilities has proven difficult for most right-wing parties. According to Krzyanowski and Wodak 2008, “their strength seems to lie in their oppositional role, not in taking over governmental responsibilities”, pointing to the erosion of voter confidence in parties such as the BZÖ.

As a governing party, they are forced to execute their campaign promises. The populist campaign rhetoric now has to be converted in results that the citizens can measure. They have shifted from accusing the political elite of ineffectiveness, to becoming part of the political elite and are directly to blame for falling short on their populist promises. The execution of these promises is difficult precisely because the problems they intend to solve are not one-dimensional (Geden 2006:).

4.1 European Right-Wing Populist Parties

4.1.1 FPÖ

According to Gerd Wiegel (2013), the Austrian FPÖ can be regarded as a “prototype” of European right-wing populism in Europe (Wiegel 2013:112). The author attributes this to the FPÖ’s pioneering election results as the first party of its kind in Europe, and whose distinct style under Jörg Haider served as a role model for various other parties (ibid:112), also known as “The Haiderization of politics”, a term coined by Ruth Wodak (2013).

Wiegel captures the change right-wing parties have undergone in recent years:

This turning point refers to the modernization and professionalization of the extreme right who increasingly incorporated neo-liberalistic elements and distanced themselves from an economic and political model grounded in historical fascism (ibid:112), contributing to their acceptance as a coalition partner for the ÖVP in 2000 (Wiegel 2013:112).

Common to most right-wing parties is the presence of a single individual who serves as an icon and driving force for the party. Jörg Haider undisputedly occupied this position until he moved on to form his own party, the BZÖ, while the FPÖ was taken over by one of his former associates.

4.1.2 Partij van de Vrijheid (PVV)

The Netherlands have been at the forefront of Europe's noticeable shift to the political right. Arjan Vliegthart and Hans van Heiningen (2013) give an overview of the developments that accompanied the rise of right-wing populist parties. The Netherlands witnessed the rise and fall of Pim Fortuin during the early 21st Century. It is also home to Geert Wilder's Party for Freedom (PVV), who secured around one-sixth of the votes in 2010. Though not formally a coalition partner, Wilders actively supported the minority government consisting of center right liberals and the "Christdemokraten". In return, the government promised to enforce harsher immigration and integration guidelines (Vliegthart / van Heijningen 2013:146). Two years later, voters expressed their discontent at the party's by withdrawing their support.

4.1.3 Swiss People's Party

The Swiss political system is unique in a sense. It is one of only a few countries in which direct democracy is an inherent part of the constitution. Rolf Buechi refers to the Swiss system as Modern Direct Democracy or MDD, to distinguish it from its more antiquated form found in early-day Athens (Rolf Buechi 2012:184). As such, it grants its citizens much more political influence than those in representative democracies. Hanspeter Kriesi and Laurent Bernhard (2012) identify three features of direct democratic institutions on the Swiss federal level: popular initiative, compulsory referendums and optional referendums. All three strengthen the voice of eligible voters in directly participating in the political process by overturning laws adopted by parliament or by proposing amendments to the constitution by making use of their right to launch an initiative, if they can produce the 100 000 signatures needed to open a proposal up to voters. To illustrate more clearly the differences between an initiative and a referendum, we can draw on Bernhard and Kriesi's explanation:

Initiatives are propositions 'from below', formulated by organizations representing groups of citizens, while referendums concern propositions from above, that is, legislative acts proposed by the government and adopted by Parliament. (Bernhard / Kriesi 2012:18).

Georg Lutz (2012) notes that initiatives launched by interest groups can help shape the political agenda by putting issues in the public's eye, that political parties would prefer not to take a stand on. However, once successfully launched, the established parties are forced to comment, meaning that the public holds substantial power in shaping the political agenda (Lutz 2012:30). The author further demonstrates that the number of initiatives launched has steadily increased in comparison to that of referendums (ibid.:29).

In theory, any issue can become the subject of an initiative. In the last decade however, a number of initiatives have been questioned as to their conformity with international laws. The initiative to ban the construction of minarets in 2009 was widely criticized, both on a national level and internationally. At the time of writing, the "Schweizerische Volkspartei" represented the largest and most popular party in Switzerland, accounting for approximately 27% of the votes in 2011 (Bundesamt für Statistik: 2011). For the next two decades after its creation in 1971, the SVP remained in the shadow of the three largest parties FDP, CVP and SP who further cemented the "magical formula" by which power, influence and political appointments were allocated, referred to as "freezing hypothesis" (Kriesi 2005:3).

On a national level, the ascent of the SVP can be traced back to their campaign in 1986, in which they successfully prevented Switzerland from joining the United Nations. (Kriesi 2005:4) In 1992, the SVP emerged as victor in what is described as the longest and most intensive battle in Swiss politics, resulting in the rejection of her joining the European Economic Area and kept her from becoming a member of the European Union. These events can be seen as a precursor to the massive transformation of the party in the 1990's, during which they skyrocketed from a mere 11% at the polls in 1991, to 26,7% in 2003 after winning three national elections in a row, thus emerging as the largest party (ibid.:4).

4.2 The SVP on Immigration

Geden (2006) gives an overview of the immigration discourse as constructed by the Swiss People's Party. His account is based primarily on extracts of the "Zürcher Bote", a monthly party publication by the SVP's cantonal section of Zürich, which is regarded as the more radical wing of the party but at the same time has a decisive influence in setting the party's national policy agenda.

The SVP fears an uncontrollable flood of asylum seekers, illegal immigrants, economic migrants and their families (Geden 2006:96). The current situation is described by them as “precarious”, exacerbated by inconsequent deportation of denied asylum seekers and temporarily admitted refugees. At the time of writing, the SVP anticipated that this situation would only get worse if Switzerland were to join the Schengen area, which would lift restrictions at the borders, intended to ensure the free flow of persons within the European Union and between the EU and countries party to the treaty.

Geden notes that the SVP, in addition to addressing the direct consequences of immigration, voices a plurality of other issues regarding immigration, which can be seen as indirect effects. The party fears an increasing abuse of the country’s social system, molestation of their women, an increased willingness to use violence, disadvantages for Swiss children in public schools with a large foreign student body, a meteoric increase in costs to sustain the asylum system, a threatening balkanization and islamification of Switzerland (Geden 2006:97).

The SVP distinguishes between good and bad migrants and emphasizes that the immigration population is primarily made up of migrants, who are not beneficial to the Swiss market place. According to them, the migrants are mostly “criminals”, “terrorists” and “economic refugees” who do not join the job market, but instead eventually end up in the country’s welfare system. The party differentiates between previous immigrant populations (predominantly German and Italian) which in their view have mostly integrated quite well, and new immigrant floods of foreign cultural circles (African and Islamic countries) with whom peaceful co-existence seems impossible (Geden 2006:97).

The SVP also criticizes the way society has chosen to deal with these “problems”. In their view, the other political parties lack the courage to identify a definite culprit but instead hide behind political correctness. Further, the party questions the current multi-cultural ideology, which, in their view, causes foreigners to not even bother adapting to the rules and norms that govern the way people live in Switzerland. According to them, they are the only party actively engaged at trying to preserve the “true” Swiss identity. The party maintains that individuals and groups of similar cultural backgrounds are easier to integrate and do so mostly voluntarily, whereas Albanians tend to oust other ethnic groups and Muslims are by default unable to integrate and tolerable (Geden 2006:101).

Another point of concern to the party is the naturalization of foreigners. By giving them a Swiss passport, foreign criminal statistics are artificially lowered. This does not actively solve

the problems associated with “Secondos”, second-generation immigrants who are disproportionately linked to violence, criminality and speeding, according to SVP’s Ulrich Schüler.

The Swiss People’s Party understands itself as the only party willing to address the “legitimate concerns” and “everyday experiences” of the Swiss people. The SVP does not regard their campaigns as racists. In fact, they believe that their addressing of immigration policy grounded in a realistic assessment, reflecting the wishes of their citizens, ensures that radical immigration views do not surface. They see themselves as victims who have been stigmatized by the political elite as engaging in an extremist and criminal way, judging the party’s actions from a morally superior position and subjecting their actions to the scrutiny of the antiracism clause, which since 1995 prohibits the discrimination and attack of an individual’s or groups’ dignity based on their affiliation to an ethnic or religious group (Geden 2006:98).

4.3 Alexander Segert - The Black Sheep

Alexander Segert is the chief architect of the SVP’s poster campaigns. As head of the communication agency “Goal”, Segert has been in charge of designing and implementing the party’s poster material since 2004. His illustrious biography is interesting, as he is a German national, living in Switzerland for the past twenty years. Previous to his collaboration with the SVP, Segert was a contributor to the nationalist paper “Schweizerzeit”, in which he decidedly argued against homosexuality, abortions and Islam. In an interview with the German magazine “Die Welt” in 2010 entitled “I give fear a voice”, Segert explained his thinking regarding the design of the posters and the messages he wants to send. Segert concedes that his primary objective is to execute the ideas of his clients the best way he knows how, even if his designs often cross the boundary of what is morally acceptable. One of his more recent campaigns was aimed against the “German filth”. The Germans represent the largest ethnicity of foreigners in Switzerland (Federal Bureau for Migration 2014), and there is an increasing anti-German sentiment in Switzerland which is particularly noticeable in the (linguistic) Swiss-German part. The fear of losing their jobs to qualified Germans has been an issue discussed extensively by the nation’s largest quality newspaper NZZ (among others) as in the article entitled “Neue Deutsche Welle” (New German Wave). Segert has no problems of directing voter’s attention to this issue, despite being a German citizen himself. He emphasizes the differences in demeanor between Swiss and German people and empathizes with the Swiss’ fear of cultural invasion. He again stresses his role as a communicator for the SVP, whose main aim is to solve the issues that affect their citizens

without any taboos, even if it crosses the notion of political correctness. Segert emphasizes that, although he would not encourage it, he would, if it reflected the interests of his clients, design a poster that would call for restricting German migration into Switzerland. According to him, there are only two things that he would not support: a campaign that is unlawful and one that has no chance of succeeding. Despite his claim not to support a campaign that is unlawful, Segert was charged with committing sedition because of his involvement as a consultant for the Austrian FPÖ. According to news sources, Segert advocated for the release of a video game by the nativist Austrian party FPÖ in which players were encouraged to virtually bomb mosques and muezzins, iteration of a video game the SVP had launched online previously in Switzerland. Segert's conviction and ideological dedication help to illuminate why the party is so successful, He does not shy away from breaking the code of political correctness but focuses primarily on achieving his client's aims, which he fully supports. Segert stresses that the party succeeds not by playing the conventional political game, but by condensing the messages so that everybody can understand them, which is crucial when bringing an issue to the vote.

Historically, initiatives have a weak chance of succeeding at the polls. Between 1848 and 2014, out of 191 initiatives only 22 initiatives have reached the required majority. Of the 22, nine were launched in the last decade, (Federal Bureau of Statistics 2014) of which the controversial minaret initiative constitutes one. According to Segert, the poster created to raise awareness and support for the anti-minaret initiative was decisive for its success at the polls. He cites an unspecified external study that estimates that the monetary value generated by press reports on this issue amounted to an estimated 1,5 million Swiss francs. This value, according to Segert, far exceeded the royalties of their advertising budget. It has to be noted at this point however, that the SVP does not disclose their annual spending budget on political advertising.

He sees this as a testament to the importance of designing simple, appealing and emotional messages. The SVP seems therefore to be aware of the agenda setting function of their poster campaigns and factors this into their communication strategy. When questioned about his communicative intent concerning the minaret designs, Segert maintained that he wanted to illustrate the alleged threat emanating from increasing Islamic tendencies in Switzerland, by depicting a number of minarets springing from the Swiss flag like mushrooms. He recognizes the affective potential of inciting and strengthening existing fears through his advertisements.

5. The Power of the Visual

We live in a mediatized world. The supply of information far exceeds our ability to absorb all the information that is produced daily by newspapers, television, blogs, radio broadcasts and other media (Schulz 2012:19, Friedrich 2007). While the traditional media are struggling, not much has changed for commercial ones, as well as for political posters. They have always faced an audience on the move, which have only a split second to spare.

5.1 Political Posters

In an analysis of political posters in Germany, Stephanie Geise notes that on average a poster is looked at for around three seconds (Geise 2010: 240). According to Krober-Riel (1993), approximately one second is needed to decipher an image of medium complexity (Krober-Riel 1993:55, Gordon 2004). Using eye trackers, Geise shows that visual elements are superior in capturing a person's awareness and lead to stronger activation than its textual counterparts. She further shows that the visual elements of posters are viewed significantly longer than written texts and that our attention focuses first on the visual, then on the text, and concludes by looking again at the visual elements in posters. (Geise 2010:242)

In an article entitled "Political Advertising, Why is it so boring?" the authors Margaret Scammell and Ana Lange (2006) state that political advertising has a fundamental problem. In their view, political ads fail to engage the audience's attention, as the advertisements are simply not interesting enough, a perspective mirrored in the works of Kiessling/Zolleis (2005); Jarren/Donges 2006; Podschuweit 2007; Demarmels (2009) and Udris 2011, to name a few.

Scammell and Lange believe that political advertisements should be more aesthetically pleasing and exhibit more characteristics of commercial advertisements (Scammell and Lange 2006:772). Kiessling/Zolleis (2005) have shown interesting parallels between the news values that determine whether a story gets mentioned in the media, and criteria governing impactful commercial advertising. However, Scammell and Lange concede that the call for more courageous, innovative and provocative political ads may prove difficult under the assumption that political advertisement should adhere to a higher "moral" standard should the party wish to keep its reputation of integrity (Scammell and Lange 2006:780).

5.2 Populist Posters

In an interview (Wysling 2011), Bettina Richter, curator of the Swiss poster collection at the museum of design in Zürich, conveys why the SVP has been so successful and continues to

be so with their political poster advertisements. She points out that the SVP has perfected the art of reducing the visual and its accompanying slogan, ensuring that the message is widely understood and creates maximum impact on part of the audience. She further notes that the SVP distinguishes itself from poster advertisement of other parties by using a different style. While most parties rely on aesthetic photography to reach their audience, the SVP has adopted “comic language”. This “language” is consistent throughout their advertisements and is inextricably linked with their party. In fact, the SVP is so strongly associated with this style of poster design, that an alert observer could make an educated guess as to what party authored the poster without the party’s logo even having to be present. In short, the SVP has succeeded in creating a strong brand identity on par with highly successful commercial companies.

Richter also emphasizes the stylistic similarities that the SVP posters share with the polarizing depictions that circulated during the world wars, known for their depictions and constructions of the “enemy”. The stark presence of red and black further trigger associations of a modernist era that emerged out of the Russian constructivism of the 1920’s which embraced black and white photomontages, paired with red as a signaling color. According to Richter, the SVP has appropriated this style and made it its own by infusing the colors with new symbolic meaning: red stands for Switzerland as a country while black symbolizes the evil intruder. Richter maintains that these parallels between the posters and those found throughout the war period is not a coincidence, but part of a refined strategy to polarize and initiate a debate over migration which they have managed to dominate over the past two decades and have taken on the form of campaign character (Wysling 2011).

In an article entitled “It is and it isn’t: Stereotypes Advertising and Narrative”, David Wall (2008) discusses a controversial political ad by the British Labour Party depicting two conservative politicians of Jewish origin as “flying pigs.” Given the historical symbolism “to portray them as pigs is at best insulting and at worst anti-Semitic” (Wall 2008:1033).

6. Legal Considerations

This chapter takes a critical look at contested Swiss right-wing posters from a legal perspective. Specifically, it asks what legal provisions are in place to protect people from racial discrimination and juxtaposes this basic universal right with that of freedom of expression. Given the controversialist nature of the advertisements and the issues raised therein, this chapter also questions whether boundaries should be imposed on what can be subject of a people's initiative and whether the state should be able to restrict the speech of political parties in some cases.

The right to free speech is constitutionally guaranteed. Simultaneously, laws are in place to ensure that human rights are upheld, including anti-racism norms that can be enforced in a court of law. But what happens when the right to freedom of expression clashes with another universal human right? This section aims to discuss this issue from an angle that considers advertisements from the Swiss right-wing party, whose advertisements frequently focus on perceived negative attributes of foreigners. By doing so, they pose a challenge to the question as to whether the state can restrict free speech to ensure that the rights of minorities to non-discrimination are upheld. Should we restrict free speech at all, and if so, where do we draw the line?

This issue is particularly "charged" considering that the Swiss political system of direct democracy allows any individual to launch an initiative to be voted on by the people if he or she can amass 100 000 signatures to support their proposal. The planned initiatives to reestablish the death penalty (1997, 2010 both times withdrawn) for certain crimes come to mind, but also the frequently discussed initiative aimed at deporting foreign criminals which found its graphic expression in the black sheep campaign is an example of this obvious conflict.

Free speech, though guaranteed in the First Amendment and its international counterparts, is rarely free. "Communication, which makes us human and constructs society, also can inflict some of the greatest harms – emotional, reputational, economic, and political – on both individuals and collectivities" (Richard L. Abel 1992:374).

In article 11 of the EU charter of Fundamental rights, the right to freedom of expression is guaranteed.

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers. This article shall not prevent States from requiring the licensing of broadcasting, television or cinema enterprises.

2. The exercise of these freedoms, since it carries with it duties and responsibilities, may be subject to such formalities, conditions, restrictions or penalties as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society, in the interests of national security, territorial integrity or public safety, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, for the protection of the reputation or rights of others, for preventing the disclosure of information received in confidence, or for maintaining the authority and impartiality of the judiciary.

Richard L. Abel has examined areas in which the state can and does restrict the free speech of individuals and groups if it serves to protect a higher good. He cites the banning of alcohol and cigarette ads, the promotion of pornography and the limitation of speech in times of war as examples in which the state restricts speech of corporations/individuals (Abel 1994:374). The following section discusses the scope and application of the Swiss penal code, which illustrates the controversy between the right to freedom of expression and protection from racist speech.

6.1 Scope and Legal Application of Article 261 StGB:

6.1.1 Protected Groups:

Article 261 of the Swiss penal code protects certain groups and individuals from racist utterances that occur in public, and this accessible to an undefined amount of addressees. Among the protected are certain races, ethnicities and religions.

Although it is conceded that the term race is biologically faulty, Switzerland's highest court has ruled that the term "race" denotes a group of people who consider themselves as a distinct group or are perceived as a homogenous group by others. The Swiss federal court has further ruled that membership to a certain race, and thereby resulting in protection under article 261 StGB, can be derived from someone's skin color. People with dark skin color are, in the courts view, undoubtedly a "race" in accordance with the legal provision, though incorrectly considered to be a genetic property. The court notes, that the invective "sales blancs" can be analogously seen as a racist attack on white people, thereby "white" is considered established race, and thus covered by article 261. In addition to black and white, legally speaking, Tamils are the only group considered a race in the court's view (EKR 2007:15).

Certain ethnicities are also covered under Art. 261 StGB. Legally, individuals are considered part of an ethnic group if they share the same culture, consider themselves as a distinct

group and are also considered to be “distinct” by others (EKR 2007:15). The term culture is very loosely defined in this context and is therefore also open to critical debate. However, belonging to an ethnicity is marked by a sense of common identity that may be passed from one generation to the next. If an attack is based solely on someone’s skin color, it is considered to be racially motivated. If it specifically attacks a certain group of people however, the attack is considered ethnically motivated, even if skin color is a factor for the attack.

To date, the following ethnicities have been recognized in the framework of Article 261 of the Swiss penal code: Albanians, Kosovo-Albanians, Portuguese, Italians, Swiss, Arabic, Palestinians and Roma. Concerning people of former Yugoslavia, the courts have denied the claim to a distinct ethnicity, as Yugoslavia pre 1991 was made up of several ethnicities to start off with.

Following race and ethnicity, people of different religions also enjoy legal protection under the non-discrimination clause in article 261, although this was not explicitly called for in the treaty for the elimination of any form of racial discrimination of 1965, to which Switzerland became a party to in 1994. Again, the term religion is understood broadly, making it hard to differentiate it from sectarian formations.

6.1.2 Non-Protected Groups:

After looking at groups and people that are protected under the non-discrimination clause 261 StGB, it is worth noting that a variety of groups has not been included in the penal code, which may seem surprising. Foreigners and asylum-seekers pertain solely to the legal status of a person and therefore do not fulfill the criteria set forth by article 261 StGB, although legal scholar Marcel Niggli argues that they should not be denied protection, just because they represent a more general collective group. Among the non-protected groups are: nationalities and states. Generally speaking, discriminations that are solely based on citizenship are not considered legally relevant, although membership to a particular ethnicity based on nationality and therefore “the nation” and their people can be inferred. As the federal commission against racism notes, members of a different nationality can often be distinguished from Swiss citizens by their skin color, thereby causing article 261 of the Swiss penal code to apply.

Art. 261^{bis} StGB¹ Rassendiskriminierung

Abs. 1)

Wer öffentlich gegen eine Person oder eine Gruppe von Personen wegen ihrer Rasse, Ethnie oder Religion zu Hass oder Diskriminierung aufruft,

Abs. 2)

Wer öffentlich Ideologien verbreitet, die auf die systematische Herabsetzung oder Verleumdung der Angehörigen einer Rasse, Ethnie oder Religion gerichtet sind,

Abs. 3) wer mit dem gleichen Ziel Propagandaaktionen organisiert, fördert oder daran teilnimmt,

Abs. 4 Hälfte 1) wer öffentlich durch Wort, Schrift, Bild, Gebärden, Tätlichkeiten oder in anderer Weise eine Person oder eine Gruppe von Personen wegen ihrer Rasse, Ethnie oder Religion in einer gegen die Menschenwürde verstossenden Weise herabsetzt oder diskriminiert

Abs. 4 Hälfte 2) oder aus einem dieser Gründe Völkermord oder andere Verbrechen gegen die Menschlichkeit leugnet, gröblich verharmlost oder zu rechtfertigen sucht,

Abs. 5) wer eine von ihm angebotene Leistung, die für die Allgemeinheit bestimmt ist, einer Person oder einer Gruppe von Personen wegen ihrer Rasse, Ethnie oder Religion verweigert,

wird mit Gefängnis oder mit Busse bestraft.

The (Swiss) National Commission against Racism (EKR) raised the issue whether article 261 StGB of the Swiss penal code (criminalizing racist utterances) conflicts with article 10 of the European Convention of Human Rights – itself a fundamental human right – in a publication dated 2007. The Commission discusses the dilemma, how, and under which circumstances, the law can mediate between these two fundamental rights. The Swiss federal court has stated that the right to freedom of expression is not absolute and can be restricted if deemed necessary to maintain the democratic order. Marcel Niggli, a prominent law professor, maintains that the violation of a constitutionally guaranteed basic human right (in this case violating someone's right to dignity) cannot be justified by calling on another guaranteed basic human right (right to freedom of expression) (EKR 2007:14).

6.2 Cases:

A search on the database of the federal commission against racism (EKR) gives an idea of cases in which article 261bis has been applied. The search term "SVP Plakat" aims at

restricting the search to posters that have been authored by Swiss People Party (SVP). The search turned up four results from different years that will be outlined below.

Case **2007-065N** (full details available here in German;

[http://www.ekr.admin.ch/dienstleistungen/d524/2007-](http://www.ekr.admin.ch/dienstleistungen/d524/2007-065N.html?db=N&search=svp%20plakat&p=1)

[065N.html?db=N&search=svp%20plakat&p=1](http://www.ekr.admin.ch/dienstleistungen/d524/2007-065N.html?db=N&search=svp%20plakat&p=1)) deals with the “Black Sheep” poster that was launched in 2007 by the SVP and the “Kommittee für eine sichere Schweiz”, in order to promote the initiative aimed at deporting criminals of foreign nationality. The suing party claimed that the rights of dark skinned people and foreigners in general had been violated in accordance with article 261bis StGB. The suing party further argued that the poster incited hate and furthered discrimination, and that their dignity had been violated. They were able to show that the infringements occurred in public, as the posters were prominently displayed in public areas as well as online and were therefore accessible to an undefined, large group of people. The prosecuting authorities dismissed the charge on the basis that the people’s initiative targeted “foreigners”, which are not subject to protection under article 261bis StGB. According to the prosecuting authorities, article 261bis StGB protects a person’s dignity. This would be the case if a person had been denied of their dignity as a person of equal worth in a societal setting, which the court denied in this case. The attack has to target an individual’s core personality. The prosecuting authorities maintain that the attack had to be weighed against the right to free speech and that only severe, misanthropic and despicable actions of discrimination are eligible for consideration under article 261bis StGB.

The court did not dispute the public character of the attacks as the ads were prominently publicized in various newspapers, magazines, as posters in public areas and online. The district attorney acknowledged that the relative distance of the black sheep from Swiss territory could be interpreted as xenophobic, but argued that any proposition to toughen criminal law pertaining to foreigners could be seen this way.

The prosecuting authority further noted that the illegality of written and visual utterances is judged according to what interpretation the average unbiased citizen would come to when viewing these posters. These depictions are further a form of political advertisement, which function similar to normal advertisements by reducing the message to a memorable image. The core of the initiative is mirrored through the depiction of a black sheep, which is deemed unwanted. The judicial authority further argued that the idiomatic expression of a “black sheep” is derived from a biblical passage in which black sheep were considered less useful, as the shepherds wanted to process white wool. Translated to today’s environment, the

idiomatic expression is to be understood as individuals who deviate from the norm. The court denied any claim alleging intrinsic racist motivation and dismissed the case as a result. An appeal was also dismissed.

7. Method

7.1 Critical Discourse Analysis

For this thesis, I delimit the term “discourse” as defined by Ruth Wodak, who has expanded the existing theoretical framework in order to make pictures accessible to empirical scrutiny. The term discourse is accompanied by profound confusion. It has been used in a plethora of contexts, ranging from architectural to policy issues, a situation that can be attributed to its proliferating use in the social sciences as well as the fact that systematic definitions are hard to come by. The situation is exacerbated because concepts found in literature are commonly inadequately operationalized and are often used in an inconsistent manner (Wodak 2008:1). Critical discourse analysis (CDA) understands itself as a framework suited for problem-oriented social research. It is characterized by a strong sense of interdisciplinarity and draws heavily on concepts originally devised in the field of linguistics.

Two concepts are especially relevant when talking about discourse, namely intertextual and interdiscursive relationships (Wodak 2008:2). “Texts” as used in cultural studies can refer to a number of cultural artifacts and encompass written as well as visual objects. In this light, intertextuality refers to the fact that a text cannot be seen in isolation, but must be viewed as connected to other texts, past and present. According to Wodak, these links can be established by referencing the same topic, main actors, same events or by transferring main arguments from one text into another, often dubbed recontextualization

Nowadays, many researchers’ primary focus lies in examining the role of social media in election campaigns. Undoubtedly, the online efforts were a crucial and novel aspect of the 2008 American Presidential campaign and were essential in securing Obama the Democratic nomination and the presidency. However, the artwork created by Stephen Fairey remains the most memorable piece of political propaganda of the entire campaign. The Obama campaign of 2008 is a prime example of the effectiveness of classical, some might say old-fashioned visual political advertisement. His “Hope” posters, launched barely in time for Super Tuesday on which 22 states were to hold primary elections, reached iconic status almost immediately. In his book “Art for Obama”, Fairey explains what he wanted to convey through his art.



Fig.2 Recontextualization of Obama campaign poster. Left, original; right, recontextualization.

With my illustration, I wanted to convey that Obama had vision – his eyes sharply focused on the future – and compassion, that he would use his leadership qualities for the greater good of America in a very patriotic way. I used a photo for reference, and gave the illustration a patriotic color scheme, dividing the face into the red shadow side and the blue highlight side, to convey the idea of blue and red states, Democrats and Republicans, who are frequently in opposition, converging (Stephen Farey 2009:7).

Farey’s Hope poster was the first in a series to follow. “Progress”, “Vote” “Change” “Be the Change” and “Yes We Did” are all alterations of the original poster, though kept in a similar style. Farey’s posters resulted in what can be described as a “domino effect”, inspiring fellow artists around the globe to follow his example and design what they thought, the presidential nominee represented. The artwork designed in support of Barack Obama is visually and textually interesting, ranging from silk-screen prints and oil on canvas designs to wood carvings, bumper stickers, wool knitted sweaters and even entire art installations. The entire art journey is documented in the book “Art for Obama.”

In many ways, the artwork created in support of Barack Obama can be seen as a best practice example of how the arts, and especially posters, can be an effective way to generate movement for a political candidate. Can we call this poster populist? It is generic, uses no concrete well-reasoned arguments, but patriotic symbols and simple slogans, appeals to emotions. But the posters are noteworthy because they, in contrast to many European

political print advertisements, choose to highlight the positive aspects of his candidacy instead of going negative, as is often the case on thematically focused ads in Switzerland, as well as the television ads that air in the United States. The poster appears to be a counter-example of what people have dubbed the “Americanization Hypothesis”, referring to the fact that most political ads are negative in nature, aiming to discredit a political opponent in some way or another. To a certain extent, traces of negativization can be also found in the Obama posters, as the slogans “Change” and “Hope” both implicitly refer to the previous political climate of the Bush administration by advocating for a presidency that would markedly differ from that of its predecessor. Nevertheless, the main messages entailed in these posters are primarily positive, depicting Obama as a strong, patriotic leader. This observation however, does not apply to television ads during the 2008 campaign, which were largely negative attack ads (cf. livingroomcandidate.com). But the posters created in support of Obama, cleared by the Obama campaign staff, are a refreshing example that negative political advertisements are not compelling in order to get your own message out.

In her pioneering book entitled “Ja. Nein. Schweiz”, Sascha Demarmels (2007) investigates the various emotionalizing strategies used in political posters. She references an abundance of studies examining the importance of emotions in commercial advertising. Schierl (2001:73, cited in Demarmels 2007) states that the majority of advertising is designed to appeal to our emotions. He concludes that the main purpose of appealing to our emotions is to trigger cognitive processes (ibid.:81). Emotions are especially relevant when products are concerned, that are mostly interchangeable. Political advertising differs from its commercial counterpart, as no material product is involved, making a strategic, goal oriented use of emotions even more important (Demarmels 2007:70). Holtz-Bacha (2000:236) notes that common emotionalizing strategies in political communication include the creation of collective political identities by appealing to the target audience emotionally. Using national flags, colors and symbols such as the Red Cross in Switzerland or the German eagle are just a few examples. Further emotionalizing strategies involve the depiction of idyllic landscapes, happy people and especially children.

However, Georg Felser (2001) states that negative advertising can also be effective, especially when it can be convincingly argued that the negative consequences of a posing threat can be averted by a specific behavior the communicator intends to evoke. This strategy is common in political advertising and a perfunctory glance is sufficient to see that the Swiss People’s Party and other European right-wing populist parties alike, rely heavily on this phenomenon in their advertising (Felser 2001, cited in Demarmels 2007).

7.2 Poster Characteristics

The size of a poster is a constraint on the design's possibilities and has changed over the course of time. The "Weltformat", developed by Willhelm Ostwald, measured 128cm by 90.5cm in size, but contrary to its name, an international standard has never been agreed upon. In Switzerland, the country's "leading out of home advertising company", which is in charge of hanging 75% of all poster campaigns in public spaces, offers the following standard formats to their customers:

City poster F200 measuring 116,5cm by 170cm

Backlit City Poster F200L measuring 119cm by 170cm

Wide Format F12 measuring 268,5cm by 128cm

The world format F4 measuring 128 cm by 89,5cm

Big Format Poster measuring 268,5 cm by 258cm

Demarmels draws on Schierl (2001) to illustrate commonalities pertaining to gaze motions when looking at a poster or print advertisements, irrespective of content. He attributes this to recurring trigger stimuli. To trigger a homogeneous gaze motion, advertisers must follow basic text-image constellations, which are specific to the composition of the poster. Posters have an additional challenge to overcome as lower parts of the design may be covered by cars or moving people.

Kamps (1999) distinguishes posters according to their ratio of text and image: text posters, visual posters, text-visual posters, and visual-text posters.

Meylan (1979:12) notes that the image played a minor part in political posters until the beginning of the First World War. Most common were typographical compositions, in which images were mostly absent, and if they were featured, they primarily served illustration purposes. By the 1950's the role of the image was to amplify the written slogan of the poster. Demarmels has disputed the findings of Meylan, stating that although the investigated corpus was the same, the interpretation may have differed, speculating that Meylan did not do a systematic investigation of the material (Meylan 1979:12, cited in Demarmels 2007).

7.3 Intertextuality and Recontextualization

Interdiscursivity links a variety of discourses with each other: “If we define discourse as primarily topic-related, that is a discourse on X, then a discourse on un/employment often refers, for example, to topics or subtopics of other discourses, such as gender or racism: arguments on systematically lower salaries for women or migrants might be included in discourses on employment.” (Wodak 2008:3).

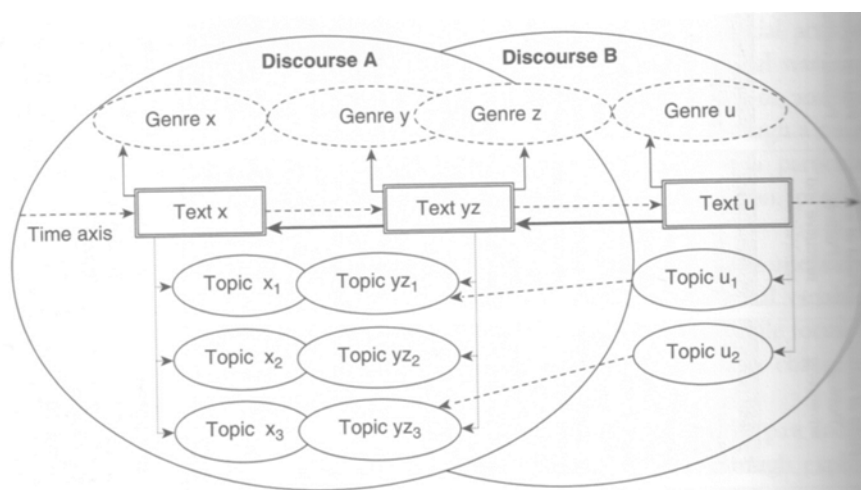


Fig. 3 Interdiscursive and intertextual relationships between discourse, discourse topics and texts.
From: Reisigl / Wodak (2009): 92

As previously stated, critical discourse analysis is not a rigid structure with a universal approach to investigating socially relevant problems. The possibilities are manifold, depending on the theoretical foundation the researcher wishes to draw on. While most approaches are qualitatively oriented, some researchers subject a large corpus of data to a predominantly quantitative linguistic analysis.

The notion of critique, power and ideology are present in all variants of critical discourse analysis. Wodak's Discourse Historical Approach aligns with the socio-political orientation of critical theory. (Reisigl/Wodak 2009:88). The author's take on **critique** incorporates three distinct aims:

- 1) Discourse immanent critique aims at discovering inconsistencies and self-contradictions in the text or discourse internal structures.
- 2) Socio-diagnostic critique aims to demystify the manifest or latent persuasive character of discursive practices, which are often manipulative in nature. Contextual knowledge and social theories help to uncover and interpret the discursive events of the text.

3) Prospective critique contributes to improving communication. Applied to political advertising, this could take the form of recommendations for other parties on how to design their posters visually and linguistically. This would be particularly relevant concerning issues that are largely dominated by right-wing parties, e.g. migration.

This ties in with Richardson and Wodak's understanding of **ideology**. Drawing on Thompson (1990), the authors convey their position on ideology as forms and processes within and by which, hegemonic symbolic forms circulate in the social world. (Richardson/Wodak 2009:88) In the scholarly tradition of DHA, ideology is seen as an often one-sided perspective composed of mental representations, convictions, opinions, attitudes and evaluations that are shared by members of the same social group. "Ideologies serve as an important means of establishing and maintaining unequal power relations through discourse: for example, by establishing hegemonic identity narratives, or by controlling the access to specific discourses or public spheres.[...] One of the aims of DHA is to **demystify the hegemony of specific discourses by deciphering the ideologies that establish, perpetuate or fight dominance**" (Reisigl/Wodak 2009:88, emphasis Wido Kuhlemeier).

By examining ideology, we can see how it is related to the notion of power, which the authors believe to be an asymmetric relationship between social actors who belong to differing social groups. They follow Weber's remarks on power as the smallest denominator, who defines power as the ability to assert one's own will against the vested interests of someone else within a social relationship (Reisigl/Wodak 2009:88). According to the authors, texts embedded within discourse are a site of struggle for dominance and hegemony in which ideologies of political actors are expressed. In addition, texts represent a discursive site, in which the power of political actors can be legitimized or delegitimized and their influence can be approximately gauged according to the access they have to exert their opinions.

7.4 Visual Discourse

Visual discourse has long been denied the attention it deserves in academia. The seminal text by Richardson/Wodak (2009) draws attention to the fact that many researchers have adopted a logocentric position, claiming that visual texts are incapable of advancing an argument, as arguments have to be constructed linguistically. Responding to critics that images fail to offer arguments, the authors maintain that visual and multi-modal media (e.g. movies) do in fact communicate meaning, and help shape public symbolic actions (Richardson/Wodak 2009:51). Critics have rejected images as advancing arguments on the basis of their ambiguity. However, the authors convincingly advance the standpoint that political speeches are often just as inherently ambiguous as a political leaflet, garnished with

metaphors that can be every bit as ambiguous as the meaning of an image. In both cases, the meaning of the text (speech and image) has to be deconstructed and presupposes contextual knowledge on part of the reader: “We believe vagueness to be an inherent feature of political communication and also for advertising, particularly in images and metaphors” (ibid.).

Thus, ambiguity and vagueness are features of both verbal and visual communication. Richardson and Wodak go as far as stating, that verbal political communication is intentionally vague to allow for a maximum amount of people to identify with their standpoints which can vary according to the individual interpretation of a text. For this reason, the author of this thesis follows Wodak’s methodology of HDA, which pays special attention to the historical and political context of the text. The conclusion derived by the analysis of the text can then be explained and substantiated by taking into account the political climate of the embedded discourse.

The DHA offers five types of discursive strategies to help justify the inclusion or exclusion of the “self” and “others” and thereby leading to the construction of identities (Reisigl /Wodak 2009; Richardson and Colombo 2013). Reference and nomination strategies are applied to examine how social actors are represented in a text by looking at the creation of in-and-out-groups. These constructions can be made visible by looking at a variety of linguistic categorization devices such as metaphors, metonymies and synecdoches which take the form of a part standing for a larger concept (*pars pro toto*) or the reverse in which a whole stands for the part (*totum pro parte*). Individuals, group members as well as entire groups can be linguistically characterized through predications. As Richardson and Colombo 2013:182 point out, “predicational strategies may [...] be realized as evaluative attributions of negative and positive traits in the linguistic form of implicit or explicit predicates, or visually through more socio-culturally situated signifiers”. Thirdly, certain argumentation strategies and topoi can be made transparent. These are discursively used to help justify positive or negative attributes of individuals or groups. Referring to a number of scholars (Baker et al. 2008; Krzanowski and Wodak 2009; Reisigl and Wodak 2001; Wodak and Van Dijk 2000), the authors state that “typically in prejudicial or discriminatory discourse, topoi of burden, costs and irreconcilable differences are employed in quasi-rational arguments to justify the exclusion of migrants” (Richardson and Colombo 2013:183). Richardson and Wodak 2009 have summarized the prevailing topoi in immigration discourse shown in the table below.

1- Usefulness, advantage	9- Economy
2- Uselessness, disadvantage	10- Reality
3- Definition	11- Numbers
4- Danger and Threat	12- Law and Right
5- Humanitarianism	13- History
6- Justice	14- Culture
7- Responsibility	16- Abuse
8- Burdening	

Table 1: Prevailing Topoi in Immigrations Discourse (Richardson and Wodak 2009:45)

7.5 Data Collection

The investigation included posters from selected campaigns by the Swiss SVP from the time period 2007-2014 which were considered because of their thematic focus on foreigners, religion and European issues and generated considerable interest in the national and international media. Building on Rodriguez-Amat's (forthcoming) chronology of the appropriation of SVP posters by selected European Right-Wing parties, the implications will be assessed whether this transfer contributes to the formation of a European public sphere and what this means for a societal understanding of a democratic public sphere. The "black sheep" poster campaign, launched in 2007 by the SVP will be at the centre of the detailed analysis, complemented with posters from other SVP campaigns and European right-wing parties to illustrate the proliferation of visual themes.

8. Analysis of Visual Rhetoric conveyed by SVP posters

8.1 "Ausschaffungsinitiative"

The poster depicted below (Fig. 4) was widely distributed by the Swiss National Party in July 2007 for the upcoming parliamentary elections and reused to gather support for their initiative that would provide the legal basis for the state to deport foreigners back to their home countries if convicted of a crime by an automatic mechanism. In addition to hanging these posters in public spaces such as train station and public squares throughout the country, a leaflet was also mailed to all households nationwide to raise awareness on the first of August. This date is of symbolic significance as it marks the mythical foundation of the Swiss Confederation.



Fig. 4 The highly successful “black sheep” poster

Factual description

The poster depicts three white sheep on the backdrop of a Swiss flag. The sheep are portrayed in the SVP’s characteristic comic style. The poster, which appeared in various sizes, is divided into two, diagonal components. The upper half is taken up by the Swiss flag (white cross on red background) on which the three white sheep are standing, while the other half, kept in white, is contrasted by a black sheep being booted from the space by the sheep nearest to the border indicated by the shift in color. The two white sheep located on the top left corner are standing upright. The third sheep is still standing on the edge of Swiss territory; with two feet in the air kicking the black sheep with his hind legs over what appears

to be the border between Switzerland and unnamed (foreign) territory. While the body is turned away from the black sheep, the white sheep propelling the black sheep gazes in its direction. The accompanying text reads “Sicherheit schaffen”, the translation amounts to “Creating Security”. The bottom right contains the typical party logo, a smiling yellow sun and the text “Mein Zuhause – Unsere Schweiz”, meaning “My Home-Our Switzerland”.

The images depicted below (Fig. 5) are a deconstruction of the SVP’s original poster advertisement in 2007 (reused in 2010). The rendered images convey how the individual elements combine to elicit maximum contrast by gradually introducing issues of space, race and the nation state by juxtaposing the relative distance of the black vs. the white sheep within the image. Viewed in isolation, the messages in figures 5a and 5b remain ambiguous, but suggest a state of normalcy (in which a space is solely occupied by white sheep), that only becomes clear with the introduction of the black sheep. The relative placement of the two white sheep in the upper left corner make them appear passive, while figure 5c introduces the issue of similar conflict between two sheep of similar dimensions that differ in biological characteristics. In figure 5d, the Swiss Cross is added, giving the depiction a nationalist context. The lines on the white sheep’s hooves suggest an act of violence. Figure 5e reinforces the idea that the violent act occurs in the name of the “people” in defense of the national order. Normalcy is re-established, and the passive, helpless white sheep that have no means to defend themselves are protected. Figure 5f shows the entire poster and illustrates how the slogan reinforces the visual narrative.

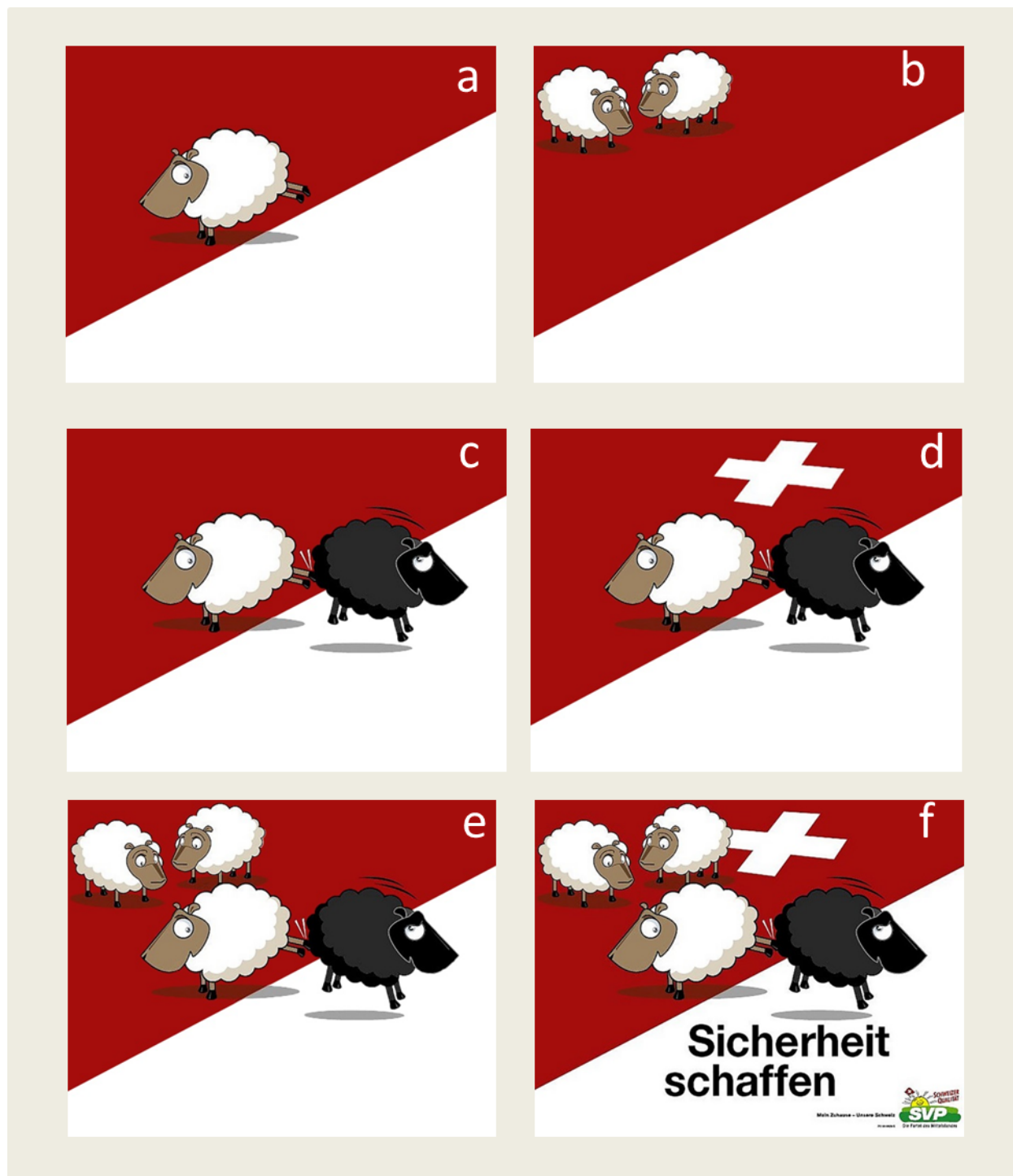


Fig. 5 Deconstruction analysis of the black sheep poster

On a visual level, the exclusionary elements manifest themselves through chromatic contrast. The dichotomy of the colors black and white used to depict the sheep, evoke stereotypical associations of good and bad at the most basic level. The poster explicitly draws on biological differentiation through color to construct identity narratives of we vs. them, without addressing the question of who is included in their stereotypical depiction of “the others.” By using the Swiss flag as a backdrop for the passive demeanor of the two white sheep located furthest away from the viewer, territorial differentiation is achieved and

places this poster well within the nationalist discourse prominent among European right-wing parties. The flag as an expression of nationalist marker is used as a synecdoche to symbolize the nation and thereby further reinforces the notion of national identity and the respective in-and-out-groups. Across cultures, the flag is inextricably linked with the concept of nationhood, citizenship and cultural identity and the SVP deliberately draws on this shared symbolic knowledge in order to trigger the deeply rooted semantic and pictorial networks that come with it. We should remind ourselves that the SVP, as a nationalist right-wing party, considers itself the voice of the people, therefore speaking as a defender of true Swiss values (which remain undefined) and on behalf of all Swiss people.

The metaphoric portrayal of individuals or groups of people as black sheep, evoke culturally dependent idiomatic connections. In this context, someone is often denoted as a “black sheep” if they deviate from an expected behavior in a way that is deemed (culturally) inappropriate (cf. legal discussion). As critical discourse analysis seeks to evaluate discursive fragments from all angles, one can also turn to religion for possible interpretations, as sheep are featured prominently in the bible. Consider Jeremiah 50:6 “My people have been lost sheep. Their shepherds have led them astray, turning them away on the mountains. From mountain to hill they have gone. They have forgotten their fold”. Considering the biblical reference, the black sheep may symbolize an individual or a group of people that are deemed unworthy of the company of those who have not deviated from the norms and expectations and as a result, are denied membership. In this specific incidence, the offender – metaphorically portrayed by a single sheep but representing an indefinite undefined group– is expelled over the national border. Benjamin A. Foreman (2011) has investigated the metaphorical significance of animals in the bible and argues, that the flock of sheep and goats that have strayed from the right path, have done so because of an inattentive shepherd or the absence of one. In German, “Unschuldslamm” denotes somebody as an innocent lamb, and Jesus is referenced in the bible as Lamb of God. Translating his finding to the poster of the SVP, it can be argued, that the SVP takes on the role of a shepherd (god), restoring law and order (topos of law and order) in Switzerland by expelling groups of people that behave in a way deemed inappropriate by the party. The metaphorical depiction of in-and-out-groups as black and white sheep to denote membership dehumanizes the undisclosed foreign group and almost comically legitimizes the exclusion of ethnic minorities. During a televised discussion, Christoph Mörgeli, Member of Parliament for the SVP, said that retrospectively, he considered this depiction of criminal foreigners as black sheep a cute way of expressing the intent of the initiative.

Perspective is relevant in two ways: First of all, it indicates that we contextualize the poster’s content from a societal position in which we attribute more importance to the hegemonic positions which in this case is that of a Switzerland dominated by a “white elite”. The second

way in which perspective becomes relevant is the artistic aspect of it. Moreover, it can also be understood as an attack on the political elite, which in the SVP's view, have failed to impose stricter laws and restrictions to protect its citizens from the unwanted black sheep. Given the fact that the composition of the Swiss government includes all the major parties (due to the principle of collegiality in the Federal Council) including the SVP, it is paradoxical that the party takes on such a strong anti-establishment position as they are directly involved in the shaping of Swiss policies. The question of agency in this poster also raises issues of power. We have a white sheep kicking a black sheep. What message does this send and what would the implications be, if agency in this image were reversed?

As previously pointed out, interpretation depends on ideology, party affiliation, socio-economic differences and cultural and contextual familiarity. No claim can be made that the interpretations derived here are universally applicable. But the aim is to convey plausible interpretations that consider a plurality of perspectives.

The possible "readings" are manifold and range from a perhaps naïve interpretation of "Oh, I thought this was an advertisement for the quality of Swiss wool" (comment by a Canadian artist living in Switzerland), to voices declaring it a crude, xenophobic and racist attack against foreigners and black people in particular, referencing the biological characteristics exhibited by the sheep. At the same time, the SVP, as authors, maintain that this is not an indiscriminate attack on foreigners but specifically targets foreigners who negatively impact Switzerland, who deviate from the norm of law-abiding citizens and should therefore be automatically expelled to their country of origin. In any case, the poster has subsequently produced great interest in national as well as international media. The graph below illustrates that the SVP was overrepresented in the media (in Swiss media).

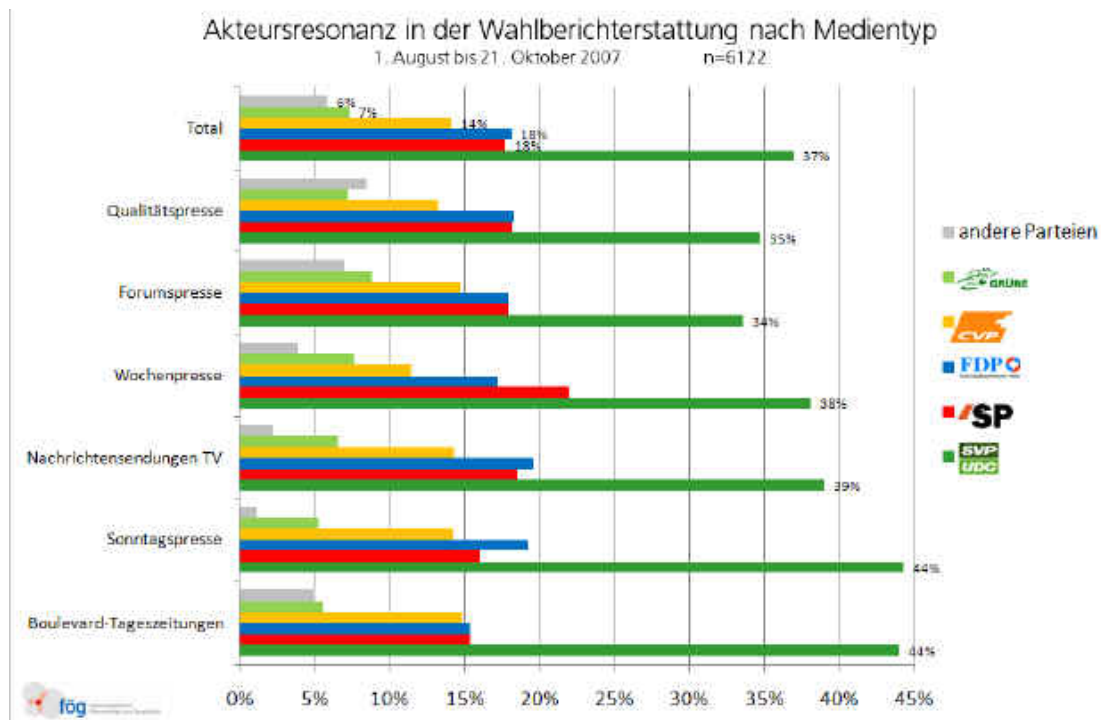


Fig 6. Media attention raised by SVP. Source: Linards, Udris (2007): Medienwahlkampf 2007. Alles drehte sich um die SVP

Previously in January 2007, Doudou Diène, a United Nations Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, published a paper for the Human Rights Council in which he voiced concerns over posters published by the SVP that in his view, were expressly xenophobic in nature and noted:

deep-rooted cultural resistance within Swiss society to the multiculturalization process, especially where persons of south-eastern European and non-European origin are concerned, and the growing prevalence of racist and xenophobic stances in political programs and discourse, particularly during elections and various votes (UN Report 2007:2).

In reference to the poster, the British quality newspaper “the Independent” called Switzerland “Europe’s Heart of Darkness”. “Der Spiegel”, a renowned German magazine, published a story entitled “Schwarzes Schaf, braunes Gedankengut (“Black Sheep Brown mindset”, thus explicitly establishing a link between the depicted image and common rhetoric of Nazi Germany (Soukoup 2007).

Various members of the Swiss parliament also condemned the poster for its xenophobic and unfounded nature and that it hurts Switzerland’s reputation globally. Shortly after, the Swiss People’s Party (SVP) issued another news ad which is a slight alteration of the previously one, but now in addition to the black and white sheep, depicts a white sheep on its back, with a knife inserted in its body which intertextually links to an older and controversial ad campaign that the SVP launched in 1993, shown below (Fig. 7).



Fig. 7. Advertisements with the knifing motif. Left: Knifing ad by the SVP (1993). Right: advertisement modified from the black sheep poster depicting knifing of white sheep (2007).

Apart from the slogan “Creating Security”, the original “Black Sheep” poster (2007) features no text to allow for an alternative reading, nor does it specify what group or individual the black sheep represents or what led to the forced deportation of the black sheep. For someone without the contextual knowledge of the Swiss migration debate, the informative



value of the poster is limited. Lacking previous knowledge, the image depicted can be viewed as a blatantly racist move to expel black people as a generic group from Switzerland. The “official” version, in which the SVP maintain, that it is merely the idiomatic depiction loses legitimacy if one considers the SVP’s visual history, such as this poster from a cantonal SVP section in 2004 (Fig.8).

Fig. 8 Poster with obviously racist message



Verbrecher verhätscheln und integrieren?

Der Gegenentwurf verhindert die Ausschaffung ausländischer Mörder, Gewalttäter, Vergewaltiger und Sozialmissbraucher.

► Sollen willkürliche Entscheide Ausschaffungen verhindern können?

Mit dem Gegenentwurf darf kein ausländischer Mörder, Vergewaltiger, Sozialbetrüger oder Kindesmissbraucher aufgrund seiner Straftat zwingend – also ohne Wenn und Aber – aus der Schweiz ausgeschafft werden. Im Gegenteil: Der Gegenentwurf sagt: Die Gerichte und zuständigen Behörden können nach eigenem Ermessen entscheiden, wer ausgeschafft wird oder nicht! So kann auch ein ausländischer Mörder oder ein Vergewaltiger weiter in unserem Land bleiben, und wir alle bezahlen gar für seine Integration.

Faruk B., Mörder bald Schweizer?

Wird nicht ausgeschafft, weil es die Behörden so wollen.

► Soll fremdes Recht Ausschaffungen verhindern?

Mit dem Gegenentwurf entscheidet nicht mehr Schweizer Recht, wer aus unserem Land ausgeschafft wird oder nicht. Im Gegenteil, der Gegenentwurf schreibt neu fest: Jeder Verbrecher kann sich auf internationale Konventionen und fremdes Völkerrecht berufen, um seine Landesverweisung zu verhindern. Damit ist der Willkür Tür und Tor geöffnet. Denn das allgemeine Völkerrecht enthält eine Unzahl von Bestimmungen, die eine Ausschaffung verhindern werden. Ausschaffungen würden damit fast unmöglich oder zumindest infolge von Rekursen über Jahre blockiert.

Ismir K., Sozialbetrüger bald Schweizer?

Wird nicht ausgeschafft, weil fremdes Recht es so wollte.

► Soll die Integration in der Bundesverfassung festgeschrieben werden?

Der Gegenentwurf ist kein Kompromiss, sondern er vermischte die Ausschaffung krimineller Ausländer mit der «Integration». Kriminelle sollen in Zukunft besser integriert statt ausgeschafft werden. Denn der Gegenentwurf zwingt Bund, Kantone und Gemeinden zu teuren Integrationsmassnahmen. So wird in einem «Integrationsartikel» festgehalten, dass Bund, Kantone und Gemeinden «bei der Erfüllung ihrer Aufgaben die Anliegen der Integration» zu berücksichtigen hätten. Integration soll also neu zur staatlichen Aufgabe werden. Dabei ist die Integration in erster Linie die Verantwortung der Ausländer, die in unser Land einwandern.

Detlef S., Kinderschänder bald Schweizer?

Wird nicht ausgeschafft, weil es die Gerichte so wollten.

Die wichtigsten Unterschiede

zwischen der Volksinitiative «Ausschaffung krimineller Ausländer» und dem «Gegenentwurf»:

Wer entscheidet über die Ausweisung?

1. Mit der Volksinitiative werden ausländische Mörder, Vergewaltiger, Kindesmissbraucher und andere Kriminelle zwingend aufgrund ihrer Straftat aus der Schweiz geschafft.
2. Beim Gegenentwurf entscheiden wie bisher Behörden und Gerichte nach eigenem Ermessen, ob ein Täter ausgewiesen werden soll. Selbst bei einem Mord können sie unter dem Vorwand der Verhältnismässigkeit die Ausschaffung verhindern.
3. Die Volksinitiative stellt Schweizer Recht über internationale Konventionen und fremdes Völkerrecht.
4. Beim Gegenentwurf entscheidet ausländisches Recht, wen wir Schweizer ausschaffen dürfen!

Die Ausschaffung als kurzer «Heimurlaub»?

5. Mit dem Gegenentwurf können ausgewiesene Straftäter unter Umständen bereits nach einem Jahr wieder in die Schweiz einreisen. Die Volksinitiative verlangt eine Einreiseperrre von mindestens fünf Jahren.

Steuergelder für einen Integrationsstaat Schweiz?

6. Der Gegenentwurf zwingt Bund, Kantone und Gemeinden dazu, für die Integration der Ausländer zu zahlen.

Deshalb: Gegenentwurf NEIN

Überparteiliches Komitee Gegenentwurf Nein
Postfach 8252, 3001 Bern, info@kriminelle-nein.ch

www.kriminelle-nein.ch

Mit einer Spende auf PC 60-167674-9 unterstützen Sie diesen Flyer. Herzlichen Dank.

Fig. 9. top: Ivan S. poster; bottom: additional poster from campaign in favor of the Ausschaffungsinitiative

The poster depicted above (Fig. 9) is a continuation of the initiative to deport foreign criminals back to their home country, known in Switzerland as the “Ausschaffungsinitiative”. The caption reads Ivan S., rapist, soon a Swiss citizen? As Ruth Wodak and John

Richardson have pointed out, the strategy to provide the person's given name but withhold the family name "paradoxically acts to anonymise" the man and construct him as a generic type (Wodak/Richardson 2009:57). This effect is borrowed from journalistic practices and works in combination with the concealment of their eyes, which should act to keep his identity hidden. But his foreign sounding name locates him within the identity narrative of citizenship and the negative attributes act as a predicative strategy of intensified criminalization. To reinforce his status as a foreign citizen, the SVP clarifies that this person is not Swiss as of yet, but introduces the notion that Ivan S. could potentially attain Swiss citizenship in the future. It is formulated as a rhetorical question "bald Schweizer? (soon a Swiss Citizen)?" By labeling him a rapist, the party strategically evokes a topos of threat. Interestingly enough, press reports have revealed the origin of the image. According to unequivocal news reports, Ivan S. was apparently a Canadian model who posed as a Mexican gangster, and the rights to the pictures were purchased by the Swiss Peoples Party on a public photo stock website.

At the same time, the party produced a leaflet in the same fashion as the aforementioned poster depicting Ivan S. (Fig. 9). The leaflet included further (fictitious) examples of supposedly criminal foreigners. Faruk B. is made out to be a murderer, Ismir K. as an abuser of the Swiss welfare system and Detlef S. is portrayed as a child rapist. The negative actional anthroponyms are consistent with the portrayal of Ivan S. as a foreign threat. The argumentation strategy is one of intensifying criminalization and functions by stirring up negative emotions in the form of fear among the Swiss electorate by providing three supposed real examples of foreign criminality. Faruk B., Ismir K. and Detlef S. serve as concrete examples of foreign criminality and thus provide an image that voters can grasp. The party strategically uses them to represent prototypic foreign criminality and thus make them out to represent a cross-section of a virtually unlimited immediate foreign threat.

Both the poster and the leaflet are intertextually tied to the alternative legislative proposal that was put forward by the Swiss Federal Council, which advocated a more moderate position pertaining to the deportation of foreign criminals. While the Swiss People's Party wanted to implement an automatic mechanism that would instantly deport a foreigner after committing a crime without putting it under judicial review, the Federal proposal aimed to decide on a case-by-case basis. The Federal Council's primary concern pertained to the possible incompatibility of the proposed legislative change with international humanitarian law; specifically towards the non-refoulement principle that prohibits sending asylum seeker back to their country of origin if they stand the chance of being persecuted there. The counter-proposal by the Federal Council adopts many of the concerns raised by the SVP's initiative, namely the rescinding of foreigner's residence permits after committing a serious

offence that carries a prison sentence of at least two years followed by the deportation of an individual. Contrary to the proposal by the Swiss right-wing party, the counter-proposal urges the production of an encompassing catalogue of offences, for which a foreign alien can be deported, which in the SVP's proposal remains undefined. In addition, the counter-proposal sought to align the legislative change with international humanitarian law and European treaties, which are hierarchically situated on par with Swiss law (Swiss Federal Department of Justice 2009). The caption of the leaflet directly references and attacks the counter-proposal with the following headline entitled "Verbrecher verhätscheln und integrieren?, " (Pampering and integrating criminals?). The subheading serves the function of substantiating the claim contesting the alternative proposal by entitling it as follows:

"der Gegenentwurf verhindert die Ausschaffung ausländischer Mörder, Gewalttäter, Vergewaltiger und Sozialmissbraucher, " (The counter-proposal inhibits the deportation of foreign murderers, violent criminals, rapist and welfare abusers) as well as negatively predicating foreigners with a variety of attributes.

The argumentation strategy of the SVP is thus as follows:

- 1) The SVP acts by keeping criminals out of Switzerland
- 2) Faruk B. is a murderer
- 3) By voting against the initiative, Faruk B. can continue murdering
- 4) If you vote against the initiative, Faruk B. may not be deported and could become Swiss
- 5) If you vote for the initiative, people like Faruk B. will be deported immediately
- 6) If you vote for the initiative, the SVP will get rid of foreign criminality
- 7) The SVP stands for law and order



Figure 10. SVP posters on the Masseneinwanderunginitiative (2011 (a) and 2014 (b))

The two posters above pertain to the SVP's recent initiative to limit the flow of foreigners into Switzerland's job market (Fig.10). Dubbed "Initiative gegen Masseneinwanderung" or initiative against "mass immigration. The posters seamlessly tie in with the previous visual rhetoric characteristic of the SVP depicted above (Fig. 10). They represent a continuation of the party's well-established comic campaign style and invoke the familiar in-group-out-group representations through biological markers. The SVP responded forcefully against the decision of certain Swiss towns (Lausanne, Yverdon-Les Bains, Basel, Fribourg, Montreux and Neuchatel, cf Swissinfo) to prohibit the "hanging" of these posters in public space that argued that these incited hate against foreigners. The SVP claims that the decision to ban the hanging the posters represents censorship unworthy of a democracy. The party also announced legal action against people who alter the poster, which the party calls an act of vandalism. (<http://www.svp.ch/aktuell/medienmitteilungen/vandalismus-und-zensur-gegen-svp-plakate/>)

In Fig. 10b the nation is depicted as a political map, with a white cross at the heart on red background. Also depicted is a tree bearing apples, with a black trunk branching out over the nation. The roots are prominently featured and have branched out over the nation. The nation is shown not as a coherent whole, but has started to splinter, indicated by certain areas that are depicted as separating from the country. The nation is cracked, the fragments hanging over the country as debris causing the nation to destabilize and dissolve even further due to parasitism by foreigners. The slogan reads: Masslosigkeit schadet! (Excess is

harmful!) a is accompanied by the subheading: Masseneinwanderung Stoppen JA (Stop Mass Immigration YES). Media reception of this poster that embodies the initiative to restrict the flow of foreigners in Switzerland was greeted with skepticism. In response to the poster campaign (specifically 10b), Die Zeit, a renowned German publication, titled one of their articles “FUCK THE EU”. While linking to a statement made by an American diplomat EU, the title also refers to the endangerment of Swiss-EU relations, as the free flow of people is a cornerstone to the Swiss-EU bilateral agreements. The unilateral termination of one agreement jeopardizes the entire agreement and it remains unclear how this conflict can be resolved (Daum:2014 cited in Die Zeit). The Swiss daily paper “Tagesanzeiger” summarized the international media reactions in an article, which are all marked by concern over Swiss-EU relations (Tagesanzeiger 2014).



Fig. 11. SVP Poster supporting the initiative to ban the building of minarets

The final poster in this section (Fig. 11) was designed in support of an initiative launched by the SVP and an ultra-radical group to ban the construction of minarets. The poster draws a visually powerful link between Islam and terrorism against Switzerland. This highly controversial poster may well have contributed to the success of the initiative. The poster equates Islam with Islamism. Presented as a homogenous group, the argument is made that all of Islam presents a danger to Swiss culture. Commentators have noted that the minarets spring like rockets from the Swiss flag. The poster draws on the typical color-scheme also found in other poster campaigns by the SVP, giving it a threatening note (cf. Bettina Richter’s remarks in the chapter on populist posters).

8.2 Recontextualization by (Swiss) national civil society

Apart from generating an abundance of reports in the media, the black sheep poster also served as a canvas for the general public who expressed their discontent by scribbling on them. Four such examples are depicted below (Fig. 12). Fig 12a show the white sheep with swastikas on their body. The Star of David has been drawn on the black sheep.

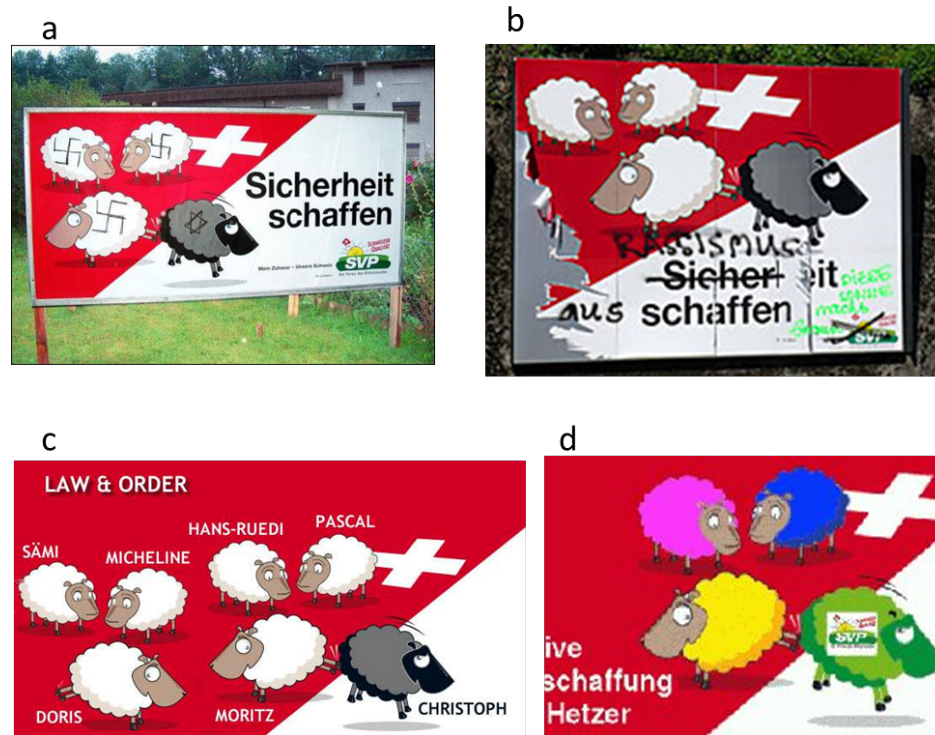


Fig. 12 The black sheep poster with swastikas and the Star of David.

What makes this recontextualized image so striking is that it underpins the universality of this particular poster as a vehicle for xenophobic articulation. It elucidates how easily “meaning” can be altered to express something different from the author’s intention and thus speaks to the calculated ambivalence of the poster. Initially designed to raise awareness against criminality committed by foreigners, the poster now creates discursive linkages to Anti-Semitism. While the SVP expressly distanced themselves from this imagery and Anti-Semitism in general, the proliferation of these images raises legitimate concerns about the original poster regarding the intended audience and can be understood as an appeal to critically reflect how Switzerland presents itself to the outside world.

8.3 Appropriation by other Right-Wing Parties

The posters were also contextualized by a number of European right-wing (as in the case of the Lega Nord and the Spanish Democracia Nacional) and right-wing extremist parties (Fig. 13). Again, the dissemination of these posters across Europe highlights the ease with which images can be radically modified irrespective of language.



Fig.13

Recontextualized sheep posters from left to right: German NPD, Czech Narodni Strana, and Czech Usvit



Fig. 14 Conference poster advertising a meeting of the European Alliance for Freedom in Antwerpen 2011.

While the previous images convey how the black sheep poster was appropriated by other European right-wing parties without having to drastically change the original image, they are an indication of solidarity among right-wing parties in Europe. The poster advertising a conference made up of a variety of national right-wing actors is visually representative for this alliance. Paradoxically, nationalism and its symbolic expression thereof (flag) is used as a territorial marker. In this image however, the different nationalities, symbolized by their

national flags are united in one image, thus illustrating a concerted effort on a European level aimed at tearing down European cooperation. This image pointedly shows how right-wing parties create a visual European public sphere of the European right.

9. Discussion

As Joan Rodriguez-Amat has pointed out, right-wing parties' ideological core centers around the notion of national identity, which itself builds on our understanding of the nation state and thus territorial differentiation. (Rodriguez-Amat 2014, forthcoming).

While the idea of a collective European identity, conceived either as a supranational European public sphere or the Europeanization of national public spheres (Swantje Lingenberg 2010:47) remains out of reach, the decidedly anti-European, Right-Wing national parties have formed strategic trans-national alliances among themselves within Europe. Anke Tresch (2012) has already noted that the criteria set forth for a European public sphere remain unattainable even for a (allegedly) tradition-rich nation like Switzerland on a national level.

Like most countries, Switzerland prides itself as a nation rich in tradition, whose foundation is linked to the year 1291 in which the mythological figure Wilhelm Tell secured the nation's independence, his counterfeit visible on every 5Sfr. coin and whose character lives on in Schiller's canonical literary work "Wilhelm Tell". Benedict Anderson notes, however, that it was not until 1891 at the height of the nationalist movement, that Switzerland decided on a date to commemorate its nation's birth:

In 1891, amidst novel jubilees marking the 600th anniversary of the Confederacy of Schwyz, Obwalden and Nidwalden, the Swiss state 'decided' 1291 as the date of the founding of Switzerland. Such a decision, waiting 600 years to be made, has its diverting aspects, and suggests that modernity rather than antiquity characterizes Swiss nationalism. (Anderson 2006:135)

Heinrich Schneider argues that while a collective European identity necessitates a collective European "we feeling", which in an age of hybrid identities can co-exist next to national identities, the question remains what distinguishes a national from a European identity (Schneider:2011:145).

One could argue that strategic alliances of European nationalist parties can be considered a formation of a partial right-wing public sphere within Europe. By concertedly acting on a European level, they create a "we" feeling among the European right and thus give rise to a novel right-wing European identity. Nationalist or even xenophobic parties paradoxically create transnational identities.

While we are used to national parties with similar ideological convictions joining forces with their European counterparts, the collective, (anti-democratic) discursive participation of nationalist parties on a European level in order to achieve the dissolution of a European public sphere by returning to a perceived normal national order appears paradoxical.

Considering that the existence of a EPS is contested, it appears plausible that the SVP's poster campaigns act as a unifying element among European right-wing parties and help create a (visual) right-wing public sphere in Europe. Incidentally, it also speaks, in my opinion, to the universality of the SVP's poster, as the image can easily be adapted to different national contexts. Right-Wing posters such as the black sheep or the Mosques and Minarets motif satisfy the criteria set forth by Dahlgren, who defines the public sphere as "a constellation of communicative spaces in society that permit the circulation of information, ideas, debates" (Dahlgren 2005:148, cited in Katharina von Kleinen-Königslöw 2012:445). These posters by the Swiss right-wing party initially exist in the national public sphere only, but the gradual appropriation and proliferation by other European right-wing parties (chronicled by Rodriguez-Amat 2014, forthcoming) indicate the transcending of national public spheres into what can be called segmented Europeanization. The controversial imagery of the posters amplify this perceived segmented European public space, as national and international media act as multipliers of these issues and thus synchronize the issues raised by the right-wing parties.

Media Reactions to the Black Sheep Campaign:

The proliferation of the SVP's iconic "Black Sheep" poster has already been demonstrated. Its circulation in national and international media is an indication of its polarizing nature, and the "Economist's" urging to pay close attention to the ongoing, "unsettling" elections in Switzerland, a country that due to its relative size is frequently ignored by the international press, have been echoed by other media. The "Economist" in an article entitled "The Black Sheep of Swiss Politics" points to the dog-whistle character of the poster campaign that bases its depiction on deception and ambiguity. The author stresses that the depictions are not inherently racist, but its implicit racial meaning would not be missed by the party's more nationalistic band of voters:

It does not seem ludicrous to guess that a "dog whistle" campaign is underway, to quote a piece of campaigning jargon, in which core voters are meant to hear a message that others may not otherwise pick up. (Economist 2007)

The Economist frames the image as a “startling poster” that has to be considered in conjunction with a campaign video “contrasting urban violence and black-skinned Africans” which are compared to “Hell” in relation to post card images of Switzerland as “Heaven” and a statement by Swiss President Micheline Calmy-Rey, that she regarded these images as “racist” and “disgusting” (cf. The Economist 2007).

The New York Times shares sentiments expressed in the Economist, but provides more analytical insights. According to NYT, the poster “captures the rawness of Swiss electoral campaigns” which are not the product of a “fringe movement” but stem from the “most powerful party in Switzerland’s parliament and a member of the coalition government, an extreme right-wing party.” The New York Times reflects a plurality of voices, including political actors not affiliated with the SVP condemning the collective depiction of foreigners as criminals as unacceptable, human rights groups as well as party proponents and citizens in favor of the campaign. In addition to Micheline Calmy-Rey’s statement, the New York Times included “Couchepin’s” remarks as Minister for the Interior, who likened the party’s “worship” of Christoph Blocher, Justice Minister and driving force of the party, as reminiscent to that of fascists for Mussolini (cf. New York Times 2007). The New York Times also includes the voices of human rights organizations pointing to the SVP’s parallel efforts, in which the poster serves as a platform to launch the aforementioned referendum to deport foreign criminals after their sentence, and the automatic deportation of the entire family if the crime is committed by a minor to the practices of Nazi Germany, “Sippenhaft (kin liability)” in particular. Parallels to Nazi-Germany are also drawn in an article published in “The Independent” titled “Europe’s Heart of Darkness”, which locates the developments in Switzerland within a new sphere of political extremism that contrasts forcefully with Switzerland’s image as a heaven for neutrality and plurality and calls the proposed law reform “draconian”.

The paper does not restrict itself to a national assessment, but contextualizes the issues within a European frame of reference. In comparison to the anti-immigrant French party “Front National”, the SVP has taken a much cruder we-vs-them approach, the paper notes (NYT 2007). The NYT thus frames the advertisements within a European right-wing public sphere, by drawing explicit comparisons between the two parties, indicating that the Swiss Party sets a novel standard regarding blatancy of visual statements, reinforced by the accompanying film which had to be withdrawn from the online sphere but continued to be shown at campaign rallies.

Minarettinitiative

The images below (Fig. 15) show the SVP's anti-minaret poster was appropriated by different European right-wing parties.



Figure 15: Appropriation of the SVP minaret poster. a) SVP original; b) Austrian FPÖ; c) German NPD of State of North Rhine Westphalia; d) SVP poster destroyed by anonymous ; e) French Front National; f) Belgian party Vlaams Belang.

The general tenor in the media marks the visual campaigns as a danger to civil society. The implications here are severe, as it opens up the debate to the question whether one can restrict the circulation of violent images in the public sphere.

Damian Tambini's (2009) writes that "law and policy are a crucial and neglected part [...] and can be seen as a crucial indicator for publicness" (Tambini 2009:48). Tambini introduces a regulatory framework regarding the regulation of profanity in public space. While Tambini's considerations are strongly linked to the challenges that are posed by online technologies that enable access to profane, pornographic and other material that is not suitable for all, they are transferable to European Right-Wing advertisements that exist in public space. Essentially, the black-sheep poster depicts and represents a supposedly sanctioned act of violence that exists in European public space. This is where the distinction between push-and-pull media, pointed to in the introduction of this thesis, and which Tambini calls "invasiveness of the medium" (Tambini 2009:60) becomes pivotal: watching a horror movie represents a recipient's conscious choice to be exposed to acts of violence, whereas a poster so prominently displayed in public space forces an individual and especially children to be exposed to violence, regardless of whether he/she wants to or not. The issue of whether we should restrict violent imagery that fosters an anti-cohesive societal climate and an amalgamation of citizens that conform to the hegemonic "ideal" representation of "Swissness", and by extension to European society as a whole becomes pressing. Habermas' (1964) notion of a critical publicity "depended on access to open dialogue, participation of and no barriers for a reasoning public of citizens" (Brants 2005:144, cited in Tambini 2009:49) and as such, might disagree with considerations that would prevent parties showcasing extremist positions from advancing issues in a violent, visual way. But as Tambini points out, "decisions over whether to enforce in cases of infringement are moments where the new boundaries of the public sphere are being drawn" (Tambini 2009:49). Tambini further states that the barriers to publicity can take a variety of forms, but "to an increasing extent, they are legal" (Tambini 2009:49). Ultimately, the call to restrict access to the public sphere is a legal issue. It remains questionable whether the recipients of the SVP's posters constitute a collective "critical publicity", as the posters operate on fear by triggering negative emotions and not on informed information. Tambini writes that "the entry of any material into the public domain occurs only if benefits outweigh risks" (Tambini 2009:63) and that criminal or civil liability are limiting factors in an individual's or collective's decision to publish. To date, Swiss federal courts have denied such liability on part of the SVP, citing freedom of speech as a higher good, which strengthens the SVP's position not only from an electoral, but also from a legal standpoint. The suggested sanctioning of violence against "others" which are biologically and ethnically distinct should be alarming to a society that

prides itself on being as linguistically and culturally heterogenic as Switzerland. Nevertheless we must, as the editor in chief of Switzerland's leading quality newspaper "NZZ" stated, accept that the SVP's views, as Switzerland's most successful party and as a democratically elected party, are regularly supported by a majority of Swiss citizens and that the stricter immigration policies resulting from them are a product of citizens exercising their political right.

Aristotle Kallis (2013) notes that most ideas, whether extreme, bad or good, do not become truly "infectious" (Kallis 2013:55). Those of right-wing parties are no different, and must start as counter-frames and compete with mainstream ideas that they hope to replace. Electoral success is an indicator to what extent these ideas have been adopted and the numbers show that there is an upward trend for the radical right in Europe. The visual advertisements of the respective parties condense the issues that dominate the agenda of right-wing parties. The Swiss posters discussed, extending to other nationalist parties in Europe, all call on familiar themes such as the fear of cultural invasion of the "other", the threat of Islam and national identity.

Katharine Sarikakis remarks that "social cohesion" has been explored in a wide array of disciplines and is generally linked to strengthening democratic values by causing economic productivity, political stability as well as being an outcome of globalization and cultural diversity (Sarikakis 2007:66). If we understand social cohesion as an environment in which communities meet, partnerships are being fostered and intercultural awareness and understanding generated, the benefits to progressive nations that situate themselves in a global world, are visible (Sarikakis 2007:66). Following Benedict Anderson's central claim that nation's are "imagined communities" (Anderson 2006), we distance ourselves from the assumption that the nation as a homogenous collective exists and that social cohesion helps bridge differences and leads to a culturally diverse society. Sarikakis (2007) explores the ways how technology and cultural diversity and consequently, social cohesion are linked.

Cultural diversity as a requirement for social cohesion presents a complex set of questions about the coexistence of culturally heterogeneous groups, the apprehension of dislocation and dispossession of migrant populations, the struggle of dealing with material polarisations across class, gender, age, and ethnicity as well as the particular framing of collective memory and experiences. (Sarikakis 2007:79)

Applying this to the proposed policy changes by the Swiss Right-Wing party (SVP) and by extension, her European counterparts, it is apparent that these Right-Wing parties want to silence cultural diversity by promoting ethnocentric values and construct a coherent national

identity which can only be created through “othering” and deliberately constructing fear of the unknown that poses a risk to a national identity by foreign infiltration.

10. Conclusions

Throughout this thesis, preliminary results have precipitated which will be recounted here in a comprehensive fashion. The research question that provided the framework for this thesis regarded the position of the poster campaigns of the Schweizerische Volkspartei in a democratic public sphere. The investigation considered the historical, contemporary sociopolitical and legal contextual positions in which the poster campaigns are embedded. The analysis indicates that the democratic public sphere has given rise to the formation of sub-public spheres in which the poster campaigns of the SVP are a part of and are marked by a strong sense of xenophobic, Islamophobic and anti-European sentiment. The posters advance visual arguments that exist within the national public sphere and are embedded within a greater societal and legal structure that has given rise to the formation of counter voices that manifest themselves discursively in two ways: Firstly, we have identified alterations of the physical posters in public space by civil society by means of drawing symbols such as the swastika on the posters; by altering the slogans to raise awareness for anti-discriminatory positions in a number of ways, which have given rise to legal claims. Secondly, this thesis conveyed the transference of the posters in public space to an online public space in which the posters were altered digitally to convey anti-discriminatory stances. Reactions of the media on a national and international level (which were mainly skeptical of the posters) provide context to the proposed legislative changes by the Swiss People’s Party (SVP), but in light of the highly successful posters act more as a multiplier of the SVP’s imagery than effectively demystifying the party’s anti-cohesive messaging.

The proliferation and appropriation of the SVP’s xenophobic poster campaigns by a variety of populist and extremist Right-Wing parties across national borders have demonstrated that there is a synchronization of visual discourse among the European right. The “black sheep” poster campaign demonstrates how seamlessly racist imagery integrates into the campaigns of European Right-Wing Parties without necessitating stark adaptations to national contexts. Analog to Michael Billig’s concept of “Banal Nationalism”, the same holds true for more extremist positions. Racist views have changed from being confined to the fringes to becoming mainstream positions that can succeed at the polls and, due to the nature of the Swiss political system, become enshrined in the constitution. The visual narrative that originates in Switzerland extends to other European countries and is evidence of a thematic continuity among European right-wing parties.

The image has become an iconic representation for the solidarity among the right-wing community, suggesting the establishment of a shared visual public sphere among the radical right. The shared visual representations demonstrate that there is in fact a European public sphere, however, it does not display the (idealized) normative values attached to it as envisioned in a supranational version of the European Public Sphere. Instead, the public sphere is composed of multiple national spheres interlinking through visually similar negative constructions of the “other” and positive self-representations of right-wing parties as legitimate political actors who actively tackle problems caused by foreigners in the name of re-establishing the homogenous national and cultural order. This alliance is best represented visually within the poster advertising the conference with participants from Denmark, Italy, Netherlands, Switzerland and Austria. They are all embodied as white sheep sharing a common agenda that extends beyond territorial and linguistic borders. Paradoxically, common right-wing identities are created through the exclusion of others, rather than the inclusion of all citizens living in a European Union.

The question was raised whether a democratic public sphere can exist, when right-wing parties mirror anti-cohesive messages aimed at countering the diversity agenda of a European Public Sphere. Naturally, this includes a discussion of how to model a common European public sphere and its legal structure. This thesis aimed at fostering the debate pertaining to the restriction of violent, anti-cohesive and therefore anti-democratic visual content of political campaigns, but cannot provide a definite answer to this polarizing question. The posters act as a discursive site on which public opinion is formed and the copying of imagery points to the universality of the SVP’s posters. By switching the party logo and the respective national flag and colors in the imagery, the poster’s messaging becomes global.

This thesis has demonstrated how right-wing populist parties create transnational alliances through their poster campaigns by visually portraying foreigners as a threat, depicting Islam as a homogenous religion posing a danger to the depicted normality of the national order and by suggesting an ethnical hierarchy that places the “white race” at the top.

In that sense, this thesis ties in with numerous studies that have focused on the exclusionary discourse of right-wing parties. It should be understood as a point of departure for future research on the topic. The latest election figures have shown that right-wing populist parties have become an alternative for a larger segment of voters. This creates a series of interesting questions, which will hopefully be tackled by researchers to further develop our understanding of visual right-wing communication. Primarily, it would be interesting to see, how right-wing populist parties react to a changing political landscape in which they increasingly gain legitimacy as political actors. With ambitions to grow to the point to assume

governmental responsibilities (SVP excluded) and the percentage of naturalized migrants eligible to vote in the “host” country on the rise, it would be plausible to assume that right-wing parties will have to modify their positions to reflect more moderate views to catch the votes of these eligible voters with a migration background.

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13. Summary

13.1 German

Die vorliegende Arbeit beschäftigt sich mit der öffentlichen Kommunikation von rechtspopulistischen Parteien in Europa. Ausgewählte politische Werbeplakate der Schweizerischen Volkspartei (SVP) wurden einer kritischen Diskursanalyse unterzogen, wobei der Fokus der Untersuchung auf der visuellen Ebene liegt. Unter Berücksichtigung soziopolitischer und legislativer Rahmenbedingungen geht diese Arbeit der Frage nach, inwiefern die politischen Werbekampagnen der rechtspopulistischen Parteien zu einer (visuellen) europäischen Öffentlichkeit beitragen.

Ausgangspunkt dieser Arbeit sind normative europäische Öffentlichkeitstheorien, deren Ausprägungen im Verlauf der Zeit Wandlungen unterlegen sind. Basierend auf Hanspeter Kriesis Beobachtung, dass die Schweiz aufgrund ihrer linguistischen Heterogenität als Modell für ein kleines Europa fungieren kann, zeichnet diese Arbeit die Appropriation der thematischen Motive der schweizerischen Volkspartei durch europäische rechtspopulistische Parteien nach und zeigt auf, wie eine europäische Öffentlichkeit aussehen könnte.

Die Arbeit kommt zum Schluss, dass im Gegensatz zu öffentlichkeitskritischen Ansätzen durchaus eine europäische Öffentlichkeit existiert. Paradoxerweise wird diese transnationale europäische Öffentlichkeit durch die Exklusion von Minderheiten – seien diese religiöser, ethnischer oder nationaler Art – durch rechte Parteien geschaffen, die durch die zunehmende scheinbare Legitimierung diskriminierender Sprache und Verhaltensweisen banalen Nationalismen und zunehmend extremistische Positionen mehrheitsfähig machen und dadurch zu einer wählbaren Alternative für viele Bürger in europäischen Ländern werden. Die bisherigen Erklärungsmodelle wie z.B. das der supranationalen Öffentlichkeit, erweisen sich als ungenügend, um die identitätsstiftenden Prozesse zu erklären, die durch visuelle Poster-Kampagnen rechter Parteien ausgelöst werden. Vielmehr handelt es sich hier um eine Formierung von nationalen Teilöffentlichkeiten, die nicht nur territoriale, sondern auch linguistische Grenzen überschreiten und so eine neuartige europäische Öffentlichkeit schaffen. Die weitgehend identische Übernahme von fremdenfeindlichen SVP-Motiven durch andere rechte Parteien wie z.B. der Lega Nord, Front National, Vlaams Belang oder der FPÖ veranschaulichen, dass der Bildsprache der SVP eine wenn nicht universale, dann doch zumindest europäische identitätsstiftende Funktion zukommt, die sich fließend in die politischen Realitäten anderer Länder eingliedern lässt.

Die durch rechtspopulistische Parteien vorgetragenen visuellen Argumente zielen darauf ab, die Pro-Europäischen Bewegungen aufzulösen und zu einer nationalen Ordnung

überzugehen. Bemerkenswert ist auch hier wieder, dass dies nur durch ein konzertiertes Vorgehen möglich ist, was eine Stärkung einer rechtsgerichteten Identität auf europäischer Ebene zur Folge hat. Politische Plakate als visuelle, diskursive Projektionsflächen können allerdings nicht nur im Rahmen einer Übernahme durch andere rechte Parteien begriffen werden, sondern auch durch Re-Kontextualisierungen durch die Zivilgesellschaft – sei dies durch die Modifikation von Plakaten im öffentlichen Raum mittels Schreibgeräten, oder durch digitale Neugestaltungen, die im Netz Verbreitung finden – meist um antidiskriminierende Positionen zu artikulieren.

Abschliessend beschäftigt sich die Arbeit mit der Frage, wie mit politischen Plakaten, die im öffentlichen Raum existieren, und gewalttätigen Handlungen, die beispielsweise das Treten eines schwarzen Schafes legitimieren, umgegangen werden muss. Während einige Städte in der Schweiz das Ausstellen der Minarettplakate untersagt haben, wird die Haltung der SVP von den Gerichten bekräftigt, dass es sich bei den Motiven nicht um rassendiskriminierende Äusserungen im strafrechtlichen Sinne handelt. Auch wenn diese Frage nicht abschliessend beantwortet werden kann, wirft sie doch legitime Fragen auf, ob ein Ausschliessen von Plakaten rechter Parteien den politischen Diskurs und damit die Möglichkeit der Bürger und Bürgerinnen, sich eine möglichst informierte Meinung zu bilden, die alle politischen Strömungen berücksichtigt, stärkt, oder ob damit Zensur unangenehmer Positionen betrieben wird.

13.2 English

The following thesis focuses on public communication of right-wing populist parties in Europe. Selected political posters by the Swiss People's Party (SVP) were analyzed using a critical discourse approach, with a focus on visual elements. Accounting for socio-political and legislative contexts, this thesis investigates whether political poster campaigns by right-wing populist parties contribute to the formation of a European Public Sphere (EPS).

Normative theories regarding a European Public Sphere that have undergone changes over time represent a point of departure for this thesis. Building on Hanspeter Kriesi's observation that Switzerland can be regarded as a model for a future Europe because of its linguistic heterogeneity, this thesis documents the appropriation of the SVP's thematic imagery by European right-wing populist parties and subsequently proposes a possible constitution of a European Public Sphere. Paradoxically, these transnational European public spheres are created through the exclusion of others – articulated as different ethnicity, religion or nationhood – by right-wing populist parties. Their increasing use of allegedly sanctioned discriminatory language and actions of banal and explicit nationalism lead to the mainstreaming of their anti-democratic positions and thus, become a viable alternative for a larger segment of voters in European countries. Idealized normative conceptions such as the supranational public sphere are insufficient to explain the identity constituting processes that are triggered by the visual campaigns of right-wing parties. It is more plausible to conceive the public sphere as a compilation of national sub-public spheres that cross territorial and linguistic borders to create a novel form of a public sphere. The appropriation of xenophobic SVP motifs by other right-wing parties such as the Lega Nord, Front National, Vlaams Belang and FPÖ convey that the SVP's visual language possesses a if not global, then at least European identity creating potential that seamlessly integrates into the national political realities of other European right-wing parties.

The visual arguments of right-wing populist parties aim to dissolve pro-European movements and encourage a return to a strictly national order. It has to be noted that this is only possible through a concerted effort, which in turn strengthens right-wing identity on a European scale. However, political posters as sites of discursive struggle can not only be conceived by looking at the appropriation by other right-wing parties, but also by examining the recontextualization of the posters by civil society. This can take the form of modifying the posters in physical public space by drawing on them with markers, or digitally redesigning the posters disseminated online, mostly to articulate anti-discriminatory positions.

In conclusion, this thesis discusses whether action should be taken against political posters that exist in the public sphere and propagate and legitimize violent behavior such as the kicking of the black sheep. While some cities have prohibited the public showing of the minaret posters, the judicial view regarding these posters as not racially discriminating from a legal perspective, strengthen the views held by right-wing actors as legitimate political actors. Although this question cannot be finitely answered, it raises legitimate questions whether excluding right-wing posters from the public sphere would lead to its strengthening, or to its impoverishment preventing people to form an opinion about the political issues with all views available.

14. Curriculum Vitae

Ausbildung	
Magisterstudium der Publizistik- und Kommunikationswissenschaft Wien, Österreich Stipendiat der New York University,	Oktober 2010- 2014 August 2012 - Dezember 2012
Bachelor der Publizistik- und Kommunikationswissenschaft	Juli 2010
Bachelor-Arbeit I Krisenkommunikation von Non-Profit Organisationen – eine Fallstudie	April 2009
Bachelor-Arbeit II Fluch oder Segen: Die Bedeutung des Mobiltelefons für das soziale Handeln Jugendlicher	Januar 2010
Law School Studium der Rechtswissenschaften an der Universität Fribourg	2004 - 2005
Matura: International Baccalaureate	2004
International School of Berne, Schweiz Auszeichnungen für Deutsch und Kritisches Denken 2004: Teilnahme an The Hague International Model United Nations	2003 und 2004
Abschluss 2002: International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) mit Auszeichnung, durchgeführt von der Cambridge University	2002

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Praktikum bei der Vertretung der Europäischen Kommission in Österreich	Oktober 2011-März 2012
Volontariat bei der Nationalagentur für Immaterielles Kulturerbe der Österreichischen UNESCO-Kommission	Juni 2011-September 2011
Mitarbeit im Medienzentrum der 18. Internationalen AIDS Konferenz 2010	Juli 2010