

9

Mediatization, Right-Wing Populism and Political Campaigning: The Case of the Austrian Freedom Party

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Introduction

By analysing the discourses and performances of and within the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) since the millennium, 2000, this chapter highlights the role of ‘mediatization’ in the dynamics of right-wing populist political campaigns and their leading narratives and strategies. These are analysed in the context of recent FPÖ politics and campaigning, which extensively utilize, *inter alia*, rhetorics of Islamophobia (cf. Krzyżanowski and Wodak, 2009; Krzyżanowski, 2012) and discursive strategies of ‘blaming and denying’, ‘saying the unsayable’ and breaking social and political taboos (cf. Wodak and Pelinka, 2002; Wodak, 2006b, 2012, b, c; Engel and Wodak, 2009, 2013; Richardson and Wodak, 2009a, b).

While we will show that the discourses and discursive strategies of right-wing populist parties such as the FPÖ are multifaceted and include diverse ways of increasing mediatization, we situate this case within wider, more global, sociopolitical changes. Thus we claim that over recent decades and across (at least) ‘the West’, we are witnessing the development of ‘media democracies’ in which media-savvy performances seem to become more important than traditional politics (Grande, 2000). Accordingly, contemporary politics does not only rely on the media as ‘the most important source of information and

vehicle of communication between the governors and the governed' (Strömbäck, 2008: 230; and more broadly, Thompson, 1995). Instead, the media have contributed to the transformation of politics related to an emphasis on 'front-stage performances' (Goffman, 1959; Wodak, 2011).

Indeed, our main interest in the FPÖ from the point of view of mediatization does not merely hinge on looking at, or analysing, either the media appearances of FPÖ politicians or discourse about the party in mainstream mass media. Rather, we are primarily interested in its increasingly savvy '(pre-)electoral self-mediation' in terms of both classic and new genres of political communication. Among those genres we focus on, on the one hand, traditional political communication media, such as billboards, while, on the other, we scrutinize 'new' hybrid genres, such as comics or rap songs (frequently also posted as videos on *YouTube*, see Sparkes-Vian, this volume). The recontextualization of discourses and elements of rhetoric, we argue, enables the FPÖ to spread its message via different media, into different public spaces and, effectively, between different members of the Austrian electorate. Against this background, we thus explore a 'new face of politics' by analysing in particular the FPÖ's political communication during the 2010 election campaign in Vienna.

By drawing on a critical discourse-historical perspective, we mainly view the FPÖ strategies and discourses as far-right attempts to functionalize a range of media in order to counter the missing political involvement and engagement, especially, of young voters (Hay, 2007). In doing so, we illustrate how contemporary societal dynamics trigger new developments in mediated political communication. Second, we explore the roles that the media – whether in the sense of 'classic' media or Web 2.0 social media – have or are attributed in political campaigning when disseminating such new trends.

We start by discussing the salient dimensions of 'mediated politics' in late modernity – that is, the characteristics of contemporary media ecologies. Then, we comment briefly on our framework of analysis, the discourse-historical approach (DHA) in critical discourse studies (cf. Wodak and Meyer, 2009 for an overview), before outlining the history of the FPÖ as a means of contextualizing our object of investigation. Subsequently, we focus on some recent developments which we analyse by looking at the FPÖ's (pre)campaign discourses. Here, we particularly emphasize the various genres through which a coherent set of messages and discursive strategies are conveyed. We conclude by summarizing our main findings.