

**RIGHT-WING  
POPULISM/EXTREMISM AND THE  
MEDIA IN FRANCE:  
SIMILARITIES WITH FLANDERS?**

**BÉNÉDICTE LAUMOND, PHD CANDIDATE  
EUROPA UNIVERSITÄT VIADRINA /  
UNIVERSITÉ DE VERSAILLES**

# **BETWEEN POPULISM AND EXTREMISM: A BATTLE OVER THE CONCEPTS?**

- **Populism?**
- **Choose the concept of « radical right » to encompass the whole phenomenon**
- **Definition by Michael Minkenberg (1998): 3x4 matrix**
- **4 ideological types: the fascist autocratic right, the ethno-centrist type, the populist right and finally the religious-fundamentalist type**
- **3 movement's forms: political party, social movement, sub-cultural milieu**

# THE RADICAL RIGHT IN FRANCE AND FLANDERS ADAPTATION M. MINKENBERG (1998)

	Political Parties	Social Movements	Sub-Cultural Milieu
<b>Fascist-Autocratic Right</b>		Jeunesses Nationalistes (F), Œuvre Française (F)	Neo Nazis (All), Bloed Bodem Eeren Trouw (B)
<b>Ethnocentrist Right</b>	Front National (F), Vlaams Block - Belang (B)	Bloc Identitaire (F), Riposte Laïque (F), GUD (F), Antwerpse Solidariteit (B), Nationalistische Studentenvereniging (B), Voorpost (B), Vlaams Belang Jongeren (B)	Skinheads and Hooligans (All)
<b>Populist Right</b>	Nieuw Vlaamse Alliantie (N-VA) (B)		
<b>Religious-Fundamentalist Right</b>		Civitas (F)	

# **THE RADICAL RIGHT SPHERE IN COMPARISON**

- **Hegemon political parties with significant electoral results**
- **Cordon sanitaire as a relevant practice in Belgium and France**
- **Small but active sub-cultural scene**
- **Interdiction of the most extreme groups in both countries**
- **Focus on political parties:**
  - **Despite strong similarities the leading party from the radical right in Flanders has lost electoral influence whereas the French Front National is still experiencing electoral successes.**

**ASSESS THE ROLE OF  
THE MEDIA IN THE  
ELECTORAL FORTUNE  
OF THE RADICAL  
RIGHT**

# WHY THE MEDIA?

- **Why is media central in assessing the influence of RR movements? → « right-wing populists need the mass media to provide them with a stage from where they can convey their ideas to the public » (Van der Brug et al., 2007)**
- **2 sources affect the legitimacy of those parties: mainstream political parties and the mass media (Art, 2008)**
- **Media as friend and foe at the same time (Mudde, 2007)**

# **SPREAD THE (RADICAL) WORD**

- **Importance of the Agenda Setting in attracting voters :  
example of immigration and crime issues in Flanders  
(Walgrave and De Swert, 2004)**
- **In order to have electoral success it is important for them  
to appear to be influential or effective (Van der Brug et al,  
2005)**
- **A high media coverage increases the perceived  
importance of RR issues (Boomgaarden and Vliegenthart,  
2007; Walgrave and De Swert, 2004)**

# POLITICAL STRATEGIES IN THE MEDIA

- **Strategic Communications?**
  - **The case of « *dédiabolisation* » in France, an exception? Traditional oscillation between extreme stances and a strategy of respectability (Dézé, 2012)**

- **Discourse Analysis - a relevant tool to understand the RR's strategies:**

**Persuasion**

**Interpretations of reality**

**Minimal and vague discourse (Moufahim, 2007)**



# **REACTIONS TO THE RISE OF THE RR VIA THE MEDIA**

- **Exclusion chosen in both France and Belgium → ‘cordon sanitaire’**
- **Demonization by the establishment (encompass the media): the effects of boycotting the party depend on the context.**

**Negative effect in electoral support, but only during the early years of the party’s existence**

**Erosion of trust**

**(Van Heerden et al, 2014; Van Spanje, Van der Brug, 2009 ; Downs, 2012)**

- **Mediatization of the prosecution of RR’s leaders: no evidence of support’s erosion (Van Spanje, de Vreese, 2013)**

# COUNTERING THE RR

- **Co-optation of RR issues by mainstream parties: poor result in France**
- **Why did the Vlaams Belang decrease? Impact of the NVA**
  - LDD and particularly the N-VA were able to steal a significant share of VB votes
  - The VB has lost its monopoly on issues such as immigration and populist anti-party sentiments

## **Why prefer the copy?**

- 'a sustained strategy of containment combined with an attempt to provide democratic alternatives for dissatisfied voters will, in the end, convince extremist voters that their vote is, indeed, a wasted one' (Rummens, Abts, 2009)

# **CONCLUSION: HOW TO ENGAGE WITH THE RR?**

## **Public Forum**

- Regulation of public communication (editorial board of newspapers, moderators etc.)
- A co-regulation that does not solely lies on the legal branch of the state
- Necessity for politics to engage strategically

**(Maussen, Fennema, 2000)**

# REFERENCES

- Art, 2008, "The Organisational Origins of the Contemporary Radical Right: The Case of Belgium", *Comparative Politics*, p. 421-440
- Boomgaarden and Vliegthart, 2007, "Explaining the Rise of Anti-Immigrant Parties: The Role of News Content in the Netherlands", *Electoral Studies*, p. 404-417.
- Bos, van der Brug, de Vreese, 2007, "How the Media Shape Perceptions of Right-Wing Populist Leaders", 43 p.
- Coffé, Dewulf, 2014, "Wavering between Radical and Moderate : The Discourse of the Vlaams Belang in Flanders", in Feldman, Jackson, *Doublespeak: The Rethoric of the Far Right since 1945*, p. 147-166
- Dézé, 2012, *Le Front National: À la Conquête du Pouvoir*, 189 p.
- Downs, 2012, *Political Extremism in Democracies*, 239 p.
- Jagers, Walgrave, 2007, "Populism as a Communication Style: An Empirical Study of Political Parties' Discourse in Belgium", *European Journal of Political Research*, p. 319-345.
- Maussen, Fennema, 2000, "Dealing With Extremists in Public Discussion: Front National and 'Republican Front' in France", *Journal of Political Philosophy*, p. 379-400.
- Minkenberg, 1998, *Die Neue Radikale Rechte*, 409 p.
- Moufahim, 2007, *Interpreting Discourse: A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Marketing of an Extreme Right Party. The Vlaams Blok: Vlaams Belang*, 389 p.
- Mudde, 2007, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, 404 p.
- Pauwels, 2011, "Explaining the Strange Decline of Populist Radical Right Vlaams Belang in Belgium: The Impact of Permanent Opposition", *Acta Politica*, p. 60-82.
- Tiberj et al., 2013, *Developments in French Politics*, 320 p.
- Van der Brug et al., 2005, "Why Some Anti-Immigrant Parties Fail and Others Succeed: A Two-Step Model of Aggregate Electoral Support", *Comparative Political Studies*, p. 537-573
- Van Heerden et al., 2014, "The Immigration and Integration Debate in the Netherlands: Discursive and Programmatic Reactions to the Rise of Anti-Immigration Parties", *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, p. 119-136
- Van Spanje, de Vreese, 2013, "The Good, the Bad and the Voter: The Impact of hate Speech Prosecution of a Politician on Electoral Support for His Party", *Party Politics*, p. 1-16
- Walgrave, De Swert, 2004, "The Making of the (Issues of the) Vlaams Blok", *Political Communication*, p. 479-500