ANDREJ ŠKOLKAY

School of Communication and Media, Bratislava, Slovakia

ADINA MARINCEA¹

School of Communication and Media, Bratislava, Slovakia

Information Sources Shared on Facebook and Networking by a Populist Leader in Greece

Greek politicians tend to more intensively use their social media accounts during the pre-electoral periods. In general, Syriza had to fight both established mainstream parties and the mainstream media since its founding, including while in power. Yet Syriza's campaign on the Internet between 2006 and 2015 relied mainly on alternative media activists. In 2019, Alexis Tsipras prioritized sharing content from digital sources (mainly own created content such as comments or videos posted on his FB page) and occasionally articles from the websites of newspapers or links from the Syriza website or FB account. Not surprisingly, there were no links shared from radio or TV stations. The content shared by Tsipras, other than his own messaging which constituted the vast majority of his posts, came from predominantly left or centre-left publications. The reciprocity network of Tsipras was limited to posts shared between the account of Alexis Tsipras and the official account of his party. The accounts that shared the posts of Alexis Tsipras,´were either accounts or pages dedicated to Alexis Tsipras or Syriza. The communication strategy of Alexis Tsipras lacked a discernible "populist pattern" of communication, at least in terms of the types of sources shared and the type of social media network that the leader of Syriza participates in.

Keywords: populism, Syriza, Tsipras, Facebook, media, social media, networking, Greece

Introduction

The study is focused on information sources shared on Facebook (FB) and networking by a selected populist leader in Greece in two periods in 2020. More specifically, the analysis focuses on the leader Alexis Tsipras of Coalition of the Radical Left (*Syriza*). Tsipras and (indi-

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rectly) *Syriza* are selected as the main populist political actors in Greece due to the fact that they constitute the most visible and successful populist political actors in the country, and are arguably among the most successful populist parties in Europe. There is widespread agreement in the relevant literature (e.g. Mudde 2015; Stavrakakis – Katsambekis 2014), that *Syriza* constitutes a populist party, particularly since the onset of the economic crisis in Greece in late 2009. In fact, "Populism is the bedrock ideology of the Greek political system, since it affects both the left and right wings of the political spectrum" (Papathanassopoulos, Giannouli – Andreadis 2016, p.8). Moreover, interestingly, "left and right populist political parties present common characteristics; anti-globalization, anti-Western, and anti-imperialist rhetoric has had a long history in Greek political culture (Doxiadis & Matsaganis 2012 cited in Papathanassopoulos, Giannouli and Andreadis 2016, p.8).

The 2018 Populism and Political Parties Expert Survey (POPPA) dataset shows that *Syriza* reached 7.64 magnitude of populism on a 10 points scale (the key discursive indicators: Manichean, indivisible, general will, people centrism and antielitism, and clearly located to the left ideological spectrum – radical left)[2], while the *Independent Greeks – National Patriotic Alliance (ANEL)*, the second party considered here for analysis, reached 8.46 degrees of populism and clearly standing on the opposite ideological pole – radical right.[3]

Syriza was formed in 2004 as an electoral alliance of leftist parties and organizations and entered parliament in elections the same year. A decade later it was in government. It was the only example when anti-austerity parties (*Syriza*), together with the right-wing populist party *ANEL* – a party formed during the crisis — managed to come to power in an EU M.S. The *Syriza* government from 2009 to 2015, and its fall, has been unquestionably a major political event not only for Greece. For some time, *Syriza* plans threatened to endanger the Euro and, in effect, the whole EU. Moreover, from a populism studies perspective, the Greek crisis was deeply rooted in poorly performing institutions at all levels affecting interactions at home and abroad (Koutsoukis and Roukanas 2011).

However, the analysis does not include *ANEL*, the junior partner of *Syriza* in the two successive coalition governments of 2015 and 2015-2019, due to the fact that in the period covered in the analysis[4] *ANEL* had already exited government and had been consigned to a status of electoral irrelevance. *ANEL* performed poorly in the 2019 European Parliament (EP) Election, capturing only 0.80 percent of the vote, and its leader Panos Kammenos decided not to compete in the July 2019 national election. The party of Kyriakos Velopoulos, *Greek Solution (EL)* eventually replaced *ANEL* as the main right-wing populist actor in the Greek party system but that happened only after the surprise result of the May 2019 EP Election. For that reason, our analysis focuses solely on Alexis Tsipras, whose party went to both the EP election competition in May

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[2]   https://dataverse.harvard.edu/file.xhtml?persistentId=doi:10.7910/DVN/8NEL7B/RMH4MI&version=2.0

[3]   https://dataverse.harvard.edu/file.xhtml?persistentId=doi:10.7910/DVN/8NEL7B/RMH4MI&version=2.0 Interestingly, PASOK and ND were seen as little populist, with 2.86 points or 2.59 respectively at 10 points scale. Historically, both parties could be seen as populist.

[4]   The first period stretched from April to June 2019, capturing the *electoral period* related to the European Elections. The second was an eight months *routine period*, occurring between July 2019 and February 2020. Finally, the *Covid-19 period* goes from March to April 2020.

2019 and in the national parliamentary election in July 2019 as the only party in control of the Greek government. *Syriza* failed in the 2019 general elections. One reason for its failure was flux in policies – during its time in office, the party has increasingly shifted its priorities to become whatever Tsipras saw these policies and priorities should be (Baboulias 2019).

Historically, there was Left–Right polarization between the two major parties /(*Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK*) and *New Democracy (ND*)/ from the 1970s until the end of the 2000s (Andreadis and Stavrakakis 2019, Papathanasspoulos and Giannouli 2019). Fundamentally, *Syriza*'s rise to prominence established a new, sharp polarisation within the Greek political system: pro-austerity/pro-memorandum political forces (mainly represented by *PASOK* and *ND*) against anti-austerity/anti memorandum forces (mainly represented by *Syriza*), or in general, attitudes toward the EU were polarizing the Greek electorate, and that pro/anti-EU polarization was closely associated with the austerity measures enforced by the bailout agreements (Stavrakakis and Katsambekis 2018, Andreadis and Stavrakakis 2019, Antonakaki, Spiliotopoulos, Samaras, Pratikakis, Ioannidis, Fragopoulou 2017). There was the post-2010 crisis of political representation (Stavrakakis and Katsambekis 2018). In party politics, the salience of the materialist cleavage exacerbated by the country's severe and protracted economic crisis gave rise to populist and/or radical forces of both the right and the left (Halikiopoulou 2020). Before moving to the specific research topic, an overview of social and legacy media roles in populism in the country might be useful, to allow deeper contextualisation of our findings.

Research Overview

It is essential to start discussion with a general overview of the Greek media landscape before and around the period when the Syriza-led coalition came to power. Greek media landscape showed a lack of content pluralism before *Syriza* came to power (Kyriakidou 2013). The audiovisual media have traditionally been under the total supervision of the government in power, while private media depended on the state in other ways (Papathanasspoulos and Giannouli 2019). A few media tycoons managed to set the predominant biased reporting through their media. In 2016, Greece ranked 89th in the World Press Freedom Index, with 80% of the population showing distrust in the country's TV channels. The inadequate legal framework has failed to protect journalists from external pressures (Panagiotopoulos 2016). Perhaps the most controversial and well-known example was abrupt closure of the public broadcaster *ERT* in 2013 by the Conservative-led government as part of its fiscal policy of cuts (Iosifidis and Katsirea 2015). Paradoxically, the deregulation of the state monopoly of broadcasting frequencies in the late 1980s led to a great number of private TV channels and radio stations but it did not help much in creating efficient media content pluralism. In contrast, the regulatory framework contributed to the concentration of media outlets (Boucas and Iosifidis 2015). During the crisis, the mainstream media has adopted a pro-memorandun agenda (see Doudaki et al. 2016). The mainstream media portrayed *Syriza* as a populist defender of the 'drachma lobby, being anti-EU, against NATO, a party that 'flirts with violence' (Stavrakakis & Katsambekis 2014, 134 in Papathanassopoulos, Giannouli, Andreadis 2016, p.7). Syriza received some limited media support through a comedy

show on TV, in some tabloid websites, in a few small-scale, alternative outlets, and its own, party-owned media whose reach remained negligible. The only relatively mainstream and independent outlet that supported Syriza a was *Efimerida ton Syntakton*, a daily newspaper published by a cooperative of journalists and employees. The only media supporting S*yriza* has been *Documento* newspaper (The Manifold 2020).

Within this context it is much easier to understand why prior to *Syriza*'s electoral victory in January 2015, the party had committed to declare a war to the media "oligarchs" (Drakaki 2016). Indeed, the *Syriza-ANEL* government planned to allow for the existence of only four private nationwide TV channels in 2016 – until the Highest Court of Justice, declared it to be an unconstitutional move (Katsirea 2017). At the same time, the government allowed a limited number of available TV licenses. It should be explained that there was no transparency in the procedure of licencing framework previously for decades. There were only temporary licenses renewed by successive governments. Some even argued that private media were allowed to broadcast without paying for the requisite licenses, in exchange for favorable reporting for government policies (Biri 2016). When in government, *Syriza* boycotted the largest news broadcaster *SKAI* from summer 2018 onwards, following its dissatisfaction with *SKAI*'s wildfire coverage. However, this was all in vain. Before the 2019 general elections, in majority of the key media it was the opposition party *ND* that had dominated the media coverage and journalistic interviews (Baboulias 2019). The Rule of Law 2020 report by the European Commission raised some questions with regard to the effectiveness of rules geared at ensuring transparency of media ownership as well as key concerns related to insufficient mechanisms to ensure respect for professional standards in the practice of journalism.[5] Clearly, Greek journalists and media, although opposing more radical populists, tacitly tolerated the major parties´ populism and corruption for a long time. This was due to the clientelism between political elites and the media owners that in effect, has resulted in a highly centralized state policy. This, in turn, has led to a journalistic culture cautious about reporting news that could be embarrassing to state officials (Boucas and Iosifidis 2015, Lekakis 2017, Papathanasspoulos and Giannouli 2019). This was a sort of vicious circle – before *Syriza* attempted to break it.

Before moving to the role of social media, it may be interesting to note that the first Greek political party that featured a web page in the parliamentary elections of 1996 was *PASOK* (Lappas, Kleftodimos and Yannas 2010), followed by all the other major parties in the next two years. Online communication did not become a part of the campaign strategy of candidates until the prefecture and municipal elections of 1998. The use of the internet in political campaigns was more widespread in the 2000 parliamentary elections with 17% members of the Greek Parliament online and almost half of parties running campaign websites (citing Kotsikopoulou 2002). Between the 2000 to the 2004 Parliamentary elections, the number of online campaigning politicians doubled. Yet the number of Greek households with Internet connection in 2004 was below 18%. *PASOK, ND* and *Syriza* were the three leaders in the adoption of web 2.0 technologies in campaigning. However, Greek parties ignored FB as a new tool for communication till 2008.

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[5]   EU report Greece: Serious problems in justice, corruption, media pluralism, https://www.keeptalkinggreece.com/2020/10/01/greece-commission-report-justice-pluralism-corruption/ October 1, 2020.

The *Syriza* party was on FB by January 2009, following the communist party *KKE* and *PASOK* lead (Lappas, Kleftodimos and Yannas 2010).

Social Media and Populism in Greece

Except using FB for analysis of selected topics used in rhetoric by populist politicians (e.g. Theodoropoulou 2019) we found only a limited number of studies that tackled more specific communication by populists on FB (in contrast, much more was analysed Twitter which was found to serve propagandistic purposes, see e.g. Deželan and Vobič 2016). Ferra (2019) examined four different online and social media platforms during a seven-year period to uncover the impact of digital media on the contentious politics of crisis in Greece, as well as the impact of the political economic sphere on the formation of the Greek digital mediascape. An earlier study has argued that "populist explanations of the Greek crisis based on conspiracy theories have been aided by social media (Doxiadis & Matsaganis, 2012, pp. 47–52", in Papathanassopoulos, Giannouli, Andreadis 2016, p.7). Similarly, Ferra and Nguyen (2021) argue that online media as means of public engagement and tools of public protest organization became decisive factors. In contrast, a more recent study suggested that social media provided only a kind of virtual support for (one of many) the anti-austerity movement *Aganakrismenoi Apofasismenoi Ellines* (between 2011-2017). Specifically, social media diffused negative emotions and spread pessimistic sentiment among the general public (Chung 2019, pp. 234-235)

However, Albertini (n.d.) found the absence of populist messages in *Syriza*'s political communication on FB in early 2016. It is useful to explain this contradiction with the academic mainstream that assumes that *Syriza* and Tsipras are populists. As put by Albertini, this finding can be explained by the period when the study was conducted – while *Syriza* was in office in early 2016. A put by Albertini, whether a party is populist depends on the time span, on the media used and in the particular time span in which the detection is conducted and whether the party is in office or in opposition.

It is surprising to find that there is comparatively limited research on social media use by populist political parties and politicians in Greece. This may be related to the fact that politicians tend to more intensively use their social media accounts during the pre-electoral periods (Jackson, Lilleker, Veneti 2019, p.11). Clearly, in view of the bias in mainstream media, there was no much need for the majority of parties and politicians to get deeply engaged with social media communication. Only the 2014 elections to the EP marked the beginning of a more systematic use of social media in Greece (Jackson, Lilleker, Veneti 2019). Based on data from a comparative study of 16 countries participating in the 2014 EP elections, Greece had one of the lowest levels of penetration when comparing the total number of FB users with the number who followed a political party (Jackson, Lilleker, Veneti 2019, p.7). In other words, citizens were not much interested in politicians and political parties' messages on social media. Yet the research on social media roles or functions in political communication started to gain attention among researchers, as is documented in a study on 2014 municipal elections (Lappas, Yannas, Triantafillidou, Kavada, Kleftodimos & Vasileiadou 2015).

Alternative Media and Journalism in Greece

One of the key research questions tackles the media sources used by populists. However, we know little about alternative media sources in Greece. Thus, some background and contextualisation is necessary. The 2009 economic crisis has brought significant challenges to the media environment of Greece. Not only new political actors, but also journalists, as well as citizens were able to become content producers. Thus, while mainstream media supported austerity measures (Lekakis 2017), social media increasingly served as the alternative public sphere (Mylonas 2017) or, to put it more generally, digital technologies were generally seen as a means for bypassing media gatekeepers and contacting specific audiences directly (Jackson, Lilleker, Veneti 2019). There were some attempts at new forms of cooperative journalism – bringing together journalists and online communities such as "*Radio Bubble*", which operated through a communal hashtag, a platform for bloggers and an online radio station (see Nevradakis 2021). There also was production of independent documentaries called *#greekdocs* as the epitome of alternative media production and anti-austerity activism (Lekakis 2017). Alternative media (around sixty) included blogs and websites such as *Indymedia* and *realdemocracy.gr* (which included minutes of meetings and referenda), the Editors' Newspaper (*EfSyn*), the magazine *Unfollo*w, *Katalipsi ESIEA*, the blog of the 2009 occupation of the Athenian Union of Journalists headquarter, and the online Press Project, but also alternative media from centre-right such as *Anti-news* (see Vatikiotis and Milioni 2019). The website "Anti-news" can be described as a specific case – it offers an account of how right-wing supporters perceived populism (Karavasilis 2017). Obviously, there was also a strong antifascist online network. It appears that Greek activists have proved resistant to fully adopting major social media, being afraid of censorship and surveillance. Instead, they focused on combining the use of these platforms with more independent sites such as blogs, citizen-led platforms and initiatives, such as open radio (Croeser and Highfield FCJ-193).

However, the long-term financial sustainability of such initiatives is questionable (Boucas and Iosifides 2020). Moreover, there are controversial experiences present, too. First, there are obvious contradictions between alternative news and social movements on the one hand and commercial social media platforms on the other, such as in case of the Occupy movement. Second, the exploitation of social media by the *Golden Dawn* (*Chrysi Avgi*) party points at negative sides of social media roles (Nikolaidis 2019).

Political Parties, Politicians and Social Media

In earlier periods (around and before 2010) political parties seemed to be satisfied with a tight "top-down" campaign communication strategy. Interestingly only crises led to a rise in the growth of "bottom up" campaigns by users. Ironically, political parties' online activities and users' participation in party activities followed opposite directions in a crisis period (Lappas, Kleftodimos and Yannas 2010). It is interesting to note that *Syriza* actually emerged within and against the dominant anti-populist discourse of both the mainstream parties (that earlier and later themselves were populist while in power or in opposition, respectively) and the media (Stavrakakis and Katsambe-

kis 2018). This was clearly visible in both election campaigns before the 2012 and 2015 general elections (Ferra 2019). It would be hardly surprising if *Syriza* would not turn to social media as a substitute or counter-force in communicating and at the same time, fighting biased legacy media.

Let us focus at Greek politicians on social media. The majority of Greek MPs had a FB account (85,7%), followed by Twitter (69%) and 26,7% had an Instagram account in 2019 (Jackson, Lilleker, Veneti 2019). Apparently, Greek parties have a community of followers that are willing to engage, but the political content worth engaging with is absent (Jackson, Lilleker, Veneti 2019, p.9). FB is perceived as the social medium with the broadest reach. Instagram is considered as more of a youth platform and less political. Twitter is perceived as having an impact on the news agenda. Neither politicians nor the political communication consultants considered YouTube as an essential communication platform (Jackson, Lilleker, Veneti 2019, p.9).

However, coming back to the 2012 and 2015 *Syriza* campaigns on FB, it was FB communication that looked more like classical webpages rather than currently interactive FB pages (Ferra 2019). Smyrnaios and Karatzogianni (2020) found that *Syriza´s* campaign on the Internet between 2006 and 2015 relied mainly on alternative media activists. Its success was mainly due to the European political context and the opportunities it offered to the radical Left, rather than the communication strategy (Smyrnaios and Karatzogianni 2020).

Next, we explore how Greeks used social media.

Users and Social Media

From the perspective of users, Greeks reported using on average more than five online news sources per week (the second highest among 38 countries). However, among the most visited websites were a number of news websites and blogs that regularly engaged in conspiracy theories. More than two-thirds (67%) of Greeks used social media as a source of news, while 20% of Greeks online (and 32% of those under 35) claimed that social media were their *main* source of news. Apart from FB (58%) and YouTube (36%), Greeks used messaging applications widely to share and discuss news (Kalogeropoulos 2019). Already in 2015, the Reuters Institute Digital News Report (2016) placed Greece at the top of the list of countries where citizens used social media as a news source, with 27 percent of the public stating that social media constitute their main source of news – more than TV and print consumption combined.

Methodology

As is the case with the rest of the countries analysed in the present deliverable, the analysis of populist communication in Greece covers three different periods, corresponding to different moments in the Greek political cycle: an electoral one, b) a routine period and c) the Covid-19 emergency. The electoral period corresponds to the electoral campaign period prior and a few days after the European Elections in late May 2019, namely from April to June 2019. The routine period refers to the following 8 months, namely from July 2019 to February 2020. It should be

noted however, that in the case of Greece, unlike other countries, this period covers also the very brief electoral period of the national snap election that took place very soon after the European Election, specifically on 7 July 2019. The last period, the so-called Covid-19 period, stretches from March 2020 to April 2020. So it is important to keep in mind that the routine period covers a much larger time period compared to both the electoral and the Covid-19 periods.

Analytical Part 1: Sources Shared by Populist Leaders

In this part we study the types of media sources that seem to be by and large preferred by populists. We focus on the source type, whether it is registered or not, whether it is public or commercial, and the level of transparency in its ownership. We attempted to figure out what type of media sources seemed to be preferred as well as ignored by populists. The analyses were carried out on FB data (Mancuso et al., 2020; Marincea, 2020), downloaded with the CrowdTangle app developed by FB.

Source type

Alexis Tsipras prioritized sharing content from digital sources (mainly own created content such as comments or videos posted on his Facebook page) and occasionally articles from the websites of newspapers or links from the *Syriza* website or FB account. There were no links shared from radio or TV stations, whereas digital sources accounted for about 92 percent of all posts. However, the type of content shared by Tsipras can be broken down to organic content created by Tsipras himself (about 77 percent of all posts), whereas the rest included posted links to articles posted in newspaper websites and news web portals or to the *Syriza* website. Among

Figure 1: Diversity of channels
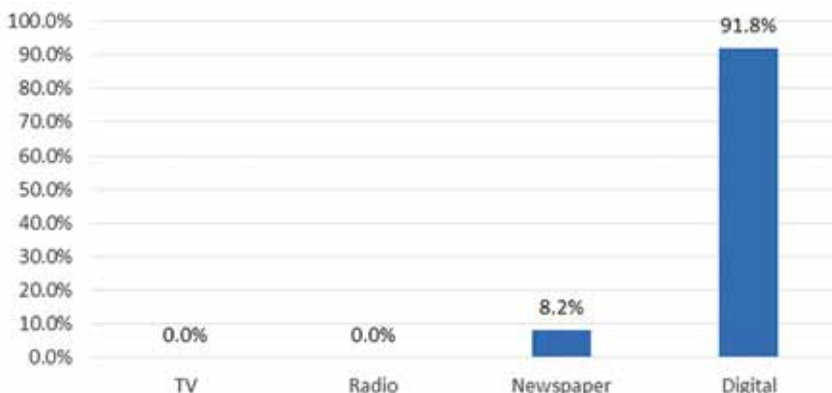
Source: Own compilation

Figure 2: Main sources shared by Alexis Tsipras
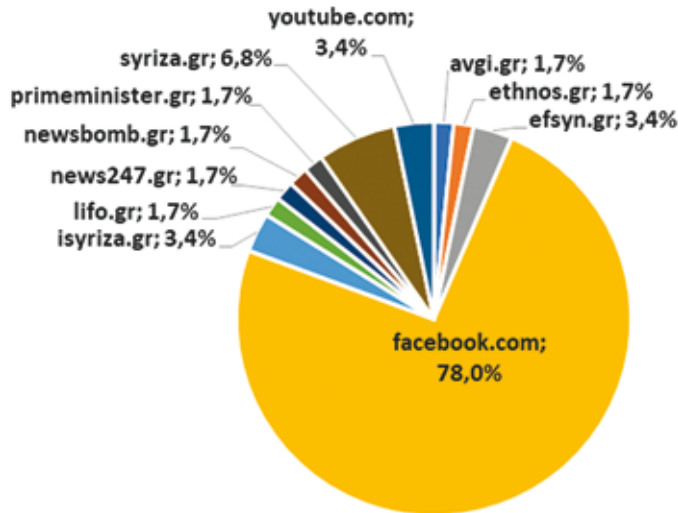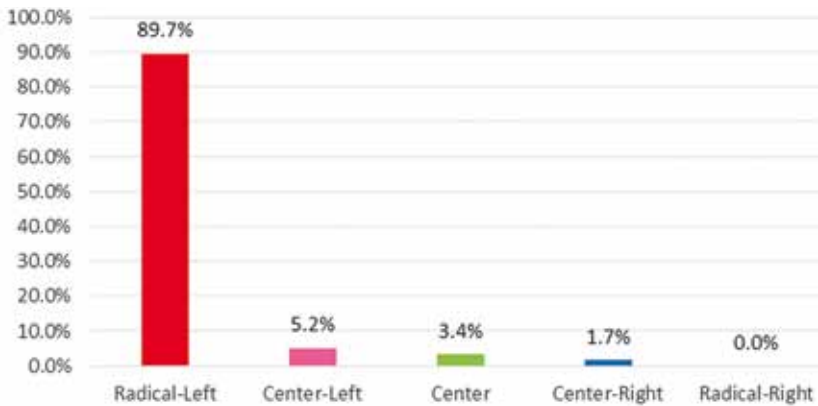

Source: Own compilation

the posts, there were two links to songs uploaded on youtube.com, which were unlike his other postings in tone and content. There was little differentiation during the electoral period. The sample from that period is smaller but the distribution of sources is not changed to any meaningful degree. The main difference is that content of the posting is more oriented to Tsipras reporting from the campaign trail, as one would expect.

Media registration

Practices of registration of media sources vary in Greece, ranging from the regulated and concentrated market of nation-wide TV stations to the unregulated and fragmented market of news websites. However, the media sources shared by Tsipras include well known newspapers and news websites, whose status as news media is not in question regardless of the respectability of the source (which ranges from legacy newspapers to tabloid-like popular news websites). Non-journalistic sources are limited to party (*Syriza*) or government sources, such as the webpage of the prime minister.

The dominant political/ideological orientation of the media sources shared

The content shared by Alexis Tsipras, other than his own messaging which constituted the vast majority of his posts came from predominantly left or centre-left publications, even though a small number of articles from newspapers and news websites with a centrist (*Lifo*), non-ideo-
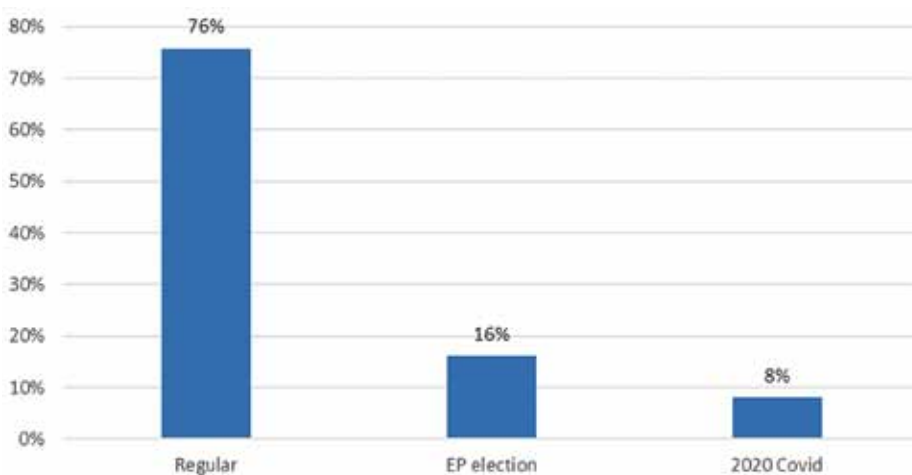
Figure 3: Political/ideological orientation of media sources shared by Alexis Tsipras
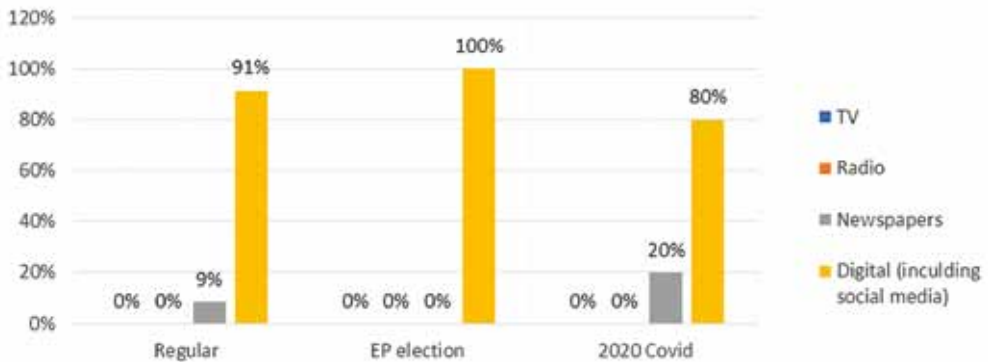

Source: Own compilation

logical (*news247*) or even right-wing conservative (*newsbomb.gr*) orientation were shared. The overwhelmingly leftist orientation of Alexis Tsipras is not unsurprising given the explicitly leftist identity of *Syriza* and of its leader.

Electoral vs. non-electoral coverage, event vs. regular period

According to the sample collected between the three periods (regular period, electoral period prior to the May 2019 European Parliament election, and the start of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020) there seems to be far more social media activity by Alexis Tsipras in the regular period

Figure 4: Percentage of sampled posts by period (Regular, EP election, 2020 Covid)

Source: Own compilation

Source: Own compilation

compared to the other two periods. About 3 out of 4 posts took place in the regular period but the distribution of the posts by source do not significantly change in each period. However, this should come as no surprise given the fact that the so-called "routine period" covers more calendar months in relation to the other two periods. Most posts correspond to digital sources (mainly social media but also links to articles from news portals). It is also noteworthy that there is no noticeable differentiation in terms of either the source of the posts, their ideological orientation or their general characteristics over the three periods. Digital sources (own Ffacebook content and links to articles coming from mainly left-center media sources) dominated the communication practices of Alexis Tsipras (see Figure 5).

What role did the public service media play in each of these periods, compared to commercial /private sources?

The role of public service media was absent in the communication of Alexis Tsipras as only 1 out of 61 posts originated from a public media source, which was the webpage of the prime minister. Some of his own facebook posts included excerpts from interviews or speeches that Alexis Tsipras had given which aired on the public TV station (*ERT*). However, the format was video files created by Tsipras himself, making it difficult to categorize separately from the rest of communication in the message and hard to quantify. When sharing articles or other external links, Tsipras relied almost exclusively on privately owned newspapers or news portals.

Analytical Part 2: Network analysis of sources that share populist leaders' posts

We examined here several aspects. First, whether there were disproportions within this network. Second, network reciprocity – the degree of interconnection between different pages. Third, the

degree of centrality, meaning of overlap between the two networks. Finally, we were interested to learn what pages were the connectors between the two, and if there was reciprocal sharing.

Network analysis of sources that shared posts by Alexis Tsipras

Figure 6 shows that the reciprocity network of Alexis Tsipras is limited to posts shared between the account of Alexis Tsipras and the official account of his party, *Syriza.* So in effect, there was no reciprocity between Tsipras and external, non-party accounts. The accounts that shared posts made by Alexis Tsipras were not really in a reciprocal network with Tsipras, as he only shared back content posted by the official *Syriza* account.

Taking a look at the accounts that shared the posts of Alexis Tsipras, we detect from their names that these were either accounts or pages dedicated to Alexis Tsipras or *Syriza* (see Figure 7). For example the page that shared most times posts of Alexis Tsipras (107) is named "Struggle with Alexis Tsipras". Others had similar names, such as "ALEXIS TSIPRAS LEADER" (69) or "ALEXIS TSIPRAS AND SYRIZA FOREVER" (64). The only surprising result is that the only non-*Syriza* affiliated pages that appear to routinely share posts coming from Alexis Tsipras's account are connected to the Greek Communist Party (*KKE*). For example, the page responsible for the second most posts from Alexis Tsipras's page is called "Forward with KKE" (97), and there is another similarly named page ("We Support KKE") that features on the list (with 27 posts). What is noteworthy is that no other populist actors or FB pages seem to participate in the network of

Figure 6: Reciprocity Facebook network of Alexis Tsipras
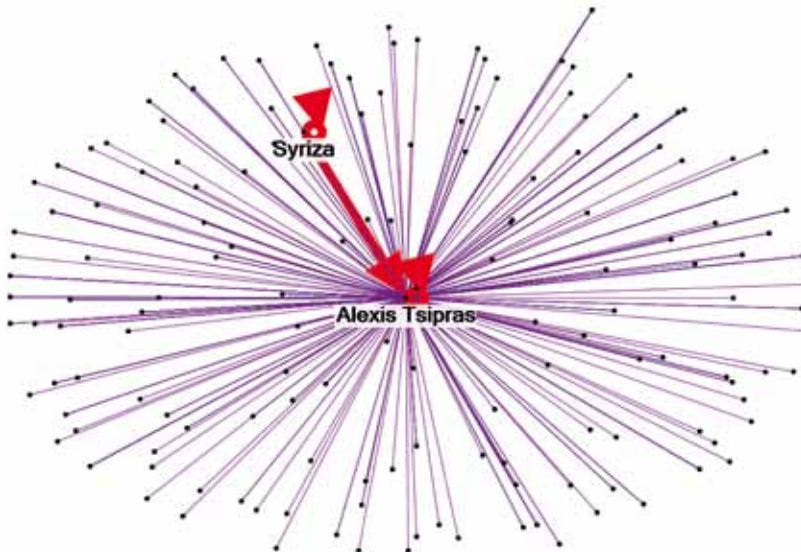
Source: Own compilation

Figure 7: Pages sharing posts of Alexis Tsipras more than 10 times. **Source:** Marincea, 2020
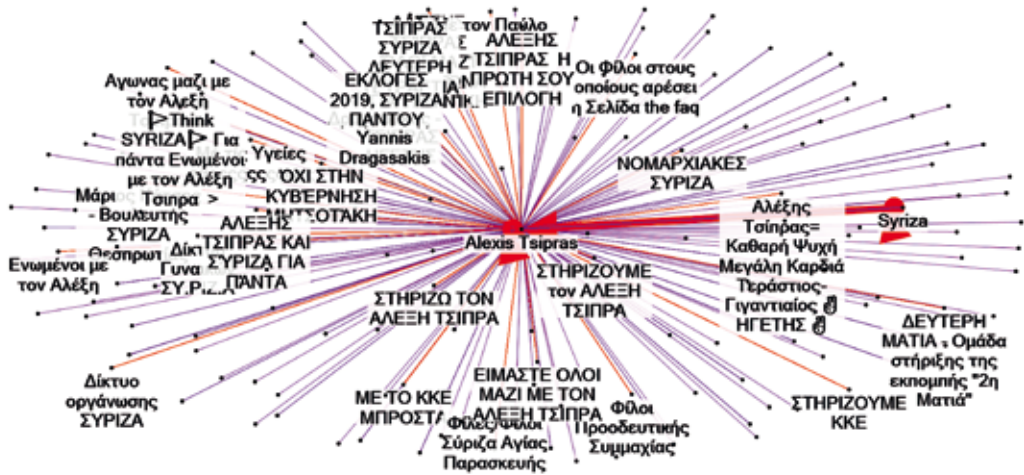
Source: Own compilation

Alexis Tsipras. The FB network of *Syriza*'s leader seems to be confined within his own party and – to a lesser extent – the wider social media ecosystem of the Greek Left.

Conclusions

Social media served more for expressing and sharing anger than other purposes. It also appears that blogs and other special platforms-based communication tools played a more important role than FB or Twitter both for politicians, political parties and the public. Syriza's campaign on the Internet between 2006 and 2015 relied mainly on alternative media activists. The emergence of this alternative communication network was facilitated by captured private and public media in Greece.

One could say that the communication strategy of Alexis Tsipras lacks a discernible "populist pattern" of communication, at least in terms of the types of sources shared and the type of social media network that the leader of *Syriza* participates in. Tsipras shared mostly direct forms of communication, prioritizing excerpts from speeches or interviews, and when he linked to external sources these were either party-related sources or standard national media sources. This does not preclude the use of populist language in the communication of Tsipras (e.g., in the 2015 September election campaign, his rhetoric was seen as populist, see Papathanasspoulos and Giannouli 2019) but it does not follow the pattern of either sharing content from dubious sources or creating networking links to other populist actors in the country. In this sense, one could argue that the style of communication observed on social media is more "mainstream" than "populist". However, it should be noted that populism in Greece has been mainstream among major political

parties as well as in the mainstream media, We have found support for this surprising finding in another author (Albertini) who studied a different period.

Finally, "the rise and fall of SYRIZA is a cautionary tale. Greek citizens still have not come to terms with the underlying causes and trauma of the harsh austerity measures."(Papathanasspoulos 2019, p.38). Thus, one can expect that populist, or, at least radical policies and occasionally populist rhetorics will still play an important role in the future.

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