



CHAPTER 16 | Populism and Media

On Wikipedia the term 'populism' is described as follows: *'Populism is a political style rather than an ideology. It is a discourse in which the people are central; a mode of communication that can be used by any ideological movement to get its message across. It starts from the oppression of the people by an elite that controls the state, and thus wants to move towards a society where the people control the state and the state can no longer be an instrument of oppression. She constantly refers to the economic and social status of the "ordinary man". It is difficult to give a conclusive definition of populism. However, characteristics can be given. Established political parties sometimes tend to label newcomers as populists. Usually, however, these established parties also started as a result of votes from "the people".'*

Populism stems from the Latin word 'populus', meaning 'people'. This word is used since populists often say to speak in the name of the people. The Free Dictionary defines Populism as follows: *'A political philosophy supporting the rights and power of the people in their struggle against the privileged elite.'* These descriptions show that populism is in fact an ideology of liberation, aimed at the emancipation of the people. From the perspective of the ruling elite, it is understandable that populism is seen as something undesirable. After all, the success of this movement inevitably leads to a loss of power and position.

Journalists and their media have actively contributed to demonizing the term populism and the people they accused of it over the past decades. This behaviour differs from the codes and canons that provide journalists with a framework of self-monitoring and self-correction. According to these codes journalism is guided by five values: Honesty, Independence and objectivity, Fairness, Diligence and Accountability. To the same extent that journalism has taken a negative connotation of populism, society has begun to question the independence and fairness of reporting. Given the values mentioned above, this is understandable. Although journalism has always had the image of being largely pro-state and pro-government, this has been unequivocally confirmed worldwide since the rise of populist politicians. No opportunity is missed to dismiss the voice of the people, also referred to as 'gut feelings', as ridiculous, unheard of and a danger to the rule of law. This is pure propaganda and deception. There is nothing wrong with people's intuition with their inner voice. We know that what the gut produces in terms of insights usually turns out to be right. Wouldn't it be wiser to listen to this? Apparently, the modern journalist thinks differently. His view of things is morally superior to everyone else's. The idea that life unfolds as intended is impossible for him. The judgment of the situation is always immediately present. For the journalist it is important that guilty parties can be identified. For the journalist it is incomprehensible how such a thing could happen. It is clear to him that the government must take measures to prevent a recurrence. With this attitude, journalism has fallen into the same trap of unconsciousness and power as the ruling elite. If journalism is to be taken seriously in the future, there is no getting away from changing and allowing new insights into people and society in its culture. This means, among other



things, that the terms 'independence' and 'fairness' need to be redefined and that attention should be focused on truth rather than judgment or activism. If not, we will see that the significance of alternative media will further increase. In view of the above, we can regard this as a natural development.