Integration or Isolation?
Mapping Out the Position of Radical Right Media
in the Public Sphere

OV CRISTIAN NOROCEL
University of Helsinki, Finland
Université libre de Bruxelles, Belgium

GABRIELLA SZABÓ[1]
Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Hungary

MÁRTON BENE
Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Hungary
Corvinus University of Budapest, Hungary

The study explores the validity of the media visibility thesis in a cross-country comparative framework, concentrating on the position of media outlets sympathetic or affiliated to the populist radical right parties in the public spheres in Hungary and Romania. The visibility of such media outlets in the public sphere is considered crucial in the context of discursive opportunities for political mobilization, whereby the presence of discursive elements of populist radical right communication in mainstream media is understood as empirical evidence for the visibility of populist radical right politics. We analyze first the characteristics of media discourses. We then identify the positions of radical right media products in relation to mainstream media. Using network analysis as a methodological approach, we evince the differences and similarities pertaining to the location of radical right media in the wider network architecture of the public spheres in Hungary and Romania.

Keywords: Hungary, political communication, public sphere, radical right media, Romania

Populist radical right parties across Europe have gathered momentum and transformed the public sphere in the countries where they operate, such as by radicalizing the present debate concerning the

Ov Cristian Norocel: cristian.norocel@helsinki.fi
Gabriella Szabó: Szabo.Gabriella@tk.mta.hu
Márton Bene: bene.marton@tk.mta.hu
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integration challenges that refugees may posit for the receiving societies. Although there are some studies researching the rise and fall of the populist radical right in countries like Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia (Pytlas, 2016; Stojarova, 2013), to date there are few studies addressing the communicative conditions of radicalization. There is a lack of detailed analyses pertaining to the location of populist radical right communication channels in the wider media sphere despite the burgeoning literature that examines the effects of media attention on the electoral success of the populist radical right (Aalberg & de Vreese, 2016; Birenbaum & Villa, 2003; Koopmans & Muis, 2009; Mudde, 2007; Vliegenthart, Boomgaarden, & Van Spanje, 2012).

The aim of this study is to fill this gap by analyzing the differences and similarities in the media visibility of the populist radical right. In line with calls for investigating the participation of populist radical right parties in the public debates (Pytlas, 2016), and echoing recent research on the radicalization of the public sphere in the United States (Barkun, 2017; Jutel, 2017), this article approaches the issue of visibility as chains of connections between the key actors of the mainstream and radical right media; this is a neglected aspect in researching the populist radical right. To do so, we examine the position in the public sphere of media outlets that are sympathetic or affiliated to the populist radical right parties, thereby exploring the validity of the media visibility thesis in a cross-country comparative framework.

Hungary and Romania represent excellent cases for a comparative investigation given the different electoral fortunes of the populist parties in each country despite their geographical proximity, shared history, and similarities in the outlook of their media systems. On closer examination, the Movement for a Better Hungary (*Jobbik Magyarországért Mozgalom* [Jobbik]) became a significant opposition force to the current government after it received 20.45% of the votes in the latest Hungarian parliamentary elections in April 2014. To circumvent the media blockade that maintained populist radical right parties at the fringes of the Hungarian public sphere, Jobbik designed a political communication strategy relying heavily on media outlets supportive of its populist radical right platform, which reunited both the party-affiliated website Alfahir.hu (corresponding to Jobbik's print newspaper *Barikád*) and the self-defined nonpartisan radical right media outlet Kuruc.info. These media outlets were used to create a media cluster that promoted an alternative discourse to the mainstream discussion in the public sphere (Molnár, 2016). Hungary represents a case in which the populist radical right parties have successfully claimed legitimacy for their discourses in the public sphere.

The situation could not be more different in Romania. After the collapse of the communist dictatorship, the populist radical right forces had claimed significant levels of popular support. In the early 2000s, it was the populist radical right Greater Romania Party (*Partidul România Mare* [PRM]) that was the main opposition force. Despite these earlier political victories, and contrary to the wider European trend, the party's political clout has constantly dwindled ever since. This does not mean, however, that the populist radical right was wiped out from Romanian politics with the disappearance of PRM (Cinpoes, 2015). PRM's political communication strategy centered on the party's newspapers *România Mare* and *Tricolorul*, which were later supplemented by their online platforms, with the explicit purpose of breaking the opposition of mainstream media and legitimizing a populist radical right agenda in the Romanian public sphere (Norocel, 2013). Romania represents a case in which populist radical right parties unsuccessfully claim visibility for their political agenda in the public sphere. Adopting a political

communication perspective, we explore the location in the wider media sphere of populist radical right communication channels, named here *radical right media*. Our research question is:

RQ: What are the differences and similarities concerning the media visibility of radical right media products in Romania and Hungary?

We review relevant literature on the discursive opportunities for populist radical right politics created by media visibility and media systems in Hungary and Romania, and we identify the existing gap in the literature that this article aims to fill. In the subsequent section, we present our methodological choices for analyzing the presence of discursive elements of populist radical right communication in the mainstream media, and then we detail our data collection and coding procedures. We discuss the findings of our analysis, which suggest that the visibility of populist radical right media channels is very divergent in the examined countries. We conclude by placing our findings in the wider context of existing scholarship and indicate further avenues of research.

Populist Radical Right Parties and Media Visibility

The present study is anchored in the scholarship on populist radical right parties, which acknowledges *populism* as a "thin ideology" underpinned by antagonism between the people and the elites and identifies the *radical right* as the key ideological anchor of these parties, lending ideological consistency to the rejection of social equality on grounds of xenophobic nationalism (Mudde, 2007). Among the populist radical right parties across Europe, besides Jobbik (Hungary) and PRM (Romania), are the National Front (*Front National* [FN], France), Sweden Democrats (*Sverigedemokraterna* [SD], Sweden), Flemish Interest (*Vlaams Belang* [VB], Belgium), and the Party for Freedom (*Partij voor de Vrijheid* [PVV], The Netherlands) (Mudde, 2007; Norocel, 2013; Vliegenthart et al., 2012).

This article is concerned with the *discursive opportunities*—the set of structural factors in the public discourse that influence the success of the populist radical right political communication as it is reflected in their electoral success (Koopmans & Olzak, 2004). On this matter, there is a consensus that the media are partially responsible for the radicalization of public discourse by means of intense coverage of the preferred topics, political personalities, and actions of populist radical right parties (Bos, Van der Brug, & de Vreese, 2010; Walgrave & de Swert, 2004). Some research suggests that visibility matters the most, regardless of the tone and frames of media coverage (Ellinas, 2010). When the media report on the populist radical right parties, these parties seem capable of exploiting even negative publicity to present their political agenda to potential voters. When the mainstream media engage with these parties and present their viewpoints on given political topics, this too seems to have a positive impact on their electoral performance. In sum, the more attention media pay to populist radical right parties, the more successful in elections these parties are likely to be.

In addition, the visibility afforded to the media outlets sympathetic to or affiliated with the populist radical right—which we simply label in this article as *radical right media* to indicate their position in relation to the mainstream media—is another key component of the discursive opportunities for populist radical right mobilization. As a case in point, in the 2016 U.S. presidential election, it seemed that the

strong presence of the radical right media, sometimes labeled *alt-right*, was instrumental in radicalizing the American public sphere (Barkun, 2017; Jutel, 2017). It is worth noting that the populist radical right keenly establishes its own media universe, with a powerful mix of social media, traditional formats of written press, and radio stations, designed to counterbalance the often-hostile mainstream media (Udris, 2012).

Visibility as an instrument to analyze radicalization concerns the textual dimension, which is measured by means of quantitative and qualitative content analyses of the media coverage of populist radical right parties or of their specific political issues (Vliegenthart et al., 2012). We add to this conceptualization of visibility a new dynamic perspective that evinces the interactions between key actors of mainstream and radical right media (Szabó & Bene, 2015).

Media Systems in Hungary and Romania

Looking at the media systems in Hungary and Romania, the two countries reflect wider media trends in Central and Eastern Europe, marked by tabloidization, fragmentation, dominance of opinion-based journalism, gradual decline in broadsheet newspaper sales, and high level of political pressure on media (Bajomi-Lázár, 2014). The two countries arguably represent the "politicized media model," characterized by high political parallelism, significant politicization of public broadcasting, and heavy governmental control over public broadcasting (Dobek-Ostrowska, 2015).

In the past decade, there has been a continuous fusion in the Hungarian public sphere between center-right discourses and populist radical right discourses. This discursive permeability enabled frames and vocabulary typical of the populist radical right discourses to gain legitimacy in the mainstream. Such topics as Hungary's relationship with the European Union institutions, corruption, the place of the Roma minority in Hungarian society, matters of criminality, and welfare abuse were described with frames specific to populist radical right discourses (Bernáth, 2014; Vidra & Fox, 2014). Despite the gradual acceptance of these populist radical right frames on behalf of center-right media, mainstream media generally proved much more reluctant in providing media visibility for Jobbik representatives.

Again, the situation in the Romanian public sphere is the opposite. Although most mainstream media constantly criticized PRM for its rabid nationalism, thinly veiled anti-Semitism, and outright antiziganism, and avoided legitimizing its populist radical right discourses, mainstream media seemed susceptible to the sort of scandalous sensationalism that was PRM's discursive trademark. Allowing such levels of visibility in the public sphere, some researchers argued, fed into a "cultural register that accommodates highly discriminatory, intolerant, and exclusionary views" (Cinpoes, 2015, p. 294). Such a low threshold for intolerant frames in the public sphere led to their gradual adoption by a wide variety of political parties (Norocel, 2016, p. 250). In the face of frequently unfavorable mainstream media, a specific strategy of various populist radical right parties was to communicate their discourses directly to their potential supporters through party faithful media outlets, such as the *România Mare* and *Tricolorul* newspapers, and Oglinda-TV (OTV) (Gherghina & Miscoiu, 2014; Norocel, 2013).

Summing up, previous research on both Hungary and Romania indicates the importance of radical right media outlets, which are either controlled by or closely affiliated to populist radical right parties, in disseminating populist radical right discourses in the public sphere. Examining Hungary and Romania comparatively helps shed some light on the different patterns of media visibility, exemplifying two cases in which the populist radical right either blossoms or is on retreat even though the media systems in both countries are very similar.

Method and Data

To assess the visibility of radical right media, we first analyzed the characteristics of media discourses (e.g., the interaction patterns among all media outlets, frames, etc.). Second, we identified the position of radical right media products within the wider network architecture of mainstream media. The presence of discursive elements of populist radical right political communication in the mainstream media was understood as empirical evidence for the visibility of populist radical right politics. The more numerous these discursive elements are in the mainstream media, the higher the level of visibility for these politics. In other words, the more integrated into the mainstream flow of mass communication the radical right media is, the higher its chances of influencing the public discussion, creating the favorable discursive conditions for populist radical right politics.

Network Analysis: Nodes, Connections, Ties, Metrics, and Structures

We employed network analysis as a methodological approach to study both the general structure of the wider media network and the ego network of radical right media outlets. For this purpose, we compiled multiple *media networks*, which are n × n directed and weighted networks, whereby the media outlets are the nodes of these networks, and the edges are the connections between nodes that we define as *discursive ties*. The connection between various media is examined via their discursive patterns. The discursive patterns are operationalized in two ways. First, we focused on the *references* in the news content of media articles (citations of, quotations of, and hyperlinks to news items in other media). Second, we monitored the *framing activities* of media products to qualitatively assess communal sentiment and tie strength (Caton, Hall, & Weinhardt, 2015), and we coded issue-specific interpretations in each collection of empirical items.

We then analyzed the general structure of media networks and the location therein of radical right media nodes by metrics as follows: the maximum modularity score of the edge-betweenness community detection algorithm, fitness score, global clustering coefficient, and average shortest path (Szabó & Bene, 2015). Our focus is on the ties between the nodes of the network, evincing how the ties were distributed between the nodes and whether the distribution followed any specific patterns (see Appendix A). If the networks of media products were cohesive (Watts & Strogatz, 1998), we expected little or no difference between the location of the radical right media nodes and the place of mainstream media nodes. This finding would indicate that the radical right media outlets are highly integrated into the mainstream media sphere and function as important actors of the public sphere. In the case of core–periphery networks, we expected the radical right media nodes to be positioned at the periphery of the entire network; this result would entail that the populist radical right agenda remain at the fringes of the

public sphere. Alternatively, the radical right media nodes may form their own cluster characterized by dense in-group connections and few or no out-group ties; in this network architecture, we may conclude that the radical right media are the representatives of an alternative communication universe, with little impact on the mainstream media flow.

Data Collection and Coding

The study concentrates on a couple of heavily debated political issues in the election year 2014 in each country. Focusing on different issues within a limited time frame allows us to examine whether distinctive communicative situations provide different patterns of visibility for the populist radical right actors. Because communicative situations vary, the media visibility may change or, alternatively, may remain unchanged. The Issue Type 1 tested the visibility in a controversial domestic issue, which is rather neutral for the populist radical right;[2] it enabled us to assess the position of the populist radical right party in a "politics as usual" situation. In turn, the Issue Type 2 examined the changes in a communicative situation whereby populist radical right parties are positioned actively as promoters, initiating new political ideas or spearheading political maneuvers; it allowed us to map out the reconfigurations of media networks when populist radical right parties intensify their communication efforts with the hope of attracting as much public attention as possible. In other words, we wanted to observe whether the promotion of the populist radical right's own agenda modifies the structure of media networks and the position of radical right nodes therein. For this purpose, the Paks issue[3] and the Năstase issue[4] were selected as neutral communicative situations (Issue Type 1), while the Janiczák issue[5] and the Diaconu issue[6] were deemed as communication situations in which the populist radical right acted as promoter (Issue Type 2).

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[2] Criteria for issue selection: (1) the issue is a controversial one, opposing pro- and antigovernment forces; (2) the issue is not associated with populist radical right forces; (3) neither the populist radical right parties nor associated media introduce new arguments, new communicative tools, and techniques in the debate; and (4) neither the populist radical right parties nor associated media are excluded from the debate by any means.

[3] Paks nuclear power plant would be expanded with the help of Russian state-owned nuclear firm Rosatom, with Russian loans for financing the two new units, as agreed by Russian President Vladimir Putin and Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán in January 2014. Thousands protested the agreement, and the left-leaning opposition parties and organizations attempted to mobilize electoral supports around the issue.

[4] Former Prime Minister Adrian Năstase (Social Democrats) was tried and sentenced by the Romanian Supreme Court of Justice for taking bribes and for blackmail in January 2014. The Social Democrats claimed it was a politically instrumented case at the instigation of then acting right-wing president Traian Băsescu.

[5] Dávid Janiczák (Jobbik) was mayoral candidate in the November 2014 local elections in Ózd (midsized industrial city in northern Hungary). Janiczák's campaign and subsequent victory were heralded by Jobbik as milestones for the party's preparedness to govern Hungary.

[6] Bogdan Diaconu left the Social Democrats in August 2014 and founded the United Romania Party (*Partidul România Unită* [PRU]). The PRU is a radical right populist party with a stated political agenda to "regain Romania for Romanians."

Concerning data collection, first we made an *ex ante* calculation of the mainstream media products: These were the most read dailies (including tabloids) and online news portals. Additionally, we predefined a list of radical right media outlets (mostly online news portals), which were included in the analysis. Second, we collected the data with the help of keywords specific to each issue (see Table 1). Third, all quotations, references, and citations of or hyperlinks to other media products were coded as an outgoing tie (self-references excluded) if they signified published news items during the chosen time frame for data collection. Inspired by the chain referral techniques of sampling (Noy, 2007), we continuously expanded the data, adding those media outlets that were referred to by the ones already collected, social media platforms included (see Appendix B). In this manner, we aimed to reduce the sampling bias and provide as inclusive and cohesive a set of data as possible. Once saturation was achieved, four topical types of corpora were created, with a total of 707 articles.

Table 1. Summary of Data Collection.

Issue	No. of articles	Type of network	No. of media outlets involved in analysis	No. of nodes in the media networks	Keywords for advanced searches in sampled media products	Time frame for data collection (2014)
Paks issue	283	Reference	50	38	*Paks*, *Roszatom*, *atomerőmű* [nuclear plant]	January 14–28
		Framing	50	29		
Năstase issue	295	Reference	39	33	*Năstase*, *condamnat* [convicted], *Zambaccian*	January 5–26
		Framing	39	28		
Janiczák issue		Reference	44	22	*Janiczák*, *Ózd*, *választások* [mayoral election]	October 22–November 13
		Framing	44	24		
Diaconu issue		Reference	17	11	*Diaconu*, *Partidul România Unită* [United Romania Party], *demisie* [resignation]	August 20–September 10
		Framing	17	15		

Every news item was then systematically examined with the help of issue-specific codebooks. Codebook 1 contained instructions for data collection for the reference networks. In the reference networks, the architecture of the media sphere was calculated on incoming and outgoing ties: whenever a journalist writing an article (e.g., Media 1) cited the content of another article (e.g., Media 2), we connected the two media nodes in our analysis, and we consequently coded it as outgoing tie of Media 1 and incoming tie of Media 2. The more citations we found, the stronger the connection that was evaluated. For the framing networks, then, we conducted a qualitative preanalysis to identify the dominant issue-

specific interpretations that were employed in all selected media. These frames provided both neutral and partisan explanations and interpretations of the issues from the various perspectives of the parts involved. After labeling the issue-specific interpretative frames in Codebook 2, the total sample was recoded to map out the presence or absence of these frames in the analyzed media. If multiple frames were detected in an article, regardless of whether they were presented simultaneously or sequentially, the coders registered all frames to assess nuanced similarities as well as differences between analyzed media. During the network analysis, we connected the media to each other by the interpretative frames they employed when reporting on the chosen political issues (Issue Type 1; Issue Type 2).[7] The more similar framing activities were identified, the stronger the connection between the examined nodes was established. Coding was undertaken by the authors with the aid of two competent assistants. The results were then compared; whenever a discrepancy was detected, the research team discussed the issue and took a stance on it.[8] We used the igraph (Csárdi & Nepusz, 2006) and the tnet (Opsahl, 2009) packages for R, as well as the Ucinet 6 software (Borgatti, Everett, & Freeman, 2002) as software support for calculation, employing NetDraw to visualize the findings.

Mapping Out the Architecture of Reference Networks

Regarding the controversial domestic issue neutral to the populist radical right (Issue 1), which in a sense reveals the architecture of the media sphere in a "normal" political debate, the two networks differ from one another in terms of structure. Concerning the Paks issue, more media products referred to each other, and there were also more connections between them. However, the total number of references was smaller than that of the Năstase issue. When it comes to the situation in which the populist radical right actors were promoters (Issue 2), there is a somewhat similar pattern in the studied cases. More specifically, we found more nodes and more connections in the Hungarian data, though with a less dense network structure with significantly fewer nodes and ties (see Table 2). We detail these findings below.

Table 2. Characteristics of the Reference Networks.

		No. of nodes, total/after removal of isolated nodes	No. of connections	No. of references
Issue Type 1	Paks issue	50/38	54	112
	Năstase issue	39/33	76	98
Issue Type 2	Janiczák issue	44/22	31	46
	Diaconu issue	17/11	17	22

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[7] Let us say that both Media 1 and Media 2 apply Frame F1; Frame F1 is also present in the articles of Media 1 and Media 3, which additionally both employ Frame F2. In this situation, we coded it as a connection between Media 1 and Media 2. Also, Media 1 and Media 3 were linked together, though there is no tie between Media 2 and Media 3.

[8] We calculated the intercoder reliability using Krippendorff alpha (Krippendorff, 2004). This resulted in .79 for the reference networks and .80 for the framing network of both Issue 1 and Issue 2 in the Hungarian case, and .75 for the reference networks and .64 for the framing network of Issue 1 and .87 for the Issue 2 in the Romanian case.

Comparing the Paks Issue With the Năstase issue

In both cases, the ties indicate a network in which web-based, non-web-based, and mixed media products connect strongly to one another, evidence that both online and offline media channels are important components of their respective media sphere. We noticed that online as well as print media referred heavily to broadcast media, but these broadcast media alone did not alter the way these networks developed. Looking more closely at the Hungarian case, there are no tabloids in the Paks issue network. Apart from one (szegedma.hu), the local media outlets are also missing. We interpret this lack of incoming and outgoing ties as a separation of the issue coverage by the mainstream media from that of the tabloid dailies and local press (see Figure 1). The networks identified in the Paks issue show signs of slight polarization (modularity = .14). Two rather distinctive clusters (modularity = .27), besides other nonclustered media, are discerned. Both clusters cross the lines of political orientation of the media outlets, and, interestingly enough, radical right media are represented in each. In our view, this indicates that the radical right joined the main direction of public debate.
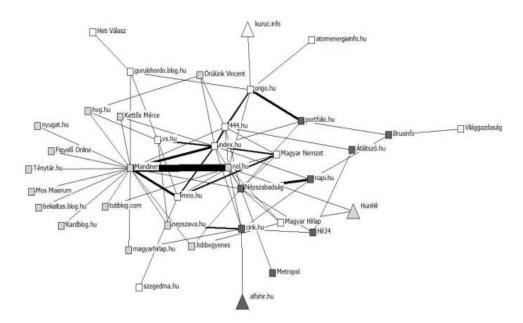

Figure 1. The Paks issue reference network (light gray = Community 1; dark gray = Community 2; white = no community; square = mainstream media; triangle = radical right media).

For the Paks issue, we registered the presence of three radical right media products. There are not many references connected to any of these three media products: Both alfahir.hu and kuruc.info refer to one, while hunhir.info refers to two other media, though they are not referred to by any other media. The four registered references that come from the radical right media are not identical; all of them refer to different media. As a result, the patterns of reference of the three radical media are different from each

other. Basically, they refer to media that are often referred to by other actors too (e.g., cink.hu, origo.hu, and nol.hu). However, only hunhir.info refers to one of the most referenced media in the network (nol.hu). In addition, hunhir.info refers to Magyar Hírlap, which is only referred to by one other medium. As such, the radical right media seem to be positioned at the periphery of a slightly polarized network: While they are not referred to by other media, in some cases, they refer to some important mainstream media even though they ignore the most important ones. Their peripheral position is also strengthened by the fact that radical right media do not refer to each other either.

In the Romanian case, the value of maximum modularity is nearly zero (.017) for the Năstase issue; consequently, there is no clear polarization in the network. The network is not structured around a core–periphery architecture either. Metrics indicate that while the average shortest distance is significantly smaller than the expectable value, the clustering coefficient is about the same as the expectable value. In other words, the network appears to be rather cohesive despite the low number of references (see Figure 2). Looking more closely, only one radical right medium is registered in the Năstase issue reference network (buciumul.ro). There are no references to this medium by any other media, and buciumul.ro did not refer to any other media referred to by the other eight actors. However, it referred to a medium that was not referred to by any other media (cotidianul.ro). We interpreted this as a position of isolation of the radical right media in an otherwise cohesive network. Consequently, it entails a low level of visibility of the radical right media in the wider network.
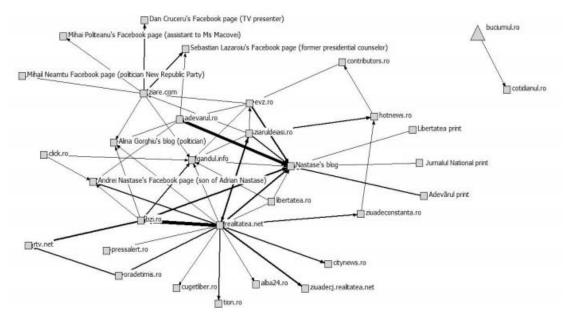

Figure 2. The Năstase issue reference network
(square = mainstream media; triangle = radical right media).

Comparing the Janiczák Issue With the Diaconu Issue

When it comes to issues in which the radical right media outlets were in a communicative situation of promoting a populist radical right agenda in the media spheres in Hungary and Romania, data indicate that there are fewer nodes in both media networks than the previously analyzed issues. We also noticed a lower density of connections, which means that fewer media outlets produced a smaller number of references than in the previous issues in both countries. In other words, the topics promoted by radical right media received considerably less general media attention than the issues of general political concern (see Table 2).

In the Hungarian case, the Janiczák issue displayed a cohesive structure (see Figure 3) very close to the small world network ideal typology, as indicated by the clustering coefficient (.48) and the average shortest distance metric (relatively low 1.09). The maximum modularity score of the edge-betweenness community detection algorithm (score 0) confirms this. In terms of structure, we found no evidence of a core–periphery architecture in the network. Regarding the position of radical right media, the Janiczák issue illustrates a strong capacity for clustering. On the one hand, the radical right media, in general, proved to be very active, with 55% of all references being initiated by them. On the other hand, these media outlets received considerable attention, being referred to in 57% of citations. Moreover, they seem to form a tightly knit cluster, with 46% of the references being coded in the circle of radical right media nodes, though these were not separated from the mainstream media nodes. As a case in point, both radical right media outlets kuruc.info and alfahir.hu initiated outgoing ties to mainstream media. Even more so, alfahir.hu received incoming ties from outside the radical right media universe (e.g., from index.hu, TV2.hu, and Mandiner). This seems to indicate that for the Janiczák issue, the radical right media occupied an integrated position in the media sphere in Hungary.

The Diaconu issue proved much more difficult to analyze because of the small numbers of nodes and ties. The network structure is not cohesive, as indicated by the average shortest distance metric (2.16). Concomitantly, there are no tightly knit groups either, as shown by the clustering coefficient value (.54). These notwithstanding, there seems to be a key node in the network, given that 54% of references were made to Bogdan Diaconu's own Facebook page. In our view, the Diaconu network is a version of the diffuse media network model, given that most references have a node of central importance that maintains the network's structure. Apart from Bogdan Diaconu's Facebook page, the other radical right outlets were positioned outside of the network as fully isolated nodes (see Figure 4). The moderate level of attention and citation activity in the Romanian media sphere resonates with previous observations concerning the position of the radical right in the wider public discourse: Populist radical right actors remained somehow below the radar of general public concern in the analyzed period. Also, there were no signs of the creation of a tightly knit radical right media universe in Romania, unlike the Hungarian case, where alfahir.hu, kuruc.info, N1TV, *Barikád*, and *Hazai Pálya* interacted closely with the social media platforms of populist radical right politicians.
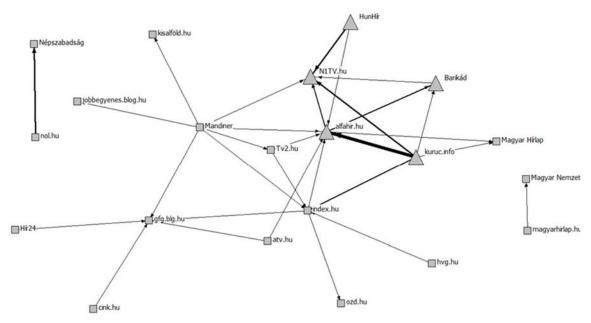
Figure 3. The Janiczák issue reference network
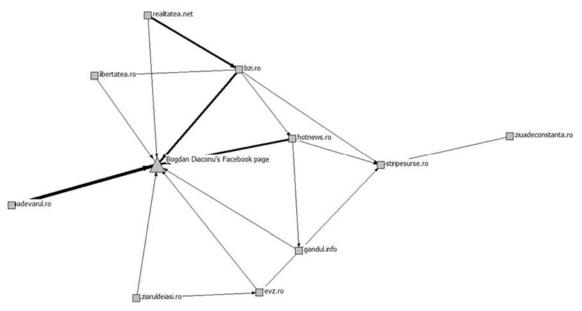*(square = mainstream media; triangle = radical right media).*

Figure 4. The Diaconu issue reference network
(square = mainstream media; triangle = radical right media).

Mapping Out the Architecture of Framing Networks

In this section, we discuss the findings of our analysis of the framing networks identified in the two countries, making use of the same comparative grid, issue by issue, as in the analysis of the reference networks mentioned earlier. In Table 3, we centralized the analysis of framing activities for each issue, country by country, detailing the different explanations and interpretations for each selected issue.

Table 3. Summary of Data Collection on the Framing Networks.

Issue	Frame	In how many media outlets does the frame appear?	How many times was the frame registered?	Frame appears in total visible interpretations (%)	No. of nodes
Paks issue	F1: It decreases Hungary's energy dependency	20	64	13	29
	F2: It increases Hungary's dependency on Russia	20	89	18	
	F3: Overall energy costs will decrease	19	105	21	
	F4: Overall energy costs will increase	15	40	8	
	F5: There are no feasible alternatives to this deal	15	37	7	
	F6: Deal done without consultation, without transparency	26	101	32	
Năstase issue	F1: The conviction is political revenge	26	114	43	33
	F2: A success in the fight against corruption	16	55	21	
	F3: Năstase's good qualities irrespective of corruption	15	43	16	
	F4: A new political landscape emerging	12	33	12	
	F5: Romania's image abroad is strengthened	12	22	8	
Janiczák issue	F1: Jobbik won because of a good campaign	18	29	18	24
	F2: A result of the last four years' local government	13	24	15	
	F3: Only Jobbik understands people of Ózd	10	17	11	
	F4: A new beginning for Ózd	14	31	19	
	F5: Jobbik's win was a fraud	18	60	37	

Diaconu issue	F1: Social-democrats concede to Hungarian minority party's pressure	14	21	34	15
	F2: An inconvenient politician	12	20	32	
	F3: A pro-Moscow politician	9	12	19	
	F4: PRU a new party for Romanians	4	6	10	
	F5: The economic well-being of Romanians	2	3	5	

Comparing the Paks Issue With the Năstase issue

For the Paks issue, we identified 29 media, which were interconnected through interpretation frames, and for the Năstase issue, we found a total of 33 media. For the Paks issue, there was only one radical right media outlet (kuruc.info), whereas for the Năstase issue, there were four radical right outlets (buciumul.ro, ziartricolorul.ro, magazincritic.ro, and *România Mare*). Overall, however, these media outlets did not appear very active: kuruc.info, buciumul.ro, and magazincritic.ro employed only one frame, whereas ziartricolorul.ro presented three frames, and *România Mare* presented two different frames (but at three different times). The metrics revealed that both framing networks in Hungary and Romania have rather cohesive structures (see Figures 5 and 6). The framing network of the Paks issue has nonetheless a more integrated architecture than that of the Năstase issue. In both networks, modularity is close to 0. No polarization was detected for the Năstase issue. The data suggest that the media outlets, regardless of their general political leaning to the left or the right on the political spectrum, provided visibility for all the dominant interpretations of the covered topics. In this context, despite the heavy political parallelization and biased political coverage that characterize the media spheres in both Hungary and Romania, the mainstream media still seem to be displaying similar lines of political argumentation. It remains nonetheless unclear whether the radical right media outlets are open for alternate explanations, or the other way around, if the mainstream media platforms pay any attention to the discursive patterns of the radical right media.

On closer inspection of the radical right nodes in the Paks issue, we noticed that only one radical right media outlet (kuruc.info) is part of the wider framing network. Kuruc.info in fact applied frame F1, which appears to be rather marginal in the wider media coverage of the issue (13% of the total occurrences; for details, see Figure 5). This notwithstanding, we noticed that the visibility of frame F1 connects kuruc.info to the progovernment center-right media outlets, which employed the frames F1, F3, and F5. This seems to suggest that although the framing activity of the radical right media was somewhat different than that of the mainstream media, there is a certain similarity in the manner of framing the issue between the radical right and progovernment center-right media.
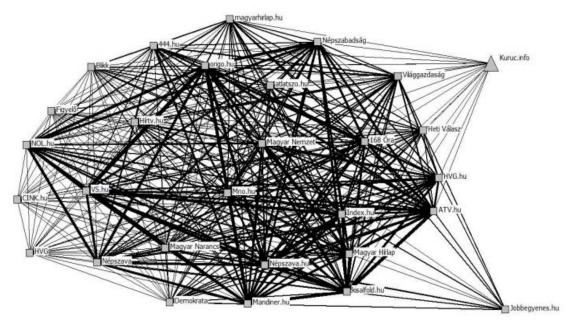
Figure 5. The Paks issue framing network (square = mainstream media; triangle = radical right media; normalized network, only the strongest connections).

Similarly, in Romania, the radical right media did not play an active role in framing the Năstase issue. Despite that, the four radical right media that were present in the analysis employed eight times four different frames altogether. Like kuruc.info in Hungary, buciumul.ro and magazincritic.ro made visible only one frame, while ziartricolorul.ro used three frames, and *România Mare* applied two frames (three times). In terms of community division, the radical right media appear to belong to both clusters. This is the case because in the Năstase issue, the difference in terms of the rate of attention paid to the issue was more significant than the difference between the applied frames. Like other media outlets, buciumul.ro and magazincritic.ro barely dealt with the issue, employing only the interpretation that dominated the whole discourse (frame F1). This interpretation was also employed by ziartricolorul.ro, which nonetheless also made visible two other frames (the second most popular, F2, and the second least popular, F4). *România Mare*, as Figure 6 shows, functions as a bridge between the two clusters. This is because in *România Mare*, frame F1 was dominant (appearing twice), but frame F3 was used once as well. Frame F3 was not employed by any other radical right media outlet, although it was the third most popular frame in the whole discourse (16% of the total occurrences). In the raw network, ziartricolorul.ro had the strongest connection to bzi.ro and gandul.info. These mainstream media outlets, although they employed frame F1 most often, used frame F3 as well, whereas they employed frames F2 and F4 only once. In turn, the normalized network revealed more about this matter. It showed that ziartricolorul.ro was most similar to ziare.com and hotnews.ro in terms of used frames. Although these mainstream media outlets made use of many more frames, the rates of employing the frames were similar to those of the

radical right media. In turn, the radical right *România Mare* seemed to have the strongest connection to pressalert.ro and Evenimentul Zilei.
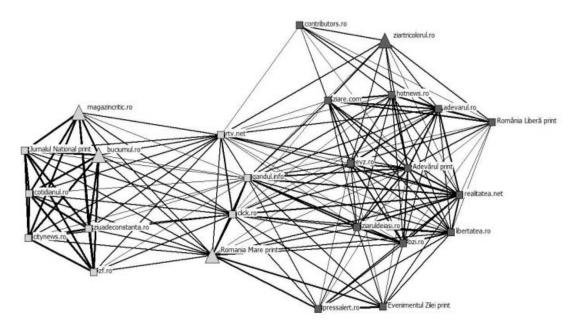

Figure 6. The Năstase issue framing network (light gray = Cluster 1; dark gray = Cluster 2; square = mainstream media; triangle = radical right media; normalized network, only the strongest connections).

Comparing the Janiczák Issue With the Diaconu issue

Similar to the results in the case of reference networks, the Issue Type 2 in the two countries revealed two networks with fewer nodes and less dense connections than the Issue Type 1 discussed earlier. Unlike the cases of the Paks issue and the Năstase issue, metrics indicated that both Issue Type 2 created polarized framing network structures. In other words, the media spheres in the two countries were divided by the different framing of media outlets. Somewhat surprisingly, the general political leaning of the analyzed media, either to the left or to the right on the political spectrum, did not provide any adequate explanation for the division thus observed.

In the Janiczák issue, for instance, the modularity score for the whole network is .21, whereas the one for the most tightly knit group is .31. In addition, the three clusters of the Janiczák issue networks vary significantly in size (see Figure 7). In this context, the radical right media were active both in terms of references as described earlier as well as in terms of applied frames: Three radical right media employed almost a third of all the identified frames. Among these radical right media, alfahir.hu was the most active in terms of usage of frames (27 times), almost twice as many as the second placed media

(index.hu, 15 times). Hunhir.info was placed third, and kuruc.info shared a fourth place in terms of the number of used frames per media outlet. All radical right media employed frame F5, and F4 was used by these media more often than the average. At the same time, hunhir.info did not employ frame F1 at all, and the other two radical right media used F1 similarly to the average.
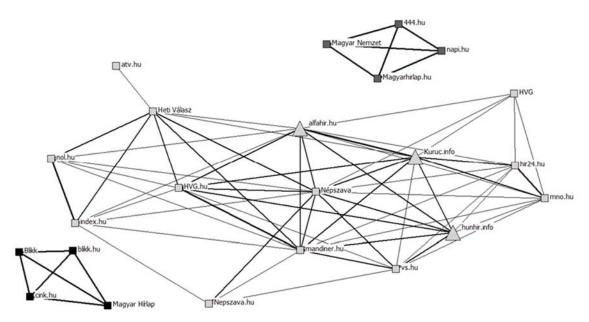

Figure 7. The Janiczák issue framing network (light gray = Cluster 1; dark gray = Cluster 2; black = Cluster 3; square = mainstream media; triangle = radical right media; normalized network, only the strongest connections).

The Diaconu issue in Romania showed a somewhat similar framing network structure to the Janiczák issue. Here the network appeared as rather integrated, with a modularity score of .15. Looking closer at the strongest connections, we could differentiate three clusters (modularity = .26; see Figure 8). In Cluster 1 and Cluster 2, we did not find any radical right media. We identified, however, a radical right node in Cluster 3, which consists of buciumul.ro. cugetliber.ro, and tion.ro. The other examined radical right media outlets (*România Mare*; ziartricolorul.ro) remain isolated. Regarding the frames employed, frame F1 was by far the most used, by both Cluster 1 and Cluster 3, while Cluster 2 employed most frequently frame F3 and, to a lesser extent, frame F1, which was also used by the radical media outlet of Cluster 3 (buciumul.ro).
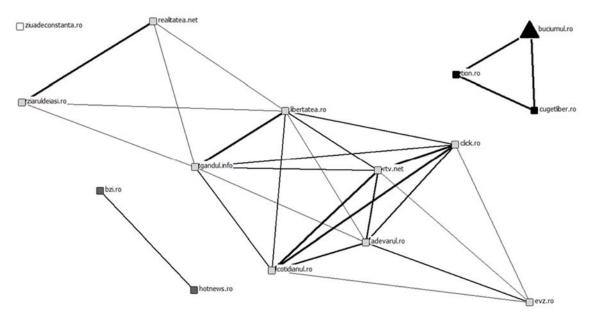
***Figure 8. The Diaconu issue framing network (light gray = Cluster 1; dark gray
= Cluster 2; black = Cluster 3; square = mainstream media; triangle = radical
right media; normalized network, only the strongest connections).***

The findings for the Janiczák issue and the Diaconu issue indicate that the framing activities of the radical right media play a role in their involvement in the wider media spheres in their respective countries. The more active the radical right media outlets are in covering and interpreting an issue, the greater the chances that they attract the attention of mainstream media and gain visibility in the public discourse, as the Hungarian case suggests. At the same time, the Romanian case illustrates how the deliberate self-isolation of the radical right media from the mainstream is crucial to explaining why they failed to break through the media quarantine.

Conclusions

In the present study, we aimed to contribute to the wider literature on the media attention to the populist radical right parties and discourses in Europe (Aalberg & de Vreese, 2016; Birenbaum & Villa, 2003; Bos et al., 2010; Ellinas, 2010; Koopmans & Muis, 2009; Udris, 2012; Vliegenthart et al., 2012), and in a larger perspective, to bring nuance to the emerging literature on the "alt-right" media's successful radicalization of the Republican party in the United States (Barkun, 2017; Jutel, 2017), by examining the visibility of radical right media products in the network structure of the media spheres in Hungary and Romania. The methodological novelty of the study—the network analysis across different issues in a comparative perspective—highlights new pathways for unveiling the relational mechanisms underpinning the radicalization of the public sphere. Our point of departure was that visibility represents the keystone among the discursive opportunities afforded to populist radical right mobilization: The more

integrated the radical right media are into the wider media network, the more visible in the public sphere are the populist radical right discourses disseminated with the help of these radical right media. In empirical terms, then, dense and strong interaction ties between all media outlets are evidence that the radical right media is progressively integrated into the wider media sphere, and, consequently, the radical right media have become important, legitimate, and persuasive media presences in the public sphere. The comparative analysis of the architecture of reference networks and framing networks in Hungary and Romania enabled us to analyze two different situations concerning the integration of radical right media into the mainstream (see Table 4).

Table 4. Summary of Findings.

	Structure of the network	Position of the radical right media outlets
Reference network		
Paks issue	Polarized	Integrated: fringe position
Năstase issue	Cohesive	Isolated
Janiczák issue	Cohesive	Integrated: strong cluster of radical right nodes
Diaconu issue	Diffuse	One outlet is integrated: key position; others are isolated
Framing network		
Paks issue	Cohesive	Integrated: fringe
Năstase issue	Cohesive	Isolated
Janiczák issue	Polarized	Integrated: strong cluster of radical right nodes
Diaconu issue	Polarized	One outlet is integrated; others are isolated

In the Hungarian case, we conclude that the radical right media outlets are an integral part of both the architecture of reference networks and the framing networks in the public sphere. The Hungarian case shows that, although in a fringe position in the wider network, the radical right media can form a tightly knit cluster within the wider media space, which we interpret as an early sign of creating a distinctive media universe for the radical right. Comparing the two examined issues, we argue that the specific architecture of the media system should be considered when assessing the diffusion of radicalization in the public discourse. It seems that populist radical right forces thrive in the context of a polarized media landscape, but only if there is a loyal and supportive radical right media ecosystem around them. Data suggest a more nuanced picture when it comes to how the political orientation of the media products correlates with the interactions between the radical right media nodes and the mainstream outlets. Even though we noticed that the radical right media employed a similar framing of the Issue Type 1 as the progovernment center-right media, we did not find strong evidence to confirm that progovernment center-right media nodes play the role of bridgeheads in the integration of the radical right media into the wider media sphere. We assess that in Hungary, even though there are media opportunities favorable for populist radical right discourses, Jobbik's political legitimacy is reliant on the radical right media universe crystallizing within the wider media network.

In the case of Romania, the radical right media are situated in a decidedly isolated position, with the notable exception of those communicative situations when populist radical right parties are positioned actively as promoters, as in the Issue Type 2. Even more so, the radical right media are even disconnected among themselves, a pattern we discerned in both types of media networks. Therefore, in Romania, there are sensibly fewer media opportunities for populist radical right politics, the fragmentation of radical right media illustrating the exclusion of populist radical right discourses from the public sphere. This indicates unsuccessful political communication on behalf of the populist radical right forces in Romania. Comparing the two examined issues shows that, unlike in Hungary, there are hardly any signs of an emerging populist radical right media universe in Romania so far. Influential populist radical right platforms may appear, as happened for the Diaconu issue; however, the general observation is that the analyzed radical right media tend to keep a distance from the mainstream media, but equally from other radial right media. These findings confirm in a sense the previous critical assessments of the Romanian public sphere as already saturated by a casual use of intolerant and discriminatory framing (Cinpoes, 2015; Norocel, 2016), which in turn reduces the appeal of similar populist radical right discourses.

The innovative character of the method applied in this study notwithstanding, a few methodological reflections are necessary. To assess the visibility of populist radical right actors in the media systems in Hungary and Romania, we examined the media coverage of two types of controversial domestic issues per country. As observed, the most common political experiences for populist radical right actors are either to react to an issue gaining traction in the wider media on a topic outside their political agenda, or, alternatively, to promote and react to an issue that may be beneficial for increasing their political support. This is not to say, however, that there are no other types of issues that would be worth examining. A case in point would be an issue whereby the populist radical right actors are portrayed negatively or put in a defensive position in relation to their political opponents. Thus, the probability of a different architecture for the network may never be excluded: If the media network would be organized around other issues, the analysis may shed light on other patterns of media visibility.

In addition, because of space limitations, the interactions we have identified could not be contextualized in much greater detail. With this said, further qualitative analyses are needed to examine the tone of framing networks—more clearly, whether media outlets quote, refer to, or cite radical right media products in a positive or negative manner. In addition, empirical analyses could build on the present study and investigate to what extent media interactions contribute to identity construction within the populist radical right. We also argue that the role of journalistic culture in enabling/denying media visibility for populist radical right actors deserves further scholarly attention. In a wider perspective, our results on the integration of radical right media into the public sphere provide fresh insights into how "fake news" influences mainstream politics. On this matter, there are reasons to assume that the visibility of partisan media outlets increases the chances that politically biased and/or fabricated news is disseminated into the public sphere, an avenue of research that may be fruitfully connected to similar analyses of recent developments in the United States and around the world.
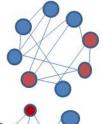
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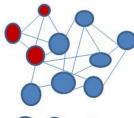
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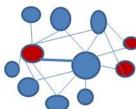## Appendix A. Network Structures

We designed five typical network structures and defined the location of radical right nodes therein to compare the results of our study. In the process, we evaluated all scores to the benchmark values of the metrics that served as indicators of the networks' structure and the position of radical right media nodes. Figure A1 illustrates the indicators and the benchmark values for each type of network.
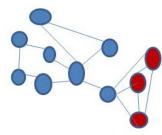
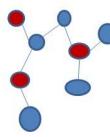| Cluster-free network indicators	Conditions (with benchmark values)
Modularity	low (< 0.3)
Global clustering coefficient	not high (< EV+2SD)
Average shortest path	low (< EV+2SD*; < EV+1SD**)
Fitness	not high (< 0.5)

Small-world network indicators	Conditions (with benchmark values)
Modularity	low (< 0.3)
Global clustering coefficient	high (> EV+2SD*; > EV+1SD**)
Average shortest path	low (< EV+2SD*; < EV+1SD**)
Fitness	not high (< 0.5)

Core – periphery indicators	Conditions (with benchmark values)
Modularity	low (< 0.3)
Global clustering coefficient	-
Average shortest path	-
Fitness	high (~ 0.5)
+ density of blocks between core and periphery	+ QAP test to assess the similarity of the examined network to the ideal type of the core-periphery structure
+ validation of the separation	

Polarized network indicators	Conditions (with benchmark values)
Modularity	high (> 0.3 and > EV+2SD*; > EV+1SD**)
Global clustering coefficient	probably high (it is not a condition)
Average shortest path	-.
Fitness	not high (< 0.5)

Diffuse network indicators	Conditions (with benchmark values)
Modularity	low (< 0.3)
Global clustering coefficient	low or in middle range (< EV+ 1 SD)
Average shortest path	high (> EV+2SD*; > EV+1SD*)
Fitness	not high (>0.5)

*Figure A1. Predefined types of networks in media sphere and measurements. EV = expected values (average of 1000 random networks); SD = standard deviation (average of 1000 random networks); * = strong condition; ** = weak condition; blue nodes = mainstream media outlets; red nodes = radical right media outlets.*

Appendix B. List of Media Outlets in the Samples

Hungarian Sample

Mainstream media:

- Dailies and weeklies: Blikk, Bors, Demokrata, HVG, Heti Válasz, Magyar Hírlap, Magyar Narancs, Magyar Nemzet, Metropol, Népszabadság, Népszava, Világgazdaság.
- Online news portals, blogs: 444.hu, atlatszo.hu, atv.hu, bekialtas.blog.hu, Blikk online, Bors online, brux.info, cink.hu, Figyelő online, hir24.hu, hirado.hu, hvg.hu, index.hu, jobbegyenes.hu, kardblog.hu, kettosmerce.hu, kisalfold.hu, magyarhirlap.hu, mandiner.hu, mno.hu, mosmaiorum.hu, napi.hu, nepszava.hu, nol.hu, nyugat.hu, origo.hu, Örülünk Vincent blog, ozd.hu, portfolio.hu, szegedma.hu, tenytar.hu, tutiblog.com, vs.hu.

Radical right media (both print and online): alfahir.hu, *Barikád*, derestv.hu, *Hazai Pálya*, Hunhir.info, kuruc.info, n1tv.hu

Romanian Sample

Mainstream media:

- Dailies and weeklies: Adevărul, Click, Evenimentul zilei, Jurnalul Naţional, Libertatea, România liberă, Ziarul Lumina.
- Online news portals, blogs: adevarul.ro, Adrian Năstase blog, alba24.ro, antena3.ro, bzi.ro, citynews.ro, click.ro, cotidianul.ro, cugetiliber.ro, evz.ro, gandul.info, hotnews.ro, libertatea.ro, oradetimis.oradestiri.ro, pressalert.ro, realitatea.net, rtv.net, stiripesurse.ro, tion.ro, zf.ro, ziare.ro, ziaruldeiasi.ro, ziuadecj.realitatea.net, ziuadeconstanta.ro.

Radical right media (both print and online): buciumul.ro, glasul.info, magazincritic.ro, *România Mare*, tricolorul.ro, ziaristionline.ro, ziarulromaniamare.ro.