Local parties, local ideas

An ideological approach to understanding independent local parties in the Netherlands

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Abstract

Independent local parties have been on the rise in recent elections in the Netherlands, Germany and Scandinavian countries. Despite previous predictions that they would disappear, these small political parties, only competing on the local level of government, have persisted. New ones have even appeared. Knowledge on their ideology is limited, but they are sometimes referred to as populist or at least more populist then national parties. Theorizing that dictionary methods do not differentiate between close but distinct ideologies, 'localism' is proposed as an alternative ideological characterization. Looking at Dutch local parties in the 2018 election, a content-analysis is performed on party programs to test whether these parties are ideologically better identified as populist or localist. Taking 29 cases, we find that no local parties are truly populist, while a few are localist. Additionally, we find that some local parties mix morality-references with community-centrism. Localism centers around a strong connection to the local community combined with a perceived difference between local and national politics. We also conclude that populism might be better conceived as centering around the relationship between the people and the elite, rather than the people or the elite themselves.

Independent local parties; populism; localism; ideology; content-analysis

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1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

If one were to look at a pie-chart showing the results of the 2018 Dutch local elections, it could easily be concluded that a single party has attracted nearly a third of the vote. Yet again it has increased its share of the vote, and leaving other parties far behind. However, this is not the case: this third does not represent a single party, but a collection of over at least 830 unaffiliated and independent parties known as 'Local Parties' (Kiesraad, as cited in Van Ostaaijen, 2019, p.8). The rise of the local party is not just happening in the Netherlands, but in Germany, Norway and Sweden as well (Otjes, 2020, p.92).

These 'independent local parties', unaffiliated with any national party and competing solely in a single municipality, were once considered relics of a pre-politicized world, competing in regions national parties did not bother to join, out of strategic reasons or simply because the region in question was too small, too thinly populated or just too insignificant to be worth the costs (Rokkan & Valen, 1962).

Once understood as a mostly regional, Catholic phenomenon (De Bruin, 2018), Dutch local parties have survived the changes of Dutch society and made a stunning comeback (Boogers, Lucardie & Voerman, 2007, p.6). In the last local elections, local parties combined received 28.6% of the vote, far out-polling any national party. At their low-point in 1986, they received only 12% of the vote (ibid). Naturally, the comeback and subsequent resurgence of local parties have led to a renewed interest in local parties. Local parties, however, have been notoriously difficult to properly categorize apart from the general understanding that they do not form an coherent group. Ironically, because of the difficulty in identifying different kinds of local parties, most research continues to group them together as the sole trait they unquestionably share is their localness (Boogers et al, 2007; Van Ostaaijen, 2019). Most research, in the end, tries to say something about *all* local parties in general in comparison to *all* national parties, even when recognizing there are different kinds of local parties (Boogers et al, 2007; Van Ostaaijen, 2019). The lack of knowledge with regards to their ideology and the question of why they exist and grow are directly connected and offer an interesting puzzle.

Of course, there has been research on this subject. One conclusion that is being frequently drawn is that local parties are more ideologically populist than their national counterparts, both individually (tending to be more populist on average than national party chapters) (Van

Ostaaijen, 2019) and as a collective group (A larger share of local parties are populist) (Boogers at al., 2007). However, following Aaberg[1] and Ahlberger's (2015) suggestion that local parties can, and ought to, be understood amongst different ideological cleavages than their national counterparts, this thesis seeks to establish an alternative identification. We put forward the idea that some local parties should and can be ideologically better identified as *localist.* Localism can and has been successfully conceptualized into an ideological definition. Basing ourself on previous authors on this subject like Boogers at al. (2007), Aars and Rinkjøb (2011) and Copus and Wingfield (2005), we propose a new conceptualization of the term 'localism'. Localism, we argue, consists of a set of ideas on local governance and local society that is distinct from both populism and pluralism. Localism centers around the idea of the local community, and argues that the nature of the local community makes local politics distinct from national politics.

The conceptual closeness of the populist 'people' and the localist 'community', combined with the ignoring of the difference between anti-elitism (a very broad concept) and anti-partisan sentiments (a comparatively narrow one) has led to the misidentification of many localist parties as populist because of the use of dictionary methods that do not take context into account (Gevers 2016; von Harenberg, 2016). Dictionary methods have been frequently used to determine the ideology of (local) parties but, as we will show, suffer from issues with their internal validity based on their coding. We will not only establish what the core concepts of localism are, but also show that some local parties adhere to this ideology.

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[1] Aaberg's name is written with the Scandinavian 'over-ring a'. When this letter is not available, it is recommended that the writer uses 'aa' instead. We follow this suggestion.

1.2 Central Research Problem

Nowadays, most local councils in western European countries like Norway, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands consist of councilors belonging to national parties. They usually, though not always, sit in combination with a small group of independent, nonaffiliated councilors or councilors belonging to local parties. Rokkan and Valen (1962) considered the gradual replacement of local parties by national party chapters an ongoing process. They called this a process of '(party) politicization', in which local politics became dominated by the national party system (1962, p.112). As more national parties opted to enter local elections for mostly organizational reasons., local politics started to resemble national politics and the local lists were bound to disappear, from relevancy if not from all existence (Rokkan & Valen, 1962, p.120; Aars & Rinkjøb, 2005, p.162). But despite nearly three decades having passed since this theory was introduced, local parties were still present in the 1990s and early 2000s. In general, their persistence was generally considered not to be in conflict with the theory of party politicization as their combined share of the vote was in constant decline. Instead, the local parties that remained were considered 'left-overs, only showing the process was just not entirely done yet (Aaberg & Ahlberger, 2015, p.813). However, their decline reversed in the last twenty years. New local parties came come into existence (ibid.) and they significantly improved their collective share of the vote (Boogers. Lucardie & Voerman, 2007, p.6). Rather than declining to an eventual disappearance, local parties are seemingly here to stay.

Why then, do local parties still exist? It has generally been attempted to explain their existence by the same explanations used for the existence of national parties, such as cultural, structural or actor-oriented explanations (Aaberg & Ahlberger, 2015, p.817). From the supply-side perspective, there is some evidence that local lists compete for voters that are, both nationally and locally, disappointed or discontent with the national parties (Boogers et al, 2007, p.6). The existence of local parties gave these angry voters a chance to vote for something else than the national parties. This view is shared by Otjes, who shows in his demand-side survey research that many local-party-voters vote that way due to being unhappy with the national parties or because the national party of their choice is not present (2018, p.305). However, it has never been made clear what actually *fuels* this discontent or what it actually means in practice (Aaberg & Ahlberger, 2015, p.817), or why there are so many different types of local parties that clearly do not all appeal to the same kind of 'discontented' voters (Boogers et al., 2007, p.12).

The question why local parties came into existence and still exist ties directly into the question of how local parties are to be categorized, either as their own party family or into party families that exist on the national level. Ideology, along with sociologic origin, has been identified as the best way of creating meaningful party family categorization (Mudde & Mair, 1998). If we can say what ideology a party adheres to, we can not only say something about the party itself, but also explain why it exists and gains votes. From the perspective of the supply side, parties come into existence when certain issues or ideology are not yet represented in the political arena and political actors feel they can capitalize on that 'empty space' (Zons, 2013, p.919). On the demand side, voters are likely to support such attempts if the electoral options available to them are unsatisfying or have failed them and if there is a large degree of voters willing to change their preference (Lago & Martinez, 2011, p.16).

Understanding local parties as populist is an example of applying to the local level the same explanation we use to explain the existence of national parties. In recent years, despite significant *national* electoral results for populist parties in the Netherlands such as the Party for Freedom (PVV) or Forum for Democracy (FvD) (Rooduijn et al., 2019), these parties have generally failed to or not even attempted to compete in local elections. It is possible that, seeing this lack of populist parties in their municipalities, 'local' populists form their own. Local parties can thus be understood as 'filling the gap', allowing populists to vote for a local populist party in local elections, while remaining with the national populist party in the other elections.

Empirically, the claim is not without merits. Boogers, Lucardie & Voerman study local party programs and claim that as much as a third of all local parties in the Netherlands can be classified as populist (2007, pp.17-18). Using dictionary-methods to study party programs, Von Harenberg finds local parties to be more populist than national party chapters (2016, p.3) and Gevers finds that local parties have become increasingly populist the last decade (2016, p.72). All these authors use an ideological definition of populism, though they operationalize the concept in different ways.

However, an alternative understanding has been proposed by Aaberg and Ahlberger (2015). They suggest that 'local' discontent does not necessarily relate to the same type of ideological cleavages as the national level (2015, p.817). Instead of a national 'rationality', local parties have a local 'rationality'. While still ideologically competing with other parties, local parties do not necessarily adhere to an ideology that is nationally relevant or even present (ibid.). This ideology is called 'localism'. Aaberg and Ahlberger (ibid.) argue that the discontent

people feel with national parties while voting locally are not causes, but symptoms. These symptoms show a fundamentally different way of looking at society and politics compared to the national level. They continue to write that the cause of the rise of new local parties might be explained by the extensive mergers of municipalities both in the Netherlands and in Sweden (Aaberg & Ahlberger, 2015, p.822). These mergers constituted an altering and re-negotiations of local/nation-state relations. In this process, local parties can be seen an expression of dissent to the national-level parties *in relation to the locality* (ibid., p.818). The same logic of success that applies to populist local parties applies here; if voters feel disappointed with the current options or their demands (in this case, the discontent concerning the mergers) have not been satisfied, new parties are likely to be formed that satisfy those demands (Lago & Martinez, 2011, p.16).

The reason we are comparing localism against populism and not against any other ideology is twofold. For one, as we will show, both can be understood as a thin-centered ideology which makes them methodological equals. Second, because of their thin-centered nature, they have a limited amount of conceptual parts, they are both relatively easy to identify and compare. But additionally, and perhaps even more significantly, the core concepts of localism, while different, are easily confused with those of populism. This, we believe, has led to 'false positive' high populist scores when party programs are studied with methods that do not control for localism. By clearly defining the core concepts of localism as a purely ideological concept and comparing it to populism, this thesis seeks to clear up the confusion. In doing so, we will establish localism as a thin-centered ideology in its own right and validate the 'local rationality'-understanding proposed by Aaberg and Ahlberger (2015). This brings us to our central research question:

Are local parties in the Netherlands better ideologically categorized as populist or localist?

Next, we will expand on the academic and societal relevance of our research question. This will be followed by our theoretic framework. Here we will first show the different ways it has been attempted to categorize different local parties, why an ideological distinction is possible and why it makes sense. We will subsequently discuss the different definitions, both ideological and non-ideological, of populism and localism. We will operationalize these definitions into a coding scheme that will be used to analyze party programs, which will be explained further in our methods chapter. We will show the results of this analysis and expand on our findings. Finally, we will reach a conclusion and discuss its implications with regards to our understanding of local parties, as well as recommendations for further research.

1.3 Societal and Academic Relevance

The growing presence of local parties has led to local councils becoming more and more fragmented with more parties having fewer seats each than in previous decades (Van Ostaaijen, 2019). In the Netherlands, local executives (*Colleges*) consist of the nationally-appointed mayor and council-appointed executive officers known as '*Wethouders'*. Members of the executive cannot simultaneously be councilors and it is not necessary for executives to be members of a party. However, these executives are effectively always backed up by a coalition of parties holding, collectively, a majority of seats in the council. As a result of more and more parties entering the council, the councils are more fragmented. Consequently, coalitions consist of more parties than they used to be, increasing the risk for potential conflict (Schulz & Frissen, 2017, p.18). Additionally, fragmentation can potentially lead to different styles of governance and a different coalition-opposition government (Schulz & Frissen, 2017, p.35).

As a result of both fragmentation and the local party seats increase, more local parties are part of governing coalition than ever before. As of 2018, 361 local parties are part of a governing coalition, and 267 of the current 335 municipalities have a governing coalition with at least one local party, 25 more than after the previous local elections (Van Ostaaijen, 2019, p.34). 75 municipalities have more than one local party in their governing coalition. Just under a third of all executive officers are from a local party, although they hold only 1% of mayor-positions. As local parties hold more government positions, power and influence than ever before, a better understanding of the ideological background of local parties is clearly of societal relevant.

Academically, there has been a variety on research towards understanding local parties. As we will show in the theoretical framework, this research is mainly historical or, when more recent, looks into local parties from a public administration perspective. As a result, we have a pretty good understanding of how local parties are organized, why they were set up and what their goals are. We even have some idea of why voters choose to vote for local parties. Yet this research remains general in its focus, wanting to answer the what, why, how and when usually combined into one piece of research. With historical and organizational studies done, we believe it is time to ask ourselves what local parties *believe* in; their ideas - their ideology. There has been research into this subject too, but this, largely, has remained somewhat superficial. Boogers, Lucardie and Voerman try to settle the question by allowing self-identification but this runs into non-responds and social pressure-related issues (2007, pp.22-

23). Other research tries to see if they differ ideologically by looking at policy or campaign proposals, and find that while local parties focus a little more on local issues, it is hard to place them as ideologically as a group (Van Ostaaijen, 2019, p.36).

By using clear definitions of populism and localism, this thesis will be able to improve the ideological categorizations previously attempted and set better, more clear ideological boundaries for both ideologies. By looking at populism, we can test if previous claims that local parties are populist are indeed true, and by looking at localism we will be able to test the validity of the alternative hypothesis put forward by Aaberg and Ahlberger (2015).

2. Theoretical Framework

In this chapter, we will get into the different theories and definitions used with regards to local party categorization, populism and localism. We will start by showing the different ways authors have tried to create sub-categories of local parties, and explain the difficulties experienced in these attempts. We will show how of these different methods, ideological categorization is possible. Next, we will show the different definitions used for both populism and localism. This will show why both concepts can and should be conceptualized as thin-centered ideologies. There are three reasons to do this: methodological strength, adaptability and conceptual equality. Finally, by basing ourselves on previous authors and research, we will be able to create a clear definition of 'ideological localism' for the first time.

2.1 The problems of categorization

Political parties are often categorized by different means, although most attempts still aim to categorize parties by so-called 'party families' (Mudde & Mair, 1998). However, rather than one approach, there are several different methods to create party families. Mudde and Mair identified the four most used: origin, membership of international federations, ideology and label or name (1998, pp.214-215). Of these, they argue that origin and ideology are the most useful and are best understood as complimentary to each other, rather than alternatives (Mudde & Mair, 1998, p.226). It should come as no surprise that attempts to create party families within local parties partly follow the same methods. Some authors categorize local parties depending on what issues they relate to. Others attempt a more ideological approach. Additionally, several authors have also categorized local parties solely by their name. While it is commonly accepted that local parties do not form a single party family (Van Ostaaijen, 20190), it has been notoriously hard to create categories of local parties (Boogers et al., 2007, p.12), and no definite consensus on what the best method is has been established yet.

Some authors use different names to refer to the local parties: Aars and Rinkjøb call them 'non-partisan lists' while Otjes (2018) uses 'Independent Local Parties'. Then there is some discussion on when a party is 'local' and when it is not, which mainly rests on the question whether parties that do not compete in national elections or compete in several municipalities are 'local' or not (Van Ostaaijen, 2019, pp.8-9). We will use Sartori's minimal definition for the word 'party' as "*any political group that presents at election, and is capable of placing through elections, candidates for public office*" (1976, p.63). We will also use the 'strict' definition of "local party" as "Any party that runs candidates for public office in only one

district of local government". Most importantly, this omits local party chapters that no longer compete (successfully) in national elections, as well as the local chapters of regionalist parties like the Frisian National Party (*Fryske Nasjonale Partij*).

2.1.1 Categorization by name or label

Boogers, Lucardie and Voerman (2007) start their different categorizations with such a name-study. They look at 251 local parties and distinguish eight categories, including a 'none of the above'-category that takes into account no less than 18.3% of local parties:

Table 1. Categorization by Name

Type of name	Percentage
General/municipality interest	37.8
Independent Citizenpartyinitative	10.8
Leefbaar-parties	5.6
Village lists	8.4
Ideological lists	9.2
Pensioner- and youthlists	3.6
Personal lists	4.4
None of the above	18.3

Source: Boogers, Lucardie and Voerman (2007)

Otjes (2019) also looks at party names to identify common traits, showing that two-thirds of local parties include the municipality name and roughly 25 percent call themselves 'General interest' (*Algemeen belang*), while only occasionally referring to ideological frames such as 'progressive' or 'liberal' (Otjes, 2019, p.15). This type of categorization offers a good starting point, assuming that there is some connection to the name and the party's 'core business'. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that name categorization offers relatively little information about the party and is not the most useful method of categorization: parties might adopt names for strategic reason, and some labels are used by a variety of different parties that have little else in common (Mudde & Mair, 1998, p.221).

2.1.2 Categorization by issues

Instead of looking at solely names, other authors try to identify the issues these parties address. Aars and Ringkjob, studying what they call 'non-partisan lists' in Norway, identify three types based on what issues they focus on: (1) lists covering the entire municipality, (2)

lists covering some part of the municipality and (3) single-issue parties, usually concerning specific local issues and protest parties (2005, p.175). They also add a fourth type of local parties not falling into the other categories, which includes joint lists of national party chapters (ibid.). Some parties also exhibit elements of multiple or all categories (ibid).

Boogers, Lucardie and Voerman (2007) also make an issue-related categorization that uses an elite survey of local party councilors. Based on their stated goals and views, Boogers et al. identify three types of local parties in their model: (1) localist parties, (2) protest parties and (3) interest-parties (2007, p.21), although they stress placing local parties on this model is not a simple task (ibid, p.12). Localist parties, which constitute just over half of all local parties, are 'reasonably a-political', and focus on 'quality of government and local democracy' (ibid., p.20). Protest parties are centered around opposition to a specific plan or general discontent with the current municipal government, and it is implied populist and ideological parties fall under this category (ibid., pp.20-21). Interest-parties aim to serve the interest of a specific bloc of voters. This is not limited to just certain parts of the municipality (like a specific village within a larger municipality), but can also focus on groups of citizens such as the elderly or students (ibid., p.21). Protest and interest parties both make up roughly a quarter of all local parties.

Another issue-category is made by Euser (2015, as cited in Van Ostaaijen, 2019) who divides local parties into those with a 'small' party program and those with a 'broad' one. 'Small' parties are single-issue or interest-parties that care only about one or few issues that are relevant to them, including elderly parties, Islamic parties or villages (p.7). 'Broad parties' also consist of two subcategories, based on how they see their relation to the citizens. On the one hand 'municipal interest parties' who view themselves as 'serving' the interest of their 'clients', the inhabitants. On the other hand, so-called 'citizens parties' place a much larger emphasis on the role of the citizens as policymaker and deliberation (ibid, p.8)

Issue-related categorizations are more helpful than just name-categorization as they actually tell us something about the motives and actions of the party. Still, because national party chapters are not usually categorized by only the issues they look at, but by their ideology, it makes it impossible to compare local and national parties within the same party system. Could we than simply categorize national parties by their issue-focus as well? It seems doubtful, as issue-categorizations seem to struggle with how to categorize local parties with a strong ideological character. Boogers at al. seem to place them in the 'protest'-group (2007, p.21) while Aars and Rinkjøb identify them as either 'whole municipality' parties or put them in the

'Other' group (2005, p.175). While helpful to better understand local parties in general, the lack of similarity between different issue-categorizations and the problems with comparisons makes it far from perfect.

2.1.3 Categorization by ideology

The third and final method of categorization is to categorize local parties by their ideology. This has been hard to do due to the limited size of some local party programs or just plain lack of information, many local parties are hard to place on a left-right economic or cultural scale (Boogers et al., 2007). As Dutch municipal governments have fairly limited legislative and budget powers (Gallagher, Laver & Mair, 2011, p.189) those cleavages are potentially not as relevant for the local voter.

Boogers et al. (2007) attempt to ideologically place these parties, however admitting from the start that it is a hard task (p.16). They look at four dimensions: economy (left versus right), cultural (conservative versus progressive), both traditional dimensions that make sense. Next, however, they put 'green' versus growth. This dimension is not further explained and it is unclear why they choose this dimension to be its own type. The last dimension is populism versus 'government-minded focus'. They create the following ideological categorization:

Table 2: Categorization by ideology (Boogers et al.)

1. Localist or 'communal' parties
2. Personal lists
3. Special Interest parties
4. Populist parties
5. Ideological parties

Source: Boogers et al., 2007, pp.16-17.

While the model seems rather straightforward, the distinctions are rather blurry; Boogers et al. write localists parties are simply 'not clearly ideologically defined', define populism only as 'focusing on the cleavage between citizen and municipality government, usually combined with protests against certain projects', and argue ideological parties can be populist and populists can be ideological (2007, pp.16-17), making it unclear where exactly the boundary of each category lies. It also does not clearly distinguish between special interest parties (which do not center around an ideology, but a specific group of citizens and their interests),

personal lists (which center around an individual politician), and localism, all three of which are implicitly 'non-ideological' (Boogers et al., 2007, p.17).

The problem with this model is a problem of *definition:* How do we define the different categories? This matters because the definition and its subsequent operationalization used have an effect on the results: good, clear definitions create good, clear categories, and these create a good, useful method to make meaningful (local) party families. Boogers et al. write they consider populism ideological but seem to define it solely as 'anti-establishment' or 'protest'. Left unanswered is also how ideological populism is supposedly the opposite of 'government-minded governance'. There are other, and better, definitions of populism. The same can be said about localism, where Boogers at al. identify 'localism' into a kind of 'no ideology' category (2007, p.18). They do not stand alone with this definition of localism: Van Ostaaijen defines 'localist' as 'focusing more on issues most relevant to the municipality' (2019, p.18). The general idea seems that rather than looking at issues and politics in the municipality through a 'ideological lens', localists focus solely on local issues. Yet this is mostly a self-identified trait that local parties give themselves (Boogers et al., 2007), and if we consider it a useful, distinguishing trait we automatically imply that national party chapters or ideological local parties do *not* focus on local issues while sitting in an institution that only has jurisdiction over local issues. There is evidence that local parties pay more attention in their party program to issues that are only relevant in their municipality, but the difference is very small, showing that national parties do not simply ignore local issues (Otjes, 2019).

It also, as mentioned before, makes localism hard to actually distinguish from other categories. The distinction seems made on the fact that localist parties focus on the whole municipality rather than groups of citizens (Boogers et al, 2007, p.16), which is hardly an ideological distinction.

However, we could take this model and actually use it successfully by applying strict ideological definitions to both populism and localism. And these is stance reason to do so: many political scientists use an ideological definition of populism for research into populism, both for local (Van Ostaaijen, 2019) and national parties (Mudde, 2017, p.35), and this goes beyond mere 'anti-establishment' or 'protest'. The same ideological definition can be used for localism. Despite not considering localism an ideology in its own right, Boogers et al. make some very interesting observations in their definition of the localist category: a 'localist program' is (1) ideologically hard to place, (2) focuses on the municipality or specific smaller

communities in which (3) the party ignores internal differences and stresses the unity of the community. While not calling localism an ideology, it is clearly seen as a way to 'view' local politics and the community, one that resonates with other authors' perception of localism such as Aars and Rinkjøb (2005) and Aaberg and Ahlberger (2015). The claim that local parties are different from national parties because they focus only on local issues also makes sense if we perceive this not as a *fact*, but as an *idea* these local parties hold.

The model proposed here actually fits quite well with the idea of different rationalities behind different local parties, as it allows for the existence of localist, populist and 'ideological' parties (any political ideology that is not populism or localism), side-by-side with personal lists and special-interest parties, which can be seen as non-ideological. Having established that an ideological categorization of local parties is possible and even partly exists, both populism and localism must be further explained. This we will do in the following two subchapters.

2.2 Populism

As we have shown, a level of academic consensus has started to develop that says local parties are more populist than national party chapters (van Ostaaijen, 2019). This of course begs the logical question 'What does it mean to be populist?', and the answer has been notoriously difficult to provide. The definition of 'populism' has been among one of the most hotly debated issues of political science of the last decade (Rovira Kaltwasser et al., 2017, p.12). The difficulty in answering this question is also the main argument against even conceptualizing 'populism' as a definition with (for political science) useful meaning. Some argue that the word 'populism' is simply too vague to be used in any meaningful way (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017, p.1). It should come as no surprise that between 1990 and 2015, more than half of the articles on populism do not clearly specify how they understand or define it (Rovira Kaltwasser et al., 2017, p.12). Most authors on populism agree that it involves an exaltation of 'the people' and elements of anti-elitism (Aslanidis, 2018, p.1243), but how they approach understanding these conceptual parts wildly differ. Recent studies of (Dutch) local parties have used the ideational definition of populism of Mudde (Van Ostaaijen, 2019), which centers around the core understanding that populism should be understood as being first and foremost about specific ideas (Mudde, 2017, p.29). One is a populist if one believes in or expresses those ideas. The ideational approach is one of the two dominant approaches of populism and currently the most broadly used definition (ibid.).

There are, however, alternative approaches to define populism. The strategic approach is, next to ideational, another dominant approach (Rovira Kaltwasser et al., 2017). It argues that populism should be understand as a strategy used by political actors. In the strategic definition, it is the use of a 'populist' strategy that makes one a populist. Additionally, in recent years the style-approach has gained some popularity, especially in the field of political communication. This definitions argues that what makes a populist a populist is their behavior and style of communication. Both style and strategy-advocates criticize the ideational approach for being too broad and not offering sound methodological tools to measure populism (Moffit & Tormey, 2014; Weyland, 2001, p.12), arguing in favor of more narrow, limited definitions. Before we go further into the ideational approaches to populism, we will discuss these alternative approaches.

2.2.1 Style and Strategy definitions of populism

The style-approach is especially popular within the field of political communication or media studies (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017, p.2). While some authors consider style to be part of the ideational approach (Hawkins, 2009, p.1043), we treat it as a separate approach. Style-advocates argue that while politicians who are wildly understood as being populist, differ greatly in ideology, discourse and strategy. Thus, approaches that define populism on those grounds find themselves being too broad to the point of uselessness (Moffitt & Tormey, 2014, p.390). Most authors that subscribe to the style-approach focus on its rhetorical features, in which populism is usually understood as containing a simple and direct style with similar simple, straightforward solutions to society's problems (ibid., p.387). Ideational approaches, which we will discuss last, focus on the 'content' of a politician, assuming that the ideas they hold translate into their actions and decisions (Jansen, 2011, p.80). In other words, by studying their actions, we can study their ideas. The style-approach, however, deems this assumption problematic and avoids it by solely looking at the actions and performances by themselves (Moffit & Tormey, 2014, p.390). The exact definition of populism as a style is, perhaps unsurprising, still a point of debate. Perhaps the only characteristic not under debate is that 'the people' are central to the populist style. Jagers and Walgrave differentiate between 'thin' populism (a rhetorical appeal to 'the people') and 'thick' populism ('thin' populism with the addition of anti-elitism and the exclusion of groups from the idealized 'people') (2007, p.324-325). Moffit and Tormey argue it holds to three elements: an appeal to the people (2014, p.391), the perception of crisis, breakdown or threat (ibid.) and so-called 'bad manners' or a disregard for 'appropriate acting' (ibid, p.392-393).

Weyland, however sees 'populism as a political style' as too broad and unsuccessful in the delimitation of cases (ibid., p.12). He argues that instead, populism must be seen as a strategy. Political strategy focuses on the methods and instruments of gaining and exercising power. In this view, political actors use different power capabilities. Who the actor is and what power capability he, she or they use is what defines a certain strategy or type of government (ibid.). Populism is understood as a strategy in which (1) an individual leader seeks to gain or exercise power on (2) the basis of direct, unmediated and uninstitutionalized popular support (ibid., p.14). This may take different forms, but it usually involves great election- or plebiscite-wins or large-scaled demonstration to show the leader in question has mass support (ibid., p.12-13).

2.2.2 Ideational Approach of populism

The ideational approach to populism is a broad category in which multiple schools of thought can be identified. The common denominator amongst all ideational approaches is the idea that populism must be understood as being about a set of ideas (Hawkins & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017, p.514). However, this again does not entirely clarify where the boundaries of this approach are. Mudde, for example, writes that even those who define populism as a style follow an ideational approach (2017, p.29). He argues that many scholars, regardless of the term they use, consider populism to be "first and foremost about ideas" (ibid.) and includes the style-approach as being ideational. Moffit and Tormey, however, specifically mention they focus, with their style-approach, on performance and actions in the first place (2014, p.390), even if they do not ignore the importance of ideas.

The ideological definition is the most common ideational 'variation' of the ideational approach. So common, in fact, that some authors argue that the ideational approach is dominated by the ideological definition and some even go as far as using both terms interchangeably (Hawkins & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017).

What then, is an ideology? Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser define an ideology is a "body of normative ideas about the nature of man and society, as well as the organization and purposes of society" (2017, p.6). The ideological definition finds its basis in the rejection of the discourse-theoretical or 'logic' approach of Laclau (Stanley, 2008, p.95). It argues it is not the 'fact' of a relationship between the two groups that has consequence, but the interpretation – which are ideas (ibid, p.98). Actors "adopt and adapt established ideas, and innovate others, with regards to the world in which they perceive themselves" (ibid.). While ideas are the individual interpretations, ideology is the interpretive framework that is created as a result of the articulation of those ideas (ibid.). An ideology's core is formed by a cluttering of concepts which become so closely related as to form a distinct and coherent set of ideas that endures over time and is recognized as such (ibid., p.99).

Rather than a full-fledged 'thick' ideology, with interpretations on all major political concepts and a general plan of public policy to be followed, populism is understood as being a 'thin-centered' ideology. A thin-centered ideology exists of a restricted core, attached to smaller range of political concepts (Mudde, 2004, p.544). While a thin-centered ideology can, under extreme circumstances, stand on its own, it usually attaches itself to thick ideologies (like socialism or nativism) in order to have an answer for society's diverse set of political questions (Stanley, 2008, p.99). Rather than trying to fully characterize populism in all its

manifestations (which are quite often contradicting each other), it is argued that all populist parties or politicians share this ideological core but may add a variety of 'host ideologies', behavior or style (ibid.). While the alternatives, style and strategy, choose clear but strict defining characteristics and consequently identify fewer cases as populist, the ideological thin-centered approach sets a simple definition that allows for individual case variation without immediately disqualifying it. However, while much attention has been given to the attaching ideologies on the national level, we would propose to consider the possibility that local government is one of the situations where a thin-centered ideology can exist without an attaching ideology. Local governments in the Netherlands have limited powers and collect almost no taxes (Gallagher, Laver & Mair, 2011, p.189). More than 90 percent of the budget consists of national grants, usually earmarked for specific programs and projects (ibid., p.190). With fewer questions to answer, a thin ideology might be 'enough' to provide a reasonable coherent and complete program.

The ideological understanding of populism is not without its critics. The discursive definition proposed by Aslanidis, for example, is a ideational criticism of the ideological definition, agreeing with its focus on ideas but rejecting its ideological base. It stays more closely related to Laclau's writing and shares most of the ideological views on what populism *means.* It differs, however, in its view on how scientists must understand populism. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, advocates of the ideological approach got around the populist lack of a coherent set of policies by arguing for a 'thin' definition. However, the exact definition of 'thinness' itself is not clarified beyond the aforementioned 'restricted core' and 'attaching ideas', which leaves unclear when exactly an ideology is thick, thin or not an ideology at all (Aslanidis, 2016, pp. 90-91). Aslanidis also criticizes methodological inconsistencies of an ideological approach (2016, p.91), and argues it leaves no space for 'degrees' of populism while most research on populist acknowledge that one can be more or less populist rather than only a populist or not (ibid, p.92). He proposes that instead of understanding populism as an ideology, it should be seen as a frame with the same conceptual parts Mudde proposes. However, other authors reject this difference as negligible, arguing that ideology, frame, discourse or worldview are terms with only minor differences and can be used somewhat interchangeably (Hawkins & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017, p.514). Hawkins (2009) also uses the word 'discourse' in his study on former Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez. Here, he argues that populism is *like* an ideology, but because of the lack of latent ideas and vague policy specifics, it manifests itself mostly in the language of those who hold it (Hawkins, 2009,

p.1045). To him, 'discourse' combines elements of both ideology and rhetoric (ibid.). It is here that we can also find the meaningful difference between pure 'style' or 'rhetoric'-approaches. Style-advocates argue that since there is no necessary connection between rhetoric and ideas, we can only study populism as rhetoric (Moffit & Tormey, 2014, p.390), while the ideational discourse-approach argues that the language actors use is formed by ideas sincerely held (Hawkins, 2009, p.1045).

2.2.3 Mudde's ideological definition

Within the ideational approach, Mudde's ideological definition of populism has been most dominant for the last two decades (Rovira Kaltwasser et al., 2017). It is this definition has seen widespread effective use in empirical studies, both in supply-side (Mudde, 2007) and demand-side research (Akkerman, Mudde & Zaslove, 2014). He defines populism as "*a thin-centered ideology that considers society to be ultimately divided into two homogenous and antagonistic groups: the pure people versus the corrupt elite, and which argues that politics should be an expression of the general will of the people*" (Mudde, 2004, p.543).

The distinction is not based on the expression of behavior or attitudes, but on normativity (ibid., p.544). As the definition says, the relationship is antagonistic by default, for which Mudde usually uses the term 'Manichean'. It is not simply a relationship of power with one group with and the other without power, nor is it that these groups simply have different goals or values; the people are by definition good, the elite by definition evil (ibid., p.544). This makes populism, rather than a programmatic ideology, a moralistic one (ibid.). Populism believes it is the moral people who should rule, unrestrained by rules and procedures set up by liberal democracies. Rather than arriving at a policy as a compromise between various groups in society, populists believe a single general will of the people exists and should be exercised (ibid., p.588).

This does not mean, however, that populists are by definition in favor of participatory democracy like referenda and other forms of direct democracy (Mudde, 2004, p.559). Populists can, in fact, be highly technocratic (ibid, p.547). This is because populism is not so much about having 'the people' *rule*, but rather that the wishes of the people are executed. Rather than a government of the people, supporters of populism want a responsive government that implements the policies they want and serve their interest, but preferably while being as bothered as little as possible (ibid, p.588). This is why populists can criticize parties and politicians while being politicians and parties themselves. The criticism is not that they are parties, politicians, or are 'different' from the people (Berlusconi and Fortuyn were hardly examples of the average Italian or Dutchman) but that they are not exercising the *wishes* of the people (ibid, pp. 559-560).

According to Mudde, populism has two opposites: elitism and pluralism. With elitism, what is not meant is 'elitist behavior' like 'un-people-like' upper-class mannerism or appearances. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, populists have no problem with politicians that look and

act completely different from 'the average person' as long as they exercise the general will of the people (Mudde, 2004, p.560). Rather, elitism is populism's mirror-image. It agrees with its Manichean worldview and shares its morally antagonistic relationship, but sees the elite as the 'good' group and the 'people' as corrupt. It thus wants politics to be the expression of the will of the *elite*, rather than of the people (ibid, pp.543-544).

Pluralism however, denies the whole 'binary' view of society that both populism and elitism hold. Instead, pluralism holds that society is divided into a variety of overlapping social groups, each with their own ideas and interests (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017, p.7). Rather than advocating for the execution of 'the general will of the people', pluralists argue that politics should reflect the interests and values of as many different groups as possible (ibid., p.8). Pluralists recognize that other differences than just morality exist and have relevancy, like ethnicity, economic class, educational levels and so on (ibid.). In order to avoid one group from imposing its will on the other, power needs to be distributed throughout society (ibid.).

In summary, while populism has been a contested term in the recent decades, we can say that certain definitions have become more or less dominant in the academic world. Style and strategic definition have their own strengths and weaknesses, finding themselves often advocated for methodological reasons. Furthermore, it is important to recognize that not only do different approaches tend to overlap, there is sometimes debate under which 'umbrella' a certain approach does or does not fall under. Terms are used sometimes interchangeably, and sometimes as meaning separate concepts. Having discussed the most important possible definitions of populism, and having expanded on the ideological definition of Mudde, we move on a far lesser known ideology: localism.

2.3 Localism

2.3.1 Ideational localism

As we have previously shown, in the research on Dutch local parties, localism is implied to be the 'non-ideological' category (Boogers et al., 2007) but only in the sense that localist parties' focus on local issues makes them hard, if not practically impossible, to fit traditional left-right or progressive-conservative models of ideological categorization.

In a study on local lists in Sweden, Aaberg & Ahlberger (2015) are amongst the first to truly understand localism as a set of ideas on local politics, and even argue it is possible to define it as an ideology. They identify a problem with how previous authors tried to explain the appearance of local parties; it is always assumed that local parties act based on the same rationale as nation-state parties (2015, pp.816-817). Erlinggson claims local lists occur due to 'hot feelings' and frustration amongst political entrepreneurs (2005, as cited in Aaberg & Ahlberger 2015, p.816) but does not explain where these 'hot feelings' come from (Aaberg & Ahlberger, 2015, p.817). In turn, Aaberg & Ahlberger argue that ideological cleavages relevant on the national level might not relate to the local level and the occurrence of local parties (ibid). In other words, to explain why local parties exist, we must look at the local level and the local level only. First, they define an ideology as 'a latent and discursive feature of social and political power relations' (ibid.). With this definition, they argue that localism is an ideology *focusing on defending the small community from outside interference and in specific political parties* (ibid.). Localism advocates a different way of looking at local politics and society, as one that is different from the national level and where demographic and social-economic differences within the community are simply not relevant (ibid.). For this reason, localism opposes national parties, for whom these differences *are* present and relevant on the local level and to which they derive their *raison d'etre* to compete in local elections.

In their study on independent local councilors in the United Kingdom, Copus and Wingfield (2014) show that independent councilors in local councils prioritize their wards over the council as a whole (their ward being 'their community') and support more freedom from the central government. However, these independent councilors do not want *more* powers – being given the power to deal and decide on (contentious) national political issues would undermine the whole idea of the community being politically heterogeneous (ibid., p.664). Despite having a lower trust in higher government than partisan councilors, independent local councilors want some policies to remain with the national government. We would argue that even though Copus and Wingfield do not talk about ideology or ideas, their approach is

clearly on the ideational side of conceptualizing localism. They support the notion of localism being a particular concept, although they call it a 'strain of thought' and 'an approach towards local governance'.

Otjes (2018) goes with Copus and Wingfield (2014) in his supply-side research on why voters vote for local parties, and defines 'localism' to mean support for the interest of the community (which seems to be defined as the community as a *whole* instead of just right- or left-wing voters that vote for the party) and support for local autonomy, on the municipal level. Again, despite a difference of exact definition, Otjes too acknowledges that localism constitutes having certain ideas on local politics and its community (2018, p.309).

Boogers et al. argue that localism is either a political vision, ideas on local democracy or rejection of national parties (2007, p.22), and write that localism, like protest and interests, is a matter of degrees, though they do not explain this further (ibid.). They also show nearly half of local party officials consider representing the interest of a specific town or neighborhood 'very important' while only roughly a quarter say the same about representing the interest of the municipality (the political entity) (ibid, pp.22-23). They also show that the local party officials themselves stress the importance of ideas, with 43 percent arguing ideas on local democracy are 'very important' for their voters (ibid., p.21).

2.3.2 Thin-centered ideology

While some authors explicitly accept the possibility of localism as being a set of ideas, others have provided insights to the possible characteristics of these ideas without considering localism in ideational terms. No clear definition of localism yet exists, but it is possible to identify a common trait; a reference to a territorial community (a municipality or town). We argue that the next logical and possible step is to conceptualize localism not just as merely a set of ideas, but as an actual thin-centered ideology in its own right. It even can (and does) attach itself to other ideologies (Boogers et al., 2007, p.16). We propose the following definition:

Localism is a thin-centered ideology that considers local politics to consist of a territorial and homogenous community that governs itself in a non-partisan way, and therefore is separate in nature from national politics.

First, the core: just like all ideational definitions of populism agree that, at the very least, the 'core' of populism is the people, different definitions of localism at least agree that it is connected to the local community. This community is the core of localism: localists speak on

behalf not of 'the people', but of their *community*. But similar to how populists see 'their' people, they deem their community to be *politically* homogenous, ignoring internal differences and stressing its unity (Boogers at al., 2007, pp.16-17). It is not that there are no political, ideological differences within the community (which would be impossible to deny) but only that they are not relevant when talking about the day-to-day local issues the community faces.

While nationally the community might vote very differently, on the local level all voters are first and foremost simply members of the community. The community, unlike the populist 'the people', is always *territorially* based – it encompasses a certain neighborhood, village, town or the whole municipality, but not specific individual voters (like the elderly or students). Simply put, a localist can take a map and draw a circle around what they deem their community. Otjes conceptualizes localism to be always defined as meaning a connection to the municipality (2018, p.320), which, we argue, is not necessarily the case. Whatever part of the municipality is defined as 'the community', is the actor that the local party in question claims to represent as a whole. Because of this definition of the core, localism can encompass both local parties representing the whole municipality as well as those representing only a territorial part of it.

Secondly, localism sees local politics as *inherently separate in nature from national politics*. Here is where the difference between populism and localism becomes the clearest. Localism is not anti-pluralist, but *non-pluralist*. It accepts pluralism, but argues that there is a difference between the politics of the national level and the politics of the local level (Copus & Wingfield, 2014). Aaberg and Ahlberger use the word 'rationality' to describe the separation; local politics and national politics 'act out' differently (2015, p.817).
As local governance has considerable fewer powers, faces mostly practical issues and generates very little income of itself, localism argues that local politics does not have ideological cleavages. Individual citizens, of course, have different political ideologies, but the nature of local politics makes it so that those ideologies are irrelevant. Pluralism shows only on the national level, and so is only relevant on the national level. This acknowledgement of separation enables local parties to appeal to a wide variety of ideological voters even within the party membership; local party councilors can vote for different parties during national elections without any issue. Despite receiving large shares of the vote every local election cycle, there has been no attempt to move 'up' to the national level because local parties see no relevance for themselves on that level.

Finally, the third conceptual part of localism is that it advocates a *non-partisan approach to local governance* (Copus & Wingfield, 2014). The community, because of its political homogeneity and because its politics are non-pluralistic, it does not require ideological parties. Local politics is "A matter of pragmatism and common sense" (Boogers et al., 2007, p.9). Local politics might involve parties for the practical purpose of electing councilors and maintaining an organizational link to the community, but it ought not to involve *partisanship* where the interests of the party are put above the community. Because localists see themselves as solely representing the interests of the community, they have no 'party interests' to put above the community. As a result, partisanship is a feature they only identify with ideological, national parties, which are accused of having a 'dual loyalty' between the community and the national party. This could also explain why localists will frequently claim that their focus only on local issues distinguishes them from national parties chapters. In their eyes, national party chapters always have an additional, 'outsider' interest: the national party. Because it advocates non-partisan governance, localists, perhaps somewhat surprisingly, do not always want more powers. If more issues are decided on the local level, this might lead to relevancy of ideology, and thus partisanship. Local autonomy must be protected and its powers preserved, but not necessarily expanded (Copus & Wingfield, 2014). Despite having a lower trust in higher government than partisan councilors, independent local councilors want some policies to remain with the national government.

2.4 Hypothesis

While authors have attempted different methods of creating meaningful 'party families' amongst local parties, methods that look only at names or issue focus to not create a 'full picture'. Instead, a purely ideological classification offers a meaningful classification of local parties, allowing for parties with different ideologies, different 'rationalities' and non-ideological parties to all co-exist and be compared within the same model. Additionally, it allows us to compare local parties to national party families, which are often created based on ideology. We have decided to focus on populism and localism, and have shown that both can be defined as thin-centered ideologies. Each has its own core and its own set of conceptual parts, which are similar but different from one another. This brings us to our hypothesis:

> *H1: Localist local parties can be ideologically distinguished from populist local parties*

3. Operationalization

We have chosen to choose to conceptualize both localism and populism as *thin-centered ideologies*. In the previous chapter we have explained that this is possible for both, but some explanation as to the *benefits* of such a definition are still necessary. There are three reasons to do this: versatility, methodological strength and conceptual equality.

First, the strategic and style-approaches focus solely on parties and politicians and do not take into account the concept of the populist *voter* (Mudde, 2017, p.39). A political style or a strategy is something held only by political elites, not by the individual voter (ibid.). At the other hand, the ideological approach truly shines here, as it, and it alone, has been used to measure populism amongst both the supply and the demand side (ibid.). The same argument can be made in regards to localism. If we are going with Aaberg and Ahlberger (2015) and believe localist local parties are an expression of an alternative view on local government, localism cannot be understood as anything else but a set of ideas held by both voters and the local parties.

Second, the ideological definition of populism has been a tried-and-tested definition in empirical research, and has, in the eyes of some authors, become the dominant approach. While it is not beyond discussion whether 'ideology' is the right word for the concept, we follow Hawkins and Rovira Kaltwasser in believing that whether one calls it 'ideology', 'frame', 'worldview' or 'discourse' makes little difference for empirical study (2017, p.514).

Thirdly, but perhaps the most significant reason for ideological definitions, is the methodological requirement that any two concepts one wishes to compare must be on the *same level*. They must both be strategies, or both be styles, or both be ideologies. Understanding populism as an ideology has been well established, and there is a growing number of articles that suggest localism can likewise be understood as such. This will also allow an ideological categorization of all parties present on the local level, be it national party chapters or pure local parties.

We define populism as following:

Populism is a thin-centered ideology that considers society to be ultimately divided into two homogenous and antagonistic groups: The pure people versus the corrupt elite, and which argues that politics should be an expression of the general will of the people" (Mudde, 2004, p.543).

We define localism as following:

Localism is a thin-centered ideology that considers local politics to consist of a territorial and homogenous community that governs itself in a non-partisan way, and therefore is separate in nature from national politics.

Having conceptualized both populism and localism as thin-centered ideologies with their own cores and features, it allows us to conceptualize the differences between the two. In discourse, we can identify three main differences, all derived from their conceptual parts. These we will explain below.

Table 3: Ideological conceptual parts of populism and localism

Concept	*Populism*	*Localism*
Dividing characteristic	Moralism	Rationality
Core group	People-centrism	Community-centrism
Opposite group	The elite	National politics

1. The dividing characteristic: Based on what does the ideology divide society? Populism divides society into two groups (the people versus the elite), based on morality. This makes it anti-pluralist because it denies any distinction other than morality to be relevant. Localism, at the other hand, divides not society but *politics* into two groups that act by a different rationality; national politics, which is pluralistic and thus ideological in nature, and local politics, which is neither. But by doing so, it accepts the existence and relevance of pluralism in national society. This is what makes localism not anti-pluralist, but *non*-pluralist. Its distinction is therefore not based on morality, but purely on the (perceived) difference in

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rationality between local and national politics. It is the politics that are different, and not the people themselves.

2. The Core group: Who are the 'core group' of the ideology, falling on the 'good side of the dividing characteristic? While populism idealizes 'the people' as a homogenous group, localism does so for a community that is territorially based. Based on their respective dividing characteristics, populists and localists alike see no *relevant* differences between the members of their core group. However, 'people' and 'community' are two different concepts. The defining difference, just as with the opposite group, is the characteristic by which populists and localists divide the society. Populists look at morality and sees that the people are different from the elite, because the people are good. Meanwhile, a localist looks at the nature of politics and sees that local politics, unlike the national politics, is not about ideology and high stakes, but about the local community and its day-to-day issues. There is bound to be some overlap in terminology with such similar terms though, and context is what gives clarity. A community that is referred to in moral terms is a populist, while a mentioning of 'the people of the municipality' being different from 'the people' of national *politics* should be identified as localist discourse.

3. The opposite group: Who is, again through the dividing characteristic, the group that falls on the 'other' end of the line? For populism, this is the elite, morally corrupt and opposing the 'good' people. This 'elite' can take the form of national parties in the populist discourse, but does not necessarily have to. Localism is not anti-elite, but anti-national politics: national politics is the politics of ideological parties, which do not share the localist homogenous, non-pluralist view on local governance. National politics' rationality is inherently partisan and ideological. Localists are anti-partisan because they oppose national parties organized on the basis of political ideology being active in local politics. National party chapters represent, at least partly, the ideological interests of their mother parties instead of the community, and so are detrimental to those community interests. Again, as with 'people-or-community', one can tell the difference by looking if the opposition to the 'enemy' group is based on morality or rationality. While populism is antagonistic to the elite by definition (Mudde, 2004), there is no literary suggestion that localism is antagonistic to national politics or parties. Nor do we expect it to be; someone who is a localist while voting locally can hold to any ideology when voting for national elections.

4. Method

The goal of this thesis, as stated in its central research question, is to show that ideological localism can be distinguished from ideological populism. This will in turn reveal ideological categorization is the best and most useful way to categorize and understand local parties, and why they came to exist. Having defined how we see populism and localism and having discussed how we can tell the difference, in this chapter we will discuss how we will test if the identified conceptual parts are present and if local parties therefore adhere to one of these ideologies. To determine whether a party is populist or localist (or neither) we will do a content-analysis of party programs of the most recent election, which took place in 2018.

Content-analysis is the systematic examination of communicative media in any recorded of fixed form (Mayring, 2004, p.266). It is not limited to merely the content of the material, but can also focus on formal aspects and latent meaning (ibid). Content-analyses have been a popular methodological tool to study populism (Aslanidis, 2018, p.1246).

Party programs can be seen as providing an overview of the ideas of a party as a whole (Rooduijn, de Lange & Van der Brug, 2014, p.566). Party programs are meant to give the reader an idea of what the party stands for and what to achieve. They consist not only of policy points, but also often possess writings about general views and ideas on politics. Most party programs are also written by multiple members of the party and often they need to pass an assembly of party members. This makes party programs superior to other means of communication like social media, interviews or speeches when measuring ideology. Personal social media, of individual councilors, represent their individual ideas and might not necessarily reflect the ideas of the party as a collective group. Not all parties, nor all councilors, have (active) social media, while in practice nearly all local parties have a party program that is easily accessible. Speeches and interviews are a valuable source of information, but there is little material available of local politicians, from local party or national party chapters. This makes interviews and speeches, where available, better suited for an intensive case study and less for a comparative study.

4.1. Dictionary methods

There are, however, several different methods to perform a content-analysis. One way is the so-called dictionary approach, where one operationalizes specific concepts into words, creating special-purpose dictionaries (Aslanidis, 2018, p.1246). This is sometimes called the computerized content-analysis, as it uses computer technology instead of human coders

(Rooduijn & Pauwels, 2011, p.1280). These words are counted to give an average score for the whole program, telling us how often certain concepts are mentioned, in exact numbers and in percentage (Aslanidis, 2018, p.1248). For populism, for example, this could mean an author counts words representing 'the people' and those that represent 'anti-elitism'. The approach is cost-effective because it allows for computer-analysis and has a perfect reliability as there is no risk of human error. However, it suffers from problems with its validity (Aslanidis, 2018, p.1245). Dictionaries 'decontextualize and sterilize' key terms, risking false positives (ibid). Additionally, Mudde (2004) defines the relationship between the people and the elite to be hostile based on morality, but this is incredibly hard to conceptualize in single words. Rooduijn and Pauwels (2011) simply omit it, writing that Mudde's definition consist of only two components, while Mudde himself identifies four and further explores morality as being the "essence of the populist division" (2017, p.29). Some authors even reject the usefulness of computerized dictionary methods (Bauer, 2000).

This is where the conceptual 'closeness' of populism and localism play a role: while using different dividing characteristics, the populist 'people' and the localist 'community' use similar and sometimes the same words, such as 'inhabitants', 'our citizens' and more. However, a reference to 'the people' (*het volk*) and one to 'the community' (*de gemeenschap*) are not interchangeable. It is, after all, morality that divides the people from the elite, and references to a community that entails all who life in a municipality (So has no 'opposite') are hardly moral or anti-elitist. Yet Rooduijn and Pauwels count 'gemeenschap' as an operationalization for Mudde's 'homogenous people' (2011, p.1280). They even count 'society' and 'population', which are very broad and general terms (ibid.). Gevers does the same thing and even writes that the high score of local parties in a populist scales is mainly due to the high frequency of these people or community-centric words (2016, p.76). Both dichitionary studies into local parties (Gevers, 2016; von Harenberg, 2016), use an adapted version of Rooduijn et al.'s (2011) conceptualization of populism as a mix of people-centrism, anti-elitism and direct democracy, despite Mudde's rejection of direct democracy as a necessary part of populism.

While all of these words refer to the general people, not all of them are by themselves a reference to a homogenous people that stands opposed to the elite. This creates the above-mentioned false positives. '*De gemeenschap'*, for example, usually carries a much more positive 'all-of-us-together', communal meaning, while '*het volk'* carries a different, more exclusionary meaning that nearly always stands opposed to something, like an elite or

foreigners. One cannot fully understand the meaning of either without taking into account context. The same can be said about anti-elitism. Populism can reject national parties and national politics, but does so for different reasons than localism. Attempts to measure localist parties' degree of populism with a dictionary approach run into this problem creating false positives. One can manually correct for such false positives (Aslanidis, 2018, p.1247) but this adds the element of human unreliability, especially when it is unclear on what basis the author removes what they perceive as false positives. Additionally, it creates considerable work that must be done by human coders, somewhat cancelling out the benefits of computerized methods.

4.2 Holistic approach

Another approach to content analysis is holistic coding, originally a method of content analysis that hails from educational psychology, first used to measure populism by Hawkins (2009). With holistic grading, coders interpret whole texts, rather than counting certain words or sentences (Hawkins, 2009, p.1049). Hawkins advocates its use for two reasons; first, one cannot gauge broad meaning by simply counting words (ibid). Ideas are held subconsciously and these ideas are conveyed as much by tone and style as by words (ibid). Second, human-coded content-analysis that looks at phrases and sections are very time-consuming (ibid, p.1050). Holistic coding offers enhanced validity, but is less reliable due to human errors. It also does not offer any information about frequency, specific terms or references to other actors (Aslanidis, 2018, pp.1248-1249), as it usually scores on a 0-1 or 0-mixed-1 scale. While a good method for studying large quantities of relatively small texts, it does not offer a good testing method for a rather new ideology like localism which conceptual parts have not been well-established as it will not tell us anything other than presence or absence of the entire ideology.

4.3 Thematic text analysis

The answer lies in thematic text analysis; in this method, the text is split up in meaningful segments called 'coding units' like pages, paragraphs or sentences. These units are then classified with the help of a coding frame created by the operationalization of whatever concept(s) the author is looking for. As with dictionary frames, usually the occurrences are divided with the total number of coding units, giving a final score. Text analysis occupies a good 'middle ground' between dictionary and holistic grading and offers good validity and reliability. Hawkins, for example, while rejecting dictionary method for not being able to grasp complex meaning, accepts human-coding of textual parts as a valid method (2009,

p.1050). His reasoning for rejecting it are due to time-consumption and costs. By limiting ourselves to a small N-comparison in only one country we enable ourselves to use thematic text analysis. Of course, reliability will always remain an issue in a single-person thesis that does not use a dictionary approach (Aslanidis, 2018, p.1250). For this thesis, we reject dictionary methods because of its validity issues, deeming it impossible to properly distinguish between populism and localism and agreeing with Hawkins aforementioned criticism. We reject holistic coding for its absence of gradation, lack of insight into how the different conceptual parts of an ideology interact and because we lack the capability and resources for large N-comparisons like done by Hawkins (2009). For the purpose of this thesis, we find that thematic text analysis offers the best method.

4.4 Paragraph Analysis of Local Party programs

While different authors use different coding units, we choose to use paragraphs as coding units, following Rooduijn, de Lange and Van der Brug (2014) in their research on mainstream party programs. The breaks between paragraphs form divisions between arguments and themes (Rooduijn et al., 2014, p.566). In other words, it is be expected that a contextual 'hint' whether a specific word is populist, localist or neither is likely to be in the rest of the paragraph. Populism is usually operationalized as consisting of two elements: 'the people' and 'the elite'. Quite rightfully however, Rooduijn et al. identify that it is the combination of the two, not just the presence of cone, that makes a paragraph populist or not (2014, p.567). However, they do not specifically require a reference to morality to be present, but do mention it:

*"After all, it is the combination of people-centrism and anti-elitism that defines populism. Only if a critique on the **(bad)** elite coincides with an emphasis on the **(good)** people, can we speak of populism."* (Rooduijn et al, 2014, p.567).

Strangely enough, when they made their codebook, they took a broad definition of 'the people' and 'the elite' that does not include morality but merely the presence of references to the people and to a general elite (ibid., p.567).

Morality, however, is a vital part of our definition of populism. It is the morality-difference that makes the people the (good) people and the elite the (corrupt) elite. When coding paragraphs as populist or not, we are likely to find the 'morality' cue within the words that reference the people or the elite or in adjectives used in combination. We especially expect the morality-cue to be in words that relate to the relationship between the people and elite; if a

paragraph talks about the government, for example, being corrupt and ignoring the wishes of the people, this implies that the people are *not* corrupt, or else it would not be necessary to mention that adjective. Leave a reference to corruption out and the paragraph would be more accurately described as being anti-establishment or just critical of the current government. One could argue that making morality a third requirement would be superfluous as people-centrism and especially anti-elitism carry an implicit moral aspect. However, we take a broad approach to people-centrism and anti-elitism, which can but does not have to be moral in itself. We therefore make a third requirement for measuring populism; morality. We count a paragraph as populist when it includes (1) people-centrism, (2) anti-elitism and (3) a division (of the two) by morality.

For localism, we must make the same assumption. Localism is not just community-centrism and anti-partisan sentiments, but the combination of the two together when differentiated by rationality. As stated before, the 'dividing characteristic' between local politics of the community and the national, partisan politics is the rationality of politics. As with populism, this divide is somewhat implicitly present (a rejection of national parties because they are not local is closely linked a division by rationality) but will again be made a third requirement in order for a paragraph to be counted as localist. One can, after all, refer to the community without seeing it as necessarily homogenous or different from national politics. Localism thus consists of three elements: (1) the territorial community, (2) a rejection of national, partisan politics and (3) a division by rationality.

Having decided to study party programs paragraphs, there are two ways we can do this; wholesome, or introduction only. When studying the whole of a party program, it is codified from start to finish. While time-intensive, it makes sense when studying, for example, whether a party become more or less populist over time or is more or less populist in comparison to other parties; a party that is very populist is likely to show it in more than just their introduction. This is the method Rooduijn et al. (2014) use. However, we are not studying 'degrees' of populism or localism, but merely their presence. This allows us to try a different method studying only introduction chapters. Rooduijn et al. argue that the introduction of an election program usually contains the core message of a party and what it stands for (2014, p.567). We therefore believe that the introductory chapters of party programs could be seen as the most-likely place for ideological elements to turn up. It also avoids having to find a solution for bullet points: policy chapters of programs sometimes contain bullet points, which could be seen as paragraphs by themselves (massively increasing the amount of paragraphs)

or can be disregarded (while some bullet points consist of multiple sentences). 'Introductory-chapters only' avoids this problem in its entirety.

Introductions in local party programs also make a comparably larger share of the whole program: In our preliminary findings, we found that most local party programs average around 20 pages, while in the 2017 national elections, GroenLinks' program was 78 pages (2017), while the VVD (2017) party program sits at 102 pages. Introductory chapters, however, are between one and four pages for both local and national parties. This is to be expected; national politics is far broader than local and thus more issues need to be addressed. Nevertheless, it means that studying only introductions for local parties still means we are looking at 5 to 15 percent of the whole program, and perhaps even more as many programs include a few non-text pages. This means the method is not as problematic as it would be when studying national party programs.

Only studying introductions considerably reduces the amount of paragraphs to be coded, while having only a limited effect on the validity of the research. It is unlikely that a local party that has no populist or localists elements in their introduction will have them anywhere else. The downside of this method is that we will be unable to make strong statements about degrees of localism or populism, but that is not the goal of this thesis. Importantly, it allows us to include more party programs.

To provide a reasonable 'level playing field', we only take into our analysis local parties that have published a downloadable party programs as PDF-form and whose introductory chapters are at least two paragraphs. We consider a paragraph to be a paragraph when it is at least three sentences; loose sentences (without bullet points) stacked one after the other are considered one single paragraph. While Rooduijn et al. (2014) use a time-series table, we do not as we are not trying to see if parties became more or less populist or localist, but rather only if they currently are.

4.5 Case selection

Wanting to demonstrate that populism and localism both exist and are independent, unrelated ideologies, we will pick our cases for content-analysis on a most-likely basis. Trying to get a random selection out of all local parties will be too work-intensive for the scope of this thesis and does not fit the question we want to see answered. Before we can say something about which parties are *more or less* localist or populist, we need to be able to say that some parties *are* localist or populist. A random selection is likely to contain many parties that do not adhere to either of those ideologies. Additionally, no database of local parties exist, making a true random sample very difficult to make. Municipalities often have multiple local parties, but we lack a credible method to tell which parties within a single municipality are more likely to follow a certain ideology. To have at least some regularity in selection, we will pick the largest local party. If that party has no program available, we look at the second biggest.

Picking those cases that we suspect are most likely to be populist or localist, we expect populist parties should score high populist scores and low localist ones, with localist parties reversed. Because of our method, we have more 'suspected' localist parties than 'suspected' populist ones in our dataset. This analysis will therefore not be able to say anything substantial about local parties being populist or localist *in general*. It will, importantly, be able to show localism is ideologically distinguishable from populism, both theoretically and empirically.

4.5.1 Most likely populist

There is little research on what makes it more likely a municipality contains populist parties. Even Rooduijn et al. have this problem, and they pick populist parties that have been identified as such by other authors (2014, p.566). By copying this method however, we only have four cases that are mentioned by name as being populist: Leefbaar Rotterdam, Leefbaar Hilversum, Burgerforum Losser and Arnhem Centraal. To find more cases, we include local parties from municipalities where the Partij voor de Vrijheid (PVV) of Geert Wilders, a known populist party, became the largest during the last national election. The rationale behind this is that these municipalities have a relatively larger populist electorate and thus more demand for a local populist party. This makes it more likely a (new) local party is ideologically populist (Zons, 2013). This gives us 23 possible municipalities, some of which

had no local party and some of which had no party program available[2]. We picked six cases, to bring our total populist sample to ten. These parties can be found in table 6.

4.5.2 Most likely localist

Aaberg and Ahlberger suggest that we are most likely to find localist parties in those municipalities that have been merged in the recent past, naming the provinces of Noord-Brabant and Drenthe in particular (2015, p.819). It is in those communities that the relationship between the local and national government has been re-structured.

However, there are only a few municipalities that have not been re-organized since the 1980s. Moreover, those that have, often have been merged a second time somewhere after 2000 and some have recently been merged or are in the process of doing so (CBS, 2020). There is no known 'time-limit' on how long the restructuring will remain salient, though it is likely the issue does not remain salient forever. At the same, we expect that it takes some time before the discontent leads to new parties. Furthermore, localist parties tend to focus on specific communities within larger municipalities (Boogers et al., 2007, p.16), so we deem it likely that territorial larger municipalities with multiple (former independent) villages and/or towns (the so-called 'multiple core-municipalities') are more likely to have localist parties occur. Additionally, we want all provinces to be represented to get some regional spreading.

This gives us three selection criteria: a merger in the recent past, multiple towns and regional spreading. To achieve a regional spread, we simply select two municipalities from every province, giving us 24 possible cases. The best way to include multiple-town-municipalities is to pick those municipalities with the lowest population density. Low-population density municipalities are usually territorially large municipalities that include several different formerly independent towns. To control for recent mergers, we pick only those municipalities which have been re-organized at least once since 1990, but no later than 2014 (the second-to-last local election).

 This provides us with 19 cases. These parties can be found in table 7. Friesland and Flevoland's municipalities all merged before 1990 or after 2014 or have no local party. Groningen had four municipalities which fit the criteria, but the local parties in three of those have recently merged in preparation of their municipal merger that is going to happen in 2021.

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[2] Some parties did not have a program or an extremely small one with no introduction. Most simply did not make it available in PDF.

5. Descriptive Analysis

5.1 Analysis

In this chapter, we will show and discuss the findings of our analysis. For each case was calculated how much percent of the introduction paragraphs had each of the six conceptual parts of populism (people-centrism, anti-elitism & morality) and localism (community-centrism, anti-partisan and & rationality) present. If all three parts of an ideology were present, a paragraph would be classed as that ideology. A final percentage of localist and populist paragraphs per case were than calculated. For all eight categories, three averages was calculated; one per all Most Likely Populist (MLP) cases, one per all Most Likely Localist (MLL) cases, and one for all cases. These will be shown below, followed by an in-depth textual analysis of the variables.

A t-test was not possible, because of the necessary assumptions were not satisfied: Our variables are not normally distributed. All but one had a high frequency of zero, and community-centrism, while having only a few 0.0-values, was right-skewed and had over 25 percent of cases at the 100.00 value. To test for difference between our MLL and MLP cases on the various variables, a (two-sided) Mann-Whitney U-test was used. Additionally, we tested for correlation using a Spearman's Rho.

Surprisingly, no cases had a single populist paragraph, while a few cases had localist paragraphs. There was also no significant difference between MLL and MLP cases in regards to localism, with an average localism score of 6.14 and 4.00 percent respectively. The only two variables with a significant difference between the MLL and MLP parties were community-centrism and morality. Both differences were as expected: MLL cases had a higher community-centrism score than MLP cases, with moralism reversed. However, this difference is only significant at the 0.10 level, so we can only very carefully draw conclusions. That being said, localist local parties focus more on the community than populist parties, using words and phrases that connect to territory like 'the community' and 'inhabitants of our city'. This supports the idea that the local community is that core of localist ideas. In turn, populist parties make more references to morality, mostly in the form of attributing positive traits like 'good' and 'common sense' to the people. This supports the idea that populism must be defined as being centered around the relationship between two groups, rather than the groups themselves.

We found two significant positive correlations (at the 0.05 level); anti-elitism and morality, and rationality and anti-partisan. Both these findings support the idea that these conceptual parts are indeed parts of the same ideology as they usually appear together. However, it is surprising that neither correlates with people-centrism or community-centrism. We suggest that this is the case because some parties use people-centric or community-centric words without trying to convey an ideological message; it is to be expected that in a local level of a democracy, parties need to mention people or the locality at some point in their program.

Against our expectations, MLP cases do not show significantly more frequent use of people-centric words and phrases than MLL cases. Nor do MLP show less use of rationality-references. Before further interpreting our findings and drawing conclusions, we will first go into depth with regards to the frequency and form of the presence of different conceptual parts. Together with actual examples, this will provide the context in which we place our findings.

5.2 In-depth textual results

Table 4: Average score (in %) of Introduction Paragraphs with Populist Concepts

	N	*People-centrism*	*Anti-elitism*	*Morality*	*Populist (all three)*
Most Likely Populist	*10*	18.75%	7.25%	11.50%	0.00%
Most Likely Localist	*19*	8.33%	4.12%	3.95%	0.00%
All cases	*29*	11.93%	4.51%	5.59%	0.00%

Looking at table 4, we can see that pure people-centrism was not as frequent as expected, and most importantly not significantly more present with MLP cases. People-centrist remarks are usually references to 'citizens' or 'the people' without a connection to the territory or that are clearly moral in nature. Leefbaar Rotterdam, for example writes talks about "*the normal Rotterdammer, the backbone of the city*", describing them as "*Hard workers, who rise early, never complain and yet barely make ends meet*". These are clearly people-centric statements that idolize and homogenize 'the people', not references to the entire municipal community. At the other hand, six out of the nine cases had absolutely no reference to a non-territorial people, including parties like Arnhem Centraal and Leefbaar Hilversum that were previously identified as populist.

Next, we see that MLP cases also have nearly thrice as many references to morality as the MLL cases, the only populist conceptual part in which there is a significant difference between the two groups, but only at the 0.10 level. Nearly all these references take the form of adding positive characteristics to the people, calling them 'normal', 'not crazy', and the people having 'common sense'. In other instances, the morality is attributed to the style of politics the party advocates or is against: Rucphense Volkspartij (A MLP-case) talks about their party being "*Plain. Just normal. Good is good*" while Lijst Van der Does (a MLL case) describes itself as disliking "*Vague business and empty-faded promises*".

Lastly, only around four to seven percent of all paragraphs have references to anti-elitism. There is also no significant difference in frequency between the MLP or the MLL cases. This is especially interesting considering anti-elitism is supposedly a necessary and sometimes even considered a sufficient part to consider a program populist (Aslanidis, 2015, p.1247). In our data set it is the least frequent populist conceptual part. These references are mostly criticism of the national government or local politicians who supposedly have ignored the

wishes of the voters. On two occasions, a reference criticizing national party leadership was coded as both anti-elite (because they criticize a general elite without naming specific parties or politicians) and anti-partisan (because they target national parties).

Table 5: Average score (in %) of Introduction Paragraphs with Localist Concepts

	N	Community-centrism	Anti-Partisan	Rationality	Localist (All three)
Most likely Populist	10	45.50%	12.13%	4.00%	4.00%
Most Likely Localist	19	70.96%	13.16%	7.46%	6.14%
All cases	29	58.74%	12.80%	6.26%	5.40%

Next, the results of the analysis with regards to localism can be seen in table 5. First, as mentioned earlier in the text, community-centrism is the only variable in which MLL cases score significantly higher than MLP cases. It is far more present amongst all cases, even amongst MLP-cases, than people-centrism. Roughly half of references use '*inwoners*' ('inhabitans'), often with a direct connection to either the municipality or to towns and villages. Other community-references are literal mentions of the community ('*gemeenschap*') or references to 'our towns' or 'our cores' ('*onze kernen*'). In general, local parties stress the importance of the (different) territorial parts of the municipality. Arnhem Centraal (MLP case), for example, describes itself as "*A local party, on behalf and from the neighborhoods*" . Gemeentebelangen Westerveld (MLL case) showcases the importance of the different parts by stating that it wants to "*further the interest of the 26 different cores of Westerveld Municipality, keeping intact local values and identity*" and stating that "*We are here not only for the community, but also are from the community ourselves*". On several occasions local parties also stress the importance of (local) businesspeople and civil society like cultural clubs.

Second, anti-partisan references are more frequent than anti-elite references, just like anti-elite, there is no significant difference between MLP and MLL cases. In an earlier chapter, we discussed that many local parties feel that national parties influence their national chapters to further the interest of the party instead of the municipality – in turn, the lack of national relation makes the local party supposedly more independent and better able to represent the interests of the municipality. This sentiment is without a doubt the number one reason local parties criticize national parties (when they mention them): anti-partisan cases are nearly all

descriptions of how the local party is not connected to a national party and therefore independent or better able to represent the interests of the people.; Middel-Delfland's OGP (MLL case) even literally states it:

"We want – close to the inhabitants and without instructions of a national [party]bureau – to do what is best for Midden-Delfland"

The anti-partisan sentiment is also present amongst MLP cases, like Burgerforum Losser:

"As local party, Burgerforum does not have to look at the assigned visions and considerations of national parties"

Third, rationality is nearly as frequently present as morality, but without any significant difference between MLL and MLP cases. All these references discuss how local politics, unlike national politics is about practical matters and without the need for ideologies:

OGP*: "In a local community, it is about completely different matters that those relevant in national politics"*

Wakker Emmen: "*They* [The inhabitants, Ed.] *know which problems are present in a village of neighbourhood and what needs to be done. These are often very practical matters. These do not require large policies, but just 'doing'. […] Not a left or right solution, but the best solution"*

5.3 Interpretations

As Table 1 shows, not a single paragraph can be considered fully populist, always lacking at least one conceptual part. Of course, a possible explanation is that we are counting false negatives, counting parties which could be considered populist as non-populist due to errors in our method or conceptualization. One argument that could be made is that the different conceptual parts are present, but simply spread over two paragraphs. And at the surface, this seems plausible. Local party program paragraphs are frequently short. But if we were to code the introductions holistically (by simply looking if the three concepts are present at all), it would not create different results: no single party in our selection has all three populist parts present.

One possible explanation is that populism only appears as a 'hybrid'. In our coding system, we looked at every reference to the people and put it either 'community-centrism' (if it connected to a territorial community) or 'people-centrism' (if it did not). Some references were whole sentences that clearly referred to a community or the people in general, but in some cases the distinction was less clear. This could lead to a potential blind spot: separating people-centrism and community-centrism makes populist parties, which could use community-like words with normative and anti-elitist statements, appear not populist while their worldview is still very much based on a moral divide. In our theoretic framework, we discussed how the question whether a reference to the people is populist or not lies in the context in which it is used. When we take this into account, it is possible that populist parties make a division of morality but instead of using people-centric language, use community-centric references to the people like 'our city' and 'the inhabitants', mixing populist and localist discourse together. Reviewing our cases, we see two MLP cases (Wakker Emmen and Hart-Leers) combining community-centrism with morality and anti-elitism in the same paragraphs. Additionally, one MLL case (Lijst van der Does) does this as well, but not in the same paragraph.

Alternatively, one could criticize the addition of morality, arguing that three conceptual parts is too much. But omitting morality from our method does not create significant changes in the results. Had we only counted paragraphs with people-centric and anti-elite statements, only one out of our 29 cases would have (a single) populist paragraphs. It is, in fact, anti-elitism that is the most lacking conceptual parts. This is surprising, as Rooduijn and Pauwel suggest that anti-elitism is, in fact, the best way to measure populism (2011, p.1275). A good example of this is Leefbaar Rotterdam. While considered a populist party by Boogers et al. (2007), and

showing both people-centrism and morality-references, it lacks any reference to elites in its introduction chapter. One explanation could be the fact Leefbaar Rotterdam was part of the municipal governing coalition during this election, so could not easily criticize elites without appearing hypocritical. Just before they list all their different specific policy achievements, they touch upon the need to be willing to compromise to get into power:

"If you want to make progress, you must be willing to make dirty hands. We understand that those who want to achieve something for the city, must be willing to combine his fight for his ideals with the bravery to make compromises"

This sentiment is present with several other local parties. These parties have been or want to be part of the municipal government, stating that staying outside of it means little will be achieved and it is better to 'take responsibility' and compromise than to shout loud and achieve nothing. This could explain the lack of anti-elitism; a strategic reasoning to improve their changes of entering government. Rooduijn et al. (2014) find that national populist parties tone down their populism after initial electoral success, and it is very much possible that the same is true for local populist parties.

But simply arguing that local parties became 'less' populist still implies that they once were and still, to a degree, are. We would argue that remarks about compromise and responsibility show a willingness to work with the 'elite' and stress the importance of specific policies and compromise, which by itself constitute ideas on politics and society. And these ideas are hardly populist, in which the elites are evil and only the struggle between the people and elite are truly relevant. If parties truly drop their anti-elite stance, out of strategic reasons or not, publically accept the legitimacy and need of compromise and show they see other parties as opponents instead of pure enemies, are they simply 'toned-down populists', or are they, in fact, no longer populist. That is, of course assuming that they ever were, a question that can only be answered by using comparing party programs throughout elections.

As for localism, it would seem that anti-partisan and rationality references are present, but not significantly more with one group of local parties then the other. It is possible that local parties regularly compare themselves favorably with national parties for campaign reasons. Alternatively, populist might use the national party as their supposed 'elite', 'hijacking' the localist frame. We would suggest, however, that we might have conceptualized localism with a conceptual part too many, and will touch upon this in the conclusions.

Having reviewed the data, we consider our hypothesis supported by our findings. While not wildly present in the shape we conceptualized it as, localism still clearly centers around a connection to the community and involves, to some degree, the idea that local politics is separate in nature from national, ideological politics. Localist parties, at the same time, do not necessarily hold populist attitudes in their party program – in fact, many have no reference to people-centrism, anti-elitism or morality at all, while frequently explicitly showing pluralist convictions. This shows that localism is indeed separate from populism. However, with our original method we find no populist parties at all; only when we accept that populist parties might be community-centric as well, or only look at morality, and thus adapt our model, we find some populist parties. We theorize that perhaps populist parties attach themselves to localism. This way, they find the answers to questions of policy in the same place as localists do: in the local community.

6. Conclusion

This thesis was written with the goal to expand our knowledge on the ideological of local parties, with two major presumptions. One, that localism does, in fact, exist as a coherent set of ideas, and two, that local parties are not as populist as previously established and that ideational localism is a better label for the ideology of many local parties. Having found a theoretical basis for both ideologies to be seen as thin-centered ideologies and having identified their conceptual parts, we performed a context-analysis of a selection of Dutch local parties. Our findings, presented in the previous chapter, allow us to do four separate conclusions; two concerning localism, one concerning populism and a final conclusion with respect to the limitations of dictionary methods.

Our first conclusion is that a localist ideology exists and is held by parties which are not populist at all. It is also clear that community-centrism is at the hearth of the localist ideology. It is the only conceptual part that is is present amongst all local parties, but significantly more amongst those parties we considered most likely to be localist. While references to the community are high in number, it goes beyond mere frequency; these parties present a strong connection to the different towns and villages and to the community the inhabitants form together. As we expected, localists see very little relevant political difference within their community. Because localism is not hostile to other ideologies or higher government levels, it allows municipal inhabitants of various ideological backgrounds to unite into a single, only-locally-relevant ideology. Localists see local politics as the platform to, as a community, deal with the local issues they face. The answers to what needs to be done in terms of policy is not found in an abstract ideology, but in the preferences of the local community. In the eyes of the localists, the community simply knows what is best.

Our second conclusion is that anti-partisan sentiments and rationality are *relevant* to localism, but perhaps not in the form we suggested. Some local parties criticize national parties and talked about the difference between local and national politics; if we stick with our original operationalization, then we can say that 'full' localism (with all three parts) exists in two of our 29 cases. Without a doubt, references were less frequent and sometimes less implicit than we expected. While national parties look to their ideology to find the answers to questions of policy, local parties look at the community. Localism, unlike populism, is not centered around a relationship between two groups, and in the end we might have put too much emphasis on anti-partisan feelings. Instead of a distinct conceptual part, perhaps we must see critique of

national, ideological parties as a direct result of, or even a part of, the difference in rationality localists feel there is between national and local politics.

Our third conclusion is that while some local parties have populist elements and could be labeled as populist, local parties in general are not as populist as previously thought. While it is sometimes hard to differentiate between community and people-centrism, it is actually mostly the lack of anti-elite statements that leads to the absence of populist paragraphs. This is directly contradicting Rooduijn and Pauwels' (2011) idea that anti-elitism is the best way to measure populism. There is no doubt that the frequent mentioning of 'communities', 'inhabitants' and other references to a territorially connected people is what makes local parties appear more populist in dictionary approaches. When drawing distinction between community-centrism and people-centrism however, we can clearly differentiate between the two concepts and even between different categories of local parties in the degree that they are community-centric. Even if one were to say that community-centrism and people-centrism are basically the same concept, closer scrutiny of local parties reveals that parties do not usually combine references to either the people or community with anti-elite statements. For the most part, local parties show a strong focus to not just people, but to the communities that they live in and together form. Indeed, if anything, we found that many parties, because of the value they give to the community, show a respect for pluralism and political compromise.

Our fourth and final conclusion is that we find ourselves in agreement with Hawkins' (2009) original criticism of dictionary methods to content analysis; one cannot grasp latent meaning by simply counting words. Populism, while not a 'full' ideology, is still a complex set of ideas that only form populism *together*. To measure populism by counting these conceptual parts differently would be problematic enough, but becomes even more problematic if the moralistic, Manichean nature of the populist relationship between the people and the elite is simply ignored. For populism, people are the people only because they are *morally good* – excluding this normative element means that instead of seeing people-centrism as a necessary part of populism (together with anti-elitism and morality) it becomes a sufficient one. Dictionary methods found local parties to the populist. Using a different, more in-depth method which lays focus on the morality division, we instead find that local parties are barely populist at all. Morality, unlike people-centrism or anti-elitism, is the only populist conceptual part that is significantly more present with MLP parties. Rather than seeing populism as being about the people and the elite, our data suggests that we must perhaps focus, when testing for populism, on the *relationship* between the two groups, rather than on the groups themselves.

7. Reflection and recommendations

Looking back to the beginning of this thesis, there are some critical reflections to be made. First, we created an ideological definition of localism that might simply over-extend itself. While community-centrism is clearly a feature, anti-partisan and rationality are much less present. Additionally, our conceptualization of these two features made them perhaps too close to one another, muddying a clear distinction. One solution would to create better, more separated conceptualizations, but as we stated in the conclusion, we would recommend instead to combine these two features into one, and see the localist critique of national parties as a direct result of their idea that local politics is different from national politics.

A second reflection we can make is on our decision to use an ideological definition of populism. Originally, we imagined that while national party chapters followed social-democratic, liberal or Christian(-Democratic) ideologies, local parties could follow populist or localist ideologies. While the conceptual parts Mudde identified are useful and solid, perhaps the term ideology is not the best fit. Mudde himself finds, after all, that pluralism is an opposite of populism, yet this would make pluralism, as the populist equal, a thin-centered ideology itself. What then, are national party chapters? Pluralist parties that attached themselves to a full ideology? Perhaps it would be better to see populism and localism too not so much as an ideology, but as a discourse in the meaning that Hawkins (2009) used: A meaningful combination of both rhetoric and ideology. This way, national party chapters, part of a larger party, combine their pluralist or populist discourse with a full ideology that provides them with a steady supply of policy specifics, while localist local parties, only focusing on solving local issues that may be far less ideological in nature, stick to only having a discourse. Of course, this steers us back to the debate on what exactly the difference between discourse and a thin-centered ideology is. In the end, while more critical of 'ideology' then when started, we stick to the argument that the difference between terms like 'ideology', 'discourse' and worldview' can be used somewhat interchangeably (Hawkins & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017, p.514), and insist that at the very least, we must keep understanding both localism and populism as being, above all else, about ideas.

With regards to further research, we recommend that a comparative study should be done comparing national party chapter and local party programs. With this, we can see if localism is something that is truly unique about local parties. Additionally, regarding populism, we ran into the question whether non-populist local parties had gotten rid of their populist character

or simply never had it. A historical comparison of local parties trough several local elections could help answer this question. Finally, with a(n improved) conceptualization of localism as a thin-centered ideology, both demand-side and supply-side research is possible. With this, our final research recommendation is to test if voters and individual politicians hold localist ideas. Previous surveys like Copus and Wingfield (2014) and the ones Otjes (2019) and Boogers et al. (2007) use show that surveys are a valuable source of information for local parties and local voters alike. Creating a survey that tests how localist voters or politicians are could help create a better idea of what exactly localist ideas entails. They could consist, for example, of specific questions with regards to the 'nature' of local politics and the way local party politicians or voters view national parties. This would also provide the researcher with a considerably higher N then our small data-set. As our findings were only statistically significant at the 0.10 level, additional research on the same questions is certainly necessary.

Appendix

Table 6: Most Likely Populist Local Parties

Party	Name of municipality	Province
Leefbaar Rotterdam	Rotterdam	Zuid-Holland
Leefbaar Hilversum	Hilversum	Utrecht
Arnhem Centraal	Arnhem	Gelderland
Burgerforum	Losser	Overijssel
Wakker Emmen	Emmen	Drenthe
Politieke groepering GOB	Sittard-Geleen	Limburg
Rucphense Volkspartij	Rucphen	Noord-Brabant
Hart-Leers	Heerlen	Limburg
Gezamenlijk BurgerBelangen Landgraaf	Landgraaf	Limburg
Ons Kerkrade	Kerkrade	Limburg

Source: (Boogers et al., 2007; Kiesraad, 2020).

Party	Name of municipality	Province
Gemeentebelangen Westerveld	Westerveld	Drenthe
Leefbaar Borger-Odoorn	Borger-Odoorn	Drenthe
Gemeentebelang Oldambt	Oldambt	Groningen
KERN Bergen	Bergen	Limburg
Fractie Franssen	Gulpen-Witten	Limburg
Heeze-Leend Lokaal	Heeze-Leend	Noord-Brabant
Sint AnthonisNU	Sint Anthonis	Noord-Brabant
Dinkelland Lokaal	Dinkelland	Overijssel
BuitenGewoon Leefbaar	Steenwijkerland	Overijssel
Senioren Hollands Kroon	Hollandse Kroon	Noord-Holland
VSPS	Schagen	Noord-Holland
Open Groen Progressief	Midden-Delfland	Zuid-Holland
Nieuwkoop	Samen Beter Nieuwkoop	Zuid-Holland
Algemeen Belang Groot Hulst	Tholen	Zeeland
Leefbaar Schouwen-Duiveland	Schouwen-Duiveland	Zeeland
Lijst Van Der Does	Woerden	Utrecht
Ronde Vennen Belang	Ronde Vennen	Utrecht
Gemeentebelangen Berkelland	Berkelland	Gelderland
Meedenken met Lochem	Lochem	Gelderland

Table 7: Most Likely Localist Local Parties

Source: Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek (2020).

Code book:

Populism

People centrism: Is there a reference to 'the people' as a non-territorial, general group?

    1. 'The common man', 'the (normal) people'

    Anti-elite: Is there a criticism to a general 'elite' (not specific parties or individual politicians).

    1. criticism of the national or local government

    2. criticism of bureaucrats or unelected officials

Morality; Is there a reference to morality such as corruption, evilness or goodness?

    1. Elites are called corrupt or dumb or accused of performing actions that are against the will of the people

    2. Common sense-appeal – the people know what is best because they, unlike the elites, have 'common sense' or are 'normal'.

    Quote: *"The inhabitants are not crazy. They know which problems trouble their town or village."* (Wakker Emmen, 2018, p.2).

Localism

Community centrism: Is there a reference to a 'community' that is territorially based?

    1. 'The citizens', 'the community', 'the inhabitants', 'of our municipality', 'the village'.

    2. References to civil society and citizens organizations as long as they connected to a certain territory like a municipality or village.

Anti-partisan: Is there a reference to national parties and/or ideological politics?

    1. Direct statement; the parties or ideological politics are mentioned and rejected

    2. In-direct statement; the 'localness' of the local party is mentioned as a distinguishing trait from national parties or national party chapters)

*Quote 1: "Wakker Emmen is a practical party […] with as members **only and solely citizens** who care about the municipality that **they and their families are part of**."* (Wakker Emmen, 2018, p.2).

Rationality: Is there reference to the nature of local or national politics being different to each other?

1. A reference a difference between the rationality of national and local politics

*"This means we are not limited or slowed down **by national policy-points from a party opinions in the Hague**, but can take **decisions purely in the interest of the Emmen Municipality and its citizens**."*

2. A statement that shows an acceptance of pluralism but denies relevance

3. A reference to the non-ideological, 'practical nature' of local politics or the local party.

"[the party] is not connected to a religion, national party or specific village. This means [the [party] can look at issues objectively, and review these from all perspectives, without being hindered by such an obstruction

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