



**University of
Zurich^{UZH}**

Science-Related Populism

Conceptualization, Empirical Investigation, and Implications for Science Communication

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Article III: Mede, N. G., & Schäfer, M. S. (2022). Science-related populism declining during the COVID-19 pandemic: A panel survey of the Swiss population before and after the coronavirus outbreak. *Public Understanding of Science*, 31(2), 211–222. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09636625211056871>

Article IV: Mede, N. G., Schäfer, M. S., Ziegler, R., & Weißkopf, M. (2021). The “replication crisis” in the public eye: Germans’ awareness and perceptions of the (ir)reproducibility of scientific research. *Public Understanding of Science*, 30(1), 91–102. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0963662520954370>

Article V: Mede, N. G., & Schäfer, M. S. (2020a). Kritik der Wissenschaftskommunikation und ihrer Analyse: PUS, PEST, Politisierung und wissenschaftsbezogener Populismus. In H.-J. Bucher (Ed.), *Medienkritik: Zwischen ideologischer Instrumentalisierung und kritischer Aufklärung* (pp. 297–314). Herbert von Halem.

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Abstract

Populist and anti-intellectual sentiments pose a considerable challenge to science and science communication in many countries worldwide. One proliferating variant of such sentiments can be conceived as *science-related populism*. Science-related populism criticizes that scientists, scholars, and experts supposedly determine how society produces ‘true knowledge’ and communicates about it, because they are seen as members of an *academic elite* which allegedly applies unreliable methods, is ideologically biased – and ignores that the common sense of *ordinary people* ought to be superior to scientific knowledge. Accordingly, science-related populism assumes that the ordinary people, and not academic elites, should be in charge for the production and communication of ‘true knowledge’. Scholarly and journalistic accounts suggested that science-related populism can have negative implications for the legitimacy of scientific expertise in society and societal discourse about science. However, there has been neither a conceptual framework nor empirical methods and evidence to evaluate these accounts. This cumulative dissertation addresses this deficit: It includes five articles that present a conceptualization of science-related populism (**Article I**), a survey scale to measure science-related populist attitudes (**Article II**), empirical findings on these attitudes and related perceptions (**Article II**, **Article III**, and **Article IV**), and a discussion of populist demands toward science communication (**Article V**). The synopsis scrutinizes the arguments and results published in these articles in three ways: First, it discusses further theoretical considerations on science-related populism, advantages and challenges of its measurement, and broader contexts of empirical evidence on it. Second, it describes implications of science-related populism for communication and discourse about science, and proposes ways in which these implications can be addressed in science communication practice. Third, it considers how scholarship of science-related populism can advance social-scientific research on populism and anti-scientific resentments and could develop in the future.

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