As online communication relies heavily on visuals, recent use of social media by politicians emphasises the role that visuals can play in the articulation of political messages (Filimonov & al., 2016). Instagram as a platform allows influencers and politicians to fully utilize the advantages of visual communication, and reach audiences who might not see the politician's messages elsewhere.

Populism may be understood as a rhetoric-performative process, a way to create meanings (Palonen & Saresma 2017, 16-17). It is a logic of politics where it is essential to construct the sense of belonging to "the people" as opposed to "others" that are perceived as enemies (Laclau, 2005). Leaders of populist movements often function as signifiers that have a role in unifying "the people". The people may identify themselves to the leader not only through verbal or written narratives, but also through visual and performative symbols which include the leader's own body and personal life.

In this paper, we focus on the strategic use of Instagram by the Prime Minister of Hungary, Viktor Orbán, whose party, Fidesz, has been in government since 2010. Viktor Orbán and his party use many rhetorical-performative measures that can be described as populist, such as dividing the nation between "us" and "others", using signifiers (Palonen, 2019). Fidesz is least popular in the age group under 30 years (Medián, 2019), which is the same group that uses Instagram the most (NapoleonCat, 2018). Hence, Instagram can be an important platform to attract younger voters, and through the images and English captions, an international audience. Therefore, we investigate 1) through what performative populist elements is Orbán as a signifier articulated in Instagram photographs and 2) how these elements are then used in the formation of his party's political messages.

The data includes all the images of Orbán's Instagram account from 2019, 95 in total. We analyse these with visual discourse analysis using coding categories of essential populist and nationalist concepts, specifically focusing on how they are used to build authenticity and the 'us' and 'them' divide. In addition, we also examine through what symbols and photographic techniques the leader's image is created.

Visual representations of populist leaders often underline them as outsiders of the prevailing political power elite and representing or as having a special connection with "the people" (Salojärvi 2019; 2020; Garcia Santamaria, forthcoming). Contrarily, Orbán's images are professional in style, with a clear focus on the leader, and less on "the people". Unlike the aggressive 'othering' campaigns of Fidesz, his Instagram pictures defines 'us', through nationalist themes, sport and symbolic acts. Through masculinity and the use of professional photographic techniques, Orbán performs as a visionary, who is to be followed by his people.

Political campaigns are strategic, so is a politician's social media. In this case, Instagram is a tool for communicating the populist messages and symbols of the party (Fidesz), and for building Orbán's image, who can be identified as the embodiment of the party and governance, thus emerging as an empty signifier of the party's populist agenda.