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Understanding varieties of populism in times of crises

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ABSTRACT

This introduction presents the conceptual and analytical framework which constitutes the background for the special issue entitled 'Varieties of Populism in Europe in Times of Crises'. More specifically, this contribution investigates how different populist parties in the European Union have been affected by the recent economic crisis and the more long-lasting political and cultural crises. Analytically, the article disentangles the role of the Great Recession vis-à-vis other factors (such as political and party system factors, but also structural social changes or cultural opportunities) in the growing strength of populist parties in various European countries. It argues that although the economic crisis has without any doubt provided a specific 'window of opportunity' for the emergence of new political actors, which have capitalised on citizens' discontent, long-lasting political factors – such as the increasing distrust toward political institutions and parties – and the more recent cultural crisis connected with migration issues have offered further fertile ground for the consolidation of populist parties in several European countries. Furthermore, as confirmed by the articles presented in the special issue, the various crises have offered differential opportunities for different types of populism – both inclusionary and exclusionary.

KEYWORDS Populism; economic crisis; cultural crisis; political crisis; Europe

This article introduces the conceptual and analytical framework that constitutes the background for the special issue, which investigates how different populist parties in the European Union have been affected by the recent economic and the more long-lasting political crisis (for example, the so-called representative democracy crisis, see Mair 2002). More specifically, the special issue tries to disentangle the role of the Great Recession vis-à-vis other factors - such as political and party system factors, but also structural social changes (e.g. Chiaramonte and Emanuele 2015), or cultural challenges (see Inglehart and Norris 2016) - in the growing

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strength of populist parties in various European countries. The crisis has, without any doubt, provided a specific 'window of opportunity' for the emergence of new political actors which capitalised on citizens' discontent. Furthermore, long-lasting political factors, such as the increasing distrust towards political institutions and parties or the redefinition of Western political and party systems (Hernández and Kriesi 2016; Mair 2013), have offered fertile grounds for the consolidation of populist parties.

This contribution – together with the other articles of the special issue – aims, first, at understanding the concept of populism and reflecting on its conceptual 'usability' beyond the traditional parties to which it is usually related. This is particularly relevant since old and new political parties have been labelled as 'populist', but may be perceived very differently in terms of both their electoral appeal and political trajectories. Second, this introduction aims at using this preliminary theoretical clarification to shed new light on the different ways in which populism has been articulated in various European countries (both in Continental and Southern Europe and in the less well-known and studied Central and Eastern European countries) since the economic crisis. This crisis has acted as an external shock in many party systems, either giving birth to new political parties or consolidating already existing ones. Third, the present article investigates the connections between populism and the political and cultural specificities that form the national context, which may determine the development of different types of populisms across countries. Fourth, it reflects on the limitations of a discrete conceptualisation of the phenomenon, suggesting instead that populism should be conceptualised in a continuous mode, as a 'gradational property' (Gidron and Bonikowski 2013: 7–10; for an empirical application, see Caiani and Graziano 2016), making it possible to establish how populism varies across countries and time.

Populism, populisms

Academic attention towards populism has sharply increased in recent years (Kriesi 2014). Yet a commonly accepted definition is still lacking, and scholars still disagree on categorisation, labels, and boundaries between its different manifestations (Mudde 2004). Some also stress that there is an abuse of this term in the public discourse (Caiani and della Porta 2011). One of the main difficulties regarding the definition of populism is that it has been applied (and adapted) to several very different historical phenomena – movements, parties, regimes, and intellectuals – across various periods, and it has often been used in a pejorative sense. Despite the still open debate on conceptual definition and terminology

(Aslanidis 2016; Freeden 2017 – which is beyond the scope of this introduction to address), from a theoretical perspective, populism has been alternatively conceptualised as (see also Caiani and della Porta 2011): (1) a political *rhetoric* that is marked by the 'unscrupulous use and instrumentalisation of diffuse public sentiments of anxiety and disenchantment' (Betz 1994: 4) and appeals to 'the power of the common people in order to challenge the legitimacy of the current political establishment' (Abt and Rummens 2007: 407); or as (2) an *ideology*, which considers 'society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups: "the pure people" versus "the corrupt elite"', and which argues that politics should be an expression of 'the *volonté générale* of the people' (Mudde 2004: 543). The elements of this 'thin-centred ideology' (Freeden 2017) concerning the structure of power in society are the references to antagonistic relations between the people and the elite, the idea of restoring popular sovereignty and a conception of the people as a homogeneous body. A specific feature of this ideology is its vagueness, in that it 'responds to its need to be adaptable' (Ruzza and Fella 2009: 3). Furthermore, populism has been also defined as (3) a *type of organisation* characterised by the presence of a charismatic (new kind of) leadership (Taggart 2000). In this respect, populism is understood not as an ideology but rather as a political strategy used by the *personalistic* leadership of a populist movement or party to exercise power 'based on direct, unmediated, non-institutionalised support from large numbers of mostly unorganised followers' (Weyland 2001: 14; for an updated discussion of populism as a political strategy see Kriesi 2018a). In this perspective, populism as an ideology/discourse and populism as a strategy are complementary and tend to 'go together' (Kriesi and Pappas 2015). Furthermore, in this strand of the literature, a specific focus has been placed on the *special style of communication* (Jagers and Walgrave 2007; Tarchi 2002) used by charismatic leaders: populists are successful (Albertazzi and McDonnell 2015), due to their role as 'taboo breakers and fighters against political correctness' (Mudde 2004: 554).

Moving from definitions to empirical cases, the variety of populist movements (Tarchi 2015) is impressive. When a typological criterion is adopted, the literature distinguishes between right-wing and – more recently – left-wing populist movements: Whereas the latter identify the 'people' in socio-economic terms, such as the working class exploited by the bourgeois elite, the former refer to the ethnic nation (Abt and Rummens 2007). Populism, especially among scholars focusing on Europe, is above all found on the extreme or radical right (e.g. the Austrian Freedom Party, the French National Front – now Rassemblement National, etc.; Mudde 2007; Rydgren 2008), but it can

also be related – as it increasingly is – to the radical left (e.g. March 2011; Ramiro and Gomez 2016; Stavrakakis and Katzambekis 2014; Zaslove 2008). Beyond populism on the fringes of the political spectrum, observers further underline the growing importance in Western and Central-Eastern Europe of a type of 'mainstream populism' (e.g. Tony Blair in the UK; see Mair 2002). There are, furthermore, forms of what may be called 'hybrid populism', for instance the Five Star Movement (FSM), which adopts an ideologically eclectic mix of policy positions and does not clearly locate itself on either the left or the right flank of the party system (Roberts 2017a).

More recently, comparative studies, moving beyond the traditional left-wing/right-wing differentiation, have drawn a distinction between *inclusionary* and *exclusionary* populism (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2013), based on three dimensions (material, political, and symbolic) which concern the distribution of resources among social groups, the appeal to forms of political mobilisation going beyond representative democratic channels, and the boundaries of the notion of 'people'. On all of these three dimensions, inclusionary and exclusionary populist parties differ in the degree of 'inclusiveness' envisaged: e.g. favouring mass welfare programmes vs. defending forms of welfare chauvinism; aiming at giving a voice to disregarded groups vs. discriminating among various types of members of the political community; and finally highlighting, for instance, the 'dignity' of indigenous populations vs. emphasising symbolic exclusion (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2013). Speaking more broadly, inclusionary and exclusionary populisms underline different forms of defining the 'other(s)' (as well as the 'imagined community': Anderson 1991): the economic oligarchy, the media, the judiciary, foreign capital (e.g. in Latin America) form the 'other' in inclusionary populism, while in the case of exclusionary European populisms, the 'other' is mostly formed of immigrants and people who are 'culturally different'.

To a certain extent, the inclusionary–exclusionary differentiation contains the distinction between left and right: whereas inclusionary populism is associated with left-wing parties (March 2011), since the 1980s exclusionary populism has been mainly associated with right-wing organisations. Inclusionary, typically left-wing populism, has until recently been considered a primarily Latin American phenomenon, although in the last few years it has also been seen in European countries – such as in Spain with *Podemos* and in France with *France Insoumise*.

In this contribution and in the special issue we are particularly interested in the success of populist parties, which we argue, drawing theoretically from Laclau (2005), depend on the capacity to 'politicise' crises in terms of a need to rescue the 'pure' people from a greedy and corrupt

Table 1. Exclusionary and inclusionary populist parties in 30 European countries (all European Union countries, including the United Kingdom, and adding Norway and Switzerland), by year of foundation.

	Inclusionary populist parties	*Exclusionary populist parties*	Total
Before 1994	1	22	23
1995–2008	3	26	29
2008–2017	6	7	13
Total populist parties	10	55	65

Source: Authors' calculations based on various secondary sources. See Online Appendix for further details.

elite. Such an elite has been (according to the 'mainstream' populist discourse) profiting from the various crises by imposing technocratic decisions that are unfavourable to the people and – in the case of the European Union, for example – lack clear democratic support. Furthermore, the elite may have taken advantage of the economic crisis and increasing inequality, thus further impoverishing the 'people'. Finally, the elite may have taken advantage of the migration crisis, which enables migrants' cheap labour to put pressure on 'nativist' workers. In this respect, nativist and anti-globalisation claims have fuelled populist support which otherwise would have remained much more marginal in Europe – as it did for almost three decades (from the 1970s to the 1990s).

The crises

The point of departure of the special issue is to consider populist parties' evolution as a function of the economic crisis while not ignoring the existence of other types of crises: political and cultural ones. As already argued with reference to Latin America, populism occurs (and is often framed by political actors) within a crisis scenario (Laclau 1977; Roberts 1995) and therefore in a comparative effort to focus on the drivers of populist parties' success we would like to take inspiration from the 'crisis' approach and focus on the abovementioned crises with reference to European countries.

As a matter of fact, we consider both the political and economic crises as particularly important, since, although populist success in post-war Europe has come in waves (von Beyme 1988: 6), it is its recent combination that – *prima facie* – may have offered opportunities for the electoral expansion of populist parties: as Table 1 shows, it is after 1995 that over 60% of the current populist parties were founded.

According to our data, among the 65 populist parties currently present in Europe (see also van Kessel 2015), 38% have participated in coalition governments or supported minority governments (in Bulgaria, Denmark, the Netherlands, and Norway; Golder 2016). Currently (January 2019), populist parties are in government on their own or as part of coalition

Table 2. Emerged, consolidated and marginal inclusionary and exclusionary populist parties in 30 European countries in times of crisis (pre-2008–2017).

	Inclusionary	Exclusionary	Total
Emerged	6	12	18
Consolidated	4	21	25
Marginal	0	22	22
Total Populist parties	10	55	65

Note: the relevance criterion is 4% of vote in national elections (last election before 2008–2017 included).
Legend: Emerged populism = if electoral result <4% before 2008 (i.e. last national election before 2008), but >4% post 2008 (considering 2008–2017 average vote); Consolidated populism = if electoral result >4% before and after 2008; Marginal populism = if electoral result <4% before and after 2008 or = if electoral result >4% before, but <4% after 2008.

governments – as is the case in Austria, Finland, Italy, Greece, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, and Poland – and provide external support to the government in Spain. Furthermore, these parties have also proven to be influential in a variety of other countries, having members of parliament in more than one legislative term – with various degrees of strength – in 49% of cases. In particular, when considering different 'stages' of populist electoral success (i.e. emergence and consolidation: see note on Table 2 for the definition) in Europe, we can identify 18 'emerged' populist parties, 6 of which are inclusionary – a majority of the total number (10). The 'consolidated' populist parties are more numerous, with a higher presence of exclusionary populist actors. Marginal populist parties, too, can be found in time of crises – showing that national patterns should always be carefully scrutinised in order to better grasp the domestic political opportunities for populist parties' success. (For the full list of parties, their classification and performance see the online appendix.)

As already mentioned, beyond the economic crisis we also focus on other crises to better understand the nature of such success. Clearly, the economic crisis (the so-called Great Recession) has played a crucial role in this populist upswing (see Kriesi and Pappas 2015) but in order not to overstate its relevance we need to further grasp what other potential triggers of populist parties' success may exist. From a merely chronological perspective, on the one hand, in several cases, i.e. in most European countries, new political parties have emerged or consolidated since the crisis. They also have been increasingly prominent in the domestic political scene by governing (for example, the case of the True Finns in Finland, Synaspismós Rizospastikís Aristerás (SYRIZA) in Greece, or the FSM and Lega in Italy) or seriously challenging the existing political parties (for example, Front National – now Rassemblement National – in France, Podemos in Spain, or Alternative für Deutschland in Germany). On the other hand, beyond the Great Recession, there has also been a more long-lasting crisis afflicting European democracies: the political

crisis, which has been labelled a crisis of representative democracy in terms of growing lack of trust in democratic institutions (such as the national parliament or government) and in traditional gatekeepers (such as political parties). It is not by chance that several populist parties have tried to move beyond the classic definition of a political party; their leaders have often labelled their organisations as 'movements', not 'parties' – see, for example, the Five Star Movement, among others, which may be considered as a good example of a movement-party. Finally, the cultural crisis – exacerbated by the growth of migration pressures in more recent times – reached its peak with the European refugee crisis of 2015 and has also had an important impact on an increasingly negative perception of migration in several European countries – going beyond what the numbers of migrants might suggest (European Social Survey 2017: 9).

As has been noted, if support for populist parties has increased steadily since 1980 in all European countries, 'the 2009–2012 double-dip recession and the ongoing refugee crisis have helped … populist parties gain momentum'. Various contributions to this special issue tackle this differential explanation of populist parties' success and provide convincing analyses of both the evolution and the explanation of such phenomena.

Political crisis and populism

The first set of explanations deals with the shortcomings of representative democracy (i.e. a *structural crisis* of representation; Kriesi and Pappas 2015). Over recent decades, Europe has witnessed a weakening of traditional party identities and changing party functions (Mair 2002: 5). Mainstream parties have progressively lost ground with respect to the new challengers, which have been better able to represent the 'losers of globalisation'[1] (either in terms of economic transformations or cultural diversities; Kriesi 2018a: 19) and therefore have obtained increasing electoral success (Kriesi 2014, 2017: 18). According to Kriesi (2018b), the political crisis is the key factor in explaining the recent reinvigoration of populism all across Europe, given that contemporary democracies are representative democracies, where political parties act as the main agents of representation: 'This crisis may interact and be reinforced by economic crises, but in the final analysis, it is the political component of the joint crises that is decisive for the rise of populism' (Kriesi 2018b: 16).

There is considerable debate in the literature (e.g. on party competition) regarding the extent to which the rise of (mainly radical right) populist parties should be understood as part of a broader realignment of party systems (e.g. Arzheimer 2009; Carter 2005; Golder 2003, 2016; Hobolt and Tilley 2016; Ivarsflaten 2008; Kitschelt 2007; Kriesi *et al.*

2008; Lubbers *et al.* 2002; Norris 2005; Rooduijn *et al.* 2017; van der Brug and Fennema 2007). The main argument is that the European party system's long-term restructuring (de-alignment or re-alignment: Roberts 2017b) has provided political space for new parties that are able to mobilise around less structured political cleavages, such as economic insecurity and immigration (Guiso *et al.* 2017). Globalisation and post-industrialisation have led to a decline in class voting and partisan identification, increased political alienation among certain segments of the population, and reduced trust in the political elite (e.g. Betz 1994; Golder 2016). The *functionalist crisis interpretation* (Kriesi 2018b; Mair 2013) would therefore be linked mainly to the increasing inability of mainstream political parties to mobilise voters (also Rydgren 2008): the indicators for this are declining party membership and party identification, declining voter turnout, the increasing volatility of the vote and the declining shares of voters who choose to support mainstream parties. Usually, the higher the electoral volatility, the lower the party membership, the lower the trust in parliament (and government and political parties) and the lower the satisfaction with democracy are, the more profound the political crisis is and, presumably, the more likely populist parties are to succeed (e.g. see Kriesi and Pappas 2015).

Economic crisis and populism

Another argument is that economic crises facilitate the emergence and success of populist parties (Hernández and Kriesi 2016; Moffit 2015; Ramiro and Gomez 2017; Stavrakakis and Katzambekis 2014; Vasilopoulou *et al.* 2014).[2] As Arzheimer (2009) underlines, with respect to the radical right, 'in line with theory of ethnic competition the extreme right will benefit from high levels of immigration and unemployment' (Arzheimer 2009: 273). Indeed, according to 'relative deprivation' theories, economic hard times are the main causes of populist attitudes (Guiso *et al.* 2017: 4);[3] moreover, economic crises increase political discontent toward representative institutions. These are two factors strongly related to populism. In fact, Hobolt and Tilley (2016) show that the crisis has reshaped the nature of party competition in Europe (through the sanctioning of mainstream parties and preferences over immigration related to the euro crisis). Nevertheless, there are also studies stressing that poor economic performance (including growth, unemployment, and inflation rates) does not explain the success of radical right-wing populist parties (Arzheimer and Carter 2006; Bjørklund 2007). Finally, we may notice that some scholars emphasise that economics may matter for the fortunes of (far-right) parties but only under certain contextual circumstances related

to party competition (e.g. the positioning of the other parties on the issue, as well as the political debate and agenda; Arzheimer 2009; Kitschelt 2007). Although clearly controversial, economic crisis-related explanations are worth using in analyses that aim to understand the electoral success of populist parties in Europe in the shadow of the crisis (e.g. see also Kriesi and Pappas 2015; Roberts 2017a; van der Brug and Fennema 2007). Particularly innovative is the analysis of the interaction between the economic crisis and the rise of inclusionary populism, which has been more recent and which has been so far been scrutinised only to a limited extent (see Font *et al.* 2019).

Cultural crisis and populism

A last set of crisis-related explanations of populist parties is linked to cultural factors. This approach, which interprets populism as a 'silent revolution' (Ignazi 1997), sees the rise of populist parties as a reaction against a wide range of rapid cultural changes that have eroded the values and customs of Western societies (Inglehart and Norris 2016: 30). This explanation may be problematic, since the 'cultural backlash' refers to several potentially unrelated issues – such as anti-immigration attitudes, mistrust in global and national governance, support for authoritarian values, and left–right ideological self-placement. Moreover, the post-materialistic silent revolution dates back to the 1970s and, until very recent times, populist parties have not been as successful as they currently are (Bartels 2017). Studies address the cultural crisis explanation by focusing on the cultural threat posed by 'immigration', including aspects such as anti-immigrant attitudes and migrants' presence within the domestic political community. Indeed, there is strong support in the literature for the cultural grievance explanation at the individual level (Golder 2016). Multiple studies have shown that anti-immigrant attitudes are positively correlated to radical right populist support (Ivarsflaten 2008; Lubbers and Scheepers 2002; Norris 2005; Rydgren 2008; van der Brug and Fennema 2007). Furthermore, it has already been underlined that – when grievances over economic changes, political elitism, and immigration are all considered simultaneously – populist (right) parties perform well when they mobilise over immigration grievances (Ivarsflaten 2008).

However, the hypothesis linking immigration to populism is thus far supported by contrasting empirical evidence. Roberts (2017a: 18), for example, finds that '[t]he level of immigration … has a statistically significant negative relationship with right populist vote share'. Similarly Vadlamannati and Kelly (2017: 30), using panel data on 27 OECD countries from 1990 to 2014, find 'no direct effect of refugee flows in

explaining electoral support for populist-right parties'.[4] Therefore, it can be argued that immigration 'objectives' figures per se are not by themselves sufficient to grasp the impact of the phenomenon on (populist) voters' reaction, but rather it is possible that more 'subjective' citizens' perceptions (such as for instance citizens' attitudes on immigration) should also be factored into the equation. In this regard, as stressed, populism can benefit from a self-proclaimed crisis; furthermore, it can also be conceived 'as a performance of crisis', capitalising and increasing on citizens' 'sense of insecurity' related to the cultural backlash, rather than on objective figures on immigrant and/or refugee waves, for example. In other words, rather than being a reaction to a pre-existing crisis, populist political actors can construct specific 'failure stories' in line with people's sentiment, and transform them into a perceived crisis (Moffitt 2015). Beyond a cultural-immigration crisis, cultural opportunities coming from the past (such as for instance the fascist or communist legacy respectively in Western and Central-Eastern European countries) need to be accounted for in understanding of the success of populism. As shown elsewhere, similarities and differences between types of populist groups and countries in the framing strategies of populism are linked to the cultural, historical, and political-discursive opportunities (Caiani and della Porta 2011) that determine what kind of ideas are made visible to the public, resonate with public opinion, and are held to be 'legitimate' by the audience (Kriesi 2004: 72).

Our general argument, supported by the various articles in the special issue, is that the crises have interacted in different ways at the national level and that therefore we need to pay specific attention to the context when we analyse the different trajectories of populist parties at the national or regional levels.

Broadly speaking, the crises are 'windows of opportunity' that can be used by the new political parties or for the rebranding of old political parties, which find it relatively easy to build a 'thin-centred ideology', especially in the context of the very widespread social media that further facilitates simplified, unilateral, and antagonistic forms of communication. Furthermore, we may notice that beyond demand side (i.e. crises) contextual factors, meso-level organisational characteristics could be relevant: ideology, organisational structure, and leadership (Art 2011; Carter 2005; De Witte and Klandermans 2000; Goodwin 2006; Mudde 2007) may explain how populist parties take advantage of the macro-level opportunities and constraints. For example, several studies provide evidence that strong party organisations help radical right parties' consolidation (Art 2011; Carter 2005; Lubbers and Scheepers 2002). For these reasons, a contextualisation strategy – which is the one followed in this special issue –

is of utmost importance in order to better grasp the drivers of different variants of populism and the differential levels of electoral success enjoyed by populist parties.

The special issue

Starting from these more recent reflections, in this special issue all the abovementioned three main dimensions or attributes of populism – political rhetoric, ideology, type of organisation/communication style – will be considered, bringing together contributions that explore their empirical manifestations in several European countries and that go beyond the classical division between left-wing and right-wing populism. Each contribution is a stand-alone article in which the author has selected one or more key elements of the analytical framework and has applied it to the selected countries. More specifically, taking into account this scholarly debate, the special issue aims to appraise the 'degree' and 'varieties' of populism within various political parties, with a particular focus – also linked to the special momentum for European democracy after Brexit – on Europe (south,[5] north, east, and west).

In other words, this special issue aims to combine an analytical perspective with an empirical focus on current populism(s) in Europe. Each article reconstructs the new and complex ways in which populism has manifested itself within the context of the economic and political crisis after 2008. This special issue develops an analytical and empirical approach to the topic, which is decidedly distinct from the most recent normative contributions.

The special issue is composed of seven contributions. First, by comparing three countries (Greece, Portugal, and Spain) badly hit by the 2008 Great Recession, which have experienced important electoral and political turmoil, Lisi, Llamazares, and Tsakatika (2019) assess the various populist features through a content analysis of all the most significant – mainstream and challenger – party documents since 2008. They suggest an explanation that focuses on the economic and political crisis (which affects inclusionary and exclusionary populist parties differently). Finally, they discuss some implications regarding the impact of populism on party system change.

Mosca and Tronconi (2019) focus on the Italian case and investigate the nature and evolution of the not easily classifiable type of populism represented by the Five Star Movement (FSM). By relying on original survey data on the ideological positioning of FSM voters, as well as on the analysis of texts published on the blog of the movement's leader, Beppe Grillo, they show that the 2013 national elections represented a turning point in Italian politics: a critical juncture related to the mingling of

economic, political, and moral crises that clearly 'unfroze' voters and generated a tripolar party system.

With a communications and media-related approach to populism, Bernhard and Kriesi (2019) comparatively examine the levels of populism exhibited by parties in Western Europe. Relying on a quantitative content analysis of 11 national elections in time of crises (2012–2015), they show that populist parties from both the radical right and radical left make use of populist appeals, particularly on economic issues. In this contribution, the economic dimension of populism seems particularly relevant for understanding the success of populist parties.

Surel focuses (2019) on France and assesses the relevance of the notion of 'exclusionary populism' for the characterisation of the Front National in the country, making the case that this remains the most appropriate label, even when other labels (such as 'catch-all populism') are employed. The analysis is carried out by examining the political discourses as well as various electoral platforms of the party and concludes by studying the ways in which other French parties and political leaders (such as Macron and Mélenchon) have, to a certain extent, adapted to the new 'populist Zeitgeist'.

Caramani and Manucci (2019), in considering both socio-economic and political-institutional factors, carry out a comparative analysis of eight West European countries and analyse cultural opportunities that may account for populist success. They show that the electoral performance of exclusionary populist parties also depends on the type of re-elaboration of countries' national past and their collective memories. The added value of this contribution is especially in regard to the cultural crisis and the redefinition of the past as a populist political tool.

Usherwood (2019) focuses on the UK Independence Party (UKIP) and, on the basis of various empirical material (website data and leader's speeches), analyses its development. It is shown that, although it was born as a single-issue party par excellence, since the mid-2000s the party has changed into a broader party of protest, moving towards a type which could be classified as exclusionary populism. It sheds light on details in our argument that exclusionary populist parties take advantage of broader feelings of discontent and disconnection across a range of socio-economic groups.

Finally, Engler, Pytlas, and Deegan-Krause (2019), using a combination of elite, expert and mass surveys, and extensive fieldwork, analyse the party systems of various countries in Central and Eastern Europe by looking at the degree of populist ideology among major parties (including the degree of inclusion and exclusion expressed by parties). They also investigate the degree of populist rhetoric and forms of organisation. They argue that Eastern and Central European countries can offer a crucial case study

for the investigation of (the multiple gradational qualities of) populism, since in this region the lack of clear solutions to basic problems, austerity measures, and the distrust of elites among uncommitted voters have shaped the political landscape since the fall of communism, and the phenomenon of populism has never been confined only to exclusionary or inclusionary political parties.

In conclusion, we believe that this special issue provides an important contribution to the analysis of contemporary variants of populist parties within the European contexts, highlighting the relevance of a multicausal analytical framework, which considers three different types of crises – political, economic, and cultural. More specifically, the various articles prove that distinguishing between different types of populist parties (namely exclusionary vs. inclusionary) is particularly important in order to capture the differences and similarities in domestic responses to the crises. In line with Mair (2002) and Kriesi (2018b), it emerges quite clearly that populist parties are especially successful in those cases where the political crisis is pronounced, but that the degree of the parties' success depends on the specific capacity of populist leaders to mobilise in response to the crisis. Furthermore, the economic and cultural crises have a differential impact on the emergence and consolidation of populist parties – the former are more relevant for inclusionary populist parties, the latter are more conducive to the success of exclusionary populist parties. Put differently, the crises per se are windows of opportunity that can be exploited by domestic political leaders or parties who are able to mobilise – via specific 'thin-centred ideologies', rhetoric, and organisation – electorates who are increasingly unsatisfied with the traditional political offer.

Notes

1. For example, the typical radical right-wing populist voter would be a young male, with a low level of education, who is either unemployed, self-employed, or a manual worker (Arzheimer 2009; Arzheimer and Carter 2006; Lubbers and Scheepers 2002; Lucassen and Lubbers 2012; van der Brug. 2000).
2. Kitschelt 2007 (as Carter 2005) also argues that radical right parties' ideological appeal on economics is one predictor of their electoral performance. See also the analyses of Lubbers *et al.* (2002) and Ivarsflaten (2005), as well as Norris (2005 on the socio-economic support base of the radical right.
3. Contrary to this expectation, it has also been noted that economic crises increase the relative salience of the economic dimension, on which far right parties have little expertise (Mudde 2014) or potential cross-class support (Ivarsflaten 2005; Evans 2005).
4. Whereas some studies find that larger immigrant communities increase far right parties' support (Golder 2003, 2016; Lubbers and Scheepers 2002; van der Brug and Fennema 2007), others do not find such effects (Arzheimer

and Carter 2006; Lucassen and Lubbers 2012; Norris 2005; on Eastern Europe, see Bustikova 2014; Rydgren 2008).

5. In the special issue there will be a slight over-representation of Southern European countries. The reason is that in this region the impact of the economic crisis has been harder and party system change has been particularly relevant.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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