

These past years, populism has received great attention from the social science community [mudde2004populist; panizza2005populism]. The term ‘populism’ is both widely used and disputed [roberts2006populism; barr2009populists]. Several scientists have taken on the challenge of conceptualising populism with only a small number of widely acknowledged characteristics. Often, the concept is broken down to political, economic, social, cultural and discursive features and analyzed from numerous theoretical perspectives including democratic and modernization theory, social movement theory, party politics and political psychology [postel2007populist; goodliffe2012resurgence; acemoglu2013political]. Within the wide range of literature there is a general agreement that populism is context-dependent and culture-bound, therefore strongly variable across countries. By the means of cross-national analyses, mudde2012populism were able to gain extensive insight into populism and democracy in Latin America, Canada, Eastern and Western Europe. Further scholars differentiate populism based on historical periods with studies using data going back to the late 19th century [arter2010breakthrough; rosenthal2012steep; levitsky2013resurgence]. Furthermore, populism cuts across ideological cleavages [kaltwasser2014responses]: in Europe, an exclusionary right-wing variant of populism emerged in the 1980s—and has intensified since—targeting mostly immigrants and national minorities [mudde2007populist; ivarsflaten2008unites; art2011inside; berezin2013normalization]. Finding common traits which combine various populist activities across several countries remains a great challenge. The task therefore is to explain how specific circumstances and culture nature populists politics and how these in turn impact the political sphere [arter2010breakthrough]. Despite such difficulties, it is possible to conceptualise populism by clearly identifying the key features of the phenomenon to be observed, allowing a comparison of populist politics across contexts.

The increase of right-wing extremism is of great matter in several Western European democracies. While right-wing parties with conservative and anti-system attitudes are gaining more and more ground in the political arena, the actual democratic process is jeopardised [coffe2007fertile]. Comparative evidence on the intentions of right-wing voters is rather insufficient [kai2008protest]. Several analyses have shown that vote intentions and therefore election outcomes for right-wing parties are affected by political, economic and social variables such as the political landscape, socio-economic characteristics, political trust, the presence of immigrants, crime rate and social capital [eatwell2000rebirth; carter2002proportional; golder2003explaining; coffe2007fertile]. The comparative studies that have been conducted either focused exclusively on the aggregate level or on the individual level. In aggregate-level studies, a variety of country-specific characteristics have been related to voter turnout for right-wing parties at national elections (Bainbridge et al. 1994, 1995; Betz 1994, 1998; Kitschelt 1995; Husbands 1996; Jackman & Volpert 1996; Knigge 1998). However, in studying the context, they neglected individual characteristics related to voting for the extreme right wing. Individual-level studies, on the other hand, did take into account individual voter characteristics. In these studies, again, cross-country comparisons have mostly been limited to comparing a few country case studies, neglecting international impact by the right-wing community [merkl2014revival].