

Seminar Paper

Rise of Populism

A Cross-National Examination of the Support for Populism in 25 European countries

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Abstract

This paper seeks to investigate support for populist parties in Europe. While populism is an intensely debated topic, most scholarship is plagued with conceptual confluences between different variants of populism.

To avoid such conceptual confusions, this paper adopts a minimalist definition to identify core features that all subtypes of populism have in common, namely anti-establishment attitudes as well as their opposition to globalization.

While previous authors used economic and cultural factors to determine support for populism, we propose a theoretical model that distinguishes between *traditionalist* and *progressive populism*. This model involves two steps:

1. **Economically deprived individuals** are more likely to reject establishment parties and consequently support populist parties instead.
2. **Cultural values** determine whether these individuals support progressive or traditionalist populism:
 - a. *Traditionalist populists* draw their support from people who believe that societal change has gone too far.
 - b. *Progressive populists* draw their support from people who believe that their reactionary society is in need of progressive change.

In order to operationalize our conceptual considerations, we use the *Chapel Hill Expert Survey* dataset and combine it with *European Social Survey* data to identify respondents that vote for and/or identify with populist parties.

We estimate a multinomial logistic regression to test our hypotheses. Our models lend support for our theoretical expectations. Economically deprived individuals are more likely to support either variant of populism. Yet individuals who hold traditional values are more likely to support traditionalist populism, whereas the effect goes in the opposite direction for the support of progressive populism.

Further research might be able to build upon our conceptualization and give more attention to the different variants of populism, so as to not conflate the distinct explanatory frameworks that come along with them.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Subcaption 1

1.2 Subcaption 2

This is a great way to test whether 1233.34 really works in the way it is intended to work. This is different though because 34.876 might be better actually. Or how about 44864.

1233.34

1233.34

1233.34

The following subsection will conceptualize regime support and introduce possible explanatory frameworks that were gathered from the relevant literature (Section 2.1). In this section, the concept of deliberation is clarified (Section 2.2) and a link between deliberation and regime support is established, from which research hypotheses are subsequently derived (Section 2.3).

2 Theory

Some Citations

This is an example introduction. Let's cite someone here (Easton 1965). And in text as well: Habermas (1994) says that we can cite people in text. Or we can write the name, and then use the citation thingy to print the year: Blabla states something about something (1975). Or how about multiple citations (Habermas 1994; Habermas 1994). Or we citation with a little of text around it (for example see Habermas 1994: 92-93).

ALLE Zitierweisen von Zotero gibts HIER.

More Citations

Blah blah (cf. Easton 1965: 33–5; also Easton 1975: 2).

Blah blah (Easton 1975: 33–5, 38–9).

Blah blah (Easton 1975; Habermas 1994).

Smith says blah (1975).

Easton (1975) says blah.

Habermas (1994: 33) says blah.

2.1 What is populist about populism? (5,5)

While populism is an important and intensely debated topic, most scholarship is plagued with conceptual conflation (Mudde/Kaltwasser 2011: 1). Despite existing pleas to avoid these, many influential scholars continue to use qualifying features of the Right to describe populism, possibly leading to severe shortcomings in their empirical analyses. To avoid similar conceptual confusions, this chapter will first adopt Cas Mudde's clear minimalist definition to identify those core elements that all subtypes of populism have in common (2.1.1.). Subsequently, we propose a comprehensive framework to classify European populist parties along two relevant dimensions: progressivist and traditionalist populism. (2.1.2.)

2.1.1 A minimalist definition: Moving away from the confusion between populism and the Right (3)

In nearly every handbook about populism, authors would eventually point out to the concept's contested nature. As Heinisch et al. described, "[n]early as ubiquitous as articles and commentaries on populism is the assertion that it is a contested concept and difficult to define. [...] [T]here have been numerous conceptualisations, which are themselves derived from several fundamental approaches that differ [...] in their ideas on whether populism is primarily ideational, discursive, stylistic, or strategic in nature." (HB: 22) This contending debate on how to best define populism is reflected by various empirical studies that emphasize different and sometimes even contradictory aspects of the phenomenon (Gerring 2001: 120 in HB: 169). Broadly speaking, there exist three types of definition for populism. It can be qualified as an organizational type, as a political communication style or as a thin ideology (cf. Pauwels 2011: 99). Especially the latter type has gained prominence in scholarly literature (? Referenz wiederfinden) However, the differentiation between populism as a communication style and as a thin ideology seems artificial at times. Both types distinguish between the people as opposed to the elite and they both allow for a combination with other (even diametrically opposed) ideologies. In our understanding these two types of populism share so many characteristics that the differentiation between them seems to be a matter of wording rather than a matter of clear defined features of populism.

Most scholars agree on the "chameleonic" character of populism (cf. Taggart 2000 in Ot/Low 2015: 61). Some authors, borrowing Michael Freeden's (1996) notion of a thin ideology (in Ot/Low 2015:61), assert that populism can be combined with other more "established"

ideologies like liberalism, nationalism, conservatism, federalism or socialism (i.e. Mudde 2015:1, M/K 2017: 19, Albertazzi & McDonnell 2008: 4). As Mudde and Kaltwasser emphasize, populism can be "left-wing or right-wing, organized in top-down or bottom-up fashion, rely on strong leaders or be even leaderless" (? In Mudde/Kaltwasser 2012: 153).

A serious problem is therefore the confusion between populism and the Right (ie Betz, 1994 in Albertazzi & McDonnell 2008:3), as Cas Mudde laments: “Until now, populism was almost exclusively linked to the radical right, leading to an incorrect conflation of populism and xenophobia.” (Mudde 2015: 1 in HB. 229) This tendency has to do with the fact that populism gained strength in Europe with the formation of populist radical right parties in the 1980s (Mudde/Kaltwasser 2012: 155). Their emergence triggered the blossoming of a vast scholarly literature – although focussing almost exclusively on discussing right-wing populism (De Lange, 2008, in Ot/low 2015:60) while neglecting the growing impact of their counterpart on the left side of the political spectrum (Lucardie and Voerman, 2012; March and Mudde, 2005 in Ot/Low 2015: 60).

Despite the already existing thematization of this shortcoming, many scholars still make the mistake of using right-wing characteristics to define populism (Mudde 2007 in Ot/Low 2015: 61). Inglehart and Norris, for instance, justified their definition of populism as follows: “Cas Mudde has been influential in the literature, suggesting that populist philosophy is a loose set of ideas that share three core features: anti-establishment, authoritarianism, and nativism.” (Inglehart/Norris 2016: 6). Considering that the publication they quoted from is called “Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe” (2007), Inglehart’s and Norris’ statement seems to be remarkably negligent. In this publication, Mudde unambiguously named authoritarianism and nativism as ideological features of the populist right and not of populism per se (cf. Mudde 2007: 22, Mudde/Kaltwasser 2012: 155). We believe that it is exactly because of such a theoretical conflation that Inglehart’s and Norris’ empirical classification of European parties exhibits serious flaws, i.e. by wrongly indicating that the National Democratic Party of Germany belongs to the populist left party family, just to name but one. (cf. Inglehart/Norris 2016: 36). As Albertazzi points out, “this insistence on making ‘populist’ and ‘extreme right’ synonymous or lumping all populists under the ‘radical Right populist’ banner for ease of comparison [...] is detrimental to our understanding [of] [...] populism itself.” (Albertazzi et al. 2007: 4).

To avoid similar mistakes, we draw on a minimalist definition to capture those core features that all subtypes of populism have in common. Following Mudde (who is indeed “influential in the literature”), we view populism as “a thin-centered ideology that 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* (general will) of the people”. (Mudde 2004: 543) / (Mudde/Kaltwasser 2017: 6). The biggest advantage about this minimalist definition is its neutrality, allowing us to analyse populism separately from the ideological situation in which it operates (Hali/Nanou 2012: 2).

Marlon: The essential point about Mudde’s definition is to make a normative distinction between the “pure” people and the “corrupt” elite (cf. Mudde 2017: 9). Generally speaking, the elite can be defined on the basis of power. Whatever specific group of elite, the corrupt elite is understood as a

homogeneous group that works for their own interests instead of representing the *volonté générale* (general will of the people) (M/K 2017: 11). Therefore, the politics should be an expression of the general will (M/K 2017: 16).

Verbinden & Reformulieren/Kürzen: In essence, “Whatever their positioning on the Left/Right spectrum, the key feature of populists is their claim to be the ‘true democrats’, fighting to reclaim the people’s sovereignty from the professional political and administrative classes (be they in regional or national capitals, or at supranational level in Brussels), as well as other elite ‘enemies’ who, through the sleight of hand of representative and deliberately arcane and complex politics, have stolen and perverted democracy.” (Albertazzi & McDonnell 2008: 4) “Populists claim that, contrary to the ruling elites, they will make good on their promises.” (Ot/Low 2015: 60).

Recognizing that left-wing populism was widely neglected in the past, recent scholarship has started to study this variant of populism (i.e. Stavrakakis, 2014 or Rendueles, 2018). However, so far this literature has tended to conduct qualitative case studies that concentrate on regional singularities instead of generalizable tendencies of the phenomenon.

Reformulieren/Kürzen: “Like most political phenomena, populism is studied mostly nationally and partly regionally. The first studies of populism were focused exclusively on the United States, while later work looked at Latin America and Western Europe. Few cross-regional studies of populism exist (notably Weyland 1999), while most generic studies of populism remain fairly theoretical and empirically voluntaristic (e.g., Laclau 2005; Taggart 2000). This situation is neither unique to the topic of populism nor without compelling reasons.” (Mudde/Kaltwasser 2011: 1)

Left-wing populism is commonly perceived as geographically limited to Latin America while right-wing populism is associated to the European political context. Given the recently growing importance of left-wing populist parties in Europe (i.e. SYRIZA or Podemos), it is important to study the populist phenomenon taking into account – but without limiting it to – the regional context (comprising political, cultural and economic specificities) that it is

embedded in (? in HB: 138, 229).

With regard to the populist phenomenon in Europe – which is this is paper’s focus of study – two common points shared by all populist parties are important to note. First, as explained above, populists reject establishment parties that they consider to represent the “corrupt elite” (M/K 2017: 12). Secondly, populists are consistently opposed to the European integration process. It is however at this point that differences between varieties of populism manifest. While populists from both sides of the political spectrum display an anti-European stance, the justification and intensity of their euroskepticism vary depending on their ideological orientation (in Ot/Low 2015: 60, M/K 2017: 22). What, then, essentially distinguishes the operating logic of these populism subtypes?

2.1.2 An essential distinction: Moving towards a comprehensive conceptualization of progressive and traditionalist populism (2,5)

The main difference originates from the populists' conception of "the pure people" and "the corrupt elite". As Mudde and Kaltwasser (2017) assert, "[e]ach populist actor emerges because of a particular set of social grievances, which influences its choice of host ideology, which in turn affects how the actor defines 'the people' and 'the elite'". (M/K 2017: 22). Populists are usually ambiguous about the "people" that they intend to represent (HB: 22). Since "the people" is an "empty signifier" (Laclau in M/K 2017: 9), its meaning varies depending on historical and regional circumstances and differs from party to party (Canovan 1981 in HB: 169). Due to this ambiguity, the dichotomy between the "pure people" and the "corrupt elite" can be understood from a political, a cultural or an economic viewpoint (Mény and Surel 2000 in HB: 169). Most populists therefore not only target the political elite, but also other types of elites like the economic, the cultural or the media elite (M/K 2017: 12).

While all populists attack political elites, left-wing populists especially target the economic elite. Right wing populists, on the other hand, are characterized by nativism and focus on "cultural antagonism" (HB:170, cf. Mudde 2007: 18 ff.). Simply put, populist parties frequently enter in a marriage of convenience with some type of "nativism" on the right and with some sort of "socialism" on the left" (Mudde 2015: 1 in HB: 229, M/K 2017: 21). Radical-right wing populists emphasize the necessity to resist "external threats" to the nation state. This ethno-centric tendency expresses

RIGHT: The shared ideology of radical right-wing parties is centred on nationalism. These parties highlight the need for resistance against external threats to the nation – often expressed by an "ethno-centric message" (Hainsworth 2008) and tough policies on asylum and immigration (Mudde 1996, 2007; Mair & Mudde 1998). (in hali/nanou 2012: 2)

LEFT: The shared ideology of radical left-wing parties has three key elements (March & Mudde 2005): a rejection of the values of capitalism and the free market economy; the protection of collective economic and social rights in pursuit of social justice; and the idea of states working together to address shared concerns in support of internationalism. Therefore, conventionally, the defence of the nation tends to be associated with radical parties of the right

There is a lively discussion within recent scholarship on how to ideally capture these two broad dimensions of the populist phenomenon. They are commonly labelled as "right-wing" and "left-wing" populism. Some authors prefer to describe them as

3 Methodological and Analytical Section

The following section will introduce the data and its sources. We use the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES) on European party position in order to construct our dependent variable of *Support for Populist Parties* (i.e. Support for Progressive or Traditionalist Populist parties) along with individual level data from the European Social Survey (ESS) (Section 3.1). The following subsection operationalizes our hypotheses (cultural and economic explanations for populism) and subsequently a description of the used control variables is given (Section 3.2). Following this, the statistical methodology is explained (Section 3.3) and a short examination of descriptive statistics takes place (Section 3.4). Lastly, the results of estimated multinomial logistic regression models are reported and examined for their implications regarding the research hypotheses (Section 3.5).

3.1 Data & Operationalization

The CHES dataset contains information on the positions of XXX political parties in 40 European countries on european and national policy issues in the timerange between 1999 and 2014. This makes the CHES data suitable for identifying the ideological party positions that can be classified as progressive and traditionalist populism within the European context.

As a first step, we selected two variables that are in line with our minimalistic definition of populism. They will be used to construct the an Establishment - Anti-Establishment Axis.

3.1.1 Establishment - Anti-Establishment Axis

Populism, as it is conceptualized in this study, is characterized by two main features: a disdain for the established elites that supposedly exploit the *pure* and *little* people and an opposition to the effects of globalization that brings cultures and economies closer together at the expense of the (local) working class.

Anti-Elite Sentiment

Anti-Elite Sentiment is measured with the 11-point scale (0-1) variable *antielite_salience* that indicates the salience of anti-elite rhetoric within a given party. This corresponds with Mudde and Kaltwasser's concept of populism where the "corrupt elite" is pitted against the pure people (M/K 2017: 12).

- *Salience of anti-establishment and anti-elite rhetoric*
 - 0. Not important at all
 - 1. Extremely important

Euroskepticism

Euroskepticism (*position*¹) will be used as a proxy variable for anti-globalization. Populists are consistently opposed to the European integration process, albeit for different reasons.

- *Overall orientation of the party leadership towards European integration*
 1. Strongly opposed
 2. Strongly in favor

3.1.2 Progressivism - Traditionalism Axis

Next, we try to identify the value cleavage between progressivism and traditionalism.

This value cleavage depicted divides *progressives*, who favor progressive social values, promote liberal lifestyles and acceptance of homosexuality, civil liberties and multiculturalism from *traditionalists* who take the opposite stance on all these positions. The following Variables have been selected in order to distinguish between progressive and traditionalist populism.

GAL-TAN

GAL-TAN is a new politics dimension invented by Hooghe et al. (2002). The capital letters are abbreviations for a scale that is supposed to capture the new fault lines in European politics and they stand for *Green-Alternative-Libertarian* (GAL) and *Traditional-Authoritarian-Nationalist* (TAN) respectively.

- *Position of the party [...] in terms of their views on democratic freedoms and rights. “Libertarian” or “postmaterialist” parties favor expanded personal freedoms, for example, access to abortion, active euthanasia, same-sex marriage, or greater democratic participation. “Traditional” or “authoritarian” parties often reject these ideas; they value order, tradition, and stability, and believe that the government should be a firm moral authority on social and cultural issues (galtan).*
 0. Libertarian/Postmaterialist
 1. Center
 2. Traditional/Authoritarian

Social Lifestyle

The acceptance of different lifestyle is a phenomena that consistently splits traditionalists from progressives. While progressives push for the acceptance of non-traditional social lifestyles traditionalists see this push as undermining very fabric of society.

- *Position on social lifestyle (e.g. homosexuality) (sociallifestyle).*
 0. Strongly supports liberal policies

¹The Euroskepticism variable has been recoded so that higher values indicate higher opposition to European integration.

1. Strongly opposes liberal policies

Civil Liberties

While progressives favor civil liberties and rehabilitation of criminals into society, traditionalists favor tough measures can serve as a deterrence, even at the expense of civil liberty.

- *Position on civil liberties vs. law and order (civlib_laworder).*
 0. Strongly promotes civil liberties
 1. Strongly supports tough measures to fight crime

Multiculturalism

Traditionalists usually see a looming threat from immigrants from different countries, especially when they come from non-European countries, so they favor their complete assimilation into the host country. Progressives on the other hand understand diversity as strength and favor multicultural society without assimilation.

- *Position on integration of immigrants and asylum seekers (multiculturalism vs. assimilation) (multiculturalism).*
 0. Strongly favors multiculturalism
 1. Strongly favors assimilation

Left-Right Scale

Lastly, a general left-right scale is added to this dimension. While our definition of the Progressive-Traditionalist Axis is mostly based on value differences, it's not *just* that. Party affiliation with a set of ideas matters as well and therefore we also include a measure of ideology through this scale.

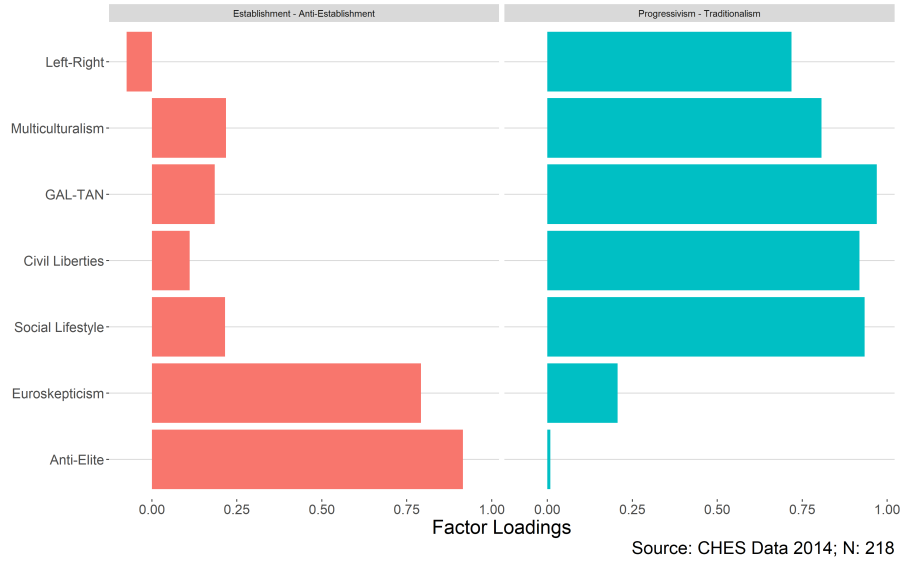
- *Position of the party [...] in terms of its overall ideological stance (lrgen).*
 0. Extreme left
 1. Center
 2. Extreme right

Having selected the variables, a maximum likelihood factor analysis with varimax rotation is conducted in order to estimate whether our proposed dimensions are being measured by the relevant variables.

Based on the Kaiser-Criterion, two distinct dimensions are extracted explaining a total variance of 0.78%. The extracted scales are then summed into two scales *Establishment vs. Anti-Establishment* and *Progressive vs. Traditionalism*, each standardized from 0 to 100 points to facilitate easy interpretation.

As a next step, we want to extract our traditionalist and progressive populist parties. This will be done with the help of *k-means clustering*. K-Means clustering is a very popular form of unsupervised

Figure 1: Factor Analysis of CHES Data



machine learning that helps with classification problems. The algorithm produces a k number of clusters (classification groups), where k is specified by the researcher. K-Means clustering estimates a centroid (i.e. a center) for each group that has the highest *intra-class similarity* within a given cluster (i.e. smallest distance from the centroid) and the lowest *inter-class similarity* with other specified cluster (i.e. maximized distance from other cluster centroids). The resulting clusters have minimal *within cluster variation* and a maximum of *between cluster variation*.

The classical algorithm for k-means clustering is the Hartigan-Wong algorithm (1979), where the total within-cluster variation is defined as the sum of squared (Euclidean) distances between data points and the corresponding centroid:

$$W(C_k) = \sum_{x_i \in C_k} (x_i - \mu_k)^2$$

Where x_i is a data point belonging to the cluster C_k and μ_k is the mean of values that are classified as cluster C_k (centroid).

Each data point x_i is classified as a specific cluster so that the sum of squares euclidian distance of the observation to their assigned cluster centroid μ_k is minimized.

$$Within - SS = \sum_{k=1}^k W(C_k) = \sum_{k=1}^k \sum_{x_i \in C_k} (x_i - \mu_k)^2$$

Finally, the total within-cluster sum of square (Within-SS) measures the appropriateness of the clustering based on how much it can be minimized.

Now the algorithm can come into use. As a first step, the algorithm randomly selects k points from the given data that will be used as centroids. Next, two steps will be repeated iteratively until convergence is achieved:

1. Cluster Assignment Step

Using Euclidean distance, the distances to the centroid are calculated and the data points are classified to be part of a cluster.

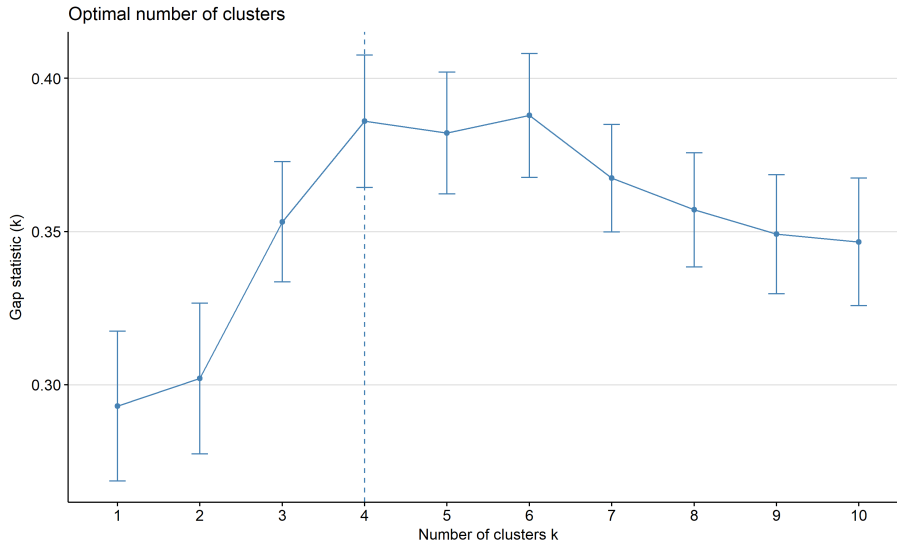
2. Centroid Update Step

In this step, a new centroid is calculated based on the estimated clusters. These centroids serve as new starting point and all data points are reassigned.

The algorithm converges when the clusters do not change in the next iteration (the last two iteration produce the same clusters with the same data points within them).

Finally, the two scales *Establishment vs. Anti-Establishment* and *Progressive vs. Traditionalism* are handed over to the K-means clustering algorithm. Based on the Gap Statistic method (cf. Tibshirani et al. 2001), four clusters are suggested as the optimal number of clusters.² Figure shows the results of the gap statistic that clearly indicate four clusters.

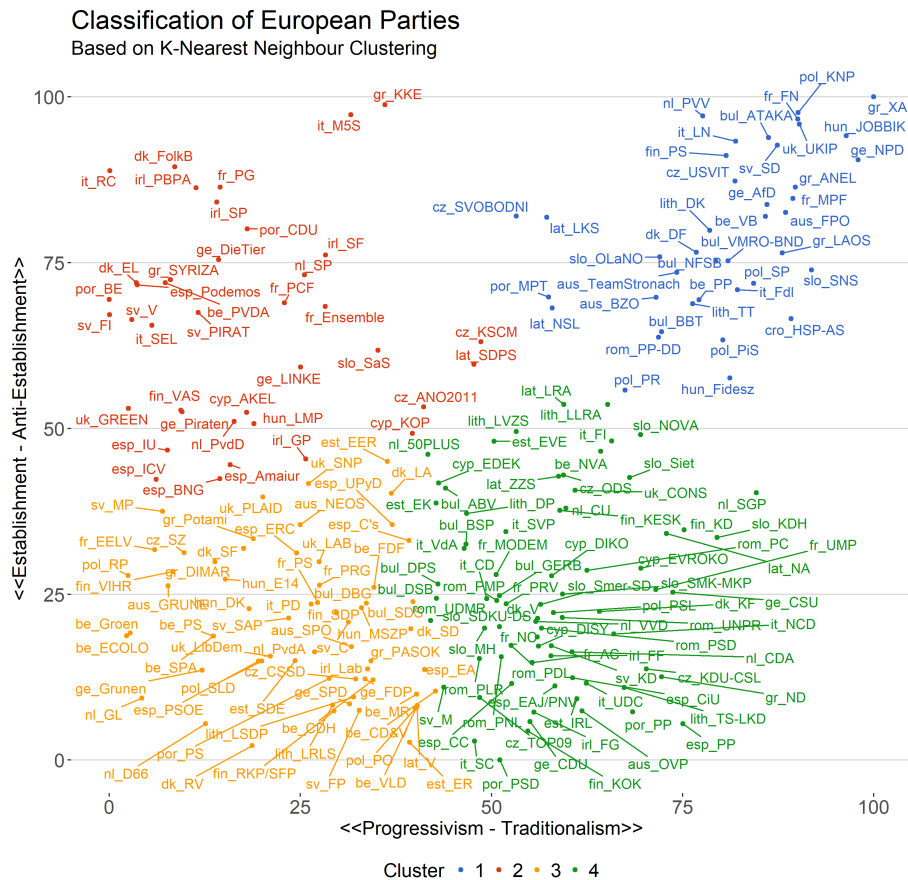
Figure 2: Results of Gap Statistic Method



The four clusters that are estimated with the help of the k-means algorithm can be named as traditionalist and progressive populist parties as well as their two establishment counterparts (establishment progressives and traditionalists). Together with the clustering method, the two dimensions can be used to visualize the ideological position of each European party and its classification, which is illustrated in Figure .

²Elbow and average silhouette method also suggest four clusters as optimal.

Figure 3: Party Alignment of European Parties



In order to validate the clusters, let's take a look at them in greater detail and see whether the classified parties fit our theoretical expectations.

TODO:

Top Left shows progressive populists such as:

Syriza, Podemos and Partit de Gauche (or Partit Communiste Français PCF)

DESCRIBE THEM

Top Right shows traditionalist populists such as:

Golden Dawn, AfD and Front National

DESCRIBE THEM

Bottom left and bottom right shows progressive and traditionalist establishment parties:

German SPD and CDU, Labour Party and Conservatives UK, SOME FRENCHIES

DESCRIBE THEM

Given that the distinction between kinds of establishment parties is not of greater interest to us, we will merge progressive and traditionalist establishment parties into a single establishment party group.

Our measure of populism correlates well with different similar classification methods.

(TODO:) CORRELATION WITH OTHER MEASURES

(TODO:) ONLY INCLUDE PARTIES THAT ARE USED LATER ON

A full list of used parties as well as their respective affiliations can be found in the appendix.

(TODO: TABLE that shows the individuals scores)

3.1.3 Dependent Variable: Support for Populist Parties

TODO:

(TODO:) INCLUDE ALL ESS ROUNDS

The European Social Survey data is such and such.

- from when to when
- which countries
- how many parties
- actual operationalization

After the successful classification, we combine the clusters from the CHES data with the *European Social Survey* (ESS) Round 5 – 8. We decided to use only these dates, as we expect the years after the European financial crisis (2008-09) to be more homogenous in terms of populism. Two variables will be used to measure our dependent variable *Support for Populist Parties*:

1. *What party did you vote for in the last national election?*
2. *Which party is closest to your views?*

A respondent that either voted for or indicated that they feel closest to a specific party, will be classified as either supporting a progressive or traditionalist populist or an establishment party, based on the clusters generated by the K-means algorithm. If it is the case that a person voted for a party but felt close to a different party, we decided to classify said person as a supporter of the party that it felt most close to (thus ranking their vote as less indicative of their support). This is based on the assumption that many voters have an incentive to vote strategically and they might end up voting for an establishment party even though they actually support a populist party (TODO: **CITATION**).

After the merging is completed we are left with XXX respondents from 24 European countries.

TODO: **Descriptives?**

3.1.4 Independent Variables: Cultural and Economic Explanations

TODO: **Description of INDEPENDENT VARIABLES?**

Measuring this or that (just check Inglehart on how they have done it)

The models include standard social and demographic controls, including sex, age, education, and ethnicity. Economic inequality was monitored through experience of unemployment, households dependent upon social benefits (excluding pensions) for their main source of income, urbanization, and subjective feelings of income insecurity. Principal Component Factor analysis with Varimax Rotation was used to determine the dimensionality of a range of cultural items which were included in all waves of the ESS and which were expected to be particularly salient for the division between Populist and Cosmopolitan Liberal values. Five values scales were produced through this process, including scales on attitudes towards immigration, trust in global governance, trust in national governance, authoritarian values, and left-right ideological self-placement. The value scales were each standardized to 100-points, for ease of comparison. All models were checked by tolerance tests to be free of problems of multicollinearity. The inclusion of items consistently asked across all rounds of the ESS maximized the size of the pooled sample of populist voters, and therefore strengthened confidence in the reliability of the results, although unfortunately it also restricted the full range of items which ideally could be included, for example concerning gender equality. The descriptive means and standard deviations of all the items are presented in Appendix C.

3.2 Statistical Methodology

Here comes a description of the multinomial model (might need to change the name of the title)

3.3 Descriptives

TODO:

- Populist Parties by Region
- Populist Parties by Country (map)

Descriptive Statistics and Exploratory Evaluation of the Hypotheses

3.4 Multinomial Logistic Regression

Here comes the Analysis Part

4 Analysis

4.1 Results

4.2 Discussions

5 Conclusions

5.1 Limitations

5.2 Implications

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