Trajectories of Populist Parties in Europe

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Puzzle/RQ

Puzzle

Cas Mudde: "'Populists are attractive at the moment because they shake up the world but, after a while, populists are no longer that interesting."'

Source: https://www.ceu.edu/article/2017-06-15/
happy-people-rarely-vote-populists-mudde-says

Mechanisms

- Context of original citation: Media attention
- Here: Interplay of general wave-shaped trajectories of populist parties with external "shock" of "refugee crisis"
- Potentially also: Boredom, pressure valve, realization of limited impact, corruption or disenchantment due to government participation

Disclaimer

Sparse data

- Despite the attention they get, populist parties have generally not successfully contested a whole lot of elections
- Here, 16 parties in 12 western European countries at 50 elections since 2000 are studied → N=66
- Also quite old-fashioned RQ and data, trend towards e.g. intra-party analysis or impact of populism (Mudde 2016; C-REX working paper)
- *Goal*: Conceptual and statistical framework for analyzing *trajectories* of populist parties

Theory

- Populism as an increasingly salient dimension of political competition (cultural backlash/economic inequality)
- Working definition of populism: Core of antagonistic relationship between "the people" and "the elites"
- Often involves nativism and authoritarianism
  $\rightarrow$ Populist radical right
- Anti-immigration stances fit perfectly with "we" against "the others"
- After a while, populism falters

Hypothesis 1

Populism occurs in waves.

Hypothesis 2

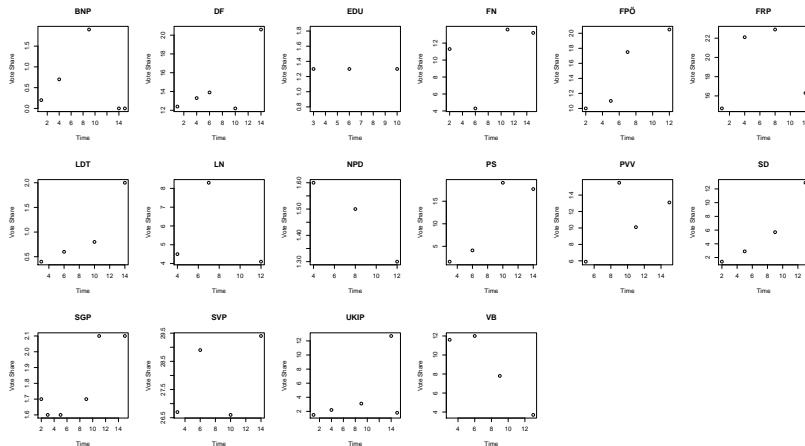External "shocks" can spark temporary support for populist parties.

Design

- N=66 (16 parties in 12 western European countries at 50 elections since 2000)
- Dependent variable: Log of vote share of populist party at election
- Controls: Random intercepts for parties, elections and countries; district magnitude
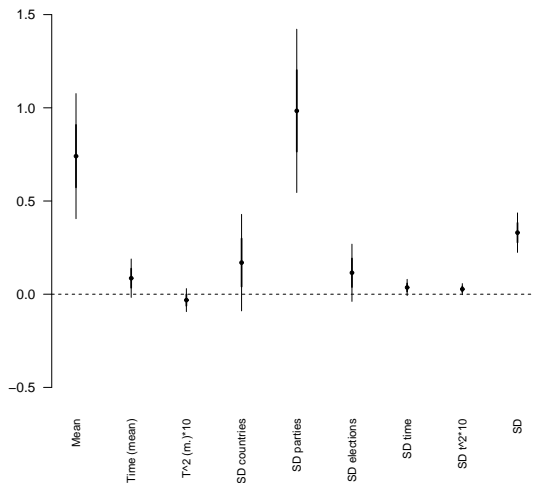
Model implementing trajectories

- Latent curves multilevel model: Time (T) and time squared (T2) since 2000 as independent variables
- T and T2 are allowed to vary by party
- Immigration rates and "shock" of "refugee crisis" expected to explain deviations from "wave"-shaped trajectories
- Bayesian framework for estimation to cope with sparse data
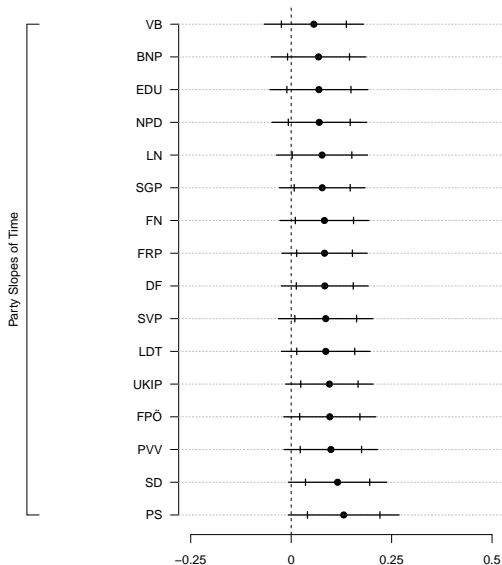
Electoral Results
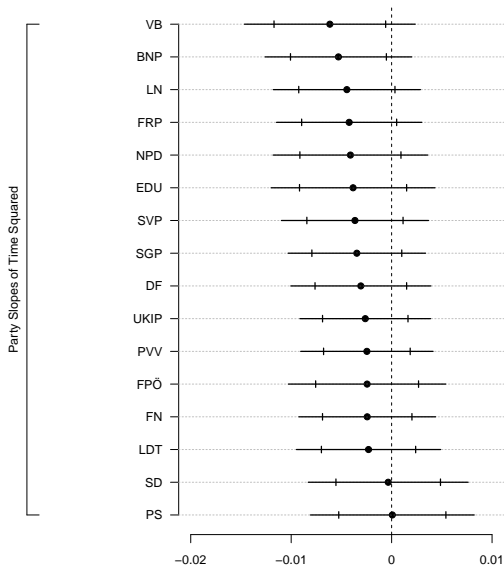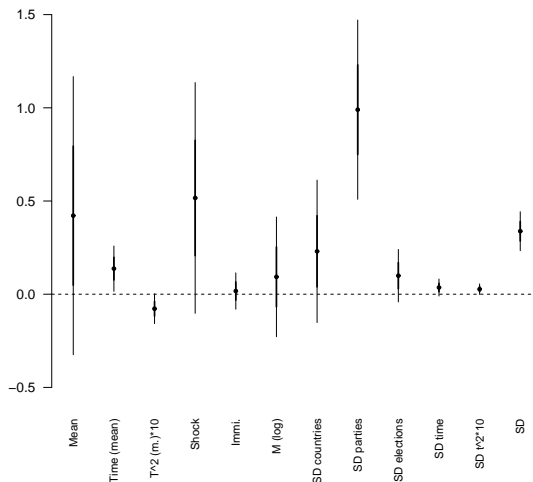
Model of Trajectories

Party Slopes: Time

Party Slopes: Time Squared

Model of Electoral Trajectories with Covariates
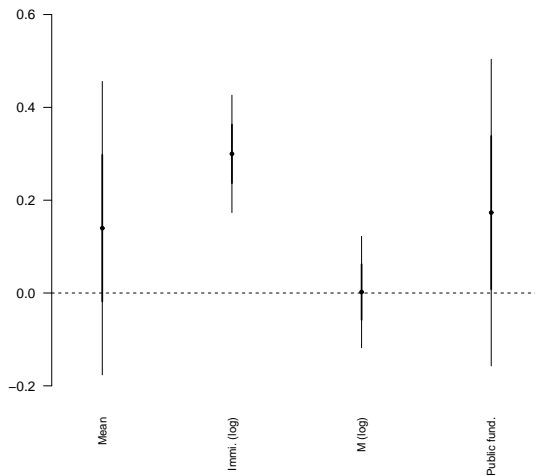
Conclusions

I like

- Conceptual and statistical framework for analyzing the trajectories of populist parties
- Hints at potential fourth wave of populism

I dislike

- N
- Length of waves; hypothetical character of prediction
- Exclusion of mechanisms such as government participation
- $\rightarrow$ Go for regional-level election results?

Thank you for your attention!

Model of Entry

Residual vs. Fitted