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Right-Wing Participation: who is attracted by right populists?

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Abstract: In this study we explain extreme right-wing voting behaviour in the countries of the European Union and Norway from a micro and macro perspective. Using a multidisciplinary multilevel approach, we take into account individual-level social background characteristics and public opinion alongside country characteristics and characteristics of extreme right-wing parties themselves. By making use of large-scale survey data ($N = 49,801$) together with country-level statistics and expert survey data, we are able to explain extreme right-wing voting behaviour from this multilevel perspective. Our results show that cross-national differences in support of extreme right-wing parties are particularly due to differences in public opinion on immigration and democracy, the number of non-Western residents in a country and, above all, to party characteristics of the extreme right-wing parties themselves.

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1 Introduction

In the 2009 European Parliamentary elections, especially right-wing parties mobilized anti-EU sentiment and gained seats in the European parliament.

Since the early 1980s, parties such as the French Front National, the Belgian Vlaams Blok, the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) and the Danish People's Party have established themselves in their respective party systems, sometimes with vote shares exceeding 20 per cent.

In the following study we are eager to answer the question whether ...

In this article, we will try to explain differences in extreme right-wing voting behaviour between 16 Western European countries. So far, cross-national empirical research on extreme right-wing voting has been scarce, even though in 1988 von Beyme emphasized that “future studies of right-wing extremism will have to pay more attention to the whole political context of the political movement” (von Beyme 1988: 16).

(???) : Any attempt to explain an individual's propensity to vote must take into account the differences in the context in which the individual lives. We mainly assume that different contextual settings will have different impacts on individual participation. We also expect different interactions between contextual and individual characteristics. In other words: differences in individual resources play a key role in explaining individual participation behaviour, but the latter also depends on the canton in which a person lives. On the one hand the cantonal context builds a framework which fosters or hinders the individual's propensity to vote, and on the other hand, the effect of individual resources on participation also differs from context to context.

Third, we advance a methodological argument. We hypothesise that an individual's propensity to vote is influenced by both his personal characteristics as well as by contextual attributes. Individual-level explanations of electoral participation on the one hand typically argue that non-voting is determined by a combination of

facilitative and motivational variables. Motivational factors as such include ideology, political attitudes, and basic tendencies, whereas facilitative determinants refer to specific individual resources and socio-demographic factors (education, income, age etc.) (Kleinhenz 1995; Knight and Marsh 2002). Macro-level approaches, on the other hand, evaluate the determinants of total voting turnout rather than focusing on the individual (Franklin 2002; Norris 2002). In this strand of research, cross-country variance is explained by cultural, economic, and – most importantly – politico-institutional settings (Blais and Dobrzynska 1998; Crepaz 1990; Franklin 2002; Freitag 1996, 2005; Norris 2004; Wernli 1998). While micro-level research neglects the contextual framework within which individual actions take place, macro-level approaches face the risk of ecological fallacies. Against this background, we argue that non-voting has to be explained by both individual and contextual characteristics. Moreover, the environmental context also functions in an interactive manner, influencing the strength of the effect of individual characteristics on participation. By combining individual and contextual determinants of electoral participation and modelling them simultaneously with multilevel analysis, we contribute to the overcoming of the “midlife crisis” facing electoral studies (Curtice 2002: 6). We see multilevel analysis as a possibility to overcome the micro-macro dualism widely discussed in social sciences. With multilevel analyses, the determinants of individual behaviour can be analysed in a much more appropriate manner than with simple micro-analyses or macro-analyses (Hank 2003). For the first time, data on the 2003 Swiss elections allows the influence of the cantonal contexts on individual participation to be tested. We can therefore go further than the very rare existing studies on electoral participation in Switzerland, which are conducted either on the aggregate (Freitag 2005; Wernli 1998, 2001) or the individual level (Ballmer-Cao and Sgier 1998; Bühlmann et al. 2003). This contribution is divided into four sections. Before we turn to a short description of our method and our results we discuss the existing theoretical and empirical contributions to our investigation (next section). Our last section offers conclusions and outlines for future research.

So far, these factors have been studied in isolation and have not as yet been integrated

into an explanatory model of cross-national differences in extreme right-wing voting. This article is among the first to take all these factors into account for all countries of the European Union and Norway using a multi-level approach. This approach also allows us to examine how the contextual and individual levels are interrelated. It brings together a large amount of individual-level survey data ($N = 49,801$). Moreover, country characteristics are added from census data as well as data from an expert judgement survey conducted among political scientists in all countries included in the study to trigger information on the opportunity structure for extreme right-wing parties as well as their specific characteristics (Lubbers 2000). To summarize, we answer the question as to what extent differences between countries in extreme right-wing voting can be explained in terms of (a) composition effects, (b) country conditions, and (c) characteristics of extreme right-wing parties themselves. Moreover we examine how individual-level effects differ between countries and to what extent these differences are influenced by contextual conditions.

Whether or not this fear is justified, the fact remains that many countries have witnessed a growing popularity of these parties since the 1980s and that this growth in popularity is mirrored by a declining popularity of the more traditional political parties.

The ability of populist politics to galvanize new forms of political engagement is especially important in an era of decline in formal political participation such as turnout and party membership Skocpol & Williamson (2016). At the same time, in unconsolidated democracies populism may erode democratic institutions and usher competitive authoritarian regimes (Levitsky & Loxton 2012).

Populist politics can reshape repertoires of political mobilization, especially in the forms of mass social movements and socially engaged party organizations (Hawkins 2010; Jansen 2011).

2 State of Research

These past years populism has received great attention from the social science community (Mudde 2004; Mudde & Kaltwasser 2017). The term “populism” is both widely used and disputed (Roberts 2006; Barr 2009). 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 (Postel 2007; Goodliffe 2012; Acemoglu et al. 2013). 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, Mudde & Kaltwasser (2012) 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 (Arter 2010; Rosenthal & Trost 2012; Levitsky & Roberts 2013). Furthermore, populism cuts across ideological cleavages (Kaltwasser 2014): in Europe, an exclusionary right-wing variant of populism emerged in the 1980s—and has intensified since—targeting mostly immigrants and national minorities (Mudde 2007; Ivarsflaten 2008; Arter 2011; Berezin 2013). 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 (Arter 2010). 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 (Coffé et al. 2007). Comparative evidence on the intentions of right-wing voters is rather insufficient (Kai 2008). Several analyses have shown that vote intentions and therefore election outcomes for right-wing parties are affected by political, economic and social circumstances such as the political landscape, socio-economic characteristics, political trust, the presence of immigrants, crime rate and social capital (Carter 2002; Golder 2003; Coffé et al. 2007).

Most comparative analyses either observed solely on the individual level or on the aggregate level. In aggregate-level studies, several country-specific characteristics connected to the vote of right-wing parties were identified (Lubbers et al. 2002). However, when analysing the context, individual characteristics on voting for the right wing are often disregarded (Merkl & Weinberg 2014). Further researchers recognized these flaws and derived important factors to explain variations between several countries (Husbands 1996; Van der Brug et al. 2000). Lubbers et al. (2002) propose the distinction between political, economic and sociological factors. While the party system and party-specific factors play an important part from the political perspective, economic competition and malaise as well as immigrants have to be considered when explaining differences in right-wing voting (Husbands 1996; Lubbers et al. 2002). Werts et al. (2013) found evidence for the impact of increasing immigration rates as well as the use of such by right-wing parties in order to mobilize their voters (Werts et al. 2013). Sociological factors however refer to the social structure and the public opinion within it and are often tested with data on education and attitudes towards ethnic minorities.

Recent findings from France and Denmark however show that economic factors are not the prevalent explanation, rather cultural ethnic threats and their effect on far-right support (Ivarsflaten 2005). Findings by Lubbers & Güveli (2007) support the idea of important differences between cultural and economic threats in order to explain right-wing voting. Werts et al. (2013) derive from the national identity approach “[...] that the EU poses same threat as mass migration, i.e. a threat to a supposed homogeneous society” (Werts et al. 2013: 188). Turning to the EU's institutions, Werts et al. (2013) find political distrust being a relatively important

attitude of right-wing voters. Citizens who perceive deprivation in their current situation, have higher levels of political distrust and therefore are more inclined to vote for a right-wing party.

Next to the presence of a variety of material resources, political participation is also triggered by cognitive resources such as political efficacy. Over the last 40 years, internal efficacy almost always occurs when explaining political participation. Within this literature, internal efficacy is predominantly characterized as a stable psychological resource used to overcome the costs of participation (Valentino et al. 2009). Political deliberation can also have quite powerful effects on what Morrell (2005) calls “situation-specific” internal efficacy: the ability to discuss, understand, and make decisions about politics. It refers to citizens’ feelings of their own personal competence to participate in politics, and scholars have demonstrated that it has important consequences for democracy by influencing citizens’ political participation (Morrell 2005). While the concept of political efficacy is widely studied, literature and especially empirical evidence of its impact on voting behaviour are rather scarce. In order to overcome these flaws, we analyse several theoretic perspectives which take individual as well as aggregate characteristics into account. By combining these, we hope to develop a more precise concept for cross-country evaluation of right-wing voting. Moreover we are eager to contribute essential evidence to the internal efficacy and political psychology literature.

3 Voting Right-Wing Parties

During the past two decades, the radical right has re-emerged as an electoral force in Western Europe and is changing citizens’ political participation. There are many other ways in which citizens can get involved in the political process. Once this is recognized, the challenge is to clarify what we mean by political participation, what activities are and are not covered by the concept. (Brady et al. 1995: 38) provide the standard definition of political participation. For them, it refers to “activity that has the intent or effect of influencing government action - either directly by affecting the

making or implementation of public policy or indirectly by influencing the selection of people who make those policies.”(Verba et al. 1995).

As most modern representative democracies are built upon electoral processes, participation in elections is typically the most common form of citizen political engagement. (Easton 1965) considers elections an important source of legitimisation. The political system and its representatives obtain the citizens’ support only if the latter are satisfied by the output of the system (Bühlmann & Freitag 2006). Electoral outcomes determine who manages the affairs of government and who makes public policy. The selection of leaders and the ability to vote someone else at the next election are the public’s ultimate instruments of non-violent power. Indeed, the competitive nature of electoral politics encourages elites and citizens to discuss the policies of the government and the behaviour of potential policy-makers (Blais 2010). From the perspective that voters behave rationally (i.e., goal oriented), the first and most obvious motive for electoral choices that can be distinguished theoretically is a voter’s wish to affect public policies. To the extent that voters wish to influence policies by means of voting, they tend to vote for the party with which they agree most on issues deemed important.

Early studies suggest that while most parties are known for their wide-ranging agenda on several political issues, most right-wing parties were characterised as alliances concerned with one single issue: immigration (Husbands 1988; Eatwell 1998). However, more recent studies have demonstrated that, even though voters for these parties tend to hold hostile attitudes towards foreigners, broader ideological concerns are more important determinants of right-wing voting (Van der Brug et al. 2000; Husbands 2013). It has been shown empirically that positions of voters as well as parties on a variety of different issues are largely structured by left/right ideology (Van der Brug et al. 2000). In most countries the first dimension in particular – left-libertarian versus right-authoritarian – was proven to be strongly correlated with ideological left-right orientations.

3.1 Individual-level Explanations

3.1.1 Political Distrust

Populists argue that they despise the political system of representative politics itself (Taggart 2000). Moreover, populists are characterised being against the political establishment, the economic, media and cultural elite. Each of them are portrayed as one homogeneous corrupt group acting against the “general will” of citizens (Mudde & Kaltwasser 2017). Therefore populism tends to develop an inner group working against the corrupt others. As Mudde and Kaltwasser elaborate furthermore, *“This anti-elitist impetus goes together with a critique of institutions such as political parties, big organizations, and bureaucracies, which are accused of distorting the ‘truthful’ links between populist leaders and ‘the common people’”* (Mudde & Kaltwasser 2017). It is emphasized that voters of populist parties do not trust the political system they live in, neither are they satisfied with representative democracy in their country. Populism may be broadly defined as *“a general protest against the checks and balances introduced to prevent ‘the people’s’ direct rule”* (Pelinka 2013). Summarizing, we can observe the great accordance of scholars, that populist electorate is not supporting the political system and wants to rebel against the established structures.

Indeed, recent events have shown that a large number of citizens are hesitant to encourage European integration. Simultaneously, several parties express euro-criticism and successfully mobilize national identity considerations against the European Union (De Vries & Edwards 2009; Hooghe & Marks 2005; Lubbers 2008). These parties see the EU as a threat to the sovereignty of the nation state. There is an almost all-over agreement that right-wing parties generally characterise the EU as unacceptable and should either be reformed or completely abolished (Mudde 2007). Yet, the relationship between euro-scepticism and radical right-wing voting behaviour has received little empirical attention in previous studies. Ivarsflaten (2005) showed that euro-scepticism is an important determinant for radical right-wing support in France and Denmark. Van der Brug et al. (2005) also found a positive relationship between anti-EU sentiments and radical right-wing voting in France. Using data

from 2002, Lubbers & Scheepers (2007) focused on the role of euro-scepticism for radical right-wing support in national elections in 13 countries. They found that voting for radical right-wing parties can partly be explained by euro-scepticism, over and beyond other relevant socio-political attitudes. Also, Arzheimer & Carter (2009) found evidence for the relevance of euro-scepticism, although he was not able to test its effect next to the major predictor of radical right-wing voting: the unfavourable attitudes towards migrants.

Dassonneville (2012): The disaffected volatile voter Carsten Zelle was not convinced about different theories trying to explain volatility by means of levels of education, political interest or social characteristics. After showing that those theories insufficiently explain volatile behaviour, he develops the “frustrated floating voter”-hypothesis. The main argument is that voters behave volatile because of a “mood of protest”. According to Zelle, floating voters are: “somewhat less satisfied with the political system, less trusting in parties, and less happy about their favoured party” (Zelle 1995, p. 340). More recently, Dalton and Weldon (2005) investigated the impact of distrust in parties on electoral behaviour. They state “distrust in parties stimulates a marked increase in voter volatility” (Dalton and Weldon 2005, p. 944). Moreover, they also demonstrate that trust in parties is correlated to satisfaction with democracy and the democratic process in general. Peter Söderlund (2008), then, investigated whether volatility is mainly caused by voters’ opinion on a specific party or by “attitudes towards politics in general” (Söderlund 2008, p. 218). His findings point to the first possibility, volatility is significantly related towards how voters perceive the performance of their preferred party. This last approach fits within “reward-punishment”-theories developed by rational choice scholars who state that voters judge the performances of parties and vote accordingly (Fiorina, 2002; Key, 1966). While dissatisfaction about parties’ performances is an important reason for changing party preferences or vote choices, it cannot be considered as a fundamental voter characteristic. Rather than such a short-term and fluid attitude, we are interested in the impact of long-term stable politic attitudes on volatility. The longterm stable political attitudes having an impact on volatility mentioned

by Zelle (1995) and Dalton and Weldon (2005) –satisfaction with democracy and political trust– are aspects of the “political disaffection”- concept. This concept has two aspects, on the one hand there is institutional disaffection, and on the other hand there is political disengagement. Indicators for institutional disaffection are institutional confidence and external political efficacy. Political disengagement can be operationalized by means of political interest, political salience and internal political efficacy (Torcal and Montero, 2006). Political disengagement could be considered as the opposite of political sophistication and is thus taken into account within our analysis. Institutional disaffection, is what Zelle (1995) and Dalton and Weldon (2005) point at and should also be included in an analysis about characteristics of volatile voters. Although, up so far, there is very few work done on the impact of institutional disaffection on volatility, results unambiguously point at its destabilising effect. Consequently we expect voters with low levels of political trust and external political efficacy, variables used to measure institutional disaffection, to be more volatile in their party preferences and vote choices.

3.1.2 Internal Efficacy

(Bühlmann & Freitag 2006): Since Lazarsfeld et al. (1949), socio-economic status (SES) has played a prominent role in explaining both the decision to vote and participation behaviour. Normally, socio-economic status consists of the individual’s educational level, income, and her occupational status. In theory, a high SES leads to a higher propensity to participate in elections, because individuals with high education levels and/or with a high income have more disposable time and a greater capacity to understand political debates (Kleinhenz 1995). This leads not only to greater political interest, but also to a greater probability of participation. Furthermore, wealthy individuals have an interest in contributing to the stability of the political system by participating in it (Wol nger and Rosenstone 1980). • Political skills are seen as the most important resource of participation (Bühlmann 2006): individuals with a lot of political interest (Campbell et al. 1976; Lazarsfeld et al. 1949) and internal efficacy (Campbell et al. 1976) make wider use of all the different possibilities of influencing

politics - including electoral participation - than uninterested individuals or persons who do not think they have the ability to participate in politics.² • Political attitudes play a crucial role in the decision to vote. Since Campbell et al. (1976), party ties have been considered long-term factors which stabilise electoral choices. However, party ties are also important for participation (Dalton et al. 1984). People with only weak, or no party identification at all, show a lower propensity to participate in elections (Pattie and Johnston 1998). An important and widely discussed (especially in German political science (Feist 1992))³ factor is the attitude that voting is a civic duty. If participation in elections is seen as the fulfilment of one's duty as a citizen, the propensity to vote increases.

Valentino et al. (2009): While most resources such as education, income, and employment status are stable, some psychological forces appear more variable. One such trait is political efficacy: a combination of one's sense of competence in the political sphere and one's assessment of the responsiveness of the system (Campbell et al. 1954). A citizen is more likely to participate when she believes her actions can make a difference in politics. This can either be because she considers herself competent and influential—a dimension labeled internal efficacy—or because she is confident that the system is responsive to her and others like her—a dimension labeled external efficacy (Easton 1965; Easton and Dennis 1967; Iyengar 1980). Individuals high in internal efficacy feel they understand how to take part in politics, and are not intimidated by the challenges, conflicts or disagreements that occur in that arena. External efficacy refers to an individual's belief in the openness and responsiveness of the political system. People high on this dimension believe the system reacts when pressure is applied by citizens, regardless of whether or not they are willing or able to apply that pressure themselves.

Bandura (1977) explains behavioral change through performance. A sense of mastery comes with success, and this determines future coping behavior, effort, and persistence in the face of obstacles. When people cope with environmental threats effectively, they gain confidence in their ability to succeed the next time a threat arises. Bandura states, “People fear and tend to avoid threatening situations they believe exceed their

coping skills, whereas they get involved in activities and behave assuredly when they judge themselves capable of handling situations that would otherwise be initiated” (p. 194). Applied to politics, we would predict that under threat, citizens who feel confident about their ability to participate should be more likely to act. Participation should then reinforce internal efficacy, especially when it is successful (Bandura 1977).

Kenski & Stroud (2006): Political efficacy is a determinant of political behavior—without feelings of competency and beliefs that one’s actions are consequential, one has little incentive to participate in politics (Abramson & Aldrich, 1982). Political participation is important because levels of engagement in a democratic system have consequences on the system’s equity (Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993). Theoretically, an optimal democracy would contain citizens who possess high levels of political knowledge, efficacy, and participation (Kenski & Stroud 2006).

In *The Voter Decides*, Campbell, Gurin, and Miller (1954) described the concept of political efficacy as “the feeling that political and social change is possible, and that the individual citizen can play a part in bringing about this change” (p. 187). Several scholars have noted that political efficacy appears to be made of two different constructs, a personal sense of efficacy, commonly known as internal efficacy, and a more system-oriented sense of efficacy, known as external efficacy (Balch, 1974; Converse, 1972; Niemi, Craig, & Mattei, 1991). Niemi et al. explain that internal political efficacy refers “to beliefs about one’s own competence to understand, and to participate effectively in, politics” (p. 1407), whereas external political efficacy refers “to beliefs about the responsiveness of government authorities and institutions to citizen demands” (p. 1408). Although political efficacy is frequently discussed as an overall concept, internal and external efficacy items typically fall into two unique dimensions, and these dimensions interact differently with other political variables (Balch, 1974)

Research in several European countries has shown that voters for the radical right-wing parties feel less politically efficacious, more alienated, and more dissatisfied with the established parties, the political institutions, and the democratic system in general (Beta 1994:35..67).

3.1.3 Economic Deprivation

text: what unites right wing populists in western europe All existing theories of party system evolution, be they inspired by the Downsean economic tradition (Downs, 1957) or by the political sociology tradition of Lipset and Rokkan (1967), agree on one point. They implicitly or explicitly argue that unless there is some sort of societal change that gives rise to a widespread public grievance, a major change in the party system is unlikely to occur.³ Thus, in the most detailed explanation yet of the pattern of party systems evolution in Western Europe, Lipset and Rokkan emphasized the intimate connections between grievances, the expansion of suffrage, and the rise of new parties.

3.1.3.1 The Protest Vote

This approach builds on a widely accepted idea that radical right-wing parties gain from political protest. From this point of view, voters for these parties are not attracted by their anti-immigrant stances, but express predominantly political dissatisfaction (Mudde 2007). Although several studies emphasize that voters not only cast a radical right-wing vote based on political dissatisfaction, the protest proposition explains at least some of the variation in radical right-wing voting (Ivarsflaten 2005). We expect people who perceive their socio-economic situation as deprived to oppose established parties. They will be dissatisfied politically, feel more powerless, and are consequently more likely to cast a radical right-wing vote, since parties on the radical right claim to listen to the dissatisfied and oppose government decisions. People who perceive deprivation in their present socio-economic situation are more likely to vote for a radical right-wing party, as they are more dissatisfied politically (Werts et al. 2013).

3.1.3.2 Ethnic competition theory

Contributors to the ethnic competition theory proposed that ethnic groups sharing similar economic interests are in competition for scarce resources, which induces

perceived ethnic threat and intergroup antagonistic attitudes (Coser, 1956; Levine and Campbell, 1972). In most European countries, ethnic out-groups (search for) work particularly in the lowest labour segments, where unemployment levels tend to be higher (Kiehl and Werner, 1999). Social categories that hold similar positions to ethnic minorities perceive more ethnic threat and therefore have stronger exclusionary reactions, e.g. voting for radical right-wing parties (Lubbers et al., 2002).

Coffe (2005) and Van der Brug and Fennema (2003) stressed the relevance of more general threat perceptions: deterioration of the living environment will also nourish feelings of threat, particularly among lower social strata that are more likely to live in neighbourhoods with relatively high levels of criminality. Therefore, those people are expected to feel unsafe in their own neighbourhood more often (e.g. Hale, 1996). Moreover, people may feel directly threatened by ethnic minorities, since ethnic groups are overrepresented in criminality statistics (Dagevos and Gijsberts, 2010). Since radical right-wing parties claim to serve the interests of the in-group and suggest that foreigners are related to a variety of problems, these parties may be an attractive option for people from lower social strata. H1: Lower-educated people, manual workers and unemployed people are more likely to vote for a radical right-wing party, (a) as they experience more ethnic threat, and (b) as their level of subjective victimization is generally higher.

Earlier research results were consistent with the hypothesis that antiimmigration attitudes are an important factor for predicting who will vote for radical right-wing populist parties (e.g., Lubbers & Scheepers 2000; Lubbers et al. 2002; Norris 2005). Even if not all voters who are sceptical of immigration vote for radical right-wing parties, most voters who do vote for those parties have such attitudes

3.1.3.3 Theory of psychological interests

The classic study of the Authoritarian Personality (Adorno et al., 1950) gives another explanation of why lower social strata would be more likely to vote for radical right-wing parties (e.g. Lipset, 1981 [1960]; Falter and Klein, 1994). Its core idea is that the socio-economic position of lower social strata may be characterized by poverty and

deprivation, which in turn would create anxiety and frustration. To deal with anxiety and frustration, these particular strata are likely to submit themselves to strong authorities or strong traditional norms (Scheepers et al., 1990). Radical right-wing parties serve these psychological needs, as these parties emphasize traditional norms and a strong leader (Lubbers et al., 2002). H2: Lower-educated people, manual workers, unemployed people, as well as people who perceive deprivation in their present socio-economic situation, are more likely to vote for a radical right-wing party, as they favour authoritarian attitudes.

In addition, we control for age, sex, and confession. With regard to life-cycle effects, it is assumed that younger individuals are more likely to abstain from voting (Kleinhenz 1995). Gender differences, in turn, are seen as both consequences of generation effects and of structural differences (Ballmer-Cao and Sgier 1998). Lastly, in the Swiss case, confession is an important determinant of electoral participation (Wernli 2001).

3.2 Contextual Factors

Various approaches can be found in internationally comparative participation research which seek to explain the differing participation levels in democratic parliamentary elections. Clearly, three research directions – the politico-institutional perspective, the politico-cultural approach, and the theory of socio-economic resources – dominate the debate, while in research so far, institutional influencing variables have proven particularly operative and significant (Franklin 2004; Jackman and Miller 1995; Lijphart 1997: 7; Norris 2004). In this section, we sum up the essential theoretical standpoints of these research perspectives.⁴

3.2.1 Institutional Perspective

In existing comparative electoral participation research, the most attention by far is paid to politico-institutional determinants (Lijphart 1997: 7). Following the tradition of neo-institutionalism, this approach conceives of institutions as “rules of the game” which facilitate certain action alternatives while preventing others. In other words:

institutions, in this view, function equally as formalised rules and as social norms which facilitate, limit, or stimulate individual attitudes and actions (Immergut 1998; Mayntz and Scharpf 1995: 43). Macro-quantitative research generally distinguishes between politico-institutional conditions in the broader sense and factors concerning electoral law and administration (Norris 2004: 153). While characteristics of the electoral, party, and government system belong to the former set of conditions, primarily organisational stipulations such as the existence of compulsory voting belong to the second category. Advocates of this institutional research perspective generally look for incentives or possible institutionalised barriers which coincide with participation in an election (Blais and Dobrzynska 1998; Jackman and Miller 1995: 469; Norris 2004).

Pursuant to the Swiss constitution (Article 149.2), the electoral system is the same in all cantons, i.e. proportional representation (PR) is used throughout all of the cantons. However, the number of available seats varies greatly from canton to canton and corresponds to the size of the population: while in the largest canton, Zurich, 34 seats are allocated, the candidates in the six smallest cantons compete for only one seat. In practice, this situation comes close to a majority vote. Relevant research identifies the type of electoral system as the first relevant variable towards an explanation of differences in electoral participation levels (Siaroff and Merer 2002). Majority electoral systems are seen as barriers to high electoral participation, since (it is argued) elections are not controversial in safe constituencies or strongholds, and supporters of the previously defeated party or small parties stay away from the election because they consider their vote to be ineffective (Ladner and Milner 1999). Additionally, previously defeated parties reduce their mobilisation efforts. In contrast, turnout should be higher under proportional systems, since voters will not feel that their vote is wasted, more parties are likely to run, and parties will have an incentive to campaign everywhere (Siaroff and Merer 2002: 920). In Switzerland, single-seated cantons resemble majority systems. Again, in cantons with proportional systems the number of parties increases with the number of available seats (Wernli 2001). Against this background we hypothesise that an increasing number of seats leads to a higher

propensity to vote.

Party system. In their search for the driving forces behind participation rates, researchers frequently refer to the competitive situation within the party system (Blais and Dobrzynska 1998: 249; Wernli 1998). This approach assumes that whilst elections with pre-determined outcomes bring about a degree of apathy and ignorance amongst voters, a strongly competitive inter-party situation at the outset has a stimulating effect.⁵ At the same time, the weight of each individual vote is argued to increase with the supposed marginality of an electoral outcome. In other words: the more consequences an individual vote has for an electoral result, it is argued, the more likely citizens are to go to the ballot (Freitag 2005). Furthermore, the number of parties is assumed to have an effect on electoral participation. The more fragmented a party system, the more multi-faceted the party-ideological spectrum becomes, and thus the more possibilities the voter has to find candidates in which he sees his interests represented and realised (Blais and Dobrzynska 1998: 248). Thus, a large party diversity is said to boost willingness to participate in political elections. Finally, a high level of electoral participation should be traceable to a polarised party system, since opposite party camps are adept at keeping their respective clientele particularly close (Crepaz 1990; Norris 2004: 167).

Institutions. Two competing assessments can be formulated regarding the influence of direct democracy on participation at parliamentary elections. The first conjecture assumes that a culture of active referendum democracy stimulates citizens' political interest (Hajnal and Lewis 2003). Wernli (1998), for instance, comparing 10 Swiss cantons concludes, that electoral participation is higher in the cantons where a more intensive form of direct democracy is practised. The opposite to this hypothesis is the assumption of a negative relationship between direct democracy and electoral democracy. At least two reasons speak for this claim: first, sundry popular initiatives and referenda restrict the competencies of government, parliament, and parties. The voter recognises that she is in a position to decide authoritatively on important issues, independently and without recourse to members of parliament. Thus, from this perspective, political questions are decided on primarily in referenda and not at (less relevant) elections

(Bühlmann et al. 2003; Linder 1999: 315). Second, where there are several pillars of political co-determination, it is conceivable that a certain fatigue could arise regarding elections and referenda, mainly at the expense of less significant ballots (Jackman and Miller 1995: 483) and above all in cantons where the use of direct democracy instruments is high. Furthermore, cantons with a well-developed communal autonomy could be expected to ascribe little importance to national authorities, since the latter's limited powers of action and decision mean that elections to national parliament are considered largely irrelevant. Electoral law and administration. Among the factors concerning electoral law and administration, compulsory voting is particularly significant in the explanation of electoral participation (Lijphart 1997). On the international level, Italy and the Netherlands pursued this arrangement until 1993 and 1970 respectively. Today, compulsory voting continues to exist, for instance, in Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Costa Rica, Greece, Luxemburg, Lichtenstein, Mexico, Peru, Singapore, Turkey, and Cyprus. Among the Swiss cantons, compulsory voting exists only in the canton of Schaffhausen. Here, as in Australia or Belgium, citizens can be driven to vote by the threat of retrospective penalties.⁶ While regular participation in the democratic process leads to the acquirement of a certain political competence and to the development of an active citizen's political interest (Pateman 1970; Wernli 1998), compulsory voting leads us to expect a higher rate of participation at ballots (Franklin 2004).

3.2.2 Cultural Determinants

Exponents of the politico-cultural and socio-integrative perspective emphasise that the willingness to participate in elections is not so much a result of institutional incentives and stimulants, as, primarily, an acquired habit (Norris 2004: 154). Accordingly, other investigations attribute an influence on the level of electoral participation to socio-political and politico-cultural factors (Crepaz 1990; Gray and Caul 2000; Siaroff and Merer 2002).

Socio-political integration characteristics. At least since Tocqueville's (1994) analyses, social science has been dealing with the significance of clubs and organisations for

the social and political integration of individualistic societies. This perspective's fundamental ideas can be traced back to the politico-cultural research of the 1960s, when voluntary organisations are considered to be "the most important foundations" of stable democracies, and were thought to secure the latter's continued existence (Almond and Verba 1965: 220ff.). Here, organisations act not only as mediums of political socialisation, but also as "schools for democracy", since they enable the "membership role" to be combined with the "role of citizen" in social practice. We expect cantons with a high density of membership, particularly in trade unions and parties, but also in other formal associations, to display a higher level of participation. A high cantonal degree of involvement in this respect is regarded as an environment which fosters civic behaviour, including the willingness to support the political system through electoral participation.

Politico-cultural characteristics. In the Swiss context, Catholicism is traditionally considered a signi cant, historically established politico-cultural driving force behind electoral participation. According to Wernli (1998: 96ff.), there is a particularly strong bond in the Swiss cantons between the Christian Democratic Party (CVP) and Catholics. This historically entrenched relationship dates back to the defeat of the Catholic coalition at the end of the Sonderbundkrieg (short Swiss civil war, 1847). In the aftermath of this war, the Catholic population grew to perceive itself as a minority subordinated to worldly and modernising forces, and withdrew into a kind of isolated society in the strongholds of the Catholic cantons (Linder 1999: 37; Geser 2004). In these cantons, federal order guaranteed the continuation of Catholic morals and customs. It is thought that in cantons with a Catholic majority, elections are perceived of as regular challenges to the bastion of Catholicism and essential Christian religious values. This perception, together with the clientelistic entanglements between party and ideology, is suggested to act as a mobilising force on electoral participation. In view of the enduring confessional-political culture in Switzerland (cf. Geser 2004), these connections ought also to affect more recent developments and to render political Catholicism a propulsive force on political participation. At least two reasons oblige us to take not only the confessional, but

also the language, cleavage into consideration. First, we can distinguish between the cantons by their type of democratic system. In existing research, the non-German cantons have typically been seen as representative systems, while the German speaking cantons pass as more direct-democratic systems (Kriesi 1998; Wernli 2001): not only are cantonal constitutions in the Latin areas more oriented towards representative democracy, with fewer opportunities of direct legislation (Ladner 1991), but the direct democratic instruments also are used more seldom than in the German speaking cantons (Linder 1999). Second, the non-German cantons have minority status at the national level. We therefore suggest that individuals living in these cantons concentrate more on cantonal than federal politics, and thus tend to exercise their national voting rights less intensively. The first point of view leads us to expect that a higher degree of importance will be attached to elections, and that there will thus be a higher electoral turnout in Latin cantons. The second point, however, leads to contrary assumptions.

3.2.3 Socio-economic Factors

Besides the approaches mentioned so far, extant comparative investigations refer to the effect of socio-economic and socio-demographic factors on participation rates at political elections. Thus, for instance, economic strength and population size are mentioned as particularly relevant influencing variables (Blais and Dobrzynska 1998: 241ff.; Norris 2004; Siaroff and Merer 2002: 917). *Economic strength and modernity*. Where existing research draws upon societies' cognitive and material resources to explain varying electoral participation rates, it refers primarily to differing levels of modernity and economic strength. A well-functioning economic system causes positive attitudes to develop towards the political system, strengthens political interest, and bestows the feeling that one's potential participation will be politically effective (Verba and Nie 1972: 125ff.). Additionally, the higher a democracy's level of socio-economic development or degree of modernity, the higher will be the rate of electoral participation (Blais and Dobrzynska 1998: 241ff.; Siaroff and Merer 2002). With a view to population size, researchers assume that less densely populated areas

will display lower electoral participation, since a scattered population is more difficult to mobilise and relevant information is less accessible (Blais and Dobrzynska 1998: 242ff.).

4 Methods

4.1 Data and Variables

In order to test our set of hypotheses data is collected from different sources:

- **European Social Survey** (ESS Team 2016). The ESS is a multi-country scientific survey conducted every two years since 2002 by scientists in several European countries. The objectives of the ESS are to understand the changing attitudes and values in Europe, to explain how European institutions are changing and to develop a range of European social indicators and values (ESS8 2016). We retrieved the latest data available for each country from the cumulative ESS.
- **Chapel Hill Expert Survey** (Bakker et al. 2014): Since 1999 CHES provides party positioning scores on European integration, ideology and policy issues for national parties in a variety of European countries. This data set is used for clustering parties according to their similarity on populist indicators.
- **Varieties of Democracy** (Coppedge et al. 2017): V-DEM aims to transparently produce Indicators of Democracy that are multidimensional and disaggregated. This modern framework reflects the complexity of the concept of democracy and captures seven high-level principles of democracy: electoral, liberal, participatory, deliberative, egalitarian, majoritarian and consensual, and collects data to measure these principles. This data delivers country-level predictors like ...
- **Human Development Index** (United Nations 2016): Brought by the UN Human Development Programme, HDI emphasizes people's capabilities as ultimate criteria for assessing the development of a country, not economic growth

alone. This variable approximates modernization on a macro level.

- **World Bank Development Indicators** (World Bank 2018): An international effort to measure state performance and to reduce poverty through informative data analysis. We used to variables as macro predictors.

4.2 Model Based Clustering

Voting for a right wing party is often approximated by left-right scales or is time-intensiv coded. This analysis adopts Cas Mudde’s clear minimalist definition of populism to identify core features that all sub types of populism have in common. In line with this definition, we suggest that populist parties are primarily shaped by their degree of anti-establishment attitudes as well as their opposition to globalization. Subsequently, we propose to classify European populist parties along a progressive and traditionalist left-right dimension. Some CHES party indicators are part of the clustering even though they are not be present in the ESS micro data.

This multidimensional classification problem is best approached by model-based hierarchical clustering (Scrucca et al. 2016). This tool set is already adopted in political science and praised for estimating meaningful clusters on high-dimensional data political science (Ahlquist & Breunig 2012; Jang & Hitchcock 2012). Model-based clustering assumes the data generating process to be driven by a mixture of underlying probability distributions in which each component represents a different cluster. Consequently each sub population is separately estimated and summarized by a mixture of these sub populations. Therefore the density tends to be centered at the multidimensional means (μ_k) and increased by geometric features (shape, volume, orientation) of the clusters being determined by the parameters of the covariance matrices Σ_k , which may also induce cross-cluster conditions (Ahlquist & Breunig 2012). In a nutshell the Gaussian Finite Normal Mixture model assumes a d-dimensional data set y_1, \dots, y_n to calculate G components with the likelihood

$$\ell_{MIX}(\theta_1, \dots, \theta_G | y) = \prod_{i=1}^n \sum_{k=1}^G \tau_k f_k(y_i | \theta_k)$$

where f_k is the density of the θ_k mixture parameters, unlike traditional methods model-based clustering uses a soft assignment and calculates τ_k that represents the probability of a given observation belonging to the k component (Ahlquist & Breunig 2012). Unsupervised machine learning algorithms are often criticized for introducing

bias by hyper parameter settings. `mclust` addresses this by estimating a grid of different models and hyper parameter constellations. Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC) is provided to pick the most useful model (Scrucca et al. 2016). The metric is penalized for the complexity of the model to ensure Osm Razor.

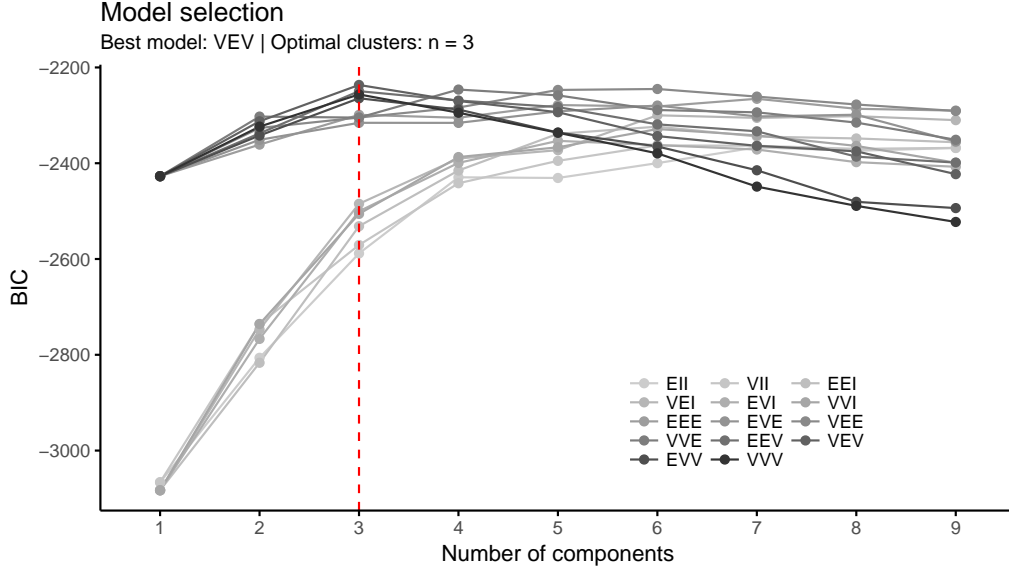


Figure 1: BIC Model Selection for mixture models on the CHES party positioning data set. Following Fraley and Raftery (2010), the grid component structures are labeled using: EII=spherical, equal volume; EEI=diagonal, equal volume and shape; EVI=diagonal, equal volume, varying shape; EEE=ellipsoidal, equal volume, shape, and orientation; VEV=ellipsoidal, equal shape; VII=spherical, unequal volume; VEI=diagonal, varying volume, equal shape; VVI=diagonal, varying volume and shape; EEV=ellipsoidal, equal volume and equal shape; VVV=ellipsoidal, varying volume, shape, and orientation.

The estimated grid models are represented by the following identifiers: EII, VII, EEI, VEI, EVI, VVI, EEE, EEV, VEV and VVV. The first Letter refers to volume, the second to shape and the third to orientation. E stands for “equal”, V for “variable” and I for “coordinate axes” (Kassambara 2017).

There is a clear indication of a four-component mixture with covariances having different shapes but the same volume and orientation (EVE) (VEV (ellipsoidal, equal shape)).

Following Milligan and Cooper’s (1988) finding that standardization by dividing each variable by its range gives consistently superior recovery of the underlying cluster

Table 1: Cluster means and standard deviations for populist indicators

| Var | Establishment | Left Populist | Right Populist |
|---------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| antielite_salience | 3.42 (1.78) | 5.9 (2.44) | 7.73 (1.5) |
| civlib_laworder | 4.67 (1.75) | 3.47 (1.97) | 8.19 (1.07) |
| eu_position | 6.16 (0.51) | 3.28 (1.15) | 2.81 (1.24) |
| galtan | 4.52 (2.13) | 3.58 (2.36) | 8.35 (0.95) |

¹ Note: Standard deviations are in parentheses

structure, all the variables are standardized by dividing by each variable's range.
PCA ...

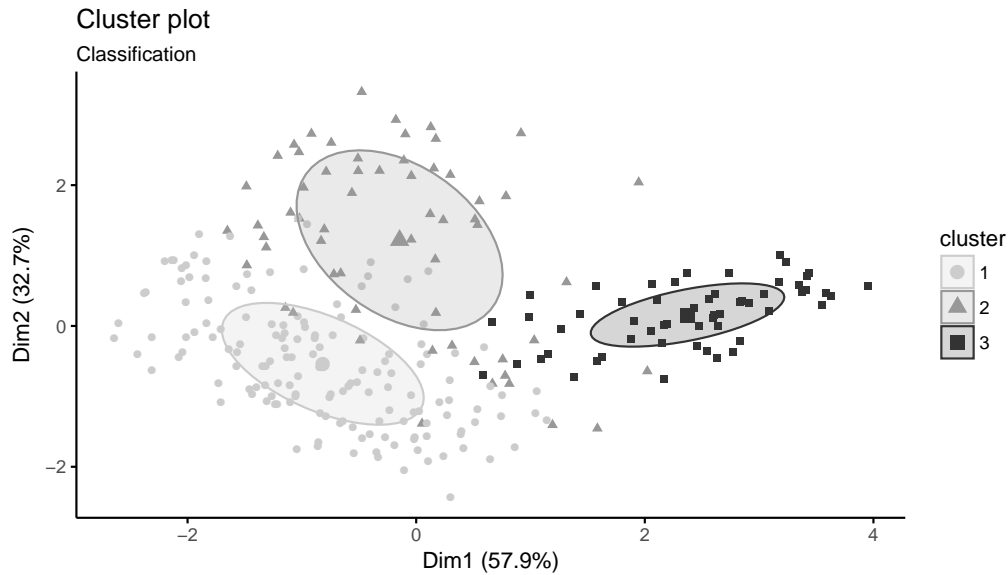


Figure 2: Classification and Cluster Boundaries

Table X displays the characteristics of each cluster through mean and standard deviation.

To validate the clusters let's inspect the party classification for three countries. For checking the consistency of the clusters, the variable means are calculated by cluster in Table @ref(tab:cluster_means). The final cluster vector is attached to the data with name `cluster`.

Table 2: Party Cluster Membership

| Cluster | Parties |
|-----------------------|--|
| Establishment | CDU (ger); SPD (ger); FDP (ger); Grunen (ger); CSU (ger); PS (fra); PRG (fra); EELV (fra); UMP (fra); MODEM (fra); NC (fra); PRV (fra); AC (fra) |
| Left Populist | Linke (ger); Piraten (ger); DieTier (ger); PCF (fra); PG (fra); Ens (fra) |
| Right Populist | NPD (ger); AfD (ger); FN (fra); MPF (fra) |

¹ Note: ...

4.3 Principal Component Analysis

Principal Component Analysis (PCA) another unsupervised machine learning approach is now used to reduce the dimensions of two item batteries to get a parsimonious model size. For both variables we are only interested in the first Dimension/Component that contributes most to the variability in the underlining data structure. The formal model for the first principal component of a data set is the linear combination its features

$$Z_i = \phi_{11}X_1 + \phi_{21}X_2 + \cdots + \phi_{p1}X_p$$

that has the largest variance and where is the first principal component loading vector, with elements $\phi_{11}X_1 + \phi_{21}X_2 + \cdots + \phi_{p1}$ are normalized, which means that $\sum_{j=1}^p \phi_{j1}^2 = 1$. To calculate these loadings, we must find the vector that maximizes the variance. It can be shown using techniques from linear algebra that the eigenvector corresponding to the largest eigenvalue of the covariance matrix is the set of loadings that explains the greatest proportion of the variability. This method does not depend compared to Factor Analysis or SEM on model assumptions or multivariate error distributions. Despite all dimensionality reduction methods have different background and purposes they often yield similar results. But for construct validation I recommend factor analysis or any other framework that provides hypothesis testing.

4.3.1 Trust Items

First we explore the diemnnionality of the given trust items by applying standard pairwise scatter plots for each variable combination. The visual inspection confirms a strong linear association between all variables and the diagonal histograms approximate a normal distribution with a heavy tail on 0, as people are especially critical against political institutions and put more overall confidence in the police.

The next plot shows a two-dimensional representation of the data that captures most of the information in a lower-dimensional subspace. The First two components

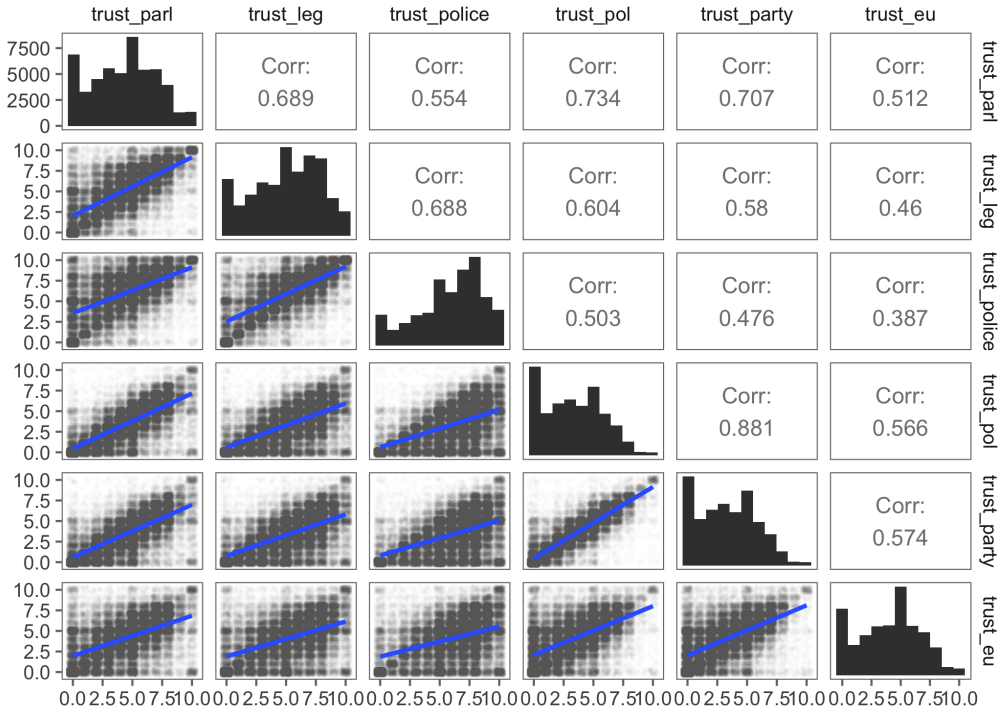


Figure 3: Bivariate Scatter plots for item battery public trust

contribute together to nearly 80% of the total variance.

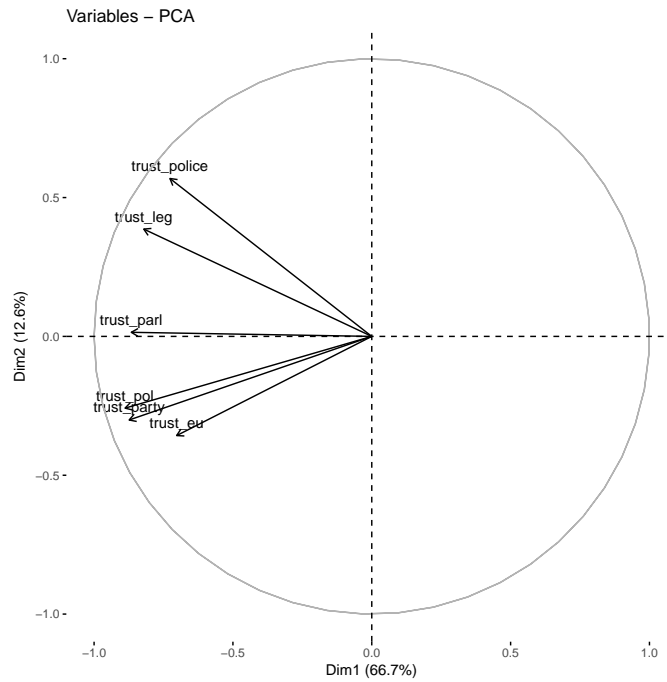


Figure 4: First and Second PC Dimensions for the Trust Items

As each principal component vector defines a direction in the feature space and all

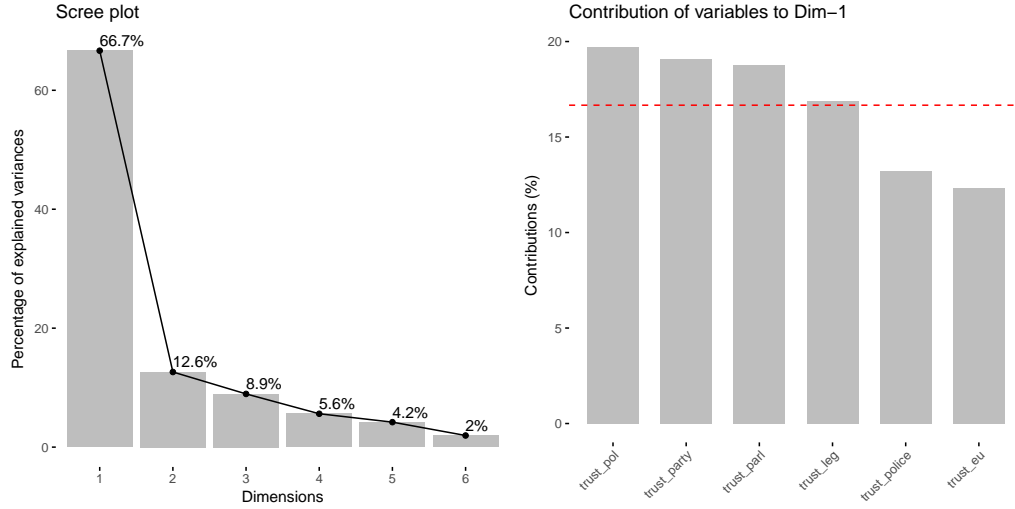


Figure 5: scree plot and Component Contribution by Variable

arrows in Figure X point to the same direction we can be confident to approximate one trust dimension. This notion is supported by the scree plot capturing 66,7% of the total Variance by the first dimension. We can further see that the trust items for political institutions do somewhat differ in their contribution to the first PC due to different reasons. The European Parliament is often seen as disconnected from people and the police is always highly appreciated by everyone. The first PC scores are stored for later analysis as `pc_trust`.

4.3.2 Immigration Items

Next we applied the same PCA for the Immigration Items. But first we explore again the nationality of the given data by standard pairwise scatter plots for each variable combination in figure @ref(fig:imm_cor). The visual inspection again confirms a strong linear association between all variables but seem to be more noisy than the trust items before. The diagonal histograms approximate a normal distribution, despite the fact that three out of four variables have only 4 levels. This Likert scale is assumed to be equal-distant to be suitable for PCA.

The two-dimensional representation of the immigration items proposes again a strong one PC solution but points to a minor second dimension entirely rooted in `imm_econ`. We are only interested in the first PC that captures over 70% of the total variance.

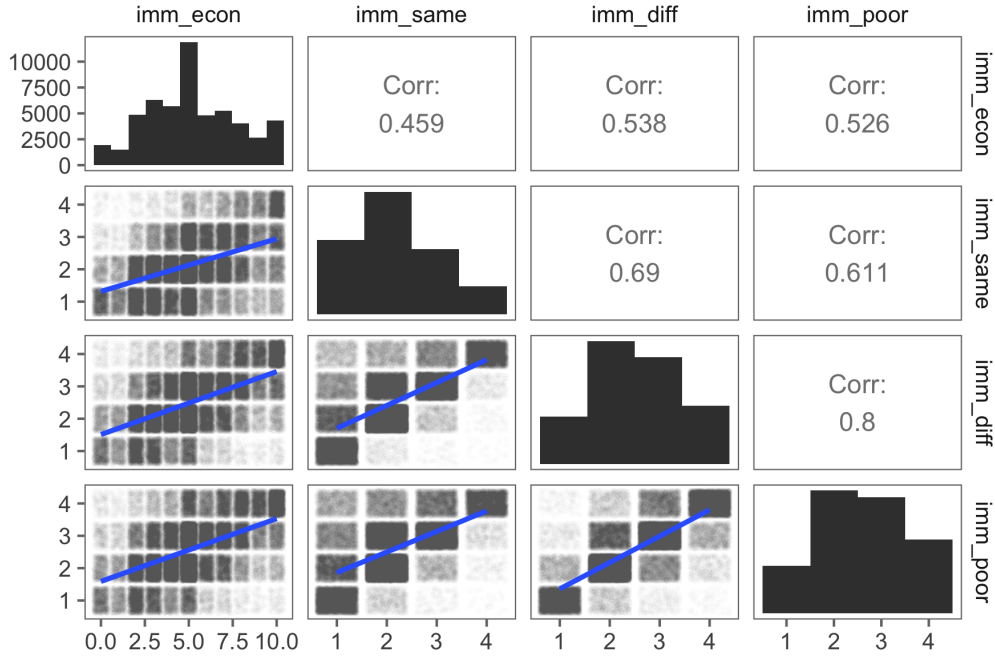


Figure 6: Bivariate Scatter Plots for item battery immigration

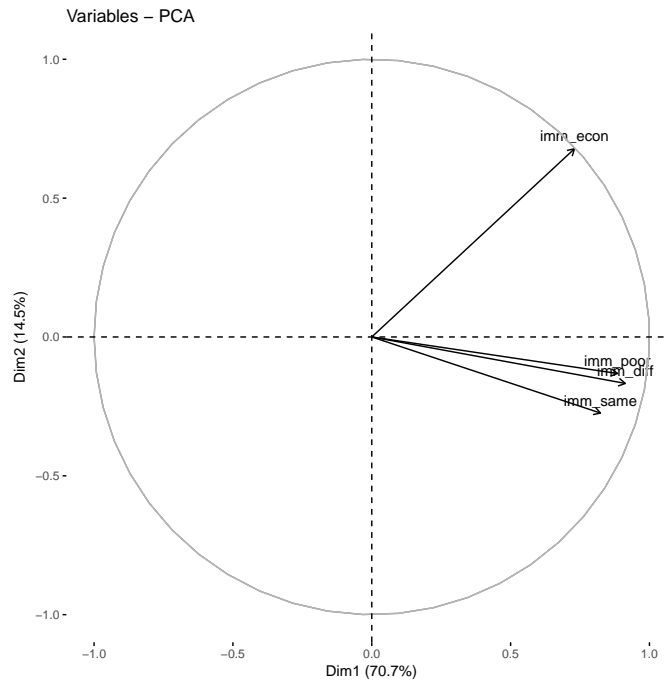


Figure 7: PCA Dimensionality for the Immigration Items

The scree plot and contribution plot support these findings. The final PC scores are stored for later analysis as `pc_imm`.

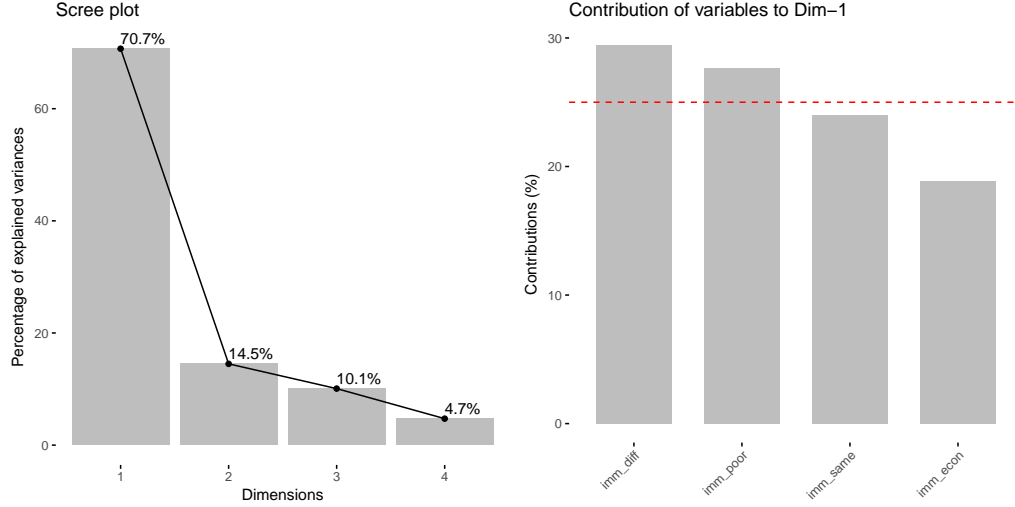


Figure 8: scree plot and Component Contribution by Variable

4.4 Statistical Models

As detailed explained in section X and the dependent variable y_i is labeled as 1 for voters of right wing populist parties estimated by model based-clustering.

$$y_i = \begin{cases} 1 : & \text{if voted for a right populist party} \\ 0 : & \text{if not} \end{cases}$$

This binary data structure is best fitted by generalized linear models (GLMs) with Binomial response function (Bernoulli). As part of this paper we built different logistic regression models with varying size amount of complexity. First, we discuss simple logistic regression. Second, we augmented logistic regression with a hierarchical representation to better capture the nested data generation process of the ESS micro/country data structure (Gelman & Hill 2007).

The first simple logistic model predicts the mean log-odds of a respondent voting right-populist, through a linear combination of an intercept and a slope the latter allowing to quantify the effect of each covariate. Finally the inverse link function (logit^{-1}) non-linearly transforms the outcome into new vector space $\in (0, 1)$

$$y_i \sim \text{Binomial}(n_i, p_i) \quad (1)$$

$$\text{logit}^{-1}(p_i) = \alpha + \beta x_i \quad (2)$$

This complete pooling architecture is separately deployed to each country dataset and summarized accordingly to explore country-specific model characteristics, as well as deficiencies. The fitting function is taken from the core R **stats** functions.

The simple version of the GLM assumes independence of each individual observation which produces in a less severe scenario downwards biased parameter standard errors (SE). By deploying random effects with context level predictors we are able to model country-specific heterogeneity and group level standard errors (Steenbergen & Jones 2002). The formal multilevel logistic regression has the formula

$$y_i \sim \text{Binomial}(n_i, p_i) \quad (3)$$

$$\text{logit}^{-1}(p_i) = \alpha_j + \beta x_i \quad (4)$$

$$\alpha_j \sim N(\mu_\alpha, \sigma_\alpha^2) \quad (5)$$

The group intercepts α_j are assumed to be an independent and identically distributed random variable with hyperprior grand mean and equal variance. This population distribution is partially fitted by pooling its sub-population intercepts (share information) and used to refit or regularize the parameters towards 0. Thereby we compromise between complete pooling and no pooling, in order to balance bias and variance (trade-off). In sum we avoid fixed effects for nested data to control model complexity and prevent overfitting.

5 Analysis

We present the empirical findings of our regression analysis in figure 9. Models 1 & 2 report the findings on individual level, starting with the most relevant variables to this analysis. Model 2 presents the findings concerning macro predictions only and Model 3 simultaneously includes all discussed explanatory variables. This sequential or cumulative regression approach allows to assess the stability of each parameter under increasing model complexity¹.

The multilevel analysis indicates (Model 1) that people with higher trust in state institutions indeed are more likely to vote for a right populist party². This positive effect seems to be counter-intuitive but to be affiliated with a democratic party requires trust in the political process and that change can be enacted. This effect gets only stronger by adding individual control variables.

... `pc_imm` & `_econ`

With regard to the control variables, the empirical analysis shows that women are overall less likely to vote for right populist as well as increasing income reduces the likelihood too. Likewise trust, political interest seems to be slightly increased for right-wing voters... As expected is the left right self-evaluation strongly related to one's voting preferences. Finally religiosity slightly increases the favourability for right populists.

In the next step we included context level predictors. In order to avoid convergence problems we standardized each continuous variable. Model 3 includes context predictors only which are very stable in comparison to the full model 4. The tendency for the obligatory referendum index and engaged society is slightly negative but inconsistent. In contrast the percent of refugee population living in a country dramatically increase the likelihood for its people to vote for right populist. Additionally we modeled a second order polynomial of `ref_pop` in order to allow more flexibility of the model. As

¹We decided to avoid p-values but instead focussing on confidence intervals and more informative methods which is in accordance to the ASA

²As `pc_trust` is mapped to a standardised vector space the parameters can only be interpreted in terms of standard deviations. This is the case for every extracted principal component

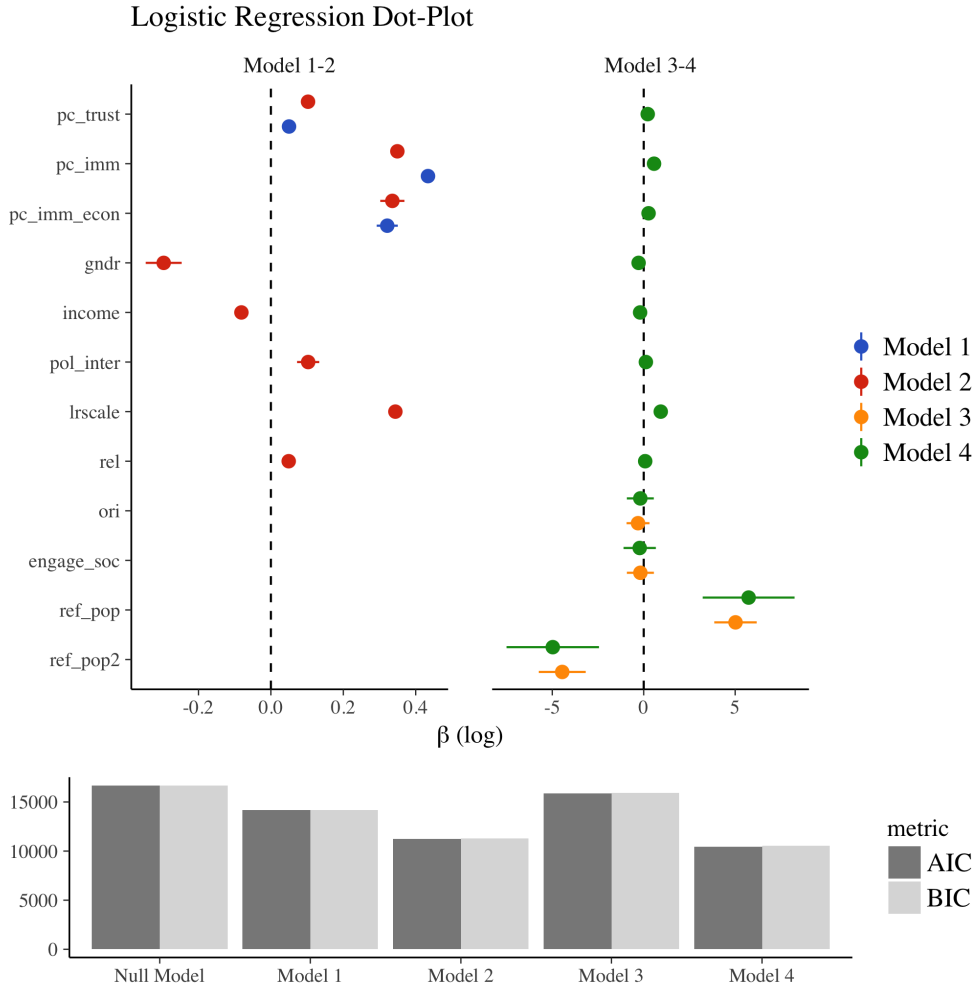


Figure 9: Log Odds Forest Plot

the negative sign of `ref_pop2` indicates a concave (inverted U-shape) we conclude that societies with very low and very high percentage of refugees are less likely to support right wing populists.

Evaluating the overall model performance is always problematic as through list-wise deletion of missing values the sample size for each model varies which could mislead an interpretation. Interestingly, the macro predictors do not account for much variability between countries in terms of voting right populist. In fact model 2 presents the most useful set of features and is parsimonious. In order to better understand the multilevel parameters we applied model 2 to each country dataset separately.

The parameters of 25 simple logistic regressions are mapped in order to identify

country-specific effects and deficiencies.

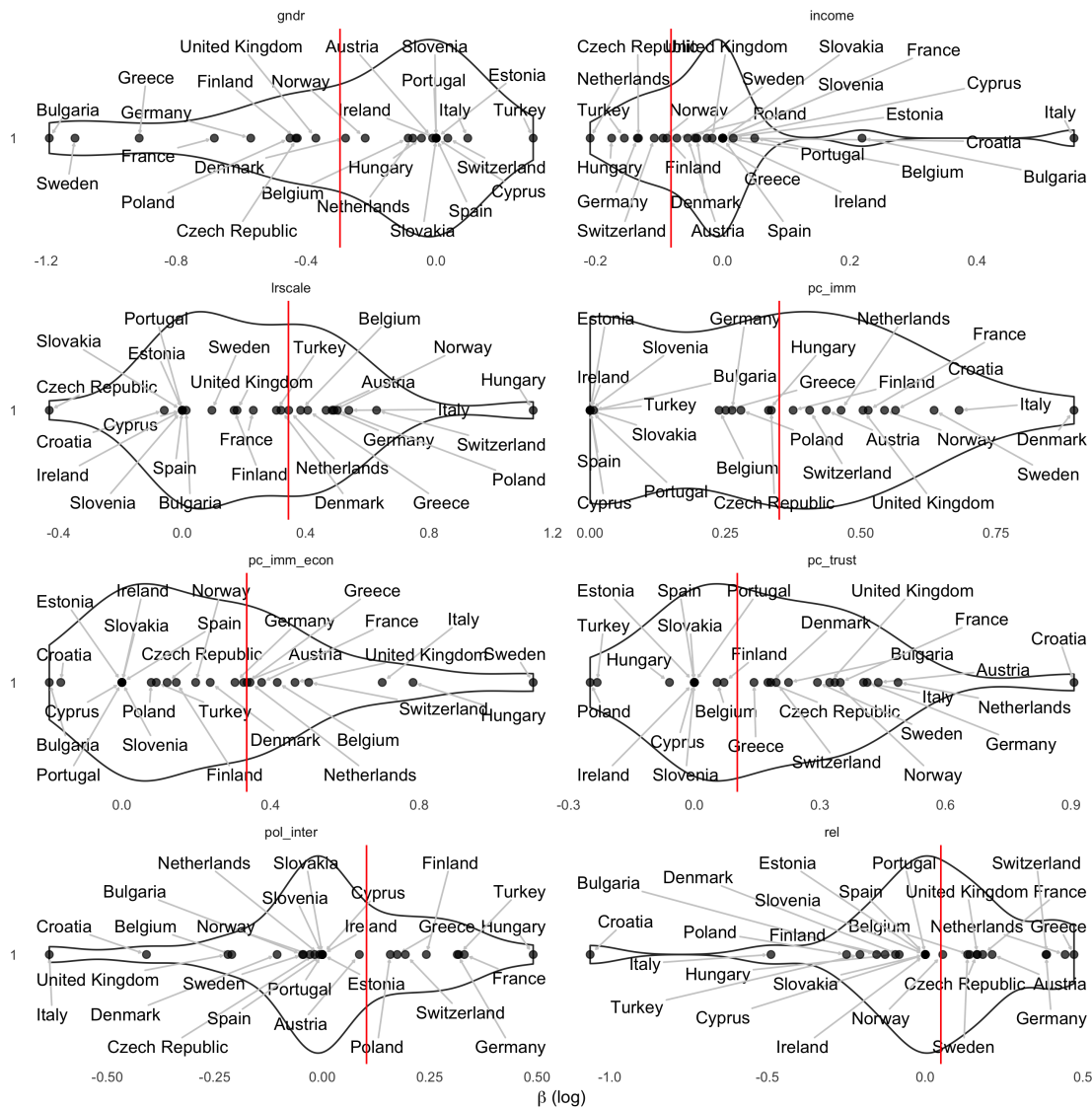


Figure 10: Odds Ratio Dot Plot by Country and Parameter

6 Conclusion

6.1 Limitations

6.2 Future Research

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