



# D4.1: CAUSAL MECHANISMS OF POPULISM

WP4 – Causal, Policy and Futures Analysis (D4.1)

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## Abstract

This deliverable presents the first results of the work on causes of populism, within WP4 (Causal, Policy and Futures Analysis), focusing specifically on identifying and analysing causal mechanisms of populist voting. The report proceeds in two main parts and a concluding section. Part One is devoted to analysis of three types of causal mechanisms (situational, action-formation and transformational) leading to populist (in the narrow sense used within PaCE) and/or nativist voting. Part Two presents the results from two studies carried out by PLUS team within the framework of PaCE: a pilot study by PLUS on the effect of 4 causal factors on voting for populist and nativist parties in three European countries. This pilot study will be extended to cover all European countries in the focus of PaCE for the purposes of D4.2, and a study on the extent citizens' conceptions of territorial identity contribute to the support for Radical Right Populist Parties or Leftist Populist Parties mobilizing either at the national or sub-state level (20 cases of populist and nativist parties in Europe covered). In the concluding section two models explaining voting for populist parties are introduced and analyzed. These models - "the squeezed middle class" and the "bargaining and insurance model" - will be further tested and will serve as the ground for elaborating a causal model of populist voting (D4.2).

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The opinions express in this document reflect only the author's view and reflects in no way the European Commission's opinions.

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# Introduction

In this report we present, analyze and apply to selected cases some key causal mechanisms leading to voting for populist parties in Europe.

The focus of this report is on identifying the causal mechanisms leading to voting for what are, broadly defined, populist parties. In PaCE project - and in this report - we distinguish between populist parties (narrowly defined) and nativist parties. The distinction draws on Takis Pappas' work (Pappas 2016, 2019a), where he defines populist parties through their two core properties: they are both democratic (have allegiance to democracy and are committed to electoral contestation) and illiberal (do not accept societal pluralism, seek polarization rather than moderation and consensus and are majoritarian/are skeptical of rule of law and minority rights) (Pappas 2019a: 33-39). These two core properties set them apart from liberal-democratic parties on the one hand, and from anti-democratic (which contest elections yet have weak allegiance to democracy) and openly authoritarian parties (openly hostile to democracy and electoral contestation), on the other extreme. Nativist parties, often erroneously lumped together with populist parties, are distinct from populist parties. They, as a rule, do not challenge liberal democracy per se, but instead aim to serve the interests of the native populations only: such parties "thrive on typically liberal, albeit often ultra-conservative agendas for native populations to the exclusion of alien ones" (Pappas 2019a: 65). Nativist parties are the type of parties in Western Europe most often classified as "populist" - radical right populist parties, more precisely. Populist parties (in the narrow sense) are more geographically spread in Europe and appear both in Southern Europe and are the dominant type of populist parties in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE).

For further details on the difference between populism and nativism, as well as for a classification of political parties as populist and nativist, see the infographic prepared by Takis Pappas for PaCE project (available at [http://popandce.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/PaCE\\_Populism-vs.-Nativism\\_Infographic.pdf](http://popandce.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/PaCE_Populism-vs.-Nativism_Infographic.pdf)).

The report also focuses on identifying and analyzing the causal mechanisms leading specifically to *voting* for populist parties - and hence contributing to their emergence and success. Thus 'populist voting' is the main dependent variable in the analyses that follow. The reason for this choice of focus is that this part of Work package Four of PaCE project (WP4 Causal, Policy and Futures Analysis) is aimed as an input for developing agent-based social simulation of populist party vote (WP 2 Simulation). To the extent that increase in populist attitudes in voters is linked to increased chance of voting populist (not in a deterministic way but through various forms of activation of those attitudes, Hawkins et al. 2020) and given the recent turn in the fast-growing populism literature towards measuring populist attitudes in voters (Akkerman et al. 2014), we also investigate the mechanisms of forming such attitudes, and how these are activated.

Our understanding is that there is not one single mechanism explaining populist voting. There are a variety of factors, which may affect a voter to opt for a populist party. And the mix of these factors is different in different political settings. So are the causal paths leading to this result. Thus, we aim to highlight in detail the

"heterogeneous drivers of heterogeneous populisms" (Colantone & Stanig 2019a). Our findings are also consistent with the position of Kotwas and Kubik 2019, who argue that "the rising political influence of populism is the result of what Myrdal called a circular cumulative causation in which economic, political and cultural factors interact with each other." (Kotwas and Kubik 2019: 13)

We reach this conclusion based on an overview of the vast literature on causes and causal mechanisms of populism. We have also checked some of the hypothesized causal mechanisms against case studies of populist and nativist parties that we have selected for the PaCE project. And finally, some of the hypotheses have been further tested in a pilot study by the PLUS team of PaCE in the context of voting for populist and nativist parties in Austria, Bulgaria and Hungary.

The analysis of causal mechanisms is intended to serve as the basis on which a causal model of voting for populist parties will be elaborated by November 2020.

We start with the hypothesis that the main drivers for populist voting are diverse *socio-economic* and *cultural* grievances of the voters. We also explore the effects of specifically *political* grievances on populist voting. Populism has a serious critical potential: it rides on the waves of popular dissatisfaction with the *status quo*. The character of this dissatisfaction accounts for the different logics of causal mechanisms.

We also take the findings of Pappas' (2019a) research on the causes for populist voting as a general overall frame of the analysis: It is hardly controversial that for a populist party to emerge there needs to be a serious crisis of representation and disappointment with the established mainstream parties. Secondly, most of the populist parties are leader's parties, formed around a strong, charismatic personality. The personalization of politics is a phenomenon, which is broader than populism and precedes the rise of populism in the last decade or so. Anyway, a strong, charismatic personality is an element, which helps populist mobilization and, as Pappas argues, may be indeed indispensable for their success.

Our analysis in this report is an attempt to unpack the different types of crisis, which could ultimately lead to the triggering of a crisis of representation, thus opening space for the new populist players.

The report proceeds in two main parts and a concluding section:

**Part One:** Causal mechanisms of populism: analysis of three types of causal mechanisms (situational, action-formation and transformational) leading to populist voting

**Part Two:** Results from two studies carried out by PLUS team within the framework of PaCE.

This second part of the report has two sections:

1. Results of a pilot study by PLUS on the effect of 4 causal factors on voting for populist and nativist parties in three European countries. This pilot study will be extended to cover all European countries in the focus of PaCE for the purposes of D4.2



2. Results of a study on the extent citizens' conceptions of territorial identity contribute to the support for Radical Right Populist Parties or Leftist Populist Parties mobilizing either at the national or sub-state level (20 cases of populist and nativist parties in Europe covered).

In the *concluding section* two models explaining voting for populist parties are introduced and analyzed. These models - "the squeezed middle class" and the "bargaining and insurance model" - will be further tested and will serve as the ground for elaborating a *causal model of populist voting* (D4.2).

# Part One: Causal Mechanisms of Populism

Building on scholarship on mechanisms (Faletti and Lynch 2009; Beach and Pedersen 2013), social mechanisms (Hedström and Swedberg 1998), causal mechanisms (Hedström and Ylikoski 2010), and process tracing (Bennett and Checkel 2015), a basic explanatory model on social mechanisms, known as ‘Coleman’s boat’ (Hedström and Swedberg 1998) - panel A on Figure 1, was adapted for an analysis of the causal mechanisms for the rise and success of populism specifically (panel B Figure 1).

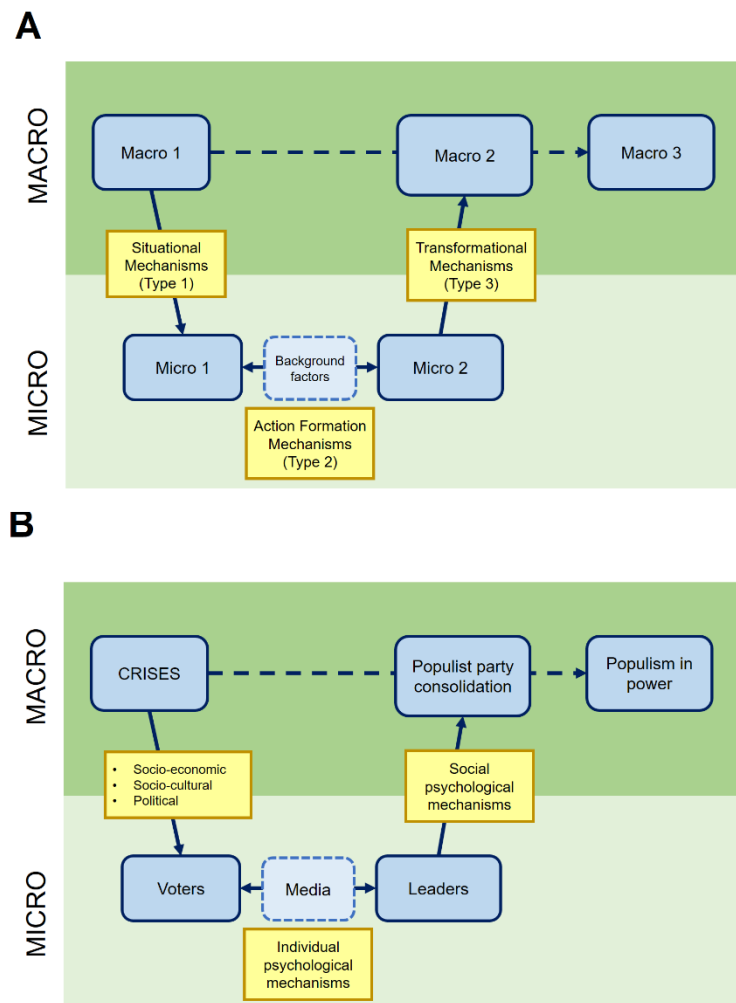


Figure 1. "Coleman's Boat" Model of Causal Mechanisms.

The model distinguishes between three types of causal mechanisms that may explain the occurrence of a social outcome:

- situational mechanisms* (macro-to-micro/ structure-to-agency transition) trace the process through which a specific social situation is affecting individuals in a particular way,
- action formation mechanisms* are working at the micro level and explain how a specific combination of individual desires, beliefs, and action opportunities generate a specific action (on this level, individual and social-psychological mechanisms interact) and, lastly,

c) *transformation mechanisms* (micro-to-macro transition) show how actions of individuals are transformed into a collective outcome (intended or unintended).

Drawing on this model and based on a survey of the existent research, three types of mechanisms for populism's emergence and eventual success are analyzed.

Firstly, the *situational mechanisms* describe how a certain macro phenomenon (crisis) leads to micro action (change in individual attitudes). Several types of crisis as possible triggers for surge in populist attitudes are discussed in the literature on populism: (1) political: crisis of representation due to collusion or dysfunctional party systems; ineffective and/or corrupt government; important issues left off the political agenda, etc.; (2) socio-economic: inadequate 'neoliberal' policies (slow, partial response to "The Great recession"), growing sense of injustice; (3) demographic: aging population, low birth rates, insecurity, declining health status for certain strata; (4) globalization-related: migration flows exceeding absorption capacity, competition pressures, etc. These sorts of crises are what many people think of when they talk about "causes of populism". Yet, these crises do not always and necessarily lead to populist voting and to the emergence of populist parties. What we further need to demonstrate are the intermediate steps that turn these crises into populist voting.

Thus, the effects of the multiple crises on voters' attitudes and how these effects are produced is further analyzed. (1) Growing distrust of representative institutions may produce apathy, but may also trigger the growth of populist, even authoritarian attitudes. (2) Economic crisis in its various manifestations may trigger demand for more redistribution, or for compensation. (3) Demographic crisis has a differential (regional/country-specific) effect on voters' populist attitudes. In Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), for example, the demographic panic brought anti-EU sentiments, hostility to migrants and minorities due to majority's fear of status loss, while in all EU countries the aging, ailing population heightens popular sensitivity to law-and-order issues, and also triggers welfare chauvinism. (4) Globalization-related crisis triggers anti-immigration attitudes favoring law-and-order and protectionist measures.

Secondly, the *action formation mechanisms* detail the interplay between the two main actors on the populist script: the voters and populist leaders. With regard to the voters the central questions studied were how the populist attitudes (often widespread) are activated to lead to action (vote for a populist party). Here we focused on the oft neglected role of affect: what are the precise feelings/emotions spurred by crises/grievances and how do these lead to the action. In the populism literature several sentiments as triggers for populist action have been studied: Resentment (Betz 1994), *ressentiment*, (Salmela and von Scheve 2017), fear, sense of loss, powerlessness and loss of control, frustration, longing to restore 'wholeness', shame for lost identity (repressed or acknowledged) and anger. We hypothesize that anger, which is linked to moral evaluation/blame attribution (central elements of the Manichean worldview characteristic of populism) is crucial for triggering populist action - i.e. voting for populist party. Several hypotheses on how anger is activated through the complex combination of the above feelings were explored. All of these hypotheses attribute a leading role in the activation process (of certain attitudes leading to readiness to act) to the figure of the populist leader: charismatic (Eatwell 2005), opportunistic (Weyland 2001, Heinisch 2008), performative - "performance of a crisis as an internal core feature of populism" (Moffitt 2015). The questions addressed in this part of the analysis are how emotions/desire for action are activated by various political narratives (Skonieczny 2018). The role of the mass media as an enabling

condition for populism growth is crucial, as there is a close link between mediatized politics and populism. The role of the media in “performing” crises (Moffitt 2015) needs to be further analyzed to detail the mechanisms through which resonance between voters’ and populist discursive frames (Bonikowski 2017) is achieved.

Lastly, the *transformational mechanisms* account for the emergence of a new structure (a successful populist party) through the agency of a populist leader forging new collective identity to mobilize support for an emerging populist party. This is achieved through the strategic employment of populist discursive frames (Heinisch and Mazzoleni 2017), whose message is amplified by scandal-hungry media, who thereby reinforce populist attitudes and activate them for action. Opportunity structures: the electoral system, the political/policy space, the media environment, the populist party organization (flexibility secured via leader-controlled, centralized party organization) all play a role in the emergence of a successful populist party though will not be discussed in the present report, which focuses mostly on the demand side of populist party emergence. The construction of a new salient cleavage is helped by the long-noticed chameleon-like (Taggart 2000) nature of populist parties: ambivalence in the populist claims “serves to divide a population in an effort to reconstitute political majority with which to gain political control” (Heinisch and Mazzoleni 2017). The new structure that is thus emerging - populist parties in power - invariably establishes an illiberal order that displays four characteristics: reliance on charismatic leadership, incessant pursuit of political polarization, colonization of the state by loyalists, accompanied by the undermining of liberal institutions (Pappas 2019b).

Table 1 sums up the different mechanisms that we analyze in detail in this report

*Table 1. Types of causal mechanisms leading to populist and/or nativist voting*

Type of mechanism	Type of explanatory factor	Key grievance	Indicator
Situational mechanisms (SM)	Socio-economic	economic hardship	growing unemployment
SM	Socio-economic	inequality and (perceived) unfairness	GINI
SM	Socio-economic	relative (perceived or objective) deprivation	positional deprivation, economic status anxiety, subjective, fear of future relative deprivation
SM	Socio-economic	relative gratification under growing inequality	turned into relative deprivation
SM	Socio-economic	fear of globalization	Attitudes towards globalization/ impact of global markets

SM	Socio-cultural	“Cultural backlash”	reaction to post-material values
SM	Mixed (economic and cultural)	substantiating cultural factors	economic insecurity declining subjective social standing
SM	Political	“democracy without choices”	convergence of mainstream parties, cartelization, over-constitutionalization
Action Formation Mechanisms (AM)	Individual psychological	status anxiety	fear of future loss, shame, anger
AM	Individual psychological	social integration problems	Perception of social exclusion/marginalization
AM	Individual psychological	which emotions?	ressentiment/resentment fear, anxiety, shame, anger
Transformation Mechanisms (TM)	Social psychological <sup>1</sup>	threat to group standing	threat to future status, nostalgic deprivation
TM	Social psychological	threat to ethno-cultural identity	collective identity threats and identity politics
TM	Social psychological	collective victimization	historic injustices, imitation and longing for lost authenticity
TM	Social psychological	fear of shrinking numbers	threat to future status, fear of majority status loss, etc.
TM	Social psychological	collective narcissism and paranoia	Attitudes towards the (glorious) history of the community; feelings of collective victimization

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<sup>1</sup> The grievances and the indicators associated with this type of causal factors are often not too distinct. The respective grievances are often interrelated and may take different forms depending on the historic, geographic, cultural, religious etc. contexts and may even be affected by such *ad hoc* circumstances as political fashions and shorter or longer-term political trends (rise of a successful populist party) in neighbouring countries. Future research, including within PaCE, will shed light on the influence of such circumstantial factors on the described in this report transformational mechanisms.

## I. Situational Mechanisms

Here we analyze the mechanisms through which socio-economic, socio-cultural and political factors trigger populist party support and voting for a populist party.

The aim is to explain the trajectory leading from certain structural conditions to forming populist attitudes, which, through further, action formation mechanisms, ultimately may lead to voting populist.

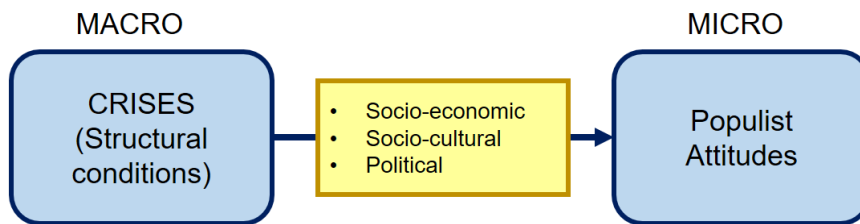


Figure 2. Situational mechanisms: socio-economic, socio-cultural, political.

We assume that no mono-causal explanations may account for the emergence of ideologically diverse populist parties in different political, cultural, economic, historical, etc. settings: multiple paths (in which multiple causal factors often interact, very much in line with Myrdal’s “Principle of Circular and Cumulative Causation”, Myrdal1957) lead to forming populist attitudes and populist voting. We specifically address the role of economic and cultural factors, the special role the political crisis of representation, as well as the interrelation of economic, political and cultural factors in triggering populist reactions and the emergence of populist parties.

### A. Socio-economic mechanisms

An oft-advanced explanation for the increasing success of populist parties and politicians is that they tap into public complaints about the economic situation - that it is a response to economic grievances (Eichengreen 2018). In what follows we unpack the various mechanisms through which economic grievances may translate into populist vote, pointing out the settings in which such populist mobilizations have taken place.

#### 1. Economic hardship

The first causal mechanism relies on the objective deterioration of the economic situation due to rising unemployment and an increase of poverty (typical marks of economic recessions). Research on rising unemployment as a driver for populist voting is rich, though somewhat inconclusive. Some authors find strong correlation between rising unemployment and voting for populist parties (Anderson,1996; Arzheimer, 2009; Givens, 2005; Jackman and Volpert, 1996), other studies find no significant association (Lubbers et al., 2002; Lubbers and Scheepers, 2002; Swank & Betz, 2003), and there are even findings of a weak negative correlation (Arzheimer & Carter, 2006; Knigge, 1998). Populist voting is also associated with growing precariousness of employment (Dörre et al. 2006).

The causal mechanism outlined in the literature is: “people are in competition over scarce resources, which may result in intergroup conflicts” (Lubbers and Scheepers, 2002). Yet, a reverse mechanism is also hypothesized,

detailing why under economic hardship “people may turn back to the more established and experienced mainstream parties” (Arzheimer and Carter 2006) rather than opt for the easy fixes of their populist competitors.

The type of populist attitudes triggered by rising unemployment is anti-elitism: individuals with such attitudes believe that democracy works for the rich.

In order for this mechanism to work, people have to distrust mainstream parties - as they might believe that mainstream parties cater only to the interests of privileged. Triggering events of this mechanism can be seen in the financial crisis after 2008, sovereign debt crisis after 2010, the economic recession, and the COVID-19-triggered economic crisis of 2020.

Indeed, there is case study evidence that the emergence of (mostly, but not only left) populist parties in Southern Europe - Greece, Spain and Italy, as well as the rise of the Brexit movement happened in the wake of the financial crisis of 2008. Similarly, right wing populists in CEE - Fidesz in Hungary, PiS in Poland and GERB in Bulgaria came to power after this crisis. In Iceland, the issue of populism was also brought to the public arena by the same economic crisis.

Yet, there are arguments to doubt the strength of this causal explanation, especially at the level of potential voters for populist parties. First, a lot of populist parties had actually emerged as formidable political forces well before the mentioned economic crises. A most typical case is Forza Italia of Silvio Berlusconi, whose ascendancy was related to a political rather than economic crisis. Further, the rise of populism in Eastern Europe started well before 2008 and coincided with the accession of ten Eastern European countries to the EU between 2004 and 2007. This was a period of most impressive economic growth and rise of foreign direct investment in the Eastern European economies. Both Fidesz and PiS, although not in government, became very strong political players and were able to seriously contend for the government exactly during this period. Fidesz had started to organize huge public rallies against the Hungarian socialists well before 2008. Even before the financial meltdown political science literature had started speaking of “democratic backsliding” of the region (*Journal of Democracy* devoted a special issue on the topic in 2007), which could not be explained by rising economic hardship. The Polish case is particularly revealing (Markowski 2016): Poland was the only economy in Europe, which did not experience economic recession after 2008. Yet, despite this performance, the government of the liberal Civic Platform was ousted and PiS came to power.

At the level of individual voters, evidence from a study of voting for radical right populist parties (classified as nativist in PaCE) in three European countries - UK, Switzerland and Germany - suggests that those most deprived have lower chance of voting for such parties, than those just slightly economically better off, still having the chance to lose out (Kurer, 2020). It is reported that the probability of "former routine workers ... to vote for the Swiss Peoples Party or the United Kingdom Independence Party, respectively, declines substantially once they lose their job and are unable to find another one" (Kurer 2020: 20). People below the poverty line often abstain from voting or vote for parties that offer redistributive policies, which are rarely on the policy menu of nativist parties. "Contrary to what is often assumed, absolute economic hardship does not appear as a driver of support for socially conservative or right-wing parties. Effectively dropping into unemployment

increases the probability to vote for pro-welfare parties or, even more likely, to abstain from the ballot box altogether (Ibid.: 23)

Further, the voters for populist parties in CEE – especially centre-right ones like Fidesz, PiS, GERB – are rarely unemployed or members of marginalized minorities. The most marginalized group in Eastern Europe – the Roma – are not voters for either populist or nativist parties.

These findings are supported by the Austrian case as well, where the voters for the Freedom Party are not vulnerable groups dependent on the welfare state. In Eastern Europe, in Hungary and Bulgaria the voters for populist parties are slightly better off and more educated than the average. Poland provides a more complex picture but again there is no direct link between poverty, unemployment and the vote for populist players.

It may be the case that such a link is stronger for left-wing populist parties like Syriza and Podemos (and the Five Star Movement in Italy): their emergence was due to the fall out of the 2008 financial crisis and its repercussions in the Eurozone. The 2018 *Populism Barometer for Germany* (Verkamp and Merkel 2018) argues that voters with lower income more often harbor populist attitudes, and voters with populist attitudes are more likely to vote for populist parties. In general, this study finds that the expansion of populist attitudes towards the political center of society benefits mostly the populist parties.

A study by the Bertelsmann Foundation (de Vries & Hoffmann 2016), titled *Fears not Values* has argued that economic anxiety is a driver of populist voting, although not as strong as the fear from globalization. The authors define economic anxiety as (self-reported) deterioration in the economic situation over the previous two years and a negative outlook for the future. The findings are that while the average for the EU in terms of economically anxious people is around 35%, they are overrepresented among supporters of parties such as AfD, FN and FPÖ, and Lega Nord. Yet, voters of Fidesz, Jobbik, PiS and UKIP are below this average for Europe, so the outcome again is not fully conclusive. (For left-wing populist parties, the researchers find that between 32% and 53% of their supporters report economic anxiety – the parties include Podemos and the Five Star Movement).

A recent study of drivers of populist attitudes in nine European countries found that neither individual vulnerability nor personal economic grievances per se, but perceptions of the economic situation in their country is what most strengthens them. Further studying the question of endogeneity between economic perceptions and populism, based on data from Spain, the authors conclude that the effect goes mostly from economic perception to populism (Rico & Anduiza 2019).

On the basis of all this evidence, we can conclude that the “economic hardship” - in one or another interpretation - needs to be taken into account: it could explain some part of the populist mobilization, although it does not seem to have universal validity.

It is best applicable to

1) left-populist formations such as Die Linke, Podemos and Syriza;



2) Nativist formations such as AfD, FPÖ and FN. The mechanism seems much less applicable to centrist populist formations, such as Fidesz, PiS, GERB, Forza Italia.

Objective economic deterioration (economic insecurity) will be further discussed in the context of the analysis of cultural factors for populist voting. Recent studies demonstrate that cultural grievances are not stand-alone factors for populist support, but often mediate the effect of long-term economic decline (Colantone and Stanig 2018a, Carreras et al. 2020).

## ***2. Rising inequality and (perceived) unfairness***

The populist narratives exploit heavily the grievances of the “left behind”. In Western Europe, this problem is framed mostly in the context of globalization and issues associated with it, such as mass migration. As we shall see, voters of nativist parties there often position themselves against globalization. In Eastern Europe, similar grievances are articulated by the so-called “losers-of-the-transition” narrative (transition from state socialism to democracy and market economy). In general, growing inequality has been identified as a cause of populist voting (Han 2016)

In this model, these factors trigger mostly anti-elitist attitudes: democracy works for the educated, cosmopolitan elites, but not for ordinary people.

### ***2.1. GINI, inequality and populism***

In their book *National Populism*, Eatwell and Goodwin (2018) argue that the rising inequality over the last decades is one of the causes of the sense of deprivation, which affects populist voting. They point out that in the western developed democracies inequality has risen significantly in this period, especially in the US and UK. A similar argument has been made by Przeworski (2019), who stressed the growing disparity between productivity and average wage. Przeworski does not claim that a robust causal link between populist voting (or the crisis of democracy) and this disparity has been proven, but draws attention to the strong correlation.

Yet, there are reasons to doubt the causal significance of inequality and the GINI coefficient *per se*. Our case studies show the following. First, there are no changes of the average GINI for the EU over the last decade – it stands at roughly 30.5-30.8. Secondly, populism has affected countries with high levels of inequality (Bulgaria, Romania, UK) and those with very low levels (Czechia and Slovakia). Finally, in some central cases for populism such as Poland, the GINI coefficient has fallen over the last decade. It could be speculated that this is the result of populist governments in office: populists arguably redress the inequality complaints of the populace (an argument to this effect was recently made by Orenstein 2020 to explain the reelection in 2020 in Poland of PiS-backed president Andrzej Duda). Yet, Orbán’s reign in office in Hungary has led to some increase of GINI – from 24 to 28, which has not visibly affected his electoral support.

Although it is difficult to link inequality causally with the rise of the populist parties at the national level, it could still be a valid factor to explain the behavior of some voters from regions away from the capital and large cities. Often the voters for populist parties are not from the capital but from the provinces and regions of a country.

Our case studies show that this is true for many of the countries (Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, Czechia, but also the UK). There is a particular sense of being “left behind” in rural and small towns areas of many states.

## *2.2. Perceived unfairness*

Some authors suggest that what drives popular discontent and may trigger populist backlash is not inequality *per se*, but perceived unfairness. Drawing on the work of three psychologists Starmans, Sheskin, and Bloom (2017), who have provided support for the idea that what matters for people is not so much equal but fair distribution Rodrik (2018) takes the worry about economic unfairness and not inequality, to be the driving appeal of ‘fair trade’ arguments. These arguments are instrumentalized by US President Trump to rally support for his ‘angry populism’, to use the apt term introduced by Wahl-Jorgensen (2018). Concerns over procedural fairness may also account for the opposition to “social dumping” (using cheap foreign/immigrant labour). Grievances against this “social dumping” are often taken onboard by nativists and populists to mobilize supporters around an anti-immigrant welfare chauvinist agenda (Bent 2019). But note that according to the study by Oesch (2008) concern with ‘social dumping’ and economic competition from immigrants is not the *main* driver for voters of radical right parties in Western Europe.

## *3. Relative deprivation (real or perceived)*

### *3.1. Relative ('positional') deprivation*

A number of authors have argued that what explains the behavior of populist voters is not objective but subjective inequality and relative deprivation. There have been various attempts to make this notion operational. Focusing on “positional deprivation”, defined as “a situation where the increase (decrease) in disposable income of an individual is smaller (larger) relative to the growth in income of other groups in the same country’s income distribution”, Burgoon et al. (2019) argue that individuals experiencing lower gains/greater losses in income than the gains experienced by others, are more likely to vote for radical parties. This effect on vote choice is larger than the effect of “subjective economic well-being, gender, and urban/rural residency, but smaller than the effect of education”. A further finding that these authors report is that the support for radical left or radical right populist party depends on the type of positional deprivation the person is experiencing: if it is relative to the wealthiest groups in society, the person tends to vote for a left-wing party, if it is relative to the poorest groups in society – then the person tends to vote for a radical right party.

Although the authors claim a causal link between positional deprivation and voting for radical parties, the study has certain (serious) limitations regarding our project. Most importantly, it defines “radical parties” as a narrower set of parties within populism: for instance, central cases like Fidesz, PiS, GERB, Forza Italia are not included in the analysis. So, here again we have valid results mostly for what we define as “nativist parties” and also for left-wing populist parties.

An interesting recent paper on the populist vote in the UK and France drawing on fine-grained house price data shows “that the pattern of house prices – even within small districts – plays a major part in shaping support for Brexit and Marine Le Pen. The findings illustrate how long-standing variation in local wealth shapes the

geography of discontent and drives populist appeal. Populism...is primarily a politics of place, and place is a product, in part, of the housing market.” (Adler and Ansell 2020)

This study also lends credit to the thesis that real relative deprivation may be a driver of populist voting: since the price of houses is definitive of the economic situation for the average voter, their fluctuations do lead to relative deprivation. These findings also indicate that even for “cultural” explanations of populism, there could have an economic dimension as “culture does not emerge in a vacuum” but is influenced by economic factors: housing prices “harden geographic borders creating cultural ecosystems, in which a single worldview can become dominant” (Adler and Ansell 2020: 361-362).

It will be difficult to generalize on the basis of this study, however, and it may be the case that its validity is stronger for Western Europe, and especially for countries where mortgages are the central means of owning a flat or a house. In many Eastern European states most of the people own the flats they live in, which may affect the findings. Nevertheless, house market prices differences in CEE as well may present serious challenge to economic and social mobility and may thus boost populism’s appeal.

### *3.2. Economic status anxiety*

Kurer (2020) describes another causal mechanism leading from economic status anxiety to voting for the populist radical right (the 3 cases his study is covering correspond to nativist parties in PaCE classification). It traces the trajectory of routine semi-skilled workers, leading from susceptibility to displacement through automation via status anxiety among 'survivor' (retaining their jobs) routine workers - to support for right-wing populist parties. Those actually transitioning to lower status (non-skilled workers or long-term unemployment) are less likely to vote radical right, opting instead for pro-distribution left parties.

What explains according to Kurer's analysis the higher probability of voting for nativist/radical right parties of 'survivors' is their economic status anxiety.

### *3.3. Subjective relative deprivation, fear of future deprivation and 'nostalgic deprivation'. The "wealth paradox" and the "paradox of well-being"*

The conclusions about the predominantly economic determinants of less tolerant culturally, anti-immigrant attitudes among the low-skilled white male workers, and among semi-skilled routine workers, are weakened by findings that such attitudes grow as much in times of relative deprivation as in times of gratification - and also among members of “the middle class”. This result is known as “the Wealth paradox”. In a series of papers, Jetten and colleagues (Jetten et al. 2015, 2016) examine the link between support for radical right populist parties ('nativist' in PaCE) and economic prosperity, and establish that both relative deprivation and relative gratification enhance anti-immigrant attitudes. They also demonstrate that opposition to immigration grows stronger for all wealth groups and this opposition increases rather than declines with increasing inequality.

The authors’ hypothesis for this effect of growing inequality is that it typically leads to greater status competition whereby everyone experiences greater status instability and status anxiety. Finally, they argue that it is fear about

future wealth (fear of future deprivation) which underpins opposition to migration even among the relatively well-off.

Gest et al. (2019) introduce yet another notion of deprivation - 'nostalgic deprivation'..."that captures individuals' perceptions of increasing or decreasing deprivation over time". Subjective social, political, and economic status among White respondents, perceived to decline, ...drives support for the Radical Right in the United Kingdom and the United States". These results substantiate well a causal mechanism that will be discussed later under the rubric "threats to majority status".

Rooduijn & Burgoon 2018 identify a further paradox: the "paradox of well-being". Trying to explain why the less well-off often turn to radical right and left populist parties particularly under favorable aggregate level economic conditions, Rooduijn and Burgoon (2018) study two possible mechanisms underlying this effect—relative deprivation and risk aversion. They find support for the relative deprivation hypothesis only among radical right (nativist) voters and for the risk aversion hypothesis for both types of radical voters, with economic hardship leading to radical right voting when the socioeconomic circumstances are favorable and to radical left voting when net migration is modest. Paradoxically, individual economic suffering might foster both left and right radicalism, yet this happens mainly when that suffering takes place amid favorable conditions at the aggregate level.

#### *3.4. Turning objective relative gratification into subjective relative deprivation. The role of populist political entrepreneurs*

In a further study on the puzzle of growing opposition to migration in times of prosperity even among the well-to-do, Mols and Jetten (2016) identify as one of its major causes the aptitude of nativist and populist leaders. As crafty identity entrepreneurs, nativist and/or populist leaders manage, through various discursive techniques, to present the people as victims of injustice by conspiring elites and migrants. Such artificially induced perceptions may create feelings of injustice and resentment towards outgroups, who might be viewed as threatening the 'disadvantaged' group's interests. Remarkably, this discursive new identity formation (as victims of injustice) is sometimes sufficient to turn objective relative gratification into perceived relative deprivation (Mols and Jetten 2016).

Jetten (2019) studies further this phenomenon of support for radical right populists (nativists in PaCE vocabulary) among the relatively well-off within the framework of classical social identity theorizing (commonly applied for analysis of low status groups). She shows that less tolerance and hostility towards outgroups among wealthier groups may be accounted for by the "status anxiety, status threat, and fear of falling" among members of such groups, as group boundaries are increasingly permeable and these strata's wealth positions – less secure.

#### *3.5. PaCE results on relative deprivation as a causal factor for populist/nativist vote*

Results of the pilot study conducted by PLUS team within PaCE indicate that (perceived or real) relative deprivation cannot explain vote for either populist or nativist parties in either Austria, Hungary or Bulgaria. On the contrary, perceived relative deprivation either is not associated with voting populist/nativist (in the cases of

anti-democratic Jobbik in Hungary and in the case of nativist NFSB in Bulgaria), or is *negatively* correlated: moderately in the case of 'nativist' FPÖ voters and of 'populist' GERB voters) and strongly in the cases of Fidesz voters. Strikingly, perceptions of unfair inequality are also not linked with increased chance of voting either populist or nativist, and in one case (Fidesz voters) - it is strongly negatively correlated: the more unfair the distribution is perceived, the less likely it is for voters to opt for Fidesz.

As the studies quoted in this section, on the contrary, suggest a positive correlation of voting populist/nativist with (perceived) relative deprivation and with perceptions of unfair/unequal distribution, and as there are recent analyses (Orenstein 2020, for example) hypothesizing such link, we at PaCE plan to extend the pilot study to cover more cases – PiS voters in Poland, Podemos' in Spain, voters of Lega and of Five Stars movements in Italy, and the voters of AfD and Die Linke in Germany. As the pilot study covers also 'cultural' micro factors (such as identity concerns and spread of illiberal values), extending it to cover more cases will allow to assess the relative contribution of socio-economic and socio-cultural causal factors.

#### 4. *Fears of globalization*

Fears of globalization are another aspect of economic anxieties and feelings of relative deprivation. Globalization is portrayed by many populist leaders as a threat to the wellbeing of the nation state. Global foreign actors become dominant, while local producers and businesses gradually become non-competitive. The EU and other supranational organizations are presented as the main instruments through which the global actors unravel the nation state.

Research has identified 'losers of globalization' as voters for radical right nativist and populist parties (Betz 1994, Kitschelt 1995, Kriesi et al. 2008, 2012, Kriesi and Pappas 2015, and Rodrik 2018). Rooduijn (2018), however, did not find in this feature a common predictor of populist vote. Based on a comprehensive study of voters of 15 considered paradigmatic populist parties from 11 European countries, he showed that the 'populist voter' is not the proverbial 'loser of globalization' but has a much more diverse profile.

According to the economic-interests thesis, explaining the globalization-related drivers for populist voting, it mostly affects “the losers in the competition over scarce resources and/or those who suffered from some form of relative deprivation” (Eatwell 2003: 53). A related account explains the appeal of populists for the 'losers of globalization' as providing them with voice.

The already mentioned study *Fears not Values* (De Vries and Hoffmann 2016) argues that fear of globalization is the single most important defining feature of the voters for populist parties (the cases studied fall into PaCE categories of nativist and populist - both right-wing and left-wing - parties).

“For those identifying with right wing challenger parties in Europe globalisation fears are very pronounced. 78% of AfD voters, 76% of FN voters, 69 % of FPÖ voters, 66% of Lega Nord voters, 57% of PVV voters, 58% of PiS voters, 61% of Fidesz and 50% of Jobbik voters and 50% of UKIP voters see globalisation as a threat. Left-wing populist parties, such as Die Linke, Five Star Movement, and Podemos, also attract people who fear

globalisation, but interestingly to a lesser degree.” (De Vries and Hoffmann 2016: 4)

A recent study by Colantone and Stanig (2019b), “The Surge of Economic Nationalism in Western Europe” also attributes the vote for populist parties (on the Brexit model) to the “shock of globalization”. The authors correlate the increase of Chinese imports with increases for the support for populists at the constituency level.

They argue that:

“Clearly, all these are estimates of the effect of specific economic shocks on electoral outcomes. The main message emerging from this literature is that economic factors are consequential. What we cannot infer from the available evidence...is the overall effect of economic drivers vis-à-vis cultural or social status factors. This type of question is very difficult to address, especially as different economic shocks not only interact with one another but also influence cultural factors, as we have just discussed. In our view, and especially in thinking about policy implications, it might not even be the most relevant question to ask. What matters for us is that a coherent body of evidence is pointing in the same direction: failures in addressing the distributional consequences of economic shocks may have dangerous political implications. Dismissing the economic determinants of the populist backlash could lead the elites to a dangerous conclusion, against the evidence, that nothing has gone wrong in the management of structural economic changes... we believe that recognizing and addressing the distributional consequences of economic change are prerequisites for promoting politically sustainable liberal policies in an open society.”

Fear of globalization plays out differently in Eastern and Western Europe. In both places economic migration is problematic, but in the East many fear “brain drain” and even depopulation of Eastern European states. Such fears are closely linked with populist voting.

This short review of the *economic factors* for populist vote lends support to the following conclusions.

First, economic grievances – be they objective or subjective – *do play a role* in explaining the vote for populist and nativist parties in Europe.

Second, these grievances *per se* cannot explain the wide spectrum of populist players and especially those of more centrist type as Fidesz, PiS, GERB, Forza Italia or broader social movements as the Brexit vote. Economic grievances alone do not make the voters for such parties distinctive from the rest of the electorate. This is also demonstrated by the results of the pilot study conducted by PLUS (to be presented in Part Two of this report) on factors explaining populist and nativist vote in Bulgaria and Hungary: neither growing inequality nor relative deprivation (perceived or real) are significantly positively associated with voting either populist or nativist in Bulgaria and in Hungary.

In short, economic factors seem to explain better what the PaCE project calls 'nativist parties' (such as AfD, FPÖ, FN) in Western Europe, as well as left-populist parties such as Syriza, Podemos and Die Linke. These factors much less explain the most successful right-of-the-centre populists, often commanding absolute majorities and enjoying several terms in office - most notably in CEE, but also in Italy (Forza Italia under Berlusconi).



## B. Socio-Cultural Mechanisms

### 1. *The "Cultural Backlash" thesis*

For Norris and Inglehart (2016, 2019), the main drivers of populist support are culture and values. In a series of influential works, they argue that populists draw their biggest support from those, who view negatively the social changes brought about by the Silent Revolution (Inglehart 1977) - the societal shift towards post-material values and the cosmopolitan multiculturalism of the 'Anywheres' (to use Goodhart's 2017 memorable term). These changes have produced a powerful backlash which is the main source for the success of what they call "authoritarian populist" forces across the globe. The "cultural backlash" thesis, in short, explains this support as "retro reaction by once-predominant sectors of the population to progressive value change" (Norris and Inglehart 2016).

Behind the shift towards post-material values is the "existential security" in the post-war period enjoyed by Western societies, which has triggered a 'counterrevolutionary retro backlash' among the older, less educated, white men who react angrily to the erosion of their privileges and status - especially when they feel that their group is being marginalized. Cultural backlash is a major explanatory factor: the rise of populism should not be "attributed directly to economic inequality alone. Psychological factors seem to play a more important role. Older birth cohorts and less-educated groups support populist parties and leaders that defend traditional cultural values and emphasize nationalistic and xenophobia appeals, rejecting outsiders, and upholding old-fashioned gender roles. Populists support charismatic leaders, reflecting a deep mistrust of the 'establishment' and mainstream parties who are led nowadays by educated elites with progressive cultural views on moral issues." (Inglehart and Norris 2016)

#### 1.1. *Theoretical and descriptive limitations of the "cultural backlash" explanation*

The explanatory power of the thesis that support for radical populist parties is due to generational shifts in values and a backlash of the older generation (especially among the less educated and lower-income members of that generation) against the post-material values promoted by the ruling elites, has its limits as it fails to fully acknowledge the role of the socio-economic factors that often underlie these reactive processes.

Independently of these more theoretical shortcomings, the cultural explanation fails to fully account for the spectacular success of populist parties in CEE. At least two populist parties in the last decade have formed single-party governments (and have been reelected) with one even winning an absolute majority of votes cast and securing constitutional 2/3 majorities in 3 consecutive national parliaments. Remarkably, these parties do exceptionally well among the young voters, as well as among all other age groups (and this failure of explanation is not necessarily due to the rise of populism in CEE being the result of exclusively socio-economic factors). In the 2010 parliamentary elections in Hungary, for example, the winning populist party Fidesz won 52.73% of the vote – and 65.19% of the vote among the youth (18-30), the extreme right party Jobbik – 16.67% of the total vote – and 18.75% of the vote among the young (Wilkin 2016), with the total of the youth vote going to right wing populist and extreme right parties in Hungary exceeding 80%.



Similarly, in the Polish 2015 parliamentary elections, the populist PiS won the plurality of the vote among that age group (25,8%), with another 19.9% (Kukiz'15) and 16.8% (KORWiN) of the vote in this age group going to anti-establishment parties. Support for PiS was also not limited to the less educated: though this party won strongest support among the least educated (55%) and those living in villages (45,4%), the party won plurality of the votes among voters with all education levels and residential location (all data from Czczerbiak 2016).

### 1.2. Role of Religion and the Church?

It has been suggested by recent research that the spectacular success of nationalist populism across CEE – and especially in the champions of the successful transition from communism to market democracy Poland and Hungary – may be linked to the role of the Catholic Church in those countries (Ádám and Bozóki 2016), with some scholars arguing that identification of national groups in these countries with religious loyalties is a relatively recent phenomenon, shaped by the combined effects of pre-communist and communist legacies (Grzymała-Busse 2015b). However, this role of the Church (Catholic or East Orthodox) could hardly explain the rise and success of populism across the region. Not only are the numbers of those attending church in most of the post-communist countries in Europe declining less than 10% of Hungarians, Bulgarians and Czechs declare to attend religious services weekly, with 72% of Czechs admitting to not be religiously affiliated at all. The number of those, identifying themselves as Catholics, during the post-communist period is declining in Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic, though rising in East Orthodox countries (Romania and Bulgaria), Pew, 2017. Vast majorities share a strong belief that the Church should not interfere in politics. Even among Poles, 80% hold this view, and the rates of church goers in CEE sharing this view are uniformly high, as reported in Grzymała-Busse, 2015 a: 6. The convincing argument of Grzymała-Busse (2015 a) that the influence of the Church on public policy is strongest where it is not perceived to interfere with policy choices (thus maintaining its high moral authority - as does the Catholic Church in Poland), this could hardly explain the success of nationalist populism in post-communist societies with low levels of religious affiliation (such as the Czech or the Bulgarian).

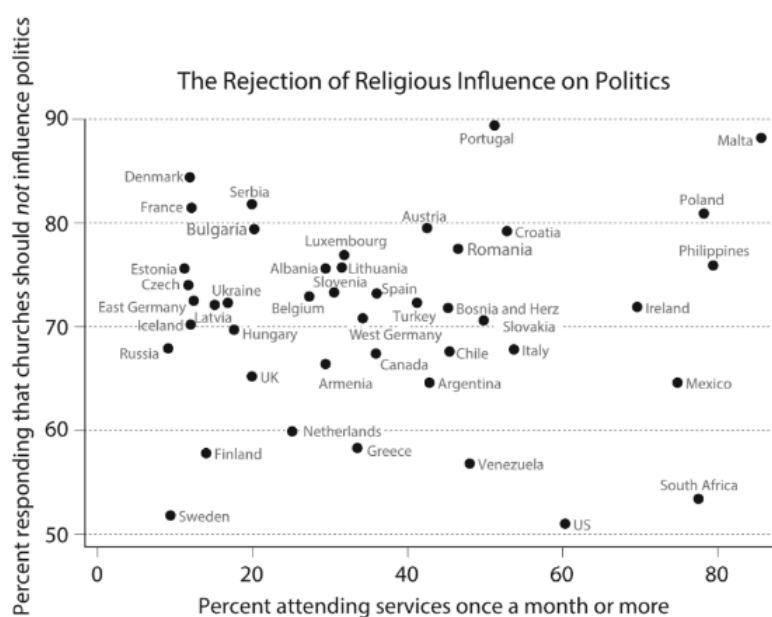


Figure 3. *The Rejection of Religious Influence of Politics*. Source: Grzymała-Busse 2015a: 6.

## **2. Substantiating cultural factors: background socio-economic conditions**

### *2.1. Objective economic deterioration (economic insecurity)*

The strong conclusion of Norris and Inglehart for the prevalence of cultural factors behind the support for authoritarian populists are partly contradicted by recent studies, which explore the hypothesis that the economic insecurity and the cultural backlash do not compete as explanations for what drives populist voters, but rather reinforce each other.

Colantone and Stanig 2019a argue that “economic and cultural factors should be seen as tightly interrelated explanations for the observed political shifts, rather than as mutually exclusive alternatives”.

Building on the analysis of Inglehart (2018), according to which decreased levels of existential security lead to more xenophobia, stronger in-group solidarity, support for more authoritarian politics, and rigid adherence to traditional cultural norms, Carreras et al. (2020) studied the determinants of support for Brexit to establish that cultural grievances mediate the effect of long-term economic decline. Already in 2016, Colantone and Stanig (2018a) had tracked the support in regions in the UK voting overwhelmingly “Leave” in Brexit to the shock of surging imports from China over the past three decades. They interpreted this result as “driven by the displacement determined by globalization in the absence of effective compensation of its losers.” In short, the explanatory mechanism is ‘globalization without compensation’.

A cross-national study of 15 Western European countries by the same authors further supports the thesis that recent growth of values, underlying the cultural backlash hypothesis, is due to the impact of globalization on people’s attitudes (Colantone and Stanig 2018b).

The causal explanation offered here is more detailed: “economic shocks can translate into voting behavior through changes in people’s attitudes that might seem only indirectly related to the economic shifts”.

The support for this conclusion draws on the analysis of survey data from the ESS and EVS for 1998 – 2008, demonstrating that residents of regions exposed to stronger import shocks from China are relatively more apprehensive towards immigration (they perceive it as a threat to national cultural life), and have lower support for democracy and liberal values. This change in attitudes happens irrespectively of whether the individual economic situation of the persons worsens or not - it is sufficient that the region as a whole is hit by the globalization shock. The resulting change in their attitudes alienates them from left parties perceived to support multicultural values and internationalist solidarity. Important element in the winning formula of national right-wing populists are low taxes, which draws the support of the middle classes. The combined effect of these simultaneous processes penalizes the pro-distribution left parties even though lack of sufficient compensation for losers of globalization may have been part of the problem. Yet demands for redistribution lose out as economic shocks bring to the fore identity concerns as more politically salient (ibid.). In a further co-authored study with Anelli, the authors extended their finding to cover the political impact of the economic shock produced by automation (Anelli et al. 2019)

Economic shocks (globalization, automation) lead to change in attitudes (anti-immigrant, illiberal) and alienation from left parties (which are perceived to back multiculturalist solidarity values), which may trigger (given the relevant supply) vote for right-wing populist (nativist in PaCE vocabulary) parties, which run on anti-immigrant platform and low taxes. The '*winning formula*' for the success of a nativist party on this model is the combined support of 'losers of globalization' and of the middle class.

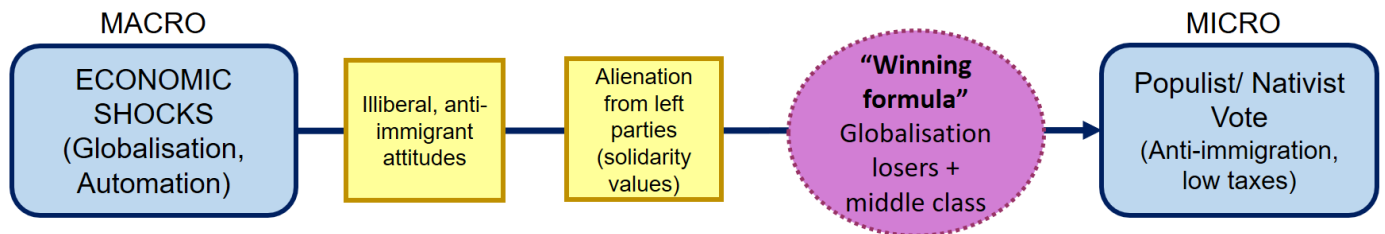


Figure 4. The explanatory mechanism (economic insecurity to populist/ nativist vote). (Colantone and Stanig 2018 b, Anelli et al. 2019).

## 2.2 Declining "subjective social standing"

Gidron and Hall (2017) also argue that an effective explanation for the causes of populism must rest on an understanding of how economic and cultural factors interact to generate support for populism. They point in particular to "status anxiety as a proximate factor inducing support for populism, and economic and cultural developments as factors that combine to precipitate such anxiety".

Their approach, however, differs from that of Colantone and Stanig as they do not look for explanations solely in the *objective deterioration of the economic situation* at the regional level as determining change in value attitudes, and, as a result of this change – triggering growing support for national populists. Rather, here the explanation is broadened to include the *subjective perceptions of one's social standing* as well. The success of right populists is, accordingly "rooted in both economic and cultural developments including economic changes that have depressed the income or job security of some segments of the population and shifts in the cultural frameworks that people use to interpret society and their place within it" (Gidron and Hall 2017).

The explanation of how economic and cultural developments are intertwined to generate support for radical right populism (nativism in PaCE vocabulary) among the white working class ("why does economic disadvantage seem to engender support for ethno-nationalist and anti-immigrant platforms? Why does the populist right win working-class support on identity issues?") is based on the analysis of a cross-national survey data from 20 developed democracies.

The main explanatory variable is '*subjective social status*' (henceforth SSS), defined as "the level of social respect or esteem people believe is accorded them within the social order". It reflects people's "*own feelings about the levels of respect or recognition they receive relative to others in society*". SSS is thus a relational variable - it "embodies a person's sense of where she stands in relation to the full social assembly and, in that respect, might be said to represent *social integration*, namely, whether or not the person feels herself to be a *fully recognized member of society*".

SSS seems conditioned both by material circumstances (job, income) and by prevailing cultural beliefs about what is most valued in society. SSS may affect voting decisions because people care about social esteem as much as they do about money and power (this is so because social esteem is closely linked to self-esteem, which in its turn is affecting physical and mental well-being).

The results of the study show that low SSS (feeling 'left behind'), especially among the low-skilled male workers, is associated with support for right populist parties. The explanatory mechanism is complex. It starts with economic and cultural developments in the developed democracies since the mid-80-ies have led to a downward shift in the levels of social status enjoyed by people in manual, clerical and lower-level service occupations - particularly for men without a college education - due to the gradual disappearance of secure low-skilled decent jobs, concentration of good jobs in cities and shifts in gender and inter-ethnic relations. These latter changes in the cultural frameworks may have intensified the impact of economic developments on subjective social status. Especially pertinent are the shifts in gender relations with the rapid increase of the subjective social status of women relative to men due to increased female employment. As social status is a positional good, SSS of those above is declining as a result of the leveling up of those that were previously below them. Thus, as a result of the increased gender equality, those not having sources of self-esteem other than their dominant gender position (and this may be true of men without secure decent jobs due to low skill and education) may experience decline in SSS.

People most likely to vote right populist are not those at the lowest social ranks, but those whose social status is low enough to generate concern but who still have some status to defend. People in this category, argue the authors, are known to be especially eager to defend social boundaries – the existing set of rules in society, as they have an acute last place aversion. SSS may engender such conservative attitudes associated with voting RRPP even when there is no political supply: concern with defending social boundaries may trigger hostility to immigration even without presence of immigration; the cultural resentment toward those with higher social status will likely trigger anti-elite attitudes, and the relative disadvantage may also trigger demand for protectionist policies.

We have here *a more complex causal mechanism for 'nativist' voting*:

Economic and cultural developments (mid-80-ies) triggered:

1. downward shift in SSS low skilled less educated men (less decent jobs, good jobs in cities, shifts in gender, inter-ethnic relations)
2. shifts in gender relations negatively affect their SSS (no other source of self-esteem left)
3. voting 'nativist' are not lowest social ranks, but those that can still lose out – and are thus eager to defend their SSS by defending social boundaries
4. Defending social boundaries may trigger hostility to immigration
5. cultural resentment toward higher social strata with progressive values trigger anti-elite attitudes
6. relative disadvantage may also trigger demand for protectionist policies

The cumulative effect of the consecutive developments listed above drives support for radical right populist ('nativist') parties.

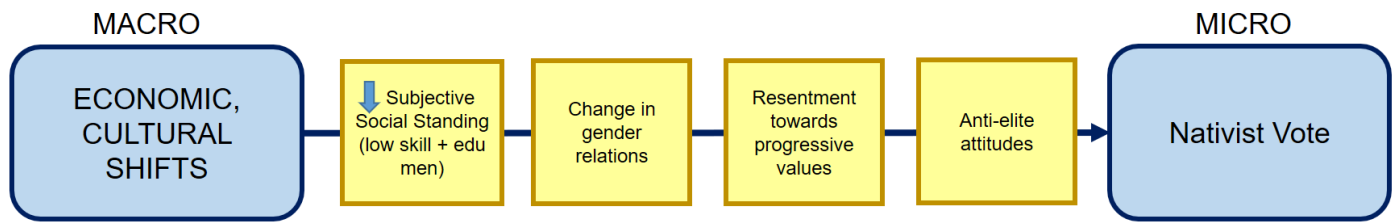
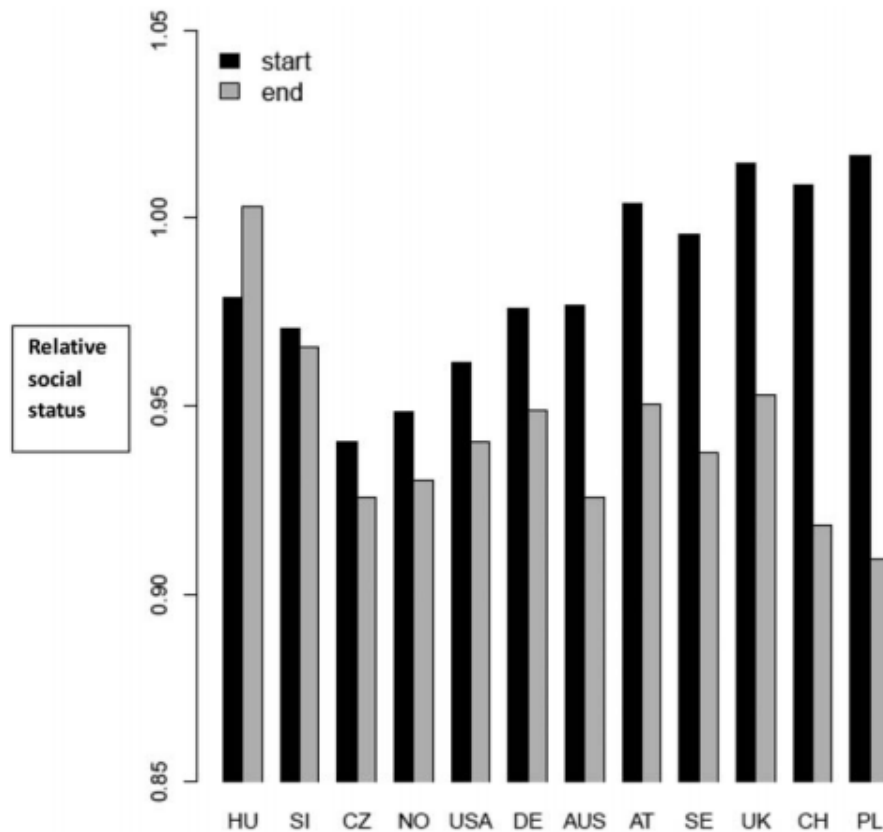


Figure 5. Explanatory mechanism from declining subjective social standing.

There are limits to this causal explanation with regard to the rise of national populism in CEE, however.



Source: ISSP Surveys.

Note: Start period for Germany, Sweden, Norway, the Czech Republic and Slovenia is 1992; end period for UK and Hungary is 2009. Otherwise start period is 1987 and end period is 2014.

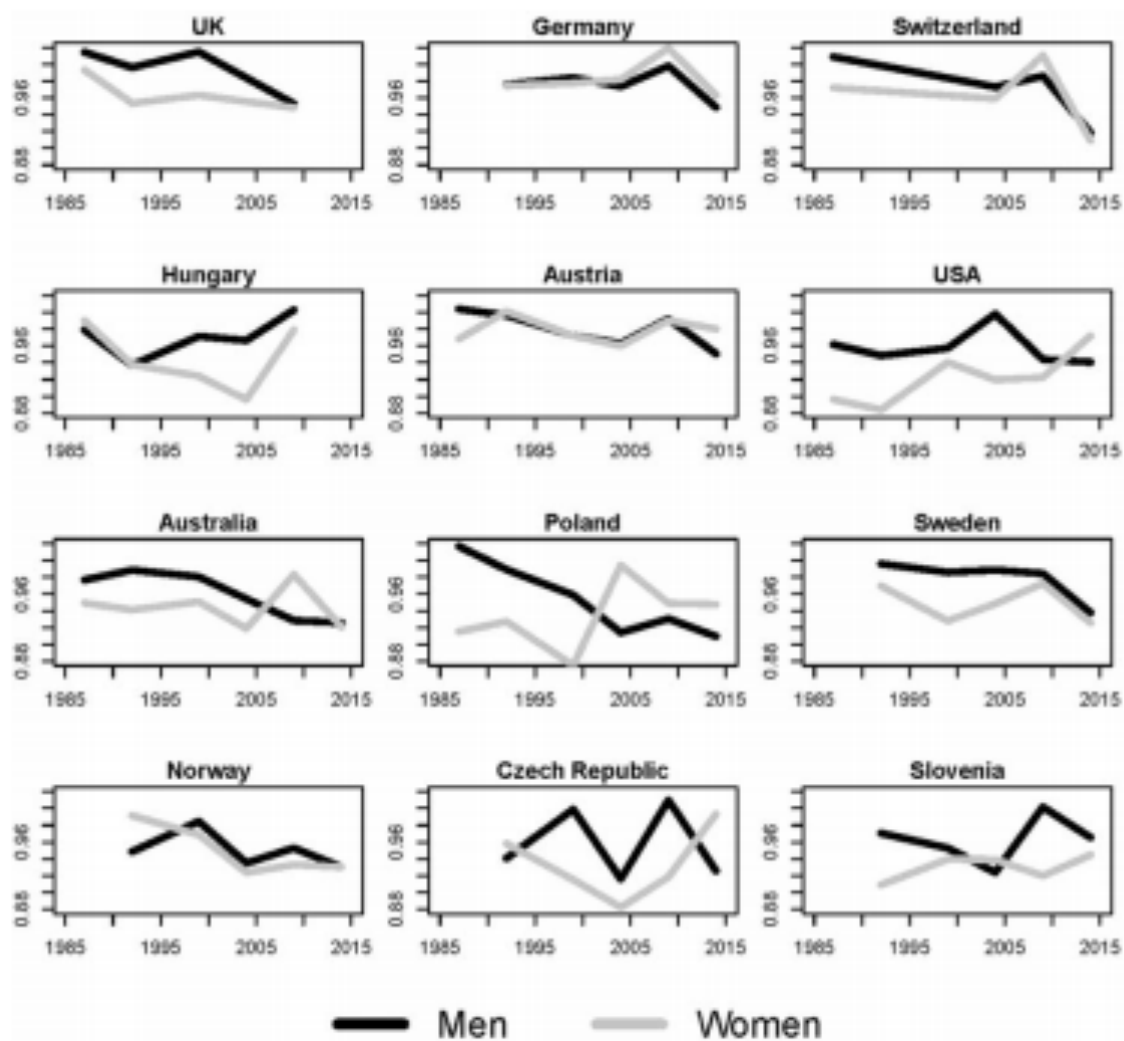
Figure 6. Relative social status of men without college education (1990 - 2014). Source: Gidron and Hall 2017.

The findings (Fig. 6) about the levels of relative social status of men without college education reported in Gidron and Hall 2017 (where the relative social status is the average level of subjective social status reported by

the sub-group taken as a percentage of the average level of SSS at that time in the entire national sample) cannot explain the support of either Fidesz or Jobbik in Hungary in 2010 general elections, as this stratum in Hungarian society saw increase rather than decline of their SSS (which was in any case quite high relative to the national average). At the same time, the support for PiS among low skilled workers in Poland in the 2015 general elections may be attributable to the enormous decline in their relative social status after 1990. Yet this explanation, if valid, cannot account for the fact that support for PiS was strongest among all skill, employment and education groups (save for entrepreneurs).

The analysis in Gidron and Hall 2017 has considerable explanatory power with regard to the observed differences in opposing gender equality among populist-voting majorities in those two countries, however. Thus, the lack of strong opposition to anti-gender equality policies in Hungary and the virtual ‘civil war’ in Poland over reproduction, gender equality and LGBT rights, may be explainable by the discrepancies in the trajectories in the two countries of the relative social status of men and women (Figures 7 and 8). Figure 8, for example, shows that for the last 25 years, the average SSS reported by women has risen relative to that reported by men in 9 of the 12 countries (women in Poland and Slovenia reporting the highest increases in relative SSS).

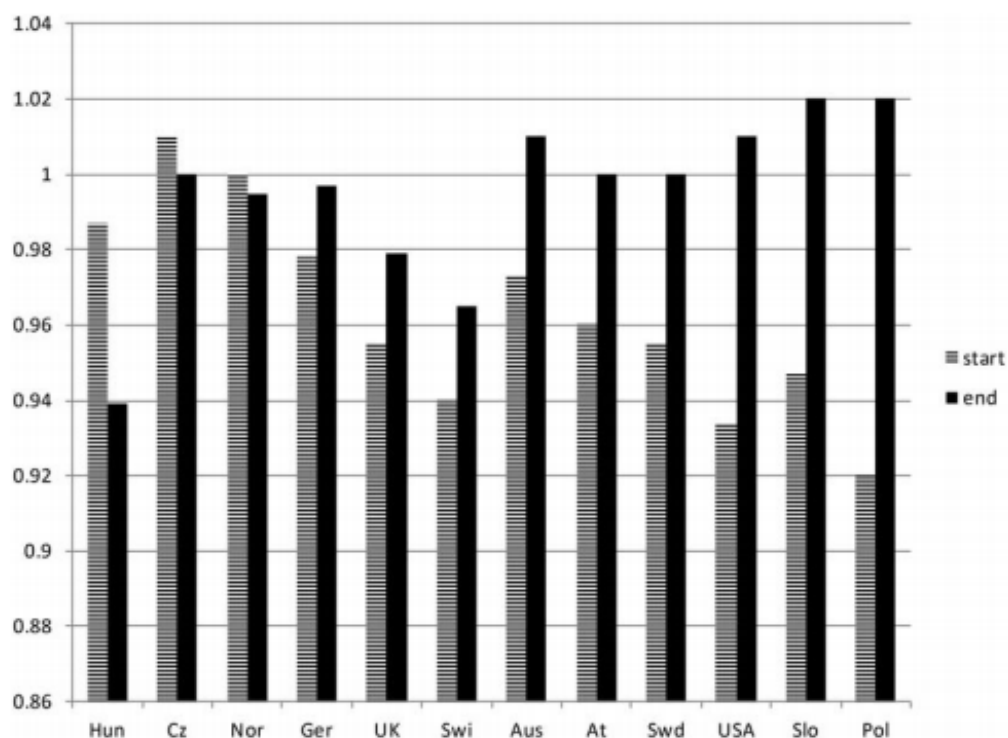
Yet while Poland saw a dramatic increase in the relative SSS of women, who now see themselves in a dominant position, the male dominance in SSS in Hungary remains high and is further increasing - Hungary and the Czech Republic are the only countries of those studied here, that exhibit such a trend. The negative change in fortunes of Polish men *vis-a-vis* their female counterparts may be part of the explanation for the vigorous cultural backlash against gender equality and rights observed in Poland recently. This is not happening to the same extent in Hungary or the Czech Republic, where populist mobilization seems to be around different issues (anti-immigration, national sovereignty, etc.).



Source: ISSP Surveys.

Note: Relative social status is subjective social status of each group as a percentage of mean social status in the country/wave.

Figure 7. Dynamic changes of relative social status of men and women without a college education  
(Source: Gidrone&Hall 2017)



**Source:** ISSP Surveys.

**Note:** Start period for Germany, Sweden, Norway, the Czech Republic and Slovenia is 1992; end period for UK and Hungary is 2009. Otherwise start period is 1987 and end period is 2014.

Figure 8. Ratio of average SSS of all women to all men (Source: *ibid.*)

As the results from the pilot study on 4 micro-factors of populist/nativist vote in three European countries, conducted by PLUS team also indicate, illiberal values (opposition to LGBT rights) do not seem to predict higher support for either illiberal or nativist parties in Hungary and Bulgaria (though such values are moderately correlated with support for FPÖ). Yet the explanation for this lack of correlation may be that the spread of such illiberal values in the respective two societies is so wide, that it does not distinguish the vote for populist and nativist parties. For Bulgaria, for example, data on social acceptance of homosexuality indicate a backward trend after 2007 (39%) with less than 1/3 of respondents in 2020 (32%) agreeing that it is socially acceptable, Pew 2020.

In the wake of Duda's reelection as Poland's President in 2020, where cultural issues (specifically gender equality and LGBT rights) dominated the electoral campaign, for example, Poland's government announced its withdrawal from "The Council of Europe's Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence" ("The Istanbul Convention").

Opposition in the region towards the Istanbul Convention is very high and is linked to the rise there of nationalist populism and its war on what illiberals call "gender ideology". The dominance of the anti-gender equality discourse, introduced and fanned by illiberal national populists, has led to the refusal of most of the populist-dominated governments in CEE to ratify this Council of Europe document. The Constitutional Court



of Bulgaria even managed to produce an international scandal by declaring it anti-constitutional (due to the alleged ‘gender ideology’ the constitutional justices believed to have discovered in its texts), which effectively blocked the ratification of this document by the European Union (Smilova 2020).

The changes in the relative social standing of women vis-a-vis men in the region (and the cultural backlash this change produces) may be part of the explanation for the appeal of illiberal values in some of the countries in the region and the strong position there of populist parties promoting such illiberal values.

To sum up the findings above on the combined effect of the economic and cultural factors on populist support, we outline the following causal mechanism:

1. Economic and cultural developments (gradual disappearance of secure low-skilled decent jobs, concentration of good jobs in cities, shifts in gender and inter-ethnic relations),
2. declining SSS of low-skilled, less educated male workers,
3. anti-immigrant, anti-gender and racial minorities, authoritarian attitudes,
4. may trigger vote for radical right populist ('nativist') party.

### **C. Political mechanisms: democracy without choices**

According to a growing scholarly consensus, populism as a ‘thin’ political ideology (Mudde 2004, Stanley 2008) at its core, which opposes the “good people” to the “corrupt elite” and claims that the people are relatively homogenous. It is logical then to assume that political grievances about corruption and lack of representation are at the heart of the causal mechanism leading to vote for populist parties. Yet, the puzzle is that, as in the case of economic factors, frustration with the political process is wide-spread and is reflected in the attitudes of most of the voters. On average, trust in political parties, for instance, is slightly over ten per cent in most of the established liberal-democracies in Europe. Another institution, which is a major part of the representative structures of democracy, the parliament, fares hardly better than the political parties in terms of trust. Further, many people are skeptical of the capacity of elections to change policy outcomes. And significant groups of people are not convinced that government is exercised in the public interest.

These political disappointments may be linked and even caused by economic factors, but they may also have a separate standing. Over the recent years these types of political grievances start to affect the median voter and ever larger groups in the centre of society. Particularly revealing of this trend is the study *Populism Barometer* (Verkamp and Merkel 2018), mentioned above. Germany is one of the polities in Europe in which the inroads made by populist parties have been relatively moderate: AfD and Die Linke together account for around 20% of the electorate. Yet, the study finds that only a third of the people do not have populist attitudes reflecting strong political frustration. Another third has strong populist attitudes, while the rest are moderately populist. This expansion of populist attitudes towards the centre of society is a very important phenomenon: both novel and of great political significance.

It is particularly interesting that the authors of the *Populism Barometer* define populism as a set of specific attitudes of political frustration: namely, that politicians do not reflect the will of the people, that politicians “sell

out” the interests of the people through compromise, that professional politicians distort the will of the people, that representative democracy does not defend the interests of the people, etc. The growth of these attitudes puts pressure on mainstream parties to cater better for the views of the disappointed. Not surprisingly, a number of studies find that mainstream parties (especially centre-right ones) adopt many of the policies of populist parties in order to preserve public support.

Thus, the *causal mechanism of populist voting based on political frustration* starts from certain

1. Background conditions of contemporary politics:

- the convergence of the political programmes of the mainstream parties,
- the emergence of the cartel party,
- over-constitutionalisation of politics resulting in delegation of powers to expert bodies, such as independent central banks.

These structural conditions lead to

2. Public frustration with the democratic process: people feel that elections cannot change policies.
3. Populists ride the wave of this frustration and promise that they are going to break the party cartels and restore power to the people.

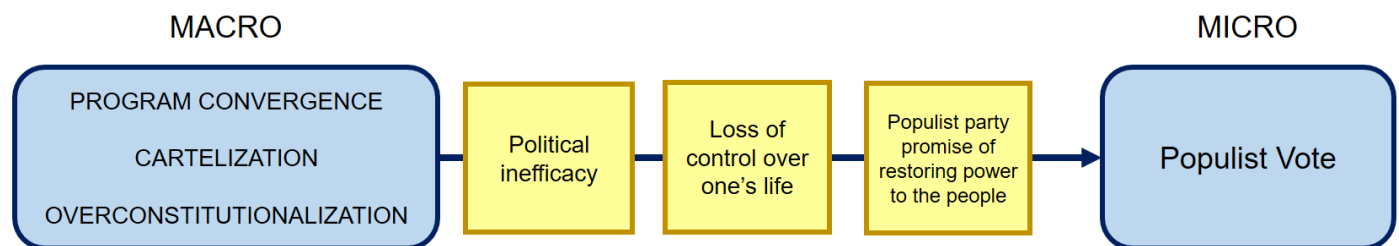


Figure 9. Political causal mechanisms

Bértoa and Rama (2020) find a causal link between the increase of the vote for populist anti-establishment parties and two structural factors: the volatility of the public vote and the fragmentation of the party systems. Both of these factors indicate a certain political crisis as the cause for populist voting: disappointment with the mainstream parties, the dilution of classical “cleavages”, falling party loyalty, experimentalism with voting, etc.

The convergence of the political programmes of mainstream parties is a well-researched and documented process in the Western democracies. In Eastern Europe, this process was also quite visible in the 1990s and the early 2000s when the so-called “liberal consensus” of the transition period was established. This “liberal consensus” consisted in the adoption of policies of fiscal and financial discipline, endorsement of the values of liberal democracy, and membership in the EU and NATO. Populists actually emerged as challengers to this “liberal consensus”: they promised the people to do politics in the national interests beyond its precepts. “A convergence over the past three decades in the economic platforms of the centre-left and centre-right toward the right have reduced the appeal of the centre-left to the working class (Iversen 2006). In this context, many voters now complain that no one speaks for them (Rydgren 2004; Berger 2017).” (Gidron and Hall 2017).

However, with regard to the effect of mainstream parties' convergence on support for RR and far right PP (what in PaCE following Pappas' conceptualization, we call 'nativist' parties), Golder (2016) reports mixed results from studies, some finding positive, some no, and some - even negative correlation.

Over-constitutionalisation is also a relevant factor in inducing frustration with democratic politics (Smilov and Krastev 2008). Parliaments, executives and ruling majorities are constrained by complex systems of checks and balances. These systems rely on the setting of independent, expert bodies, such as independent regulators, central banks, judicial and prosecutorial bodies. Supranational constitutionalism at the level of the EU and the Council of Europe adds another dimension of constraints on the political processes. Parliaments, executives and ruling majorities are constrained by complex systems of checks and balances. These systems rely on the setting of independent, expert bodies, such as independent regulators, central banks, judicial and prosecutorial bodies. Supranational constitutionalism at the level of the EU and the Council of Europe adds another dimension of constraints on the political processes.

Populists have turned these sets of constraints into their target for attack. They attract votes by arguing that they are going to bring power back to the people by: dismantling supranational bonds (Brexit); threatening to leave the Eurozone (Lega, Front National, Syriza); railing at the role of experts and independent bodies, etc.

Further, populists have to a large extent succeeded in convincing the people that the political establishment is corrupt in a deep, structural way. Cartelization of the political parties (famously argued for by Richard Katz and Peter Mair) may be per se considered a form of corruption. Many populist players rally against policies such as public financing for the political parties, because in their view this measure leads to decrease of political competition and greater dependence of the parties on the state. Further, populists often campaign for the reduction of the number of MPs, as a way of “punishing” a political class, which has grown alienated from the people (Smilov 2020).

More importantly, the rise of populism has been associated with making the fight against corruption into a top public priority in many countries. Populist parties have often come to power as a response to serious corruption scandals. They have also promised to eradicate corruption from politics. The first such significant advent of a populist player was the coming to power of Silvio Berlusconi in Italy after the major party funding scandals in the country, which devastated the mainstream party of post-war Italy. Similar developments took place in Bulgaria in 2001, when the former tsar Simeon II formed a government with the promise to rid the country of the corrupt politics of the 1990s. In 2009, GERB came to power with a very strong anti-corruption message.

In Hungary, Fidesz returned to power in 2010 after major corruption scandals in the Socialist Party. In Romania as well corruption and anticorruption have been turned into a major, if not the major political factor over the last decade. Similar processes could be seen in Czechia and Slovakia.

In general, populist parties vent the frustration of the people with “democracy without choices” by focusing public attention not so much on socio-economic matters, but on the issue of corruption and identity politics. In the words of Gidron and Hall 2017 "in order to mount distinctive appeals at a time when the differences

between parties on economic issues has narrowed, many parties have put more emphasis on identity or values issues, which often draw middle-class voters to the left but working-class voters to the right”.

At the level of voter attitudes, this mechanism implies a link between voting for populist parties and:

- frustration with (cartelized) mainstream political parties;
- over-constitutionalization of politics (national or supranational);
- frustration with the power of elections to change policies.

Populist leaders use corruption scandals to amplify these frustrations and to turn them into anger and a desire for the voter to “punish” the political establishment.

It is not necessary for the public to believe that the populist leader is morally impeccable: actually, politicians with less than a perfect record on that front have also been able to capitalize on public frustrations with the political establishment, if they manage to present themselves as a “punishment” for this establishment, a tool which “shakes up” the system. (This may explain why there is no “good hero” emerging in many populist narratives, as preliminary findings from research on populist narratives on the internet within PaCE testifies.)

The political mechanism for mobilizing populist vote is important because it explains why populist parties emerge even without a deep economic crisis. Cases such as PiS in Poland (and other parties in Eastern Europe more generally) and Forza Italia are better explained by political frustration rather than economic ones. Further, phenomena such as the Brexit vote or the election of president Trump in the US suggest that it is not only the economically deprived or anxious, who find populist issues and leaders attractive. People in the centre, who feel that they have lost political control, that democratic decision making is not tightly linked to their will, also may go for a populist option.

## II. Action Formation Mechanisms

Here we discuss the role personal psychology and some specific emotions play in activating (triggering) voting for populist and nativist parties. The focus in this part is mostly on the demand side as we are interested to identify the drivers of individual action in support of the respective parties. This work aims to provide input for developing an agent-based simulation model of populist voting.

The trajectory to be explained here is how populist attitudes of voters are activated through the interaction of voters and populist party leaders (against a background of favourable media environment) to produce populist voting.

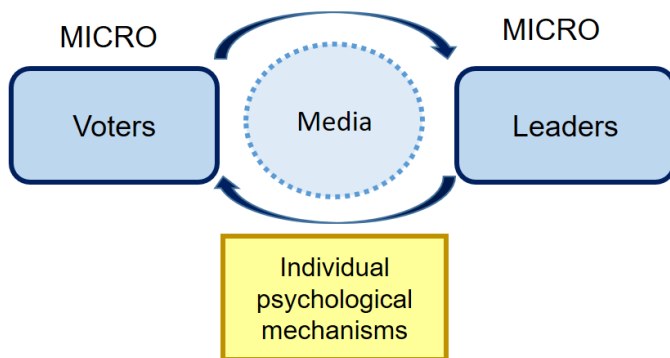


Figure 10. Action formation mechanisms: individual psychology explanations.

### 1. Emotions behind status anxiety

Salmela and von Scheve (2017) have detailed the emotional processes behind status anxiety. They identify emotions linked specifically to status anxiety as a source of radical right populist support among the middle classes in particular. They hypothesize that *insecurities* of the middle classes “manifest as *fears* of not being able to live up to salient social identities and their constitutive values, and as *shame* about this actual or anticipated inability.”

These authors argue that the link between fear and shame is particularly salient in contemporary capitalist societies with their individualized responsibility for success and failure, where failure is further stigmatized as unemployment, receiving welfare benefits, or labor migration.

To sum up, status anxiety emotions explain middle class radical right populist/nativist vote (Salmela and von Scheve 2017):

The causal mechanism:

1. fears of not living up to salient social identities
2. link between fear and shame in capitalist societies (with its individualized responsibility for failure)
3. anger
4. vote RRPP (nativist)

These authors also detail *two psychological mechanisms* specifically linking status anxiety to voting populist.

The first is *ressentiment* – it explains how the negative emotions (fear and insecurity of losing status) transform through repressed shame into *anger*, *resentment*, and *hatred* towards perceived “enemies”. The list of perceived enemies includes refugees, immigrants, the long-term unemployed, political and cultural elites, and the “mainstream” media.

The second mechanism explains the process of *emotional distancing from social identities* that inflict painful negative emotions (such as shame). Abandoning such social identities, anxious middle-class members look for meaning and seek self-esteem from aspects of identity perceived to be stable and to some extent exclusive. Such stable, risk-free identities are achieved by identifying with ascriptive features of one’s personality - such as nationality, ethnicity, religion, language, and traditional gender roles. In the place of social identity through personal achievement (which is risky and may trigger negative emotions of fear and shame), they *gradually develop ascriptive identity through exclusive belonging*.

These two psychological mechanisms explain well how *economic anxieties and fears of loss of status* translate into *changing values and forming exclusivist nationalist identities*, which are some of the defining features of the profile of RRPP/nativist parties' voters (Dunn 2013).

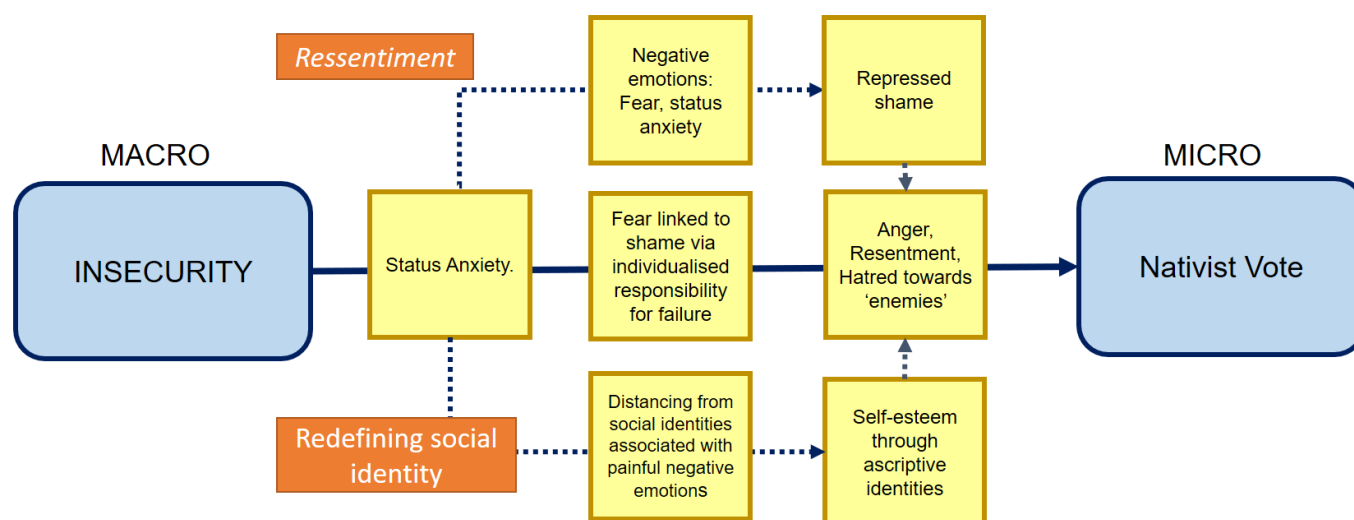


Figure 11. Status anxiety explanatory mechanisms.

## 1. "Social Integration" problems

Gidron and Hall (2020) similarly look at the psychological mechanisms behind radical populist-left and populist-right voting. However, for them the main source is not so much status anxiety, but problems with “social integration” - with the levels of “social relations linking individuals and promoting their sense of being valued members of society”. Problems with social integration are more widespread among individuals with perceptions of low and declining social status, who feel they are “pushed to the fringes of their national community and are

deprived of the roles and respect normally accorded full members”. This approach, these authors argue, brings together economic and cultural explanations for populist support.

Feelings of social marginalization (low levels of attachment to the normative order, low levels of trust in others and social engagement, and low sense of social respect) are found to be associated with voting for radical parties.

The causal path goes as follows:

1. Low and declining social status
2. Feeling of social marginalization
3. alienation from mainstream parties
4. increased chance of support for radical - left populist and nativist - parties.

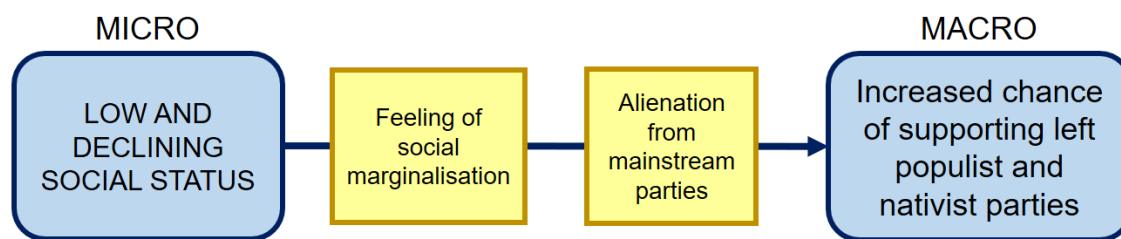


Figure 12. Explanatory mechanism from problems with social integration.

## 2. Individual psychology explanations: which emotions?

Recent research has focused on identifying the specific emotions that trigger support and vote for radical populist parties.

In addition to the vast literature studying the role of diverse fears and anxieties (from globalizations, from status loss, from relative deprivation, of loss of control, etc.) summarized above, some have focused on outlining the sources of resentment (Betz 1994) and of ressentiment itself (Demertzis 2006, Salmela and von Scheve 2017) as possible explanations of such a vote.

Ressentiment, however, may not directly lead to increased support for radical populists - but, rather, its effect may be mediated through alienation from mainstream parties - which most often leads to vote abstention. When there is a supply of a pro-active radical right party, however, ressentiment may trigger support for it, as it may enhance anti-immigrant attitudes, themselves triggered by amorphous fears. Here, in addition to the emotion of ressentiment, key role plays the populist party itself, which may help activate the latent populist attitudes into active populist support. through various discursive strategies

Recent studies, furthermore, show anger rather than various kinds of amorphous fears and anxieties to be closely linked to populist attitudes (Rico et al. 2017). Anger spurs more targeted, stronger anti-elite sentiments



via clear blame attribution. Anger is shown to be a strong driver of active support - through vote - for radical left populists (Ibid).

It has also been demonstrated (Magni 2017) that anger may indeed lead to voting radical populist (UKIP), though its effect on the vote choice is mediated by political efficacy. Anger generally triggers desire for change, yet the level of efficacy determines where the political options for realizing this change are found: those with high efficacy opt for the mainstream opposition, while those with low efficacy may either abstain or vote for an anti-establishment actor (like UKIP).

For populist support turning amorphous fear and anxiety into pro-active emotions (such as anger) is key. At this key juncture populist entrepreneurs and favorable media play a crucial role. They help *politicize* the amorphous fears, anxieties and resentment and turn them into pro-active and (via blame attribution) - targeted anger. But populist leaders may achieve politicization even without much prior resentment. Acting as 'crisis performers' (Moffitt 2016), apt political entrepreneurs are able to even turn objective relative gratification into subjective relative deprivation, as shown by Mols and Jetten 2016. Trump's promotion of his brand of 'angry populism' has also benefited from scandal-hungry, sensationalist media coverage (Wahl-Jorgensen 2018). "Populism panders to media expectations by ventriloquising the frustration of the people ... the righteous "indignation" of the public" (Higgins 2017), without which it is doubtful his political project would have been successful (Kellner 2016)

### III. Transformation Mechanisms

Transformational mechanisms account for the emergence of a new structure (successful populist party) through the agency of a populist leader forging new collective identity to mobilize support for an emerging populist party. This is achieved through the strategic employment of populist discursive frames (Heinisch and Mazzoleni 2017), whose message is amplified by scandal-hungry media, who thereby reinforce populist attitudes and activate them for action. New cleavages to forge new identities and reconstitute majorities with the aim of gaining and retaining political power are introduced by populist players without rigid ideological positions, opportunistically instrumentalizing diverse ideational frames for their political purposes. The focus in this section of the report will be on several discourse frames used by populists to forge new or reconstitute old collective identities. The explanatory mechanisms for the success of this exercise of forging new/reconstituting identities via new cleavages are mostly social-psychological.

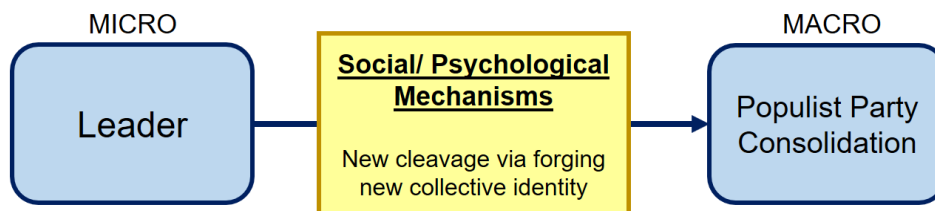


Figure 13. Social psychological explanatory mechanisms.

#### (Perceived) threats to group standing

##### 1. Threats to majority group's future status and 'nostalgic deprivation'

Discussing the drivers of Trump support (beyond the Republican party alignment vote), Mutz (2017) broadens the perspective on status anxiety to cover perceived threats to group rather than individual social standing. She also dismisses the importance in status anxiety of the economic component – the feeling of being left behind personally. Rather, in her analysis the felt status threat that drove Trump supporters to favourably respond to his messages was not for one's individual standing in society but for that of one's group - domestically and internationally. She argues that “the 2016 election was a result of anxiety about dominant groups' future status rather than a result of being overlooked in the past”.

The flip side of this explanatory mechanism is the already mentioned above 'nostalgic deprivation' among Whites in the US and Britain, studied by Gest et al. (2018). The study reveals that nostalgic deprivation - the decrease in subjective social, political, and economic status over time - among White respondents drives support for the radical right in the United Kingdom and the United States. “Collective Nostalgia and the Desire to Make One's Group Great Again” are identified by Wohl and Stefaniak (2020) as “a striking example of the efficacy of using collective nostalgia as a populist tool”.

Bonkowski (2017) has also shown that a “variety of social changes have engendered a sense of collective status threat among national ethno-cultural majorities. Political and media discourse has channeled such threats into resentments toward elites, immigrants, and ethnic, racial and religious minorities, thereby activating previously latent attitudes and lending legitimacy to radical political campaigns that promise to return power and status to their aggrieved supporters”.

## ***2. Threats to ethno-cultural identity***

It is a truism that anti-immigrant attitudes are strong predictors of radical right populist (or 'nativist' in PaCE vocabulary) vote.

"The larger goal behind the radical right-wing populist political project is to halt and reverse the erosion of the established patterns of ethnic, political and cultural dominance" (Betz and Johnson 2004). The halting and reversion of the erosion of established patterns of ethnic and cultural dominance has been justified by stressing the uniqueness of the native culture and the impossible integration in this culture of non-natives. This exclusivist interpretation of ethno-cultural identity has been termed 'differentialist racism' (Taguieff 1988) or 'differentialist nativism' (Betz 2002), casting "xenophobic shadow of indigeneity...which values wholeness and separation, pure blood and autochthonous land" (Clifford 2001, quoted in Betz 2002).

The differentialist nativism is most often expressed in anti-immigrant attitudes and anti-immigrant attitudes are strongly correlated with support for radical right populists (Lubbers and Scheepers 2002, van der Brug et al. 2005, Rydgren 2008). This is also confirmed by the studies of micro-level factors of populist vote and populist support conducted for PaCE project by PLUS team (see for details Part Two of this report).

There are studies linking individual perceptions of economic threat with stronger anti-immigrant attitudes. Cultural grievances - migrants perceived to pose threat to the nation and its unique culture - are also shown to be linked to success of nativist parties. One explanation for this link is provided by social identity theory, according to which individuals tend to associate with similar individuals and their desire for self-esteem causes people to perceive their in-group as superior to out-groups. This perceived superiority is exploited to mobilize support by nativists, who stress that immigrant behavior and values are incompatible with those of the native population.

There is strong support for the cultural grievances account at the individual level - including in PaCE research on ethno-territorial identity drivers for populist support, conducted by PLUS team.

It should be stressed, however, that these results do not necessarily mean exclusive support for cultural grievance account, though the work of PLUS team separates ethno-territorial identity as driver of radical right support from anti-immigrant attitudes (the latter proving to be a stronger predictor of such support). We have

already discussed above the hypothesis that cultural grievances may in fact mediate the effects of long-term socio-economic transformations.

### *2.1. Identity politics and "Whiteshift"*

Fukuyama (2012, 2018) adds a twist to the explanation advanced by Mutz (2017), reversing its sting. He identified the surge of leftist identity politics in particular as the primary source of this nationalist populist backlash of groups feeling threatened by the liberal agenda of multicultural diversity. On this view the 'nationalist' identity politics - arguably, the ticket on which Trump was elected - is a reaction of threatened majority groups to the excessive victimization of marginalized groups by anti-discrimination warriors of diverse stripes.

National populist leaders (from Viktor Orbán and Jarosław Kaczyński to Jair Bolsonaro) use similar arguments to rally support against 'political correctness'. They aptly politically instrumentalize such explanations for the nationalist "backlash" against the 'excesses' of the multiculturalist liberal left.

A controversial work that sparked heated debates used similar ideologically tinged explanations for the surge of nativist populist political opposition to non-white non-Christian immigration. In "Whiteshift. Populism, Immigration and the Future of White Majorities", Kaufmann (2018) is similarly diagnosing the current backlash against mainstream parties as an understandable reaction of white majorities, distressed with losing their majority status.

'Yearning for closure' (in the apt words of Sybille van der Walt 2019) seems to describe well these types of explanations for the populist "counter-revolution".

## *3. Collective Victimization*

A recent influential account presents victimization as a central feature of all populist (illiberal) regimes generally - not just characterizing Putin's and Erdogan's political projects of restoring imperial status, but also Trump's "Make America Great Again!" project - however unlikely attaching the label of 'victim' to the US may seem (Krastev and Holmes 2019).

Whether such an explanation aptly diagnoses the populist counter-revolution in general may be disputed. Yet collective victimization without doubt is a central element in the populist narratives in Central and Eastern Europe (also stressed in Kreko et al. 2018).

### *3.1. The historic injustices narratives*

Despite generally following a different historical and political trajectory (rapidly building liberal democratic institutions after 45 years of communist rule and trying to catch up with the more competitive economies of the developed Western democracies), national populists in Central and Eastern Europe use similar discursive

strategies to rally support by presenting their respective national communities as a collective victim - of historical injustices (but also of more recent humiliations - in next section).

The Trianon trauma of Hungarians, Poland's constant threat of and recurrent occupation by its neighbors, the unfulfilled dream of national unification of Bulgarians, always sacrificed by the Great powers, the feeling of betrayal by the West of the region as a whole, left for 45 years under Soviet domination... are all examples of 'historic injustices' narratives instrumentalized by illiberal populists to mobilize support.

### *3.2. Imitation and the longing for lost authenticity*

National communities are portrayed as subject to more recent humiliations as well - with long-lasting consequences. These humiliations are allegedly inflicted by the well-meaning Western democratizers of the region.

Krastev and Holmes (2019) diagnose the felt humiliation of imitating Western liberal models of democratization and marketisation as the primary source of the backlash which ushered in the illiberal populist turn in the region:

“A refusal to genuflect before the liberal West has become the hallmark of the illiberal counter-revolution throughout the post-communist world and beyond” (Krastev and Holmes 2019).

The democratization drive was initially welcomed by the former communist countries, eager to join the democratic West. Yet the downside was that it also involved “cultural conversion to values, habits and attitudes considered ‘normal’ in the West,” but felt foreign in the East. The “political and moral ‘shock therapy’” that followed the rapid adoption of new values, habits and attitudes put inherited identity at risk ... copycat liberalism made many of those who had originally embraced the changes feel like cultural impostors, a malaise that, in turn, excited politically exploitable longings for a lost authenticity.” (Ibid.: 10, emphasis added).

Many started perceiving the inevitably imperfectly imitated Western model as “a threat to self-respect. Shame at reshaping one’s preferences to conform to the value hierarchies of foreigners, doing so in the name of freedom, and being looked down upon for the supposed inadequacy of the attempt – these are the emotions and experiences that have fueled the anti-liberal counter-revolution that began in post-communist Europe, specifically in Hungary, and that has now metastasized worldwide.” (Ibid.: 12).

The idea of collective victimhood that needs redress adds context-dependent and historically colored local specificity to the idea of an ethno-national community with shared identity and interests, whose absolute ontological priority is the central element of illiberal populism. The longing to restore the lost authenticity and regain national pride is readily weaponized by the belligerent illiberals of the region. Employing an old illiberal strategy, they fan the popular resentment and direct the popular anger towards the external enemies and the internal traitors: the global liberal elites and their local allies, thereby strengthening their own grip on power.

Growing anxiety is not limited to the imitators, however. It affects those being imitated as well. Krastev and Holmes argue that the imitated also fear that their authentic identity is being taken away from them by its being successfully adopted by non-natives. The source of this anxiety is that the uniqueness and authenticity of one's identity is somehow lost, if the same identity can be adopted by anyone: authenticity of identity is believed to require exclusivity, which is currently under threat. Such fears are readily exploited - indeed induced and further fanned - by populist entrepreneurs. They promise remedies for the collective soul via excluding the non-natives - threatening the collective identity of the natives - from the collective body.

Explanatory models of imitation leading to voting populism

### **A. Backlash to Imitation of Foreign Models**

1. Imitation of foreign models of development
2. political and moral 'shock therapy'
3. cultural 'impostor syndrome' (anxiety and shame)
4. reaction: longing for lost authenticity,
5. turn to illiberal values & attitudes ---->
6. mobilized and politicized by illiberal populists ---->  
vote nativist populist

Indicators to measure authenticity-related anxiety: societal pessimism, perceived group relative deprivation, collective narcissism

### **B. Reaction to "Stolen identity"**

1. Imitation of foreign models of development
  2. Imitation of one's identity by non-natives
  3. fear of losing one's authenticity
  4. exclusionary attitudes to non-natives)
- vote nativist populist

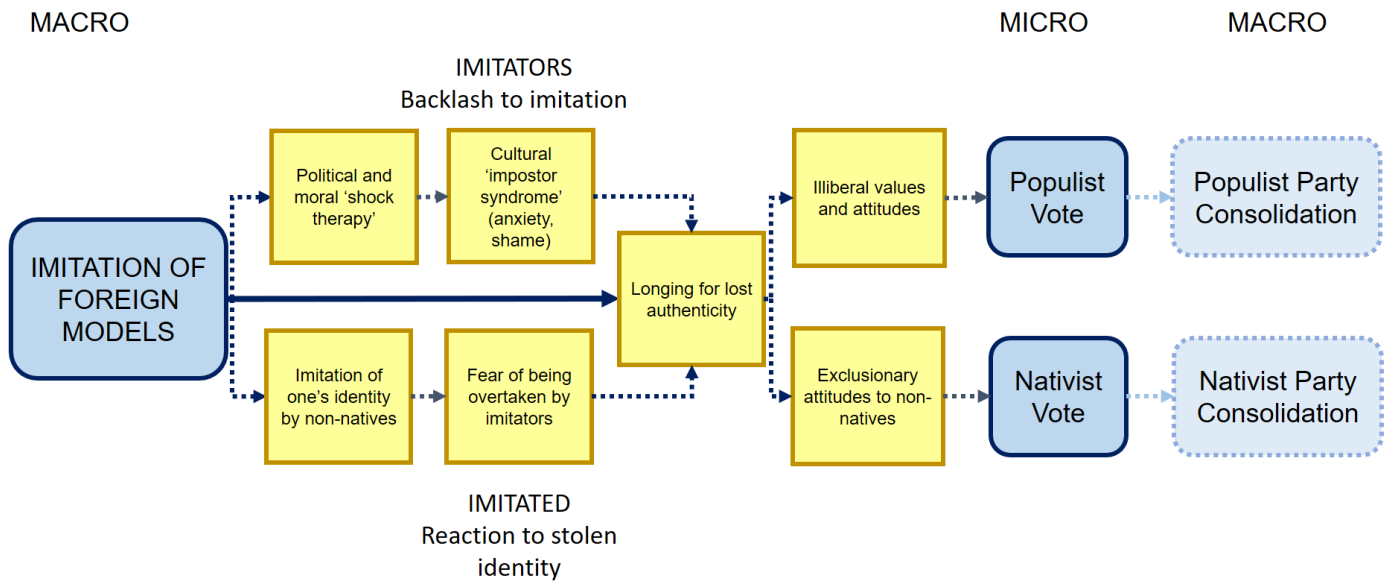


Figure 14. Explanatory mechanisms from imitation and authenticity loss.

#### 4. *'Fear of shrinking numbers' and illiberal (populist) ethnic majoritarianism*

The fear of dominant groups losing their privileged status, mentioned in the beginning of this section, is one aspect of what Ivan Krastev (2020) aptly calls “the fear of shrinking numbers”.

This fear is closely related to another background condition (in addition to the cultural and economic transformations): the demographic changes in the developed world. The demographic fears of disappearing monoethnic nations play out prominently in the political field, with the deeply rooted in this field fear of the dominant ethnic majorities of being outnumbered and losing their dominant status.

Krastev argues that the way "shrinking ethno-cultural majorities will try to preserve their power and identity in the face of population decline and increasing migration will go far toward defining the future character of European democracy", and it could affect the survival of democratic regimes in Europe. Krastev presents the clash between liberalism and illiberalism (populism) in Europe as "a contest between two contrasting ideas of the “people” that various governments want to elect: an inclusive body politic representing the diverse nature of modern societies, or an exclusionary, democratic majoritarian “people” aiming to preserve the ethnic character of national democracies. The political divide in Europe is, according to this diagnosis, a clash between liberalism and illiberalism (populism), with governments in the East "practicing democratic majoritarianism and trying to keep power in the hands of a single ethnic group." (Krastev 2020: 67-68).

#### 5. *Collective narcissism and perceived in-group disadvantage*

Marchlewska et al. (2017) argue that support for populism is associated with national collective narcissism—the unrealistic belief in the greatness of the national group, which increases in response to perceived in-group disadvantage.

Collective narcissism, the authors hypothesize, may stem from feelings of resentment about the ingroup’s disadvantaged position (quoting Cramer, 2016).

They further expected that collective narcissism increases as a consequence of perceived in-group disadvantage, and may also account for the association between in-group disadvantage and support for populist ideas.

To test these hypotheses, the authors conducted a study of voters of PiS which supported the hypothesis that collective narcissism (and not non-narcissistic national identification) would predict voting for the populist Law and Justice party and its leader. Low material status was also found to be a significant predictor of adopting populist views. The authors further conducted an experiment (drivers of support for Brexit in the UK) and a survey in the US (drivers of preference for Trump over Clinton), which additionally established that perceived in-group disadvantage is a predictor of collective narcissism. They also concluded that the situational factors (such as lack of personal control and external criticism of the group) contribute to collective narcissism. The narrative of relative disadvantage, fueled by populist leaders, might reinforce the defensive and potentially destructive national in-group positivity. The authors also hypothesize that collective narcissism may further



increase perceptions of relative in-group disadvantage - as it is strategically presented by populist leaders to be a victim of external enemies, conspiring against the group.

Forgas and Lantos (2020) also use the concept of collective narcissism, which emphasizes the need for positive group identity and advocates an illusory sense of collective greatness, to illustrate the fundamental change in the mental representations of some voters. The authors identify this change in voters' mental representations as a key factor for the rise of anti-liberalism - or what we call 'populism' within PaCE.

### *6. Collective paranoia and conspiratorial thinking*

Identifying hidden plots behind complex social events and processes, and imperviousness to refutation - two central features of conspiracy thinking - warranted denoted conspiratorial thinking "collective paranoia" (Hofstadter 1996, quoted in Castanho Silva et al. 2017). Some personal traits are found to contribute to belief in conspiracies: authoritarianism, feelings of powerlessness, low interpersonal trust and anomie, uncertainty, and a preference for Manichaeic narratives presenting the world as a struggle between the good and the evil (Ibid: 426). Conspiratorial thinking shares with the populist worldview deep anti-elitism: thorough suspicion of the deceptive (if not entirely evil) establishment as conspiring against the benign people. The finding (Castanho Silva et al. 2017) that populism and conspiratorial thinking are linked at the level of attitudes is important as it shows why conspiratorially framed anti-establishment populist rhetoric resonates with the public.

## ***IV. Conclusions of Part One***

The mapping of existing research on the causal mechanisms of populist voting leads to the following conclusions:

- 1) A variety of causal factors play a role in the mobilization of the populist vote. The existing research does not give support for reductionist accounts, which outline a single factor: be it economic, cultural, political or psychological;
- 2) The economic factors do play a role and there are a number of studies, which argue persuasively in this direction. Yet, the populist vote is not the vote of the worst off, the most marginalized members of society. Direct economic hardship indicators (poverty, low income, unemployment) cannot distinguish populist voters from others in many countries. In general, economic factors more successfully explain the vote for radical right parties, which for the purposes of our research accounts for most of the nativist parties. Successful populist parties, which command majorities or near majorities are not that strongly linked to economically vulnerable groups, which suggests that the populist appeal is not exclusively based on economic frustration;
- 3) Many studies finding causal links between the populist vote and economic grievances rely on very complex measures of economic frustration: relative deprivation, positional relative deprivation, fears from globalization, etc. Many of those are linked with concern for one's own group and community. These economic explanations in this way gradually become tightly linked with group identity and cultural in their nature concerns. Thus, one of the conclusions from the review is that the division between economic and cultural explanations cannot be sustained - these issues are substantively interlinked and causal models should aim to treat them simultaneously;
- 4) Because of that we have paid significant attention to "cultural" explanations, which are intertwined with economic factors. In our view the frustrations and anxieties of the voters have both a cultural and economic aspects, which work together and reinforce each other;
- 5) While a great deal of attention has been given in the literature to economic and cultural causal mechanisms of populist voting, another brand of research has persuasively argued that voters in liberal democracies have stand-alone political frustrations, even if these are not supported by economic or cultural grievances. Recent studies have argued that the rise of the vote for populist parties is causally explained by party fragmentation and voter volatility, which are measures of the voters' frustration with the established political parties and representatives;
- 6) Finally, there is a rich body of research on the psychological factors leading to populist voting. A valuable finding is that the leaders of populist parties are able to transform widespread public frustrations of various sorts into anger, which has greater motivational force. This body of research valuably links individual and group identities and frustrations, which is central for the creation of new group identity, a new "we, the people", which populist leaders construct and exploit.

## Part Two: PLUS work on Causal Mechanisms of Populist Political Parties in Europe

### *I. Analysis of the effect of micro-level attributes on voting for populist party.*

The four drivers for populist voting studied are:

- (1) identity concerns (including collective status threats)
- (2) relative deprivation
- (3) growth of inequality
- (4) spread of illiberal values

#### **A. Data**

To be able to cover most of the European (including Eastern European) countries as comprehensively as possible, as well as to draw on a coherent set of sound variables, the use of Europe-wide survey data is most convincing. The European Social Survey (ESS) and the European Value Study (EVS) to our knowledge are the most commonly used ones in political science research concerned with pan-European questions. After examining the most recent versions of both freely available data sets, we observed that variables that could more or less meaningfully stand for the concepts mentioned above are rather scarce in the EVS. Therefore, we decide to use the ESS data for now, in which we were able to identify at least one variable for each concept that is able to measure it in a sufficiently appropriate way. The data was collected in 2018 and released in 2020, which makes it the most recent data available to date.

The independent variables and indicators used in the study:

- Identity concerns: migration, attachment to nation
- Relative deprivation: perceived fairness of access to job
- Inequality: government should reduce differences in income levels (---> indirect indicator)
- Illiberal values:
  - do what is told, follow rules & importance of strong government (--->political)
  - LGBT rights (---> cultural)

#### **B. Measurement**

It is important to note two things on the operationalization and measurement of the identified variables: First, as we must rely on secondary data for the analyses, the variables that we identified might not measure the concept that we are interested in perfectly. We think that we can theoretically argue, that the questions and thus variables picture the respective concept. We are aware though, that a comprehensive concept, e.g. “identity concerns”, encompasses more than the influence of immigration to the country and the attachment to one's own nation. Own data collection would be necessary to increase the validity here. Nevertheless, we think that the variables at hand yield us a good impression of the association with voting for populist parties.

Second, as in all individual survey data, the measurement we find represents the perceived feeling of the concept by the respondent. This means that we do not claim that this is associated with objectively measured data in the respective country. This is especially noteworthy for the concepts of relative deprivation and inequality. A feeling of high inequality might have nothing to do with measurable inequality in a country, e.g. relative income levels.

Table 2. Drivers of populist parties support by party.

Mean values by party (all scales from 1 to 5)							
	Anti-migration	Attached to nation	Reduce income differ.	Unfair job-seeking	Illiberal	Anti-LGBT	Anti-Europe
FPÖ	3,94	4,58	4,00	2,42	3,71	2,05	3,93
GERB	3,25	4,15	4,21	2,98	3,62	2,93	2,61
United Patriots	3,39	4,09	4,17	3,09	3,64	2,89	2,97
Fidesz	3,50	4,34	4,19	2,63	3,43	3,27	3,44
Jobbik	3,50	4,06	4,44	2,96	3,24	3,15	3,09



 Populism and Civic Engagement

Table 3. Results from statistical analyses of drivers for populist and nativist vote.

	Austria	Bulgaria		Hungary	
(always 5-point scales)	FPÖ	GERB	United Patriots	Fidesz	Jobbik
Anti-Migration	0.79*** (0.11)	0.01 (0.11)	0.13 (0.19)	0.26* (0.14)	0.28 (0.19)
Attached to Nation	0.24* (0.13)	-0.10 (0.12)	-0.11 (0.20)	0.00 (0.12)	-0.04 (0.17)
Reduce income differences	0.01 (0.09)	0.02 (0.13)	0.07 (0.23)	-0.48*** (0.15)	0.13 (0.22)
Unfair Jobseeking	-0.16** (0.07)	-0.22** (0.10)	-0.04 (0.17)	-0.26*** (0.11)	0.07 (0.15)
Illiberal	-0.03 (0.12)	-0.39*** (0.14)	-0.20 (0.25)	0.12 (0.17)	-0.02 (0.24)
Anti-LGBT	0.18** (0.09)	-0.09 (0.09)	-0.19 (0.15)	0.03 (0.10)	0.06 (0.13)
Anti-Europe	0.31*** (0.08)	-0.17 (0,10)	-0.06 (0.17)	0.34*** (0.11)	-0.09 (0.15)
Pseudo R²	0.26	0.14		0.18	
(N)	(1323)	(497)		(506)	
***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.1					
Age, Gender, Education, City, Income, and Religiosity always included					

## C. Interpretation of results

Logistic Regression measures *relative impact* of the factors studied

- Compared to other party voters
- Country specific levels of anti-migration, anti-LGBT etc.

FPÖ: nativist (Anti-Migration & Anti-Europe, Nation)

GERB: hardly fits the populist classification by PopuList

United Patriots: hardly any explanation identified

Fidesz: similar to FPÖ but economically more to the right

Jobbik: hardly any explanation identified; anti-migration relevant

For Austria, we find that, generally speaking being against immigration and being Euro-sceptic significantly increases the probability to vote for the FPÖ, being against liberal cultural values (anti-LGBT) is also correlated, though to a lesser extent. Being attached to one's own country also is correlated with voting for the same party, though to an even lesser extent. Relative deprivation is moderately negatively correlated with vote for this party. The measures for perceived growth of inequality and the spread of political illiberal values did not yield significant coefficients.

For Bulgaria, we analyze the effect of the four concepts on vote choice for populist parties. In contrast to Austria, in Bulgaria more than one party is classified as populist and/or nativist by The PopuList (Rooduijn et al. 2019). The populist parties identified in The Populist and with a relevant vote share are Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria (GERB), National Front for the Salvation of Bulgaria (NFSB) - part of the coalition United patriots.

In contrast to our expectations the coefficients for the concept of relative deprivation is negative and significant. This means that feeling *less* deprived *increases* the probability of voting for a populist party in Bulgaria (GERB). The only positively correlated with voting for populist GERB concept is that of anti-liberal political values - respect for rules, law-and-order and strong state.

With regard to the nativist populist coalition of parties United Patriots in Bulgaria and the anti-democratic Jobbik in Hungary, these four concepts did not yield any statistically significant vote predictions (excluding anti-immigrant attitudes with regard to Jobbik voters), demonstrating that these micro-level factors can hardly explain vote for these parties.

Voting for the ruling populist party in Hungary Fidesz is predicted on anti-immigrant attitudes (though less strongly than usually demonstrated by other studies). Even more surprisingly, such vote is strongly correlated with anti-European sentiments (which goes against previous analyses finding strong incongruence between the anti-EU rhetoric of Orbán's government, and the strongly pro-EU views of Fidesz' voters (Krekó 2019)). The findings of the second study of PLUS team on ethno-territorial drivers of populist party support also is in tension with the reported result here. This may be explainable with a shift in attitudes of this category of voters. According to the data in ESS from 2018, the situation may have changed - with voters of Fidesz better aligning themselves with their preferred party's position. Very much in agreement with the thesis that voting populist is not necessarily predicated on perceived relative deprivation or perceived unfairness, the vote for Fidesz is

strongly negatively correlated with these factors, lending credence to the argument that not economic, but *cultural and psychological factors* might better explain support for the strongest populist party in Europe.

## **II. Ethno-territorial Identity and Populist Party Support**

(Summary of “Does Ethno-Territorial Identity Matter in Populist Party Support? Analyzing the Demand-Side of 20 National and Regional Populist Parties”, by Reinhard Heinisch and Viktoria Jansesberger, University of Salzburg, PLUS team within PaCE. The paper was prepared for the Annual Conference of the Midwest Political Science Association, April 16-19, 2020.)

In recent years, a growing literature has focused on how Radical Rightwing Populist Parties (RRPP) present themselves as nation state populists and Eurosceptics, thus engaging in the mobilization of ethno-territorial identities (Heinisch et al. 2018). In a few cases, populists have also championed regionalist or sub-state causes. Central to these discourses are ‘the people’, their sovereignty and identity, the construction of which varies depending on the parties’ political objectives. Thus, the notion of ‘the people’ living in the imagined ‘heartland’ as well as the construction of their internal and external enemies (i.e., national and/or supra-national elites) are crucial elements in these ethno-territorial discourses and their diffusion. Nation state populists claim that “the people” coincide with the majority (state) nation. Minority nationalist and regionalist populists (here also referred to as sub-state populists) make similar claims about the people of a particular region or part of the country. Confusingly, there have also emerged national-level Leftist Populist Parties (LPP) that despite rejecting nationalism on ideological grounds nonetheless claim to protect the national people from threats to their economic sovereignty emanating from the supranational- level such as by the European Union. Lastly, there are also regional LPP making the same argument with respect to the national state encroaching on regional economic self-determination.

Thus far, scholarship has largely focused on the party-side or supply side of this process. In this research, we investigate the demand side.

In short, our research question asks to what extent citizens’ conceptions of territorial identity contribute to the support for Radical Right Populist Parties (“nativist’ in PaCE vocabulary) or Leftist Populist Parties mobilizing either at the national or sub-state level. Drawing on data from the European Social Survey and using as dependent variable the measure ‘feeling closest to a particular party’, it employs multinomial and logistical regression models to examine the connection between national identity and European identity for four groups populist parties: majority nationalist RRPP (11 cases), national-level LPP (3 cases), sub-national RRPP (3 cases), and sub-national LPP (3 cases). In the case of the Italian Lega, the analysis traces also the shift of party supporters from a regional to a national orientation in line with that party’s own transformation.

The overall findings confirm that national identity and European identity have independent and significant effects. While national identity was important for majority nationalist RRPP supporters in general and distinctive in five of 11 cases, (negative) European identity was a central characteristic throughout the sample except for the Hungarian Fidesz (Table 4).

Table 4. Determinants of support for nationalist RRPP in Europe.

VARIABLES	Majority Nationalist RRPP										
	FPÖ (Aut)	SVP (Switz.)	AfD (G)	Finns (Finl)	FN (F)	UKIP (UK)	Fidesz (H)	PVV (NL)	Prog P. (Nor)	PIS (P)	Swe.Dem (Swed)
National Identity	0.0618 (0.0627)	0.151** (0.0744)	-0.0118 (0.0612)	0.0795 (0.0870)	0.0261 (0.0614)	0.249*** (0.0828)	0.223*** (0.0770)	-0.111 (0.0764)	0.164** (0.0759)	0.131 (0.0985)	0.141* (0.0743)
European Identity	-0.220*** (0.0484)	-0.131*** (0.0498)	-0.301*** (0.0525)	-0.174*** (0.0609)	-0.284*** (0.0460)	-0.383*** (0.0760)	-0.0974 (0.0658)	-0.209*** (0.0679)	-0.187*** (0.0544)	-0.179*** (0.0657)	-0.252*** (0.0565)
Anti-Immigration	0.886*** (0.283)	0.964*** (0.220)	1.227*** (0.257)	1.625*** (0.363)	1.111*** (0.235)	0.791** (0.368)	-0.113 (0.621)	1.689*** (0.287)	1.158*** (0.241)	0.545** (0.270)	1.578*** (0.279)
Left-Right-Placement	0.558*** (0.0660)	0.613*** (0.0677)	0.462*** (0.0748)	0.178*** (0.0650)	0.371*** (0.0500)	0.104 (0.0887)	0.425*** (0.0515)	0.346*** (0.0800)	0.551*** (0.0668)	0.560*** (0.0645)	0.232*** (0.0604)
Higher Education	-1.477*** (0.316)	-0.930*** (0.240)	-0.0396 (0.254)	-0.0217 (0.370)	-1.107*** (0.251)	-1.033*** (0.387)	-0.515* (0.286)	-1.513*** (0.330)	-0.366 (0.243)	-0.331 (0.288)	-0.693** (0.292)
Household Income	-0.107** (0.0524)	-0.0606 (0.0456)	-0.0473 (0.0454)	-0.179*** (0.0508)	-0.0273 (0.0444)	-0.0265 (0.0648)	0.0649 (0.0518)	-0.205*** (0.0548)	-0.0622 (0.0459)	-0.0701 (0.0589)	0.00360 (0.0497)
Male	-0.247 (0.232)	-0.00630 (0.229)	0.441* (0.261)	1.023*** (0.321)	0.173 (0.225)	0.544 (0.369)	-0.634** (0.268)	-0.0764 (0.285)	0.392 (0.259)	-0.623** (0.280)	0.425 (0.280)
Age	-0.0315*** (0.00733)	-0.0242*** (0.00631)	-0.0174** (0.00709)	-0.0331*** (0.00782)	-0.0320*** (0.00643)	-0.0332*** (0.0111)	0.00380 (0.00874)	-0.0274*** (0.00757)	-0.0109 (0.00673)	0.0152* (0.00849)	-0.0175** (0.00819)
Constant	-1.604** (0.715)	-3.577*** (0.766)	-2.753*** (0.693)	-2.332*** (0.848)	-0.915 (0.650)	-2.235** (0.999)	-3.189*** (1.066)	0.275 (0.767)	-5.445*** (0.835)	-3.809*** (1.052)	-2.716*** (0.800)
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.3534	0.3438	0.2270	0.2078	0.3269	0.1920	0.2427	0.2397	0.2688	0.3344	0.1823
Observations	684	688	1,338	965	906	810	386	777	984	381	864
Model	Logit	Logit	Multinom.	Logit	Logit	Multinom.	Logit	Multinom.	Logit	Logit	Logit

Standard errors in parentheses \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1  
Baseline: all other parties in national party system except populist parties targeted by the analysis.

Identity effects were present also in the support base of LPP although the evidence points to significantly less coherence. (Table 5).



Table 5. Determinants of support for LPP in Europe.

National-Level Leftist Populists			
VARIABLES	Podemos (Sp)	5 Stars (I)	SP (NL)
National Identity	-0.073 (0.053)	-0.130** (0.063)	0.039 (0.077)
European Identity	-0.075 (0.056)	-0.061 (0.049)	-0.169** (0.069)
Anti-Immigration	-0.585** (0.285)	0.117 (0.235)	0.743** (0.297)
Left-Right-Placement	-0.578*** (0.063)	0.072 (0.047)	-0.415*** (0.071)
Higher Education	0.075 (0.260)	-0.265 (0.252)	-0.536* (0.284)
Household Income	0.017 (0.046)	-0.045 (0.048)	-0.125** (0.053)
Male	0.286 (0.229)	0.176 (0.234)	0.422 (0.269)
Age	-0.027*** (0.007)	-0.038*** (0.007)	-0.014* (0.007)
Constant	2.514*** (0.592)	2.540*** (0.738)	1.744** (0.744)
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.2721	0.1391	0.2397
Observations	773	481	777
Model	Multinomial	Multinomial	Multinomial
Standard errors in parentheses *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1			
Baseline: all other parties in national party system except populist parties targeted by the analysis			

Sub-state RRPP ('nativist' party) supporters not only reject national identity but, interestingly, also European identity more than do other partisans. While the adherents of sub-state LPP are unified in opposing national identity, national-level LPP and sub-state LPP show overall no support for a European identity (Table 6).

Table 6. Determinants of support for sub-state LPP and RRPP in Europe.

Sub-State Nationalist RRPP					Regional Level Leftist Populists		
	VB	N-VA	Lega_2016	Lega_2018	Linke	ERC	SNP
VARIABLES	(Belgium)	(Belgium)	(Italy)	(Italy)	(Germany)	(Spain)	(UK)
National Identity	-0.237** (0.093)	-0.189*** (0.0514)	-0.339*** (0.080)	0.202** (0.081)	-0.0911* (0.050)	-0.634*** (0.115)	-0.315*** (0.069)
European Identity	-0.305*** (0.102)	-0.113** (0.051)	0.0335 (0.063)	-0.147*** (0.056)	-0.066 (0.047)	0.331** (0.157)	0.025 (0.078)
Anti-Immigration	1.707*** (0.498)	0.313 (0.217)	0.462 (0.323)	1.009*** (0.265)	0.181 (0.250)	-0.272 (0.839)	-0.380 (0.450)
Left-Right-Placement	0.530*** (0.116)	0.459*** (0.055)	0.460*** (0.075)	0.642*** (0.064)	-0.570*** (0.056)	-0.447*** (0.172)	-0.204** (0.089)
Higher Education	-0.005 (0.522)	0.336 (0.253)	-0.478 (0.340)	-0.513* (0.285)	0.357* (0.214)	-0.246 (0.650)	-1.387*** (0.455)
Household Income	0.153 (0.110)	0.009 (0.0466)	0.113* (0.065)	0.086 (0.056)	-0.107*** (0.037)	0.058 (0.116)	0.130* (0.069)
Male	-0.160 (0.461)	-0.011 (0.206)	0.0024 (0.319)	0.013 (0.255)	0.502** (0.203)	-0.769 (0.660)	0.487 (0.382)
Age	-0.004 (0.0127)	-0.007 (0.005)	-0.010 (0.009)	-0.019** (0.007)	0.007 (0.005)	-0.006 (0.018)	0.020* (0.012)
Constant	-4.784*** (1.411)	-2.116*** (0.598)	-1.544 (0.994)	-4.599*** (1.008)	0.641 (0.494)	0.0975 (1.325)	-1.525 (0.957)
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.1923	0.1923	0.1391	0.2127	0.2270	0.2721	0.1920
Observations	803	803	481	606	1,338	773	810
Model	Multinomial	Multinomial	Multinomial	Multinomial	Multinomial	Multinomial	Multinomial
Standard errors in parentheses *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1							
Baseline: all other parties in national party system except populist parties targeted by the analysis.							

Summing up, we may interpret these findings such that the supporters of radical populist parties, especially on the right, use notions of identity to select the parties they support. Their understanding of identity may not be nuanced but it is often distinctive when compared to other partisans. This has also important implications for the durability of the party-supporter relationship in that identity provides arguably an additional emotional connection that goes beyond policy issues and party leadership. As such, it provides an additional linkage between parties and their supporters especially on the right and thus a potential competitive advantage that requires further exploration

## Concluding Section: Towards an Integrated Causal Model

In this section we draw further conclusions on the basis of the mapping of different causal mechanisms in the preceding sections. We suggest that the relationships among these mechanisms could be understood in the frameworks of at least two different, alternative models. These models are outlined here as possible directions for our future research leading to the elaboration of an integrated causal model (D4.2).

The integrated causal model should answer the following set of questions:

*1) How are economic and cultural factors of populist voting interrelated?* Our analysis thus far has shown that reductionist accounts – either economic or cultural – do not explain the great variety of populist voters and their motivations. Socio-economic and socio-cultural grievances often work as a package and they reinforce each other. What is more, some of the more complex conceptualizations of economic and cultural factors are by definition hybrid. For instance, feelings of ‘relative deprivation’ or ‘erosion of social status’ have both economic and cultural dimensions. Therefore, our preliminary conclusion is that the economic and cultural grievances are best to be treated as a complex but single package in the integrated causal model;

*2) How political factors (frustrations with the democratic process) relate to the socio-economic/cultural package of causal mechanisms?* There are two possible interpretations here. First, it could be argued that political frustration with the democratic process is in itself caused by economic/cultural grievances and has little self-standing value in explaining the populist vote. On this interpretation an integrated causal model should place the emphasis on the economic/cultural mechanisms, giving the political frustrations and grievances a secondary, derivative role. Secondly, an integrated causal model could accord greater separate significance to the political causal mechanisms (what we have called ‘democracy without choices’). We have elaborated two alternative variants of integrated models based on these two different choices: ‘the squeezed middle-class model’ (economic/cultural) and the ‘bargaining and insurance model’ (political). Our assessment of the existing research thus far is that both models are partially supported by the evidence. More research is necessary to give priority to one of them;

*3) The psychological mechanisms reviewed in this paper are in general compatible with the different situational (economic, cultural and political) causal mechanisms.* Yet, they play different roles as action formation and transformation mechanisms in economic/cultural and political causal mechanisms. In what follows we attempt an initial clarification of what this difference is.

Further, an integrated model explaining the causes of populism has to account for two major characteristics of the populist phenomenon.

First, the vote for anti-establishment populist parties has notably increased over the last two decades. For Western Europe it has doubled, arguably - tripled (Lewis et al. 2018) and has reached historically high levels

comparable to the voting patterns of the 1930s (Bertoa and Rama, 2020). There have always been ‘radical right’ parties in Western Europe after WWII. They have occupied a political niche and have catered for groups, which feel economically deprived and culturally intolerant. Some of the populist parties that we study have such characteristics as well. Their voters clearly feel ‘left out’ more than other voters, and they are more conservative on issues such as immigration and the rights of minorities. Most clearly, the so-called ‘nativist’ parties in our sample fall into this category, but also left-populist parties attract economically deprived and anxious voters.

Secondly, the rise of populism is associated with the expansion of populist attitudes among centrist voters. As the Populism Barometer 2018 study for Germany suggests, around 2/3 of the electorate has at least moderate populist attitudes, related to serious disappointment with the mainstream parties and their capacity to express and defend the interests of the people. This disappointment and frustration are often translated into stronger feelings such as anger, which arguably lead to a choice for populist players.

PaCE project uses Takis Pappas’ definition of populism, according to which populism threatens to dismantle elements of liberal democracy – it is a political platform, which is in intrinsic tension with liberalism and constitutionalism. From this perspective, the populist promise always contains an anti-systemic element: it is anti-systemic not towards the democratic, but the liberal element of liberal democracy. Populist leaders claim that they are going to follow the will of the people no matter what constitutional constraints they face. Thus, on the supply side populism contains at least a vague anti-systemic promise to the people.

The question therefore is, why *centrist voters*, why *people in the middle of society* would opt for a political solution, which could take them in an anti-systemic direction. The middle class and the centre of society have always been considered as the guardian of liberal democracy. What could explain the surrender of this guardian to the populist *Zeitgeist*?

We argue that at least two explanatory models (possible integrated causal models), giving two different answers to the above question, are consistent with the evidence we have presented thus far. They are based on rather different logics and have seriously diverging implications.

## ***1. The ‘squeezed middle class’ model***

This candidate for integrated causal model implies that the rising vote for populist parties is caused by the fears and anxieties of growing numbers of people, who increasingly start to include the middle, the centre of society. For these people the current political and economic system does not work, they feel ‘left out’ and are more and more lured to vote for populist, anti-establishment and “anti-systemic” parties, which promise to dismantle (parts of) the liberal-democratic status quo. Thus, ‘the squeezed middle class’, whose economic status has become more precarious and which fears that it could lose its social status and cultural identity, is thus getting ready to experiment with more radical changes of the political and economic order.

The fears and anxieties of the middle class have most commonly been described in economic terms. The already mentioned disparity between productivity and average wages means that most of the benefits of economic

growth go to the richest members of society and the ones involved in technological innovation. In comparison with those groups, the average voters see only moderate growth or even stagnation of their income.

The fears and anxieties of the middle class may also be linked with cultural and identity issues. Globalization is both an economic force but it also affects the life of communities and makes them vulnerable to issues such as foreign immigration, brain drain, demographic decline, etc.

The ‘squeezed middle class’ model assumes that more and more political parties take the characteristic of what was known as ‘radical right parties’ (‘nativist’ in PaCE vocabulary). They start to cater for the interests of economically deprived (in real terms or as a matter of perception), and groups, which see their cultural or religious identity as marginalized or otherwise threatened.

The “squeezed middle class” model has important implications.

According to it, we have to expect two types of readjustments of the political systems, if democracy is preserved, and if political parties reflect the preferences of the electorate:

- 1) The emergence of a new ‘populist consensus’. The middle sections of society have already grown much warmer to the anti-establishment/anti-systemic attitudes of the populists. This factual state of affairs will be followed by a normative recognition and mainstreaming of populism. Simply, the political systems of liberal democracies should admit that these systems do not serve well the interests of ever larger groups of their populations and should make amends to recognize their claims.
- 2) Policy changes aiming to settle the anxieties and fears of the ‘squeezed middle class’ are to be expected (and should be expected). These policy changes could range from conservative revisions of constitutions (reducing sexual and minority rights, limiting migration, dismantling of the supra-national constitutionalism of the EU and the Council of Europe) to economic reforms aiming to reverse globalization and re-establish the class-compromise of the post-war period. Such an economic reform could arguably stabilize jobs and secure higher incomes for the middle classes in a much more national (rather than international and globalized) economy.

The ‘squeezed middle class’ model takes a specific view on economic and migration crises. On this model, the crises accelerate the retreat of the current establishment and mainstream and speed up the building of a “populist consensus”. The crises (financial crisis of 2008, immigration 2015, COVID-19) demonstrate the dysfunctionality of the current system and are a harbinger of a new one.

Of course, the retreat of the mainstream parties could take various forms. In some systems, they could be swept aside and replaced by populist parties. This has happened in a number of polities: Italy, Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria and Greece. It is also possible, however, that the mainstream parties – in order to survive – readjust their political platforms and start to resemble the populists. With the Brexit movement and the election of president Trump, mainstream parties such as the Conservative party in the UK and the Republican party in the US were virtually taken over by populist players and agendas. But even in proportional electoral systems, such as Germany, Austria, Bulgaria and many other European states, mainstream parties have started to mimic the

populist ideology, style and policies. The People's Party in Austria, for instance, has ruled together with populists and has adopted many of their policies.

Finally, the 'squeezed middle class model' is based on the assumption that a new political system is emerging, which will reflect better the growing number of people with populist views. This new system has not found its definitive articulation yet, but maybe Viktor Orbán's idea of 'illiberal democracy' shows the direction of transformation. In any event, if populism stands behind any alternative idea of democracy, this idea is more majoritarian (even aggressively majoritarian), less constitutional and liberal, and obsessed with the preservation of the identity of the majority.

## ***II. The 'bargaining and insurance' model***

This alternative candidate for an integrated causal model explaining the rise of the support for populists also starts with the anxiety of the middle sections of society. But it notices a particular paradox. No matter how they are measured, the economic anxieties and feelings of relative deprivation are much less spread among this middle class than the frustrations with the political process. Our analysis of the economic factors never showed such high levels of inequality, economic anxiety and deprivation, as the levels of frustration with the established democratic processes and institutions. Further, it is often the case that people, who are not and do not feel economically 'left behind', also opt for populist players. This phenomenon has lent some credence to the thesis of the purely 'cultural' drivers of the populist vote.

But even from a purely cultural perspective it is difficult to argue that somehow Western societies have become more nationalistic, xenophobic, anti-homosexual and narcissistic over the last two decades. This miraculous change in itself should be in need of causal explanation, if we are not to believe in magical shifts of values. Also, after all we are trying to explain the behavior of the middle classes in the most advanced, affluent and proud of their identity and heritage countries in the world: it is somewhat paradoxical that the most privileged billion of the global population is driven by feelings of 'relative deprivation' to choose potentially anti-systemic parties.

Thus, 'bargaining and insurance' model relies on two observations.

- 1) Political frustrations with the democratic process go well beyond the people who have economic or identitarian complaints. As discussed, distrust in the representative infrastructure of democracy is very high and the political populist attitudes in one measure or another cover close to 2/3 of society (if we take the German example as representative).
- 2) Not all people with populist attitudes vote for populist parties, but people with such attitudes are more likely to vote for such parties. This means that in the centre of society there is a large reservoir of potential voters, whose frustration mostly concerns the political processes in contemporary liberal democracy.

What are these frustrations? As argued in the previous sections, they are linked with the cartelization of the political process – a complex web of agreements between major parties, which minimize the gains of the winners and the losses of the losers. They are linked also with over-constitutionalisation – the existence of

national and supranational constitutional in their nature rules, which make policy changes very difficult after electoral change. 'Democracy without choices' is one in which policies persist even after political change.

In such circumstances, people could be politically frustrated even if they are not or do not feel that the system does not work for them in economic or cultural aspects. Even if they are convinced that personally they are doing well, they could have two other, further grievances.

First, they may feel that they *cannot gain* anything more, due to the complex compromises and constraints on which the system relies.

Secondly, they could be *wary of a future loss*: since the system is not very responsive to changes of the will of the people, they may fear that it will not react timely and adequately if they are in need.

These two frustrations could drive centrist voters to support populist parties even though they are not interested and do not aim to subvert or radically change the system. Their support for potentially anti-systemic illiberal players could be interpreted as a *rational choice strategy* with two elements.

The centrist voters opt for anti-systemic parties as a *bargaining trump*. In over-constitutionalized and cartelized political systems, if you want any further gain, you have to have a credible threat of ruining the system in case your wish is not granted. As a bargaining chip, the populist parties serve as such a credible threat.

Alternatively, voting for populists may serve the centrist voters as an *insurance policy*: that the voter would not have to compromise her interests in favor of other groups. And indeed, the rise of populism has not been associated with redistributive policies towards the neediest in society: on the contrary, most typically populist leaders and parties have fought to minimize the tax burden for the middle classes and to block aid for minorities.

Although the 'bargaining and insurance' model also relies on the (political) frustrations of the middle classes, it has a different logic and results in different implications for the political processes. First, it implies that populism is not a tool for the middle classes to *change* the system, but rather to obtain opportunistic gains *within the system*. And indeed, the advent of populism in the Western polities has not resulted so far in any serious constitutional or institutional change.

There are two significant exceptions to this rule. One is arguably Hungary, where a populist majority adopted a new constitution and concentrated the power in the hands of Viktor Orbán in an almost autocratic way. But even Hungary (and to a greater extent Poland) remain (troubled) democracies and their voters are as a whole pro-EU. Populism in these cases seems as an attempt by certain majorities to obtain extra profits within a system by threatening to destroy it: with some qualifications, this could be interpreted as a bargaining strategy.

The second major exception is Brexit Britain, where populist actors initiated and successfully carried out an act of dismantling of the supra-national constitutional order. A definite anti-systemic effect here has actually been achieved. For the purposes of this analysis, it is interesting what role the middle voters played in this process, however. It may be the case that they grew more radical and convinced that the *status quo* is not working for them: then, Brexit does not fit the 'bargaining and insurance' model. But it could be also that the median voter

was involved in a decision, which resulted in a much ‘harder’ break with the EU than they wanted. From this perspective, what started as the making of a credible threat in order to improve one’s bargaining position, ended up with dismantling of the system as a whole. Such miscalculations may explain the difficult three-year process of partition with the EU and the remorse on behalf of some of the voters and (mainstream) parties.

In comparison with the ‘squeezed middle class’, the ‘bargaining and insurance model’ relates in a different way with crises – economic, migration, and corruption-based. On the first model, the deeper the crisis is, the better visible the dysfunctionality of the current system for the average voter becomes. Thus, the deeper the crisis, the more people from the middle will turn to populist parties.

The ‘bargaining and insurance’ model also relies on crises as triggering events but with the proviso that these crises should not be too severe as to destroy the political and economic system. They should be serious enough as to support the credible threat claim of the populists for the average voter. But if they become existential for the system, they will scare the average voter and will discourage him from looking for opportunistic gains. Thus, on the ‘bargaining and insurance’ model, the centrist voters will stop supporting anti-systemic populists, if there is an existential crisis of economic, health or cultural character.

This implication may seem paradoxical but actually there is case study evidence to support it. Many of the radical propositions with which populist players lure voters are actually not put in government action when they come to power. A most spectacular case (apart from president Trump’s ‘Mexico-funded wall’) was Syriza in Greece: in the bargaining process with the EU and its European partners the Syriza government made a lot of credible (or not that credible) threats to leave the Eurozone and put stress on the supranational European order. This strategy actually did win for Greece a lot of concessions from the partners. After the climactic moment with the bailout referendum in 2015, the Syriza government did not try to seriously break the European monetary system. On the contrary, it brought back Greece to the financial markets and generally observed the conditions for EU aid.

The Hungarian example with the emergency law in the COVID-19 crisis is also a case in point. Viktor Orbán did use the crisis to suspend parliament indefinitely, but actually then voluntarily removed the emergency legislation roughly at the time other European countries did so. Thus, if one expects that populists are trying to subvert the liberal-democratic system, it may seem that a good opportunity for that was missed by the Hungarian leader. From the point of view of the ‘bargaining and insurance model’, however, the introduction of indefinite emergency law and its subsequent removal make perfect sense: they create perceptions of a ‘credible threat’ within the system, without trying to radically change or subvert it.

Similarly, in many EU polities the COVID-19 crisis restored the public confidence in mainstream, non-populist players: with a serious crisis, average voters went back to mainstream, non-populist players. The position of Angela Merkel in Germany is a case in point. But more generally, the corona crisis spurred European governments to look for joint, solidaristic actions – something, which the ‘squeezed middle class’ model could hardly predict.



Next, the ‘bargaining and insurance’ model does not require an alternative vision of democracy – be it ‘illiberal’, conservative or something else. It implies not a major transformation of the political systems of liberal democracies, but the intensification of opportunistic, self-centred behavior of voters in it. Instead of ultimate transformation into an illiberal polity, the bargaining and insurance model predicts greater voter volatility, the emergence of new parties, corruption scandals and crises, and the rise of anti-systemic parties. But somewhat paradoxically, it implies the preservation of the system itself (unless accidents and serious miscalculations as the Brexit vote happen).

Finally, the ‘bargaining and insurance model’ accounts better for the existence of more radical and less radical populist parties. In general, many of the so-called nativist parties target voters that are really more economically deprived and fearful about immigration and globalization. Yet, there are also softer populists, who aim more to capture the attention of the average voter. The ‘bargaining and insurance’ model predicts that many populist parties will start as more anti-systemic populist but may turn into parties indistinguishable from the mainstream. This is so, because they cater for the middle of society, which according to this model is only opportunistically ‘anti-system’ and actually has a strong interest in preserving the system. Case study evidence suggests that parties, which have started strongly as populist, then have grown to be more or less mainstream centre-right: Forza Italia, GERB and NDSV of tsar Simeon II in Bulgaria. The mainstreaming of these parties normally coincided with the emergence of a more radical, populist party, however. Both Forza Italia and GERB have ruled and coalesced with such more radical parties, allowing them to cater both for the centrist, opportunistic vote, and for the angrier, radical vote.

Finally, the two alternative models – the ‘squeezed middle class’ and the ‘bargaining and insurance’ model – have different implications about the role of political leadership and the use of psychological mechanisms to attract voters. In short, on the ‘squeezed middle class’ model, the political leaders are expected to transform economic and cultural frustrations into fears and anger against the existing liberal democratic system (Smilov 2017). Further, these leaders are expected to present visions of internally coherent alternatives to the current system. Viktor Orbán seems to come closest to this scenario.

On the ‘bargaining and insurance’ model, populist leaders are also supposed to spur anti-systemic fears and transform them into anger, but this inflammatory role is moderated by the understanding that the middle voters may be scared off, if there is a real danger of dismantling or radically changing the system. In addition, on this model the leaders do not have to present the public with a credible alternative of the system, but just with a credible threat to it, which they could use as a bargaining chip and insurance policy. Many populist leaders actually fall into this more opportunistic rather than visionary ideal type.

In conclusion, it has to be reiterated that the two candidates for an integrated causal model are proposed as directions of future research. The expansion of the pilot studies of causal factors (presented in the second part of this report) will hopefully help define better and assess the merits of the two models.

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