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POPULISM AND POPULIST ATTITUDES. A LONGITUDINAL PERSPECTIVE

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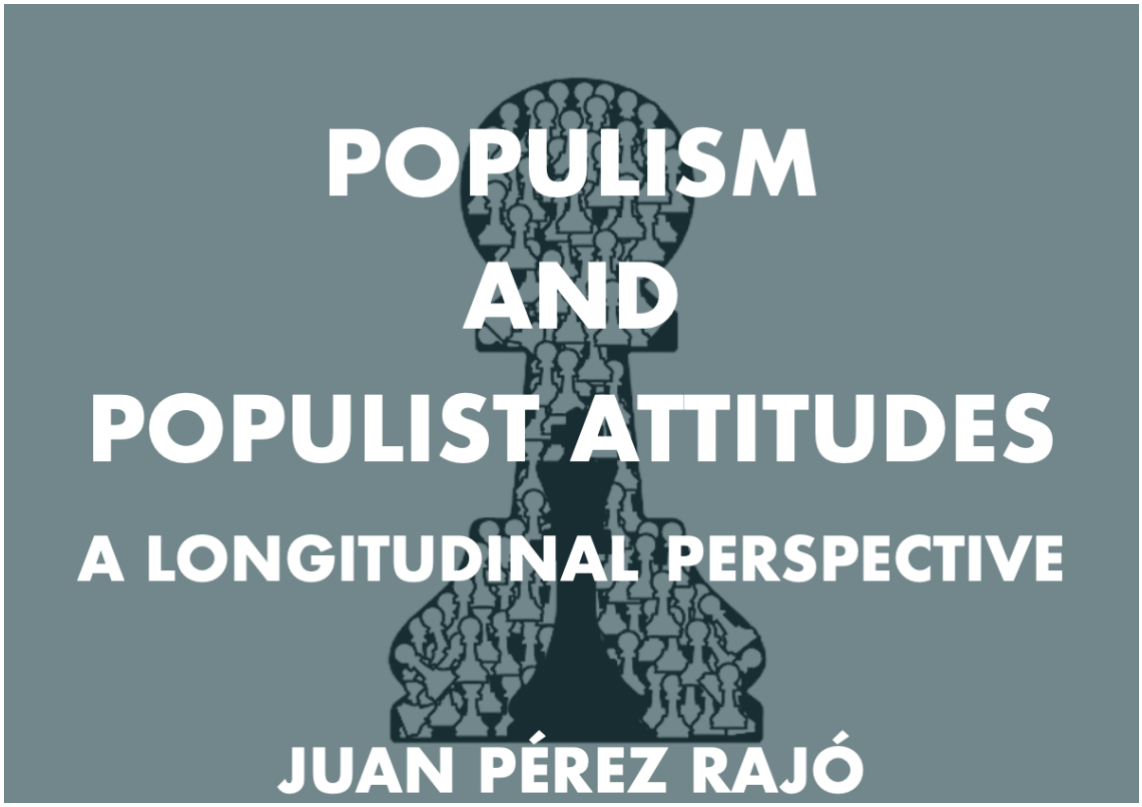

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Á CARROLA,
POR DEIXAREN SEMENTE QUE AÍNDA FLORECE

A SOFÍA,
POR SERES PORTO DE ABRIGO, AIREXA DE LEDICIA, CARREIRA DE FUTURO

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I decided to start a PhD and Eva and Guillem were to be my supervisors. So, in my defence, I have to say they already knew me. Why did they accept? You better ask them. But I can briefly explain why I am grateful they were my supervisors. Having two experts on your topic working with you is a challenge. And I am glad I had that intellectual challenge. They always made me think further but also kept my feet tight to the ground. Without their support, this thesis would not be finished. They suffered me, my delays, my chaos, my struggles… but they were there. Being there… You cannot imagine how much it means you can just go upstairs and open your supervisors' door and chat about your work.

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Abstract

This dissertation focuses on the study of populism at the individual level from a longitudinal perspective, concentrating mainly on populist attitudes. Positioned within the ideational approach to populism, it aims to contribute to five major topics within the realm of studying populism and populist attitudes.

The first chapter provides an initial insight into the evolution of populist attitudes. After describing the evolution of the Spanish political context over the last ten years, this section focuses on the volatility of populist attitudes according to certain variables. This first chapter is based on the presentation of descriptives, as its intention is not only to allow the reader to put the thesis in context but also to understand how populist attitudes have fluctuated in Spain.

The second chapter addresses the relationship between populism and political participation, integrating this debate into the recognized resource-based theories of political participation. Thus, this chapter explores the ability of increases in populist attitudes to mitigate the negative effect of increases in deprivation on political participation. The analyses point partly in the direction of expectations. On the one hand, increases in populist attitudes do not alleviate the negative effect that deprivation has on the likelihood of signing petitions or contacting public officials and politicians. However, increases in levels of populist attitudes appear to palliate the negative effect of deprivation on the likelihood of participating in demonstrations.

The third chapter explores the attitudinal effects of the populist radical right. Thus, benefiting from the emergence of Vox in Spain, a new topic —that could form part of the literature on what is known as cultural backlash theory— is considered: political (in)correctness. The results presented in this chapter suggest that becoming a Vox supporter has negative effects on individuals' levels of political correctness.

The fourth chapter continues to explore the effects of populism. Hence, the effects on affective polarization of (1) becoming a supporter of populist parties and (2) of the increase in populist attitudes are explored. The results reflect the importance of distinguishing between the two measures, as only the increase in populist attitudes enlarges the affective distance between the in-group and out-groups.

Finally, the fifth chapter exploits the coincidence of the favorable no-confidence vote against Mariano Rajoy after a corruption scandal and the POLAT survey data

collection to test the effects of changes of government after crises on populist attitudes. The results point to a reduction in populist attitudes after government alternation, but this only occurs for the winners of the change in government, and the effect is mediated through the increase in institutional trust.

In summary, focusing mainly on the temporal evolution of populist attitudes, this thesis attempts to contribute to five key issues surrounding the study of populism. First, evidence is presented on the volatility of populist attitudes over the last ten years. This dissertation also shows that populism has a mobilizing potential, but that it can also be polarizing and lead to a reduction in levels of political correctness (in the latter case, considering only the PRR). Finally, for those who believe that populism can be pernicious for democracy, this thesis offers an optimistic finding: democratic systems have tools at their disposal to reduce the demand for populism.

Resumen

Esta tesis se centra en el estudio del populismo desde una perspectiva longitudinal, enfocándose principalmente en las actitudes populistas. Así, la tesis se enmarca en el enfoque ideacional del populismo, e intenta aportar conocimiento a cinco grandes temas en torno al estudio del populismo y de las actitudes populistas.

Así, el primer capítulo intenta aportar una primera aproximación a la evolución misma de las actitudes populistas. Tras una descripción del contexto español a lo largo de los diez últimos años, esta sección explora la volatilidad de las actitudes populistas según ciertos cruces de variables. Este primer capítulo se basa en la presentación de descriptivos, ya que su intención no es otra que permitir al lector o la lectora ya no solo poner la tesis en su contexto, sino entender como han variado en términos agregados las actitudes populistas.

El segundo capítulo aborda la relación entre populismo y participación política, integrando este debate en las reconocidas teorías de participación basadas en recursos. Así pues, este capítulo explora la capacidad de los aumentos en actitudes populistas para paliar el efecto negativo de los aumentos de la deprivación en la participación política. Los análisis apuntan parcialmente en la dirección de las expectativas. Por una parte, los incrementos en actitudes populistas no palian el efecto negativo que la deprivación ejerce sobre las probabilidades de firmar peticiones o de contactar un cargo público. Sin embargo, el incremento en los niveles de populismo si parecen paliar el efecto negativo de la deprivación en la probabilidad de participar en manifestaciones.

El tercer capítulo explora los efectos actitudinales de la derecha radical populista. Así, beneficiándonos de la aparición del ultraderechista Vox en España, se introduce un nuevo tema que podría formar parte de la literatura en la conocida como teoría de la reacción cultural: la (in)corrección política. Los resultados presentados en este capítulo apuntan que convertirse en simpatizante de Vox tiene efectos negativos sobre los niveles de corrección política de los individuos.

El cuarto capítulo continúa explorando los efectos del populismo. Así, se exploran los efectos sobre la polarización afectiva de (1) convertirse en simpatizante de partidos populistas y (2) del aumento en las actitudes populistas. Los resultados reflejan la importancia de distinguir entre las dos medidas, ya que solamente el incremento en

actitudes populistas incrementa la distancia afectiva entre el grupo propio y los grupos externos.

Por último, el quinto capítulo explota la coincidencia de la moción de censura favorable contra Mariano Rajoy tras un caso de corrupción y la recogida de datos de la encuesta POLAT para testar los efectos de los cambios de gobierno tras situaciones de crisis en las actitudes populistas. Los resultados apuntan a la reducción de actitudes populistas tras los cambios de gobierno, pero ésta solo se produce para los *ganadores* de dicha alternancia, y el efecto está mediado a través del incremento en la confianza en las instituciones.

En resumen, enfocándose principalmente en la evolución temporal de las actitudes populistas, la presente tesis intenta aportar conocimiento sobre cinco temas clave en torno al estudio del populismo. Así, se presenta evidencia sobre la propia volatilidad de las actitudes populistas a lo largo de los diez últimos años. También se muestra que el populismo tiene un potencial movilizador, pero que también puede ser polarizante y llevar a la reducción de los niveles de corrección política (en este último caso, el populismo de derecha radical). Por último, para aquellos que consideran que el populismo puede ser pernicioso para la democracia, esta tesis muestra un hallazgo optimista: los sistemas democráticos tienen herramientas a su alcance para reducir la demanda de populismo.

Resum

Aquesta tesi se centra en l'estudi del populisme des d'una perspectiva longitudinal, enfocant-se principalment en les actituds populistes. Així, la tesi s'emmarca en l'enfocament ideacional del populisme, i intenta aportar coneixement a cinc grans temes entorn de l'estudi del populisme i de les actituds populistes.

Així, el primer capítol intenta aportar una primera aproximació a l'evolució mateixa de les actituds populistes. Després d'una descripció del context espanyol al llarg dels deu últims anys, aquesta secció explora la volatilitat de les actituds populistes segons uns certs encreuaments de variables. Aquest primer capítol es basa en la presentació de descriptius, ja que la seva intenció no és una altra que permetre al lector o la lectora ja no sols posar la tesi en el seu context, sinó entendre com han variat en termes agregats les actituds populistes.

El segon capítol aborda la relació entre populisme i participació política, integrant aquest debat en les reconegudes teories de participació basades en recursos. Així doncs, aquest capítol explora la capacitat dels augments en actituds populistes per a pal·liar l'efecte negatiu dels augments de la deprivació en la participació política. Les anàlisis apunten parcialment en la direcció de les expectatives. D'una banda, els increments en actituds populistes no pal·lien l'efecte negatiu que la deprivació exerceix sobre les probabilitats de signar peticions o de contactar un càrrec públic. No obstant això, l'increment en els nivells de populisme si semblen pal·liar l'efecte negatiu de la deprivació en la probabilitat de participar en manifestacions.

El tercer capítol explora els efectes actitudinals de la dreta radical populista. Així, beneficiant-nos de l'aparició de l'ultradretà Vox a Espanya, s'introdueix un nou tema que podria formar part de la literatura en la coneguda com a teoria de la reacció cultural: la (in)correcció política. Els resultats presentats en aquest capítol apunten que convertir-se en simpatitzant de Vox té efectes negatius sobre els nivells de correcció política dels individus.

El quart capítol continua explorant els efectes del populisme. Així, s'exploren els efectes sobre la polarització afectiva de (1) convertir-se en simpatitzant de partits populistes i (2) de l'augment en les actituds populistes. Els resultats reflecteixen la importància de distingir entre les dues mesures, ja que solament l'increment en actituds populistes incrementa la distància afectiva entre el grup propi i els grups externs.

Finalment, el cinquè capítol explota la coincidència de la moció de censura favorable contra Mariano Rajoy després d'un cas de corrupció i la recollida de dades de l'enquesta POLAT per a testar els efectes dels canvis de govern després de situacions de crisis en les actituds populistes. Els resultats apunten a la reducció d'actituds populistes després dels canvis de govern, però aquesta només es produeix per als *guanyadors* d'aquesta alternança, i l'efecte està mediat a través de l'increment en la confiança en les institucions.

En resum, enfocant-se principalment en l'evolució temporal de les actituds populistes, la present tesi intenta aportar coneixement sobre cinc temes clau entorn de l'estudi del populisme. Així, es presenta evidència sobre la pròpia volatilitat de les actituds populistes al llarg dels deu últims anys. També es mostra que el populisme té un potencial mobilitzador, però que també pot ser polarizant i portar a la reducció dels nivells de correcció política (en aquest últim cas, el populisme de dreta radical). Finalment, per a aquells que consideren que el populisme pot ser perniciós per a la democràcia, aquesta tesi mostra una troballa optimista: els sistemes democràtics tenen eines al seu abast per a reduir la demanda de populisme.

Resumo

Esta tese céntrase no estudo do populismo desde unha perspectiva lonxitudinal, enfocándose principalmente nas actitudes populistas. Así, a tese enmárcase no enfoque ideacional do populismo, e tenta achegar coñecemento a cinco grandes temas en torno ao estudo do populismo e das actitudes populistas.

Así, o primeiro capítulo tenta achegar unha primeira aproximación á evolución mesma das actitudes populistas. Tras unha descrición do contexto español ao longo dos dez últimos anos, esta sección explora a volatilidade das actitudes populistas segundo certos cruces de variables. Este primeiro capítulo baséase na presentación de descritivos, xa que a súa intención non é outra que permitir ao lector ou á lectora xa non só poñer a tese no seu contexto, senón entender como variaron en termos agregados as actitudes populistas.

O segundo capítulo aborda a relación entre populismo e participación política, integrando este debate nas recoñecidas teorías de participación baseadas en recursos. Así pois, este capítulo explora a capacidade dos aumentos en actitudes populistas para paliar o efecto negativo dos aumentos da deprivación na participación política. As análises apuntan parcialmente na dirección das expectativas. Por unha banda, os incrementos en actitudes populistas non palian o efecto negativo que a deprivación exerce sobre as probabilidades de asinar peticións ou de contactar un cargo público. Con todo, o incremento nos niveis de populismo si parecen paliar o efecto negativo da deprivación na probabilidade de participar en manifestacións.

O terceiro capítulo explora os efectos actitudinais da dereita radical populista. Así, beneficiándonos da aparición do ultradereitista Vox en España, introdúcese un novo tema que podería formar parte da literatura na coñecida como teoría da reacción cultural: a (in)corrección política. Os resultados presentados neste capítulo apuntan que converterse en simpatizante de Vox ten efectos negativos sobre os niveis de corrección política dos individuos.

O cuarto capítulo continúa explorando os efectos do populismo. Así, explóranse os efectos sobre a polarización afectiva de (1) converterse en simpatizante de partidos populistas e (2) do aumento nas actitudes populistas. Os resultados reflicten a importancia de distinguir entre as dúas medidas, xa que soamente o incremento en actitudes populistas incrementa a distancia afectiva entre o grupo propio e os grupos externos.

Por último, o quinto capítulo explota a coincidencia da moción de censura favorable contra Mariano Rajoy tras un caso de corrupción e a recollida de datos da enquisa POLAT para testar os efectos dos cambios de goberno tras situacións de crise nas actitudes populistas. Os resultados apuntan á redución de actitudes populistas tras os cambios de goberno, pero esta só se produce para os *gañadores* da devandita alternancia, e o efecto está mediado a través do incremento na confianza nas institucións.

En resumo, enfocándose principalmente na evolución temporal das actitudes populistas, a presente tese tenta achegar coñecemento sobre cinco temas chave en torno ao estudo do populismo. Así, preséntase evidencia sobre a propia volatilidade das actitudes populistas ao longo dos dez últimos anos. Tamén se mostra que o populismo ten un potencial mobilizador, pero que tamén pode ser polarizante e levar á redución dos niveis de corrección política (neste último caso, o populismo de dereita radical). Por último, para quenes consideran que o populismo pode ser pernicioso para a democracia, esta tese mostra un achado optimista: os sistemas democráticos teñen ferramentas ao seu alcance para reducir a demanda de populismo.

Chapter 1. Introduction

Populism has become a really stretched concept. Back in 2017, while I was finishing my Master's Thesis on the topic, I was also coding news articles that contained the particle "*populis"*. After reading quite some texts full of vagueness in relationship to the term, I found a column about the closure of a cocktail bar. And I did not see it coming. The author, probably realizing the readers would not understand the use of the term populism in such a context, clarifies in parentheses the meaning of populism: balloon glasses, peppers, fruit trees, all-in-one tonic, and *eau de gin*. Populism for defining elaborated or fancy gin-tonics[1].

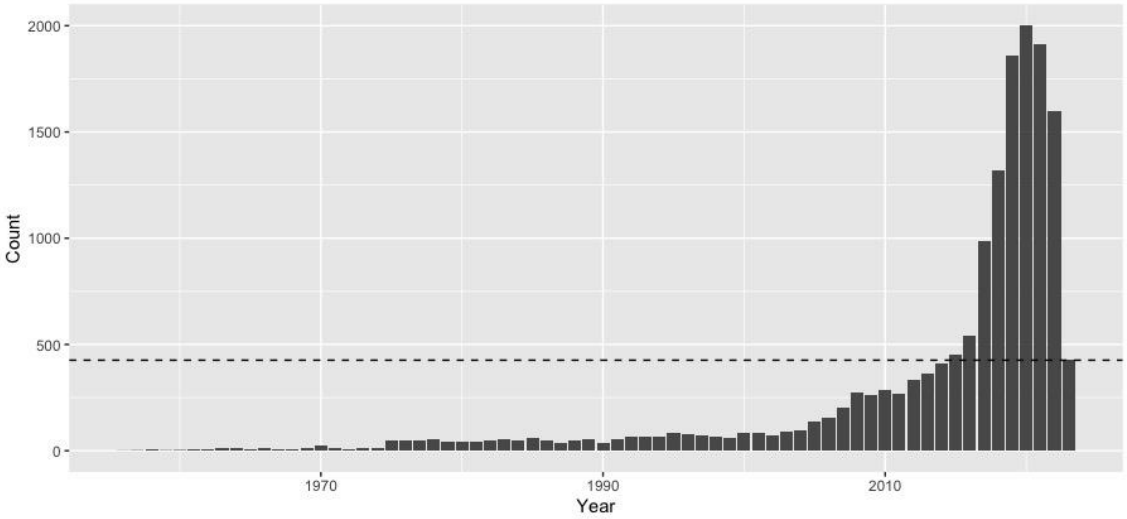
This anecdote exemplifies the use (and especially the misuse) of the concept of 'populism', but this idea has also been reflected in academic studies. Figure 1.1 expands the analysis of Brown and Mondon, reporting the number of articles included in the Web of Science Core Collection which contained the particle '*populis'* in the title, keywords, or abstract[2] (Brown and Mondon 2021). As is shown, articles on populism in the first five months of 2023 have already exceeded the total number of articles published in 2014 on the topic. However, it appears the populist hype started in 2017, with almost 1,000 articles, and peaked in 2020 with more than 2,000 publications.

Nevertheless, academic interest in populism does not say much about the meaning or connotation of the concept. In fact, some pundits even consider populism does not have a fixed meaning per se (De Cleen 2017; Dean and Maiguashca 2020), and others have alerted about the confusion between populism and nationalism or nativism (Mudde 2018). What is true is that the increase in the use of the concept has come with a negative connotation towards populism, as diverse studies have shown (Brown and Mondon 2021; Manucci and Weber 2017).

[1] https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/2014/12/26/549dd34122601d670a8b4575.html

[2] The search was conducted on the 30th of May 2023. At that point, 15,763 publications were found. One of them, published in 1932, is excluded from the graph.

Figure 1.1. Number of publications containing the particle '*populis*' in the title, keywords, or abstract on the Web of Science Core Collection per year

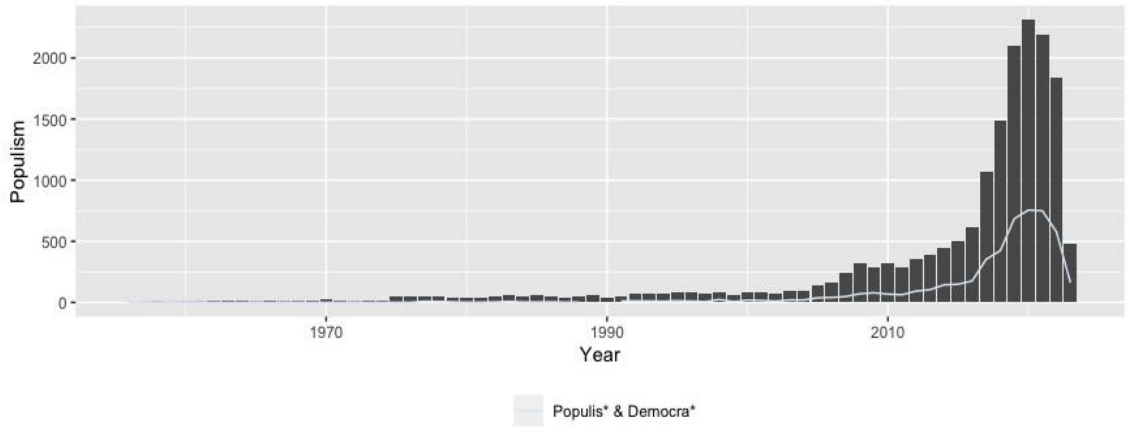


Note: own elaboration. Based on Brown & Mondon (2021)

Additionally, the increase in the study of populism has been accompanied by a parallel interest in the relationship between populism and democracy. Figure 1.2 illustrates this fact, expanding Figure 1.1 and including a line trend which represents the number of articles with the particles *'populis'* and *'democra'* in the WoS. More than one-third of the total number of articles on populism in the peak of interest on the topic was related to democracy. However, while research on populism has been consistent since the mid-70s, research including *'democra'* only consistently exceeds 20 publications per year in the 21st Century.

The alleged tension between populism and democracy, or more specifically, liberal democracy, has served some scholars to define populism in different ways, both as a cause and as a consequence of that relationship. This has left us with a wide array of definitions or conceptualizations of populism, as well as diverse theories about the connection between populism and specific aspects of liberal democratic regimes. However, the aim of this thesis is not to deepen the conceptual confusion around populism. On the contrary, I consciously avoid what could be called 'the big conceptual and empirical debates on populism' but benefit from them for developing the empirical studies included in this volume.

Figure 1.2. Number of publications containing the particles '*populis*' and '*democra*' in the title, keywords, or abstract on the Web of Science Core Collection per year



Note: own elaboration. Based on Brown & Mondon (2021)

Accordingly, these debates provide us with significant leverage for studying certain aspects of populism and its relationship with specific aspects of liberal democratic regimes. For instance, Chapter 3 speaks to one of these debates, namely, to the alleged mobilizing capacity of populism, which has served some pundits for arguing populism can bring back into politics previously excluded sectors of society (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2012a; Taggart 2000) and therefore have a positive impact in liberal democratic regimes. On the contrary, Chapter 5 is embedded in the discussion about the possible polarizing effects of populism, which has been argued to be negative for democracies (Pappas 2019).

It is important to note, however, that this thesis mostly relies on populism at the individual level. It has been argued that the study of populism is long-standing, but the development of measures of what has been coined as populist attitudes is a quite more recent strand of the literature, only consolidating in the second decade of the current century.

This section continues with an explanation of the conceptual foundations of this dissertation, briefly delving into the ideational approach, leaving specific and more profound theoretical, methodological, or contextual explanations for each of the chapters which compose this thesis. The introduction continues placing the present research into perspective, positioning it in the current scholarly debates on populism. Finally, after illustrating the main objectives of the thesis, this section concludes by outlining the structure of the thesis.

The ideational approach to populism

Despite the aforementioned misuse of the concept of populism, the truth is that academia has reached a certain consensus on the meaning of populism. Most scholars on the topic gather around the so-called ideational approach. Within this approach, scholars tend to use different terms for conceptualizing populism, such as ideology, thin-centred ideology, set of ideas, discourse, outlook, worldview, frame… (see, for example, Hawkins et al. 2019, 5; Hawkins and Rovira Kaltwasser 2022, 514). However, the use of different terminology to define populism should not prevent us from highlighting the agreement among scholars on the core elements of populism.

For instance, Mudde defines populism as "*a thin-centered ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite,' and argues that politics should be an expression of the* volonté générale *(general will) of the people*" (2004, 543, 2007, 23); Rooduijn "*as a set of ideas that concerns the antagonistic relationship between the corrupt elite and the virtuous people*" (2019, 363); while Hawkins and Rovira Kaltwasser refer to populism "*as a unique set of ideas, one that understands politics as a Manichean struggle between a reified will of the people and a conspiring elite*" (2022, 3).

Therefore, the three abovementioned definitions share certain elements which construct populism, which will be explained in greater detail in the following lines. However, before moving into the ideas that define populism, it is important to note the transition from the understanding of populism as a 'thin ideology' to a 'set of ideas'.

'Thick', 'full' or 'macro-ideologies' are defined as 'overarching, inclusive networks of ideas that [offer] solutions, deliberately or by default, to all the important political issues confronting a society (Freeden 2003, 78). However, populism does not fit that definition, as '*by itself populism can offer neither complex nor comprehensive answers to the political questions that modern societies generate*' (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2017, 6). Hence, populism has been understood as a thin ideology, as it does not provide answers to all problems or questions as macro ideologies do, but it is argued to have a discernible and restricted morphology. This causes thin ideologies to always be attached to other ideologies, and, as Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser (2017) put it, sometimes populism is even assimilated into those ideologies. Populism, in consequence, can take different shapes, appear in different contexts, and even be attached to contradictory concepts or macro ideologies. This has led scholars to distance from the

concept of ‘thin ideology’, replacing it with the looser concept of ‘set of ideas’, which has allowed them to capture populism in its different renderings.

Throughout the dissertation, I resort to Mudde’s definition of populism, as I do not consider the distinction between ‘thin ideology’ and ‘set of ideas’ to be the cornerstone of the normative debate on populism. On the contrary, both concepts allow us to capture the basic elements that constitute populism, and to differentiate it from what is not populism. This latter element, indeed, has been one of the main concerns among scholars who do not align with the ideational approach, who have argued that within this understanding populism becomes a catch-all concept, which does not allow for differentiating what is and what is not populism.

Notwithstanding, defining it as a thin ideology or as a set of ideas, what constitutes populism according to the ideational approach is a Manichean exaltation of popular sovereignty embedded in an antagonistic struggle between the pure people and the corrupt elite. This allows us to distinguish populism from its two opposite poles: elitism and pluralism.

Elitism considers a limited group of people (i.e., the elite) to be virtuous and superior to the people, who are vulgar and dangerous, so therefore considers the former should control a certain set of resources or power. Elitism is therefore the mirror image of populism, and the latter is intrinsically opposed to it. As a matter of fact, some scholars argue the roots of modern populism go back to the independence of the United States, considering it a revolt against the aristocracy. Lipset argued five elements describe the ideology of the US: *liberty, egalitarianism, individualism, populism, and laissez-faire* (1996, 31). He also poses that populist forces won the major conflicts against the ‘elite’: the Revolution itself, the War of Hawks, the Jacksonian period, and the Civil War (p. 24).

Therefore, populism poses a clear distinction from elitism, as it considers the elite as corrupt and evil by definition, while it is the people who are pure and should make the most important decisions in politics. It should be also noted that the elite for populism is not a clearly defined and stable group. On the contrary, the elite serves as a label or ‘empty signifier’ including all those who are alleged to work against the people’s interests and will, being able to comprehend from the political establishment to minorities who revindicate their rights.

Pluralism is the second opposite pole to populism. Pluralism goes beyond the dualistic worldview of both elitism and populism, which divide society into the people and the elite. In so doing, pluralism recognizes the diversity which constructs every

society, understanding that different groups, ideas, or interests coexist. Contrarily to this understanding and exaltation of diversity, populism understands each of the two groups in which it divides society as monolithic and homogeneous.

This leads to another element of populism: the general will. Populism understands the vast majority of the society, the people, has a *volonté générale*, a general will. This understanding of the will of the people does not leave any room for the coexistence of different interests, of diversity. Instead, the people have one unique interest, which is shared and common. According to that common interest, the task of politicians is simple: to understand the general will and to transcend individuals to consolidate the people as a cohesive community (Canovan 2005, 115). Let me exemplify it with an excerpt from Hugo Chávez's 2007 public address when he was presenting his government (also included in Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2017, 17):

'Nothing . . . is in greater agreement with the popular doctrine then [sic] *to consult with the nation as a whole regarding the chief points upon which governments, basic laws, and the supreme rule are founded. All individuals are subject to error and seduction, but not the people, which possesses to an eminent degree of consciousness of its own good and the measure of its independence. Because of this its judgment is pure, its will is strong, and none can corrupt or even threaten it.'*

In contrast to this, politicians, the media, and the elite in general are accused by populists not only of going against the general will of the people but also against common sense. The appeal to common sense is frequent among populists, as it is what ordinary citizens think, being shared by them all, and this can provide citizens with a sense of belonging to a social identity (i.e., the people).

The idea of common sense is also exploited by populists to reinforce the existence of a general will. This is exemplified in what we will later explore in one of the chapters of this dissertation, the idea of political (in)correctness. Populist rhetoric usually appeals to the way the common people think or speak, which is far away from the artificial and not representative language of the elite.

The general will exists because 'the people' —as a whole— exist, and populism puts the people at the centre of politics (i.e., people centrism). The importance of the people for populism was exemplified in the abovementioned Chávez's quote: individuals only matter as they construct the people. This category allows for a simplification of politics, in which the sovereign has a shared will, and in which there is no room for collective bargaining. In Laclau's words, 'the people' is an empty signifier which allows

for the construction of a collective identity, encompassing different groups and demands (Laclau 2005a, 2005b). While it could sound contradictory to the idea of a general will, this construct allows populism to be rather flexible (or even chameleonic).

The idea of 'the people' as sovereign (remember Lincoln's Gettysburg Address), in opposition to the elite, also allows for the victimization of the former, when *its* will is not being represented by the establishment. This dichotomy, which could be argued to have a polarizing effect, as we will see in another chapter of the thesis, can have a mobilization potential. Additionally, it can reinforce the populist leader, who is part of the people and shares its will but can also delegitimize the political and institutional system.

Finally, the last element to highlight from the abovementioned definitions of populism is Manicheism, which derives from the division of politics and society into two different and antagonistic groups. Manicheism consists of a dualistic interpretation of politics and society, by which there is one pole which is good and pure (i.e., the people) and another which is bad and corrupt (i.e., the elite).

Manicheism provides another simplification of politics and society in general, which allows for creating a clear division between 'them' and 'us'. The moralization of the distinct groups constituting a given society not only provides a sense of belonging to a social category but also provides a motivation for distancing from the other. Hence, Manicheism could be understood as a filter through which reality is seen as black or white, as good or bad, and which can settle grounds for increasing delegitimization of and separation from the outgroup.

Populist attitudes

Until this point, I have introduced what populism means, but it is important to note that populism is not only a matter of political supply. Populism should also be observed from the demand side of politics, or what is the same, from an individual-level perspective. Citizens can align to the populist worldview, they can also see their world through the lenses of populism, even when there is no populist supply.

Most of the research on populism, however, has focused on the supply side, analyzing parties, candidates, discourses…, or on the conceptualization of populism per se. When focusing on the individual level, research has usually relied on individuals'

support for populist parties, until important developments were made for measuring populist attitudes.

Building upon previous work (Elchardus and Spruyt 2012; Hawkins, Riding, and Mudde 2012; Stanley 2011), Akkerman, Mudde, and Zaslove (2014) presented their seminal article on the measurement of populist attitudes. This improvement allowed to capture individuals' level of populism beyond their support (or not) for populist parties, as, as it was said before, individuals can see the world through the lenses of populism even if there is no populist supply, or if they do not support a populist party.

While different measurements of populist attitudes have been proposed since 2014 (see, for example, Castanho Silva et al., 2018; Hobolt et al., 2016; Oliver & Rahn, 2016; Schulz et al., 2018), this thesis relies on Akkerman and colleagues'. The set of indicators developed by Akkerman, Mudde, and Zaslove has been included in the POLAT panel survey since 2014, which allows us to conduct longitudinal analyses using populism at the individual level for a fairly long period.

Additionally, their measurement of populist attitudes is the most used today, which could bestow comparability with research carried out in different contexts that fall beyond the scope of this dissertation. The fly in the ointment is that the measurement developed by Akkerman and colleagues is not recommended in multicountry studies (Castanho Silva et al. 2019). However, as this thesis only benefits from data coming from one single country, I do not consider there are clear downsides of using this instrument to capture populist attitudes, nor theoretical, nor empirical —see the following Chapter for an extended discussion of different measures of populist attitudes and Castanho Silva et al. (2019) for an empirical comparison of seven populist attitudes scales—.

Therefore, populist attitudes are captured by measuring six different items (see Table 1.1), which capture the degree of agreement or disagreement of individuals with the core elements of populism. Respondents use a 7-point Likert scale running from 1 (absolutely disagree) to 7 (absolutely agree), and all six values are then added, with higher values indicating higher levels of populist attitudes.

Table 1.1 Wording of the items for the measurement of populist attitudes (Original in Spanish)

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?						
Completely disagree						Completely agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Politicians in Parliament need to follow the will of the people						
I would rather be represented by a citizen than by a specialized politician						
The people, and not politicians, should make our most important policy decisions						
What people call 'compromise' in politics is really just selling out on one's principles						
The political differences between the elite and the people are larger than the differences among the people						
Elected officials talk too much and take little action						

The road ahead

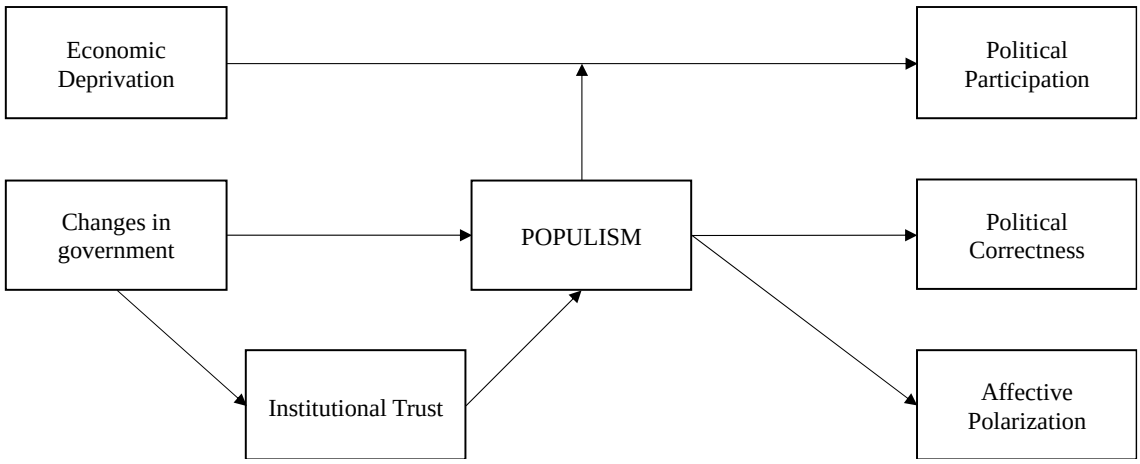
Once the most important conceptual foundations of this dissertation are set out, the objective of this section is to place the thesis in relationship with the state of the art. As the theoretical details of each article are explained in its corresponding chapter, the aim is to take an overarching perspective of the whole thesis, signalling to the reader at which point lies each article, and, most certainly, the dissertation as a whole.

Diverse scholars have worked on defining the 'state of the art', aiming to comprehensively grasp the vast literature on populism, also proposing new avenues for future research. For instance, Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser (2018) highlight four promising topics for the study of populism (i.e., economic anxiety, cultural backlash, negative partisanship and polarization, and the tension between responsiveness and responsibility), and they advocate for the use of clear definitions of populism. This last issue —the need to discern between populism and what travels with it— has also been pointed out by Rooduijn (2019). Finally, Hunger and Paxton warn about the misuse of the concept of populism, as 'although many studies use populism as a central theme, the actual focus of this research is the host ideology' (Hunger and Paxton 2022, 629).

Hence, one of the main problems highlighted in previous scholarship on populism is the difficulty in distinguishing between populism and its hosts. Accordingly, this dissertation mostly relies on the measurement of populist attitudes for testing different causes and consequences of populism, which allows us to differentiate populism from other elements such as host ideologies.

Beyond conceptual clarity, which is reinforced by the use of panel data (see the methodological sections of the different articles), this thesis aims to contribute to the literature in different ways. Figure 1.3 summarizes the main relationships explored throughout the dissertation, which are explained in detail in the following pages.

Figure 1.3. Main relationships explored throughout the dissertation.



A longitudinal perspective

Not infrequently, when one opens a book on populism finds references to the first three words of the US Constitution (i.e., We the People), to Lincoln's words in the Gettysburg Address (i.e., government of the people, by the people, for the people'), to the Omaha Platform of the Populist Party, or the Russian *narodniki* (populists) and the revolutionary group *Zemlya i Volya* (Land and Freedom). This allows researchers to track down populism in History, but this says little about the evolution of populism, and especially, of the specific dimensions of populism.

At the macro-level one can grasp from the many publications on populism the different specificities of populism in different contexts, both territorial and temporal (especially if one is interested in the populist radical right). Thus, for example, one can read about the evolution of the French National Front/National Rally, from Le Pen (father) to Le Pen (daughter), understanding the discursive changes and the evolution of its support (for example, Ivaldi 2016; Rivero 2019).

However, as the literature on populism at the individual level is more recent, understanding the evolution of populist attitudes is more difficult, and research should devote attention to this specific issue. Populist attitudes have been used to explain populist voting, for example, but little has been said about the stability of populist attitudes. Scholars assumed populist attitudes change, or that they can be manipulable in

experimental settings (Ferrari 2022; Morisi and Wagner 2020), but empirical evidence is still missing —with only one article (to the best of my knowledge) focusing on the evolution of populist attitudes over time (Schimpf, Wuttke, and Schoen 2023)—.

Are populist attitudes malleable or are they constant? Are they more susceptible to short-term or long-term variation? Do variations of populism match at the individual level and at the party-level discourses? Which one precedes which one? These are just some of the questions that research on populism should, in my opinion, address, for researchers to gain a more comprehensive knowledge of the topic.

The present dissertation does not aim to provide responses to all these questions, but nevertheless provides an account of the evolution of populist attitudes in Spain over the last ten years. This allows us not only to gauge to what extent populist attitudes fluctuate but also to put this thesis into its own context, a period marked by economic, social, and political challenges.

Needless to say, the descriptive evidence included in this dissertation does not provide a comprehensive analysis of how populist attitudes fluctuate and why. Again, it only presents different pictures of the evolution of populism at the individual level in its context, Spain, for the last ten years. Therefore, more research should continue this path, exploring populist attitudes from a longitudinal perspective, which should also inform researchers on populism about the adaptation of the measure of populist attitudes to different contexts.

Additionally, beyond the longitudinal analysis of populist attitudes per se, a major part of this dissertation resorts to panel data analysis —and more specifically to linear panel regressions with fixed effects—. This allows us to improve the internal validity of the thesis, as we mostly focus on how changes over time in the independent variables of interest affect subsequent levels of our dependent variables within-individuals. Hence, the longitudinal perspective that articulates the major part of the thesis allows us to go one step further in terms of causality, compared to traditional cross-sectional designs (see the different methodological sections for the specificities and benefits of each methodological strategies).

The mobilization potential of populism

Populism has been argued to have a mobilizing potential —especially among those who consider populism can be beneficial for democratic systems—, including into politics previously excluded sectors of society (Dzur and Hendriks 2018; Laclau 2005a;

Taggart 2002; Urbinati 2017; Zaslove et al. 2021). Empirically, populist attitudes have been found to explain voting (Hawkins, Rovira Kaltwasser, and Andreadis 2018; Stanley 2011; Van Hauwaert and Van Kessel 2018) and other forms of political participation (Lüders et al. 2021; Rooduijn 2014). However, research has also found that populist attitudes do not appear to boost protest participation (Ardag et al. 2020; Zaslove et al. 2021).

This thesis aims to tap into the contended mobilization potential of populism by integrating this hypothesis into a different strand of the literature: the resource-based theories of political participation. Let me put it simply. Those interested in explaining political participation tend to gather around two different hypotheses. On the one hand, a group of scholars argues that resources are a sine qua non-condition for political engagement. On the other hand, the second group posits that economic hardship can trigger political participation.

However, empirical evidence is mixed, and support for both hypotheses has been found depending on the operationalization of both resources and political participation, as well as on the context. For that reason, this dissertation aims to bring together these two strands of the literature: first, the mobilization hypothesis of populism, and second, the resource-based theories of participation. Existent research provides us with three different pieces of literature, which I aim to integrate as if they were part of the same puzzle.

Can populism help in explaining the discrepancies between the two main hypotheses of resource-based political engagement? Theoretically, I argue the response to this question can be affirmative. The first empirical chapter of the present dissertation aims to tap into this question. As the details of the expected relationship can be found in the corresponding chapter, let me simplify the argument in the following lines.

Departing from the dogma that any form of political participation entails costs, the logical consequence is that resources are necessary for participating. Hence, if an individual lacks economic resources, they will be less prone to participate in politics. However, the array of resources that could condition political participation goes beyond material or economic ones.

Accordingly, populism could be argued to palliate the lack of economic resources by providing a different but also necessary resource: motivation to participate. Populism's division of society can serve as a justification for individuals to participate, as it provides them with a scapegoat who goes against their interests. The elite (whoever it is) is morally

repugnant, and what is more, should not be making decisions, decisions which lead the individual to lack resources or to perceive themselves as relatively deprived in comparison to the elite.

Therefore, I argue that populism can palliate the negative effects of economic deprivation by providing individuals with an important resource for political engagement, which is the motivation for doing so. The creation of two different identities, scapegoating the outgroup, and hoisting the group to which the deprived individual belongs, can indeed encourage them to participate in politics to make their voice heard.

Chapter 3 addresses this mobilization capacity of populism focusing on three different forms of political participation: demonstrating, petition signing, and contacting a politician. This chapter shows that increases in individuals' levels of deprivation decrease their probability of participating in all three forms of political engagement, and more interestingly, that populism can indeed mitigate that negative effect for participating in demonstrations. Hence, populism appears to have a mobilization capacity among those who become more economically vulnerable, but only opening the channel of demonstrating.

Political (in)correctness

The cultural backlash theory is probably the most researched issue when considering the explanation for the rise of the populist radical right. This argument considers multiculturalism and immigration are behind the rise of this family of parties. However, it could be argued that this relationship, along with the mixed results in empirical evidence, can only be theoretically expected for the mentioned family of parties due to their nativism, but not to populism per se.

The cultural backlash hypothesis could be connected to the so-called theory of losers of globalization —to which the economic anxiety hypothesis also connects, going back to Lipset's status politics thesis (Brandmeyer and Denisoff 1969; Lipset 1955)—. According to the American sociologist, it is important to consider individuals' and groups' desires to improve or maintain their social status. Therefore, globalization entails not only the relocation of jobs into underdeveloped parts of the world but also an increase in the supply of labour hand in hand with the demand for welfare policies.

However, the motives behind the working class supporting populist radical right parties appear to hinge more on an alleged cultural threat than on objective numbers of refugees, migrants, or competitors in the labour market (Hogan and Haltinner 2015;

Inglehart and Norris 2017; Margalit 2019; Schäfer 2022; Van Hauwaert and Van Kessel 2018). Nevertheless, only PRR parties appear to exploit the idea of a cultural threat posed by aliens, which explains little about populism itself but says much about a more general cultural war which is being fought. The cultural backlash hypothesis, then, should consider other 'threats' beyond immigration. As an example, recent studies have started paying attention to feminism as an example of this contention (Abi-Hassan 2017; Anduiza and Rico 2022; Off 2023b, 2023a).

This dissertation adds to the new avenues for exploring the different issues that can contribute to the cultural backlash hypothesis by focusing on political (in)correctness. What is more, when exploring the consequences of the populist radical right, literature has mainly paid attention to the contagion effect of the PRR in mainstream parties and on citizens' perceptions of immigration. Hence, this thesis also contributes to the literature on the effects of the PRR by focusing on one of the cultural issues that this family of parties is exploiting, which is the use of language.

It ought not come as a surprise that populist candidates —both on the right and the left— have resorted to the use of plain language to stress their identification with the common citizen (Canovan 1999a; Krämer 2018; Moffitt and Tormey 2014). Politically correct language is presented by them as the one the elite speaks, but not the people, and is commonly associated with talking much and not saying nor doing anything for the benefit of the latter.

Following these debates, this thesis explores —in chapter 4—the individual-level effects of the populist radical right on attitudes towards political correctness. It does so by focusing on the Spanish case, in which the presence of this family of parties is quite recent when compared to other countries (see, for example, Alonso and Rovira Kaltwasser 2015).

Hence, the present dissertation aims to contribute to the literature on the attitudinal effects of the populist radical right, going beyond previous research on the effect of these parties on other parties' positions and attitudes towards immigration. Additionally, it aims to contribute to the cultural backlash thesis, by expanding the number of issues that can be exploited by populist parties for gaining support.

Affective polarization

The study of polarization, and more concretely of affective polarization, has increased in the last few years. However, the linkage between populism and polarization

is not new, as both concepts have been related in different ways. For some authors, polarization is an antecedent of populism. For instance, Ignazi (1992) points to the convergence of mainstream parties as a first step for polarization and the subsequent rise of the PRR. After that consensus, right-wing parties distanced from the centre of the ideological spectrum, creating a crisis of identity among their supporters (both with the parties in particular and the system in general) and opening the door for these populist parties, especially when mainstream parties returned to the centre. Pappas also highlights the idea of consensus, considering populist parties promote 'adversarial and polarizing politics rather than (…) moderation and consensus-seeking' (Pappas 2014a, 3–4).

On the contrary, Laclau and Mouffe argued that populism is a response to the lack of polarization in politics, as the neoliberal system depoliticized politics constructing a consensus which took politics out of politics (Laclau 2005a; Mouffe 2000, 2005; Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2018). Therefore, populism is the re-politicization of politics, the defence of certain interests which are not represented by mainstream parties, which logically implies populism has a polarizing effect.

And finally, others argue populism is the antecedent of polarization. Let me take Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser's words on the polarizing effect of populism: 'Given that populists (re)politicize certain issues that the establishment, deliberately or not, has overlooked, and do so in essentially moral terms, they polarize the political system by mobilizing segments of the electorate that are angry with the current state of affairs against the "corrupt" elite' (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2018, 1682).

The present dissertation builds upon this last strand of the literature, exploring the alleged effect of populism on polarization. More specifically, it turns the debate to the individual level, as previous research has mainly focused on the party level. Thus, at the macro level, it could be argued that the relationship between populism and polarization is mainly driven by the prevalent ideological extremity of populist parties.

According to the doubts that can be raised about the isolated relationship between populism and polarization, this thesis explores the longitudinal relationship between populism and affective polarization. It is argued that both concepts speak of a bisected society and that the moral division of populism, together with the idea that the people (i.e., the ingroup) should govern and the elite (i.e., the outgroup) should not, can boost the distance between the different partisan groups, as in the populist mind there is no room for more social categorizations than that of good vs. evil. Results of Chapter 5 support the idea that increases in populist attitudes can indeed boost affective

polarization. However, becoming identified with a populist party does not appear to exert that effect, which also speaks about the importance of distinguishing between supporting a populist party and holding populist attitudes.

Reducing the demand for populism

Some of the effects of globalization have been already mentioned, but it is important to highlight that the development and increasing power of supranational actors has limited the action range of national governments and institutions —think, for example, of the convergence criteria of the European Union, or the different Economic Adjustment Programmes during and after the Great Recession.

According to the reduction of power of national actors, and to the rising perception among the citizenry of that situation, some individuals perceived 'the elite' was not taking into consideration the necessities and the will of 'the people'. What is more, during the economic crisis it was palpable that governments were taking austerity measures against the will of the people (think of the massive protests in Greece or Spain), but the same governments applied financial sector bailout measures to banks and savings banks, which could be considered part of the elite.

The perception of betrayal by their national institutions provoked negative feelings among the population, which could then translate into supporting populist parties to punish the elite. As a matter of fact, thinking of the Spanish case clearly exemplifies this argument. The economic crisis led to the adoption of austerity measures, which led to massive protests in the streets. These protests transformed into a social movement (*Indignados*) which had in its own name the feeling towards the elite: they were outraged. Ultimately, a populist party was launched (*Podemos*), which led to the breakdown of the Spanish bipartisan system (Orriols and Cordero 2016).

In sum, national governments faced a critical juncture: representing their constituencies or applying the measures imposed by supranational governments in order to avoid the bankruptcy of their countries. Most of them took the second path, which we have argued led to the rise of populism. Accordingly, this leads us to the following questions: what would have happened if they had taken the first path (i.e., representing the people's interests)? Would populism have raised as it did?

Political scientists should not try to respond to the 'what would have happened if…' type of questions, but we can reformulate these questions to find ways to approach them. The previous questions implicitly lead to a more general debate, which revolves

around the question of whether populism can be eroded or not. Previous research has addressed the issue of how to respond to populism, basically focusing on the strategies mainstream parties can apply to reduce the emergence of the populist radical right (Mudde 2019b).

However, little has been done on exploring if and, in that case, how, the demand side of populism can be shrunken. As I argue somewhere later in this thesis, research on the individual level of populism, but this could be applied to research on populism in general, has given the impression that everything can potentially lead to the rise of populism, but that the reduction of populism is not plausible or worth studying.

Accordingly, this thesis aims to contribute to the literature on how to reduce the demand for populism, especially paying attention to the connection between crises and populism. We have already mentioned that economic crises can widen the gap between 'the elite' and 'the people', ultimately fueling populism, but there are other types of crises that could also be argued to have the same effects.

Corruption scandals are only one more of the situations that could be included under the umbrella of a 'crisis of the political system'. Additionally, corruption involves making empirically evident a populist dogma: that the elite is corrupt. Therefore, corruption scandals could be argued to boost populism, as literature has pointed out (Hawkins 2010; Pappas 2019; Taggart 2002).

Spain witnessed, according to Transparency International, one of the 25 biggest corruption scandals in the World: Gürtel.[3] In line with the previous reasoning, the corruption scandal would lead Spaniards to increase their levels of populism. But in this case, the party in government —which was convicted of benefiting from a corruption scheme— was overthrown by Parliament. Part of the political elite responded to what could be considered a civic demand in liberal democracies: holding governments accountable.

Therefore, this thesis aims to contribute to the literature on populism by specifically focusing on the reduction of populist attitudes. Benefiting from the coincidence of the Gürtel sentence and the data collection of the POLAT survey, I apply a UESD (Unexpected event during survey design) design, which provided us with a (quasi) natural experimental setting.

[3] https://www.transparency.org/en/news/25-corruption-scandals

Chapter 5 explores the effects of changes in government as responses to crises on populist attitudes. Results reflect the importance of institutional trust for government alternation to have an impact on populist attitudes. Hence, the change in government has a negative effect on populist attitudes —which only occurs for those who can be labelled as winners of that alternation—, but that effect is mediated by institutional trust. Therefore, the results do not only highlight the importance of institutional trust for reducing the demand for populism, but they also speak about the tools democracies have at their disposal for weakening populism.

Structure of the thesis

Until this point, I have attempted to clarify the theoretical approach towards populism this dissertation aligns with. Additionally, and building upon previous scholars' research on the most important topics that deserve research in the field of populism, I have presented five issues which I consider worth studying: the longitudinal perspective of populism, especially at the individual level, the mobilization capacity of populism, the effects of the populist radical right on political (in)correctness, the relationship between populism and affective polarization, and the reduction of populism at the individual level.

From now on, the thesis will be divided into five more chapters and a concluding section, and each chapter will be devoted to answering specific questions embedded in each of the previously mentioned topics. Hence, the first chapter explores the change in populist attitudes during the last ten years. Additionally, it includes a brief summary of the main events that took place in Spain during that period, which not only puts the evolution of populist attitudes in its context but also contextualizes the dissertation itself, especially the data which will be used throughout the thesis for the different analyses.

The second chapter brings together literature on resource-based theories of political participation and literature on the mobilizing role of populism. The chapter departs from the following question: can populism bring back to politics those who experience economic deprivation? If the answer to this question is affirmative, populism could be an explanatory factor in the divergences between the mobilization and the withdrawal hypotheses (Kern, Marien, and Hooghe 2015; Rosenstone 1982; Solt 2008; Yagci 2017). The chapter focuses on non-institutional forms of political participation, and populism only appears to enhance mobilization, and even to palliate the negative effect of economic deprivation, in the case of participating in a demonstration.

The third chapter, written together with Dr. Carol Galais, is the only chapter which does not focus on populist attitudes, but instead explores the effects of supporting the populist radical right on attitudes towards political correctness. Benefiting from the recent emergence of a populist radical right party in Spain, as well as from the recent number of elections, this article finds that becoming a supporter of Vox subsequently reduces the levels of political correctness of individuals. Hence, this chapter should inform the literature on the effects of the populist radical right, going beyond already explored issues such as positions towards immigration.

The fourth chapter of the thesis focuses on the polarizing effect of populism at the individual level. Two different measures of populism at the individual level are employed in this article: on the one hand, I explore the effects of being a supporter of a populist party on affective polarization, and on the other hand, I use populist attitudes to explore the same effect. Results highlight the importance of discerning between both measures of populism, as supporting populist parties does not appear to enhance individuals' levels of affective polarization. On the contrary, increases in populist attitudes do appear to polarize affectively, both by increasing affect towards the ingroup and by decreasing it towards the outgroup.

The fifth chapter of the thesis deals with the question of how to reduce the demand for populism. Benefiting from the coincidence of the no-confidence vote against Mariano Rajoy —and the resulting change in government after the Gürtel sentence— and the data collection of the POLAT survey, I apply an experimental design for testing the effects of changes in government on populist attitudes. Results show that the change in government after the corruption crisis had a negative effect on populist attitudes, but only for those who support the incoming government. Additionally, the effect is found to be mediated by the increase that the change in government had in institutional trust.

Finally, the thesis is closed with a conclusion. In that section I do not only intend to summarize the main findings, but also to highlight the importance of the results in light with existing literature, and also opening doors for further research.

Chapter 2. Ten years of populist attitudes: So what?

Literature on populism has come up with different measures of populist attitudes (see, for example, Castanho Silva et al., 2018; Elchardus & Spruyt, 2016; Hobolt et al., 2016; Oliver & Rahn, 2016; Schulz et al., 2018; Stanley, 2011; Wuttke et al., 2020), but it is the measure proposed by Akkerman, Mudde and Zaslove (2014) the one which obtained more consensus among scholars (Castanho Silva et al., 2019).

Since then, populist attitudes have been used to explain voting behaviour (Akkerman, Mudde, and Zaslove 2014; Bertolotti, Leone, and Catellani 2021; Hawkins, Rovira Kaltwasser, and Andreadis 2018; Van Hauwaert and Van Kessel 2018) (including abstention) (Ardag et al. 2020), protest participation (Lüders et al. 2021), democratic attitudes (Zaslove et al. 2021; Zaslove and Meijers 2023), or other political preferences (Ellenbroek, Meijers, and Krouwel 2023).

Additionally, populist attitudes have been used as dependent variables, and scholars have attempted to find the drivers of populism at the individual level. Rico and Anduiza (2019), for instance, study nine different European countries in the aftermath of the Great Recession to explore how different aspects of economic hardship boost populism, finding individuals' perceptions of the economic situation in their country explains populist attitudes —and not vulnerability nor individual economic hardship—.

Negative emotions have also been found to explain populist attitudes (Rico, Guinjoan, and Anduiza 2017), and to moderate the negative effect positive and fact-based information have on populism at the individual level (Morisi and Wagner 2020). Conspiracy beliefs and other psychological determinants have also been studied as predictors of populist attitudes (Erisen et al. 2021), as well as social cynicism (Jami and Kemmelmeier 2021) or political attitudes such as political trust and external political efficacy (Geurkink et al. 2020).

However, research on populism at the individual level has often relied on measures of identification or support for populist parties and candidates. Different explanations could be given for this fact, but this could be mostly explained by the recency of the development of the measures of populist attitudes and the cost of capturing this type of data compared to the others.

Therefore, the evolution of populism over time has often focused on the evolution of populist parties' support (see, for example, Mudde (2013) on the populist radical right, or *The PopuList* (Rooduijn et al. 2019), which analyses the evolution of European populist parties' electoral support since 1989). Other scholars have explored the evolution of populism in academic research and newspapers (Brown and Mondon 2021), and even the change in the meanings of populism as a signifier (Hatakka and Herkman 2022). However, it was not until very recently that, to the best of my knowledge, the first article exploring populist attitudes from a longitudinal perspective was published (Schimpf, Wuttke, and Schoen 2023).

Despite the lack of publicly available data measuring populism at the individual level, this thesis benefits from the POLAT survey (Hernández et al. 2021), an online panel survey conducted in Spain, which includes the measurement of populist attitudes from 2014 until 2023. This provides us with the opportunity to track the evolution of populist attitudes in Spain for the last ten years. Consequently, this chapter does not aim to explain the causes and consequences of populist attitudes but to present different pictures from different angles of our object of study. Putting it simply, the following pages aim to provide a better understanding of populism at the individual level by shedding light on the question of how have populist attitudes evolved in these ten years. To do so, I will first present a brief contextualization of the period covered by the POLAT panel, for then analyzing the evolution of populist attitudes.

The Spanish context

Longitudinal analyses of any phenomenon should always be accompanied by a contextualization which can provide a better understanding of the evolution of the issue under examination. This contextualization appears even more pertinent when the longitudinal analysis relies on one specific case, and more importantly, when the temporal evolution of a phenomenon (i.e., populist attitudes) is not fully addressed in previous literature.

Moreover, a PhD thesis appears as a well-suited framework not only for the description of the evolution of populist attitudes —which are the central element of the thesis— but also for providing a contextualization that can help the reader better understand certain changes that could affect populist attitudes. As the thesis itself revolves around populism and populist attitudes in Spain during the last decade, it is

pertinent to keep in mind the most important events that took place in the country in the last few years.

Hence, the purpose of this contextualization is not to develop a detailed and exhaustive explanation of the social, economic, or political events that took place in Spain between 2014 and 2023. On the contrary, I will 'cherry-pick' some of the major events that took place in Spain during that period, which can help in understanding the evolution of populist attitudes.

The period for which the POLAT panel includes information about populist attitudes corresponds to the years 2014-2023. In 2014 Mariano Rajoy, leader of the People's Party, was in government. His party won the elections held in 2011, after two terms of Socialist government led by José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero. During that period, Spain was in troubled waters: the Great Recession of 2008 hit hard the Spanish economy, bursting the housing bubble on which the Spanish economy relied for years, which subsequently led to a rapid increase in unemployment rates, especially among younger generations (Lluis Orriols and Cordero 2016).

Austerity measures were implemented, and the number of protests increased. Additionally, one of the key political decisions during that period was the modification of the Spanish Constitution. The fundamental law had been only reformed once, in 1992, for only including two more words that would allow non-nationals to stand as candidates in local elections. The 1992 reform was a simple one, following the Maastricht Treaty, and was proposed and passed by all parliamentary groups in the Chamber.

Contrarily, the 2011 reform was only proposed by the two biggest parliamentary groups, by the main political parties in Spain, without the concurrence of the rest of the Chamber. Additionally, this reform was more profound than the first one. In the shadow of the crisis, and with the 'Troika' imposing and recommending austerity measures (Lluis Orriols and Cordero 2016), the Spanish Constitution was amended to '*guaranteeing the principle of budgetary stability, bounding all Public Administrations, reinforcing Spain's compromise with the EU and guaranteeing economic and social sustainability*'.[4] This increased the perception of Spaniards that decisions were being taken elsewhere, not by their democratically elected representatives, which goes in line with Mair's idea that global markets and international institutions have limited the power of national institutions (Mair 2009, 2013).

[4] https://app.congreso.es/consti/constitucion/reforma/segunda_reforma.htm

Among the numerous protests in Spain, the 15-M could be considered the most relevant one. In March, a manifesto was published under the slogan 'Real Democracy Now!', and a demonstration was called in for the 15th of May. Protesters camped in different cities, especially in Madrid, and the so-called '*Indignados Movement*' or '*15-M movement*' was born. Protests continued in Spain, not only as a reaction to the austerity measures, but also against the system, politicians, and the main political parties, especially after the constitutional reform (Orriols and Cordero 2016).

Corruption was one of the main problems for Spaniards in that moment of crisis, and there was a crisis of representation (some of the slogans of protestors were 'Real democracy now!', or 'They do not represent us') (Anduiza, Cristancho, and Sabucedo 2014). The party in government (PP), involved in cases of corruption such as the Gürtel case, did not help in palliating the political discredit, and neither did the head of the State.

Juan Carlos I, the monarch appointed by the dictator Francisco Franco, broke a hip while hunting elephants in Botswana in 2012 with his friend Corinna Larsen (while the Spanish risk premium was at its historical maximum). His son-in-law, Iñaki Urdangarín, Duke of Palma, was accused of corruption in 2011, and her daughter, Princess Cristina (Duchess of Palma), was also accused in the same legal case (caso Nóos) in 2013, events that led to the abdication of the king in 2014.

The political crisis could be anticipated in the 2011 general elections, with minority parties increasing their electoral support, and three new parties entering Congress (Martín and Urquizu-Sancho 2012). However, it was during the period 2011-2015 —with the People's Party in government— when different parties were created (for example, Podemos, Vox, or the Partido X). Some of this new generation of parties ran in the 2014 European Elections, and Podemos and Ciudadanos (the latter founded in 2006) achieved their first MEPs. But it was in 2015 when the national political system trembled.

At the local and regional level, a bunch of new candidatures close to Podemos appeared, achieving the government of different institutions such as the municipalities of Madrid, Barcelona, València, or Zaragoza, among others. However, it was in the 2015 general elections in which Podemos (and their satellite candidatures) and Ciudadanos, obtained 69 and 40 MPs, respectively, shacking the system at the national level.

Spaniards voted in 2015 for a fragmented Parliament, a Congress which was not able to deliver a majority for any candidate, and elections had to be repeated. After the 2016 elections, the PP was the only big party which increased its seats in Parliament. The PSOE entered a crisis, as a sector of the party preferred abstaining in Mariano Rajoy's

investiture voting than approaching Podemos and nationalist parties. This crisis indeed resulted in the abstention of part of the PSOE, and the resignation of Pedro Sánchez as Secretary General of the PSOE and as Member of Parliament.

However, as a result of the primaries in the PSOE, Sánchez came back as leader of the party. The next time he would sit in Parliament would be in 2018, in a no-confidence vote against Mariano Rajoy, as a response to the Gürtel judgement, in which the PP was convicted of benefiting from corruption. With the PSOE in government, Spaniards were called again to the polls in 2019, for the first time after the Catalan bid for independence, which included massive demonstrations, protests, a referendum for independence deemed illegal by the Spanish government and judiciary and which resulted in the suspension of the Catalan self-government by the Spanish executive.

In the 2019 national elections, the political scenario was also fragmented: the socialist party won the elections with 123 seats; the PP got 66 MPs, and Ciudadanos and Podemos got 57 and 42, respectively. The novelty in those elections was the irruption in Parliament of a populist radical right party, Vox, with 24 seats. Upon the impossibility of appointing a Prime Minister, elections were repeated.

The second elections of 2019 left two critical changes in Parliament: Ciudadanos collapsed, getting only 10 seats, and Vox increased its support, obtaining 52. Nevertheless, the most important consequence of those elections is that PSOE and Podemos reached an agreement for forming a coalition government. This was the first time since the restoration of democracy in which the national government was composed of more than one party.

After the local and regional elections held in 2023, in which the left lost important quotas of institutional power, Pedro Sánchez announced national elections for July. Nonetheless, Spain was going to vote in very different circumstances than it did years before. Ciudadanos, one of the parties of the new generation, did not contest elections. Podemos had new faces, with most of its founders having abandoned active politics, and the party was running the 2023 elections under the umbrella of a new one: Sumar. The PP had a new candidate, the former President of Galiza (Alberto Núñez Feijóo), who replaced Pablo Casado (Rajoy's successor) after an internal crisis in the party. The scenario after the 2023 national elections is again fragmented, but as this exceeds the period captured by the POLAT panel, I leave for others to write about it.

Measuring populist attitudes

As mentioned before, for tracking the evolution of populist attitudes, I use Akkerman and colleagues' measurement of populism (the measurement that is going to be used throughout the thesis) (Akkerman, Mudde, and Zaslove 2014). Remember that populist attitudes are captured by the measurement of six different items which capture the degree of agreement or disagreement of individuals with the core elements of populism. Respondents use a 7-point Likert scale running from 1 (absolutely disagree) to 7 (absolutely agree), and all six values are then added. Basic computations are made for then recoding the variable to range between 0 and 10, from no-populist attitudes to the highest level of populism, respectively.

However, before moving any further, I will briefly comment on the different measurements of populist attitudes —even though I refer the reader to previous literature for empirical comparisons of different populist attitudes scales (Castanho Silva et al. 2019)—.

Beyond Akkerman et al.'s measure of populist attitudes (Akkerman, Mudde, and Zaslove 2014), other instruments have been developed to capture the degree of populism of individuals. For instance, Akkerman and colleagues build upon three earlier measurements of populist attitudes (Elchardus and Spruyt 2012; Hawkins, Riding, and Mudde 2012; Stanley 2011), as those previous attempts did not fully capture populism —focusing only on anti-establishment attitudes (Elchardus and Spruyt 2012)—, or were not able to explain support for populist parties due to conceptual and contextual reasons (Stanley 2011).

Additionally, with the rise of research focusing on the individual level, more instruments were developed in the last years to capture populist attitudes. Hence, while Akkerman, Mudde and Zaslove's measure is still the most used among scholars (Castanho Silva et al. 2019, 13), their scale has been considered to have certain drawbacks, leading scholars to propose new measures of populist attitudes.

Hence, Akkerman, Mudde, and Zaslove's (2014) measure of populism appears to perform poorly in multi-country studies (Castanho Silva et al. 2019, 13), a limitation that does not appear to affect this thesis —as it only focuses on the case of Spain—. However, their scale has been found to have a strong internal coherence —together with Schulz et al.'s (2018) and Castanho et al.'s (2018)—, which indicates the scale measures populism at the individual level and excludes other constructs the scale is not intended to measure.

Following Castanho et al.'s empirical comparison of seven populist attitudes scales —and only considering the three scales which appear to fully capture populism at the individual level—, Akkerman et al.'s measure also presents certain benefits compared to those of Schulz et al. and Castanho and colleagues. The former (Schulz et al. 2018) appears to have less cross-national validity than Akkerman et al.'s, and the latter (Castanho Silva et al. 2018) does not appear to predict support for populist parties, which leads this scale to have lower levels of external validity than that used throughout this dissertation.

It should be noted that Castanho and colleagues' measure of populist attitudes is the only one of these three that is found to capture 'more than mere anti-elitism' (Castanho Silva et al. 2019, 10). However, the wording of their proposed indicators only includes 'the government', 'government officials' and 'politicians' (Castanho Silva et al. 2018). Therefore, while their measure of populist attitudes empirically appears to capture more than anti-elitism, it does not seem this is due to their measure's comprehensiveness of the elite.

Further research should pay attention to this fundamental characteristic of populism when attempting to measure populism at the individual level. While all populist attitudes scales effectively refer to 'the people', only some introduce broad 'empty signifiers' that refer to 'the elite', and not to politicians in particular (S. Hobolt et al. 2016; Schulz et al. 2018; Stanley 2011). While this may be particularly difficult due to the contextual disparities of populism and the different conceptualizations of the elite, this is a matter of utmost importance, as those other groups —beyond politicians— that can pertain to the elite can also influence levels of populism among individuals.

To sum up, scholars have endeavoured in recent years to develop instruments to capture and reliably measure populism at the individual level. This led to the development of various measures of populist attitudes, although it is true that the vast majority share basic characteristics derived from the conceptualization of populism in line with the ideational approach. This thesis relies on Akkerman and colleagues' measure of populist attitudes (Akkerman, Mudde, and Zaslove 2014), as the main drawbacks of this measure do not appear to compromise the present dissertation.

The times they are a-changin'

I start by presenting the general evolution of the average level of populist attitudes from 2014 (wave 6) to 2023 (wave 15), to then show the evolution of populist attitudes in the same period by different variables. According to Figure 2.1, the first conclusion that can be extracted is that on a scale ranging from 0 to 10, the average degree of populist attitudes among the citizenry is quite high, consistently lying above 6.2 points. Accordingly, the first picture of populism portrays that populist attitudes are quite widespread among the general population in Spain, which goes in accordance with the findings of Akkerman, Mudde, and Zaslove (Akkerman, Mudde, and Zaslove 2014).

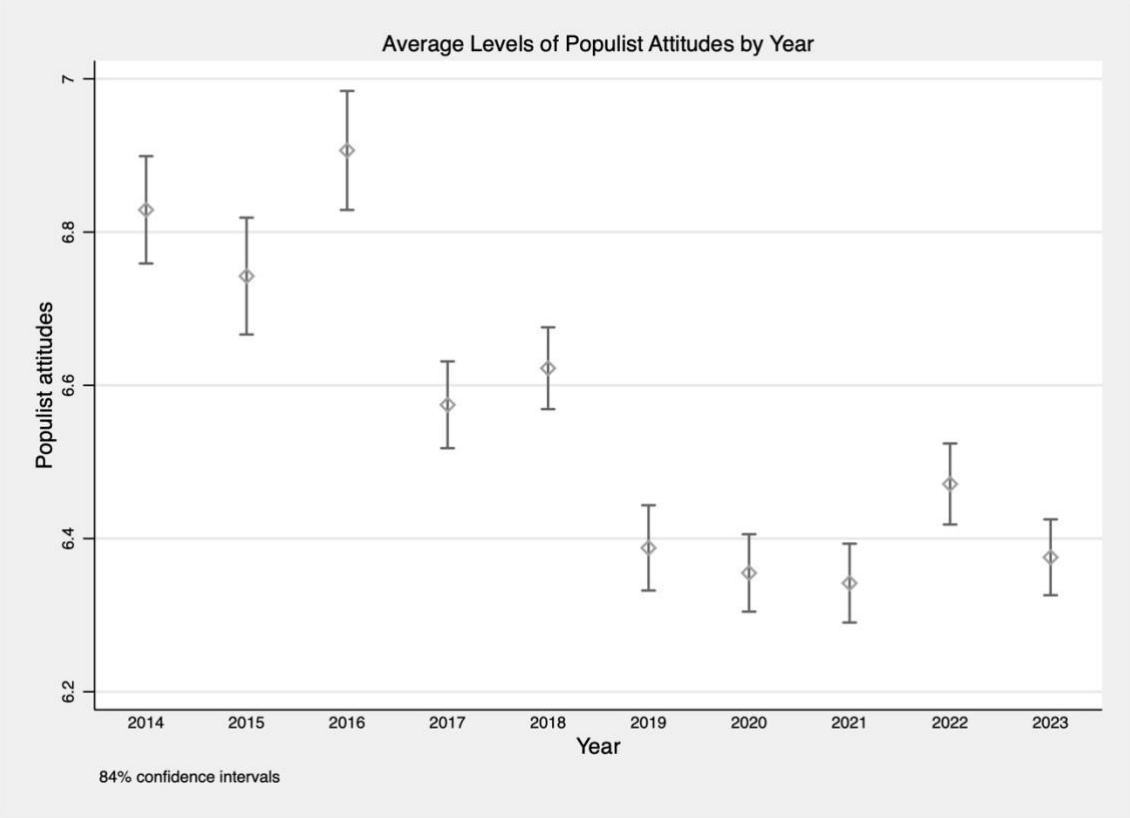
However, it can also be argued, according to the evolution of the average of populist attitudes, that populism at the individual level can fluctuate. In the first three waves captured by the POLAT survey, populist attitudes reached their highest level in ten years. Those waves correspond to the years 2014-2016, in which new political parties were emerging, as I have exposed before. Therefore, understanding the general discontent with the two main parties (PSOE and PP), and with the system in general (remember, for example, the king resigned in June 2014), together with the rise of new parties and the number of electoral campaigns, could explain that during this period populism was that high.

However, as I argue elsewhere in the thesis, while the literature on populism has usually focused on the rise of populism, data on the evolution of populist attitudes portrays that populist attitudes are also subject to decline. In this case, populist attitudes substantially declined in 2017 and 2019.

Different factors could explain the first decrease, from the diminution of the political intensity, without electoral campaigns at the national level, to the amelioration of both symbolic and substantive representation, with more parties and, in consequence, ideological positions, being represented in Congress. However, in 2019, with the socialist party in government and Spain immersed in electoral campaigns, populist attitudes shrunk again. Therefore, the presence or absence of electoral campaigns does not seem to be a necessary nor sufficient condition for populist attitudes to fluctuate. Consequently, it could be argued the institutionalization of new parties, whose alleged purpose was to renovate the political system, could have an impact on individuals' levels of populism, bringing back into politics those who previously felt excluded (Hawkins, Rovira

Kaltwasser, and Andreadis 2018; Huber and Ruth 2017; Kriesi 2014; Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2012b).

Figure 2.1. Evolution of Populist Attitudes by Wave (84% CIs) [5]



Finally, from 2019 onwards, populist attitudes are rather stable among the sample, with a peak in 2022, the year in which regional elections in Andalucía and Castilla y León took place. In the first, the PP won with an absolute majority, but the latter led Vox to participate in its first government in the country. However, it is important to note that in 2022 the PP plunged into crisis because of the disputes between the president of the party,

[5] Technical note. The reader can realise the confidence intervals are set at the 84% instead of the commonly used 95%. Two different reasons inform this decision. The first, is that when comparing large samples, the discrepancies between both parameters are not significant (see, for example (Amrhein, Greenland, and McShane 2019; Payton, Greenstone, and Schenker 2003; Wasserstein, Schirm, and Lazar 2019)). The second, and given the purpose of this chapter, 84% confidence intervals help for having a clearer picture of each graph and of the evolution of the average levels of populist attitudes.

Pablo Casado, and the president of the Autonomous Region of Madrid, Isabel Díaz Ayuso.

In February, the national party was accused of spying on Ayuso and her network in relationship to public contracts awarded during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic to Ayuso's brother. To put it simply, Casado accused Ayuso of influence peddling; Ayuso accused Casado and his team of disloyalty, and asked for changes in the party; her sympathizers concentrated around the PP headquarters to support her and demand the resignation of Casado; Ayuso's brother was investigated by the Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office; and Casado's support among members of the PP faded away, leading to a congress in the PP in which Casado was replaced by Feijóo.

Therefore, one might speculate that this situation could be interpreted by citizens as a struggle for political power, as well as another example of corruption. Continuing with the speculation, the impression citizens could get from the 'masks case' is that when they were sticking to strict measures for fighting the pandemic, others (connected to the elite) were making money for being who they are.

In sum, populism at the individual level has generally decreased in Spain since the first years the POLAT panel captures, only increasing between 2014 and 2016. Since then, new parties appeared, some of them being populists —such as Podemos, on the left of the ideological spectrum (Vampa 2020; Zarzalejos 2016), and Vox, which can be defined as a populist radical right party (Ferreira 2019)—. Some of those new parties have disappeared or integrated into other political parties, and have been institutionalized, taking part in coalition governments. Is all this behind that decrease? Is that after the 2008 economic crisis a cycle of contention started (Tarrow 2011), which led at that point to a sporadic rise of populist attitudes?

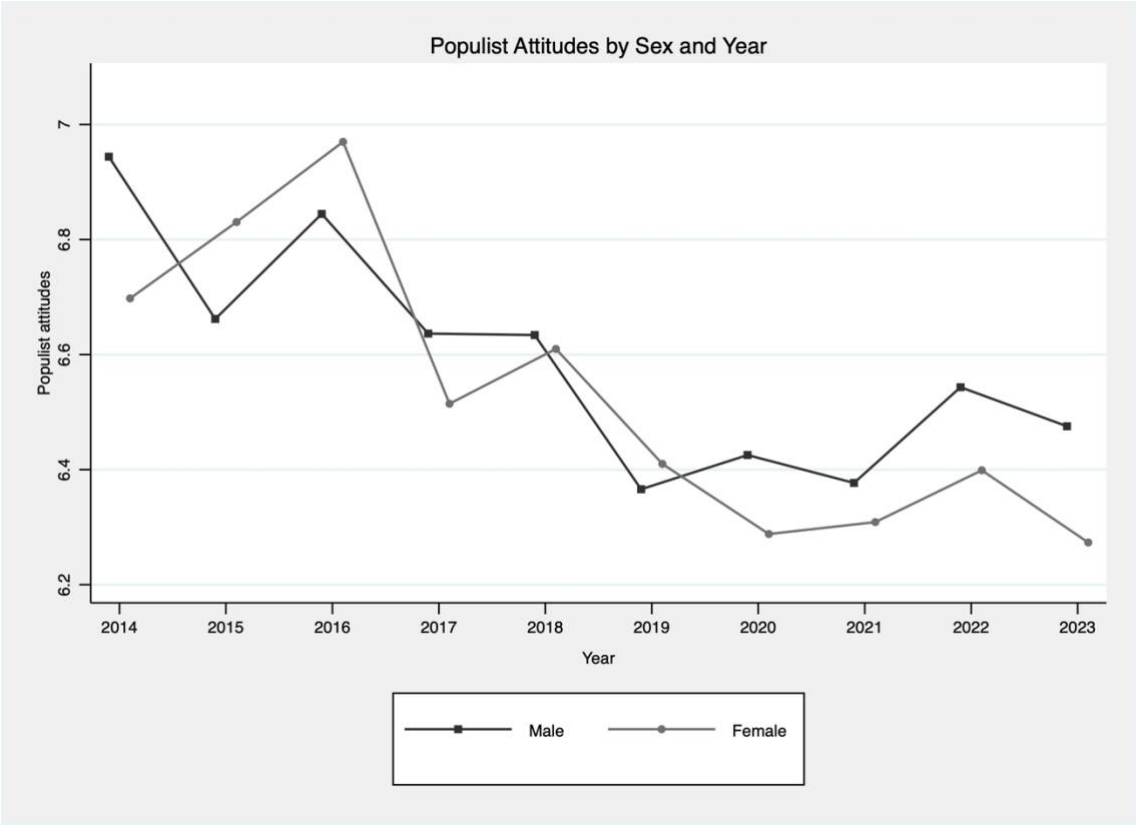
As I have argued, the intention of this section is not to explain why populist attitudes changed as they did. Contrarily, I consider putting populist attitudes in context can help understand them, their evolution, and the contextual factors that may be worth investigating for explaining them in further research. In sum, I believe scholars on populism should advocate for more research on the (in)stability of populism at the individual level, transcending research on populist voting.

Hence, in Figure 2.1, we have captured the general evolution of populist attitudes in Spain during the last ten years. However, to avoid having a farsighted vision of the evolution of populism at the individual level, I also include graphs that present the evolution of populist attitudes over the last ten years dividing the analysis by different

groups of certain variables of interest. These graphs are not analysed in depth, as the analysis of many graphs could be redundant, referring throughout them to the same events that have been addressed in the previous pages. Contrarily, I will only provide a few insights about each graph, assuming the audience of this chapter can easily follow the graphical representations.

Finally, the titles and subtitles in the graphs were designed to be as intuitive as possible. However, I invite the readers to check the appendix to this chapter, in which the wording of the different questions included in the survey is provided.

Figure 2.2. Evolution of Populist Attitudes by Sex and Year

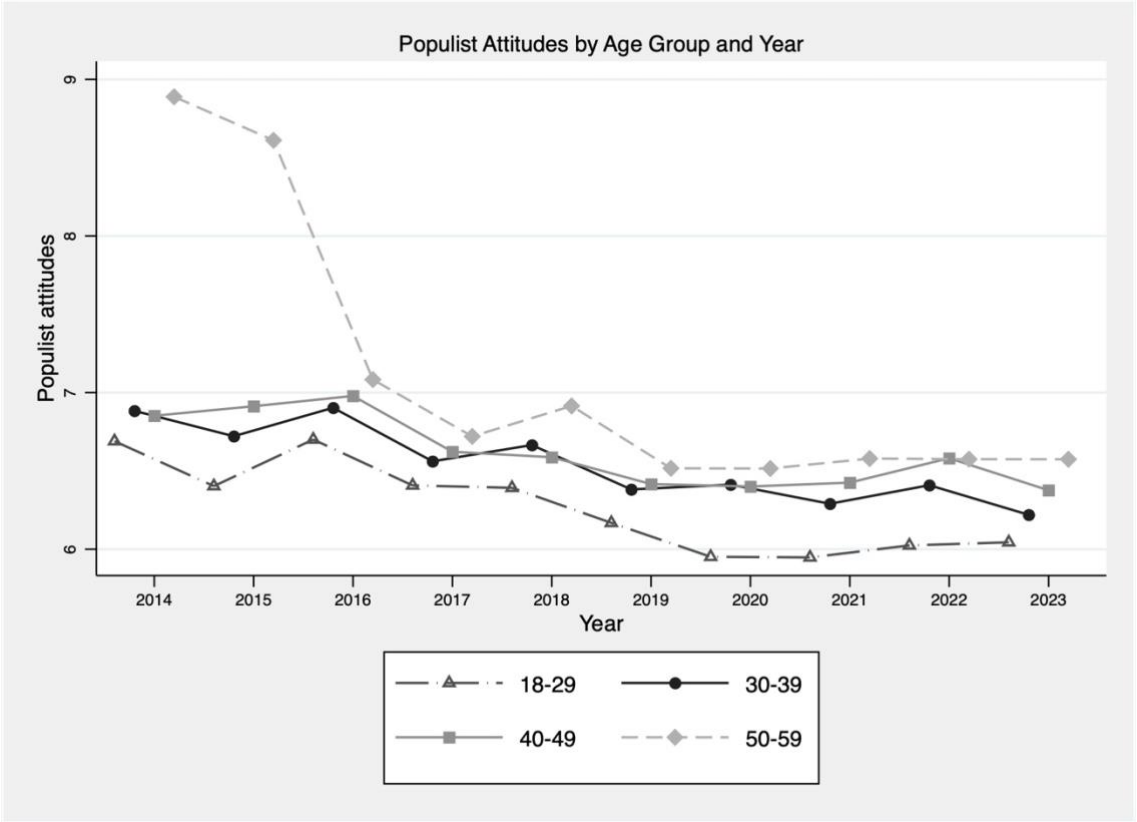


Focusing on the evolution of populist attitudes by sex, small differences can be observed between the two groups. Focusing on the category 'Female', the three first years of data report a consistent increase in the average level of populist attitudes among females (from 2014 to 2016), declining in 2017. After a slight increase in 2018 —the first year in which the global wave of feminism hit Spain, with the first multitudinous demonstration and a feminist strike (Anduiza and Rico 2022, 6)—, populism decreased again in 2019. After that, a period of certain stability started, with the lowest levels of populist attitudes in the ten years of data captured by the POLAT panel.

The descriptive evidence for the 'Male' category reports, however, a different evolution of populist attitudes among this group. For males, populist attitudes peaked in 2014, decreasing in 2015 and, after a peak in 2016, keeping a rather constant level until 2018. As for females, there was a significant decrease in 2019, but this reduction was not constant over the years. On the contrary, populist attitudes increased in 2020, staying since then above the average levels of populist attitudes among females.

Are females and males intrinsically different in terms of their populist attitudes, or could part of these differences reflect the cultural backlash hypothesis, specifically on an overlooked issue: the role of gender equality (see, for example, Anduiza & Rico, 2022; Off, 2023a, 2023b)? While the response to the first question could be affirmative, it would be naïve to disregard the second option, especially after 2018, when feminism became an important issue in Spanish political life, and 2019, when Vox gained its first seats in a regional parliament. However, before those years some differences already existed. Further research should continue exploring the relationship between gender and populist attitudes, especially integrating this research into the cultural backlash research agenda, focusing on attitudes towards gender equality or feminism.

Figure 2.3. Evolution of Populist Attitudes by Age Group and Year



Moving now to Figure 2.3, it can be observed that there is a general slight and parallel decrease in populist attitudes among all age groups. However, it is interesting that the youngest are those who systematically hold lower levels of populist attitudes, and those who experienced the highest decrease since 2016 —the highest decrease occurs among the oldest category, but this might be due to the limited presence of respondents older than 50 in the first waves of the panel survey—. This appears to be contradictory with Spain's recent history: around the 15M movement, and even before, groups such *Juventud Sin Futuro* (Youth Without Future) appeared, denouncing the precarity the youngsters were suffering in the country — remember the unemployment rate among those under 25 raised above the 56% in 2013[6]—.

In this context, it is rather eye-catching the fact that those in older cohorts appear to hold higher levels of populist attitudes. But more striking is the fact that populist attitudes appear to vary less across time as age increases. This could be speaking about the role of individuals' socialization and politicization in shaping populist attitudes, which could also derive in the conclusion that when individuals acquire a certain set of values, they do not change much.

Moving to the evolution of populist attitudes by the level of education of individuals (Figure 2.4), it can be clearly seen that those with primary education held higher levels of populist attitudes in the first years of study. However, the decrease in the average value of populist attitudes is rather consistent, in opposition to the other two groups, which show less consistent patterns.

Those with tertiary education appear to hold lower levels of populist attitudes than those with secondary and primary education, except for 2014 and, to a lower extent, 2022. Again, this descriptive evidence contrasts with the general idea one could have about the Spanish political system. According to data from the CIS (the Spanish Centre for Sociological Research), new parties (particularly Ciudadanos and Podemos) had among their electorates the highest rates of individuals with university degrees[7], which points to the idea that supporting a populist party does not implicitly entail holding higher levels of populist attitudes.

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[6] https://www.newtral.es/jovenes-situacion-espana-mercado-laboral/20230812/

[7] https://www.eldiario.es/politica/sexo-religion-edad-estudios-cambiado-perfil-votante-cis_1_8546042.html
https://elpais.com/politica/2019/07/30/actualidad/1564499209_543441.html

Figure 2.4. Evolution of Populist Attitudes by Educational Level and Year

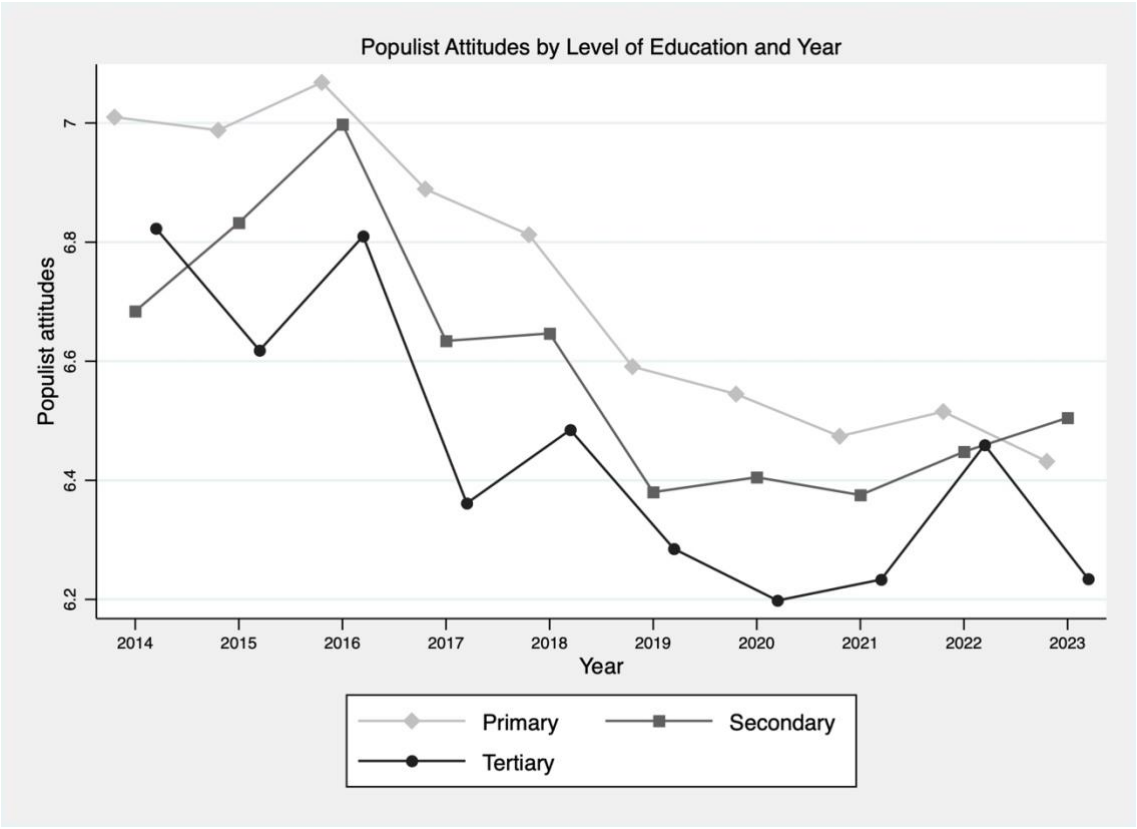


Figure 2.5. Evolution of Populist Attitudes by Income and Year

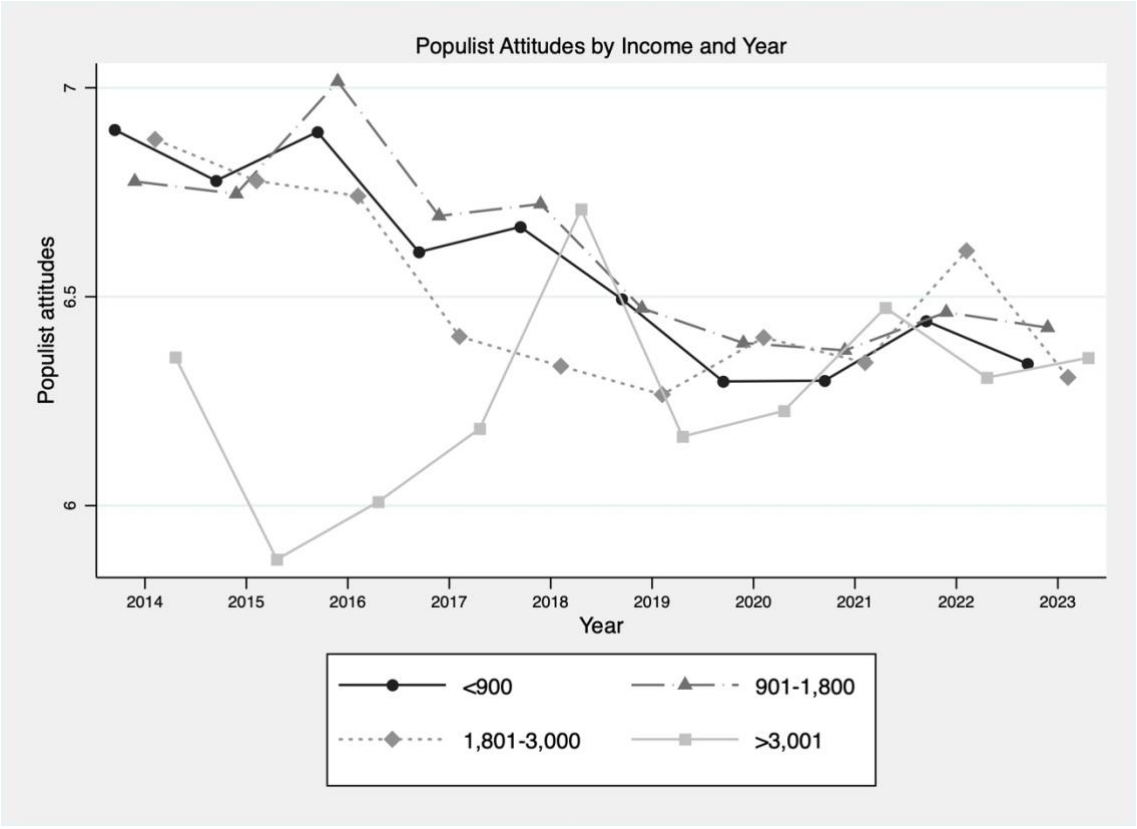
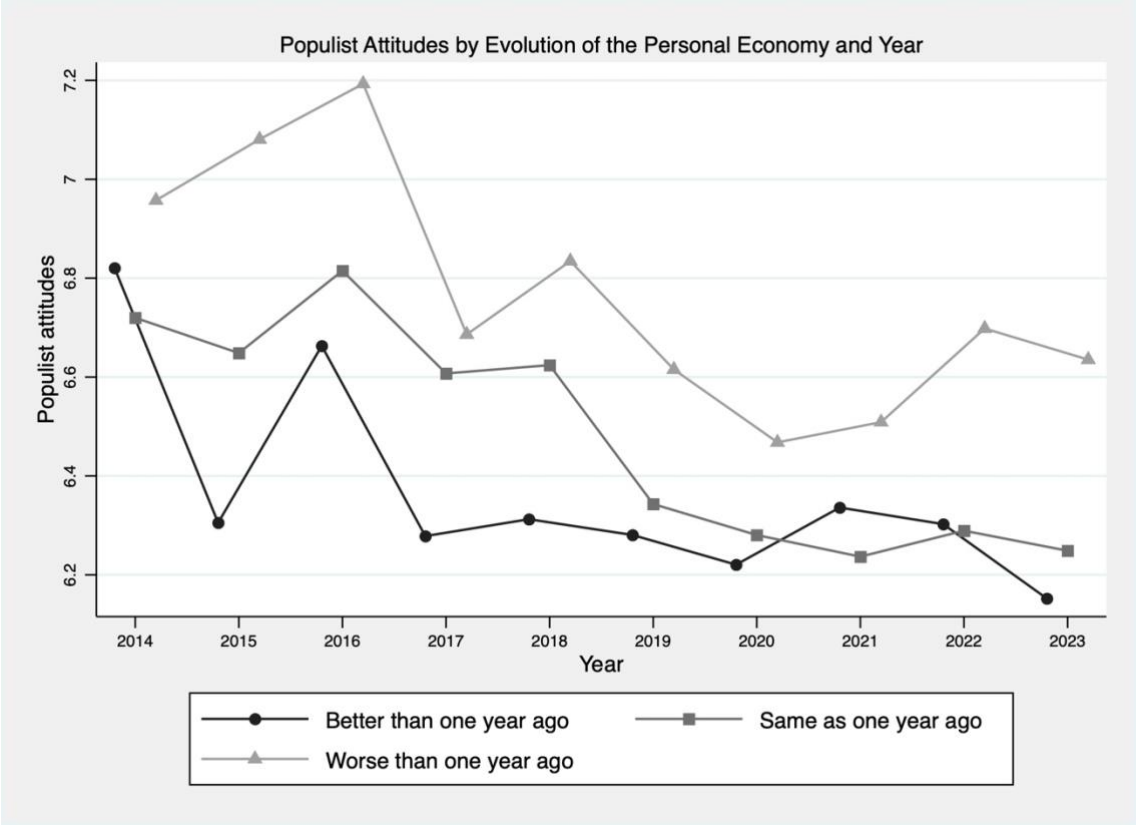


Figure 2.5 reports the evolution of populist attitudes by four different categories of objective measures of personal income. As can be seen, differences are higher across time than between the diverse categories. Thus, populist attitudes appear to generally decrease, even though this evolution is not consistent in all years. The only category which deserves further explanation is the one that includes those more well-off in the sample: while the level of populist attitudes of the richest category was significantly lower in the first four years covered by the POLAT panel, its increase in 2018 —the year in which there was a change in government in Spain— placed them closer to the other categories of personal income.

Figure 2.6. Evolution of Populist Attitudes by the Perception of the evolution of own economic situation and Year

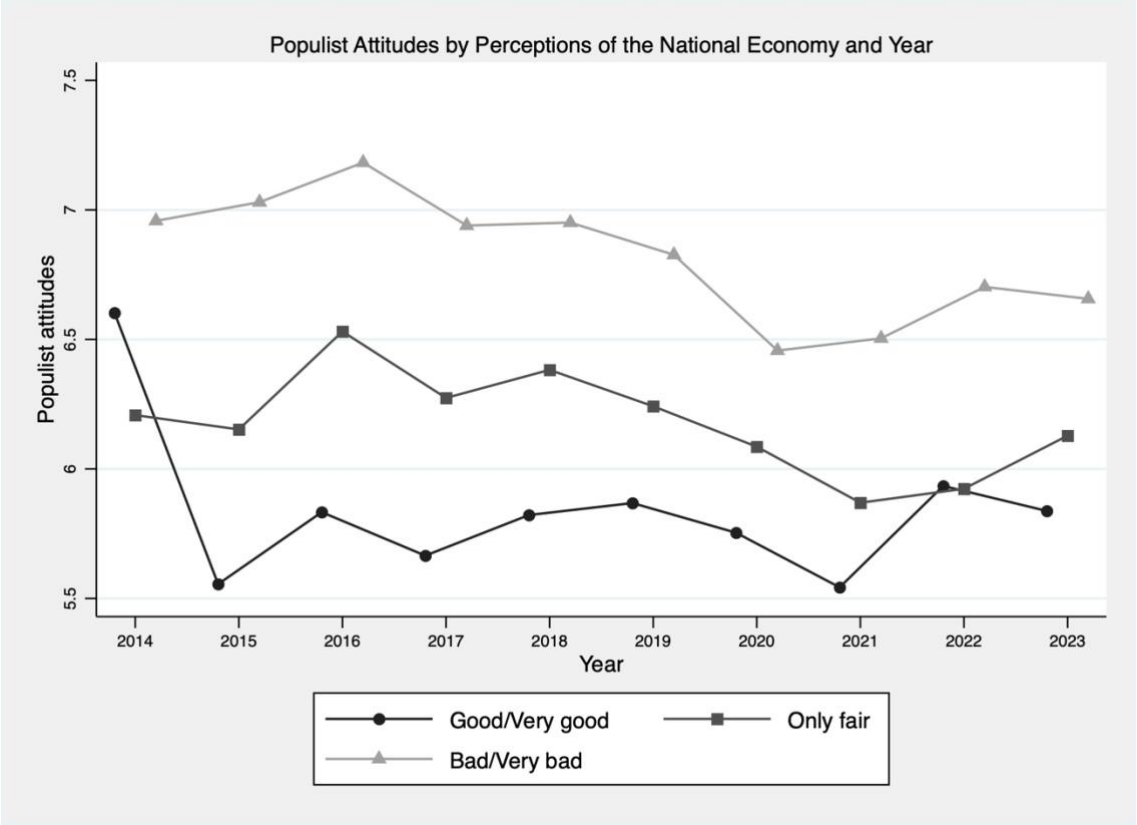


But objective indicators of the economic situation, as argued before, do not always explain populism. Accordingly, Figure 2.6 includes the subjective perception of individuals about the evolution of their economic situation (compared with the previous year). Figure 2.6 reports a different picture from that depicted in Figure 2.5. Those who perceive their economic situation improved when compared to the previous year do not present great differences across time, particularly since 2017. Those who consider their economic situation to be the same as the year before present two clear clusters with little

within-variation. Thus, until 2018 the average level of populist attitudes was systematically above 6.5, dropping in 2019 and keeping a stable value. Finally, those who consider they are in a worse situation than one year earlier report higher levels of populist attitudes than the other two categories, especially since 2019.

Accordingly, this speaks about the alleged connection between relative deprivation, economic anxiety —and other economic factors—, and populism. Those who perceive their economic conditions to deteriorate hold systematically higher levels of populist attitudes than those who perceive no change or a positive evolution in their economic situation. However, the level of populist attitudes among those who perceive their situation to be worse has also decreased since the first waves of the survey, which could be related to contextual factors such as the supply of new political parties.

Figure 2.7. Evolution of Populist Attitudes by Perception of the National Economy and Year



If we move to Figure 2.7, which reports the perception of the national economy, relatively similar conclusions can be drawn as in Figure 2.6. Those who consider the economy is doing bad or very bad show higher average levels of populist attitudes than the other two categories, particularly those who think the economy is doing well. Therefore, these three last figures speak of the differences in populist attitudes when

comparing three different measures of the situation of the economy, by comparing objective personal situations, and perceptions of own's situation and the country's.

Figure 2.8. Evolution of Populist Attitudes by Ideology and Year

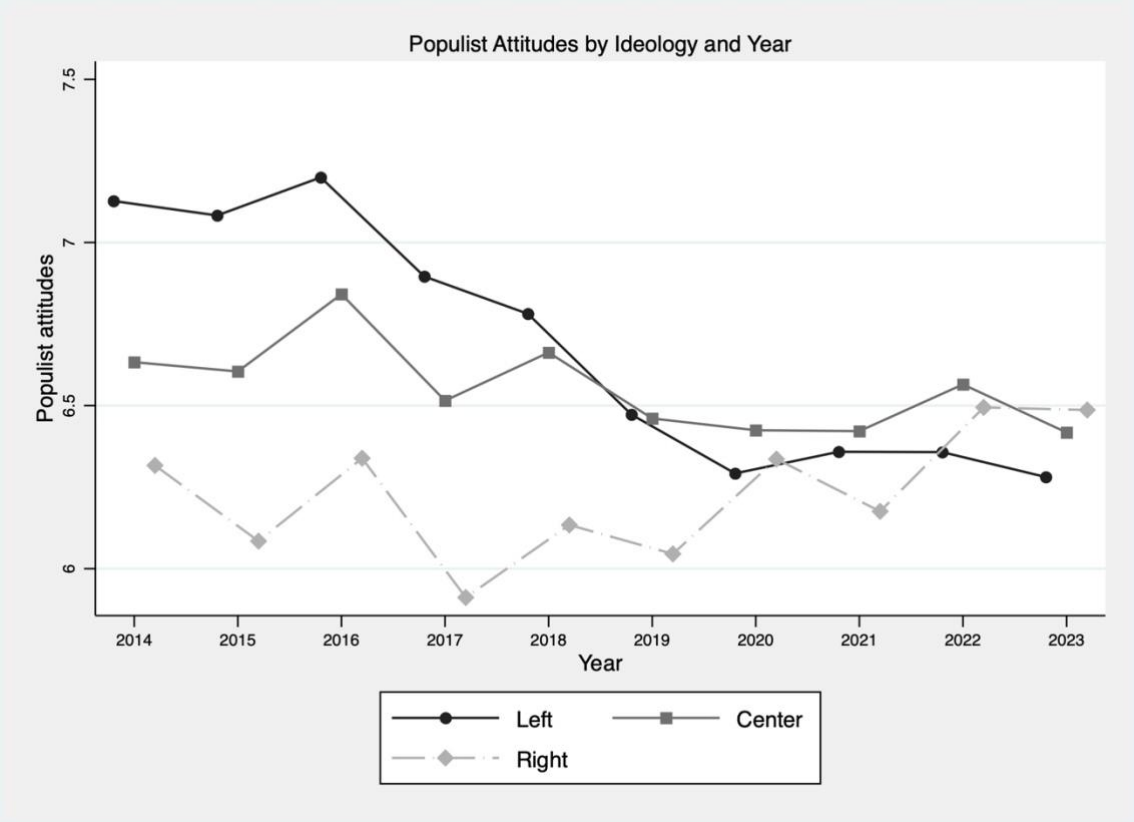


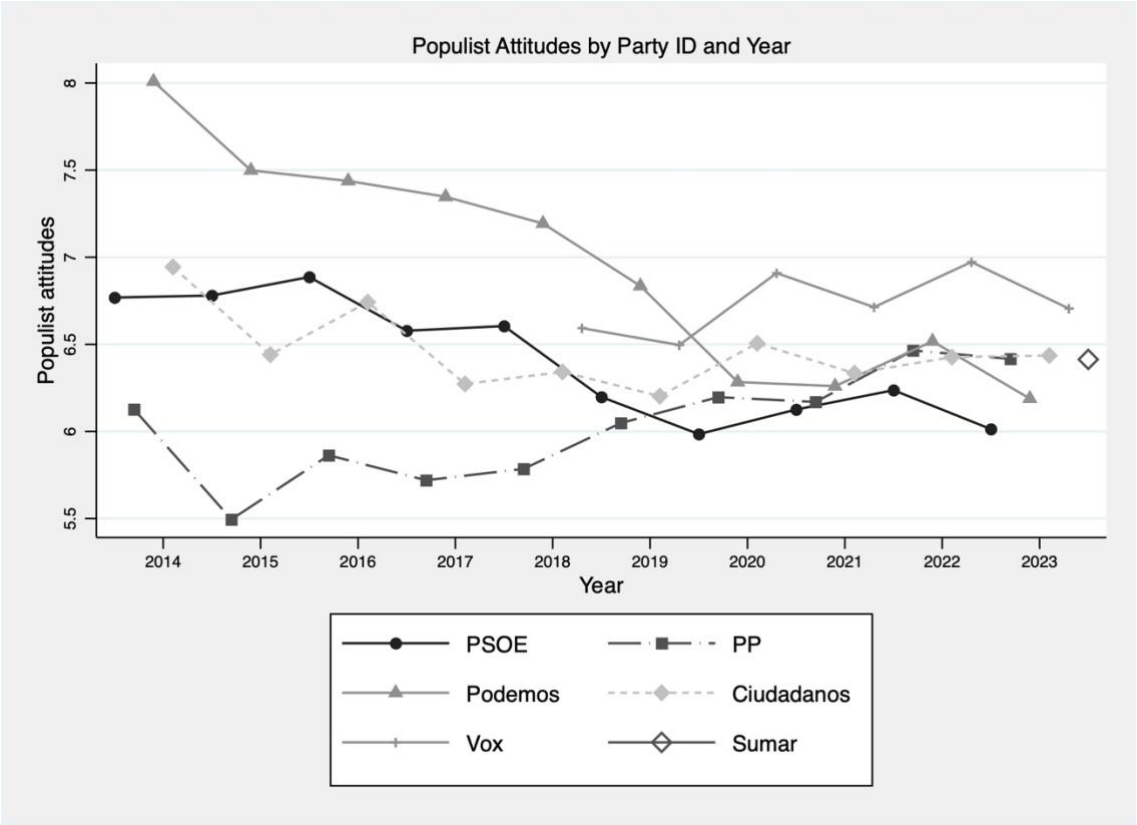
Figure 2.8 presents the evolution of populist attitudes by the ideological position of respondents. On the one hand, this Figure portrays that those on the left of the ideological spectrum tended to have higher levels of populist attitudes than their counterparts in the other two categories. However, after three years of stability, the average levels of populist attitudes among leftists started to shrink in 2017, leading this category to match the levels of populist attitudes of centrists in 2019 (and being very close already one year before). Additionally, the level of populist attitudes of leftists continued to decrease in 2020, being in 2023 the lowest level of populism among all three categories —note that there was a government change in 2018, in which the PSOE first, and afterwards also Podemos, entered national government—.

On the other hand, and as a smoothing mirror image, those on the right of the ideological axis have experienced an increase in their levels of populist attitudes. While rightists held the lowest levels of populist attitudes until 2019, after 2020 —the first wave after the entrance of Podemos into government— their populism started to increase,

reporting in 2023 the highest level of populism when compared to centrists and leftists. In conclusion, it appears populist attitudes fluctuate as contextual factors —in this case, the party or parties in government— change.

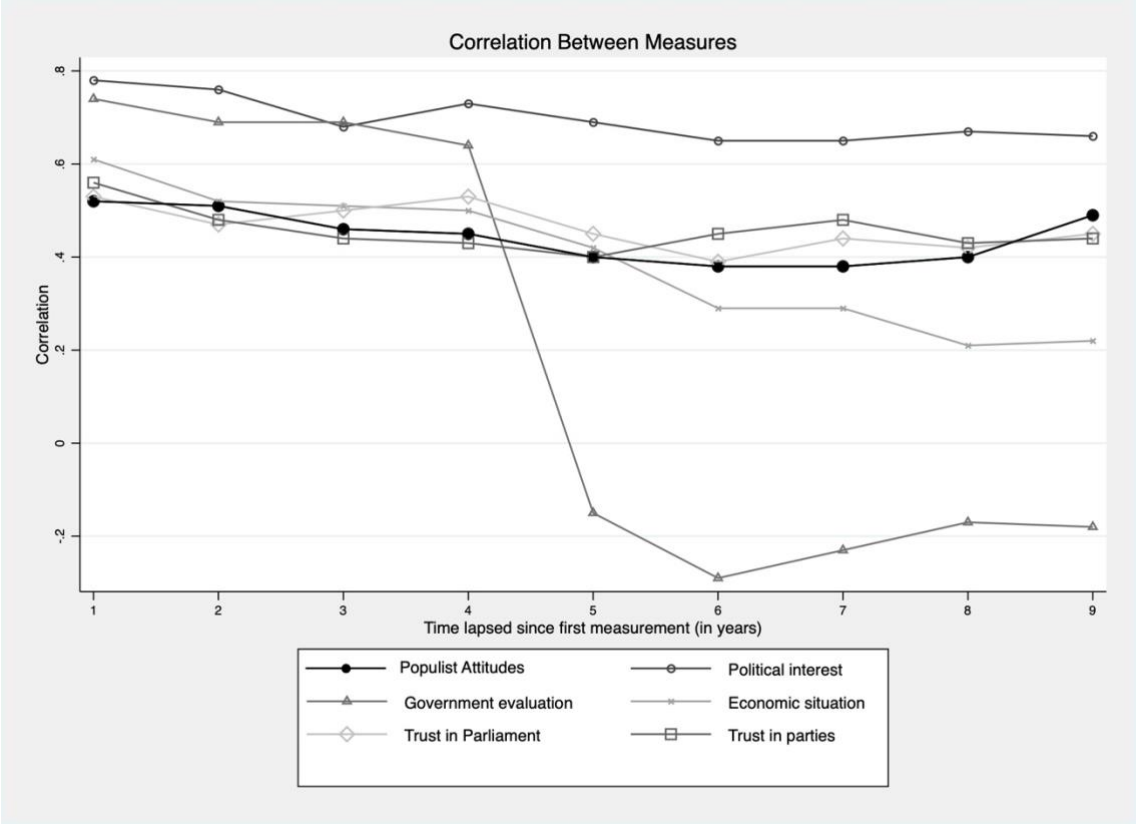
The idea that the ideological distance between individuals and government has to do with populism is reinforced in Figure 2.9, which reports the evolution of the average levels of populist attitudes by the main national parties in Spain. The first idea that can be extracted from this Figure has to do with the funnel-shaped evolution of populist attitudes. As it can be observed, those identifying with Podemos have experienced an extraordinary decrease in their levels of populist attitudes, especially after this party took part in the coalition government. Those identifying with the socialist party (PSOE) have also experienced a decrease, even though they departed from lower levels of populist attitudes than those identifying with new parties (Podemos and Ciudadanos). On the contrary, those supporting the People's Party followed the opposite pattern, increasing their levels of populist attitudes, and so did those supporting the populist radical right party Vox.

Figure 2.9. Evolution of Populist Attitudes by Party ID and Year



According to the evolution of populist attitudes by the different parties, one could ask whether institutions have *tamed* the electorate of the populist left parties or if this is just the natural evolution of cycles of contention. While it could be argued that this could have to do with the rapprochement between 'the people' and 'the elite' for the electorate on the left, especially of Podemos —and the symmetrical distancing for those on the right—, this deserves further exploration, as it speaks about the nature and (in)stability of populism among the citizenry.

Figure 2.10. Correlation between different variables over time



Up until this point, we have explored the evolution of the average levels of populist attitudes by different groups. While the different trends at the macro level can inform about the stability of populist attitudes, Figure 2.10 delves deeper into this issue, comparing the stability of populist attitudes with other variables such as political interest or trust in institutions.

Hence, Figure 2.10 depicts the correlation between the first and subsequent measures of the variables of interest. Accordingly, if our variables of interest were to be stable, we would expect constant values near 1. However, the variable which could be

considered to be more stable —or closer to being a trait, in terms of Schimpf and colleagues (Schimpf, Wuttke, and Schoen 2023)— is political interest. On the contrary, the evaluation of the government is the less stable variable, which should not come as a surprise, especially after the government change.

But, where do populist attitudes lie in this continuum between 'trait' and 'widely fluctuating'? Populist attitudes, similar to the variables of trust and evaluation of the economic situation, appear to be highly fluctuating, with values ranging between .38 and .52. Hence, this evidence contradicts that presented by Schimpf and colleagues, who found correlations of populist attitudes over time above .59 points —reaching .71 in the correlation between populist attitudes between their first waves, conducted with only a few months of difference— (Schimpf, Wuttke, and Schoen 2023, 7). In this case, populist attitudes do not correlate with subsequent measures above .52 points, which indicates the degree of variability of populist attitudes at the individual level over time.

However, these differences in the degree of instability of populist attitudes could be due to two different factors. First, due to the different approaches for capturing populist attitudes —Schimpf et al. resort to a different measurement of populist attitudes than the one followed in this dissertation (Schulz et al. 2018)—, which could explain the variability of the results. Second, contextual reasons may affect the instability of populist attitudes in Spain compared to Germany, a country which did not face such a tumultuous political, social, and economic evolution. Nevertheless, further research should fully address the (in)stability of populist attitudes over time in different contexts, as contextual factors appear to influence the change of populism among individuals.

Conclusion

The political panorama has appreciably changed in Spain over the last ten years, along with the social and economic situation. I aimed to provide a general idea of how the main circumstances evolved, particularly regarding events that could be —a priori— related to populism, both at the party and individual level.

Populist attitudes, as it has been presented, have also fluctuated, which, in the first instance, speaks of the malleable character of populist attitudes. However, research should explore more populist attitudes as the dependent variable, considering certain evidence presented in this section. For instance, it has been shown that populist attitudes tend to be more stable among those in older cohorts, while they appear to fluctuate more

among the youngest. Do populist attitudes stabilize throughout one's life? Which type of events shape one's levels of populist attitudes? These are just some examples of questions whose responses could help researchers understand better populist attitudes in particular and populism in general.

The evolution of the average levels of populist attitudes by party identification has also yielded interesting insights. The most striking evolution is that of Podemos' sympathisers, with a notable decrease in their average levels of populist attitudes. Those who identify with the PSOE also decrease their levels of populist attitudes over time, in opposition to the trend followed by those who identify with right-wing parties.

Finally, this chapter has also explored the stability of populist attitudes within individuals over time, finding a higher degree of volatility than previous research (Schimpf, Wuttke, and Schoen 2023). While we have mentioned the possibility that this divergence is explained by contextual factors or by the use of different measures of populist attitudes, further research should address this issue, as it can be essential for explaining the rise of populist parties or movements.

In sum, the circumstantial evidence presented throughout this chapter points towards the idea that populism appears, at least under certain circumstances, as something opportunistic, for distancing from the opponent when they are in power, neglecting their legitimacy for making decisions and for representing them. Incidentally, and to conclude, the evolution and the instability of populism lead me to remember Marías' sentence, as it appears it could be applied to populism: 'the "ism" is often like the "itis", like the inflammation; we all have an appendix, but it is best not to have appendicitis' —original in Spanish— (Marías 1978, 28).

Appendix 2

Original wording of the questions and translation into English

Figure 2.2 — Sex

¿Eres…? [*Are you…?*]

- Hombre [*Male*]
- Mujer [*Female*]

Figure 2.3 — Age

¿Cuántos años tienes? [*How old are you?*]

Figure 2.4 — Educational level

¿Cuál es el máximo nivel de estudios que has completado? [*Which is the maximun level of education you have completed?*]

1 Tengo menos de 5 años de escolarización [*I have les tan 5 years of schooling*]

2 Educación primaria de LOGSE [*Primary education*]

3 Educación General Básica (EGB) [*General basic education*]

4 Educación Secundaria Obligatoria (ESO) [*Secondary education*]

5 Formación Profesional de grado medio [*Middle grade vocational training*]

6 Bachillerato de LOGSE [*Baccalaureate*]

7 BUP/COU [*Baccalaureate*]

8 Formación Profesional de grado superior [*Upper grade vocational training*]

9 Diplomatura, arquitectura o ingeniería técnica [*Diploma, Technical architecture or engeneering*]

10 Licenciatura, arquitectura o ingeniería superior [*Bachelor's degree, upper architecture or engeneering*]

11 Estudios de Postgrado, máster o doctorado [*Postgraduate, master's or doctorate*]

Figure 2.5 — Income

Actualmente, y por todos los conceptos, ¿cuántos ingresos netos obtienes por término medio al mes? [*Currently, and for all concepts, how much net income do you earn on average per month?*]

[no respuesta permitida]

1 Menos o igual a 300 € [*Less or equal to 300€*]

2 De 301 a 600 €

3 De 601 a 900 €

4 De 901a 1.050 €

5 De 1051 a 1.200 €

6 De 1.201 a 1.500 €

7 De 1.501 a 1.800 €

8 De 1.801 a 2.400 €

9 De 2.401 a 3.000 €

10 De 3.001 a 4.500 €

11 De 4.501 a 6.000 €

12 Más de 6.000

Figure 2.6 — Evolution of personal Economy

¿Cómo calificarías tu situación económica personal en la actualidad? [*How would you define your current economic situation?*]

1 Mejor que hace un año [*Better than one year ago*]

2 Igual que hace un año [*Same as one year ago*]

3 Peor que hace un año [*Worse than one year ago*]

Figure 2.7 — Perception of the national economy

Pensando en la situación económica general de España, ¿cómo la calificarías? [*Thinking of the general economic situation of Spain, how would you define it?*]

1 Muy buena [*Very good*]

2 Buena [*Good*]

3 Regular [*Only fair*]

4 Mala [*Bad*]

5 Muy mala [*Very bad*]

Figure 2.8 — Ideology

Cuando se habla de política se utilizan normalmente las expresiones izquierda y derecha. ¿En qué casilla de la siguiente escala te colocarías tú? [*When speaking about politics, the expressions left and right are usually used. In which cell of the following scale do you place yourself?*]

Extrema izquierda [*Extreme left*] 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Extrema derecha [*Extreme right*]

Figure 2.9 — Party ID

¿Por cuál de los siguientes partidos sientes más simpatía o cuál consideras más cercano a tus propias ideas? [*For which of the following parties do you feel more sympathy or which one do you consider closer to your own ideas?*]

PP | PSOE | Podemos | Ciudadanos | Vox | Sumar

Chapter 3. More deprived and more populist, but more engaged? Exploring the role of populist attitudes on the relationship between changes in deprivation and political participation

Introduction

In the first two decades of the millennium, societies around the Globe faced two significant challenges, namely the Great Recession and the rise of populism. As governments implemented unpopular policies for mitigating the financial crisis, the citizenry faced great vulnerability, leading the number of protests (which were already rising in Europe since the beginning of the century) to skyrocket (Jiménez Sánchez 2011; Yagci 2017).

These events presented scholars with an opportunity to study changes in political behaviour, including the onset of new social and political movements. Some examples are the *Indignados* (Outraged) movement in Spain and other 'occupy movements' around the Globe; and political parties like Podemos, Syriza, the Five Star Movement, or Brothers of Italy, which have been labelled as populist (Rooduijn et al. 2019).

Hand in hand with these political changes, academic attention to populism increased —from about 1,500 publications between 2000 and 2009 to almost 6,500 from 2010 to 2019 (Brown and Mondon 2021)—. Also the use of the concepts 'populism' or 'populist' expanded enormously in the media, usually conceiving populism as detrimental to democracy and more generally negative connotations (Hatakka and Herkman 2022).

Hence, research on populism, the economic crisis, and political participation increased, but limited research has been conducted on the intersection of all three issues. This article aims to bring together literature on populism and on the resource-based theories of political participation, by focusing on the mobilization potential of populism. While the availability of resources has been considered to be a necessary condition for political participation (Rosenstone 1982; Solt 2008), empirical evidence also shows that certain economic shocks can lead to peaks of participation, and more specifically, of contentious politics (Kern, Marien, and Hooghe 2015; Yagci 2017).

In line with this, I argue populism can be a piece playing a role in this puzzle: in cases of economic deprivation, populism could act as a dam which keeps people in politics despite the lack of resources. The mobilization capacity of populism has served as an argument for those pundits who consider populism can be beneficial for democracies, as they pose it can include into politics excluded sectors of society, groups that otherwise would back away from the res publica. It is argued that the antagonistic view of populism of the pure people against the corrupt elite, and its predilection for people's sovereignty, could indeed have a mobilization potential, which could even palliate the negative effect of deprivation on political participation.

It is important to note that this article falls within the literature on populism at the individual level, by focusing on populist attitudes (Akkerman, Mudde, and Zaslove 2014; Hawkins, Riding, and Mudde 2012). Research on populism, especially the strand aligned with the ideational approach (Hawkins 2018; Mudde 2004, 2017; Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2017), has developed different tools for measuring populism at the individual level (e.g., Akkerman et al., 2014; Castanho Silva et al., 2018; Stanley, 2011; Wuttke et al., 2020), which allows to study populism beyond measuring sympathizing or supporting a populist party. In other words, by measuring populist attitudes one can isolate the effect of populism per se, differentiating it from what is usually attached to it.

To put to empirical test the argument that populism can mitigate the negative effect of economic deprivation on political participation I resort to online panel data from a survey conducted in Spain between 2018 and 2021. The structure of the data allows for analyzing this relationship in terms of change within individuals over time, which also improves the internal validity of the study compared to cross-sectional data.

Results only partially support our argument. While populism has a direct mobilization potential in participating in demonstrations, it does not in other forms of participation —petition signing and contacting a politician or public official—. Moreover, populism can palliate the negative effect of deprivation on the probability of participating in demonstrations (and even reverse its effects), but again, this does not hold for other different forms of political participation.

These results lead to questioning the general argument that populism can bring back into politics excluded sectors of society, as it only seems to open certain channels of participation for those more deprived. The main arguments among those who consider populism beneficial for democratic systems are based on the mobilization capacity of

populism and its inclusive character, but the present research raises doubts about the empirical support of that hypothesis.

The article is structured as follows. First, I review existing theories on resources and political participation, as well as on populism, and I present the hypotheses. Then, the data used for the analysis is presented, followed by an explanation of the methods. The next section presents the results and the analysis. The final section presents a discussion of the results, their implications and the conclusions, including venues for further research.

Theoretical framework

Political participation is usually understood as a wide array of voluntary activities or actions performed by private citizens aimed to affect politics (van Deth 2016). Since the 1970s, the study of political participation has focused on new forms of participation, going further than focusing only on voting or electoral participation (Sigel, Barnes, and Kaase 1980), including different forms of protest.

With the publication of *Dynamics of Contention*, by McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly (2001), the study of political participation reached an inflection point. Their conceptualization of contentious politics allows for studying political participation in its different forms, including both institutional and non-institutional forms of participation under the same research agenda. By blurring the boundaries between traditional classifications of political participation we can gain a more comprehensive understanding of political action, as different forms of participation usually overlap and interact with each other (Tarrow, Tilly, and McAdam 2001).

Therefore, contentious politics could be understood as those actions performed by ordinary people to confront elites or opponents (Tarrow 2011). This includes a way array of activities, from classic demonstrations to new forms of participation such as guerrilla gardening. Focusing on those actions that take place outside the ballot box, this paper addresses three forms of participation which could be considered contentious politics: taking part in a demonstration, signing a petition, and contacting a politician or public official.

After the crisis of 2008, a series of protests took place across the globe. Many events related to the citizens' response to the Great Recession can be undoubtedly defined as contentious politics, such as the *Indignados* movement in Spain. This wave of protests

was accompanied by the appearance of populist movements and, subsequently, of populist parties, resulting in a period that has been considered a populist momentum (Bekmen and Özden 2022). Consequently, and to put it simply, the (post) Great Recession period is characterized by increases in contentious politics.

However, it is generally assumed by experts that resources are a necessary condition for political action. However, certain individuals are activated when they suffer an economic shock, or what is the same, when resources are less. Why does this happen? What are the triggers that make some individuals take political action when resources decrease?

Considering the context of populist mobilization, this article aims to explore the effect changes in populist attitudes can have on the relationship between changes in economic deprivation and in political participation. Can increases in populist attitudes weaken the negative effect of deprivation on political participation? If populism has indeed a mobilization potential (especially among those who would be more prone to back away from politics, as it is argued), it could be expected to play a role in the relationship between economic deprivation and political participation. Let us examine the expected mechanisms at play with greater scrutiny.

The relationship between resources and participation

Among the main explanatory factors of political participation considered by the literature, economic perceptions and resources —understood and operationalized in a wide array of forms— appear to have an important role. In this respect, the relationship between resources and political participation has been studied at the macro and the individual level, measuring both objective economic indicators as well as individuals' perceptions of them. However, the use of different measurements has led to divergent and even contradictory results (see Kern, Marien, and Hooghe 2015).

Focusing on the relationship between resources and participation at the individual level, two groups of researchers coexist. On the one hand, those who followed the grievance theory (also referred to as the mobilization hypothesis) (Kern, Marien, and Hooghe 2015; Scholzman and Verba 1981; Solt 2008), and on the other hand, the followers of the withdrawal hypothesis (Rosenstone 1982). The former group argues individuals who suffer a decrease in their resources to participate more. On the contrary, the latter considers resources as a necessary condition for political participation. Therefore, if individuals suffer an economic shock, they would be expected to back away from politics.

This article falls within the second group of scholars, which can also be named the civic voluntarism model (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). Scholzman, Brady and Verba, in their book *Unequal and Unrepresented,* consider three key answers to the question 'why individuals do not participate': 'because they can't, because they don't want to, and because nobody asked' (Verba, Brady, and Scholzman 2018, 50). Putting the attention on the first answer, 'because they can't', leads to the necessity of resources for getting involved in politics or taking political action.

While not all forms of political participation *require* the same amount or type of resources, it seems also evident that resources are a necessary condition for political engagement. For example, if an individual loses her job, she would have to devote time to getting out of that situation, constraining her opportunities for taking part in demonstrations, public events, or even getting information about politics. A different example could be that less well-off individuals have to devote more resources (in relative terms) than well-off individuals to basic activities —not only working, but also others such as personal care activities—, leaving those with more resources also with more possibilities to participate in politics and in social life more generally (Chatzitheochari and Arber 2012).

Another argument in favour of the civic voluntarism model focuses on the idea that less well-off or more disadvantaged individuals could feel alienated, ultimately disengaging from politics. Hence, individuals in more precarious situations would not lose time in politics after realizing they do not have enough power to shape the political agenda or make decisions, understanding the more privileged are also the ones who have more influence in politics and who benefit more from policy decisions (Rosenstone 1982; Solt 2008).

Support for this strand of the literature is found in empirical evidence. Solt provides evidence of the effects of income inequality on political engagement, going from political interest to political discussion and participation in elections (Solt 2008). Gallego (Gallego 2007) also finds empirical support to this argument, concluding that those belonging to lower social classes tend to participate less in different forms of engagement in politics, in line with the aforementioned research of Scholzman, Brady and Verba (2018) (see also (Curtis 2014; Rüdig and Karyotis 2014; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995).

Kern and colleagues find partial empirical support for this line of research both at the country level and at the individual level. Between 2002 and 2010, countries'

prosperity is found to be associated with higher levels of non-institutional participation, and individual resources too. However, when focusing on the context of the Great Recession, they find support for the grievance theory. Their results suggest that rising unemployment and grievances seem to be associated in that context of populist explosion with an increase in political participation, and more specifically, with protests (Kern, Marien, and Hooghe 2015).

While empirical evidence generally supports the idea that economic resources are a *sine qua non* for political participation, it can also be seen that economic shocks do not always decrease political action. Kern and colleagues argue these differences could be explained by the sudden shock caused by the economic crisis. This difference can also be explained by the theory of the disruption of the quotidian, which poses, in a nutshell, that deprived individuals would resort to collective action for defending what they already have and not losing more, but not for improving their conditions (Snow et al. 1998). Finally, Galais and Lorenzini (2017) argue it is the role of emotions regarding economic grievances that makes more deprived individuals participate more in contexts of sudden economic shocks.

However, to the best of my knowledge, research has not disentangled the role of attitudes in this relationship, and particularly, of populist attitudes. The economic crisis of 2008 was accompanied by a great supply of populist actors and messages (Marcos-Marne, Plaza-Colodro, and Freyburg 2020; Rama and Cordero 2018; Roberts 2017). While the question regarding the role populism played in that specific period in mobilizing citizens is a different kettle of fish, it could be argued that populism can mobilize or, at least, affect the relationship between resources and participation. While scholars have considered the direct linkage between populism and participation, no research has been devoted to embedding this relationship in the bigger picture, in the relationship between deprivation and political participation.

The role of populism

While the study of populism expanded enormously after the 2008 crisis, it was not new at that time, and scholars and pundits had widely discussed the concept and its implications (Betz 1994; Canovan 1999b, 2005; Laclau 2005a, 2005b; Mudde 2004, 2007; Taggart 2000). While different approaches or understandings of populism exist, a certain consensus has been reached around the ideational approach, which understands populism as a thin 'ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' and 'the corrupt elite', and

which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people' (emphasis in the original) (Mudde 2004, 543).

This definition of populism allows for understanding populism in different contexts. Therefore, it can be used for understanding populism in its discursive form, for exploring populist policies or politicians, and for measuring how populist are the people. In this sense, a series of developments have been conducted for measuring populism at the individual level (Akkerman, Mudde, and Zaslove 2014; Castanho 2016; Castanho Silva et al. 2019; Castanho Silva, Blanuša, and Littvay 2015; Hawkins, Riding, and Mudde 2012), which is done through the study of populist attitudes. The measurement of these attitudes allows for capturing to what extent individuals share the core elements of the aforementioned definition: people centrism, anti-elitism, and Manicheism.

Different scholars have studied the relationship between populist attitudes and participation. However, when exploring the possible moderator effect of populism in the relationship between resources and participation, attention has been usually put on income and education (Anduiza, Guinjoan, and Rico 2019; R. A. Huber and Ruth 2017), using basically cross-sectional data.

Some scholars highlight populism has a mobilization potential. This argument is based on the idea that populism can bring into politics excluded sectors of society. In the words of Taggart, populism is in itself 'strongly committed to active and direct participation' (Taggart 2000). It could be argued that putting the people at the center of politics, and the idea that the people should govern instead of the elite can foster political participation among populist individuals or populist sympathizers (Hawkins, Rovira Kaltwasser, and Andreadis 2018; Huber and Ruth 2017; Kriesi 2014; Mudde 2014).

Following the social identity model of collective action (van Zomeren, Postmes, and Spears 2008), the construction of the people of populism can enhance levels of political participation among individuals. Creating an identity related to an inclusive group (we, the people) gives individuals a sense of belonging, motivating them to participate more. Moreover, this is combined with the construction of an outgroup —an enemy—, the elite, who is corrupt and the cause of the main problems of the people. This in-group favorability of populism, combined with an out-group hostility, results in an increase in the motivation for action due to the sense of injustice (Bos et al. 2020; Simon and Klandermans 2001). Additionally, research on polarization —based on social identity theory— shows that in-group like, as out-group hate, potentially mobilizes individuals

(Serani 2022). Accordingly, populism's moralized division between in-group and out-group could therefore have a mobilization potential,

The moral division between the pure people and the evil elite is also core for understanding the mobilization potential populism can have. What Jasper calls 'the power of the negative' (Jasper 2018) refers to the mobilization potential negative emotions such as distrust, anger, indignation, or blame can have, and populism projects those emotions towards the elite.

This theoretical expectation about the mobilizing potential of populism finds support in empirical studies. Bos and colleagues, for example, studied the effect of anti-elitist framing of messages on the willingness to mobilize, finding that framing has a mobilizing potential, especially among the most relatively deprived individuals (Bos et al. 2020).

Additionally, the anti-elite component of populism is related to the neglection and disavowal of institutional politics (see, for example, Peters & Pierre, 2020). As the political class is usually considered the evil elite, certain institutions (and even democratic mechanisms) are considered part of that corrupt truss which does not serve the democratic principles and wills of populists. In consonance with this discredit towards representative institutions and politics, it could be argued that populist individuals would sympathize with certain forms of collective action, non-institutional participation, or contentious politics.

Taggart (2017) explains this relationship stating besides populist animadversion towards politics as a process for resolving conflicts, populism 'is driven to engagement with politics but in a way that is at odds with that politics' (Taggart 2017, 81). In line with this, populism has been found to be related to direct and deliberative forms of participation (Lüders et al. 2021; Zaslove et al. 2021); but also negatively related at the individual level to protesting (Zaslove et al. 2021).

As Meléndez and Rovira Kaltwasser point out, anti-establishment individuals tend to be more interested in politics, not as apathetic and politically disengaged individuals (Meléndez and Rovira Kaltwasser 2019; Pirro and Portos 2021). This interest in politics of populist individuals, through the cognitive mobilization process (Dalton 1984; Inglehart 1977; Rico, Guinjoan, and Anduiza 2020), would translate into facing the elite's decisions and thinking for themselves, leaving them to participate more in politics, at least through non-electoral channels. Following this argument, it could be expected that

increases in individual levels of populist attitudes would directly enhance political participation. Therefore, hypothesis 1 is stated as follows:

> *Hypothesis 1: increments in populist attitudes will increase individual engagement in political participation.*

On a different note, it has been argued that resources are directly connected to political participation —or what is the same, that economic deprivation can negatively influence individuals' willingness and capacity to participate in politics—. While research has devoted attention to the moderating effect of emotions related to economic grievances (Rico, Guinjoan, and Anduiza 2017), we expect populism to moderate the relationship between deprivation and political participation.

Individuals who suffer higher levels of deprivation would be expected to back away from politics, but if those individuals become more populist, the relationship can be expected to be different. As argued before, due to their mobilization capacity, populist attitudes could weaken, and even palliate, the negative effect of increases in deprivation on participation.

Blaming others (the elite) for negative changes in one's socioeconomic status could motivate individuals to take political action instead of disengaging from politics. It could also be argued that populism can be the trigger of negative emotions related to economic issues, such as injustice or ager, and individuals could fall within the division between the people and the elite, fueling the mobilization potential of populism, especially among those who have worsen their economic conditions. Therefore, increases in populism can be expected to reduce the negative effect increases in deprivation exert on political participation. In line with this, hypothesis 2 is presented as follows:

> *Hypothesis 2: The negative effect of deprivation on the probability of participating will be lower for individuals who have increased their levels of populist attitudes, compared to those who have remained stable or whose populist attitudes have decreased.*

Data and measurement

To put to empirical test the relationship between changes in deprivation, populism and political participation, I use a Spanish panel survey that has been conducted by the *Democracy, Elections and Citizenship* research group since 2010 (Hernández et al. 2021). This survey is conducted yearly, following a representative sample of young and middle-

aged internet users who live in Spain. Quotas were used to ensure a balanced representation of participants in terms of gender, education, size of municipality, and region. While the survey has been conducted for more than a decade now, I rely on five waves, which capture the years 2017 to 2021. These five waves capture a total of 6,778 observations, which correspond to 2,459 different individuals.

While there are many different forms of political participation, this article focuses on three specific forms: petition signing, participating in a demonstration, and contacting a politician or public official. While there are more forms of political participation included in the questionnaire, they are excluded from this research because of different limitations. A common form of participation usually studied in research on contentious politics or collective action is striking. However, by definition, this is a form of participation only available for individuals who are employed, therefore limiting and biasing the sample of participants.[8]

All three questions taping at the different forms of political participation are asked to individuals as follows: 'In the last 6 months, have you done one of the following activities? Think of actions that took place not only online, but also in the street, in person, by letter, etc.…' Individuals had to select 'yes' or 'no' in case they had performed one of the three activities considered in this study or not, respectively. Variables are coded as 0 if the individual did not report having done each action, and 1 otherwise.

As argued before, measuring resources, or economic deprivation in this case is not an easy task, as the operationalization of the concept seems to have implications for the results in previous literature. Here, I focus on the individual level of economic deprivation, using the EPICES index. This index was created by Labbe and colleagues (Labbe et al. 2015) for measuring individual deprivation, but it has also been used for measuring precarity (Sesé et al. 2020). EPICES is composed of 10 items, and individuals

[8] Other forms of political participation included in the questionnaire are donating money for any cause, boycotting products for political, ethical, or environmental issues, and voting. Voting is excluded because it should not be considered contentious politics, but also because of the lack of national elections in the period included in this study. Boycotting is excluded because of two reasons: first, because the wording of the question poses some doubts about the extent to which some forms of avoiding consuming certain products could be considered political participation (for example, meat or fish); second, because more deprived individuals could be expected to have less options for boycotting products because of their lack of resources. Finally, the wording of the question for donating money is too broad, allowing for including actions that could not be considered political.

had to select between two options, 'yes' or 'no' if they had been (or not) in the situations that were presented to them. These items included statements regarding individuals' own economic and social situations. From these indicators, an index ranking from 0 to 10 is extracted (which is later recoded to range between 0 and 1), indicating higher values higher levels of deprivation. The internal consistency of the resulting index is considered good in the sample (Cronbach's alpha ranges from .68 to .72).

This operationalization of deprivation includes subjective perceptions of individuals about their economic situation. As usually argued, objective indicators of economic conditions and macroeconomic indicators fail to explain individual grievances (Geschwender 1968; Gurr 1970, 1970). Therefore, instead of using changes in personal income, or perceptions of the economy, this article employs a novel indicator which allows for tapping at individual perceptions of economic difficulties, for example. Moreover, it also includes individual expectations, as well as items tapping at the social network of respondents. This last issue, individual's acquaintanceship (and more specifically, family) networks and their capacity for helping in times of hardship are important for understanding individuals' sense of deprivation, and more in Spain, where the role of the family has been core for helping individuals in times of crisis (Moreno Mínguez 2017).

Moving into the operationalization of populism, and following the efforts of Hawkins and colleagues (K Hawkins, Riding, and Mudde 2012), improved later by Akkerman, Mudde and Zaslove (2014) to measure populism at the individual level, the analysis relies on a six-item scale. All six items capture the basic and underlying concepts of populism: people-centrism, anti-elitism, popular sovereignty, and a Manichean separation between the people and the elite. The final measure of populist attitudes is recoded to range from 0 to 1, where higher values indicate higher populist attitudes. Again, the internal consistency of the scale is not compromised (Cronbach's alpha ranges from .74 to .80).

Methods

The panel structure of the data allows for testing the relationship between deprivation, participation, and populist attitudes in terms of within-individual variation. For studying the relationship between populism and political participation, and the moderating role of populism in the relationship between deprivation and participation, I follow two complementary strategies. First, I estimate the direct effect of changes in

populist attitudes on within individual variations of the three different forms of political participation (Model(s) 1).

While the measure of the different dependent variables is dichotomic, I rely on a fixed-effects linear regression for estimating the effect of changes in individual levels of populist attitudes on subsequent participation. Linear models are preferred over logistic models for the analysis because, in line with previous work by Gomila (2021), they are easier to interpret, and because logistic models with fixed effects perform poorly because they exclude observations which do not variate in the dependent variable, inflating standard errors.

As fixed effects models control for time-invariant variables, I only include as controls variables self-placement in the left-right continuum and closeness to the party or parties in government. It should be noted that fixed effects are selected over random effects because of the benefits they pose —in a nutshell, random effects models assume unobserved variables are statistically independent of all the observed variables, while fixed effects limit possible bias in the analysis to time-varying variables (for an extensive description of fixed effects models see, for example, Brüderl and Ludwig, 2015; Vaisey and Miles, 2017)—.

As the structure of the data allows for it, I use the lagged version of populist attitudes. This means the level of populist attitudes of the individual used for the analyses is the level of the previous wave or year. Therefore, changes in populist attitudes are measured between t_{-2} and t_{-1}. This decision has been taken because participation and deprivation are measured referring to the past (that means, to the time span between t_{-1} and t_0), and populist attitudes are measured in the present (t_0).

While our theoretical background builds upon the idea that populism precedes political participation, it could be also possible that participating in different types of actions could enhance populism. Therefore, this strategy also allows for controlling that changes in populist attitudes indeed precede variations in levels of political participation, avoiding the possible recursive relationship.

The second step of the analysis focuses on estimating the moderating role of populist attitudes on the relationship between variation in individual deprivation on changes of individual levels of participation. For that, I also resort to a fixed effects linear panel regression. Besides the benefits mentioned before, linear models with fixed effects are, in line with Gomila (2021), are safer when interactions are included.

In this model, I include an interaction to empirically test hypothesis 2, on the moderating role populist attitudes can have on the relationship between individual-level variation of deprivation and political participation. In this model I include the differential between populist attitudes measured in t_0 and t_{-1}, which allows for presenting the predicted probabilities of participating for different values of change in populist attitudes. Model(s) 2 show the interaction effect, and these results are graphically presented for an easier interpretation of the effects. For the graphical visualization of results, I show the predicted probabilities of participating for each level of deprivation, by three different changes on populist attitudes: those who reduced .5 their populist attitudes, those who kept them stable (change=0), and those who increased .5 points.[9]

Results

Results of the different analyses are presented following the subsequent structure. First, models 1 and 2 are presented for each form of political participation. Again, Model(s) 1 intends to test the first hypothesis, which states that individuals who increase their populist attitudes will participate more. Note that for these models, populism is taken as the lagged version of the variable. Instead, for Model(s) 2, populism is taken as the differential between the last two waves, allowing for an easier interpretation of the results through graphing the predictions of participating.

Following the abovementioned hypotheses, the expectation for Model(s) 1 would be for the coefficient of populist attitudes to be positive and statistically significant (hypothesis 1). For Model(s) 2, the interaction coefficient between increases in deprivation and populist attitudes would also be expected to be positive and statistically significant (hypothesis 2).

Focusing first on the effect of changes in populist attitudes on subsequent levels of political participation, it is found that results are not consistent across different forms of political participation. While the expectation posits that increases in individual levels of populism would result over time in increases in participation, results do not fully

[9] In the Appendix, Model 2 is included without the interaction, as well as a model where the lagged value of populist attitudes is included in the interaction, and the average marginal effects of deprivation on political participation are shown by different levels of populism. Finally, models testing the general assumption that increases in deprivation weaken political participation are included.

support this hypothesis. This relationship is only found for participating in demonstrations: the probability of participating in a demonstration increases by 8% when populist attitudes increase by one unit over time.

Increases in populist attitudes do not appear to boost the other two forms of political participation included in the analyses. Thus, for petition signing, we find that the coefficient of interest is positive (in line with the expectations), but it fails to fall within standard levels of statistical significance. For contacting a politician or public official, however, while statically insignificant, the coefficient is negative, pointing against our expectations. Therefore, it could not be argued the relationship between changes in populism and political participation is straightforward and positive for all forms of political participation.

Moving into the moderating effect of populism on participation —weakening the effect of increases in deprivation on political participation—, results also show that the relationship is also not the same for all forms of political participation. Again, the interaction coefficient is only positive and statistically significant, as expected, for participating in demonstrations. These results support the hypothesis that increases in populist attitudes can indeed weaken the negative effect increases in deprivation exert on demonstrating. In contrast, this weakening effect of populism is not found in petition signing and contacting a politician or public official.

Table 3.1. Linear panel regressions with fixed effects

	Demonstrating		Petition		Contact	
VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)
Deprivation		-0.0878**		-0.0896**		-0.0414*
		(0.0359)		(0.0451)		(0.0245)
Populist attitudes	0.0768**	-0.0707**	0.0497	0.0575	-0.00492	-0.00864
	(0.0367)	(0.0357)	(0.0461)	(0.0448)	(0.0251)	(0.0244)
Deprivation * Populist attitudes		0.224*		-0.180		-0.0287
		(0.127)		(0.159)		(0.0865)
Ideology	-0.0334	-0.0361	0.0696	0.0655	-0.00441	-0.00410
	(0.0426)	(0.0426)	(0.0536)	(0.0536)	(0.0291)	(0.0291)
Close to party/ies in government	-0.0940***	-0.0988***	-0.103***	-0.106***	-0.0100	-0.0105
	(0.0130)	(0.0129)	(0.0164)	(0.0163)	(0.00890)	(0.00884)
Constant	0.156***	0.226***	0.374***	0.428***	0.0808***	0.0861***
	(0.0317)	(0.0211)	(0.0399)	(0.0266)	(0.0217)	(0.0144)
Observations	6,778	6,778	6,778	6,778	6,778	6,778
R-squared	0.014	0.015	0.010	0.011	0.000	0.001
Number of panelists	2,459	2,459	2,459	2,459	2,459	2,459

Standard errors in parentheses

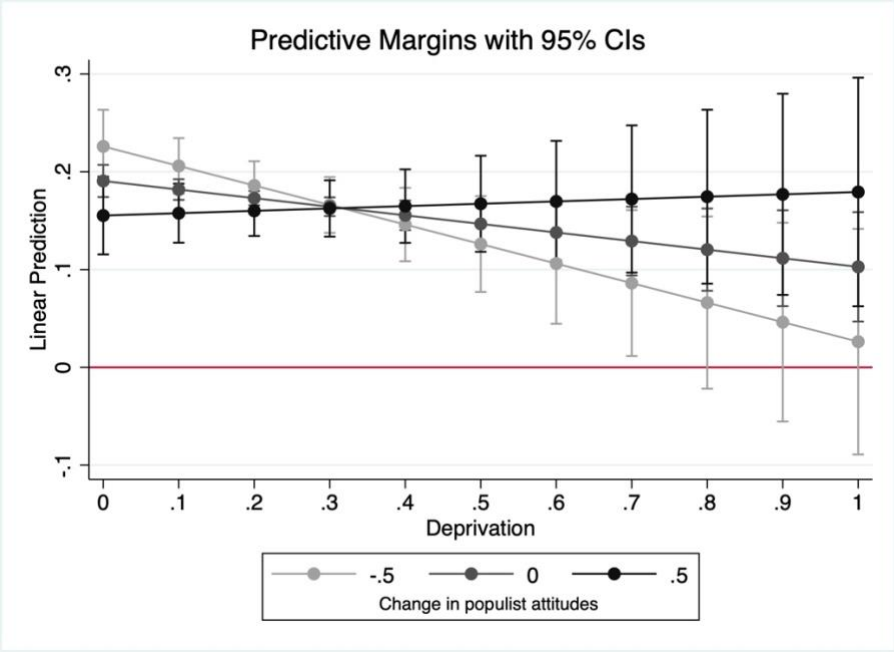
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

For an easier interpretation of the results presented in Models 2, they are graphically presented in Figures 3.1 to 3.3. These figures represent the predicted participation of individuals by different levels of deprivation, graphed by three different groups: those who have reduced .5 their populist attitudes, those who kept them stable, and individuals who increased them by .5 points from one wave to the next one.

Figure 1 presents the predicted probabilities of participating in a demonstration. It seems that individuals who experience a decrease in their levels of populist attitudes participate slightly more than individuals who are stable in their levels of populist attitudes and even more than those who increase them, but only if their levels of deprivation are null or low. However, as deprivation increases, those who become less populist participate less than those who are 'stable populists' and those who become more populist. Therefore, deprivation seems to have a negative impact on the probability of participating in demonstrations, but only for those who keep their populist attitudes stable and, especially, for those who become less populist. However, individuals who become

more populist tend to participate more in demonstrations as deprivation increases. These results go in line with hypothesis 2, and therefore, we could confirm it for this form of political participation.

Figure 3.1. Predictive margins of demonstrating by deprivation for three values of change in populist attitudes



However, results for petition signing and contacting a public official or politician do not support hypothesis 2. Results are not only statistically insignificant, but they go against our expectations. Focusing only on the sign of the coefficient of the interaction, that is to say, on the direction of the relationship, it could be argued that increases in populist attitudes tend to reduce the probabilities of participating as deprivation increases (except for those less deprived in petition signing). Therefore, these results (if statistically significant) would imply that increases in populist attitudes would not cause an increase in the probability of signing a petition or contacting a politician. What is more, they would imply the opposite, that individuals who become more populist would tend to disengage more from politics as deprivation increases than those who become less populist and those who are stable in their levels of populism. Nevertheless, as these relationships fail to fall within standard levels of statistical significance, further research should address these forms of participation for understanding better the connection between deprivation, populism, and participation.

Figure 3.2. Predictive margins of signing a petition by deprivation for three values of change in populist attitudes

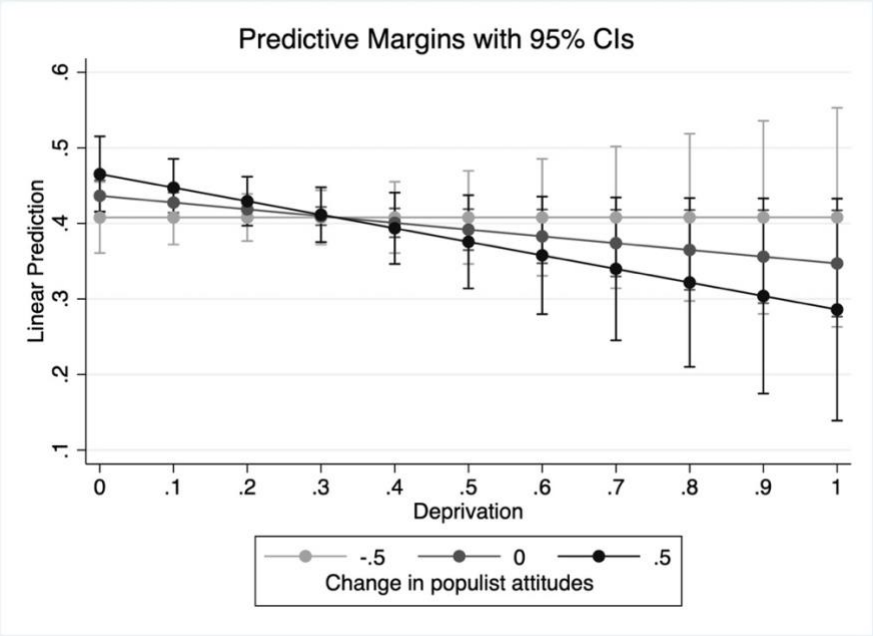
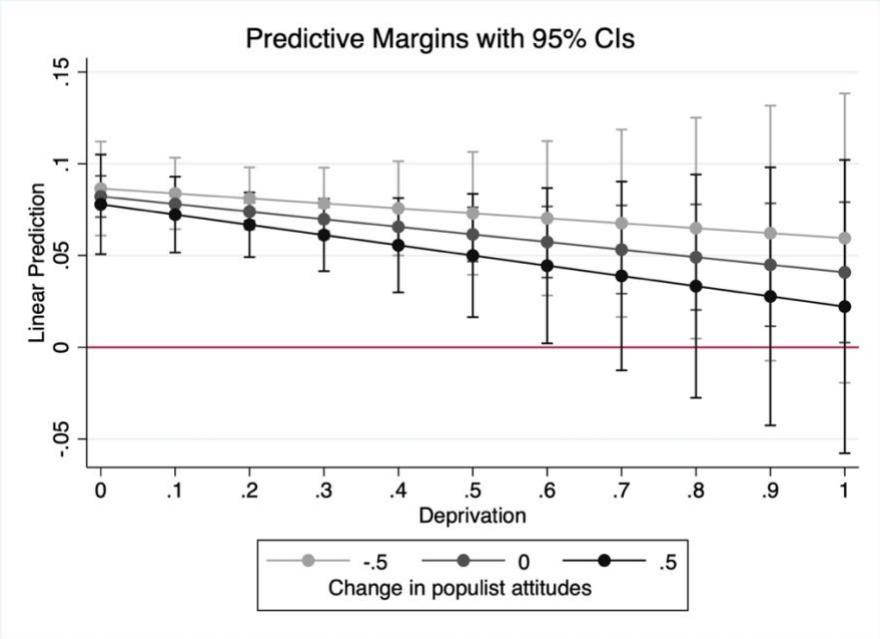


Figure 3.3. Predictive margins of contacting a politician by deprivation for three values of change in populist attitudes



Discussion and conclusion

With the rise of populist parties and candidates in times of crisis, it has been argued that populism can bring back into politics sectors of society that, otherwise, would be excluded (Jansen 2011; Jung 2019; Mudde and Kaltwasser 2012a; Taggart 2000). Understanding the relationship between populism and political participation has been a matter of interest for scholars for some decades now, but we still fail to fully disentangle this relationship. This article intended to clarify the relationship between populism at the individual level and political participation, by also focusing on the moderating role populism can play in the relationship between economic resources and political participation.

In a nutshell, the main theoretical foundations of this research are twofold: first, populism —at the individual level— can be expected to have a mobilization potential; and second, and in line with the civic voluntarism model, individuals who become more deprived would tend to participate less in politics. Accordingly, the main argument of this article is that increases in populist attitudes can palliate the negative effect of deprivation on political participation.

If populism at the individual level can mobilize individuals, especially those who are more deprived, it would appear as a tool for guaranteeing the political inclusiveness of those who were assumed to back away from politics. However, results only support the main expectations for one form of political participation (i.e., participating in a demonstration), while empirical support is not found for the cases of signing a petition and contacting a politician or public official.

Accordingly, this article sows doubts about the mobilization potential of populism, which has been the main argument for those who defend populism can have a beneficial effect on democratic systems (see Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2012a, 2012b). In this line, more fine-grained research is needed to fully disentangle the relationship between populism and political engagement.

This article has aimed at exploring the effect of populism per se on political participation, by measuring populist attitudes (Akkerman, Mudde, and Zaslove 2014). In line with this, one could argue that it is not populism per se that can have a mobilization potential, but the articulation of populism which can mobilize individuals. For example, that the appearance of a populist party would motivate part of the citizenry to mobilize, independently of their levels of populist attitudes. Nevertheless, this relationship should

be carefully explored in further research, accounting that it is not populism —understood as a thin ideology— that is causing the effect on political participation.

To better isolate the role of populist attitudes and disentangle the causal relationship between the variables of interest, this article has resorted to a unique panel dataset, exploring the relationships in terms of within-individual change over time (Hernández et al. 2021). However, further research should expand the current research not only to different territorial contexts but also to different periods, as the temporal context could also affect this relationship due to differences in the political landscape or due to the evolution of diverse cycles of contention.

Additionally, in this article, I measured economic deprivation with a more comprehensive approach than the usual measures of objective indicators of income or subjective perceptions of the economic situation. Thus, I resorted to a novel measure of economic deprivation, the EPICES index, which permits having a more holistic view of individuals' personal circumstances. I consider the use of this measurement of special interest for this type of research, as it considers the perception of individuals about their grievances, as well as their social network's capacity for helping in times of hardship. Further research may focus on other different measures of deprivation, or more generally, of resources.

Returning to the inconsistent empirical evidence on the effects of populist attitudes on the different forms of political participation, this is repeated when bringing economic deprivation into the equation. One-unit increases in economic deprivation appear to reduce the probability of participating in a demonstration and of signing a petition by 9%, and by 4% for contacting a politician. However, increases in populist attitudes do not appear to moderate the negative effect of economic deprivation on petition signing and contacting a politician. However, empirical support for hypothesis 2 is found when considering one of the most common forms of contentious politics: participating in a demonstration. Increases in populist attitudes can weaken (and even revert) the negative effect of deprivation on the probability of participating in demonstrations.

Again, these results speak to the literature on populism, challenging the assumed mobilization potential of populism, especially among those left behind or those who have more material reasons for feeling excluded from the system. Hence, this appears to only be the case —considering all three forms of contentious politics included in this article— for participating in demonstrations.

Populism appears to palliate the negative effect of economic deprivation on the probability of demonstrating, which has implications for the study of populism. For instance, populism has been often considered to advocate for direct forms of democracy (Peters and Pierre 2020; Taggart 2000, 2004; Zaslove et al. 2021). However, the empirical evidence presented in this piece shows that populism does not appear to boost petition signing, which could be considered to be close to direct participation, as it usually has to do with bottom-up initiatives. Additionally, populism does not appear to have the capacity to include individuals into politics through more institutional-addressed forms of participation, such as contacting politicians —which could let us suspect the populism's mobilization capacity through institutional forms of participation such as voting—.

Therefore, if populism would only directly enhance participation through protests and demonstrations, is that the beneficial impact populism can have on democratic systems? While some could argue that the present results make palpable that populism's positive impact on democracy is objectionable, I prefer to take a more positive standpoint and highlight that populism is able in fact to open certain channels of connection to the political system, particularly among those who are less well-off and whose interests may not be taken into consideration. Accordingly, protests can be in the short run the first step for individuals to participate in politics, which could, in the long run, translate into other forms of participation. Nonetheless, further research should discern between the short- and long-term effects of populism on political participation.

Appendix 3

Wording of the main questions

EPICES Index-Wording of the question in English (original in Spanish)

Please, select the situations that apply to you (NO/YES):

In the last 12 months, I have visited a social worker or assistant

I do not have a private medical insurance

I do not own a house and I will not do it in the short future

There are periods in the month when I have serious economic difficulties

I have not practised sports in the last 12 months

I have not gone to see cultural performances (e.g. cinema, theatre) in the last 12 months

I have not gone on holiday in the last 12 months

I have not seen any relative in the last 6 months (excluding parents and children)

If I experience difficulties (e.g. economic, family-related or health-related) there is no one who can host me for a few days

If I experience difficulties (e.g. economic, family-related or health-related) there is no one who can help me economically

Additional models

Models including deprivation and populism without the interaction

Table A3.1. Linear panel regression models with fixed effects (no interaction)

VARIABLES	Demonstrating	Petition	Contact
Deprivation	-0.0897**	-0.0881*	-0.0411*
	(0.0359)	(0.0451)	(0.0245)
Populist attitudes	-0.0252	0.0210	-0.0145
	(0.0247)	(0.0311)	(0.0169)
Ideology	-0.0362	0.0656	-0.00409
	(0.0426)	(0.0536)	(0.0291)
Close party/ies in government	-0.0987***	-0.106***	-0.0105
	(0.0129)	(0.0163)	(0.00884)
Constant	0.227***	0.428***	0.0860***
	(0.0211)	(0.0266)	(0.0144)
Observations	6,778	6,778	6,778
R-squared	0.015	0.011	0.001
Number of panelists	2,459	2,459	2,459

Standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Models including the interaction with the lagged version of the variable populist attitudes

Table A3.2. Linear panel regression models with fixed effects

VARIABLES	Demonstrating-L.populism	Petition-L.populism	Contact-L.populism
Deprivation	-0.156	-0.349**	-0.147*
	(0.112)	(0.141)	(0.0764)
Populist attitudes (Lagged)	0.0550	-0.0334	-0.0382
	(0.0493)	(0.0620)	(0.0337)
Deprivation * Populist attitudes (Lagged)	0.0970	0.389**	0.155
	(0.157)	(0.197)	(0.107)
Ideology	-0.0346	0.0685	-0.00493
	(0.0426)	(0.0536)	(0.0291)
Close party/ies in government	-0.0948***	-0.103***	-0.0101
	(0.0130)	(0.0164)	(0.00891)
Constant	0.190***	0.448***	0.112***
	(0.0393)	(0.0493)	(0.0268)
Observations	6,778	6,778	6,778
R-squared	0.016	0.012	0.001
Number of panelists	2,459	2,459	2,459

Standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Models testing the general hypothesis that increases in deprivation reduce political participation

Table A3.3. Linear panel regression models with fixed effects

VARIABLES	Demonstrating-Deprivation	Petition-Deprivation	Contact-Deprivation
Deprivation	-0.0914**	-0.0866*	-0.0421*
	(0.0358)	(0.0450)	(0.0245)
Ideology	-0.0374	0.0666	-0.00478
	(0.0426)	(0.0535)	(0.0291)
Close party/ies in government	-0.0984***	-0.106***	-0.0103
	(0.0129)	(0.0163)	(0.00884)
Constant	0.228***	0.427***	0.0866***
	(0.0211)	(0.0265)	(0.0144)
Observations	6,778	6,778	6,778
R-squared	0.014	0.011	0.001
Number of panelists	2,459	2,459	2,459

Standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Additional graphs I

Figure A3.1. Mean of levels of deprivation by wave with 95% confidence intervals

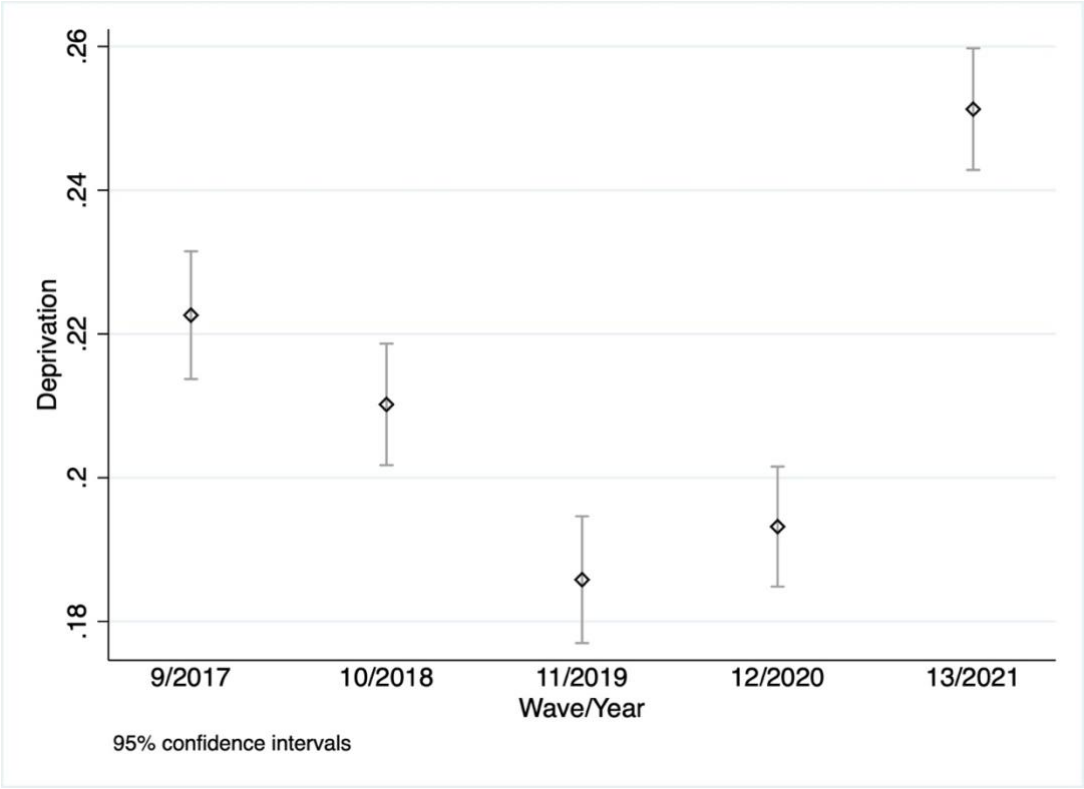


Figure A3.2. Mean of levels of populist attitudes by wave with 95% confidence intervals

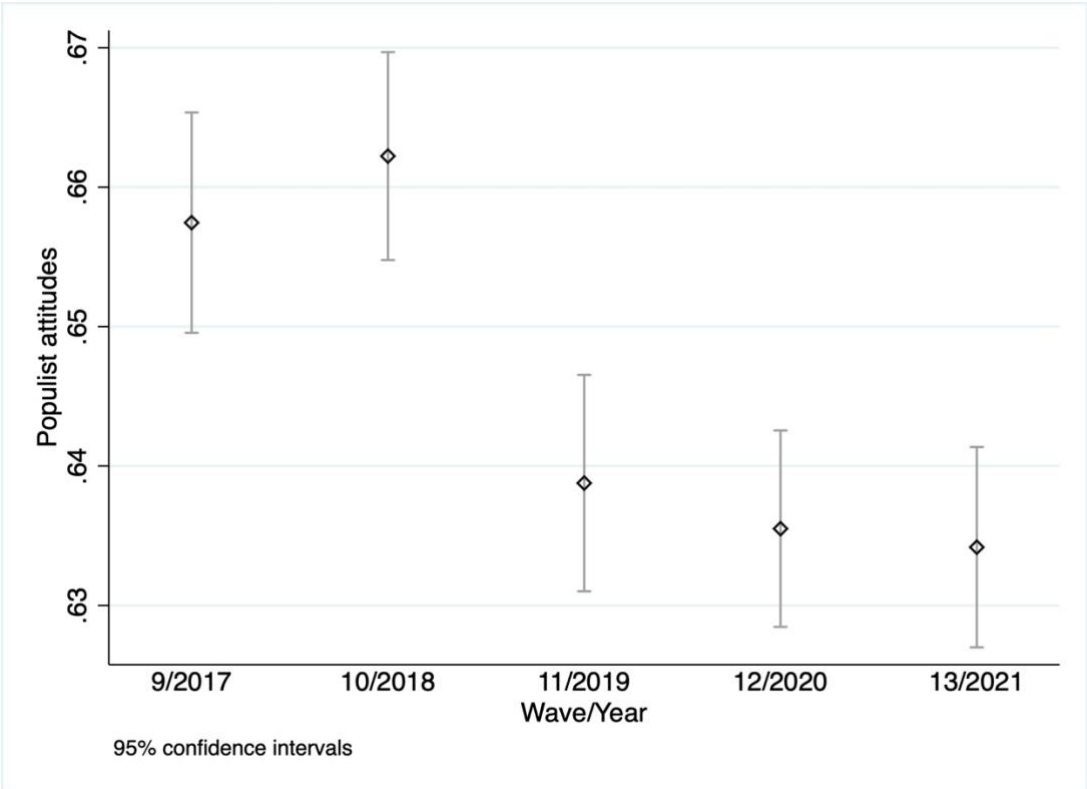
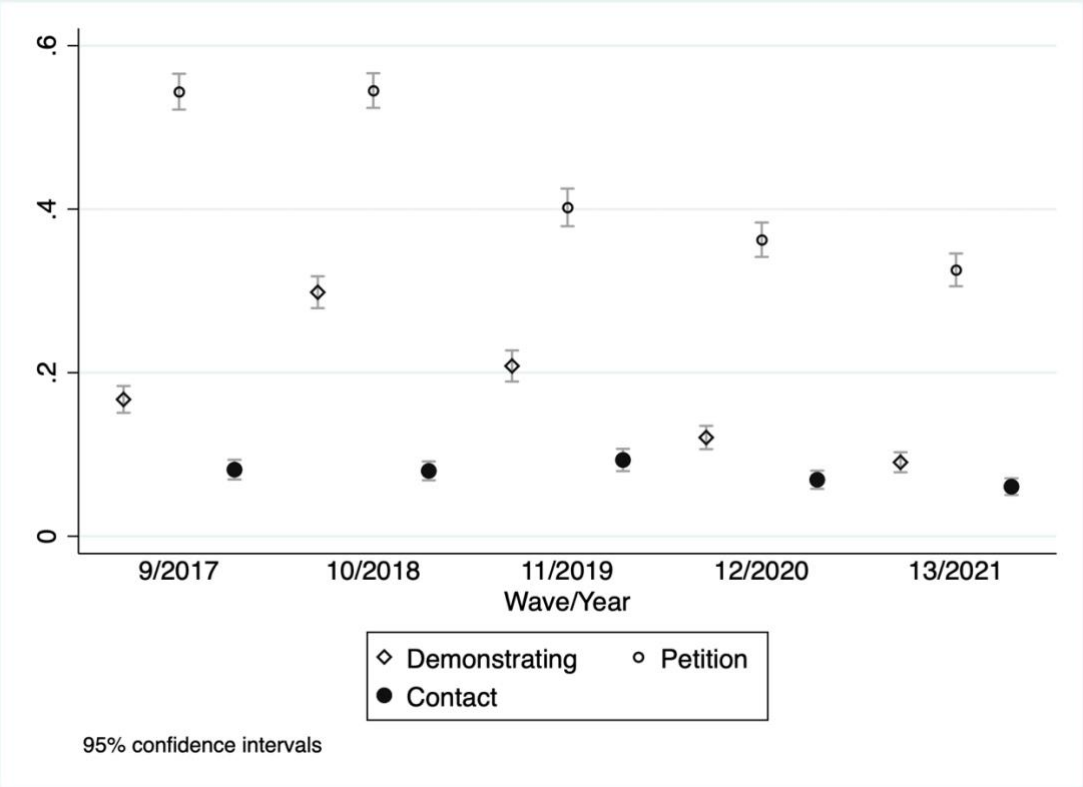


Figure A3.3. Mean of levels of participation by wave with 95% confidence intervals



Additional graphs II

Figure A3.4. AME's of deprivation on demonstrating by populist attitudes

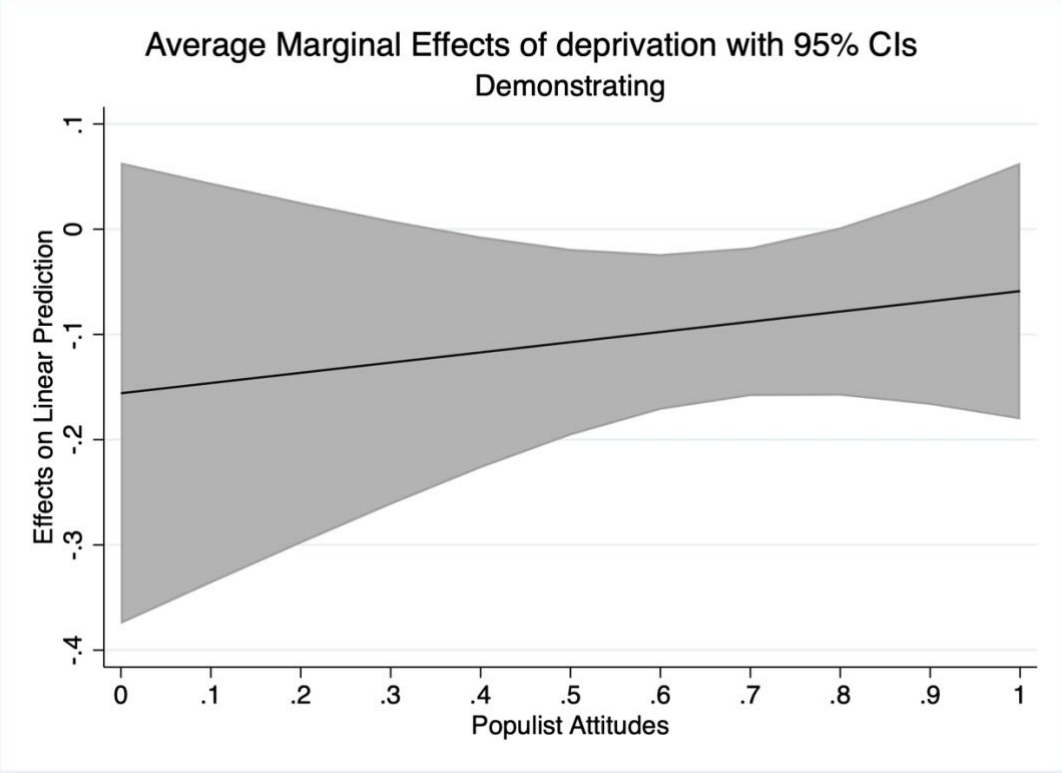


Figure A3.5. AME's of deprivation on petition signing by populist attitudes

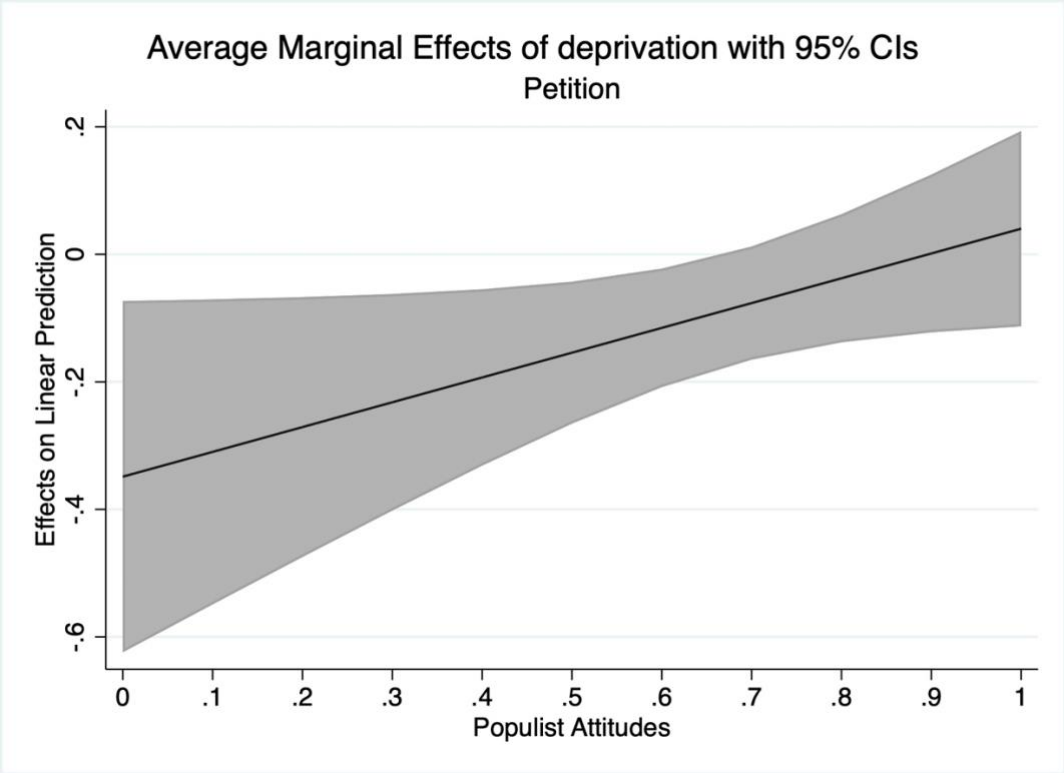
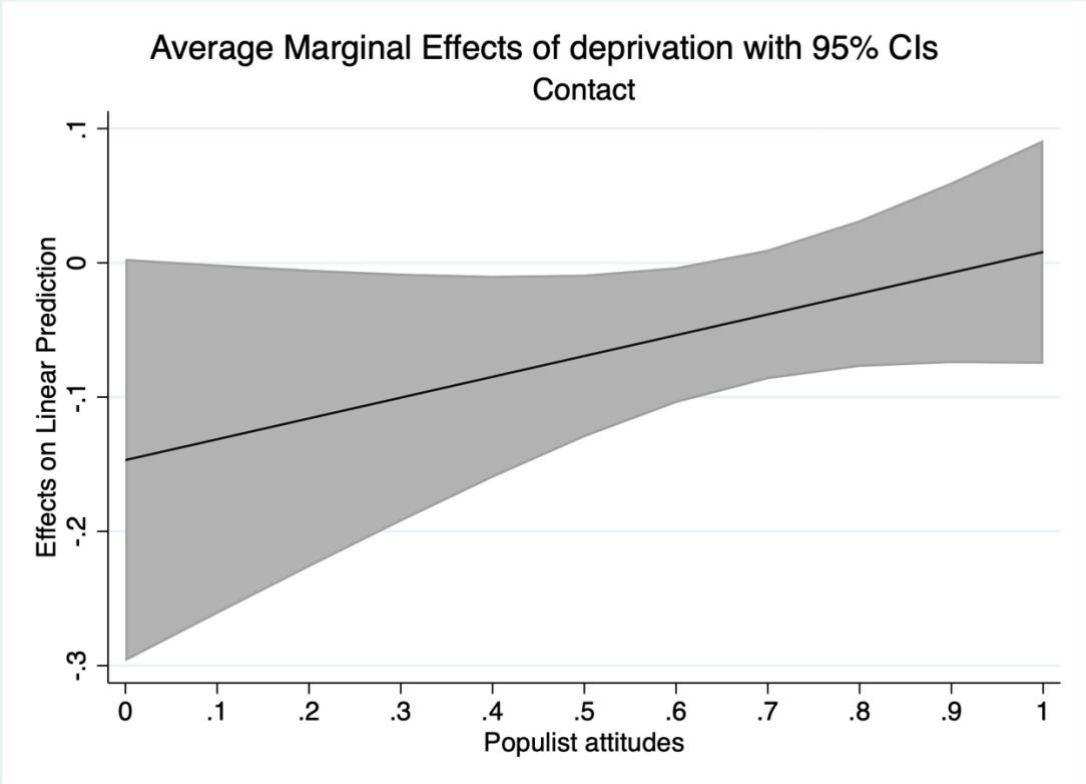


Figure A3.6. AME's of deprivation on contacting a politician by populist attitudes



Chapter 4. Populist Radical Right-Wing Parties and the Assault on Political Correctness: The Impact of Vox in Spain[10]

Introduction

Over the last two decades, there has been a significant rise in the number of populist radical right (PRR) parties and candidates all over the world, leading to several scholarly studies on the causes of their emergence. Although some studies have been carried out on the consequences of this increase on other parties' positions and policies, less explored are the effects that PRR parties might have on citizens' attitudes, particularly beyond attitudes towards immigration. The present research takes up one of these issues that the literature has disregarded and which PRR parties seem to have identified as a battle worth fighting: political correctness.

Political correctness (PC), broadly understood as a self-censoring practice to avoid offending certain social groups and minorities (Andary-Brophy, 2015; Moss and O'Connor, 2020a; Moss and O'Connor, 2020b) is considered by its defenders as a tool for achieving inclusiveness, while those who oppose PC see it as a danger to free speech. Embracing the second perspective, some political parties and candidates – mostly belonging to the PRR – have made PC a key campaign issue, launching anti-PC rhetoric that is generally presented as defending both 'common sense' and the way the common people speak.

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[10] This chapter contains an article co-authored with Dr. Carol Galais. The version included in this manuscript contains the pre-print version of the article. For quoting or referring to this chapter, please use the published version:

Galais, C., & Pérez-Rajó, J. (2023). Populist radical right-wing parties and the assault on political correctness: The impact of Vox in Spain. International Political Science Review, 44(4), 492–506. https://doi.org/10.1177/01925121231190555

For instance, in his first GOP presidential debate in 2015, Donald Trump stated 'I think the big problem this country has is being politically correct. [...] I don't, frankly, have time for total political correctness.' Marine Le Pen distanced herself from the right during her candidacy speeches in 2016, because it was 'so deeply clouded by its fear of hurting the politically correct'. In Italy, Meloni, Grillo, and Salvini have all directly attacked PC, often using the *buonismo* label, understood as a fuzzy concern for the general welfare. UK Conservative MPs and US Republican politicians have also declared war on 'woke' culture. The term 'woke' has become a derogatory term used by the right for progressives, a synonym for 'the politically correct' that has expanded from designating anti-racist, feminist and liberal people to include vegans and those concerned about the environment. Being anti-woke, as such, encompasses a wide range of values and preferences, from anti-liberal to anti-socialist, but, more often than not, it is a dog whistle that provides cover for 'ideas and viewpoints once considered deviant and morally repugnant' (Cammaerts, 2022: 731). The expansion of these ideas could cause levels of 'correctness' to fall, especially among supporters of anti-PC candidates and parties, in some cases leading to harmful consequences for minority groups (Gantt Shafer, 2017). Given the scope of anti-PC rhetoric ultimate impact, it makes sense to examine to what extent PRR parties and candidates are successful in their attempts to undermine PC.

Hence, we aim to narrow the gap in research regarding the attitudinal consequences of rising support for the PRR. To address the effects of PRR parties on the levels of PC among the citizenry, we examine the case of the Spanish party Vox. Spain did not have a noteworthy PRR party until very recently, which makes PRR anti-PC messages in Spain a new phenomenon and one that is quite exogenous to other aspects of the political culture that might be relevant confounders. Indeed, the PRR party Vox only entered the subnational arena in December 2018 and the national parliament in May 2019. While in some countries PRR parties have been part of the political landscape for decades, the recent nature of the phenomenon in Spain allows us to track the evolution in support for it, and its potential effects on individuals' opinions of PC in the short term.

Using two different methodological strategies (a series of fixed-effect panel estimation models that take time-variant factors into account, and a cross-lagged estimation to address potential non-recursive relationships), we find that some individuals are indeed more likely to decrease their levels of political correctness as a result of finding Vox an attractive alternative and/or voting for them.

The article is structured as follows. First, we review the previous literature on the effects of the PRR, then discuss and theorise the expected impact of PRR parties on political correctness. We then present the research design section, explaining both the Spanish context in general and the case of Vox as a successful PRR party, after which we go into the explanation of the data, measurements, and methods. After presenting the results of our two different methodological strategies, we end with a summary of our conclusions, including avenues for further research.

The attitudinal effects of populist radical right-wing parties

The academic discussion on the effects of PRR parties on public opinion is embedded in a wider literature on the effects of party positions on citizens' opinions. According to work carried out in this field, individuals might follow their preferred party's cues in order to save the time and effort required to make up their minds about a particular policy (Lupia 2006), or to reaffirm their party identity (Green *et al*, 2002). Some research supports the notion that voters tend to adopt the policy positions of their preferred parties (Lenz, 2012; Slothuus and Bisgaard, 2021). However, American citizens' positions on issues seem to be more influenced by their partisanship than European ones, whose partisan identities barely affect their positions on issues at stake (see Neundorf and Adams, 2018). It is perhaps this European viewpoint on the limited ability of parties to affect issue positions that leads this literature to largely disregard new topics and issues – and consequently the potential triggers of deeper cultural changes – neglecting the potential socializing effects of new parties.

PPR parties – which marshal political support by emphasizing nativism, authoritarianism and populism (see Mudde, 2009) – are not exactly 'new', since they have existed in Western Europe for about four decades now (Mudde 2013). However, their electoral success has been on the rise since 2015, following the start of refugee crisis (Bergmann *et al*, 2021), which was deemed to be the prelude to the recent (relatively) good electoral results for PRR parties in Sweden, Italy, and Spain. Given these parties' increasing presence in the public sphere, many scholars have focused on the causes of their success (see, for instance, Marcinkiewicz and Dassonneville, 2022; Mendes and

Dennison, 2021; Mols and Jetten, 2020), while far less attention has been paid to its consequences.

The literature considers that PRR parties can affect policies, intra-party competition and public opinion. Of these, public opinion has been studied far less than the other two areas (Larsen 2022), even if an impact on public opinion is very likely to influence policy (Mudde, 2012). In this respect, scholars have tended to downplay the effects of PRR parties on public opinion. For instance, Carvalho concludes that PRR parties' influence has been limited to xenophobia and that their moment has passed in terms of driving public opinion (Carvalho, 2013). Similarly, Mudde's review concluded that 'while PRRPs might have affected the position and salience of certain issues for some parts of the population, they seem to have rarely changed their more long-term attitudes' (Mudde, 2012: 7). More recent research is consistent with this skepticism, finding that PRR parties have had null effects on anti-immigration attitudes, or institutional and social trust (Bohman and Hjerm, 2016; Larsen, 2022).

However, the popularity of PRR parties has also been found to fuel political discontent (Rooduijn *et al*, 2016) and to undermine support for income redistribution (Larsen, 2022). This is consistent with the claim that the electoral success and parliamentary presence of PRR parties have significant negative symbolic effects, since 'where the new radical right assumed executive office at various levels […], the most substantive impact was a change in cultural issues, a new Kulturkampf against the left, its allies and against foreigners' (Minkenberg, 2001: 18). Overall, this suggests that studies on the effects of PRR parties on public opinion should expand the range of attitudes and topics that they examine to include other cultural aspects that might more accurately capture their 'symbolic effects'. The present study suggests that attention should be paid to one of these new battlegrounds in which PRR parties are currently attempting issue entrepreneurship and ownership: political correctness.

Political correctness and PRR parties

Some of the literature has highlighted the attacks made by PRR parties on political correctness, a trait that is common to Germany (Berbuir*et al*, 2015), USA, UK, and Australia (Hogan and Haltinner, 2015), Estonia (Trumm, 2018), or Hungary (Vidra and

Fox, 2014). This behaviour may stem from three different rationales. On the one hand, works that consider populism as a political style point to the use of 'bad manners' as a characteristic of populist leaders (Canovan, 1999; Moffitt and Tormey, 2014). By being overtly uncivil, PRR parties bring the audience's attention to the artificial way in which the elites speak, thus identifying themselves with the people (Krämer, 2018). Secondly, PRR parties tend to use the idea of a (mainstream, privileged) culture under threat, and the subsequent identity backlash, thus reinforcing a common identity to gain electoral support. By championing the anti-PC cause, they create a sense of belonging to a group, a sense of oneness (Andary-Brophy, 2015: 50). Finally, the emerging PRR parties usually emphasise issues that are new or have previously been overlooked by established or mainstream parties, of which PC is one example. In bringing forward these issues, PRR challenger parties act as 'issue entrepreneurs' (Hobolt and de Vries, 2015), politicizing new topics that have a polarizing potential. Voters, in turn, may respond by supporting these parties because they match their previous opinions on the issue, or by adjusting their attitudes to the discourse of one of these new parties.

A PRR party can easily become an issue owner of PC —that is, it can be perceived as being the only party that cares about the issue and the most competent party to handle it— in the same way that these parties have become issue owners for immigration, integration, Islam or political cynicism. This is a strategy that has been proven to be successful in the past (Walgrave *et al*, 2015). The idea that PRR parties have been issue entrepreneurs and claimed ownership of PC is suggested by Krämer , who considers that right-wing populists define 'liberty' as 'freedom from the burdens imposed by minorities, from the threat of Islamic domination, or the freedom to express their worldview without being restricted by "political correctness"' (2017: 1301). In sum, by bringing PC into the public debate, PRR parties can stir up new concerns about the issue, redefine terms and pre-existing points of consensus, force citizens and other parties to take positions on it, and even generate new opinions and attitudes, to finally reap the rewards of agitating voters and polarizing them over PC.

As such, PRR parties might consider PC a political issue that they can exploit to get the upper hand over mainstream parties. However, American scholarship considers that PC at the individual level is an attitude in favour of using inclusive language (Lalonde *et al*, 2000; Dickinson, 2017). The scant literature on the causes of PC conceptualised in this way associates this phenomenon with verbal intelligence, as well as with certain

personality traits (agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness) (see Andary-Brophy, 2015; Moss and O'Connor, 2020b). Overprotective parenting, along with moral absolutism and social media use, has been found to boost PC (Lukianoff and Haidt, 2018; Moss and O'Connor, 2020a). In addition, more liberal individuals tend to be more politically correct, along with those scoring lower on scales of emotional well-being (Strauts and Blanton, 2015). None of these studies, however, consider the political factors that can affect an individual's tendency to embrace or reject political correctness. As a result, we do not know much about the scope of the effects that PRR parties' discourses and positions on PC have among lay citizens.

We expect supporters of PRR parties to be affected by their parties's guidelines on PC, making them less politically correct, and thus reflecting some of the PRR parties' symbolic effects. These effects could be activated through a variety of mechanisms, from the increased presence of PC as a new political issue brought forth and owned by PRR parties, to an enhanced sense of belonging to a community (that of the politically incorrect), which allows PRR supporters to distance themselves from what they view as the quiescent, politically correct elite. Following the general premise that PRR parties undermine PC, we will test the hypothesis that *individuals who support PRR parties will experience an erosion in their levels of PC over time*.

Research design

The Spanish case, and Vox as a successful PRR party

While other democracies saw a rise in the strength of PRR parties in previous decades, it was not until very recently that Spain witnessed the emergence and relative success of a PRR party: Vox (Ferreira, 2019; Rooduijn *et al*., 2019; Ortiz Barquero *et al*, 2020; Rodríguez-Teruel, 2020; Turnbull-Dugarte *et al*, 2020). Vox emerged in 2013 as a breakaway party born of a schism within the People's Party . Since then, the media coverage of Vox has increased, experiencing a spike in 2018, allowing the party's message to reach a wide audience (Mendes and Dennison, 2021), and paving the way for its current status. The November 2019 general election led to Vox winning 52 seats in parliament, becoming the third most voted-for party in Spain. Furthermore, Vox supports

and participates in different governments at the subnational level. Accordingly, to use Sartori's term, Vox can be considered to have been a relevant party since 2018-2019 (Sartori, 1976).

While we can trace Vox leader Santiago Abascal's use of the expression 'PC' to March 2013,[11] Bermúdez (2020) notes that the first reference to PC from an official Vox social media account is a tweet published in January 2017, followed by repeated allusions to PC in two major rallies in October 2018 and April 2019. Since January 2019, the 'What is Vox?' section of their website has explicitly stated that Vox is 'the only party fighting against suffocating political correctness.' As a case in point, in November 2019, at the rally that closed the campaign for the November general election, Abascal highlighted: 'together we have managed to reopen all the debates that the left had decided to close by decree, with the cowardly silence of the right. […]Any debate outside the framework of political correctness was an insult. […] Well, today all the debates are open again'.[12] In this way, Vox managed to differentiate itself not only from traditional parties, but also from the other parties that emerged with the collapse of the Spanish party system,i.e. Podemos and Ciudadanos (see Orriols and Cordero, 2016).

A relevant question is, then, to what extent political correctness is a new issue in Spanish public debate. A term search in the two main Spanish newspapers (El País and El Mundo) reveals that, before 2014, mentions of PC in the press were merely anecdotal, although they were more frequent in the conservative El Mundo.[13] In 2016, Trump was portrayed in a series of articles as an enemy of PC. A handful of news stories were published in 2017 using the expression 'PC' to discuss all sorts of topics, including surrogate mothers, abortion, gender, LGBTQ+ issues, and in particular, the Catalan bid for independence. Vox was mentioned in relation to PC for the first time in a story about the 2018 Andalusian elections, published in El Mundo on 3 December 2018 (Gistau, 2018). According to that story, Vox embodied 'the resistance' to the 'dictatorship' of

[11] See tinyurl.com/3jmpsxf6

[12] See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k9CaJDCw8GY (at 56:00).

[13] We refer the reader to Appendix I of the Online Supplementary Material for an evolution of the frequency of the use of the term 'political correctness' in the Spanish press.

political correctness. After that turning point, the expression 'political correctness came to be invariably associated with Vox.[14]

Vox's defense of 'political incorrectness' evokes 'what ordinary people say' (Gistau, 2018), which relates to the people-centrism and the anti-elitism dimensions within the populism construct (Akkerman, Mudde, and Zaslove 2014). Fighting PC is therefore presented as a crusade in favour of freedom of expression and thought. In Santiago Abascal's own words: 'we say what Spaniards say to their family and friends. Vox rebelled against the dictatorship of political correctness, and people were fed up, in secret, of political correctness' (Gómez, 2018). At the same time, the expression serves as an umbrella concept that summarises Vox's position on a broad range of political positions, from anti-immigration to the defense of the unity of the country, most of them along the GAL-TAN dimension (Hooghe *et al*., 2002). For instance, Vox's anti-PC rhetoric includes nativism and promotes anti-immigration policies, often evoking the *Reconquista* to suggest that they will save Spain from Islam. A tweet from the official party account in September 2019 stated that 'common sense has arrived at the temple of political correctness', with a link to a video associating Muslim immigrants with gang rapes.[15] Anti-globalism and anti-separatism are also topics that Vox usually connects to anti-political correctness. Vox has contested the territorial organization of the state, opposing the existence of Autonomous Communities and blaming on political correctness for the main parties' weak posture regarding the Catalan bid for independence.[16] Similarly, Abascal has claimed in Parliament that the European Union has helped enshrine 'the empire of progressive political correctness'.[17] Finally, gender-sensitive language – increasingly used by the Spanish left since the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party created the Ministry of Equality in 2008 – is constantly mocked by Vox, and its MPs have repeatedly requested that inclusive language be excluded from

[14] Note as well that Vox's leaders and MPs used the term 'political correctness' increasingly in their tweets, peaking in 2018-2019, while the use of this term by other Spanish parties or MPs was negligible (See Figure A2 in the Online Supplementary Material).

[15] See tinyurl.com/fxf3vkx7.

[16] See the Parliament's record of proceedings, p. 12 (tinyurl.com/4pm5236p) in 5/11/ 2021.

[17] See the Parliament's record of proceedings, p. 22 (tinyurl.com/mesmc42j6) in 11/10/2021. We refer the reader to Appendix III for more details on how PC relates to other values and issues.

official documents since 2018, claiming that this is merely a symptom of PC (Rivas Venegas 2021). [18]

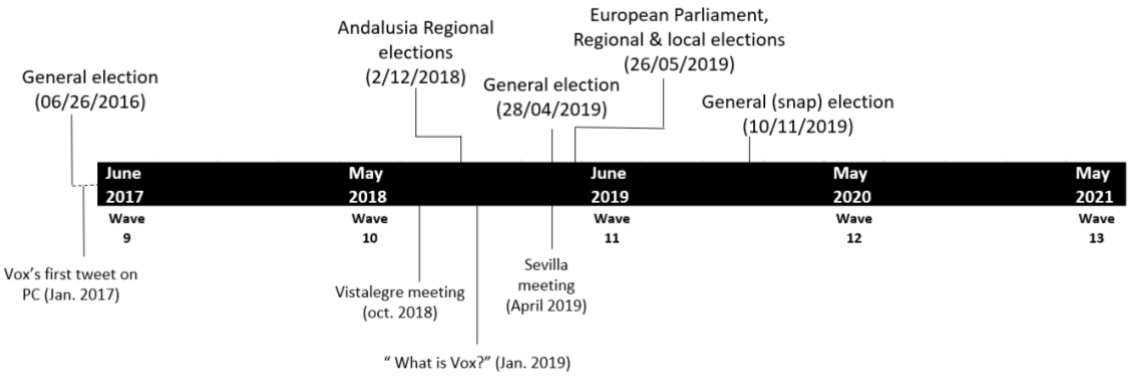
In sum, Vox has extensively attacked PC in the way it has phrased and conveyed most of its discourse, thus making it sound more socially acceptable and anti-elitist, particularly since 2018. As such, Spain appears to be a best-case scenario for exploring the relationship between support for the PRR and attitudes towards PC. The recent adoption of anti-PC as a crucial political issue by Vox, combined with the recent and rapid emergence of the PRR in Spain, allows us to explore this relationship while avoiding endogeneity and spurious relationships.

Data and measures

In order to put to the test empirically the relationship between voting for Vox and subsequent PC, we use a Spanish panel survey that has been conducted yearly by the *Democracy, Elections and Citizenship* research group since 2010 (Hernández *et al.*, 2021). The study follows a representative sample of young and middle-aged internet users residing in Spain. The sample was selected from the online panel used by Netquest, and quotas were used to ensure a balanced representation of participants in terms of gender, education, size of municipality, and region. We use the data from waves 9 (June 2017) to 13 (May 2021), as these waves were the ones for which all the measurements we require were included in the questionnaires, namely questions on PC and on respondent's intention of voting for Vox. Figure 4.1 clarifies the fieldwork carried out for the study, and the most relevant dates when it comes to the evolution of Vox.

[18] Note that Vox's manifesto goes beyond language in this respect, as it aims to repeal the gender violence law and take abortion out of the public health system.

Figure 4.1. Calendar of events related to Vox's success and the fieldwork for the study



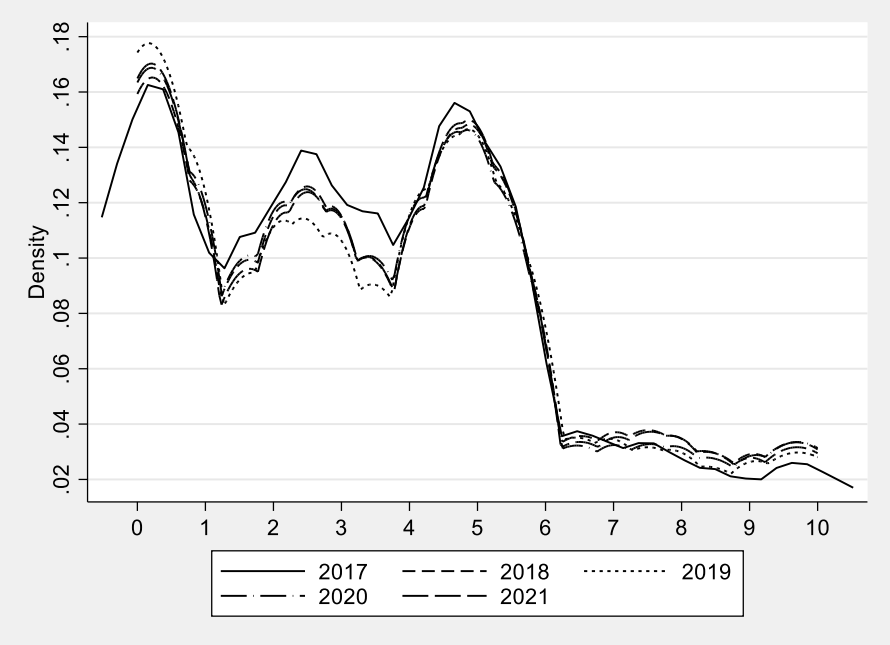
Measuring PC is a challenging endeavour, not only because previous research is mixed regarding behavioural and attitudinal PC, but also because the term refers interchangeably both to PC and 'concern for' PC. As a result, there is no standard battery of questions that assesses attitudes toward PC (Dickinson, 2017). Given that previous strategies are exhaustive (e.g. 44 pairs of words consisting of an inclusive word and a 'politically incorrect' one,; see Dickinson, 2017) but eventually boil down to one or two scales (i.e. those in favour of PC and those against it; see Lalonde *et al*, 2000), we have opted for a bipolar scale running from 0 (extreme political incorrectness) to 10 (extreme political correctness). More precisely, we use a survey question which states: 'Lately, people are talking about political correctness a lot. There are people who believe that we should change our way of expressing ourselves in order to avoid hurting some collectives' sensibilities. Other people believe that this is going too far and that some people get offended too easily. Point out where you stand according to these statements. 0: We need to change the way we express ourselves; 10: People get offended too easily.'[19]

The original wording of the question yields an 11-point scale where the higher values indicate more anti-PC positions. We have reversed the scale, making the lower values (0) indicate politically incorrect views and the higher values (10) indicate PC views. Figure 4.2 displays the distribution of the answers to the PC indicator over the

[5] Appendix III reflects on the concurrent validity of our PC indicator, concluding that it is negatively associated with positive views about bullfighting and hunting, positively associated with feminism, and that it has become increasingly associated with left-wing positions over the years. See Appendix IV on the possible effects of the wording and, more specifically, on the explicit use of the expression 'political correctness', which is likely to have triggered more negative reactions among people who hold right-wing views.

course of the study as Epanechnikov kernel density estimates. At first glance, the left-skewed distributions are very similar over the years**,** revealing that most people strongly oppose PC. Although the centre of the distribution (M = 3.3) does not vary significantly over time, we observe that more people tend to place themselves nearer the politically incorrect pole as time goes by, particularly in 2019.

Figure 4.2. Distribution of the PC indicator across waves. Kernel density



Bandwidth= 0.523; Epanechnikov kernel density estimates.

To gauge support for Vox – our main independent variable –we firstly use a respondent's intention of voting for the party. The question reads: 'Supposing that tomorrow there were general elections, that is, elections to the Spanish Parliament, which party would you vote for?'. Since wave 9 (June 2017) the 'Vox' option has appeared alongside 32 other possibilities (including 'none', 'I won't vote', 'others', 'blank' and 'I don't know'), therefore gauging the increase in support for Vox. The proportion of respondents who expressed the intention to vote for Vox in wave 9 was 0.8%. This figure increased to 8.1% in wave 12, and 9% in wave 13, although it still falls short of the actual vote share that Vox obtained in the last general election (15.1%). However, this is still a better estimation than the one observed in other representative surveys, such as the post-electoral survey conducted by the Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (CIS) after the

November general election, where the reported vote for Vox was only 7.1%. Additionally, and most importantly, our data can track changes in Vox's electoral support.

Table 4.1. Data structure and main variables in our analyses

	WAVE 9	WAVE 10	WAVE 11	WAVE 12	WAVE 13
Fieldwork	June 2017	May 2018	June 2019	May 2020	May 2021
N	1990	2128	1748	2013	2112
Intends to vote for Vox	YES (N=15, 0.8%)	YES (N=26, 1.2%)	YES (N=97, 5.5%)	YES (N=162, 8.1%)	YES (N=190, 9%)
Voted for Vox in the previous election	-	-	YES (N=95, 5.4%) (2019 I)	YES (N=166, 8.3%) (2019 II)	YES (N=166, 7.9%) (2019 II)
Actual Vox vote share in the last general election	0.2 (2016)	0.2 (2016)	10.3 (2019 I)	15.1 (2019 II)	15.1 (2019 II)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note that '2019 I' refers to the general election held in April 2019. '2019 II' refers to the repeated general election held in November 2019.

Methods

Our data structure (see Table 4.1) and the availability of information regarding voting for Vox pose some challenges that we circumvent by following two complementary strategies. Firstly, we estimate the effects of voting intention change in favour of Vox on within-individual variations of PC, using all waves available (waves 9 to 13). Given the measure of our PC indicator, we rely on a panel fixed-effects linear regression for estimating the effect of changes in the intention to vote for Vox on subsequent attitudes towards PC. In addition, we use a second model to consider the possibility that the intention to vote for Vox (dependent variable) feeds on individuals' attitudes towards PC (independent variable), estimated by means of a linear probability panel regression so the results can be compared across models.[20] Given that most relevant explanatory factors for PC suggested by the literature (e.g. upbringing, personality) are

[20] We rely on Gomila's (2021) work on linear probability models, as logistic models perform poorly in the presence of fixed effects.

time-invariant, we have only selected control variables that can potentially change over time, namely moral absolutism, perceptions of the economy, position on the left-right scale, political interest, and political efficacy. All non-dichotomous variables have been recoded so that higher numbers indicate more/better perceptions and have then been rescaled to run between the values of 0 and 1 – this includes our PC indicator.

Our second and last estimation strategy addresses the non-recursive relationships between PC and the success of Vox. While our theoretical background builds upon the likely effects of the emergence of Vox and of increasing support for the party on PC, the opposite is not only possible, but is a highly likely scenario. Vox and other PRR parties claim to represent those whose freedom of speech is hampered by PC, hence some individuals might have felt attracted to Vox because of their defence of this issue. So far, no previous research has addressed how important this element in Vox's manifesto and discourse is to their success, and an empirical assessment of its impact would already be a relevant contribution to the literature. Moreover, we contend that this relationship (between PC and intention of voting for Vox) coexists with a 'socialization' effect that goes from support for Vox or attraction to the party, to attitudes towards PC.

To model and test these relationships, we employ a cross-lagged model, using information from waves 11 and 12. The reason for this is that these are the only waves for which the reported vote for Vox might actually have changed. Before that, the panel survey refers to the 2016 general election, in which Vox ran but only obtained 0.2%of the vote share and was therefore not included as an option in the voting behaviour question. Wave 13 includes a vote recall question, but it refers to the 2019 repeated (November) election, which yields redundant information when compared to wave 12. Hence, reported voting for Vox could only potentially have changed between waves 11 (after April 2019 general election) and 12 (after November 2019 general election).

Cross-lagged models are designed to test spuriousness by comparing cross-lagged correlations and regression coefficients (Burkholder and Harlow, 2003). The models regress both the dependent and independent variables measured in t1 (wave 12 in our case) on their lagged scores measured in t0 (wave 11), producing regressive scores that provide information on the stability of both variables, and that account, to some extent, for time-constant variables (Berrington *et al*, 2006). They also consider the effects of Y (measured in t0) on X (measured in t1), and of X (measured in t0) on Y (measured in t1). The latter is our coefficient of interest, the one that puts our main hypothesis to empirical test, i.e. that having voted for Vox subsequently undermines individual levels of PC.

Depending on the results of the cross-lagged coefficients, we can detect reciprocal effects, unidirectional relationships, or null effects. We expect the coefficient that gauge the effect of a previous vote for Vox on PC to be positive and significant, even when time-constant phenomena are accounted for, and considering the possibility that the causality also goes in the other direction (a decrease in PC leading to a vote change in favour of Vox). To carry out these estimations, we again employ linear models.

Results

Our subsequent analyses use the information we have available for both our dependent and independent variables (waves 9 to 13) for 3,581 different individuals. On this basis, we estimate four panel fixed-effects linear regressions, the results of which are presented in Table 4.2.[21] The first two models consider PC as our dependent variable. The subsequent models estimate the effects of PC on the intention of voting for Vox. The models presented in columns 1 and 3 do not consider control variables, while models in columns 2 and 4 do consider them.

First and foremost, we see that variations in the intention of voting for Vox exert a negative, significant effect on PC, which slightly decreases when we take other time-variant controls into account. The 0.04 coefficient indicates a 4% decrease in the dependent variable caused by voting intentions changing in favour of Vox. This result is in line with our main expectation, and provides empirical evidence that is aligned with the hypothesis that support for Vox will precede and affect future levels of PC. Notably, PC is also eroded by the respondent being closer to the right of the ideological spectrum, being in favour of more taxation, and having worse perceptions of the economic situation and about his or her own abilities to hold opinions. If we estimate a model that uses PC as a predictor to estimate voting intentions for Vox, PC has a negative, significant effect which is lower than the one observed in the opposite direction. Note that this coefficient indicates the effect on voting intentions when the PC indicator goes from its minimum value to its maximum value (an 11-rung variation). When including time-variant

[7] We refer the reader to Appendices V and VII for two alternative models that includes voting intentions for parties other than Vox. Our conclusions hold.

controls, the initial effect decreases to 2.5%. The effect is clearly smaller than the one observed the other way around, i.e. when compared to the effect on PC caused by the increasing attractiveness of Vox.

Table 4.2. Linear panel fixed-effects estimations for PC and intention of voting for Vox.

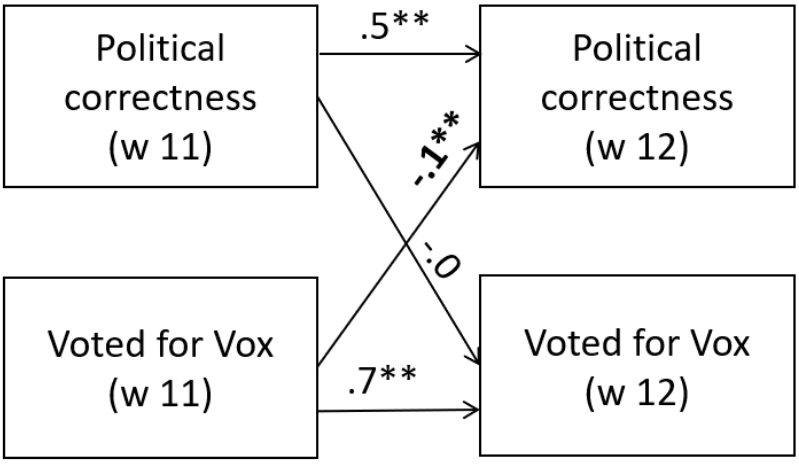
	Political correctness		Intention of voting for Vox	
	Baseline	With controls	Baseline	With controls
	b/se	b/se	b/se	b/se
Intention of voting for Vox	-0.05**	-0.04*		
	(0.02)	(0.02)		
Self-placement on left-right scale		-0.07**		0.16***
		(0.03)		(0.02)
Taxation preferences		-0.06***		-0.03**
		(0.02)		(0.01)
Perception of the economic situation		0.04*		-0.09***
		(0.02)		(0.02)
Perception of own economic situation		-0.02		-0.01***
		(0.01)		(0.01)
Perception of past eco. situation		0.00		-0.05***
		(0.01)		(0.01)
Income		0.02		-0.00
		(0.03)		(0.02)
Moral absolutism		0.00		0.02
		(0.02)		(0.01)
Interest in politics		0.01		0.05**
		(0.02)		(0.02)
Political efficacy: easy to understand		-0.03		-0.00
		(0.02)		(0.01)
Political efficacy: I always have opinions		-0.05**		0.05****
		(0.02)		(0.01)
Political correctness			-0.03**	-0.025**
			(0.0)	(0.01)
Observations	9,991	8,467	9,991	8,467
Individuals	3,581	3,332	3,581	3,332
Overall R2	0.01	0.04	0.01	0.11

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$. Constants omitted.

Our last empirical test employs a cross-lagged model that regresses our PC indicator on electoral behaviour (having voted for Vox or not in the previous election), considering only our 11th and 12th panel waves. This model yields four coefficients of

interest: two referring to the stability of the variables (represented over the horizontal arrows in Figure 4.3), and two representing contending explanations. The first (downwards diagonal) implies that past attitudes (initial PC) predict future electoral behaviour. However, our theory posits that previous electoral behaviour can yield a decrease in PC attitudes. We therefore expect the second (upward) diagonal path to exhibit a significant and negative coefficient. The results for our first cross-lagged estimation, considering our general indicator of PC as a dependent variable, are presented in Figure 4.3.

Figure 4.3. Cross-lagged estimation of the effect of voting for Vox on PC. Waves 11 & 12. Standardized coefficients



Note: the standardized coefficients for each relationship are represented over the respective arrow. The bold font indicates the coefficient that tests our main hypothesis. ** indicates significant effects at confidence level of 95% or higher. Covariances, means and errors are estimated but not represented.

Notably, the coefficient that suggests an effect of past PC on future voting for Vox is not significant, while the opposite effect (from a past vote for Vox to subsequent PC, in bold type) is negative and significant.[22] This is consistent with the results presented in Table 4.2, which are based on voting intention. This suggests that those who changed their vote choice in favor of Vox between April and November 2019 – probably swayed by the success of Vox in the first election, that skyrocketed from 0% to over 10% of the vote share – may have embraced politically incorrect attitudes as part of their new partisan

[8] See Appendix VII for detailed output in table format.

identity.

Conclusions

PC has recently become a political issue, brought forth by PRR parties, which now champion political incorrectness. Nevertheless, neither the literature on the individual dimensions and measures of PC nor the literature on the symbolic effects of PRR parties have proven that the discourse and practices of these parties affect perceptions of PC in citizens' hearts and minds. This research has empirically put to test the general hypothesis that support for PRR parties can change citizens' attitudes, pushing PRR voters and sympathizers towards politically incorrect positions. Our results confirm that switching voting intentions or behaviour in favor of a PRR party can subsequently lower individuals' levels of PC.

To test our expectations, we used the Spanish case, which appeared to be an optimal scenario for studying the relationship between PRR and PC in the short term. Indeed, Spain had not had a prominent PRR party since the restoration of democracy in the 1970s. This allowed us to capture the effects of the emergence of Vox, the most successful PRR party in Spain and, currently, the third most voted-for party in parliament. Second, since PC has not been a hot topic in the Spanish public agenda until very recently, we can gauge how the PRR's anti-PC messages entered Spanish public opinion. Third, the high number of national elections that have taken place in Spain over the last few years and Vox's meteoric rise allows us to capture the relative success of a PRR party almost in real-time (and over a timespan of only a few years). If attitudinal change can happen in such a short period of time, the likelihood of observing similar or more accute results in other countries where PRR parties have been a fixture for the last few decades is certainly greater. However, further research should also explore this relationship in other contexts.

Our approach for capturing the symbolic effects of Vox on PC focuses on individuals. We contend that Vox became an issue entrepreneur and owner regarding PC, and that their sympathizers have been recently exposed to their discourse against PC, ultimately developing anti-PC attitudes. To tap the within-individual dynamics of PC, we use five waves of a panel survey. Following two different methodological strategies, we find consistent results suggesting that feeling more sympathy towards Vox – and having

voted for them – does make individuals more prone to thinking that PC has gone too far, and that people get offended too easily.

The mechanisms behind the relationship between supporting PRR forces and PC should be explored more deeply. Our estimations suggest that the evolution of PC is related to perceptions about Vox regardless of self-placement along the left-right scale, moral absolutism, and other time-variant and invariant factors. In our opinion, our results suggest that PC has been recently politicised and claimed by Vox, and that the party has 'educated' its followers on the matter, notwithstanding some of Vox's followers' ideas being previously aligned with the party's discourse.

Our PC measure has several virtues – one key benefit is its simplicity –but also imposes some limitations on our research. Concurrent validity analyses indicate that our indicator correlates with pro-inclusiveness attitudes towards feminism, same-sex marriage, anti-speciesism, or immigration, although the content and meaning of PC have evolved in the last few years. The question wording also seems to be one that particularly triggers right-leaning citizens, although this does not explain why the association between closeness to Vox and PC becomes stronger over time. All in all, our PC indicator helps us capture the extent to which PC has become a relevant political issue, and to observe individuals' positions towards it.

Finally, some of the observed effects might be more related to a decrease in social desirability bias than to an actual attitudinal change. Following Bischof and Wagner (2019), the institutionalization of PRR parties might have affected perceptions of social norms, making 'politically incorrect' opinions appear to be perfectly acceptable, even mainstream, and therefore not so off-limits. Nevertheless, even if this were the only explanation behind the observed results, our conclusions would still be relevant and worrisome. If discourses against minorities become more present among the citizenry and, consequently, become legitimised, in the long run this could lead to a real change in preferences or attitudes towards the minority groups that PRR supporters consider too easily offended, including the female half the population. The legitimization and repetition of these discourses among PRR parties' supporters through echo chambers can further radicalise their positions, making them more visible (and acceptable), polarizing public debate, dragging political actors' positions along with them and, ultimately, attracting larger audiences. The rights of minorities could become endangered, and social cohesion eroded. In line with this, further research should explore how the relationship

between PRR parties and PC evolves in the long run and the causal mechanisms connecting both phenomena, as well as the association between other parties' positions and PC.

Chapter 5. Does populism fuel affective polarization? An individual-level panel data analysis

Introduction

The study of affective polarization (AP) has straddled its natural habitat, the US, spawning interest among European scholars (Hansen and Kosiara-Pedersen 2017; Reiljan 2020; Wagner 2021; Westwood et al. 2018). With the rise of studies dealing with affective polarization, our knowledge of citizens' like and dislike towards partisans and opponents has expanded. In line with the prominence populism has had in the previous decades, both pundits and the media have attempted to link populism and polarization.

Despite the extensive work devoted to both topics independently, there remains a dearth of empirical research exploring the causal relationship between populism and polarization, especially at the individual level. Research linking populism and polarization has usually focused on the populist radical right, with only a handful of works including also the populist left in their analyses, basically resorting to cross-sectional data (Afonso and Papadopoulos 2015; Castanho Silva 2018; Fuller et al. 2022; Ginsburgh, Perelman, and Pestieau 2021; Handlin 2018; Müller et al. 2017a; Palonen 2009; Roberts 2022).

The relationship between populism and polarization could be argued to be reciprocal. In fact, polarization has been signalled to be an antecedent of populism, while another strand of the literature follows the opposite premise. This article follows the second argument (see, for example, Handlin, 2018; Hameleers and Fawzi, 2020; Guan, Liu and Yang, 2021; Fuller *et al.*, 2022; Roberts, 2022), focusing on the effect populism can have on AP.

Populism divides society into two opposite groups: the pure us, the people, versus the evil them, the elite. In line with the social identity theory, populism's creation of the dichotomy between an ingroup and an outgroup can boost levels of AP, as the sense of belonging to a group boosts positive feelings towards it, while the definition of an out-group can trigger negative emotions in relation to it (Billig and Tajfel 1973; Tajfel and Turner 1979).

Additionally, this dyad is constructed in moral terms: populism's Manichean view of society defines the ingroup as morally superior to the evil outgroup (Mudde 2004, 2017). Therefore, the outgroup is not only different to oneself but also corrupt and impure, which can awake anger, indignation, and even bigotry towards the other. In line with this, and to put it simply, I posit that populism can influence the gap of affects towards ingroups and outgroups, increasing affect towards the ingroup and decreasing affect towards the outgroup.

Finally, populist parties and candidates tend to polarize ideologically — understanding ideological polarization as the extent to which parties or individuals are ideologically distanced (Sartori 2005)—, as they are usually positioned at the extremes of the ideological spectrum. If populism is also able to polarize in terms of like and dislike towards groups, concerns may be raised, as AP has both political and non-political consequences. AP appears to enhance political participation (Iyengar and Krupenkin 2018), but it has also been found to dehumanize out-partisans in the United States (Barber and Davis 2022; Martherus et al. 2021), to boost discrimination against them (Hersh and Goldenberg 2016), and to distance from them both physically (Gimpel and Hui 2015) and personally (Chen and Rohla 2018; Huber and Malhotra 2017; Iyengar, Konitzer, and Tedin 2018; Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes 2012a).

Considering the ultimate consequences of the increase in AP and the lack of empirical evidence on the causal relationship between populism and AP, I resort to survey panel data coming from a sample of Spanish residents to test the effects of changes in populism at the individual level on subsequent levels of AP. This panel survey has been conducted yearly since 2010, which allows to track within individual changes in behaviour, attitudes, values, and a way array of variables. Using data from nine waves (in which our variables of interest are included in the questionnaire), I find becoming a supporter of a populist party does not influence, a priori, subsequent levels of AP. On the contrary, when focusing on within individual variation of populist attitudes, evidence is found in favour of the idea that increases in populist attitudes correlate with higher subsequent levels of affective polarization. Finally, the increase in populist attitudes is found to increase affect towards the in-party, as well as decreasing affect towards out-parties.

The following section presents the definition of the key concepts of this study: populism, populist attitudes and affective polarization, for then theorizing the relationship between them. Then I theoretically debate how populism is expected to influence both

components of affective polarization (i.e., ingroup like and outgroup dislike). The article continues with the presentation of the data and measurement, for then moving into the results. Finally, the article finishes with a discussion of the results and the conclusion, also pointing out avenues for further development of the study of populism and polarization.

The relationship between populism and affective polarization

Populism is understood as a thin 'ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, "the pure people" versus "the corrupt elite", and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people' (italics in the original) (Mudde 2004, 543). According to this definition, scholars have worked on measuring populism at the individual level, developing different measures of what has been coined as populist attitudes (see, for example, Hawkins, Riding and Mudde, 2012; Akkerman, Mudde and Zaslove, 2014; Castanho Silva, Blanuša and Littvay, 2015; Castanho Silva *et al.*, 2019; Wuttke, Schimpf and Schoen, 2020), which aim to capture the extent to which individuals share the populist worldview.

On the other hand, the extent to which individuals hold positive affect towards their own partisan group while holding negative feelings about outgroups is named 'affective polarization' (AP) (Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes 2012a; Wagner 2021). To put it straight, AP could be defined as the extent to which individuals see politics as a division into two clusters (Wagner 2021).

Hence, both populism and AP speak of a bisected society —between ingroup(s) and outgroup(s)—, which led scholars to theorize the possible relationship between populism and polarization, usually at the macro level and focusing on ideological polarization. Ignazi, for instance, argues that the rise of the populist radical right (PRR) can be a consequence of polarization. He poses that right-wing parties appeal to traditional values, authority, and nationalism for differentiating themselves from left/centre, after converging in the centre with these parties. Then, when the right goes back to the centre creates a crisis of identification of individuals with these parties and the system in general, opening the door for the PRR to succeed (Ignazi 1992b; Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2018).

However, a different strand of the literature focuses on the reverse relationship — that populism precedes polarization—, which is tested in this article. Hence, when mainstream parties converge at the centre of the political spectrum, populist parties could emerge, spurring on this situation accusing parties and politicians of not representing the people, and finally getting support (Laclau 2005a). In line with this argument, it is claimed that populists could radicalize, re-ideologize and polarize politics (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2018; Sartori 1976, 2005).

In line with this argument, Pappas even considers 'promoting polarization at the expense of consensus and moderation' (Pappas 2019, 59) as one of the requisites for a party to be considered populist. While this exceeds the boundaries of our understanding of populism, it shows the theoretical importance given to the relationship between populism and polarization at the party/system level.

In sum, existent research at the macro-level argues populists can benefit from pre-existing moderation, using divisive discourses for getting certain issues on the agenda which were overlooked by the establishment, getting support from part of a disenchanted electorate which is brought back into politics (Hawkins 2018; Huber and Ruth 2017; Kriesi 2014; Laclau 2005a; Mudde 2014; Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2018; Taggart 2004). In such moments of crisis of democratic representation populism 'transcends traditional forms of ideological affiliations, allegiances, and partisanship' (Tismaneanu 2000, 11), boosting anti-elitism and Manicheism, and being able to polarize beyond the ideological axis, also in terms of affect.

These premises, however, have not resonated in research at the individual level. Indeed, the relationship between populism and polarization at the macro/party level can be driven by what is usually attached to populism (for example, populist parties may polarize societies in general because not only of their populist discourses, but because of the rhetoric this family of parties usually use, because they tend to be positioned at the extremes of the political spectrum, or due to other reasons which exceed the boundaries of this study).

To isolate the effect of populism per se on AP, this article focuses on the individual level, arguing populism's division of society, together with its Manichean component, could influence polarization levels in terms of affect towards others (Afonso and Papadopoulos 2015; Guan, Liu, and Yang 2021; Harteveld, Mendoza, and Rooduijn 2021; Müller et al. 2017a; Pappas 2014b; Tajfel and Turner 1979). Therefore, our focus

moves from the supply of populism and how citizens see this family of parties vis-à-vis non-populist parties, to how citizens' levels of populism affect their levels of AP.

The division between the people and the elite which lies at the core of populism assigns a moral component to this segmentation of society (Mudde 2004). Therefore, while the ingroup (i.e., the people) is pure and good by definition, the outgroup (i.e., the elite) is corrupt and evil. Accordingly, populism is a clear example of ingroup-outgroup thinking (Harteveld, Mendoza, and Rooduijn 2021, 4).

Any form of such ingroup vs. outgroup thinking sparks, respectively, positive and negative feelings towards both groups (Billig and Tajfel 1973; Iyengar et al. 2019). This argument would lead us to think populists would reflect a positive affect towards the people and a negative one towards the elite. Guan and colleagues (Guan, Liu, and Yang 2021) point at the out-group exclusion of populism as one of the key motives (aside from partisanship) for the increase in polarization, as well as populist messages or media, appealing to the inherent incompatibility and dichotomy of both populism and polarization. This argument is straightforward: the appeal to the ingroup and outgroup identities of populism affectively distances those identifying with the former from those categorized in the latter. In doing so, populism is expected to foster affective polarization.

It should be noted that populism rarely exists by itself, being usually attached to macro-ideologies (Freeden 2003), which makes the us vs. them division of populism coexist with other social identities. Therefore, these two groups constructed in populist rhetoric coexist with other group affiliations such as partisanship. In fact, when populists identify with the people, they usually do so in contraposition to other parties and social groups, defining all of them as the elite (or at least its allies) which has failed the electorate/the people. Therefore, the ingroup created by populism is attached to partisanship, as the outgroup is also linked to other partisan identities.

Then, the affective gap fostered by populism cannot be only expected to widen in terms of 'the people' versus 'the elite', but also to translate into the division between other social groups or identities, particularly between the partisan identities attached to them. Hence, populists can see their own group as purer or palatable, while considering the outgroup less respectable or likeable, not only in terms of people/elite but also regarding partisan divisions. In doing so, the gap between affect towards the partisan ingroup versus the outgroup increases, raising *de facto* levels of affective polarization.

Another argument in favour of the hypothesis that populism boosts polarization focuses on the Manichean component of populism (Harteveld, Mendoza, and Rooduijn

2021). The division of society between two basic groups is accompanied by a moral antagonism: 'the people' is intrinsically good and 'the elite' is bad and corrupt. In the words of Billig and Tajfel, dividing an individual's social world 'into "them" and "us", can be, at least in our societies, a *sufficient* condition for introducing in his behaviour certain forms of ingroup favouritism and of discrimination against the outgroup' (Billig and Tajfel 1973, 28).

Hence, just the mere act of creating a social category to which an individual feels a sense of belonging can be expected to increase positive feelings towards that ingroup while decreasing affect towards outgroups. In adding to this polarizing division of society the Manichean connotation of populism, individuals could be expected to develop antagonistic emotions related to their ingroup and outgroup, —again, not only in terms in 'the people' against 'the elite' but also regarding partisanship—, which can influence their behavior (Marcus 2000). In having positive emotions related to the ingroup and negative ones to the outgroup, the affective gap can be expected to widen. What is more, identifying with an ingroup which is good and arouses positive emotions can lead individuals to echo chambers, where similar views are dominant and reinforce each other, leading to further polarization (Wollebæk et al. 2019).

In line with all these arguments, it could be expected that increases in populism would lead to higher levels of AP. However, two different forms of understanding populism at the individual level should be accounted for when considering this relationship: first, individuals can be identified with a populist party (or be supporters of these actors); second, individuals can hold different levels of populist attitudes.

Populist party supporter vs populist individual

Previous research has focused on how identification and support for populist parties influence polarization. The argument behind this relationship is based on the idea that populist parties tend to have extreme positions on certain issues, and that these parties portray society as a dyad. In doing so, it would be easy to think that individuals who identify with populist parties would be likely to also adopt this way of understanding politics and society in general.

Harteveld and colleagues have empirically studied this relationship, concluding supporters of populist parties both irradiate and receive high levels of negativity (towards outgroups), especially the populist radical right (PRR) (Harteveld, Mendoza, and

Rooduijn 2021). These authors argue the main trigger of AP is the combination of different forms of ingroup vs outgroup thinking of the PRR, which leads their supporters to increase the gap of affects towards their ingroup and outgroup. Fuller and colleagues also explore the relationship between populism and AP (Fuller et al. 2022). Their results, in line with Harteveld and colleagues, suggest that citizens' distribution of affects towards parties and their supporters can be explained in different countries by the degrees of populism of those parties, almost to the extent in which affects can be explained by positions in the ideological spectrum.

Thus, we know that the degree of parties' populism correlates with the affective gap of citizens in terms of partisanship, but we still lack more fine-grained knowledge of the effect of 'being populist' or 'being a populist party supporter' on AP. Populist parties have been found to affect citizens' perceptions, policy positions, and other parties' discourses (at least in the short term) (Mudde 2013, 2014, 2019a). Individuals who identify with populist parties are not only expected to follow party cues in terms of ingroup vs outgroup thinking but they can be expected to genuinely believe in that division of society between *the good us* vs *the evil them*. Moreover, as the identities created by populism are combined with partisan ones, individuals who identify with populist parties can be expected to wield a wider gap between the good people of their party and the bad elite that other parties —and their supporters— represent. Consequently, becoming identified with a populist party will be expected to increase individual levels of AP (Hypothesis 1).

This positive relationship between populism and AP is also expected to occur when measuring populist attitudes. Even though populist attitudes are correlated with supporting populist parties (Akkerman, Mudde, and Zaslove 2014; Marcos-Marne 2021; Marcos-Marne, Plaza-Colodro, and Freyburg 2020), non-populist parties' supporters can also hold them. As populist attitudes capture the extent to which individuals share a worldview based on anti-elitism, Manicheism, and people centrism, their increase could foster ingroup vs. outgroup thinking, adding a moral component to both groups, and therefore increasing affect towards the ingroup and decreasing it towards the outgroup.

Therefore, increasing populist attitudes basically implies broadening the gap between 'the pure us' versus 'the evil them'. In being these groups created by populism attached to partisan identities, it could be expected that the increase in populist attitudes will heighten the gap of affect towards the partisan ingroups and outgroups. In other

words, the increase in individuals' populist attitudes will result in increases in their levels of AP (Hypothesis 2).

Exploring the relationship: a symmetric change on the affects towards ingroup and outgroup?

According to our understanding, AP is composed of two basic elements: affect towards the ingroup and towards the outgroup. Therefore, the effect of populism on AP could be explained by the increase in the affect towards the ingroup, because of the decrease in the affect towards the outgroup, or due to the combination of both.

On the one hand, the effect of changes in populism on AP may be caused by the increase of the affect towards the ingroup. It has been argued that the creation of the social identity of 'the pure people' may increase affect towards the ingroup also in partisan terms. Previous literature has also shown that identification with a group predisposes individuals affectively and behaviourally, especially increasing the disposition to like and favour the ingroup (Billig and Tajfel 1973; Harteveld, Mendoza, and Rooduijn 2021; Simon and Klandermans 2001; Tajfel and Turner 1979). Focusing on changes in populism at the individual level in terms of populist attitudes, it could be expected that increases in populist attitudes would enhance affect towards the 'us', the ingroup. In line with this, the following hypotheses are stated:

Hypothesis 3.1: becoming a populist party supporter will result in an increase in ingroup affect.

Hypothesis 3.2: increases in populist attitudes will result in an increase in ingroup affect.

On the other hand, populism may also boost AP by increasing outgroup animosity (or what is the same, by decreasing levels of affect towards the outgroup). Populists' creation of an outgroup, in opposition to the people, is expected to increase dislike, trigger negative emotions, and even foster hostility towards the outgroup. Constructing an outgroup has been shown to increase discrimination against it (Billig and Tajfel 1973), to the extent of not valuing non-partisans' lives as much as co-partisans' ones (Barber and Davis 2022). Moreover, adding to that outgroup a moral connotation, as the elite —and the partisan groups attached to it— is considered a threat to the people's interests, will increase outgroup bias, increasing negative affect towards it (Brewer 1999; Harteveld, Mendoza, and Rooduijn 2021). In line with this, the following hypothesis is stated:

Hypothesis 4.1: becoming a populist party supporter will result in a decrease in outgroup affect.

Hypothesis 4.2: increases in populist attitudes will result in a decrease in outgroup affect.

Data and measurement

To empirically test the effects of changes in populism on affective polarization I resort to a Spanish panel survey conducted yearly by the research group *Democracy, Elections and Citizenship* (Hernández et al. 2021). This survey follows a representative sample of young and middle-aged internet users who reside in Spain. Quotas are introduced to assure a balanced representation in terms of gender, education, size of the municipality, and religion. While the survey is conducted since 2010, because of the availability of data I use waves from 2014 until 2022.

The questionnaire includes a set of questions which allow for capturing the main variables of interest in this study. First, to measure populist attitudes, and following Akkerman and colleagues (Akkerman, Mudde, and Zaslove 2014), six items are included in the survey and used for the analyses[23]. Individuals are asked to respond using a scale from 0 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), and then the average of all responses is calculated and transformed to range between 0 and 10. Therefore, as closer to 10 the score, the more populist the individual would be.

Measuring affective polarization is a harder task —even though in bipartisan systems measuring affect towards the two main parties is easier—. To measure affective polarization in multiparty systems, like Spain, I build upon Wagner's recommendations, measuring it as the spread of like-dislike scores towards the different parties for each individual (Wagner 2021).

Previous works have measured affective polarization using the party feeling thermometer or like-dislike scales. However, the availability of data has led scholars to use certain proxies (Druckman and Levendusky 2019; Iyengar and Westwood 2015; Rogowski and Sutherland 2016; Westwood et al. 2018).

Due to the availability of traditional feeling thermometers or like-dislike scales in the panel dataset, to measure AP I resort to probability to vote for a party (PTV). While

[23] See Appendix 1 for the wording of the different items.

AP is basically focused on the distance towards individuals, PTV captures what could be considered the distance towards parties, not towards their supporters. While this could be considered problematic, PTV have been successfully used as a proxy for capturing AP (Orriols and León 2020).

What is more, the use of PTV as a proxy for traditional measures of AP has been validated in previous research. Using the same panel dataset and an additional representative survey of Spaniards, Balinhas (2022) compares the PTV measure with traditional like-dislike scales, finding correlations between both measures that range between 0.8 and 0.87. This indicates a high correlation between PVT and like-dislike towards the main partisan groups in Spain, which therefore does not appear to threaten our analyses due to the differences on the measures —note that the validation of this proxy has only been proved for the case of Spain, and this could not apply to different contexts in which, for example, there is more strategic voting than in systems with proportional representation—.

According to Wagner's measure, and using PTV instead of like, our measure calculates the spread of PTV scores each individual gives to different parties[24]. For each individual, the spread is calculated as follows, and then is recoded to range from 0 to 10, indicating higher values higher affective polarization:

$$Spread_i = \sqrt{\frac{\sum_{p=1}^{P} (\text{PTV}ip\text{-}\overline{\text{PTV}}\text{i})^2}{np}}$$

being *p* the party, *i* the individual, and PTVip the probability to vote assigned to each party *p* by each individual *i*. Results are replicated in the appendix using the Weighted Affective Polarization equation proposed by Wagner (Wagner 2021, 4) [25].

For measuring ingroup affect, I use the PTV for the party each individual feels closer to: 0 implies an individual would not vote for her preferred party and 10 that she is sure she is voting for her preferred party. In line with this measure, I calculate outgroup affect as the average of the summed PTVs for all available parties, excluding one's preferred party. In this case, the variable is also recoded to range between 0 and 10, indicating lower levels lower affect towards the outgroup, and higher levels, more affect.

[24] Only nationwide parties are included: PP, PSOE, IU, Ciudadanos, Podemos, and Vox.

[25] For an extensive explanation of the details of the different measurements see Wagner (2021).

This study's fourth main variable of interest is identification with a populist party. For this, individuals are asked '*For which of the following parties do you feel more sympathy, or which one do you consider closer to your own ideas?'*. Individuals are presented with a list of parties, as well as the options *'Other'* and '*None'*. Those identifying with one of the populist parties in the sample are coded as 2; as 0 if they identify with one of the mainstream parties included in the survey (PSOE, PP, Ciudadanos, and IU); and as 1 if they do not identify with any party.[26] For the sake of avoiding controversy and opening a debate about the classification of parties as populist, I follow the PopuList, in which only Podemos and Vox are classified as such (Rooduijn et al. 2019). Therefore, those identifying with mainstream parties are coded as 0 (reference category in the analyses), those who do not identify with any party as 1, and those identifying with Vox and Podemos are coded as 2.

Finally, ideology captures the position in the left-right spectrum. Individuals position themselves in a scale from 0 to 10, where the former means extreme left and 10 extreme right. Closeness to a party captures the extent to which individuals feel close to the party they identify with. If they do not identify with a party, they are assigned the value 0. If they identify, they are presented with three different options: barely close, quite close, and very much close, which take the values 1, 2, and 3, respectively.

Seizing on the structure of the data, I resort to a series of fixed effects linear panel regressions. This type of model allows for examining the relationship between our independent and dependent variables in terms of within individual change, controlling for individual-specific characteristics. Linear regressions with fixed effects allow for controlling for unobserved heterogeneity, controlling for time-invariant factors, so helping to avoid omitted variable bias. Finally, among the benefits of this model it should be highlighted that as it differences out individual-specific effects, it improves causal inference, in comparison with other models such as traditional regression models (Gomila 2021; Longhi and Nandi 2015). In sum, linear panel regressions with fixed effects 'are

[26] Those individuals who do not identify with any party are not excluded from the analyses, but are presented in a different category, as for mathematical reasons, their levels of affective polarization. This happens also for individuals who identify with smaller parties (see footnote 5). As the question capturing the PTVs for parties only include PSOE, PP, IU, Ciudadanos, Podemos, and Vox, supporters of smaller parties and those with no-party ID do not have an *ingroup*, in terms of preferred party. Therefore, their assignation of PTVs is low for all parties, which reduces the distribution of affects artificially, not capturing their real levels of affective polarization.

designed to study the cause of changes within a person' (Kohler and Kreuter 2005, 240), therefore focusing on how changes in the independent variable of one entity over time affect the same entity's changes in the dependent variable of interest.

Hence, the methodological strategy is designed not to understand how different levels of populism correlate to levels of AP, but to explore how changes in populism over time affect within subsequent levels of AP independently of the baseline level of populism of each individual. To see it clearly, the linear panel regression with fixed effects model is the following:

$$Y_{it}=\alpha_i+\beta X_{it}+u_i+e_{it}$$
$$i = 1 \ldots n \; ; \; t = 1 \ldots . T,$$

where Y_{it} is the outcome variable (for an individual i at time t); α_i is the intercept for each entity; X_{it} is the vector of predictors (for entity i at time t); u_i is with within-entity error term; e_{it} is the overall error term; and β is the within individual effect controlling for individual heterogeneity, or what it is the same, β indicates the change in the outcome (AP) when the predictor changes one unit over time (populism).

Results

This section presents the analyses and results —and includes a table of descriptive statistics, which is extended in the appendix—, which will be further discussed in the subsequent section. The results of six fixed-effects linear panel regressions are presented in Table 5.2, wherein Models 1 to 3 present the outcomes of the regressions that were conducted on a larger sample of respondents. Conversely, Models 4 to 6 replicate the same analyses on a smaller sample that only comprises individuals included in the analyses depicted in Table 4, to ensure comparability. It should be noted that the dependent variable in all six models is AP, and that we have standardize the main variables in the analyses to improve the comparability of the magnitude of the effects. The standardization is computed following Gelman's recommendations —i.e., subtracting the mean of each variable and dividing it by two standard deviations—, 'which allows the coefficients to be interpreted in the same way as with binary inputs'— (Gelman 2008, 2867).

Table 5.1. Descriptives (before standardization)

	Wave 6	Wave 7	Wave 8	Wave 9	Wave 10	Wave 11	Wave 12	Wave 13	Wave 14
Party ID*									
0	448	423	533	960	1,025	871	828	806	677
	(59.57)	(50.00)	(58.9)	(57.38)	(58.07)	(58.93)	(48.42)	(46.27)	(47.18)
1	249	204	177	388	443	297	463	545	434
	(33.11)	(24.11)	(19.56)	(23.19)	(25.10)	(20.09)	(27.08)	(31.29)	(30.24)
2	55	219	195	325	297	310	419	391	324
	(7.31)	(25.89)	(21.55)	(19.43)	(16.83)	(20.97)	(24.50)	(22.45)	(22.58)
Populist attitudes									
Mean	6.83	6.74	6.91	6.57	6.62	6.39	6.36	6.34	6.47
SD	1.63	1.73	1.78	1.80	1.75	1.65	1.61	1.68	1.56
AP									
Mean	3.82	4.85	5.26	4.60	4.34	5.01	4.64	4.40	4.50
SD	3.27	2.92	2.94	2.92	2.93	2.82	2.95	2.98	2.91
Ideology									
Mean	4.22	4.27	4.35	4.34	4.39	4.38	4.48	4.61	4.63
SD	1.74	1.75	1.83	1.83	1.85	1.94	2.00	2.05	2.04

** 0 (Mainstream party); 1 (No-party ID); 2 (Populist party ID). N by wave, (percentage in parentheses)*

Model 1 (as well as the replication in Model 4) tests hypothesis 1, which stated that becoming identified with a populist party would increase those individuals' levels of AP. Accordingly, we would expect the coefficient of 'Populist party ID' to be positive and statistically significant. However, in the first set of models, with a larger sample, results are positive, while being negative in the more restricted sample. Nevertheless, the coefficients are not statistically significant, which leads us to reject hypothesis 1, as becoming identified with a populist party does not appear to boost affective polarization.

Interestingly, those individuals who become 'not identified' with any party show a decrease in their levels of AP. However, it should be noted that this might be a mathematical effect of the measure of affective polarization itself. Those individuals who do not identify with a party may consistently show disaffect towards all parties asked for in the survey, so the spread of affects is biased, as it is concentrated in one pole of the response scale.

Moving to hypothesis 2, which focused on the change in populist attitudes, results do confirm our expectations. Across models (more specifically, Models 2 and 5, and even when including populist party ID in Models 3 and 6), the coefficient of interest for populist attitudes shows a positive and statistically significant effect on affective

polarization. Individuals whose populist attitudes increase over time also increase their levels of AP. It should be highlighted once again that changes in populist attitudes can occur also among supporters or non-populist parties, as they capture the extent to which all individuals share the worldview of populism.

Table 5.2. Fixed-effects linear panel regressions (DV: Affective polarization) [27]

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
VARIABLES	1	2	3	4	5	6
No party ID	-0.277***		-0.277***			
	(0.0119)		(0.0119)			
Populist party ID	0.00557		0.00277	-0.0126		-0.0161
	(0.0111)		(0.0112)	(0.0123)		(0.0123)
Populist attitudes		0.0307***	0.0300***		0.0313***	0.0324***
		(0.00825)	(0.00800)		(0.00962)	(0.00965)
Ideology	-0.0112	-0.0145	-0.0117	-0.0207*	-0.0210*	-0.0210*
	(0.00981)	(0.0101)	(0.00980)	(0.0112)	(0.0112)	(0.0112)
Ideology^2	0.0510***	0.0549***	0.0509***	0.0571***	0.0557***	0.0569***
	(0.0104)	(0.0107)	(0.0104)	(0.0117)	(0.0117)	(0.0117)
Closeness party	0.105***	0.163***	0.105***	0.102***	0.102***	0.103***
	(0.00555)	(0.00514)	(0.00554)	(0.00582)	(0.00580)	(0.00582)
Constant	-0.0735***	-0.221***	-0.0755***	0.102***	0.100***	0.0995***
	(0.0141)	(0.0131)	(0.0141)	(0.0172)	(0.0172)	(0.0172)
Observations	12,306	12,306	12,306	8,371	8,371	8,371
R-squared	0.191	0.138	0.193	0.072	0.074	0.074
Number of panelists	3,852	3,852	3,852	3,006	3,006	3,006

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1
NOTE: Controls by year are included in the analyses but omitted in the results

[27] The analyses presented in Table 2 include respondents who identify with non-populist mainstream parties (as the reference category: PSOE, PP, Ciudadanos, and IU), individuals who do not identify with any party (category 'No party ID'), and those who identify with a populist party ('Populist party ID': Podemos and Vox). Individuals identifying with other parties are not included in none of the categories for the analyses, as data for constructing the indicator of affective polarization is only available for the abovementioned parties. As the measure of affective polarization of individuals who identify with smaller parties does not include their own party, this can bias their levels of affective polarization. However, Table A2 in the Appendix includes the replication of these analyses including a category for those identifying with small parties.

In sum, becoming identified with a populist party does not appear to boost individuals' levels of AP. On the contrary, the increase in populist attitudes does have a positive effect on subsequent levels of AP. However, before moving into a more fine-grained analysis of the effects of populism on both components of AP, and benefiting from the existence of a populist party on each side of the ideological spectrum in Spain, we replicate the previous analyses differentiating between becoming a supporter of Podemos and of Vox.

Results presented in Table 5.3 portray a different picture of the effects of becoming a populist party supporter on subsequent levels of AP. Hence, becoming a Podemos supporter appears to have a positive effect on AP, but this effect is not statistically significant across the different models. But more interestingly, becoming a supporter of the populist radical right party Vox appears to exert a negative effect on levels of AP, effect that is statistically significant across models.

Table 5.3. FE linear panel regressions differentiating by populist party.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
VARIABLES	1	2	3	4
No party ID	-0.275***	-0.275***		
	(0.0119)	(0.0119)		
Podemos	0.0431***	0.0413***	0.00240	0.000270
	(0.0137)	(0.0137)	(0.0161)	(0.0160)
Vox	-0.0585***	-0.0634***	-0.0323*	-0.0377**
	(0.0176)	(0.0177)	(0.0182)	(0.0183)
Populist attitudes		0.0314***		0.0330***
		(0.00800)		(0.00966)
Ideology	-0.00651	-0.00695	-0.0191*	-0.0192*
	(0.00985)	(0.00984)	(0.0113)	(0.0113)
Ideology^2	0.0546***	0.0546***	0.0581***	0.0580***
	(0.0104)	(0.0104)	(0.0117)	(0.0117)
Closeness party	0.106***	0.106***	0.103***	0.103***
	(0.00555)	(0.00554)	(0.00583)	(0.00582)
Constant	-0.0761***	-0.0782***	0.102***	0.0991***
	(0.0141)	(0.0141)	(0.0172)	(0.0172)
Observations	12,306	12,306	8,371	8,371
R-squared	0.193	0.195	0.073	0.075
Number of panelists	3,852	3,852	3,006	3,006

Standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

NOTE: Controls by year are included in the analyses but omitted in the results

Table 5.4 presents the results of four fixed effects linear panel regressions, in which hypotheses 3 and 4 are tested. Models 1 and 2 us ingroup (in-party) affect as the dependent variable, and Model 3 and 4 use outgroup (out-parties) affect. Following the abovementioned hypothesis, we would expect the coefficients of populist attitudes to be positive in Models 1 and 2, while being negative in Models 3 and 4. This means that increases in populist attitudes and becoming a populist party supporter would result in an increase in affect towards the ingroup and a decrease in affect towards the outgroup.

Focusing on the effects of increases in populist attitudes, results go in line with our hypotheses, and both hypotheses 3.2 and 4.2 can be confirmed. In line with the results, we could affirm that individuals who increase their levels of populist attitudes (independently of the party they support) show higher levels of affect towards their ingroup (or what is the same in this case, for the party they identify with) and less affect towards their out-parties.

On the contrary, the effect of becoming a populist party supporter yields mixed results regarding our expectations. On the one hand, becoming a populist party supporter appears to increase in-party affect, but, contrary to expectations and to previous evidence (Harteveld, Mendoza, and Rooduijn 2022), it does not appear to exert any effect on affect towards out-partisans.

Accordingly, the increase in populist attitudes leads individuals to widen their gap of affects towards ingroup and outgroup, as we have seen in Table 5.2. Additionally, results presented in Table 5.4 support the idea that there is a 'symmetrical' effect of populist attitudes on both components of AP. However, the effects of becoming a populist party supporter are less clear: while they increase the affect towards the own party, it does not appear to have any effect on affect towards the outgroup.

Finally, and considering the different effects on AP of becoming a Podemos or Vox supporter, we expand in the appendix the analyses presented in Table 5.4, as a robustness check. Delving deeper into this relationship, we can see that becoming a supporter of Podemos exerts effects similar to those of populist attitudes on in- and out-group affect —increasing the first and reducing the latter—. However, becoming a Vox supporter does not appear to increase affect towards the ingroup, and more surprisingly, it has a positive effect on affect towards the outgroup, which goes against our expectations and previous empirical evidence in other contexts (Harteveld, Mendoza, and Rooduijn 2022).

Table 5.4. Fixed-effects linear panel regressions

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
VARIABLES	In-party affect	In-party affect	Out-parties affect	Out-parties affect
Populist party ID	0.0174**		0.00360	
	(0.00800)		(0.00599)	
Populist attitudes		0.0299**		-0.0370***
		(0.0137)		(0.0135)
Ideology	-0.0765	0.0357**	0.122***	0.0818***
	(0.0555)	(0.0160)	(0.0416)	(0.0158)
Ideology^2	0.136**	0.0452***	-0.0544	-0.0213
	(0.0530)	(0.0167)	(0.0397)	(0.0164)
Closeness party	0.243***	0.180***	-0.00880	-0.00862
	(0.0113)	(0.00829)	(0.00850)	(0.00817)
Constant	(0.0177)	-0.339***	(0.0133)	-0.0852***
		(0.0245)		(0.0242)
Observations	8,371	8,371	8,371	8,371
R-squared	0.103	0.103	0.028	0.029
Number of panelists	3,006	3,006	3,006	3,006

Standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

NOTE: Controls by year are included in the analyses but omitted in the results

Discussion and conclusion

The link between populism and affective polarization has been suggested by previous literature. However, research has mainly connected these two phenomena at the theoretical level, with empirical studies relying on cross-sectional data and usually focusing on the relationship between populist partisanship and affective polarization, or more at the macro level, on the relationship between populist parties (mainly those pertaining to the populist radical right) and general levels of polarization (Fuller et al. 2022; Guan, Liu, and Yang 2021; Harteveld, Mendoza, and Rooduijn 2021; Roberts 2022).

Both populism and AP speak of a bisected society —us vs. them—, and while the relationship between populism and polarization could be reciprocal, this article focused on the direct effects of populism on affective polarization. Whereas the main groups conceived by populists (i.e., the people and the elite) are not strictly the same as those subject of AP (i.e., the in-party and the out-party/ies), I argue in the populist worldview the in-party and out-parties would be assigned to the categories of 'good us, the people' and 'corrupt them, the elite'.

In line with the ideational approach (Mudde 2004), populism has been measured using two distinct instruments: support for a populist party and holding populist attitudes (Akkerman, Mudde, and Zaslove 2014). Hence, individuals who become identified with a populist party and those who increase their share of populist attitudes are expected to widen the affective gap between their in-party and their out-parties.

Additionally, drawing on the social identity theory (Billig and Tajfel 1973; Tajfel and Turner 1979), the effect of populism on AP is argued to be explained by the two components of AP: by the increase of affect towards the ingroup, and by the decrease of affect towards the outgroup, understood these categories in terms of in-party and out-parties, respectively. In other terms, there could be expected to exist a symmetrical increase in affect towards the ingroup and a decrease of affect towards the outgroup due to increases in populist attitudes and because of becoming a populist party supporter.

Benefiting from panel survey data from Spain covering the period 2014-2022, and using a series of fixed effects linear panel regressions —which allow us to understand how AP changes over time within each respondent are explained by previous changes in populism of the same individual— it could be concluded that it exists a direct effect of populism on AP. Results consistently support the hypothesis that increases in populist attitudes increase within individual levels of AP, and that this effect is explained by both the increase of affect towards the in-party and the decrease of affect towards the out-party.

However, the effect of populism on AP is not as straightforward when analyzing the effect of becoming a populist party supporter, as in the first set of analyses it does not appear to influence subsequent levels of AP. However, benefiting from the existence of a populist party on each side of the ideological spectrum in Spain, further analyses are conducted, in order to get a more fine-grained understanding of the possible relationship.

Thus, when we differentiate between becoming a Podemos and a Vox supporter, differences arise. On the one hand, becoming a Podemos supporter appears to increase

AP, even though these results are not consistent across models. On the other hand, and more surprisingly, becoming a Vox supporter consistently appears to have a negative impact on AP, which goes against our expectations.

What is more, if we look at the effects on both components of AP, becoming a Podemos supporter has a positive effect on affect towards the ingroup and a negative one on affect towards the outgroup, which goes in line with our expectations. But more striking is the effect of becoming a Vox supporter on ingroup and outgroup affect. The effect of becoming a supporter of the PRR on in-party affect is positive, but statistically insignificant, which does not align with our expectations. Additionally, the effect on out-parties affect is positive and statistically significant. Hence, becoming a Vox supporter appears to increase the affect towards the rest of the parties, which does not only go against our expectations but seems counterintuitive.

The PRR has been usually considered to be more exclusionary than the populist left (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2012), but the empirical evidence presented here collides with that idea. While this could be explained by the history of both parties and their link to mainstream parties —with Podemos coming from outside the institutional system (Orriols and Cordero 2016) and Vox arising from the People's Party (Ferreira 2019; Galais and Pérez-Rajó 2023)—, or to the main outgroups created by both parties, future scholarship should explore this disruptive evidence. Besides, in this article I have tested the direct effect of becoming a populist party supporter on AP, so further research should delve deeper into the indirect effect these parties can have on subsequent levels of AP.

The use of populist attitudes has allowed us to test the direct and, most notably, isolated effect of populism on AP. Additionally, the use of panel data has allowed to improve causal inference, compared to cross-sectional studies. Regarding this relationship, results are clear: the increase in populist attitudes increases AP, by both increasing and decreasing affect towards the in-party and the out-party, respectively.

Results indicate that as populist attitudes increase, independently of the party an individual feels attached to, individuals exhibit greater attachment to the political party they have a closer affiliation and a concomitant reduction of positive sentiment towards political parties to which they do not subscribe. Further research should explore if the relationships found in this investigation are also present in other cases besides Spain. Nevertheless, the Spanish context seems a good case for testing our expectations, as two

populist parties emerged in the last decade (each one of them is situated on one side of the left-right political spectrum).

These results highlight the importance of paying attention to the different measurements of populism, especially at the individual level. Increases in populist attitudes do appear to increase AP —even though their effects are consistently smaller than moving to the extremes of the ideological spectrum— but becoming a populist party supporter does not. Accordingly, scholars should be careful when reaching conclusions about the effects of populism if what they are measuring is support for populist parties. These political actors comprise more elements than populism, which can bias the effects and assign to populism the effects of what is attached to it.

Hence, this article should inform the general debate about the relationship between populism and polarization, even though further attention is necessary to explore the effects of AP on populism, which have not been tested in this research. Additionally, considering the ultimate effects of AP on intergroup relationships, these results may be considered significant. Individuals who identify with populist actors do not seem to be a source of polarization in general, but those who share the worldview of populism are. In line with this, the rise of populist discourses that can influence citizens' worldviews in democratic societies may come at a cost: the exacerbation of inter-group tensions and conflicts; the reinforcement of group-based stereotypes or prejudice; and the breakdown in communication, collaboration, or even respect between different political groups.

However, populist parties or candidates cannot be considered the scapegoat for the effect of populist attitudes on affective polarization. *Anti-populist* and mainstream parties have also resorted to Manicheism and oversimplified divisions of societies in their efforts to combat the rise of new political movements and parties, especially populist and left-wing ones (Stavrakakis 2018), which could also lead individuals to accept to a greater extent populism's worldview.

Appendix 5

Table A5.1. Detail of parties included in the different measures of ingroup and outgroup, by party and year

Party ID	Year(s)	Wave	In-party	Out-party	In-bloc	Out-bloc
PSOE		1-6	PSOE	PP	PSOE	PP
		7-10		PP-Ciudadanos-Podemos	PSOE-Podemos	PP-Ciudadanos
		11-14		PP-Ciudadanos-Podemos-Vox	PSOE-Podemos	PP-Ciudadanos-Vox
PP		1-6	PP	PSOE	PP	PSOE
		7-10		PSOE-Ciudadanos-Podemos	PP-Ciudadanos	PSOE-Podemos
		11-14		PSOE-Ciudadanos-Podemos-Vox	PP-Ciudadanos-Vox	
Ciudadanos		1-6	NA	NA	NA	NA

		7-10	Ciudadanos	PSOE-PP-Podemos	Ciudadanos-PP	PSOE-Podemos
		11-14		PSOE-PP-Podemos-Vox	Ciudadanos-PP-Vox	
Podemos		1-6	NA	NA	NA	NA
		7-10	Podemos	PSOE-PP-Ciudadanos	Podemos-PSOE	PP-Ciudadanos
		11-14	Podemos	PSOE-PP-Ciudadanos-Vox		PP-Ciudadanos-Vox
Vox		1-6	NA	NA	NA	NA
		7-10				
		11-14	Vox	PSOE-PP-Ciudadanos-Podemos	Vox-PP-Ciudadanos	PSOE-Podemos

Table A5.2. Replication of Table 2 before the standardization

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
VARIABLES	1	2	3	4	5	6
No party ID	-1.757***		-1.760***			
	(0.0756)		(0.0756)			
Populist party ID	0.0354		0.0176	-0.0802		-0.102
	(0.0708)		(0.0709)	(0.0782)		(0.0784)
Populist attitudes		0.0574***	0.0561***		0.0586***	0.0606***
		(0.0154)	(0.0150)		(0.0180)	(0.0181)
Ideology	-0.217***	-0.238***	-0.218***	-0.257***	-0.252***	-0.257***
	(0.0464)	(0.0479)	(0.0464)	(0.0543)	(0.0541)	(0.0543)
Ideology^2	0.0226***	0.0243***	0.0225***	0.0253***	0.0247***	0.0252***
	(0.00461)	(0.00474)	(0.00460)	(0.00518)	(0.00516)	(0.00518)
Closeness party	0.665***	1.034***	0.667***	0.650***	0.649***	0.653***
	(0.0352)	(0.0326)	(0.0352)	(0.0370)	(0.0369)	(0.0370)
Constant	4.677***	3.422***	4.301***	5.916***	5.510***	5.503***
	(0.144)	(0.177)	(0.175)	(0.173)	(0.212)	(0.212)
Observations	12,306	12,306	12,306	8,371	8,371	8,371
R-squared	0.191	0.138	0.193	0.072	0.074	0.074
Number of panelists	3,852	3,852	3,852	3,006	3,006	3,006

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1
NOTE: Controls by year a included in the analyses b omitted in the results

Table A5.3. Fixed-effects linear panel regressions (DV: Affective polarization). Replication of Table 1 including a category for those individuals who identify with a small party.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
VARIABLES	1	2	3	4	5	6
No party ID	-1.396***		-1.404***			
	(0.0766)		(0.0766)			
Other parties ID	-1.733***		-1.736***			
	(0.0715)		(0.0714)			
Populist party ID	0.0650		0.0497	-0.0802		-0.102
	(0.0669)		(0.0670)	(0.0782)		(0.0784)
Populist attitudes		0.0499***	0.0500***		0.0586***	0.0606***
		(0.0145)	(0.0140)		(0.0180)	(0.0181)
Ideology	-0.255***	-0.275***	-0.252***	-0.257***	-0.252***	-0.257***
	(0.0430)	(0.0447)	(0.0430)	(0.0543)	(0.0541)	(0.0543)
Ideology^2	0.0258***	0.0286***	0.0255***	0.0253***	0.0247***	0.0252***
	(0.00435)	(0.00451)	(0.00435)	(0.00518)	(0.00516)	(0.00518)
Closeness party	0.620***	0.910***	0.622***	0.650***	0.649***	0.653***
	(0.0312)	(0.0295)	(0.0312)	(0.0370)	(0.0369)	(0.0370)
Constant	4.525***	3.111***	4.182***	5.916***	5.510***	5.503***
	(0.131)	(0.164)	(0.162)	(0.173)	(0.212)	(0.212)
Observations	14,454	14,454	14,454	8,371	8,371	8,371
R-squared	0.192	0.127	0.193	0.072	0.074	0.074
Number of panelists	4,272	4,272	4,272	3,006	3,006	3,006

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1
NOTE: Reference category (mainstream parties)
Controls by year included in the analyses and omitted

Table A5.4. Fixed-effects linear panel regressions (Replication of Table 4 with Populist party ID as the main independent variable [Models 1 and 2] and with both Populist party ID and populist attitudes included [Models 3 and 4])

VARIABLES	(1) In-party affect	(2) Out-party affect	(3) In-party affect	(4) Out-party affect
Populist party ID	0.0174**	0.00360	0.0160**	0.00502
	(0.00800)	(0.00599)	(0.00802)	(0.00601)
Populist attitudes			0.0370**	-0.0386***
			(0.0185)	(0.0138)
Ideology	-0.0765	0.122***	-0.0763	0.122***
	(0.0555)	(0.0416)	(0.0555)	(0.0416)
Ideology^2	0.136**	-0.0544	0.135**	-0.0539
	(0.0530)	(0.0397)	(0.0530)	(0.0397)
Closeness party	0.243***	-0.00880	0.244***	-0.00946
	(0.0113)	(0.00850)	(0.0113)	(0.00849)
	(0.0177)	(0.0133)	(0.0217)	(0.0163)
Observations	8,371	8,371	8,371	8,371
R-squared	0.103	0.028	0.104	0.029
Number of panelists	3,006	3,006	3,006	3,006

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1
NOTE: Reference category (mainstream parties)
Controls by year included in the analyses and omitted

Table A5.5. Additional Models. AP

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	AP			
No party ID	-0.275***	-0.275***		
	(0.0119)	(0.0119)		
Podemos	0.0431***	0.0413***	0.00240	0.000270
	(0.0137)	(0.0137)	(0.0161)	(0.0160)
Vox	-0.0585***	-0.0634***	-0.0323*	-0.0377**
	(0.0176)	(0.0177)	(0.0182)	(0.0183)
Populist attitudes		0.0314***		0.0330***
		(0.00800)		(0.00966)
Ideology	-0.00651	-0.00695	-0.0191*	-0.0192*
	(0.00985)	(0.00984)	(0.0113)	(0.0113)
Ideology2	0.0546***	0.0546***	0.0581***	0.0580***
	(0.0104)	(0.0104)	(0.0117)	(0.0117)
Closeness party	0.106***	0.106***	0.103***	0.103***
	(0.00555)	(0.00554)	(0.00583)	(0.00582)
Constant	-0.0761***	-0.0782***	0.102***	0.0991***
	(0.0141)	(0.0141)	(0.0172)	(0.0172)
Observations	12,306	12,306	8,371	8,371
R-squared	0.193	0.195	0.073	0.075
Number of panelists	3,852	3,852	3,006	3,006

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table A5.6. Additional models. In-party and out-party affect with popid not split

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	In-party Affect			Out-party Affect		
Populist party ID	0.0382**		0.0352**	0.0104		0.0145
	(0.0176)		(0.0176)	(0.0173)		(0.0174)
Populist attitudes		0.0299**	0.0276**		-0.0370***	-0.0379***
		(0.0137)	(0.0138)		(0.0135)	(0.0136)
Ideology	0.0359**	0.0357**	0.0356**	0.0815***	0.0818***	0.0818***
	(0.0160)	(0.0160)	(0.0160)	(0.0158)	(0.0158)	(0.0158)
Ideology^2	0.0429**	0.0452***	0.0427**	-0.0226	-0.0213	-0.0224
	(0.0167)	(0.0167)	(0.0167)	(0.0165)	(0.0164)	(0.0165)
Closeness party	0.178***	0.180***	0.178***	-0.00849	-0.00862	-0.00913
	(0.00831)	(0.00829)	(0.00831)	(0.00820)	(0.00817)	(0.00820)
	-0.335***	-0.339***	-0.338***	-0.0879***	-0.0852***	-0.0847***
	(0.0245)	(0.0245)	(0.0245)	(0.0242)	(0.0242)	(0.0242)
Observations	8,371	8,371	8,371	8,371	8,371	8,371
R-squared	0.103	0.103	0.104	0.028	0.029	0.029
Number of panelists	3,006	3,006	3,006	3,006	3,006	3,006

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table A5.7. Additional models. Ingroup affect

VARIABLES	(1) 1	(2) 2	(3) 3	(4) 4
Podemos	0.0422*	0.0404*	0.0422*	0.0404*
	(0.0229)	(0.0229)	(0.0229)	(0.0229)
Vox	0.0331	0.0285	0.0331	0.0285
	(0.0260)	(0.0261)	(0.0260)	(0.0261)
Populist attitudes		0.0278**		0.0278**
		(0.0138)		(0.0138)
Ideology	0.0363**	0.0362**	0.0363**	0.0362**
	(0.0161)	(0.0161)	(0.0161)	(0.0161)
Ideology2	0.0431**	0.0430**	0.0431**	0.0430**
	(0.0168)	(0.0168)	(0.0168)	(0.0168)
Closeness party	0.178***	0.179***	0.178***	0.179***
	(0.00832)	(0.00832)	(0.00832)	(0.00832)
Constant	-0.336***	-0.338***	-0.336***	-0.338***
	(0.0245)	(0.0245)	(0.0245)	(0.0245)
Observations	8,371	8,371	8,371	8,371
R-squared	0.103	0.104	0.103	0.104
Number of panelists	3,006	3,006	3,006	3,006

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table A5.8. Additional models. Out-group Affect

Out-group affect.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
VARIABLES	1	2	3	4
Podemos	-0.0444**	-0.0419*	-0.0444**	-0.0419*
	(0.0226)	(0.0226)	(0.0226)	(0.0226)
Vox	0.0821***	0.0887***	0.0821***	0.0887***
	(0.0256)	(0.0257)	(0.0256)	(0.0257)
Populist attitudes		-0.0401***		-0.0401***
		(0.0136)		(0.0136)
Ideology	0.0755***	0.0756***	0.0755***	0.0756***
	(0.0159)	(0.0159)	(0.0159)	(0.0159)
Ideology2	-0.0262	-0.0261	-0.0262	-0.0261
	(0.0165)	(0.0165)	(0.0165)	(0.0165)
Closeness party	-0.00961	-0.0103	-0.00961	-0.0103
	(0.00819)	(0.00819)	(0.00819)	(0.00819)
Constant	-0.0865***	-0.0831***	-0.0865***	-0.0831***
	(0.0241)	(0.0242)	(0.0241)	(0.0242)
Observations	8,371	8,371	8,371	8,371
R-squared	0.030	0.032	0.030	0.032
Number of panelists	3,006	3,006	3,006	3,006

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table A5.9. Fixed-effects linear panel regressions (DV: Weighted Affective Polarization). Replication of Table 1 with the WAP measure proposed by (Wagner 2021).

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
VARIABLES	1	2	3	4	5	6
No party ID	-1.723***		-1.725***			
	(0.0765)		(0.0765)			
Populist party ID	0.0155		0.00297	-0.0525		-0.0663
	(0.0716)		(0.0718)	(0.0818)		(0.0821)
Ideology	-0.225***	-0.244***	-0.225***	-0.256***	-0.253***	-0.256***
	(0.0470)	(0.0483)	(0.0469)	(0.0568)	(0.0567)	(0.0568)
Ideology^2	0.0238***	0.0255***	0.0238***	0.0256***	0.0252***	0.0255***
	(0.00466)	(0.00479)	(0.00466)	(0.00542)	(0.00541)	(0.00542)
Closeness party	0.617***	0.976***	0.618***	0.583***	0.583***	0.585***
	(0.0356)	(0.0330)	(0.0356)	(0.0387)	(0.0386)	(0.0387)
Populist attitudes		0.0408***	0.0397***		0.0362*	0.0375**
		(0.0156)	(0.0151)		(0.0188)	(0.0189)
Constant	4.326***	3.200***	4.061***	5.505***	5.254***	5.249***
	(0.146)	(0.179)	(0.178)	(0.181)	(0.222)	(0.222)
Observations	12,306	12,306	12,306	8,371	8,371	8,371
R-squared	0.185	0.134	0.185	0.067	0.067	0.067
Number of panelists	3,852	3,852	3,852	3,006	3,006	3,006

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1
NOTE: Reference category (mainstream parties)
Controls by year included in the analyses and omitted

Table A5.10.. Summary statistics of the main variables used in the study

Variable	*min*	*max*	*mean*	*SD*
Populist attitudes	*0*	*10*	*6.54*	*1.70*
Affective polarization	*0*	*10*	*4.58*	*2.97*
Ideology	*0*	*10*	*4.43*	*1.92*
In-party affect	*0*	*10*	*7.70*	*2.25*
Out-party affect	*0*	*10*	*2.21*	*1.63*
Affective polarization (weighted)	*0*	*10*	*4.50*	*3.00*

Categorical variables		
Variables	*Values*	*Freq*
Party ID (main analysis)	*Non-populist mainstream parties ID 0*	*6,571*
	No party ID 1	*3,200*
	Populist party ID 2	*2,535*
	Missing .	*2,523*
Party ID (replication table A2)	*Non-populist mainstream parties ID 0*	*6,571*
	Small non-populist party ID 1	*2,521*
	No party ID 2	*3,200*
	Populist party ID 3	*2,535*
	Missing .	*2*
Closeness to a party	*Not close at all 0*	*4,767*
	Barely close 1	*3,723*
	Quite close 2	*4,673*
	Very much close 3	*1,292*
	Missing .	*374*

Chapter 6. Fighting corruption, fighting populism

Introduction

Among the different responses to populism, literature has often paid attention to mainstream parties' strategies for responding to the emergence of the populist radical right (Mudde 2004, 2019b; Rovira Kaltwasser 2017). Fewer studies however have been devoted to exploring responses to populism *per se*, and more striking is the lack of literature on the attenuation of the demand for populism or populist attitudes. Considering the pernicious consequences high levels of populism could have for liberal democratic systems in general, this article explores the possible effects of changes in government on populist attitudes.

Economic and political crises have been often related to the rise of populism (Ignazi 1996; Moffitt 2015; Pirro, Taggart, and van Kessel 2018; Poli 2017; Rama and Cordero 2018; Taggart 2002), particularly corruption scandals (Aguilar and Carlin 2017; Ardag et al. 2020; Aslanidis 2017; Betz 1994; Canovan 2005; Engler 2020; Gidron and Bonikowski 2014; Hawkins, Read, and Pauwels 2017; Mudde 2004; Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2017). Populism manifests a strong animosity against the elite, which is evil and corrupt in populist worldview. Corruption scandals, therefore, can lead citizens to distance themselves from the elite, as those who are corrupt in the *intelligible* world are materialized as corrupt in the *sensible* world. That said, are there any political or institutional responses to corruption that can break the linkage between corruption and the increase of populism?

This article argues so, considering changes in government after situations of crisis can lead to the reduction of populism —namely of populist attitudes—. Additionally, institutional trust is argued to play a significant role in that relationship, mediating the effect of changes in government on populist attitudes. Hence, only those whose trust in institutions increases after government alteration would be expected to shrink their distance between them and the elite, therefore reducing their levels of populist attitudes. Finally, I also build upon the bast literature on winners and losers, arguing those considered winners of the government change will be more prone —compared to losers— to reduce their levels of populism after the alternation in government.

To test the effect of changes in government on individuals' levels of populist attitudes I resort to the 2018 no-confidence vote (NCV) in Spain. After the party in government was convicted of corruption, an NCV was presented in Parliament and passed, leading to the first change in government through this mechanism in Spain's history. These events took place at the same time the POLAT survey was being fielded, which allows for considering the change in government as a (quasi) natural experiment, or more specifically, an unexpected event during survey design (UESD).

In the first instance, results support our expectations, pointing in the direction that government alternation significantly reduces populist attitudes among the general population. However, when exploring in more detail the different effects by winners and losers, results evidence the distinct effects of government alternation for winners and losers of the government change. Hence, government alternation after corruption scandals appears to increase institutional trust among those who support the incoming government, which leads to a decrease in their level of populist attitudes. However, those who could be labelled as losers do not increase their institutional trust as a response to the government change, which ultimately does not translate into a decrease in their levels of populist attitudes.

All in all, results evidence the importance of changes in government, as actions of accountability, which can ultimately reduce the demand for populism. However, government alternation does not appear to reduce *per se* the demand for populism, but it is the positive effect it exerts on institutional trust that ultimately populist attitudes. Additionally, changes in government —after situations of crisis— do not appear to have the same effects on winners and losers of the alternation —which goes in line with previous literature on corruption (see, for example, Anduiza et al., 2013; Breitenstein, 2019)—.

The article continues as follows. First, the theoretical section is introduced, in which the main concepts and hypotheses are defined. Then, the case selection is explained, including the details of the evolution of the relevant events taken into consideration in the article. After presenting the data and methods employed in this study, the results are presented, finishing with a section with the discussion of the results and their implications, as well as the concluding remarks.

Theoretical background

Populism divides society between 'the pure people' and 'the corrupt elite'. This bisection is complemented by the idea that it is the former who should make the most important decisions in politics, while the latter often comprises, among others, the political establishment that does not represent the people's interests (Mudde 2004, 2007). Following this understanding of populism, improvements developed in the last decade allow us to capture the extent to which individuals share the populist worldview by measuring populist attitudes, independently of other concepts such as partisanship (Akkerman, Mudde, and Zaslove 2014; Castanho 2016; Castanho Silva et al. 2019; K Hawkins, Riding, and Mudde 2012).

While the study of populism at the individual level has increased in recent years, research has usually focused on different explanations for the increase in populist attitudes, from the analysis of the effects of populist messages (Bos et al. 2020; Ferrari 2022; Hameleers and Fawzi 2020b; Müller et al. 2017b; Wirz et al. 2018) to the study of the emotional correlates of populism (Rhodes-Purdy, Navarre, and Utych 2021; Rico, Guinjoan, and Anduiza 2017, 2020; Salmela and von Scheve 2017). In so doing, researchers have often explained the rise of populism but disregarded the pursuit of explanations for decreases in populist attitudes.

Hence, scholarship attention has been paid to the different responses to populism mostly from a theoretical point of view, with a special focus on the different strategies non-populist parties can follow for 'fighting' populism (Mudde 2014, 2019b; Rovira Kaltwasser 2017). However, as Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser put it, '*given that populism often asks the right questions but provides the wrong answers, the ultimate goal should be not just the destruction of populist supply, but also the weakening of populist demand. Only the latter will actually strengthen liberal democracy*' (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2017, 118).

Two main ideas can be extracted from the previous quote. First, the conflictive relationship between populism and liberal democracy. Additionally, in basically focusing on upsurges of populism, academics have given the impression that populism is, at least, a pathology of democracy, or even a pathological normalcy (for using the terminology of Mudde on the populist radical right (Mudde 2010).

The second is that populism is volatile or modifiable in both directions, especially at the individual level. On the one hand, populist attitudes can be considered by some as

something instinctive or emotional (Morisi and Wagner 2020), and they have been in fact explained by negative emotions such as anger (Rico, Guinjoan, and Anduiza 2017). What is more, populism is usually considered to feed on apathetic, dissatisfied, or disenfranchised citizens (Elchardus and Spruyt 2016; Hameleers and de Vreese 2020; Kriesi et al. 2006).

On the other hand, populist attitudes have, under certain circumstances, been also proven to dwindle after exposure to positive and fact-based messages (Morisi and Wagner 2020), as well as other attitudes (Guess and Coppock 2020). Accordingly, this speaks of populist attitudes as malleable in both directions, not only being fueled by negative emotions and messages, and therefore, evidence exists in favour of the idea that populist attitudes can also decrease as a response to different scenarios.

Additionally, scholarship on populism has highlighted the idea that populism tends to increase in times of crisis, and even that populists tend to portray situations of crisis to gain support (Ignazi 1996; Moffitt 2015; Pirro, Taggart, and van Kessel 2018; Poli 2017; Rama and Cordero 2018; Taggart 2002). Crises serve populists by reinforcing the idea that the corrupt elite does not only govern without the pure people but also against their interests. If there is a perception of a lack of responsiveness and accountability by the system (and this includes responses by non-populist parties or mainstream parties), populism can increase. Individuals could perceive the elite only cares about themselves, but not about what the real people think or will, fostering the division between them and us (i.e., the elite vs. the people) (Canovan 1999b; Mudde 2004), a definitory characteristic of populism. The question that may be raised at this point is the following: if the disconnection between the people and the elite can lead populism to rise, can actions of accountability or responsiveness reduce the demand for populism?

Empirical evidence has shown that the connection between responsiveness and populism exists, ergo the answer to the previous question could be affirmative. Perceiving the system responds to the demands of 'the people' could indeed reduce populism at the individual level, as the perceived distance between the will of the people and the actions of the elite narrows. To empirically address this relationship, this article focuses on the change in government after a corruption scandal, which could be considered the best example of responsiveness or accountability by the system in situations of crisis.

Corruption, changes in government and populist attitudes

Corruption scandals could be considered the most paradigmatic cases of disconnection between the people and the elite, and it has indeed been defined by some scholars as one of the most effective situations in demeaning liberal democratic systems. As Warren puts it, 'corruption in a democracy usually indicates a deficit of democracy' (Warren 2004, 328). Hence, the consequences of corruption do not only have to do with increasing economic inequality (Fisman and Golden 2017) or obstructing economic development (Mauro 1995). Most importantly, corruption decreases trust in fundamental institutions of liberal democratic systems (Ares and Hernández 2017) and is a special activator of populism, as 'the elite' is proven to be corrupt and dishonest, going against the common interest of the people (Engler 2020; Fieschi and Heywood 2004; Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2017), creating a feeling of alienation from politics among the citizenry (Fieschi and Heywood 2004).

A variety of political actors can hold governments accountable in different ways, also as responses to corruption, being changes in government a common result of these actions. Generally, government alternation is considered a crucial indicator of democratic quality (Cheibub, Gandhi, and Vreeland 2010; Dahl 1989; Kaiser et al. 2002; Lundell 2011; Otjes and Willumsen 2019; Torbjörn and Kaare 2011), and in being understood as a signal of accountability and responsiveness, it can legitimize the political system. Accordingly, changes in government in liberal democracies could increase the general perception that the system works (Cohen et al. 2023).

Therefore, if citizens perceive changes in government to represent a response to a poor performance by those in power, these changes could reduce individuals' levels of anti-elitism, also reducing the moral gap between the people and the elite, ultimately reducing populist attitudes. The general argument is that a government —that epitomizes the elite— being replaced represents the dissolution of the elite itself, first and foremost in the short run. If a group of people holds government responsibilities, it would be easy for citizens to equate the government with the elite, ultimately distancing from them. Hence, changing those in power could shrink the perceived distance between 'them' and 'us', also lowering the moral gap between both groups. Correspondingly, hypothesis 1a can be stated as follows.

> *Hypothesis 1a*: changes in government will reduce individuals' levels of populist attitudes.

The role of institutional trust

In line with the first hypothesis, changes in government are expected to directly reduce populist attitudes. However, it has been also mentioned that corruption —which, again, materializes the difference between the good people and the corrupt elite— decreases institutional trust (Ares and Hernández 2017), a key explanatory factor of populism (see, for example, Fieschi & Heywood, 2004; Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017). Accordingly, changes in government can be seen as responses to the delegitimization of politics, especially if changes in the executive come after situations of crisis.

In fact, government alternation is a fundamental pillar of democracy, not only because it implies that 'parties lose elections' (Przeworski 1991, 10) —hence reflecting changes in public opinion—, but also because changes in government prevent entrenchment of power and foster accountability. Under the premise that all regimes depend on leaders' capacity to inspire trust, Juan J. Linz wrote that 'democracy is by definition a government *pro tempore*', a system in which those who govern are made accountable and which prevents 'omnipotence and abuse of power' (Linz 1985, 15).

Hence, government alternation can reduce institutional distrust, leading citizens to perceive a dull in their negative perceptions towards the elite, institutions, or politics more generally. Therefore, this type of expression of the responsiveness of the system can also reduce the gap between the elite and the people. As this dyad is a key component of populism, the rapprochement between the people and those who govern (i.e., the elite) would ultimately reduce populist attitudes among the citizenry.

Trust in institutions and politics, or more concretely, the lack of it, has to do with anti-elitism, one of the key components of populism. Admittedly, decreases in trust in institutions, in politics, or in other measures of satisfaction with democracy, can be expected to foster populism among individuals, as they can back away from politics and distance themselves from the elite.

In fact, political trust has been used by different scholars as a proxy for capturing populism at the individual level, but its usefulness is questionable (Betz 1994; Fieschi and Heywood 2004; Geurkink et al. 2020; Rooduijn 2018). However, in certain circumstances, low political trust has been found to explain populism or voting for extremist parties (see, for example, Akkerman et al., 2017; Ivarsflaten, 2008; Norris, 2005; Rooduijn, 2018; Van Hauwaert & Van Kessel, 2018). However, populism and

political trust have been found to be two related but distinct concepts, both theoretically and empirically (Geurkink et al. 2020).

Political scandals have been found to decrease trust among citizens (Chanley, Rudolph, and Rahn 2000). Hence, responses to political scandals could be expected to palliate that negative effect, and therefore, changes in government could be expected to improve citizens' perception of the system. In consequence, while changes in government could be expected to directly affect populist attitudes, they could also indirectly affect populism through trust in institutions.

In a nutshell, a mediated effect can be expected. Changes in government after corruption scandals could ameliorate individuals' perceptions of the political system. This improvement simultaneously implies an increase in institutional trust because individuals perceive that liberal democratic mechanisms effectively hold the government accountable. Subsequently, the increase in trust could influence populism among the citizenry, because of two main reasons. First, the increase in trust is expected to weaken the anti-elitism component of populism. If part of the elite is trustworthy, then the distance between them and *the people* shrinks. Second, part of the elite appears to be able to represent the people's will, which could also weaken the general idea that the people should ultimately make the most important decisions in politics, also because part of the elite is, at least, less morally reprehensible. Accordingly, Hypothesis 1b is stated as follows:

Hypothesis 1b: the effect of the change in government on populist attitudes will be mediated by the increase in trust in institutions.

Winners vs losers

In sum, it has been argued that changes in government, especially after situations of crisis such as corruption scandals, can be conceived as actions of accountability and responsiveness of the system which reduce populism at the individual level. However, previous literature has demonstrated that citizens punish corruption differently depending on various factors, being one of them the match or mismatch of individuals' party affiliation and that of the corrupt politician (Anduiza, Gallego, and Muñoz 2013; Breitenstein 2019). Therefore, if individuals do not perceive corruption equally depending on their partisan identities (Anduiza, Gallego, and Muñoz 2013), it would be naïf to expect the effects of changes in government on populist attitudes to be the same for all of them.

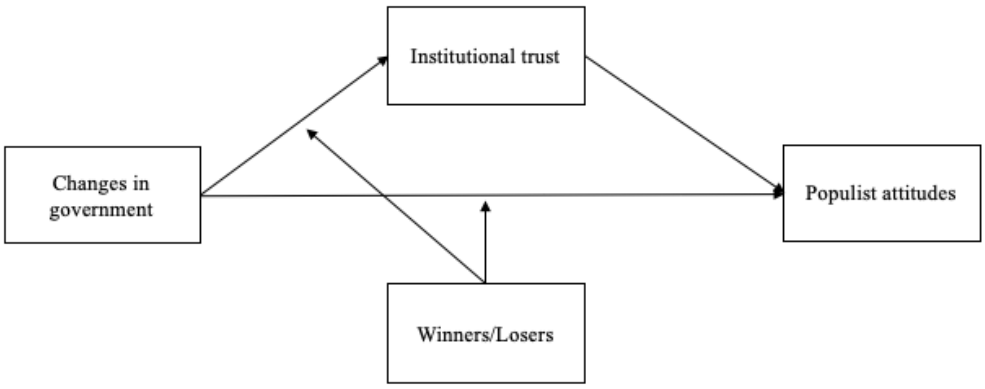
Hence, changes in government could also be seen differently depending on individuals' political preferences. If a government is overthrown, its supporters may perceive a loss and consider the system does not work, while supporters of the incoming government might consider it does, and that it responds to the demands of the people. Therefore, the effects of changes in government, a fortiori after a situation of crisis, could be expected to differ depending on what could be named as the condition of winner or loser of citizens.

In essence, the expected effect of government alternation must be distinguished between winners and losers of that alternation because perceptions of the performance of the system may differ depending on individuals' own interests or positions. Thus, on the one hand, changes in government among supporters of the outgoing government might be seen as a lack of responsiveness, feeling a lack of connection with the system. This widening of the gap between the individual and the system could easily translate into the populist dyad between the people and the elite, ultimately enhancing populist attitudes.

On the other hand, supporters of the new government might see the political change as an exercise of accountability and responsiveness of the political system. If this is the case, they are not only expected to reduce the belief in the separation of society and the elite, but they could also trust the system for making important decisions (reducing the people's sovereignty component of populism). Hence, winners could be expected to experience a reduction in their populist attitudes.

Hypothesis 2: the negative effect of government alternation on populist attitudes will be higher for winners than for losers of the government change.

Figure 6.1. Expected relationship between changes in government and populist attitudes



Case selection: Spain's 2018 no-confidence vote

To test the aforementioned hypotheses, I resort to the no-confidence vote against Mariano Rajoy in 2018. No-confidence votes are mechanisms which allow parliaments to hold governments accountable, and in Spain, these are 'constructive': a minimum of 10 per cent of members of Parliament must propose an alternative candidate for the presidency. If the no-confidence vote is passed, the Prime Minister resigns, and the candidate proposed in the motion is invested as Prime Minister.

The government change in Spain in 2018 due to a successful NCV offers an opportune context for studying the effects of government alternation on populist attitudes. The People's Party (PP) took executive power after the 2011 elections, after two terms of socialist government led by José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, and remained in government until 2018. However, the way the PP left the government was unusual in Spain: through the first successful NCV in Spanish history.

The antecedents of the NCV are clear: on May 24th, the National High Court sentenced the PP for benefiting from the Gürtel case. While the corruption case had been in the news for months (and even years), the announcement of the court shook the political life in Spain. On the 25th, El País' headline read: 'Convicted the PP; Rajoy's continuity threatened', for then defining the Gürtel case as 'the deepest corruption scheme in Spanish democracy'.[28]

The court's ruling triggered the decision of the main opposition party, the PSOE, to present a no-confidence vote on Mariano Rajoy. The debate in Parliament began on the 31st of May and was closed with the voting on the 1st of June. With 180 MPs in favour of overthrowing Mariano Rajoy and investing Pedro Sánchez as the new Prime Minister, 169 against, and 1 abstention, the no-confidence vote was passed, and Sánchez was appointed as Prime Minister. The transfer of power took place smoothly, with Rajoy being the first person to leave his seat for handshaking and felicitate Sánchez.

Therefore, the Gürtel case and the sentence which convicted the party in government present us with a paradigmatic case of corruption involving the executive branch of government. Additionally, the intervention of the legislative branch (holding the executive accountable and ultimately stripping the party involved in a corruption scandal of its power) can be considered the most extreme action for holding a government

[28] https://elpais.com/hemeroteca/elpais/portadas/2018/05/25/

accountable. The political-institutional mechanism activated in response to the corruption scandal can therefore be considered a crucial case of response to corruption, in which institutions can be perceived as working properly.

Data and methods

The empirical analyses draw on data from the tenth wave of the POLAT panel survey (Hernández et al. 2021). This online survey is conducted yearly among a representative sample of young and middle-aged Spanish residents. The tenth wave of the survey was fielded between 9 May and 9 June 2018, which allows capitalizing on the coincidence of the NCV on Mariano Rajoy and the subsequent change of government.

Our quasi-experimental strategy assumes that the survey's respondents' distribution is as-if-random. We consider the no-confidence vote and the change in government to be an unexpected event, which provides us with an exogenous variation that can be interpreted as a treatment. Hence, the sample is divided into two groups: those who responded to the survey before the announcement of the NCV are assigned to the control group while those who responded after the voting of the NCV are assigned to the treatment group. Therefore, for the main analyses, the treatment variable is operationalized as follows:

$$D_i \begin{cases} Di = 0 \text{ (control group) if the individual responded before 25 May} \\ Di = 1 \text{ (treatment group) if the individual responded after 1 June} \end{cases}$$

Table A1 (in the appendix) presents a series of two-sample *t*-tests, which depict certain differences between the control and the treatment group. Following Muñoz and colleagues (Muñoz, Falcó-Gimeno, and Hernández 2020), different factors could threaten the causal identification strategy due to the violation of the ignorability assumption. This assumption of UESD designs basically states respondents' allocation to the treatment or the control group is independent of potential outcomes. However, while the control and the treatment group are different in certain characteristics, we do not consider these differences to threaten our causal identification strategy.

Differences between the control and treatment groups in this type of design can be driven by reachability bias, the attrition of the sample, or due to imbalances on observables. However, in this case, the difference in the general characteristics of both groups is explained by the fact that most of the respondents in the treatment group come from a refreshment of the panel survey. In this type of survey, in which the same

individuals are interviewed annually, including new participants does not only help in maintaining a minimum number of respondents (which can be reduced over time because of attrition) but also helps in maintaining the representativeness of the sample over time.

In sum, individuals in the treatment group come from a sample selected in order to improve the representativeness of the whole panel survey. Theoretically, as this is an online self-administered survey, we would not expect any variable such as the job status of the respondents to influence the reachability of respondents. On the contrary, the differences between samples are solely expected to be driven by the incorporation of individuals with certain characteristics for improving the representativeness of the whole sample regarding future waves of the panel. Nevertheless, while we do not expect reachability, imbalances on observables, or attrition to threaten our causal identification strategy, we conduct the analyses using entropy balancing, ensuring both the treatment and the control groups are balanced (Hainmueller and Xu 2013). Table A6.2 in the Appendix presents the differences in the means between the treatment and the control group before and after balancing the samples.

To analyze the effect of the change in government after a corruption scandal on individual levels of populism I fit a series of OLS regressions, in which populist attitudes are specified as the dependent variable. For measuring populist attitudes I follow the six-item measure developed by Akkerman, Mudde and Zaslove (Akkerman, Mudde, and Zaslove 2014). This index captures the core elements of populism (people-centrism, anti-elitism, antagonism between the people and the elite, and popular sovereignty), and individuals indicate their agreement with each statement by selecting a position in a seven-point scale, ranging from 0 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). An additive index is created, which then is recoded to range between 0 and 10, in which higher values indicate higher levels of populist attitudes.

For testing the mediation effect of trust in institutions we conduct mediation analysis using trust in parliament as the indicator of institutional trust. Individuals are asked to rate their trust in parliament using a scale from 0 to 10, ranging from 'no trust' to 'total trust'. For capturing the mediation effect the medeff Stata package is used (Hicks and Tingley 2011). This allows us to capture the direct effect of the change in government on populist attitudes and the indirect effect, the mediation of trust in parliament.

Finally, we measure winners and losers based on individuals' party identification. Therefore, those who sympathize with the outgoing PP are defined as losers (and coded

as 0), while those who sympathize with the incoming party in government, the PSOE, as winners (coded as 1)[29].

Results

We first start showing the mean of our main variables of interest by treatment condition (0 if individuals are assigned to the control group because they responded to the survey before the NCV, and 1 if they are in the treatment group). The general trend depicts different evolutions of populist attitudes and trust in parliament. On the one hand, populist attitudes are lower after the NCV, and on the other hand, trust in parliament increases in the treatment group.

Table 6.1 presents two models in which hypothesis 1a is tested. In both models, the dependent variable is populist attitudes, coded from 0 to 10. According to our hypothesis, the coefficient of the treatment (i.e., change in government) should be negative and statistically significant. Both models are consistent with our expectations, and the change in government appears to exert a negative and statistically significant effect on populist attitudes.

Accordingly, the empirical analyses support the idea that changes in government can reduce the demand for populism. Individuals in the treatment group have on average, and when holding everything else constant, 2 decimal points fewer populist attitudes than those in the control group. While these results may seem weak, their magnitude should be put in context. If we take advantage of the eight waves of the POLAT panel database in which populist attitudes are available (from 2014 until 2022), we can compute the average differences in populist attitudes over time for each panelist/individual. The average change in populist attitudes is -0.055, which makes the effect of changes in government four times stronger than the average variation in populist attitudes.

[29] This variable is included in the models intended to test both H1a and H1b, also including an interaction term, which allows for capturing the expected different effects of the change in government for winners and losers.

Figure 6.2. Mean of populist attitudes and trust in Parliament by control (0) and treatment (1) groups (with 84% CIs)

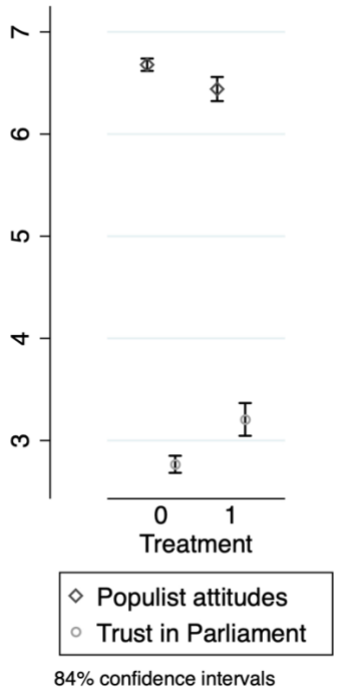


Table 6.1. Results of OLS regression models (DV: Populist Attitudes)

	(1)	(2)
VARIABLES	I	II
Treatment	-0.238***	-0.196**
	(0.0892)	(0.0924)
Age		0.00525
		(0.00417)
Sex		0.0106
		(0.0772)
Education		-0.0491***
		(0.0131)
Job status		-0.0378**
		(0.0186)
Issue corruption		-0.145***
		(0.0302)
Constant	6.679***	7.289***
	(0.0441)	(0.268)
Observations	2,086	2,086
R-squared	0.003	0.026

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1
NOTE: controlled by region

As mentioned above, for testing hypothesis 1b, we use the medeff package in Stata, which due to the characteristics of our mediator and dependent variables, computes similar calculations as the method proposed by Baron and Kenny (Baron and Kenny 1986). The results of the summary estimates of the mediation analysis are presented in Table 3, but firstly Table 6.2 presents the two models used for the calculation of the mediation. In Model 1 Trust in Parliament is specified as the dependent variable, and in Model 2 it is populist attitudes, while trust is specified as an independent variable.

Looking at the models presented in Table 6.2, it is important to note that the effect of the treatment on populist attitudes, when controlling for trust in government, is still negative, as expected, but it is no longer statistically significant. However, the treatment does exert a positive and statistically significant effect on trust in Parliament. Moving back to Model 2, it should be highlighted that the correlation between increases in trust in Parliament and populist attitudes is negative and statistically significant.

Table 6.2. Results of OLS regression models (DV: Trust in Parliament and Populist Attitudes)

	(1)	(2)
VARIABLES	Trust in Parliament	Populist Attitudes
Treatment	.444***	-0.132
	(.128)	(0.0908)
Trust in Parliament		-0.144***
		(0.0155)
Age	.010*	0.00672
	(.0058)	(0.00409)
Sex	-0.229**	-0.0224
	(.107)	(0.0758)
Education	.048***	-0.0422***
	(.0181)	(0.0129)
Job status	.051**	-0.0304*
	(.0258)	(0.0183)
Issue corruption	.130***	-0.125***
	(.0418)	(0.0297)
Constant	2.07***	7.587***
	(.371)	(0.265)
Observations	2,086	2,086
R-squared	0.019	0.065

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1
NOTE: controlled by region

Moving to the summary estimates presented in Table 6.3, it is important to note that the direct effect of changes in government on populist attitudes is negative, as expected, but is not statistically significant. However, the ACME (Average Causal Mediation Effect), which reports the effect of the treatment that goes through trust in Parliament, is also negative, but in this case, is statistically significant. Additionally, the total effect (is negative and statistically significant), while the percentage of the total effect that is mediated is considerably high (32%).

These results, in sum, go against the expectations. Hypothesis 1b expected a direct and negative effect of changes in government on populist attitudes, and a mediated effect through trust in Parliament (changes in government would increase trust, leading to a decrease in populist attitudes). However, according to the results presented in both Tables 6.2 and 6.3, the relationship between government changes and populism at the individual level is fully mediated by trust in Parliament.

Table 6.3. Summary estimates of the mediation analysis (95% CIs)

Effect	Mean	[95% Conf. Interval]	
ACME	-.063	-.103	-.028
Direct Effect	-.130	-.315	.049
Total Effect	-.193	-.380	-.014
% of total effect mediated	.316	.148	1.923

Finally, it has been argued that the effect of changes in government on populist attitudes would differ between winners and losers of that alternation. Table 6.5 presents the results of two OLS models, which allow us to capture the differentiated effect of government changes on populist attitudes by winners and losers. These models include only those who sympathize with the two main parties in the Spanish political system, which considerably restricts our sample, but allows us to identify the two clearest cases of winners and losers.[30] According to these results, the change in government *per se* does

[30] Previous research has demonstrated the fuzziness of the winners and losers division when it comes to elections (Plescia 2019). The specificities of the change of government studied in this article hinders the categorization of individuals as clear winners or losers, which leads us to take a conservative position

not seem to exert a negative effect on populist attitudes. However, focusing on the interaction term, it appears the change in government does have a statistically significant and strong negative effect on the winners of the government alternation.

Additional analyses are presented in Table 6.5, which shows the different mediation analyses for the two categories of interest (winners and losers) and in Table 6.6, which disentangles the different models used for the estimation of the mediation. Table 6.5 projects significant differences between winners and losers. On the one hand, for winners, the effect partially works as expected: there is an effect of changes in government on populist attitudes, which is mediated by trust in Parliament. However, the direct effect, while negative, fails to fall within the standard levels of statistical significance, which could be explained by the reduced size of the sample.

On the other hand, we fail to find evidence that supports the idea that losers of the change in government see their populist attitudes reduced. While the small size of the sample conveys us to take confidence intervals carefully, results do not support the hypothesis of the reduction of populism (contrarily, the direct and the total effect show positive coefficients) nor the idea that this effect would be mediated by institutional trust.

only exploring the effects by those who can clearly be defined as such. Further investigation is needed to explore this issue in more depth.

Table 6.4. Results of OLS regression models (DV: Populist Attitudes)

VARIABLES	(1) I	(2) II
Treatment	-0.196	0.491
	(0.230)	(0.348)
Winner (Ref. losers)	0.706***	1.008***
	(0.196)	(0.226)
Treatment * Winner		-1.148***
		(0.439)
Age	0.000311	0.000994
	(0.0102)	(0.0101)
Sex	-0.0414	-0.0257
	(0.191)	(0.189)
Education	-0.0442	-0.0361
	(0.0324)	(0.0323)
Job status	-0.0682	-0.0452
	(0.0464)	(0.0469)
Issue corruption	-0.184**	-0.192***
	(0.0715)	(0.0710)
Constant	7.063***	6.733***
	(0.669)	(0.676)
Observations	372	372
R-squared	0.074	0.091

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1
NOTE: controlled by region

Table 6.5. Summary estimates of the mediation analysis by winners and losers (90% CIs)

	Effect	Mean	[90% Conf. Interval]	
Losers	ACME	-.026	-.128	.043
	Direct Effect	.49	-.121	1.126
	Total Effect	.464	-.145	1.103
	% of total effect mediated	-.047	-.334	.19
Winners	ACME	-.144	-.289	-.034
	Direct Effect	-.452	-.937	.053
	Total Effect	-.595	-1.083	-.09
	% of total effect mediated	.233	.119	.891

Table 6.6 allows for getting a more fine-grained understanding of the relationship between government alternation, populist attitudes, and the mechanisms behind it. Empirical evidence supports the idea that winners' trust in Parliament increases after the change in government, but there is no evidence that supports the idea that changes in government directly influence populist attitudes. It is the increase in institutional trust which reduces the demand for populism, which presents a fully mediated relationship between government alternation and winners' populist attitudes.

Contrarily, government alternation does not appear to increase institutional trust among losers, which then does not translate into a reduction of populist attitudes. What is more, the treatment appears to exert a positive (but statistically insignificant) effect on populist attitudes for those individuals who identify with the losing party. Accordingly, hypothesis 2 could be confirmed, as the effect of changes in government on populist attitudes is higher for winners than for losers, as the latter do not appear to see their levels of populism influenced by an action of accountability such as a government change after a corruption scandal.

Robustness checks

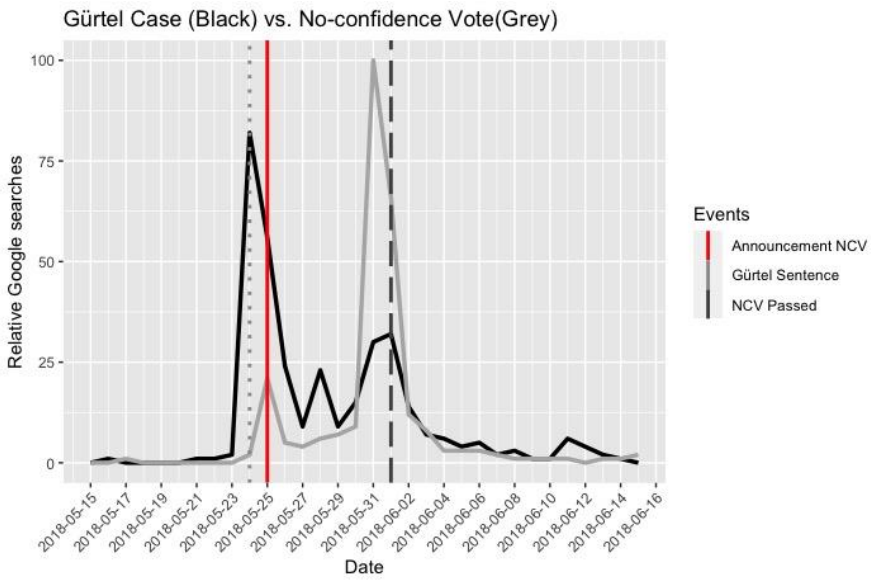
It could be argued that the effects found in the previous section are contaminated by the corruption scandal itself. Methodologically speaking, a control for the importance individuals give to corruption as a problem in Spain is introduced in all models. But most importantly, theoretically, if the corruption scandal would have had any influence on the results, that would have been in favour of the conclusions drawn in the analysis. Corruption scandals, as already mentioned, can increase populist attitudes. Therefore, and taking into account Ares and Hernández, who posit that the effect of corruption scandals on trust in politicians weakens as time passes by (Ares and Hernández 2017), we could sense the proximity to the corruption scandal is reducing the size of the effect of the change in government in populist attitudes.

However, it should be also noted that the political and media agenda shifted rapidly from the corruption scandal to the NCV and the change in government. Looking at the covers of the main Spanish newspapers (El País and El Mundo), none of them devoted the main headlines to the Gürtel case after the announcement of the NCV,

basically focusing on the latter[31]. Additionally, Figure 6.3 shows the relative Google searches for the terms 'Gürtel case' and 'No-confidence vote' in Spain, showing that the interest in the corruption scandal rapidly shifted to the NCV.

The analyses are also replicated using different bandwidths. In the first set of models (see the appendix) the control group includes all individuals who responded the interview until the 30th of May, and the treatment group includes those who responded from the 31st onwards[32]. Results point in the same direction as the ones presented above, and the only substantial difference is that the total effect in the mediation analysis is statistically significant at the 90% and not at the 95% as in the main analysis. Figure AX in the Appendix specifies the dates of the six additional models, and Table AX shows the results which also support the conclusions presented here. An additional placebo model is included, in which support our hypotheses are not confirmed. These results do not only support our results, but also help for assessing the possibility of violation of the ignorability and excludability assumptions of UESD designs (Muñoz, Falcó-Gimeno, and Hernández 2020).

Figure 6.3. Relative Google searches for 'Caso Gürtel' and 'Moción de Censura' between the 15th May and 15th June



[31] There is one exception. El Mundo published on the 29th of May an interview to Luis Bárcenas, the former treasurer of the PP, who had already been in jail and was convicted again in the Gürtel sentence.

[32] This bandwidth is selected because on the 30th of May the PNV announced their support to the NCV, which gave Sánchez the minimum share of votes for overthrowing the PP government.

Table 6.6. Results of OLS regression models by winners and losers (DV: Trust in Parliament and Populist Attitudes)

	Winners		Losers	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
VARIABLES	Trust in Parliament	Populist Attitudes	Trust in Parliament	Populist Attitudes
Treatment	0.885**	-0.457	0.345	0.484
	(0.403)	(0.297)	(0.476)	(0.374)
Trust in Parliament		-0.166***		-0.0823
		(0.0488)		(0.0683)
Age	0.00191	-0.000360	0.0146	0.00369
	(0.0175)	(0.0128)	(0.0209)	(0.0165)
Sex	-0.244	0.0808	-0.447	-0.332
	(0.320)	(0.234)	(0.405)	(0.319)
Education	0.119**	-0.0155	-0.00919	-0.0367
	(0.0557)	(0.0411)	(0.0674)	(0.0529)
Job status	-0.0440	-0.0883	-0.176*	-0.00509
	(0.0807)	(0.0590)	(0.0974)	(0.0773)
Issue corruption	0.0128	-0.206**	0.00392	-0.158
	(0.122)	(0.0891)	(0.149)	(0.117)
Constant	2.885**	8.196***	5.580***	7.221***
	(1.128)	(0.837)	(1.311)	(1.097)
Observations	232	232	140	140
R-squared	0.045	0.111	0.051	0.058

Standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

NOTE: controlled by region

Discussion and conclusion

Literature on the causes and consequences of the rise of populism is extensive. However, scholars have not focused on explaining the reduction of populism, especially from the demand side. Actually, populism has been described as a pathology of liberal democracies, giving the impression that once populism appears, it is impossible to root it out from the system. In this article, I have argued that populism can be reduced, but taking a different approach than the literature which focuses on the mainstream parties' responses to populism. Instead, I have focused on the political/institutional responses to crises as a tool of liberal democracies for reducing the demand for populism.

It has been argued that populism tends to appear in times of crisis, or that populist actors construct and portray a situation of crisis for appealing to a disenchanted electorate, fostering the division between the pure people and the corrupt elite. In fact, crises have been considered a key explanatory variable for the rise of populism, especially in case studies. Crises can delegitimize the political elite, established political parties, or even the political system in general, which can, by definition, increase anti-elitism, a key component of populism.

However, while crises and, more specifically, corruption scandals have been intensively employed to explain the rise of populism, responses to them have not been fully addressed as ways of palliating or even reducing populism. Henceforth, this article has addressed the three following questions: Can liberal democratic responses to crises reduce the demand for populism? What is the role of institutional trust in this relationship? Is this relationship different for winners and losers of the government alternation? For responding to these questions we have taken advantage of the coincidence of the no-confidence vote on the Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy and the data collection of the POLAT panel, which provides us with an experimental setting.

We consider this event as the best-case scenario for testing the effect on populism of responses from the system to situations of crisis for different reasons. Particularly, the un-expectancy of the event, together with the limited period in which the events developed, and the availability of data for using a UESD design present us with a useful scenario for testing the causal mechanism behind our variables of interest. While it could be argued the exceptionality of this type of event could weaken the generalizability of the results, previous research has already proved that changes in government between elections are not exceptional (see Ieraci, 2012).

In line with the expectations, results indicate government alternation can indeed reduce the individuals' levels of populism. However, using mediation analysis techniques, this article presents evidence of a fully mediated relationship between those two variables, with institutional trust being the mediator variable. What is more, the relationship between changes in government and populist attitudes has more intricacies, as the condition of being a winner or a loser of individuals appears to matter. Results indicate changes in government after a crisis do increase institutional trust among those who identify with the incoming government, which ultimately reduces populist attitudes among this group. However, the change in government does not increase trust among losers, not resulting in a decline in their populist attitudes.

Government alternation has been considered important to 'prevent entrenchment by the incumbents' (Przeworski 2010, 31), but symbolically it has also consequences. Government alternation can allow citizens, to put it simply, to differentiate the person from the institution, and to recover trust in the political system (Bratton 2004). Therefore, the importance of pacific changes in power goes beyond the democratic principles, keeping individuals attached to a system that works and is able to 'throw the rascals out' (Pellegata and Quaranta 2019).

However, results presented in this article point to the idea that government alternation does not have to automatically affect individuals' levels of populism. Thus, two clarifications have to be made. Firstly, it appears changes in government do not directly impact individuals' populist attitudes. On the contrary, it is the positive effect changes in government have on institutional trust which ultimately leads to the reduction of the demand for populism. Secondly, it is important to note that this article only finds evidence of these relationships among those who can be defined as winners of the change in government.

Therefore, further studies should explore the relationship between government alternation and populism in other circumstances, paying attention to different institutional settings. Moreover, this article has highlighted the importance of institutional trust in reducing the demand for populism after changes in government. Additional work is needed to explore under which circumstances these changes increase institutional trust.

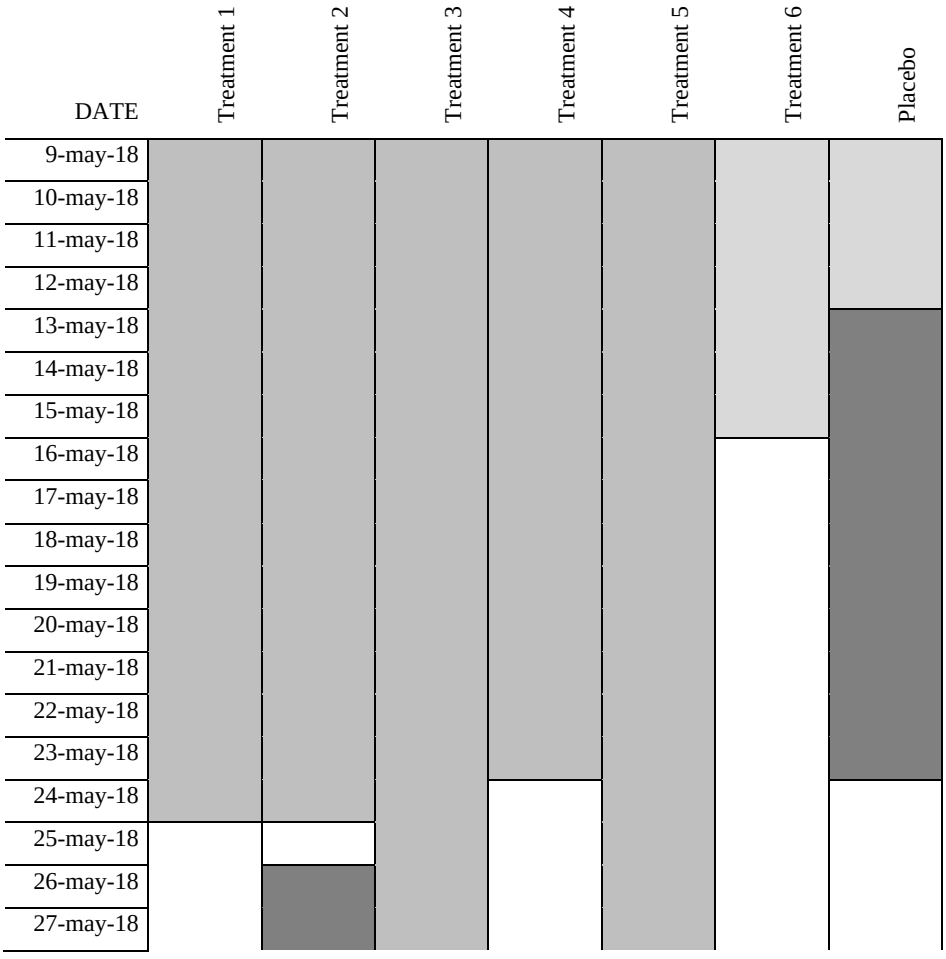
In sum, using a quasi-experimental design, this article has shown that liberal democratic regimes have tools for reducing the demand for populism. Government alteration has been proved to be one, essentially due to the increase in institutional trust among winners of that alternation. However, on a negative note, losers of government changes do not experience an increase in their trust in institutions, nor a decrease in their levels of populism. It could be argued the high levels of polarization in democracies explain this difference, but that is a different kettle of fish. Finally, further research can build upon this study to explore other actions by the system for reducing populism among the citizenry, transcending existing literature on mainstream parties' responses to the emergence of populist parties.

Appendix 6

Table A6.1. Two-sample t-tests.

Variables	Mean		*p*-value
	Control	Treatment	
Age	40.12	35.00	.000
Education	6.68	5.81	.000
Sex	1.50	1.44	.032
In paid job	.67	.51	.000
Unemployed	.16	.20	.082
Student	.06	.15	.000
Housework	.05	.05	.871
Retired	.03	.05	.054
Vote 2016	16.12	17.48	.317

Figure A6.1. Detail of the dates included in each bandwidth.



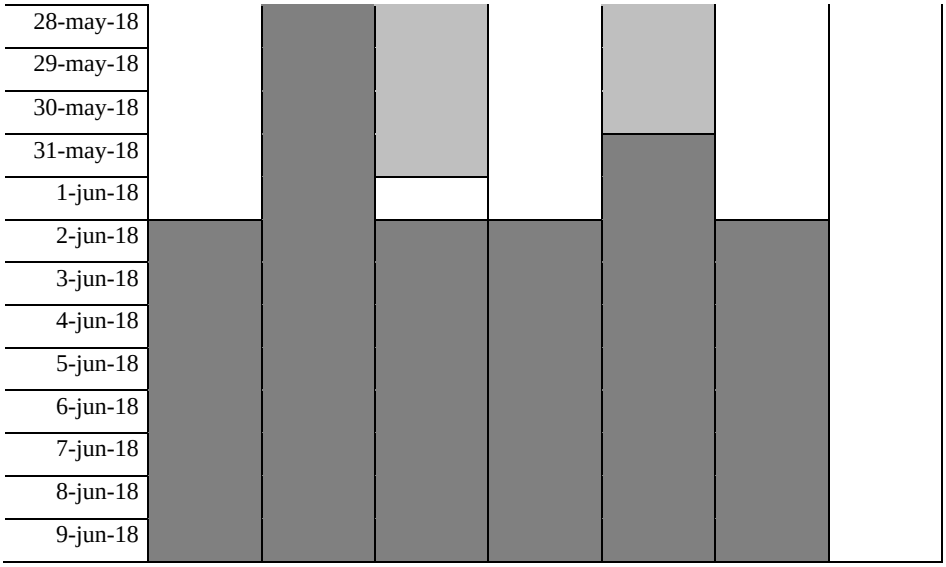


Table A6.2. Replication of main analyses with different bandwidths (next page)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
VARIABLES	Treatment 6	Treatment 6	Treatment 2	Treatment 2	Treatment 3	Treatment 3	Treatment 4	Treatment 4	Placebo	Placebo
Treatment*	-0.246***	-0.198**	-0.212**	-0.176*	-0.236***	-0.203**	-0.243***	-0.199**	0.0162	0.0258
	(0.0918)	(0.0952)	(0.0871)	(0.0898)	(0.0890)	(0.0920)	(0.0893)	(0.0924)	(0.0974)	(0.0964)
Age		0.00584		0.00445		0.00390		0.00558		0.00464
		(0.00439)		(0.00413)		(0.00412)		(0.00418)		(0.00475)
Sex		-0.0182		0.00472		0.00583		0.00445		0.0380
		(0.0827)		(0.0765)		(0.0764)		(0.0775)		(0.0866)
Education		-0.0384***		-0.0513***		-0.0521***		-0.0466***		-0.0648***
		(0.0140)		(0.0130)		(0.0130)		(0.0132)		(0.0153)
Job status		-0.0312		-0.0392**		-0.0395**		-0.0354*		-0.0294
		(0.0199)		(0.0185)		(0.0185)		(0.0187)		(0.0216)
Issue corruption		-0.140***		-0.146***		-0.146***		-0.145***		-0.177***
		(0.0323)		(0.0300)		(0.0299)		(0.0302)		(0.0342)
Constant	6.687***	7.200***	6.679***	7.356***	6.676***	7.381***	6.684***	7.272***	6.679***	7.409***
	(0.0480)	(0.285)	(0.0441)	(0.265)	(0.0435)	(0.265)	(0.0443)	(0.269)	(0.0502)	(0.307)
Region	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	1,865	1,865	2,121	2,121	2,125	2,125	2,071	2,071	1,562	1,562
R-squared	0.004	0.023	0.003	0.026	0.003	0.026	0.004	0.026	0.000	0.033

Standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Chapter 7. Conclusions

Populism has been the subject of academic, political, and social debate for decades. However, the relationship between populism and democracy has not been fully disentangled. For instance, populism' division of society between 'the people' and 'the elite' has been argued to be at the same time inclusive and divisive (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2017). On the one hand, the alleged inclusive character of populism has been considered to be beneficial for democracies, as it could bring back into politics excluded sectors of society. On the other hand, its divisive character has been argued to break social cohesion, fostering polarization.

Additionally, populism has been argued to feed on disenchanted or —as the name of that social movement indicated— outraged citizens. Feelings of disconnection from institutions can increase the perception that the system does not work, and that it does not represent citizens' preferences, widening the gap between 'the elite' and 'the people', ultimately fueling populism. This dissertation has aimed to speak to those issues around populism. The following section summarizes the main findings of this dissertation and then addresses the main contributions and their implications, pointing to potential limitations and avenues for future research.

Overview of the main findings

I have pointed out the lack of longitudinal research on populist attitudes. However, when this dissertation was about to be completed —October 2023—, a research letter exploring the stability of populist attitudes in Germany was published (Schimpf, Wuttke, and Schoen 2023). The authors, using data from 2017 until 2021, and with a different measure of populist attitudes than the one used throughout this dissertation, find —let me put it very simply— that populist attitudes are stable for part of their sample while volatile for others.

According to the scant evidence on the stability or instability of populist attitudes, the first chapter of this thesis aimed to address populist attitudes from a longitudinal perspective. In that section, we have seen how populist attitudes have changed over the last ten years in Spain, which also served to put the dissertation in its context.

The descriptive evidence on the evolution of (average levels) of populist attitudes showed that Spain has witnessed a certain reduction of populist attitudes in general terms. However, we have also seen certain disparities when it comes to the evolution of populist attitudes by different groups. For example, populist attitudes have significantly decreased among supporters of Podemos, the political party that could be considered the heir of the 15M protests and the first populist party at the national level in the country. On the contrary, the evolution of the average levels of populist attitudes among supporters of the PP went in the opposite direction. But we have also seen a certain degree of stability, for example among older cohorts of the sample, compared to the youngest, in which populist attitudes did fluctuate.

Therefore, the descriptive section has provided information about the (in)stability of populist attitudes in Spain over the last ten years, a context marked by economic, social, and political change. Those changes included, among others, the appearance (and even the disappearance) of political parties —including populist parties on both sides of the ideological spectrum—, the abdication of the former king, surrounded by different scandals, the first successful no-confidence vote, as well as the first coalition government in the current democratic period.

In sum, at first glance, populist attitudes appear to exhibit distinct fluctuations over time contingent upon the different variables explored in the first chapter of the thesis. Additionally, when analyzing the correlation of populist attitudes over time, evidence is found in favour of the idea that populist attitudes have a certain degree of stability, which could be considered to be in line with the findings of Schimpf and colleagues (Schimpf, Wuttke, and Schoen 2023), but populist attitudes appear to be more unstable in Spain than in Germany, whose implications are salient.

On the one hand, it opens the door to exploring the reasons behind the differences between those who appear to hold stable populist attitudes and those who do not. Research should not only pay attention to individuals' characteristics but also to contextual reasons that may account for those divergences in the degree of variation of populism. What is more, future research should combine both levels to explore, for instance, how the interplay of cycles of contention and individuals' process of politicization/socialization impact individuals' levels of populism.

On the other hand, this highlights the importance of exploring populism from a longitudinal perspective. Studying the causes and consequences of variations of populist attitudes is core to understanding broader political phenomena, considering the ultimate

consequences could have —think, for example, of polarization, attitudes towards institutions or minorities…—.

After describing the evolution of populist attitudes, this dissertation has addressed the mobilization capacity of populism. Populism has been considered an integrative force, being able to bring into politics marginalized sectors of the population (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2012a). This thesis has aimed to integrate that mobilization hypothesis into the conflictive literature on the resource-based theories of participation. I have argued that populism could indeed foster participation among those more deprived —who a priori would be expected to back away from politics—.

Exploring populism's effect on three different forms of non-institutional participation, populism only appears to palliate, and even revert, the negative effect of deprivation for participating in demonstrations. While these results only partially support our expectations, the question they raise is whether protesting is the first step for deprived individuals to participate in politics through other channels.

In conclusion, increases in populist attitudes over time are able to explain the disparities between theoretical and empirical disparities on the effect of deprivation on political protesting, by 'bringing into the streets' those who otherwise would be more reluctant to protest. In this line, populism could therefore be argued to have a democratization potential, by fostering the political engagement of those who could be labelled as the most left behind by the state.

The third chapter, co-authored with Dr. Carol Galais, is the only one which does not resort to the measure of populist attitudes. On the contrary, chapter three focuses on the effects of populist radical right parties on political correctness. Populist leaders have been usually related to the use of plain language for identifying more with the 'common citizen', and the populist radical right has declared the war on 'woke', often criticizing 'political correctness'.

Political correctness (PC), understood as avoiding the use of language which can offend or hurt minorities or certain social groups (Andary-Brophy 2015), could be considered a necessary element of democratic systems, which has to do with respect towards minorities. The recent emergence of Vox in Spain —a populist radical right (PRR) party— and their position against political correctness led us to question the possible pernicious effects of the PRR on PC.

Benefiting from the repetition of elections in Spain, as well as the rapid emergence of Vox, we conducted two different methodological strategies, which led us to the

conclusion that indeed, voting for Vox has a negative impact on those individuals' levels of political correctness. While the decrease in Vox's supporters' PC levels could be argued not to be a factual change in their attitudes, but a decrease in levels of social desirability, these results speak of the pernicious consequences this family of parties can have for societies in general and minorities in particular.

The findings of that chapter also speak to the literature on the cultural backlash, which has mainly focused on two issues: anti-immigration and anti-globalization. The literature on the cultural backlash should account for other topics that appear to be fundamental for populist parties, particularly the PRR, such as their anti-feminist or anti-LGTBQ+ positions. These issues could indeed play an important role in explaining PRR parties' support but can also be a target of their policies and discourses, so further attention is required to prevent the pernicious consequences of this family of parties.

In the fourth empirical chapter, I explored the relationship between populism and affective polarization. The relationship between both has been a recurrent topic in research on populism, but it has been overlooked in empirical studies. As a matter of fact, populism has been considered to feed on polarization —but also on the lack of it—, and to boost polarization.

This study has taken that argument to the individual level, exploring the effects of changes in both individuals' levels of populist attitudes and support for populist parties on affective polarization. Affective polarization could be defined as the gap which exists between individuals' feelings towards in-parties and out-parties (Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes 2012b), and populism could be expected to widen this gap, mainly because of populism's dyadic and Manichean division of society.

The empirical evidence supports the idea that increases in populist attitudes widen the gap between the in-party and out-parties, or what is the same, increase affective polarization. However, becoming a supporter of a populist party does not appear to have the same effect on affective polarization. These results should inform about the consequences of increases in the demand for populism, also pointing at the importance of differentiating between holding populist attitudes and voting for a populist party. These two indicators have been commonly used interchangeably in empirical research, basically for the lack of data measuring populist attitudes. However, I have also evidenced the importance of distinguishing between both, as they are two different concepts and, importantly enough, can lead us to misleading conclusions.

Finally, the fifth empirical chapter explores one of the most overlooked aspects of the study on populism, namely, how to respond to or weaken it. As we have mentioned elsewhere, populism is usually accompanied by a negative connotation. Different authors have argued populism poses a threat to (liberal) democracies (Bang and Marsh 2018; Kaltwasser 2012; Mudde and Kaltwasser 2012b), and as such, it should be a response to it (Rovira Kaltwasser 2017). Taking the words of Rummens, populism 'should be considered an important threat to democracy, which ought to be countered by actions aiming to remedy both the symptom and the underlying problem' (Rummens 2017, 2).

However, when considering the response to populism, scholars have usually paid attention to the response to populist parties —and especially to PRR parties—. Contrarily, this chapter focused on the reduction of populist attitudes, by analyzing how the change in government in Spain after the Gürtel sentence influenced individuals' levels of populism.

The coincidence of the Gürtel sentence —which convicted the party in government of benefiting from corruption—, the no-confidence vote, and the subsequent change in government with the data collection of the POLAT survey allowed for implementing an Unexpected Event during Survey Design (UESD) design. The main expectations of this article were that changes in government could reduce populist attitudes, that this relationship would be mediated through institutional trust, and moderated by the condition of winner or loser of each individual.

Results mainly support the expectations, indicating that changes in government could indeed reduce populist attitudes. However, this relationship was not found to be as straightforward as this. In fact, the effect of government alternation on populist attitudes appears to be fully mediated by institutional trust —or what is the same, changes in government positively impact trust in institutions, and it is the latter increase which reduces the demand for populism—. Additionally, the effect diverges for winners and losers of the government change: only supporters of the incoming government reduce their populist attitudes.

Accordingly, these results speak about the importance of institutional trust for reducing the demand for populism, but most importantly, indicate that liberal democracies can resort to institutional and political mechanisms that can guarantee individuals' attachment to the system. Hence, policymakers and politicians should not disregard accountability and responsiveness as effective tools that could shrink the moral

gap between the people and the elite, also reducing individuals' perception that it is them, the people, who should make the most important decisions.

Concluding remarks

Over the last decades, research on populism expanded vastly. This has been accompanied by a widespread use of the term in media and politics, often ascribing a negative connotation to it. Together with the different conceptualizations of populism developed over the years, this has led to a certain confusion about the nature of populism itself, its relationship with democracy, and even the instruments to empirically measure it.

This dissertation acknowledges the different debates around populism but has explicitly avoided theoretical discussions about the nature of populism. The reader might have missed a theoretical dialogue between those who consider populism a thin ideology, a political strategy or organization, a political style, a political logic, or a discursive framework (Hawkins 2009, 2010; Jagers and Walgrave 2007; Jansen 2011; Laclau 2005a; Moffitt and Tormey 2014; Mouffe 2005; Mudde 2004, 2017; Pauwels 2011; Roberts 2006). However, helping in the theoretical clarification of the meaning of populism has never been the objective of this thesis.

On the contrary, this thesis has taken a clear position on its understanding of populism. I adhere to the ideational approach, understanding populism as a thin ideology or a set of ideas. But beyond the label assigned to populism, what is most important is what defines populism. Hence, populism entails a Manichean division of society between two homogeneous and antagonistic groups —the pure and good people and the corrupt and evil elite—, and which argues that the people should make the most important decisions.

This understanding of populism also translates into the measurement of populism at the individual level. I have resorted to the measurement of Akkerman and colleagues, (Akkerman, Mudde, and Zaslove 2014), capturing what has been labelled as populist attitudes. This strategy allows for capturing how populist are the people, beyond other political attitudes or identities —particularly, ideology and partisanship—.

Measuring populist attitudes provides the first key contribution of this dissertation. Research on populism is plagued with theoretical and empirical confusion

and both feed off each other. I have already mentioned the different understandings of populism —which have led to the construction of different instruments for empirically measuring it—. But focusing on the other direction, the distinct measures of populism have also provided confusion about populism itself and important theoretical debates, such as that about its relationship with democracy.

Hence, the current dissertation has aimed to strictly measure populism when talking about populism. The thorough focus on the conceptual clarity of the dissertation is crucial for understanding its contribution to the theoretical debates around populism. And this is important, as, for example, it has provided evidence about the relationship between populism and affective polarization or political participation, regardless of individuals' ideology or preferred political party.

Additionally, research on populism had, until relatively recently, focused on populism at the party level. Understanding the demand for populism should be a paramount pillar of the scholarship on populism because understanding it can inform scholars on changes in citizens' grievances, political preferences, democratic and representative principles, and other perceptions of the *res publica*.

If the first contribution of the thesis has been its focus on the individual level, the second cornerstone of this dissertation is the longitudinal design. The perspective of time usually provides the observer with a more complex picture of anything, and this is also the case when looking at populism. First, this thesis has served to spot intriguing aspects of the evolution of populist attitudes over the last ten years, which should inform future scholarship on populism. Secondly, and most importantly, the longitudinal design provides empirical results with more robustness than other types of data, such as cross-sectional.

Not all dissertations can benefit from such a rich panel database as the POLAT. This thesis not only focused on the analysis of panel data but also paid close attention to the reality of the Spanish political landscape, which has also allowed me to resort to quasi-experimental methods and integrate them into the thesis. Therefore, this dissertation benefits from a wealth of data which has allowed the implementation of different methodological strategies which strengthen the results and the thesis itself.

A third point that should be highlighted is the continuous dialogue with different strands of the literature, pushing the boundaries of the study of populism. For example, the thesis has aimed to integrate the mobilization hypothesis of populism into the debates around resource-based theories of political participation. Additionally, it has also

explored an important issue that should be included into research on the cultural backlash (which is one of the explanatory factors of populism, and especially the populist radical right), namely political (in)correctness. Hence, this thesis should inform the literature on the sources of populism (and the populist radical right), for focusing on issues beyond anti-immigration or winners/losers of globalization, including attitudes towards political correctness and others, such as feminism or post-materialist values and attitudes.

But this thesis has also pushed the boundaries on the study of populism by empirically addressing —and arguing theoretically— relationships that had been present in the literature for years, but which had not been fully addressed by empirical research. This is the case, for example, of the effects of populism on polarization, which has been explored in this dissertation by focusing on the connection between populist attitudes and affective polarization. Also, the focus on the relationship between corruption on populism, which has been widely present in the literature, and is turned around in this thesis for exploring how responses to crises can reduce the demand for populism —being the latter one of the most under-researched issues regarding populism—.

A fourth point of the thesis has to do with its real-world implications. This dissertation has addressed relevant societal and political problems such as the observance of minority rights in the use of language —whose erosion could lead to pernicious (and material) consequences for those minorities—; the importance of accountability for securing institutional trust, and keeping individuals aligned with politics; or the disengagement of those who are more deprived, who face the risk of stepping out of politics, losing their voice for setting the public agenda.

Accordingly, this dissertation can inform non-populist and anti-populist public officials, as they should be aware of the institutional tools within their grasp for reducing the demand for populism —if they, in fact, consider populism should be fought—. But this thesis also speaks to scholars on different topics, from those studying the connection between deprivation and political engagement to those studying populism from a wide array of perspectives.

This dissertation has materialized the importance of distinguishing between becoming more populist and becoming a populist party supporter, two different concepts that have been widely used interchangeably in the literature on populism at the individual level. Accordingly, scholars should pay attention to this difference, which could indeed disturb their conclusions.

It could be argued that this difference is context-driven —and the use of only one case, Spain, could be considered a limitation of the dissertation as a whole—, but I consider the Spanish case a good scenario for the study of populism. Without entering the availability of resources which allowed to conduct the studies included in the thesis, Spain has two important populist parties on both sides of the ideological spectrum, and both parties have been created quite recently. The 'recency' of populism in Spain —even though we could think of local populist politicians in the past— could also be considered to benefit this dissertation, not only because these parties are more under-researched than some of their European counterparts, but also because it could be argued Spaniards were not accustomed to dive into populism until the last decade.

This dissertation should also inform the literature on the populist radical right, as we have seen their pernicious effects on their supporters' attitudes towards political correctness —which is no more than avoiding offending others—. The cultural war these parties are fighting appears to include more topics than the ones studied until now, and future scholarship should account for them.

Finally, this dissertation has also shown two more facets of populism. On the one hand, increases in populist attitudes have been found to motivate those more deprived to take to the streets, pointing to populism's mobilization potential. On the other hand, they have been also found to widen the affective gap between co-partisans and out-partisans. While some could argue these two facets speak of the 'corrective' and 'threat' sides of populism for democracies (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2012b)—by enhancing political participation and by increasing polarization, respectively—, this argument would imply assuming polarization is bad for democracies, that participation is positive, and that both are not related.

Allow me not to jump into a fruitless Manichean debate about the relationship between populism and democracy. But for those who remain circumspect about populism, remember it can be fought, and liberal democratic systems can do it. It is just about strengthening democracies.

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