Demand and drivers for populism: general and specific socio-political drivers of popular support

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Populism and Civic Engagement

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The role of economic problems in driving support for populism

András Tétényi, Corvinus University of Budapest

19 May, 2022

What will be discussed today?

Exogenous shocks and their impact on populist voting
– **András Tétényi**, Corvinus University of Budapest,
3 mins

What kind of public policies trigger populism?
– **Attila Bartha**, Hungarian Academy of Sciences,
2 mins

Our focus

1. This is a part of a work where we looked at economic variables on the macro level.
    1. we did not look at surveys, or any self reported data.
2. The idea was to focus on a major exogenous shock (unemployment shock around and after the global financial crisis) and assess its impact.
    1. Therefore, we looked at variables which were heavily influenced by the crisis:
        1. Unemployment
        2. Inflation
        3. Construction share as a part of GVA (GDP)
3. Regional (NUTS-2) data from 2000-2020 in 8 countries of CEE – Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia.
4. Our dependant variable is the share of populist vote based on Kessel, Inglehart and Norris and Popu-list; we looked at election results (both parliamentary and EU parliamentary) in the selected countries.

Novelty of the research: to the best of our knowledge previous studies did not cover this timespan, for both parliamentary and EU elections, for these countries.

General trends in CEE
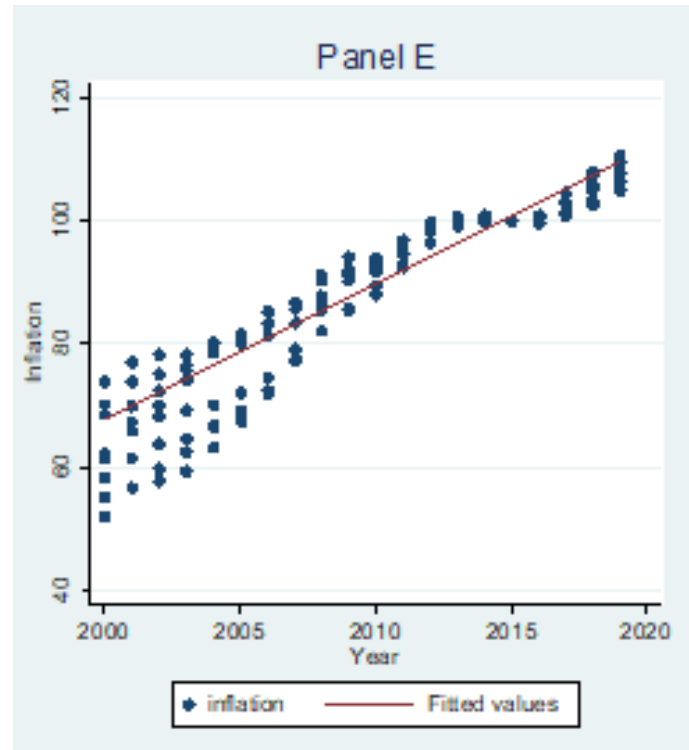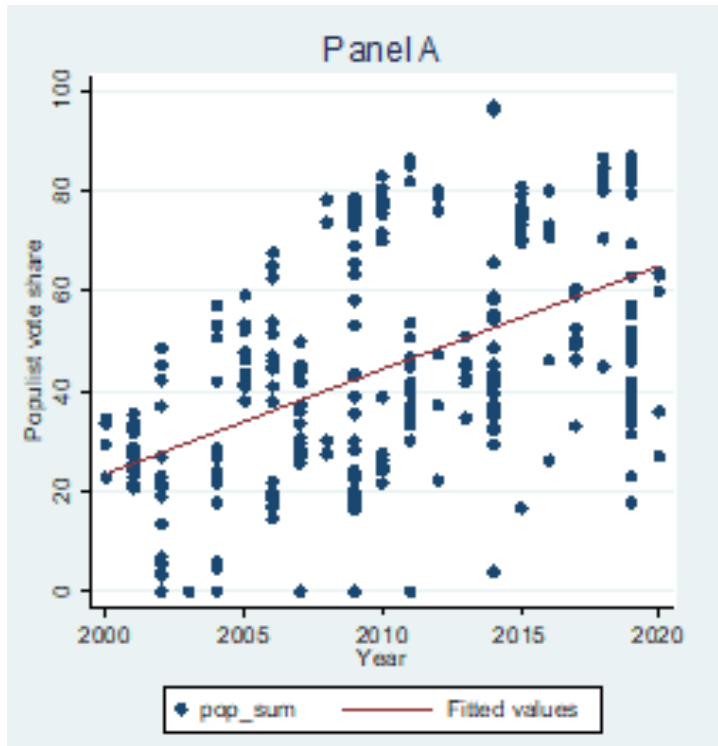
Panel A

Panel E

- Panel A: support for non-mainstream parties has increased significantly over the 20 years studied. The trend line starts from around 20% in 2000 and reaches 60% by 2019

- Panel E: inflation increased year-to-year at almost the similar rate as did populist vote

Which variables are key?

- Panel C: the higher inflation, the higher populist vote

- Panel B: the higher construction share, the lower populist vote

Panel C

Panel B
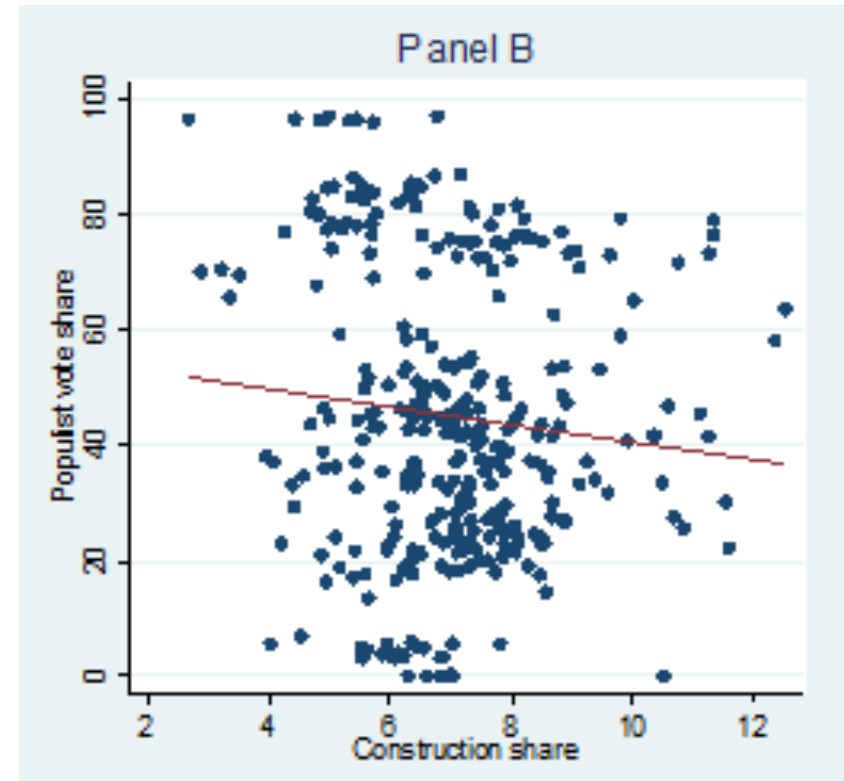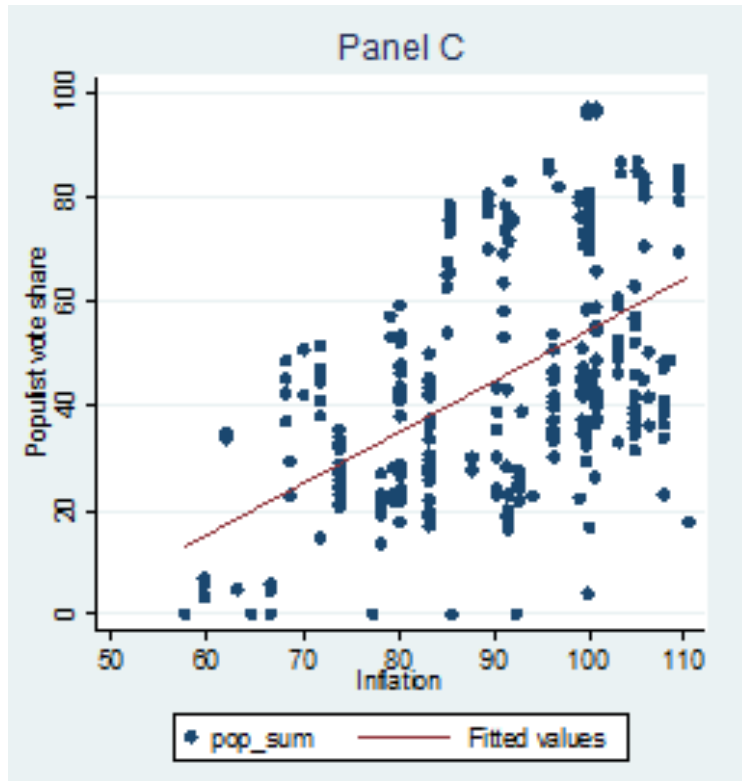
Our results

- OLS, FE and RE methods were used, with clustered standard errors, with year and country dummies.

- The **higher** inflation and unemployment is, the **more** people will vote populist; the **higher** construction share is, the **less** people will vote populist.

	OLS pop_sum	RE pop_sum	FE pop_sum
inflation	1.319***	1.365***	1.384***
	(16.03)	(12.07)	(11.18)
unemp	1.028***	1.235***	1.352***
	(4.52)	(4.83)	(4.19)
const_share	-3.075***	-2.798**	-2.423*
	(-3.97)	(-3.09)	(-2.54)
_cons	-60.65***	-68.82***	-74.10***
	(-7.48)	(-7.71)	(-5.38)
N	314	314	314
R^2	0.390		0.595
adj. R^2	0.384		0.591

Policy message

- If unemployment is increasing or inflation is increasing, people will vote populist

- If the share of construction as a part of GVA (Gross value added) is increasing, less people will vote populist

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Socio-cultural factors behind populism: nationalism and religion

Zdzisław Mach and Łucja Piekarska,
Jagiellonian University, Kraków

19 May, 2022

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Broad, comprehensive look at populism that includes:
- **cultural** and **economic** perspectives
- supply and demand sides

Right-wing populism (in Poland and Hungary) is built on ethnic nationalism

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Ethnic nationalism:

- mythical common origin hence **the cult of ancestors**
- collective identity based on shared cultural tradition
- a nation seen as an exclusive community of people who think alike
- nation-state seen predominantly as a protector of nation not liberal democracy
- sense of moral superiority and responsibility for the European civilization
- against cosmopolitanism, European liberal values, individualism, integration of diversity

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Tradition:

- supported by religion, as the ultimate source of truth, moral principles and authority
- provides simple and definite answers to difficult questions
- a remedy for ontological insecurity

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Religion:

- an essential component of cultural tradition and the core element of national identity
- ideologically and politically connected with ethnic nationalism
- mutual support between church and state
- religious sanction of the traditional social and moral order

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Polarized society:

- in social and political domains: sharply bifurcated political (also electoral) support (right-wing) populists versus liberals and moderate conservatives
- in the populist discourse: „the people" = the nation sharply contrasted to the cosmopolitans and corrupt elites, both domestic and European

Competent Government and not ignoring sections of the electorate

- Reservoirs of discontent provide opportunities to mobilise electoral support
- When a credible (not to extreme) and accessible leader arises
- These reservoirs tend not to be the sections whose standard of living is improving
- But are often parts of the electorate whose support is taken for granted by established parties
- Populists etc. address these sections of the electorate, they can notice issues others do not

http://POPandCE.eu

Not ignoring sections of the electorate

Populism and Civic Engagement

- Sections of the population whose incomes are effectively squeezed…

- …and who feel 'looked down on' or 'ignored' by politicians can quickly defect in a crisis

- The particular narrative is not as important as respecting these sections and addressing their needs

- A positive vision that includes all sections is needed

- This does not mean abandoning respect and safeguards of diversity and minorities

PaCE policy recommendations

Credits
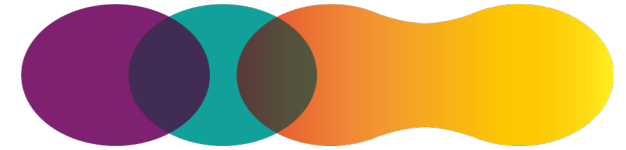
Based on research in the PaCE project by:

- Takis Pappas

- Reinhard Heinisch, Martin Dolezal, Marco Fölsch

- Ruzha Smilova, Daniel Smilov

The views are those of the project members, not of the EU commission.

Emotions, knowledge, information and values

Zsolt BODA

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Contribution from Alberto COTTICA and Nica DAVIDOV

The problem

- Populism: parties, movements, discourse, governments...

- But who are the people supporting them?

- What are their attitudes, values? What do they know? What do they feel?

- Is it possible to influence those individual characteristics?

Populist attitudes

- People centrism (e.g.: Politicians should always listen closely to the problems of the people)

- Anti-elitism (e.g.: Politicians talk too much and take too little action)

- **Manichean outlook** (e.g.: You can tell if a person is good or bad if you know their political views)

Emotions:
predicting populist attitudes

- Resentment and anger towards

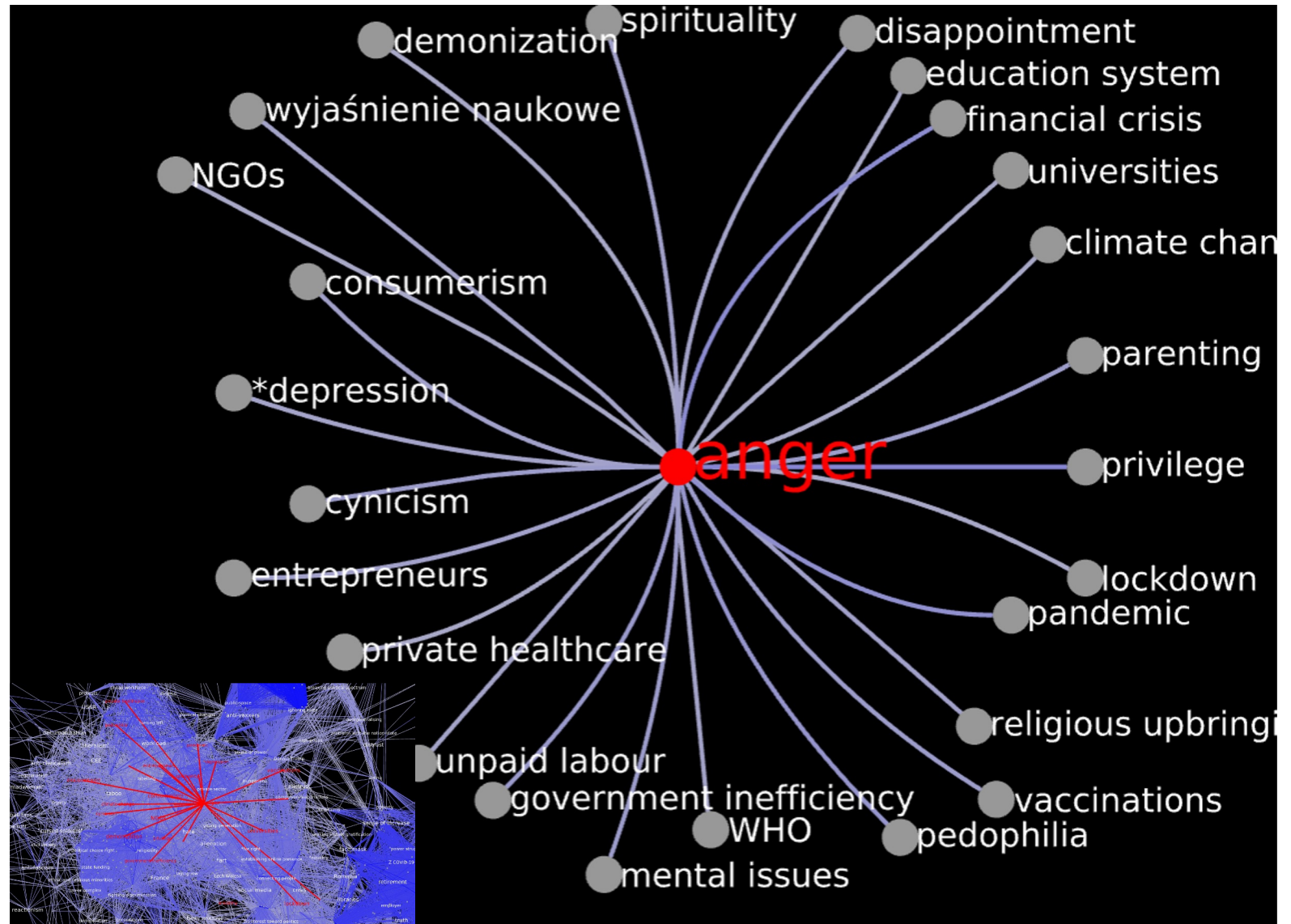 – the government

  – specific social groups

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Edgeryders
(POPREBEL team)

Ethnographic research offers insight into how emotions and politics are connected

Understanding nuances of how emotions and politics link for people can help bypass identity threat in designing interventions

Data visualization helps us map these links clearly

"Anger" inks to politics differently than "trust"

Attitudes:
predicting populist attitudes

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- People like me don't have any say about what the government does (low external political efficacy)

- I feel I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing my country (high internal political efficacy)

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Democratic capacities decrease the populist appeal

- Democratic values (tolerance, equality, autonomy, compromise)

- Political knowledge, reflexivity

- Information

- Lack of extreme partisanship

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Implications and discussion

- How can we develop democratic capacities?

  – The role of schools. Civic education; school atmosphere; anti-bullying action.

  – Critical infrastructure for democracy – the media

- How to influence (external efficacy) feelings?

  – Democracy, inclusion, participation

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Thank you for your attention!
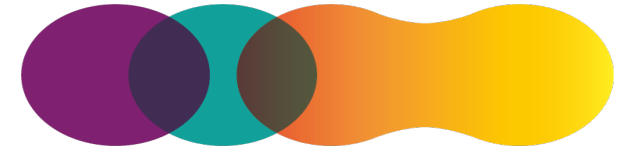
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