

EXECUTIVE MEMO ON A NEW POPULIST ATTITUDES SCALE*

In recent years, scholars have started to measure and explain populism at the micro-level, as an attitude that individuals hold about politics. Multiple scales have been proposed but, as the broad overview by [Van Hauwaert et al.](#) (forthcoming) and [Van Hauwaert et al. \(2016\)](#) show, they all have limitations. Most do not capture a broad range of the phenomenon – being able to discriminate only among moderately populist and moderately not-populist individuals – and have little cross-cultural validity. We have used standard scale-development approaches from psychology to produce a short battery of six to nine items measuring populist attitudes, divided into three dimensions. The scale has conceptual breadth, travels well across eighteen samples collected in fourteen different countries, and includes one negative-worded item in each dimension. The proposed scale, with items measured in standard agree-disagree responses, is below. The recommendations are ordered. This means that the last item in each dimension (those in *italic*) can be left out by researchers who prefer to run a shorter, six-item battery.

Suggestions:¹

People-centrism:

Ppl1. Politicians should always listen closely to the problems of the people.

*This is a short report with item recommendations for a populist attitudes scale. The full version of the study is in a forthcoming book chapter with the following citation: Castanho Silva, Bruno, Ioannis Andreadis, Eva Anduiza, Nebojša Blanuša, Yazmin Morlet Corti, Gisela Delfino, Guillem Rico, Saskia Ruth, Bram Spruyt, Marco Steenbergen, and Levente Littvay. *forthcoming*. “Public Opinion Surveys: a New Scale”. In: *The Ideational Approach to Populism: Theory, Method & Analysis*, edited by Kirk A. Hawkins, Ryan Carlin, Levente Littvay, and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser. Routledge. **If you use the scale recommended here, please cite the respective book chapter.**

¹Translations into Croatian, Dutch, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish may be found at the end of this document.

Ppl2. Politicians don't have to spend time among ordinary people to do a good job.*

Ppl3. *The will of the people should be the highest principle in this country's politics.*

Anti-elitism:

Ant1. The government is pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves.

Ant2. Government officials use their power to try to improve people's lives.*

Ant3. *Quite a few of the people running the government are crooked.*

Manichaeian outlook:

Man1. You can tell if a person is good or bad if you know their politics.

Man2. The people I disagree with politically are not evil.*

Man3. *The people I disagree with politically are just misinformed.*

Brief Description and Instructions for Use

As results in the technical description below demonstrate, the new scale captures a broad range of the concept, as measured through IRT models, and is cross-nationally valid over fourteen countries from the Americas, Eastern and Western Europe. The sample includes countries with historically successful populist parties (such as Argentina or France), and others with very little populist experience (such as Ireland), as well as examples of contemporary successful left-wing populists (Greece, Spain), right-wing (Hungary, Switzerland), and ideological hybrids (Italy). Compared to the most popular alternative, by [Akkerman et al. \(2014\)](#), it contains more information and is more cross-culturally valid. Researchers may use both the nine-items version, with three constructs, or a short six-item version with the first two items per construct, forming a single factor. The latter still has the conceptual benefit of using all subdimensions of the concept measured individually. Both conform to well-fitting models. It is essential, however, to include negative-worded items, in order to discriminate between actual support for populism and acquiescence, affirmation, and agreement bias.

Description of the Study

Concept and Dimensions

We base our measurement on the ideational definition of populism and identify three dimensions of the concept: first, praising the common people as a homogeneous group and emphasizing popular sovereignty in politics (or, the idea of a general will). Second, anti-elitism, or anti-establishment sentiments. The idea of a small, powerful group who has illegitimately taken over the state and subverted it for its own benefit. And third, a good-versus-evil view of politics, in which compromise with the other side is unacceptable, leaving little room to pluralism (Hawkins, 2010; Mudde, 2004).

Data, Methods, and Procedure

Considering that populism is a multidimensional concept, sitting at the intersection of those three dimensions, each one of them should be measured separately. Therefore, we started with a 155-item questionnaire that covered ten potential dimensions of the concept. Dimensions and items were collected from various existing scales, composed by ourselves, or suggested by members of **Team Populism**,² whom we consulted through the group's mailing list. This questionnaire was fielded in one online survey through Amazon's Mechanical Turk with American respondents, and in seven student samples³, with n ranging between 153 and 262. We proceeded with dimensionality reduction through exploratory factor analysis and Mokken Scale analysis (Mokken, 1971) on these data (all countries pooled together). Four relevant factors emerged from all 155 items: the three our theory predicted plus authoritarianism. Because the relation between authoritarianism and populism is such a debated topic, let alone the question of whether one is part of the other, we decided to keep only the three dimensions that are conceptually sound in order to measure populist attitudes.

Our next step was of that of scale reduction, based on the three factors identified. The exploratory analysis suggested 12-20 items for each dimension. We tested the measurement invariance of those items across countries using the Alignment method (Asparouhov and Muthén, 2014). It tests if items do capture the respective concepts, the same way, across different groups of respondents. Results yielded shorter invariant scales, of around 6-7 items per dimension.

²This is an international network of scholars with more than 40 members from Europe and the Americas who study populism. More information may be found at <http://populism.byu.edu>.

³In Argentina, Belgium (Flanders), Croatia, Greece, Mexico, Spain, and Switzerland.

Finally, we collected data through online surveys in ten countries⁴ in order to perform a final independent validation of our final, short scale. We apply a classic multigroup confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) test of measurement invariance on three of our best performing items for each dimension. This method was chosen for being more strict than the Alignment method. It is more difficult to obtain invariance under multigroup CFA testing. Next, we pooled the data from the ten online samples and tested an Item Response Theory model to check the amount of information the scale has – whether it captures a wide breadth of our latent constructs.

Technical Information on the New Scale

This section summarizes technical aspects from the analyses conducted and results that are most important for those interested in using the new scale. A confirmatory factor analysis model is used to test whether the proposed scales for each dimension load into single constructs, in which the factor loadings are constrained to be the same across groups (countries). Hungary is excluded from this analysis because of concerns about the quality of the data.⁵ Model and results are in Figure 1. It includes a method factor for positive worded items (DiStefano and Motl, 2006) with all loadings constrained to be the same.⁶ Model fit indices suggest borderline good fit. Factor loadings are acceptable, with the exception of the last suggestion for the Manichaeian outlook dimension which has a relatively low loading.

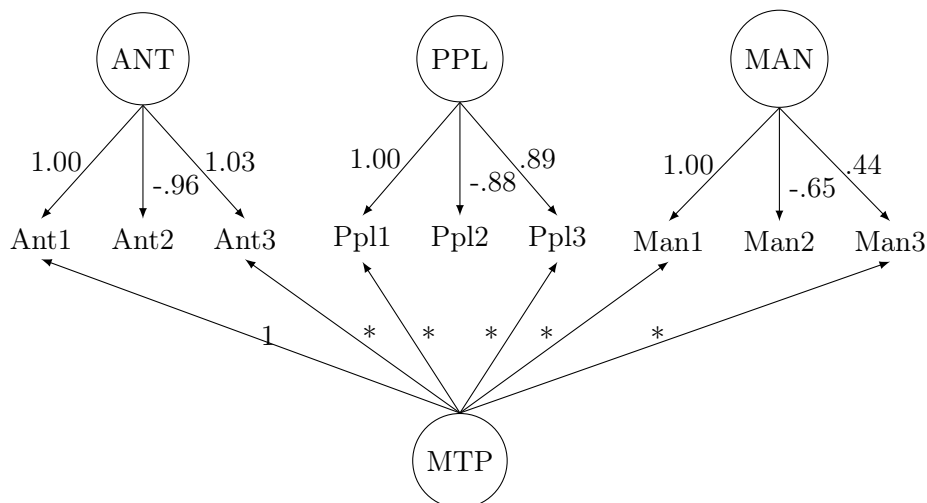
Table 1 presents results of invariance testing with multigroup CFA. For the new scale, constraining factor loadings to be the same across countries does not make the model significantly worse than letting them free to vary in each country. As a comparison, the bottom part of Table 1 shows the same test for the popular six-item scale by Akkerman et al. (2014) in the same data. The model of that scale with equal loadings across countries fits significantly worse than the configural ($p = .02$),

⁴Brazil, France, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Mexico, Spain, United Kingdom, and United States. Targeted sample sizes ranged from 200 to 300 in each. We got respondents from Amazon Mechanical Turk (U.S.), CrowdFlower (the remaining countries) and Qualtrics (for part of Ireland and Hungary).

⁵There were issues when collecting the online data with CrowdFlower in Hungary. Many respondents appear to have powered through the survey without faithfully answering the questions, while a large number managed to get the final validation code even without answering questions. For this reason, we complemented the Hungarian sample with Qualtrics respondents (100). Regardless of those issues, even if we include Hungary our scale is still invariant (p-value of the χ^2 difference between configural and loadings-constrained model is .08).

⁶We have tested all four alternatives suggested by DiStefano and Motl (2006): positive method factor, negative method factor, correlate all residuals of negative items, and correlate all residuals of positive items. We present results with the positive factor, which has the best model fit.

Figure 1: Multigroup Confirmatory Factor Analysis with Equality Constraints on Factor Loadings



Notes: Unstandardized factor loadings, constrained to be the same across nine groups (countries). Estimation: maximum likelihood robust. Items measured on a 1-7 likert scale. N = 2510. Model fit: $\chi^2 = 514.884$, $df = 254$, $p < .001$, RMSEA = .061 (90% CI: .054-.068), SRMR = .063, CFI = .924, TLI = .903. Factor loading of the method factor (*) = .97.

meaning that the instrument does not work the same way across countries. For both ours and the Akkerman et al. (2014) scales the model with an equality constraint on the intercepts fits significantly worse and should be rejected.

For our scale, Figures 2 to 4 have information curves obtained with an IRT model (more specifically a graded ratings scale model) for each of the three dimensions. We observe how each of them captures a different area of their respective dimensions, with the first two mostly on the negative side (on the [-3:1] interval) while the last (Manichaeian outlook) performs better on individuals higher on this trait (those in the [-1:3] range). If we aggregate the two top performing items in each dimension into a single six-items scale, the information curve is in Figure 5, with a comparison to the information curve obtained with the Akkerman et al. (2014) six-item scale. We see that the new one, with six items, has a somewhat broader range, particularly with lower error in the lowest end. Therefore, due to the variation in capturing distinct areas, by each dimension, we are able to cover a broader extent of the concept.

Table 1: Multigroup CFA Invariance Test

Model	χ^2	χ^2 diff	df	p
<i>New scale</i>				
Configural	440.58			
Loadings	599.12	102.20	88	.14
Intercepts	912.57	322.17	40	< .001
<i>Six-item Akkerman et al. (2014) Scale</i>				
Configural	230.76			
Loadings	297.15	59.935	40	.02
Intercepts	553.11	253.283	40	< .001

Notes: χ^2 difference calculated with the Satorra-Bentler correction scale for models fit with a maximum likelihood robust estimation (Satorra and Bentler, 2001). Equality constraints set across nine groups (countries).

Figure 2: Information Curves – Antielitism

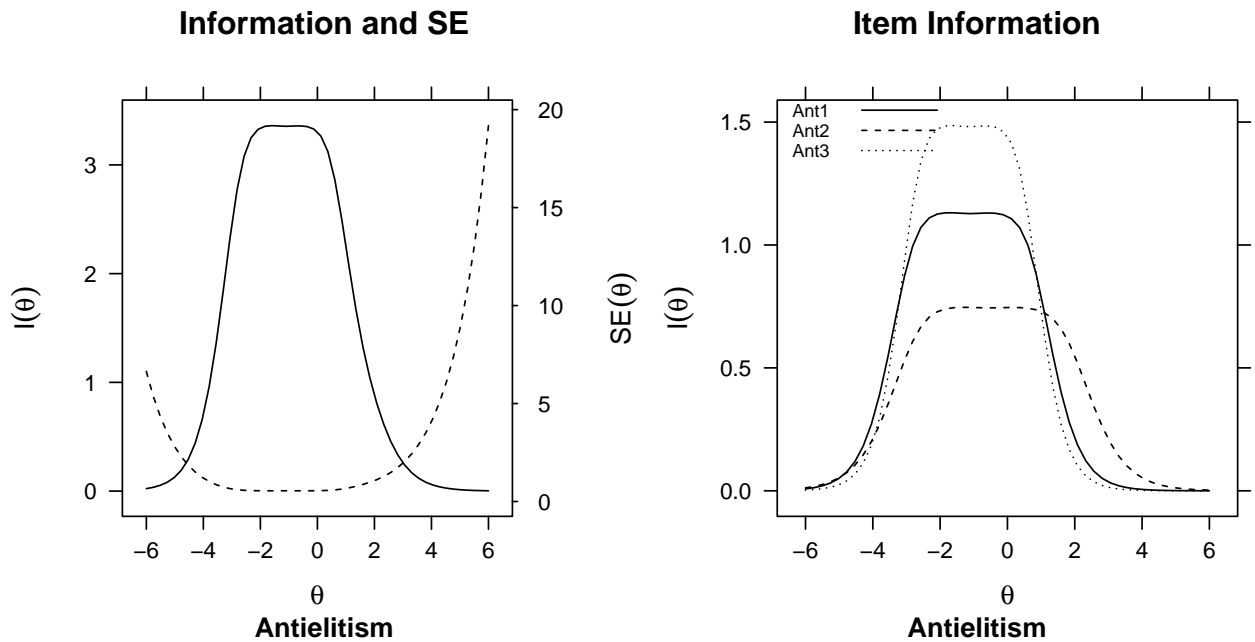


Figure 3: Information Curves – People-centrism

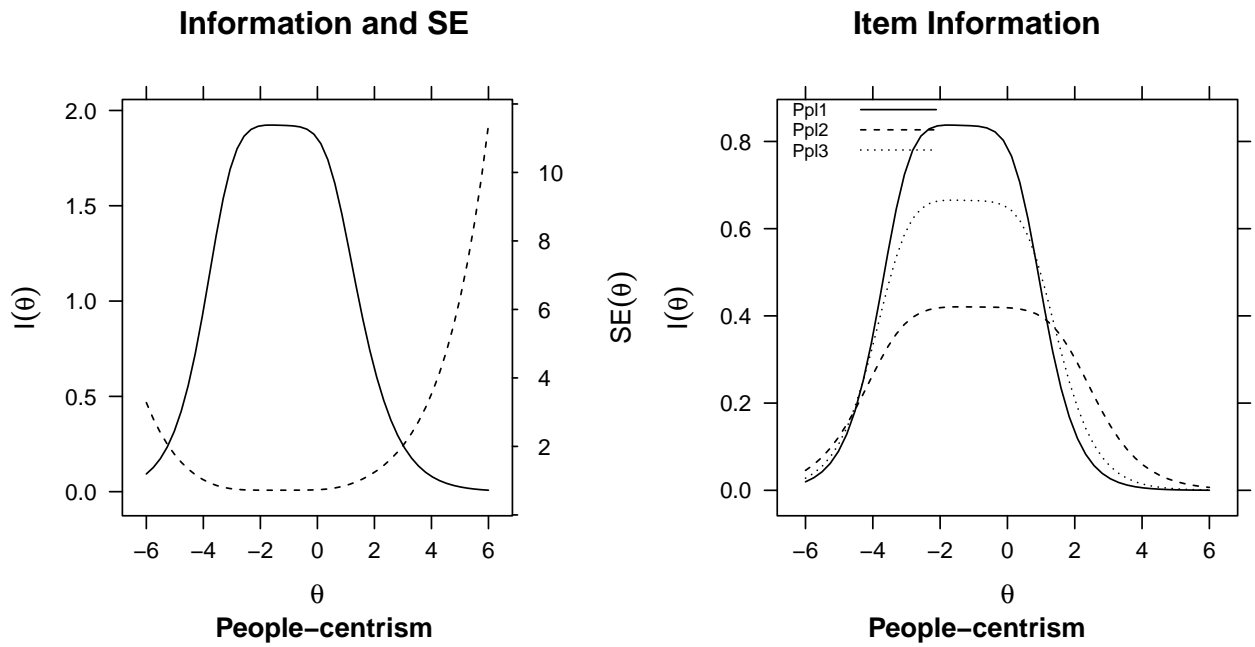
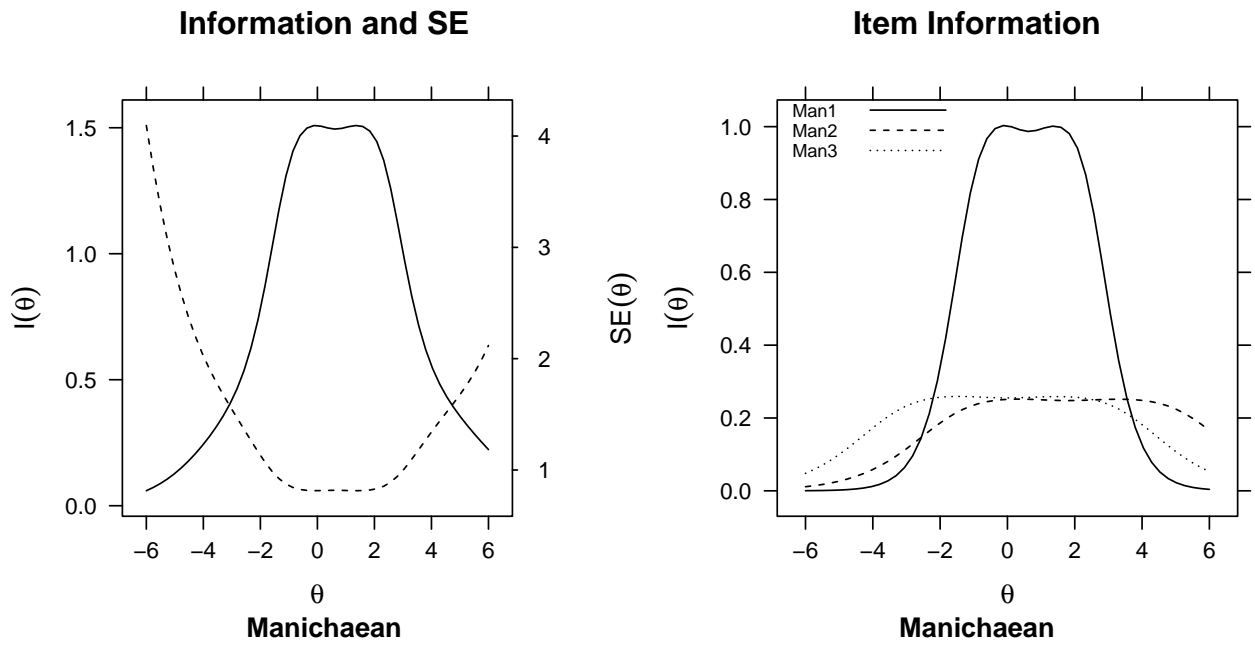


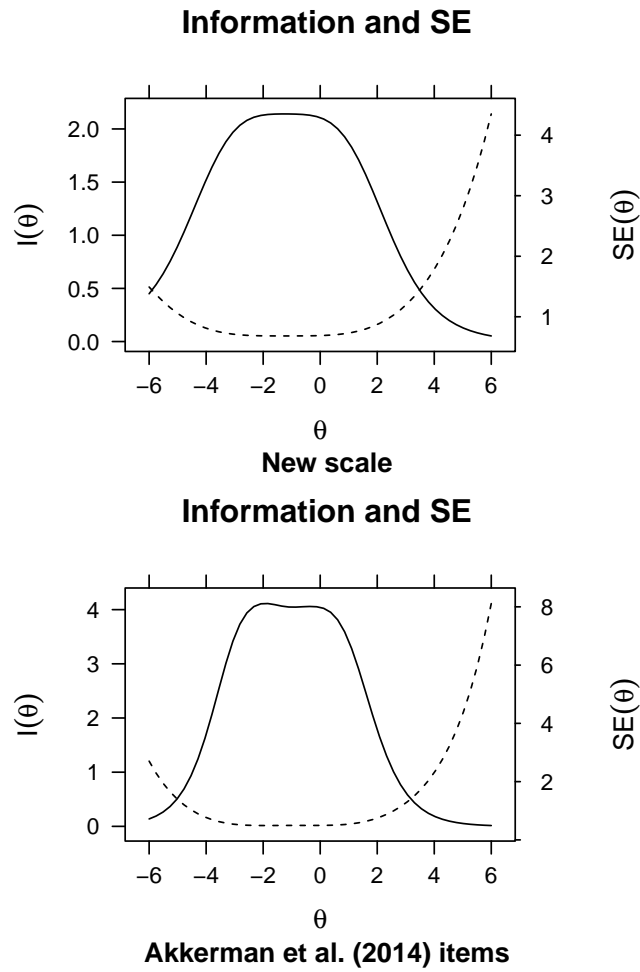
Figure 4: Information Curves – Manichaeian outlook



Conclusion

In sum, the new scale proposed captures a similarly broad range of populist attitudes across individuals as the popular battery by [Akkerman et al. \(2014\)](#). However, our scale is invariant across a large number of countries with very distinct political cultures. It is, therefore, recommended for cross-national comparisons and comparative studies of populism across countries and continents.

Figure 5: Information Curves for the Short New Scale and Akkerman et al. (2014).



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Questionnaire Translations

Croatian

People-centrism:

Ppl1. Političari trebaju uvijek pažljivo slušati probleme ljudi.

Ppl2. Političari ne trebaju provoditi vrijeme među običnim ljudima da bi dobro radili.*

Ppl3. *Volja naroda treba biti najviše načelo u politici ove države.*

Anti-elitism:

Ant1. Vlada radi samo na korist nekoliko krupnih interesnih grupa koje brinu samo o sebi.

Ant2. Vladini dužnosnici koriste svoju moć kako bi unaprijedili živote ljudi.*

Ant3. *Malo tko od ljudi koji vode vladu je pokvaren.*

Manichaeian outlook:

Man1. Jasno je je li netko dobar ili loš na temelju toga koju politiku podržava.

Man2. Ljudi s kojima se politički razilazim nisu zli.*

Man3. *Ljudi s kojima se politički ne slažem su samo neinformirani.*

Dutch

People-centrism

- Ppl1. Politici moeten altijd goed luisteren naar de problemen van de mensen.
- Ppl2. Politici moeten niet meer tijd spenderen tussen gewone mensen om goed werk te leveren.
- Ppl3. De wil van het gewone volk zou het grondbeginsel van de politiek in dit land moeten zijn.

Anti-elitism

- Ant1. De regering wordt geleid door een paar belanghebbenden die enkel voor zichzelf zorgen.
- Ant2. Regeringsleden gebruiken hun macht alleen om het leven van de mensen te verbeteren.
- Ant3. Heel wat regeringsleiders zijn oneerlijk.

Manichaeen outlook

- Man1. Aan de hand van iemands politieke voorkeur weet je of iemand goed of slecht is.
- Man2. De mensen waarmee ik politiek van mening verschil zijn niet slecht.
- Man3. De mensen waarmee ik politiek van mening verschil zijn gewoon verkeerd geïnformeerd.

French

People-centrism

- Ppl1. Les politiciens doivent toujours écouter attentivement les problèmes de la population.
- Ppl2. Les politiciens n'ont pas à passer du temps parmi les gens ordinaires pour faire un bon travail.
- Ppl3. La volonté du peuple devrait être le principe le plus élevé dans la politique du pays.

Anti-elitism

- Ant1. Le gouvernement est géré par de grands intérêts privés pour leur propre bien.
- Ant2. Les membres du gouvernement utilisent leur pouvoir pour essayer d'améliorer la vie des gens.
- Ant3. Plusieurs membres du gouvernement sont corrompus.

Manichaeian outlook

- Man1. Il est possible de dire si une personne est bonne ou mauvaise en connaissant ses opinions politiques.
- Man2. Les gens avec qui je suis en désaccord ne sont pas mauvais.
- Man3. Les gens avec lesquels je suis en désaccord sur le plan politique sont simplement mal informés.

German

People-centrism

- Ppl1. Politiker sollten immer genau zuhören, wenn es um die Probleme der Menschen geht.
- Ppl2. Politiker müssen keine Zeit mit den ganz normalen Bürgern verbringen, um gute Arbeit zu leisten.
- Ppl3. Der Wille des Volkes sollte der wichtigste Grundsatz in der Politik dieses Landes sein.

Anti-elitism

- Ant1. Das Land wird von einigen wenigen grossen Interessengruppen regiert, die sich nur um sich selbst kümmern.
- Ant2. Regierungsbeamte nutzen ihre Macht, um das Leben der Menschen zu verbessern.
- Ant3. Etliche Mitglieder der Regierung sind betrügerisch.

Manichaeian outlook

- Man1. Ob eine Person gut oder schlecht ist, kann man beurteilen, wenn man ihre Politik kennt.
- Man2. Die Menschen, mit denen ich politisch nicht einer Meinung bin, sind nicht böse.
- Man3. Die Menschen, mit denen ich politisch nicht einer Meinung bin, sind bloß falsch informiert.

Greek

People-centrism

- Ppl1. Οι πολιτικοί πρέπει να ακούνε πάντα από κοντά τα προβλήματα του λαού
- Ppl2. Οι πολιτικοί δεν χρειάζεται να περνούν το χρόνο τους ανάμεσα στους κοινούς ανθρώπους για να κάνουν καλή δουλειά
- Ppl3. Η θέληση του λαού θα πρέπει να είναι η υψηλότερη αρχή στην πολιτική αυτής της χώρας

Anti-elitism

- Ant1. Η κυβέρνηση λίγο πολύ διοικείται από λίγα μεγάλα συμφέροντα που προωθούν τις δικές τους προτιμήσεις.
- Ant2. Οι κυβερνητικοί αξιωματούχοι χρησιμοποιούν τη δύναμή τους για να προσπαθήσουν να βελτιώσουν τις ζωές των ανθρώπων.
- Ant3. Αρχετοί από τους ανθρώπους που βρίσκονται στην κυβέρνηση είναι διεφθαρμένοι.

Manichaeian outlook

- Man1. Μπορείς να καταλάβεις εάν ένα πρόσωπο είναι καλό ή κακό, αν γνωρίζεις τις πολιτικές του θέσεις.
- Man2. Οι άνθρωποι με τους οποίους διαφωνώ πολιτικά, δεν είναι κακό.
- Man3. Οι άνθρωποι με τους οποίους διαφωνώ πολιτικά είναι απλά θύματα παραπληροφόρησης.

Hungarian

People-centrism

- Ppl1. A politikusoknak mindig figyelmesen kell hallgatnia az emberek problémáira.
- Ppl2. A politikusoknak nem kell az átlagemberek körében tölteni az idejüket ahhoz, hogy jó munkát végezzenek.
- Ppl3. Az emberek akaratának kellene lennie a legmagasabb szintű elvnek országunk politikáját illetően.

Anti-elitism

- Ant1. A kormányt jószerével néhány nagy, saját magával törődő érdekcsoport irányítja.
- Ant2. A kormány tagjai és tisztségviselői az emberek életének javítására használják hatalmukat.
- Ant3. A kormányt irányító emberek közül elég sok tisztességtelen.

Manichaeian outlook

- Man1. Meg lehet mondani egy emberről, hogy jó vagy rossz, pusztán az alapján, ha tudjuk, politikailag hol áll.
- Man2. Azok, akikkel politikailag nem értek egyet, még nem gonosz emberek.
- Man3. Azok az emberek, akikkel politikailag nem értek egyet csak rosszul tájékozottak.

Italian

People-centrism

- Ppl1. I politici dovrebbero sempre ascoltare attentamente i problemi delle persone.
- Ppl2. I politici non devo passare il tempo tra la gente comune per fare un buon lavoro.
- Ppl3. La volontà del popolo dovrebbe essere il principio più importante della politica di questo paese.

Anti-elitism

- Ant1. Il governo è gestito da pochi grandi interessi che pensano solo al proprio tornaconto.
- Ant2. I funzionari di governo cercano con il loro potere di migliorare la vita alle persone.
- Ant3. Parecchie persone che stanno al governo sono disoneste.

Manichaeian outlook

- Man1. Puoi dire se una persona è buona o cattiva dalle sue idee politiche.
- Man2. Le persone con cui non vado d'accordo politicamente non sono cattive.
- Man3. Le persone con cui non vado d'accordo politicamente sono solo disinformate.

Portuguese

People-centrism

- Ppl1. Políticos deveriam sempre ouvir com cuidado os problemas do povo.
- Ppl2. Os políticos não precisam passar tempo com pessoas comuns para fazerem um bom trabalho.
- Ppl3. A vontade do povo deveria ser o princípio mais alto da política neste país.

Anti-elitism

- Ant1. O governo é dirigido por alguns poucos grandes interesses que só se importam consigo mesmos.
- Ant2. Os funcionários do governo usam seu poder para tentar melhorar a vida das pessoas.
- Ant3. Muitas pessoas no governo são desonestas

Manichaeian outlook

- Man1. Dá para saber se uma pessoa é boa ou má se você sabe as opiniões dela sobre política.
- Man2. As pessoas que discordam de mim em política não são más.
- Man3. As pessoas de quem eu discordo na política são apenas mal informadas.

Spanish

People-centrism

- Ppl1. Los políticos siempre deben escuchar con atención los problemas del pueblo.
- Ppl2. Los políticos no necesitan pasar tiempo con la gente corriente para hacer un buen trabajo
- Ppl3. La voluntad del pueblo debería ser el principio más elevado de la política de este país.

Anti-elitism

- Ant1. El gobierno está dirigido en gran medida por unos pocos grandes intereses que miran por si mismos.
- Ant2. Los cargos del gobierno utilizan su poder para intentar de mejorar la vida de la gente.
- Ant3. Muchas de las personas que dirigen el gobierno son deshonestos.

Manichaeian outlook

- Man1. Puedes saber si una persona es buena o mala conociendo su postura política.
- Man2. Las personas con las que discrepo políticamente no son malas.
- Man3. Las personas con las que discrepo políticamente sólo están mal informadas.