

New populist parties in Central and Eastern Europe: non-ideological or centrist?

Vlastimil Havlík

Department of Political Science
Faculty of Social Studies
Masaryk University
Joštova 10
Brno
Czech Republic

Contact: havlik@fss.muni.cz

Ben Stanley

Marie Curie Intra-European Research Fellow
School of Law, Politics and Sociology
University of Sussex
Brighton
United Kingdom
Contact: B.Stanley@sussex.ac.uk

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1 Introduction

There have been an increasing number of studies focusing on populism and populist political parties in recent decades. Besides the never-ending discussion on conceptualization of the term (see e.g. Mudde 2004, Rooduijn 2013, Stanley 2008), the majority of studies have dedicated their attention to different aspects of functioning of political parties and politicians including their ideology or discourse, organizational structure, electoral support or their impact on political systems or democracy. Two groups of populist political parties and movements have attracted most interest from scholars to date. position in the research so far. First, numerous of studies have dealt with left-leaning Latin American populist leaders and movements such as Juan Péron in Argentina, Alberto Fujimori in Peru or Hugo Chávez in Venezuela (Hawkins 2009, Roberts 2012, Levitsky, Loxton 2012). Meanwhile, European-centred research has concentrated on populist radical right parties such as the National Front in France, Austrian Freedom Party, Hungarian Justice and Life Party or the Greater Romanian Party (Betz 1994, Mudde 2007).

However, observers of party politics in Central and Eastern Europe have recently drawn attention to a new variety of populist party in the region. Scholars have used terms such as anti-establishment, new, or centrist populist to capture the identity of parties which combine a fiercely populist rhetoric with a moderate ideological appeal on typical policy issues. , While several attempts have been made to conceptualize centrist populism (see below) and some have sought to analyse the electoral support of centrist populist parties (Hanley, Sikk 2014), there has been no systematic and comparative empirical analysis of these parties' ideological appeals beyond their populism.

The literature on these parties is diverse and there are few common points of conceptual reference, but two fundamental claims – whether explicitly or implicitly made - can be derived from the literature to date. Firstly, these parties are significantly different from the majority of populist parties studied to date, in that they lack a consistent ideological profile on the major issue dimensions. Secondly, and as a consequence of the first point, they are less interested in the issues

associated with the major ideological dimensions, concerning themselves instead with valence issues such as competence to govern and opposition to corruption.

In this paper, we seek to answer the question of whether the ‘new populists’ (we use this term to avoid prejudging the outcome of the investigation we intend to conduct) are genuinely non-ideological in character. In answering this question, we make a twofold contribution of the paper to the study of party populism. Firstly, we provide the first comparative empirical study of the policy positions of new centrist populist parties in Central and Eastern Europe.. Secondly, studying the ‘thick ideological’ characteristics of these parties gives us the opportunity to test a common observation made about populism; that its ‘thin-centred’ ideological nature makes it necessary for its proponents to combine it with ideological appeals reminiscent of those made by non-populist parties. The existence of new centrist populist parties potentially challenges this common wisdom.

First, we summarise current conceptual debates concerning these parties, putting particular emphasis on the theory that these parties are characterised by an exclusive focus on populism and a disinterest in the ‘thick ideological’ elements of political appeals. On this basis, we pose research questions and hypotheses. In the second section, we describe the data and methods of analysis. . In the third section, we present our findings.

2 New populist parties in East-Central Europe

Populism remains a contested concept, but one of the most common theoretical approaches defines it as “a thin-centered ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous 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” (Mudde 2004: 543, see also Stanley 2008). Theoreticians of this school have tended to regard populism as an ideology which, because thin, cannot be self-sufficient as a set of political options, but which must accompany other thin or full ideologies. Stanley argues that the “thin nature [of populist

ideology] means that it is unable to stand alone as a practical political ideology: it lacks the capacity to put forward a wide-ranging and coherent programme for the solution to crucial political questions” (Stanley 2008: 95), as a result, populism has an ideologically ‘chameleonic’ character: it “can be left wing as well as right wing, and it can be organized in both top-down and bottom-up fashion“ (Mudde, Rovira Kaltwasser 2011: 7).

These theoretical reflections were based primarily on the observation of cases in West European and Latin American party systems, where left-wing populist movements (for example, the Dutch Socialist Party or various Latin American populist movements) or populist radical right-wing parties (such as French National Front or Austrian Freedom Party) have tended to be prevalent. The predominance of these kinds of parties seemed to confirm the thesis that the cohabitation of populism with other ideologies is natural and unavoidable. However, the end of the first decade of post-communist democracy witnessed the emergence of ‘new populist’ political parties in Central and Eastern Europe which lacked any clear ideological foundation in terms of traditional ideologies of left and right, such as socialism, liberalism and nationalism, but at the same time employed clearly populist appeals. The Party of Civic Understanding and SMER in Slovakia, Public Affairs in the Czech Republic, Justice and Order in Lithuania, New Era Party in Latvia or the National Movement Simeon II are the examples of this kind of populist parties.

In their attempts to conceptualise these parties, scholars have inadvertently drawn attention to one of the key elements of uncertainty surrounding their ideological identity. In discussing the ways in which these ‘unorthodox’ parties differ from mainstream parties, Grigore Pop-Eleches (2010) avers that one of their characteristic features is their attempt to eschew an ideological standpoint, claiming that they represent a non-ideological anti-political alternative to the established parties. As they are not restricted by ideological commitments, the political appeals of these parties are eclectic and often vague. Pop-Eleches argues that the central role of a leader in the organisational structures of these parties distinguishes them from mainstream political parties, for whom a moderate ideological position is more important. Furthermore, these parties do not

take strong anti-capitalist and nationalist stances, but express their dissatisfaction with the political status quo through an emphasis on combatting corruption and on the high social cost of economic reforms (Pop-Eleches 2010). In their analysis of populist parties in Central and Eastern Europe, Havlík and Pinková (2012) used the term ‘exclusively populist’ to connote a similar avoidance of clear ideological positions.

However, Peter Učeň’s (2004) analysis of ‘centrist populist’ parties takes a different approach to the issue of ideology. Referring to the example of the parties which entered the Slovak parliament at the 2002 general election, Učeň contends that the new populist parties present themselves alternatives to mainstream parties while eschewing extremist positions and “directly or indirectly refer[ring] to the ideological or geometric centre of the party system.” (Učeň 2004: 47). Učeň’s use of the term ‘centrist populist’ to describe these parties contrasts with the thesis that these parties are ideologically incoherent. The common factor in these conceptualisations of new populist parties in Central and Eastern Europe is the claim that populism is central to their political appeal. However, the distinction between ‘non-ideological’ and ‘centrist’ populist parties raises questions about how these parties differ from populists which espouse traditional ideological appeals, and how they differ from non-populist parties which occupy the centre ground of politics.

The policy appeals of new populist parties should not necessarily be assumed to be lacking in complexity. A cursory examination of the election manifestos of many of these parties reveals that they attempt to cover many or all of the the policy areas which are of relevance for the party system in which they operate. However, since these parties are driven primarily by the thin ideology of populism rather than adherence to established ideological ‘frames’ that consistently determine party positions on a number of issues, it is more likely that their aggregate policy stances will comprise a mixture of contrasting proposals, for example, both left-wing and right-wing economic policies. This accords with Učeň’s emphasis on “geometric centrality” in the ideological positioning of new populist parties. That is, their apparently ‘centrist’ position may not be intentional (centrality as a programme) but rather the consequence of inconsistency on policy issues with respect to a

given ideological dimension (false centrality). Thus, the ideological profile of new populist parties ought to be significantly different from ideological populist parties (such as radical right-wing populist parties or socialist populist parties), but also from non-populist centrist parties¹.

Radical right-wing populist parties combine populism with authoritarianism, traditionalism and xenophobic attitudes on the TAN-GAL dimension, while on economic issues they have tended to be neo-liberal but in recent years have moved closer to the centre of the economic dimension (de Lange 2007). Radical left (or socialist) populist parties combine populism with anti-capitalism, anti-imperialism and a preference for redistributive policies (March 2011), occupying a clear position on the economic left-right dimension of party competition. If one of the key features of new populist parties is their ideological eclecticism with respect to the canonical issue dimensions, we should expect to see that these parties are much less coherent on these dimensions than their ideological-populist counterparts.

If new populist parties constitute a distinct ideological phenomenon in Central and Eastern Europe, they should also differ from non-populist parties with respect to their ideological profile. Aside from the obvious point that they do not articulate populist appeals, non-populist parties are typically defined by a distinct set of ideological commitments (conservatism, socialism, liberalism, etc.) or at least by a non-populist thin ideology such as nationalism or Euroscepticism. This entails adopting either a clearly defined non-centrist position on one or more dimensions of the political space (for example, the left-wing position of social democratic parties on the economic left-right dimension or the extreme position of Green parties on the GAL/TAN axis) or a 'genuinely' centrist position on these dimensions. Genuine centrism consists in intentional placement in the centre of a particular dimension of competition or multi-dimensional issue space. The difference between genuine and geometric centrism is central to the theory that new populists are a distinct kind of party in a 'thick ideological' sense. If these parties are as ideologically eclectic as theory suggests,

¹ By non-populist centrist parties we mean political parties that do not employ populist appeal and, at the same time, occupy a centrist position in one or more dimensions of political space.

then they are more likely to be placed in the centre of one of the standard issue dimensions as a result of the ‘averaging out’ of contradictory positions.

If the tendency for new populists to take vague stances on standard issue dimensions is driven by the emphasis they place on other issues, then we should also find that the *saliency* of these issues should be less pronounced in comparison to the extent to which they feature in the appeals of ideological populists and non-populists. The ‘thick-ideological’ identity of ideological populists and non-populists alike is determined by standard dimensions of political competition and the issues which comprise them. Even if non-populist parties occupy a centrist position on a given dimension as a result of the low saliency of these issues for the party, there is always another policy area which is crucial for the identity of the party. This is often the case with, for example, Green or Eurosceptic parties.

New populist parties can thus be defined as political parties whose discourse/or policy platform is based on populism but is not supplemented by another coherent set of ideas, whether a full or thin ideology. A simple classification of political parties based on the presence of populism and other ideology in their appeal is depicted in Table 1.

Table 1: Types of political parties based on their policy platform

	Policy platform
Non-populist parties	Based on a thin (Euroscepticism, regionalism) and/or a full ideology (conservatism, socialism, etc.) or an issue (anti-tax parties). No systematic use of populist appeals.
Ideological populist parties	Based on combination of populism with another full or thin ideology or issue (radical-right wing populist parties, socialist populist parties, regionalist populist parties, etc.).
New populist parties	Based on populist appeals, but unclassifiable with respect to canonical issue dimensions.

Source: The authors

These theoretical considerations lead us to formulate the following hypotheses about the nature of new populist parties’ ideological appeals and their relationship with the political appeals of other parties:

H1: New populist parties occupy a centrist position in two-dimensional economic left-right and GAL/TAN political space.

H2: There is less consistency in the positions of new populist parties on the component issues of the economic and GAL/TAN dimensions, compared with the political appeals of ideological populist and non-populist parties.

H3: The component issues of the economic and GAL/TAN dimensions are less salient aspects of the political appeals of new populists, compared with the political appeals of ideological populist and non-populist parties.

After careful reading of secondary sources (Hanley, Sikk 2012, Havlík, Pinková 2012, Pop-Eleches 2010, Sikk, Učeň 2004) and our own expert evaluation, we have included XX parties as new populist parties that whose position in political space will be compared with other populist and non-populist parties (list of new populist parties can be found in the Appendix A).

3 Data and methods

There are several different approaches to measuring party positions. The three data sources most commonly used are party manifestos, expert surveys and voter surveys (Bakker & Hobolt, 2013, p. 29; Dinas & Gemenis, 2010, p. 427). In recent years, studies have also used media reports of party appeals (Kriesi et al., 2012; 2008). As Bakker and Hobolt (2013, p. 30) observe, each of these methods suffers from drawbacks with respect to validity, reliability, flexibility, replicability and availability. In the absence of a single measure than can serve as a ‘gold standard’ for the measure of party positions, the choice of method depends on the specific nature of the research problem.

For the purposes of the present analysis, we require a measure of party positions which satisfies three criteria. Firstly, it must measure party positions on the economic left-right dimension, and the GAL/TAN dimension. Secondly, it must measure the salience of issues in the political appeals of individual parties. Thirdly, it must cover all relevant parties over the period of interest,

which runs approximately from the beginning of the second decade of post-communist transition to the present day.

While voter surveys are unique among these approaches in that they provide information about how the message of a party is interpreted by its intended recipients, these sources of data usually focus only on the left-right divide or individual issues deemed of particular relevance to the country in question, and only rarely address the issue of salience. The MARPOR dataset (Volkens:2014vx) covers all relevant parties and is explicitly intended to measure the salience of issues in a party's appeal. Unfortunately, while the dataset allows for a satisfactory operationalisation of the left-right dimension and an acceptable operationalisation of the economic left-right dimension, the data do not permit a satisfactory operationalisation of the GAL/TAN dimension. Media report data are currently unavailable for the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

Expert surveys have faced criticism for their alleged subjectivity and the ambiguity of their object of analysis, but they are the most suitable sources of data for our analysis. These surveys typically ask respondents to place parties in accordance with their stance on an issue or placement on an overall issue overall dimension in the year in which the survey is conducted. The Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES) (Bakker & Hobolt, 2013) is the most well-established of these surveys and the one which offers the most comprehensive coverage of parties for the purposes of this analysis. The CHES dataset contains measures of party positions on the left-right, economic left-right, GAL/TAN and EU integration dimensions, and a number of measures of salience for individual issues pertinent to one or more of these dimensions. The trend file for this dataset currently covers three data points for Central and Eastern Europe: 2002, 2006 and 2010, which allows us to include in the analysis most although not all - of the parties we have identified as new populist. The fourth iteration of this survey will follow in mid-2015, providing up-to-date information on the parties we analyse in this paper, and enabling us to update the paper with data on those parties we have not yet been able to include in this paper.

To test the first hypothesis, we regress economic left-right (*lrecon*) and GAL/TAN (*galtan*) party positions on party family membership (*family*), with clustered standard errors for country and wave of analysis. The variable *family* is recoded to add two new categories, ‘new populist’ and ‘ideological populist’, with all other categories capturing an ideologically diverse range of non-populist parties. We plot the marginal effects of party family on these ideological dimensions to ascertain whether new populists occupy a centrist position, and to compare the placement of these parties with those of ideological populists and non-populist parties.

To test the second hypothesis, we calculate the standard deviation of each party’s positions on the component variables of the economic left-right and GAL/TAN dimensions, and then take the average standard deviation for each of the party families. This allows us to ascertain whether, as expected, new populist parties are significantly less coherent on one or more of the issue dimensions. The component variables of the economic left-right divide measure party positions on spending versus taxation (*spendvtax*), deregulation of business activity (*deregulation*), and redistribution (*redistribution*). The GAL/TAN divide is operationalised by positions on civil liberties versus law and order (*civlib_laworder*), liberal social values versus traditional social values (*sociallifestyle*), the role of religion in politics (*religious_principle*), immigration (*immigrate_policy*), multiculturalism (*multiculturalism*), the environment (*environment*) and ethnic minorities (*ethnic_minorities*). Where necessary, variables were recoded from the original variables in the dataset to ensure that higher values on economic left-right variables connote more pro-market positions, and higher values on GAL/TAN variables connote more green, alternative and libertarian (GAL) positions.

To test the third hypothesis, we regress salience scores for each of the component economic left-right and GAL/TAN variables on party family, and plot the marginal effects of party family on each of these salience scores. This allows us to ascertain whether these issues are significantly less important for new populists than for ideological populist and non-populist parties.

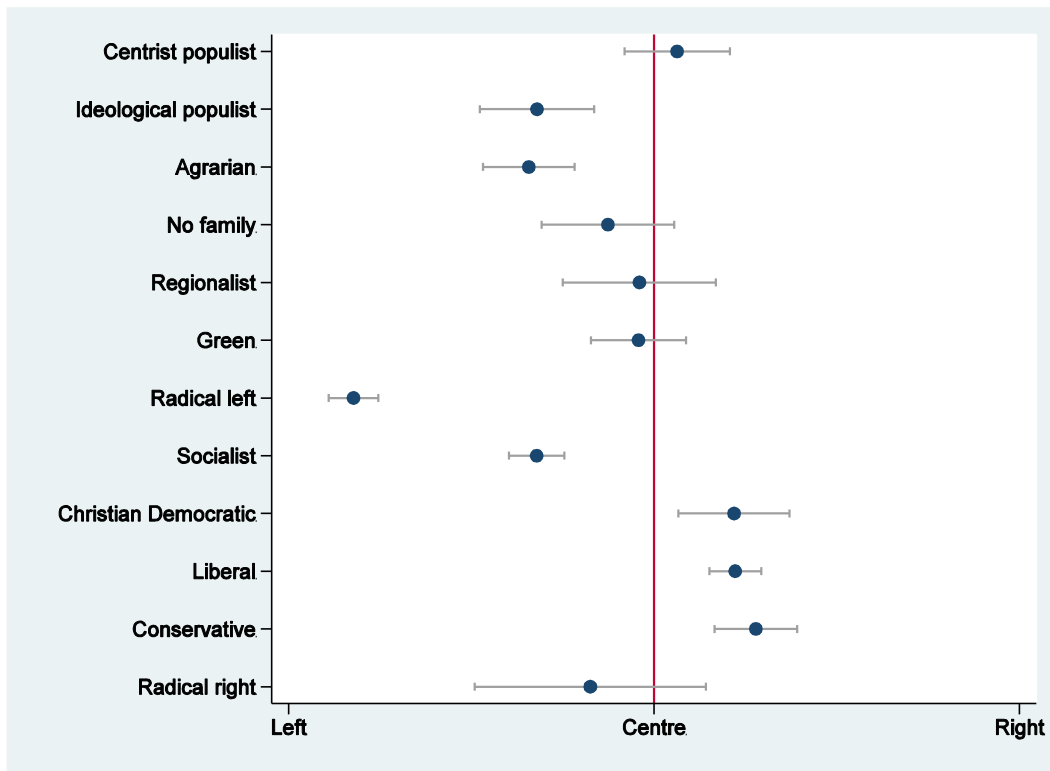
We use the salience variables which correspond to each of the position variables identified above, each of which has the suffix *salience* in the CHES dataset.

4 Results

4.1 Position in political space

First, we will investigate the position of centrist populist parties in the two dimensional political space shaped by the economic left-right and GAL/TAN dimensions to analyze the position of new political parties and compare it to other populist and non-populist parties as defined in the theoretical and methodological part of the paper. Based on the definition of new populist parties, mainly on the lack of coherent ideological background (besides populism), new populist parties should be positioned in the centre of political space on both economic left-right and GAL/TAN dimensions (H1). . We will start with economical left-right dimension as the dimension of competition which is considered the most important one in contemporary European democracies including Central and Eastern Europe (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Position of political parties in political space (economical left-right dimension)



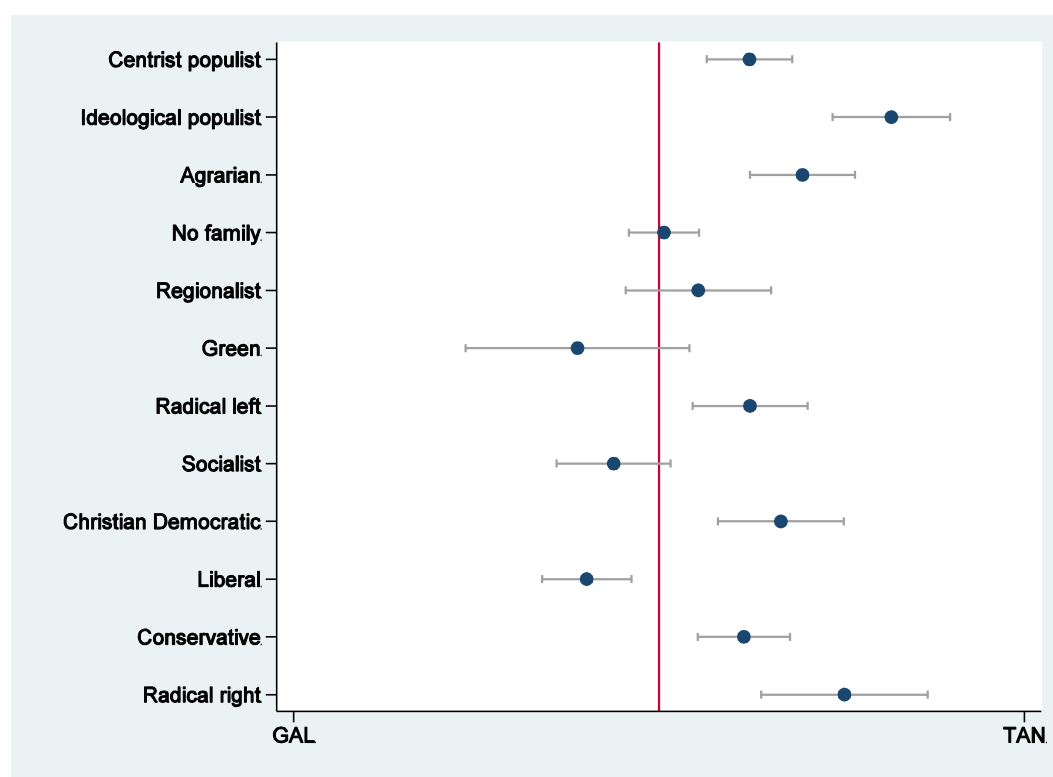
Source: The authors

What we can see is, is a strong inclination of new populist parties towards the centre of the economic left-right dimension of party competition. New populist parties are more centrist than majority of other groups of political parties including ideological populist parties that are positioned in the left of centre of the dimension. There are two groups of parties with even more centrist positions on average than new populist parties: regionalist parties and the Greens (but the difference is very small). The centrist position of regionalist parties and the Greens is logical since economic issues are not among the most important ones for these families of political parties and – similarly to new populist – the centrality is rather a result of the lack of clarity of their position than of intentional positioning of the parties. What is also clear is the significant difference of distance of centrist populist parties from representative of several traditional party families such as radical left, socialists and agrarian parties (but less difference when compared with liberals, conservatives and Christian Democrats). The positioning of political parties in the economic left-

right dimension of competition confirms the first hypothesis – new populist parties are centrist on the economic left-right dimension.

The second most important dimension of competition which is used to describe political space in contemporary democracies is the GAL/TAN divide based on non-economic values such as traditions, law and order, authoritarianism, nationalism, green politics, libertarianism and alternative politics (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Position of political parties in political space (GAL/TAN)



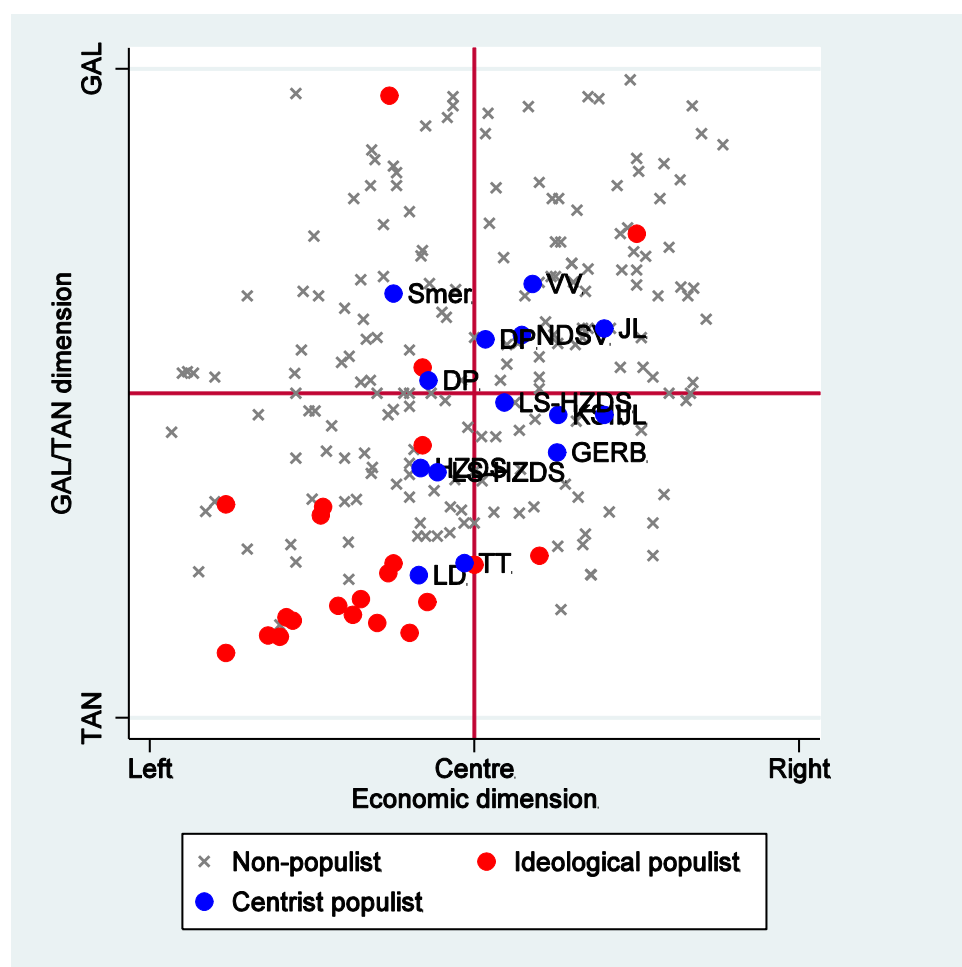
Source: The authors

The results only partly confirm the hypothesis about centrality of new populist parties on the GAL/TAN divide. New populist parties found themselves slightly on the right-centre part (closer to the TAN pole) of the axis. On the other hand, their position can hardly be described as extreme. What is also important, there is a significant difference between the position of new populist parties and the position taken by ideological populist parties (clearly on the right side close to the TAN

pole). Thus, taking into consideration the GAL/TAN dimension of party competition in Central and Eastern Europe, new populist parties form a group of parties which easily to distinguishable from ideological populist parties. Moreover, in contrast to position on the economical left-right dimension there is a clear difference between the Greens and liberal parties (clearly on the GAL side of the dimension) and new populist parties. The difference between socialists and new populist parties observed on the economic left-right dimension is further confirmed.

If we place political parties in the two-dimensional space defined by the economic left-right and the GAL/TAN divides we can see that new populist political parties indeed form a coherent group of parties concentrated around the centre of political space, although slightly on the right of the economic left-right dimension (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Positions of political parties in two-dimensional space (economic left-right and GAL/TAN)



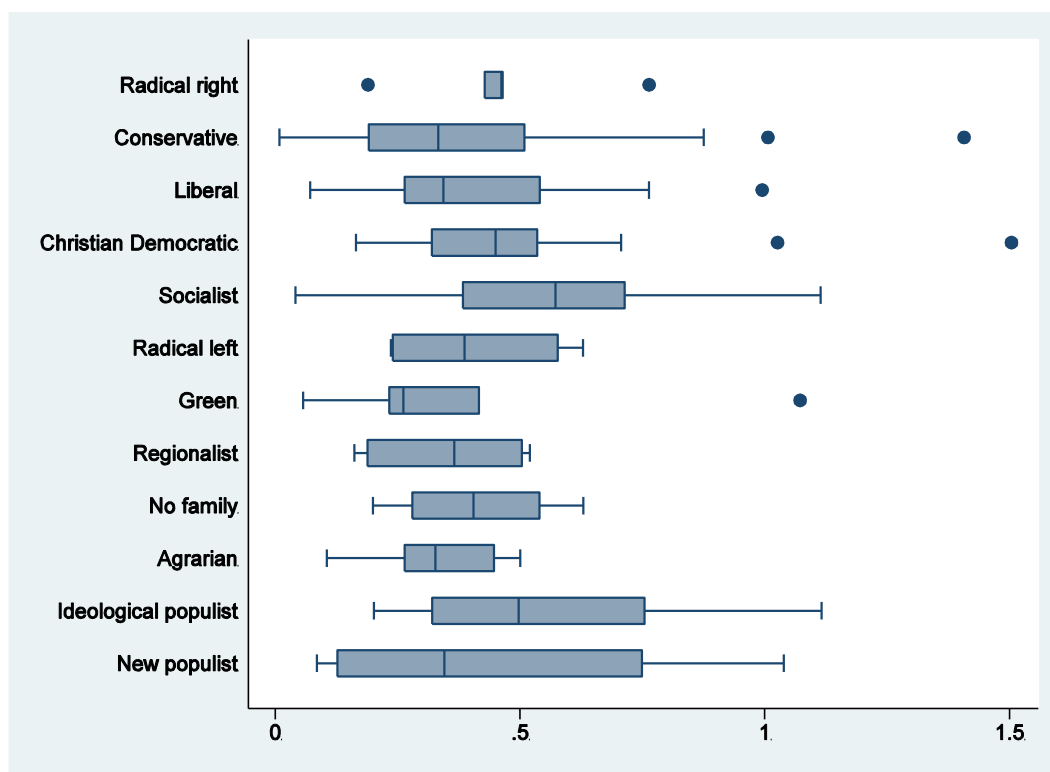
Source: The authors

The plot also confirms the difference between ideological populist parties (mostly radical-right wing populist parties) placed in the bottom-left part of the place, i.e. economically left and tending to the TAN pole of the value based dimension of political competition. The results are in accordance with the first hypothesis about the centrality of new political parties but with two political parties which seem to be borderline cases close to positioning of the majority of ideological populist parties. The position of LD and TT on the GAL/TAN divide of competition deviates from the rest of new populist parties which is something which needs to be investigated further in the future. All in all, the empirical analysis of positioning of new populist parties confirms the centrality of the parties suggested in the literature. The question remains how “pure” is the centrality of centrist populist parties which is tested by analysis of coherence of positioning of new populist parties and salience the parties put on the issue components of the economic left-right and GAL/TAN divides.

3.2 Coherence of the position in the political space

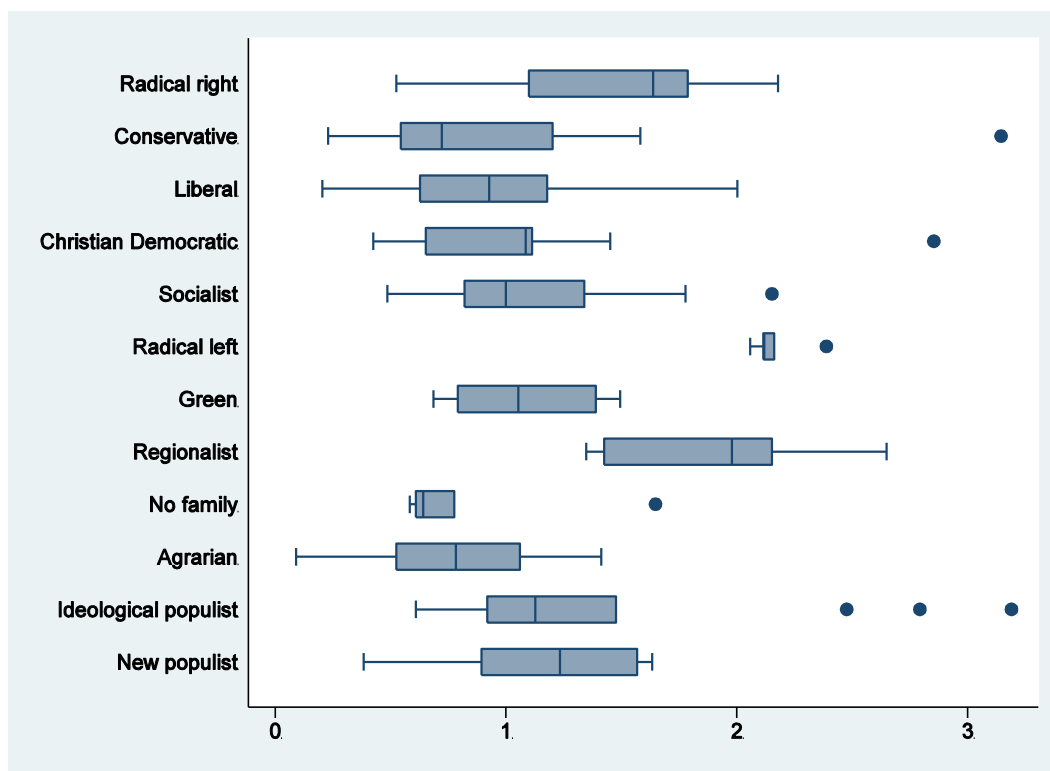
Based on the concept of new populist political parties, these parties should be less coherent on one or more of the issue dimensions (H2). To the assumption, we plotted the average standard deviation for positions of each of the party families on the component economic left-right and GAL/TAN dimensions (Figure 4 and 5).

Figure 4: Coherence of positions of party families on the economic left-right divide



Source: the authors

Figure 5: Coherence of positions of party families on the GAL-TAN divide



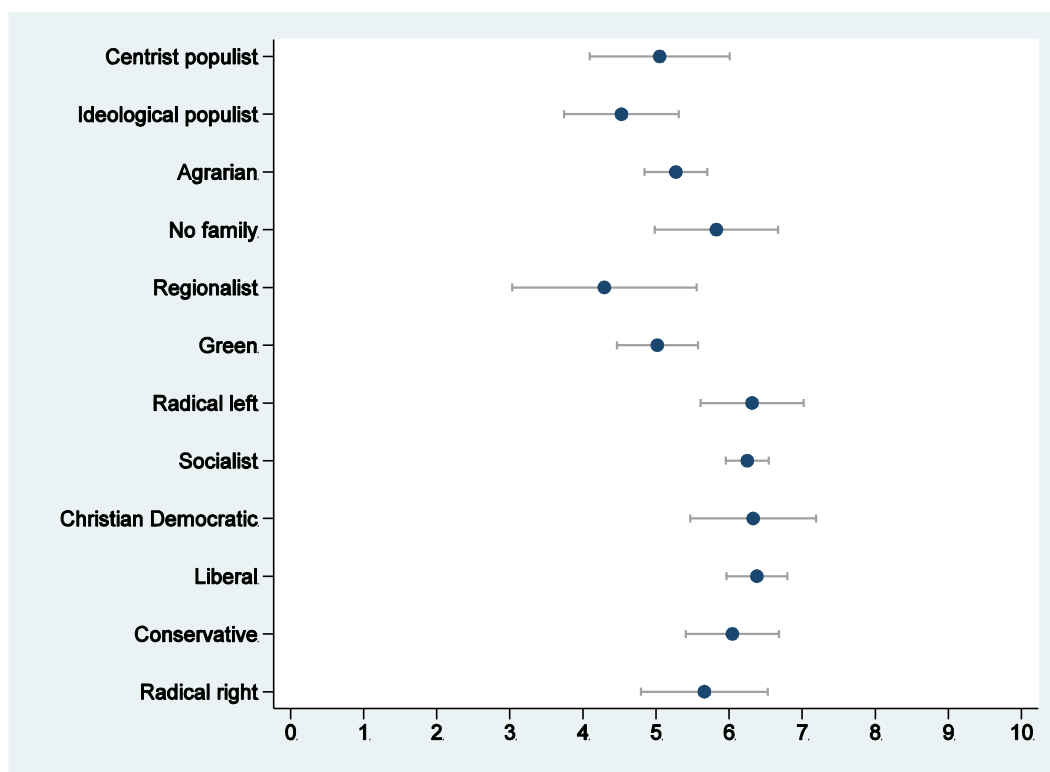
Source: the authors

As Figure 4 shows, new populist parties are by far the less coherent party family in terms of their positions in the economic left-right dimension of political space including ideological populist parties. Therefore, the second hypothesis is confirmed at least with regards to the position of new populist parties on the economic left-right divide. In other words, despite being centrist on average, the group of centrist populist parties is typical by high level of diversity of positions towards the most important economic issues. Consequently, economic issues or centrality on the economic left-right divide do not seem to be – in accordance with the concept of new populist parties – the defining features of this group of populist political parties. Figure 5 depicting coherence of positions of political parties on the GAL/TAN divide provides us with somewhat mixed results. On one hand, the coherence of positions of new populist parties is quite low (comparable to their coherence on the economic left-right divide) and the second hypothesis can be verified. On the other hand, it does not distinguish new populist parties from most of the other party families such as the radical-right, conservative or regionalist parties.

3.3 Saliency

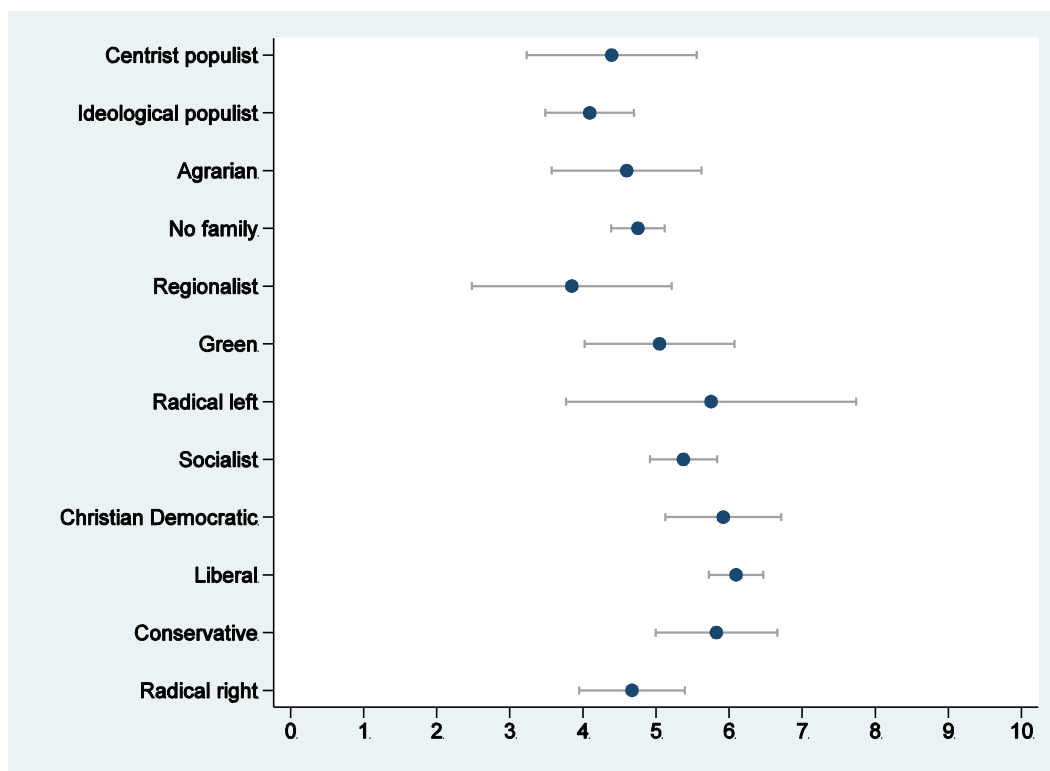
We expect that component issues of the economic and GAL/TAN dimensions are less salient aspects of the political appeals of new populists, compared with the political appeals of ideological populist and non-populist parties and other types of political parties. First, we analyse the component issues of the economic left-right dimension (spending versus taxation, deregulation of business activity and redistribution – Figures 6-8).

Figure 6: Issue salience for political parties (spending vs taxation)



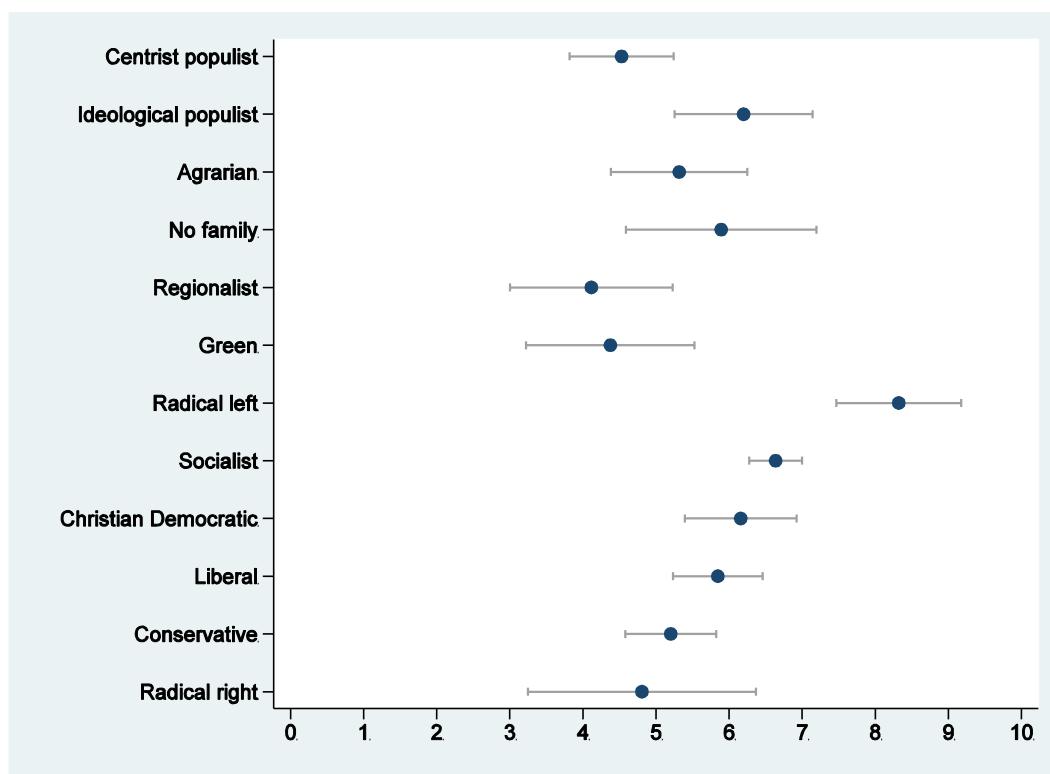
Source: The authors

Figure 7: Issue salience for political parties (deregulation of business activities)



Source: The authors

Figure 8: Issue salience for political parties (redistribution)



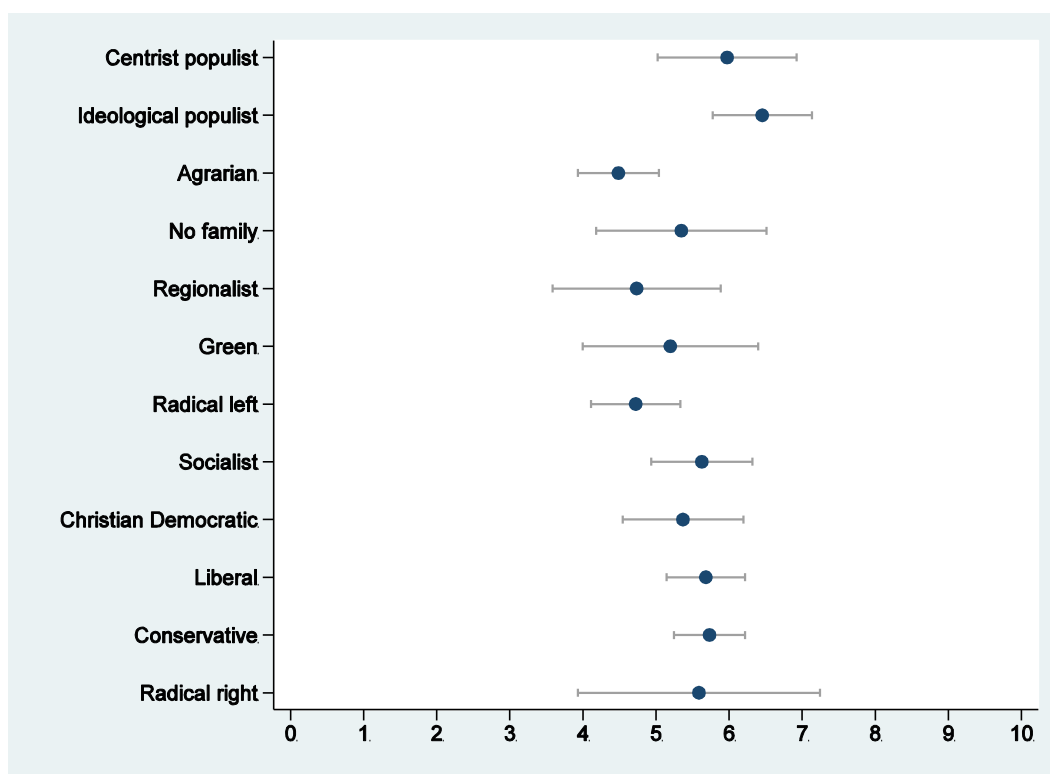
Source: The authors

As we can see from the plots depicting the salience of economic issues for different groups of political parties, none of the issues is of high salience for new populist parties. The economic issues are on average less salient for new populist parties in comparison to other party families, especially from those of radical left and socialist parties but also from other ideological populist parties (and liberal parties), mainly when redistribution is taken into consideration. There is much less difference in comparison with other party families, especially based on an analysis of taxation vs spending and deregulation, though the average salience of economic issues for new populist parties is lower in comparison to other party families. There are two systematic exceptions: Green parties and the family of regionalist parties whose appeals are based on issues not primarily related to the economic left-right dimension. There is one additional conclusion we can draw from the data: the comparatively low level of salience of economic issues for new populist parties raises the question about “purity” of centrality of new populist parties in terms of their position on the economic left-

right dimension of competition. In other words, when talking about position of new populist political parties in political space, economic related issues should be used only very carefully.

A similar conclusion can be drawn from the plots of positions of political parties in the GAL/TAN related issues of party competition (civil liberties versus law and order, liberal social values versus traditional social values, the role of religion in politics, immigration, multiculturalism, the environment and ethnic minorities – Figures 9-15).

Figure 9: Issue salience for political parties (civic liberties vs law and order)



Source: the authors

Figure 10: Issue salience for political parties (liberal social values versus traditional social values)

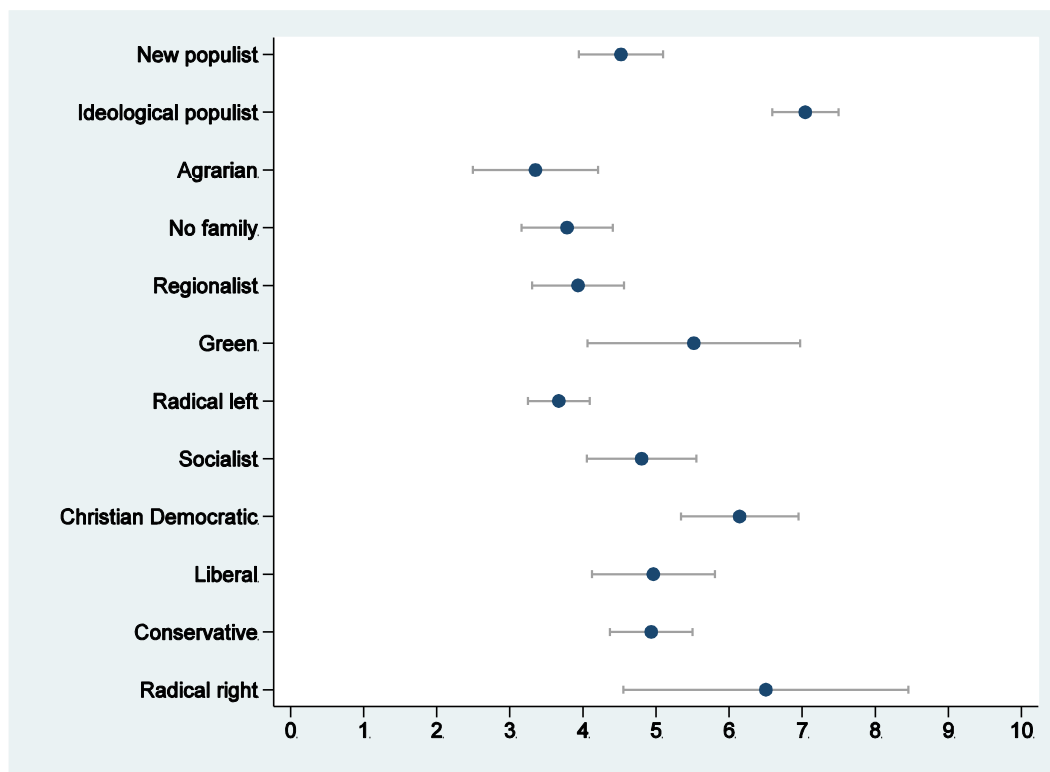
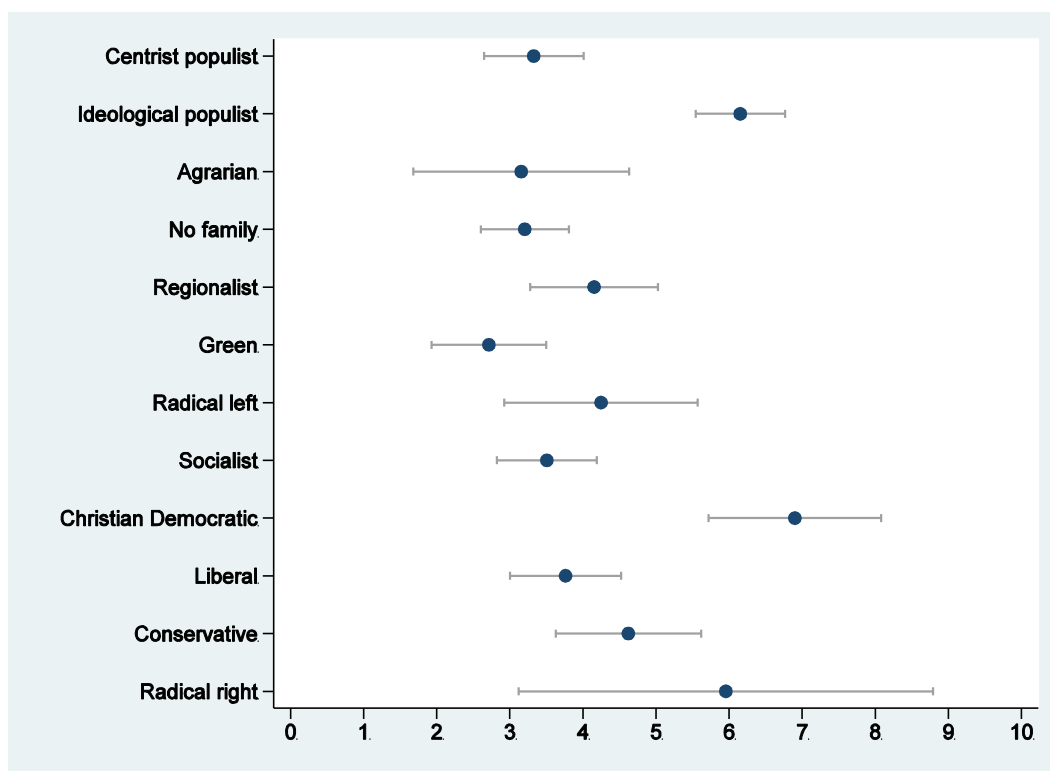
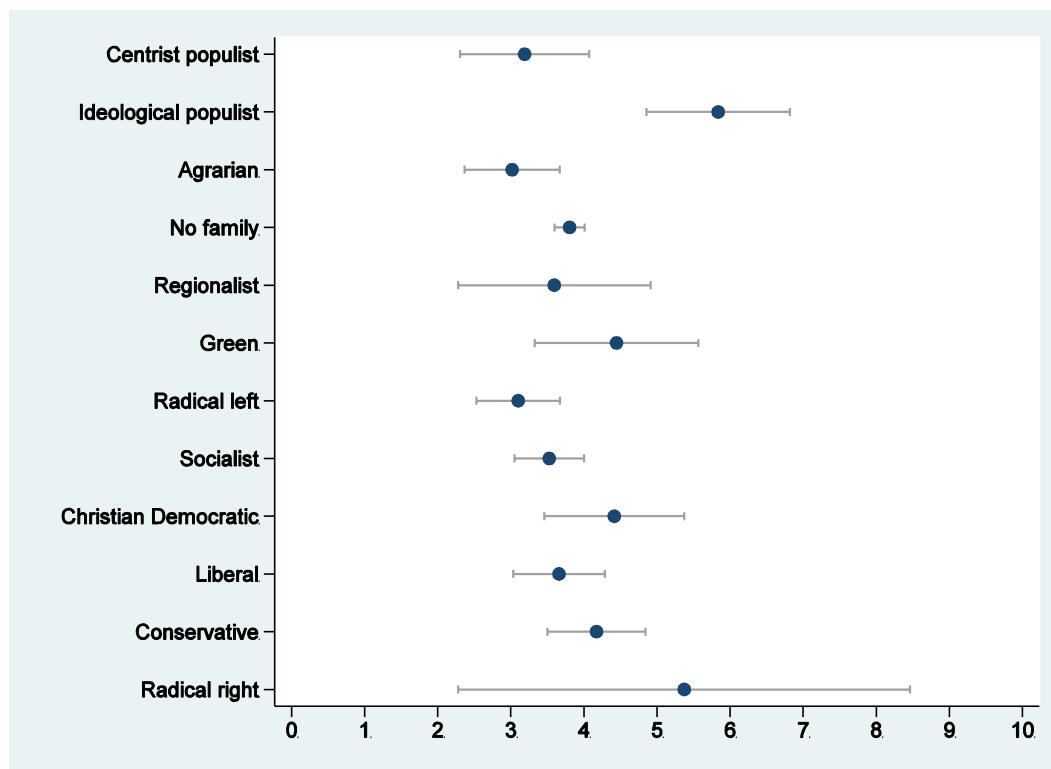


Figure 11: Issue salience for political parties (religion)



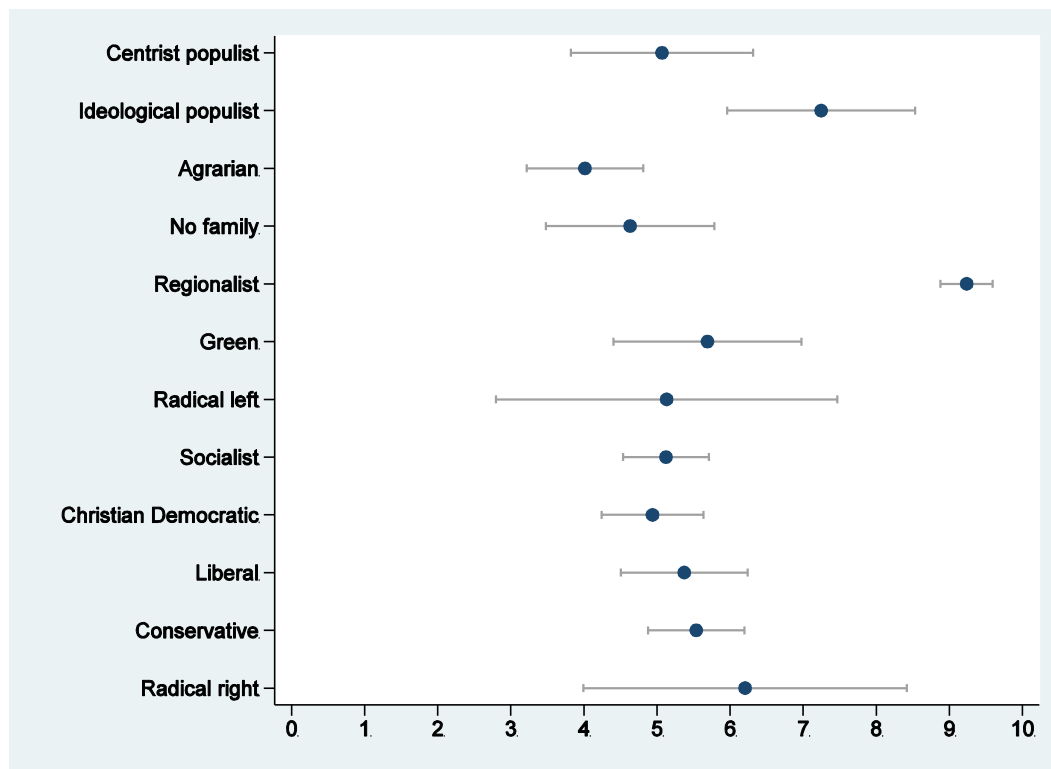
Source: the authors

Figure 12: Issue salience for political parties (immigration)



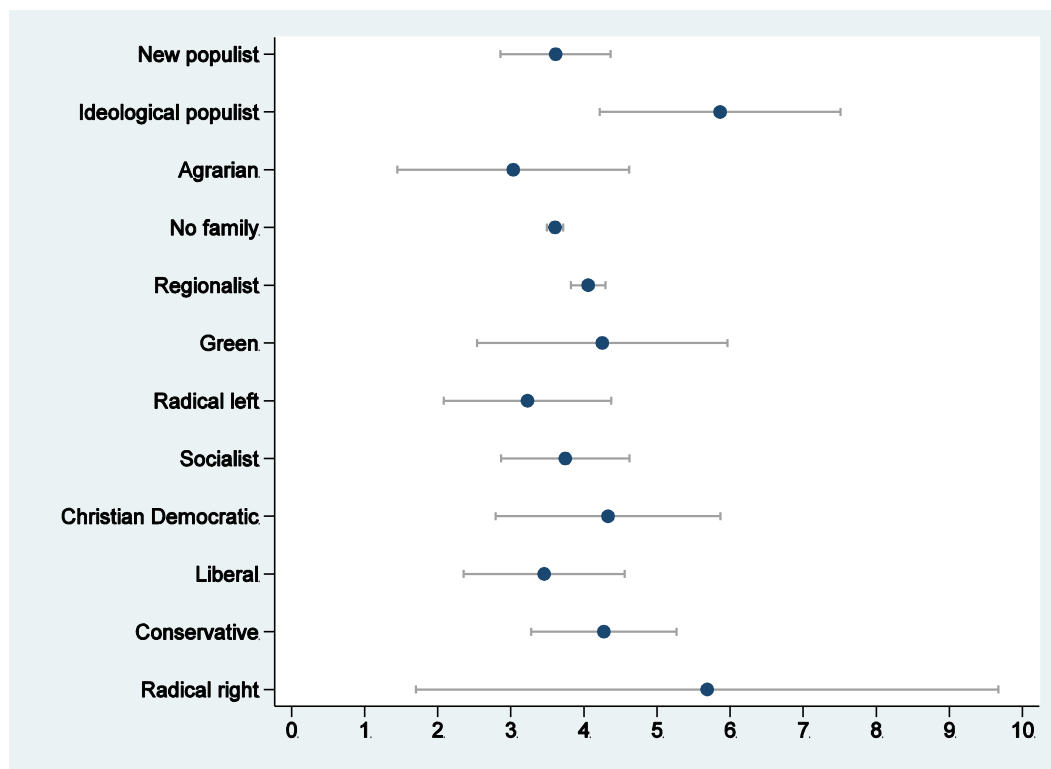
Source: the authors

Figure 13: Issue salience for political parties (ethnic minorities)



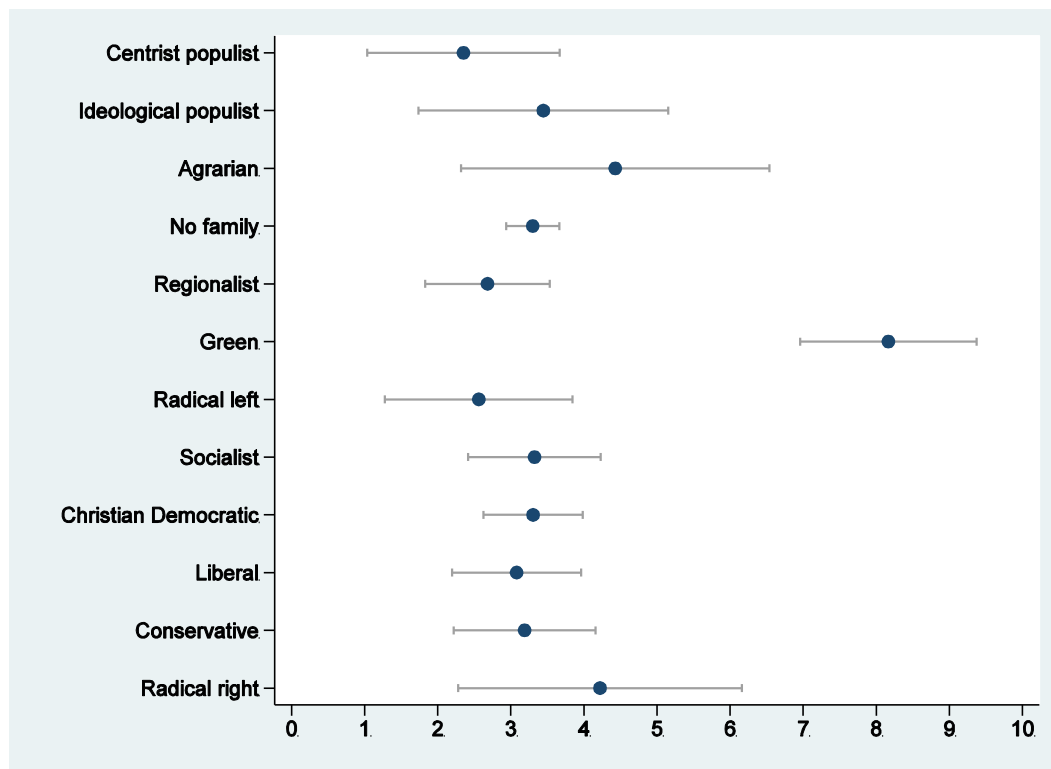
Source: the authors

Figure 14: Issue salience for political parties (multiculturalism)



Source: the authors

Figure 15: Issue salience for political parties (environmentalism)



Source: the authors

None of the issues/components of the GAL/TAN divide is of crucial importance for new populist political parties with an exception of civic liberties vs law and order which might be explained by the stress centrist populist parties put on the need of restoration of popular sovereignty and greater citizens involvement into decision-making processes (referenda, petitions, etc.). In fact, immigration and environmentalism are issues with the lowest (environmentalism) or one of the lowest salience (immigration) for centrist populist parties. Nevertheless, this very preliminary explanation needs to be investigated in a future research. Besides the low salience of GAL/TAN for new populist parties, salience of GAL/TAN-related issues makes new populist parties significantly different from ideological populist parties (immigration, social lifestyle, multiculturalism and religion), radical right (more or less the same issues as in the case of ideological populist parties), green parties (environmentalism), agrarian parties (environmentalism²) and Christian democratic parties (religion and social lifestyle). Since GAL/TAN division-related issues are not important for new populist parties, it makes – similarly to economic issues – the centrality observed (with slight right-centre tendency) of their position only very relative and, as a consequence, neither the GAL/TAN dimension of competition captures well the position of new populist parties in political space. All in all, the third hypothesis is confirmed in the context of GAL/TAN issues that are less salient for new populist parties in comparison to other party families but this conclusion but is only partially confirmed when economic issues are taken into consideration.

5 Conclusion

The main of the paper was to investigate the position of new populist political parties (sometimes labelled as centrist populist parties) in Central and Eastern Europe in political space. We conceptualize new populist parties as political parties whose discourse/or policy platform is based

² A brief look at urban – rural division (which is not a part of GAL/TAN dimension) shows, not surprisingly, a big difference in saliency for agrarian parties and new populist parties.

on populism but is not supplemented by another coherent set of ideas, whether a full or thin ideology. After careful reading of both secondary and primary sources we identified a group of new populist parties that meet the criteria set in the theoretical part of the article. Subsequently, we compared the position of new populist parties and other populist and non-populist parties in political space.

Several important conclusions can be drawn from the results. First, the position of new populist parties in traditional dimensions of political space is not directional and, indeed, they can be described as centrist in terms of economic left-right and GAL/TAN dimension. Second, the consistency of policy position of new populist parties is less apparent in comparison to other political parties (especially on the economic left-right dimension of political space). Third, components of both economic left-right and GAL/TAN dimension are on average less salient for new populist political parties in comparison to both ideological populist and non-populist parties. However, this conclusion applies mainly for the GAL/TAN issues since there is less significant difference in terms of economic issues.

The results provide us with several important implications for a further research on populism. First, new populist parties do form a specific category of political parties that is different both from non-populist political parties and ideological populist political parties. Taking into consideration the electoral performance of new populist parties, they should become an object of study of populism besides other group of populist parties including populist radical right or socialist populist parties. Second, the political parties under investigation in the article have often been labelled as “centrist” populist parties. The results of our research raise serious doubts about purity of centrality of these populist parties, for centrality this type of populist parties in both economic left-right and GAL/TAN dimensions of competition is accompanied by inconsistency of the position of these parties in political space and by low saliency of economic and GAL/TAN issues for them. Consequently, the centrality of new populist parties seems to be “accidental”, stemming from the

lack of clear policy platform than “ideological”. Therefore, the new or preferably non-ideological populist parties should be used instead of somewhat misleading “centrist populism”.

Appendix A – New populist parties included in the analysis

Abreviation	Original party name	Party name translated	Country	Ches data
GERB	Graždani za evropejsko razvítie na Bălgarija	Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria	Bulgaria	2010
KS II	Koalicija Simeon II	Coalition Simeon II	Bulgaria	2001
NDSV	Nacionalno Dviženie Simeon Vtori	National Movement Simeon II	Bulgaria	2002
VV	Věci veřejné	Public Affairs	Czech Republic	2010
JL	Jaunais laiks	New Era Party	Latvia	2002, 2006
DP	Darbo partija	Labour Party	Lithuania	2004
LD/TT	Tvarka ir teisingumas	Order and Justice	Lithuania	2004, 2008
HZDS	Hnutie za demokratické Slovensko	Movement for Democratic Slovakia	Slovakia	2002, 2006, 2010
SMER	Směr	Direction	Slovakia	2002

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