

Mapping Populist Parties in Europe and the Americas*

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July 13, 2015

Abstract

In this paper we use holistic grading to measure the level of populism found in political parties' discourse during electoral campaigns. The technique is applied to leaders' speeches and electoral manifestos from 112 parties in 22 countries, from Western Europe and the Americas. Our main findings are two: first, that parties considered typical cases of populism in Europe present this discourse less consistently than Latin American ones. Second, contrary to what is commonly thought, populism in Europe is not more usual among right-wing parties, but evenly spread across left and right, both in economic and socio-cultural issues. Moreover, it is associated with extremism: the more a party has an extreme ideological position, both left and right, the more likely it is to have a stronger populist discourse.

1 Introduction

One of the main challenges in studying populism in comparative perspective is defining which political actors deserve this label. Because it is such a controversial concept, most comparative studies either classify cases by *fiat*, based on literature reviews (see, for example, [Mudde, 2007, 2014](#)), or by relying on country specialists to decide on each case. The problem with the first approach is that it often relies on second-hand literature instead of primary sources, and has little room for testing reliability. The second approach, on the other hand, depends on different conceptions of populism experts might have, and how their perceptions are driven by the cases they know well. While it gives an idea of how populist are parties within one political system in relation to one another, the

*Paper prepared for the ALACIP Congress 2015 in Lima, Peru, July 22-24. This is a draft. **Please do not cite without permission.**

scale is not absolute across countries and renders a comparison virtually impossible. While specialists in Sweden may consider, for example, that the Sweden Democrats (*Sverigedemokraterna*) are extremely populist in that country’s context, this does not mean that it is also very populist in comparison to parties in other countries.

In this paper we use a tested and validated approach to measuring populism – holistic grading (Hawkins, 2009) – and apply it to 112 parties from 22 countries in Europe and the Americas, creating the first comprehensive data set classifying entire party systems according to the level of populism in parties’ discourse. By looking at campaign documents – electoral manifestos and speeches by party leaders –, from all main parties in a political system, we are able to observe how populist each actor is, and compare that to a range of international cases. With these data in hand, we proceed with two comparisons: first, how populism is distributed across the regions in this study; and second, how is it associated with left- or right-wing ideologies.

The first section presents the definition of populism used in this study, followed by a description of the design and implementation of holistic grading. After that, the results are presented along with descriptive statistics and methodological notes on reliability and aggregation. The last part discusses how these findings may change our perceptions of two important issues in populism studies: the regional differences between Europe and Latin America, and the relation between populism and left or right ideologies.

2 Populism and its measurement

We consider populism to be in the realm of ideas, a perspective that has become prominent in recent years (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013, 497). It is a discourse which divides politics in moral terms, where the good is identified with “the people” and the evil is embodied by an “elite”. This “people”, in populist discourse, encompasses the majority of the population and is a homogeneous, unified body that has an identifiable *will* – the General Will or *volonté générale* –, which should be guiding all decision-making in politics. The elite, on the other side, is a minority who is in power (or in risk of imminent return to), who uses its resources to exploit the people. It is morally evil,

and to blame for all bad things that befall the country. Because of this division, populist discourse calls for a “systemic change”, or liberation of the people from the grips of the elites. It charges the whole political system of being corrupted by a small ruling group, and overthrowing it completely is the only way to actually enforce the democratic rule by the people. Undemocratic means may be accepted to achieve this goal since, in this framing, the elites are thieves who do not deserve a fair treatment, and the enforcement of the people’s will should not be blocked by formalities and institutions.

An ideational approach along these lines lends itself to its operationalization and measurement, since it identifies elements that should be present in a discourse for it to be populist. Following it, researchers have used different content analysis methods to measure populism in the last years. [Jagers and Walgrave \(2007\)](#) test a dictionary-based content analysis to classifying populist parties in Flanders, which is extended in [Rooduijn and Pauwels \(2011\)](#) to three more countries. It consists in defining a dictionary of “populist” terms and classifying documents based on their frequency. [Rooduijn et al. \(2014\)](#) use quantitative human-based content analysis of party manifestos from five European countries. This approach has paragraphs as units of analysis, and uses trained coders to classify each one as populist or not, with the aggregated proportion of populist paragraphs being the party score. A third comparative approach has been put forward in [Hawkins \(2009\)](#), and consists of holistic grading. There, chief executives’ speeches are coded as a whole, without breaking them down into words or paragraphs.¹

From these alternatives, this paper uses the third. The dictionary-based technique demands a high knowledge of each specific country for the selection of relevant terms. It may be feasible in single case studies or small-n comparisons, but becomes much less so when more than 10 cases are included. Of the other two, both depart from a similar definition of populism and could potentially be used for the purposes of this study. Hawkins’ approach has the upper-hand, however, for having been tested and validated across a large number of countries and time-periods. The original study ([Hawkins, 2009](#)) included 40 contemporary and historical presidents and prime-ministers from Latin America, Europe, and Asia, while a second round was done with chief executives from

¹For a review of content analysis methods measuring populism, see [Poblete \(2015\)](#).

Eastern Europe and Central Asia ([Hawkins, 2013](#)). The technique by [Rooduijn et al. \(2014\)](#) has not yet been applied outside of France, Italy, Germany, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom.

Holistic grading was developed in educational psychology for assessing students' writing ([White, 1985](#); [Sudweeks et al., 2004](#)). It is a human-based coding approach that evaluates the text as a whole. Graders are trained to allocate scores based on the elements of the concept and a set of anchor texts defined as examples for the lowest, intermediate, and highest boundaries. In this case, coders are trained in English on the concept of populism, and the set of training documents are in English as well. The training emphasizes that the most important dimension of populism is the notion of a unified, homogeneous people, or of the “will of the people”, and that this people has to be defined in the text in opposition to an “elite”, who is powerful and oppressive. Therefore, even if there is much anti-elitism in the text, if there is no general will of the people, coders are instructed to assign a low score. As in [Hawkins \(2009\)](#), grades range from 0 to 2, where 0, 1 and 2 are categories defined as follows:

- 0 A speech in this category uses few if any populist elements. Note that even if a manifesto expresses a Manichaeian worldview, it is not considered populist if it lacks some notion of a popular will.
- 1 A speech in this category includes strong, clearly populist elements but either does not use them consistently or tempers them by including non-populist elements. Thus, the discourse may have a romanticized notion of the people and the idea of a unified popular will (indeed, it must in order to be considered populist), but it avoids bellicose language or references to cosmic proportions or any particular enemy.
- 2 A speech in this category is extremely populist and comes very close to the ideal populist discourse. Specifically, the speech expresses all or nearly all of the elements of ideal populist discourse, and has few elements that would be considered non-populist.

Because graders in earlier studies reported that it was often difficult to choose between the blunt categories, this time they were instructed to give decimal scores, and told that 0.5 rounds up to a

categorical 1, and 1.5 rounds up to a categorical 2, so they should consider the qualitative difference between the categories when assigning decimal points. After the training, coders are given the texts – speeches or manifestos – in their original language. One rubric is filled for each document, and each one is discussed with the other coders and the coordinator to clarify questions and check for possible misunderstandings.

2.1 Sampling

Two innovations were introduced in this study in relation to the previous uses of holistic grading: first, it has been expanded from chief executives to candidates to the highest executive office. The second change is that party manifestos were also coded, instead of only speeches. The option for including manifestos is that these documents help to explore a party’s discourse as an institution, which may be distinct from that of its candidate. Also, speeches and manifestos are the documents most comparable across countries: almost everywhere parties produce some kind of election program, and party candidates deliver speeches. This means we are looking for populist discourse in documents that are produced and made public with similar purposes across cases. Speeches used are all from national election campaign – this means that, again, we have comparable documents across countries, and that it is possible to find texts for all parties of interest.² While for the manifesto we effectively use a sample census (there is usually only one manifesto) for speeches we use a quota sample that selects one speech from the beginning of the campaign and one from the end. The one from the beginning is usually the one where the candidate is officially announced by the party, or confirms her candidacy, frequently done in a large party event with significant media coverage. The second speech comes from the end of the race, a few days before the election, often given in the context of a large rally closing the campaign that also has significant media coverage. The reasoning behind these choices is to, first, capture the discourse in distinct moments in the race. Also, if it is possible to have speeches from events that received large coverage, we are looking at those which have the most potential to be heard by the largest number of voters. Furthermore, while not all countries have a tradition of parties holding large rallies to end the campaign, most

²If we used speeches in parliament, for example, new parties would be excluded.

have party conventions where the leading candidate is acclaimed. Limiting the number of speeches to two is dictated mostly by a practical reason: it is very difficult to find more than two campaign speeches for several candidates. ³

In terms of coverage, the sample includes 112 parties from 22 countries in the Americas and Western Europe. The selection of countries was partly dictated by convenience: we had to include those for which there were coders who spoke the language. This was less of a problem in the Americas: all of South America⁴ plus Mexico and Canada were included. In Western Europe the sample is more limited, but we could not identify any evident biases: the sample includes countries where populism is often said to be high, and others where it is usually off the radar. Also, there are both Southern and Northern countries. What is completely absent, though, are post-socialist Central and Eastern European cases. For most countries, parties were included if they got more than 5% of the national vote in the national election of interest. ⁵ The manifestos and speeches all come from the most recent national elections up to March 2015 in which the chief executive was defined. ⁶

3 Description of results

Table 1: Populism in party manifestos and candidates' speeches

Country	Year	Party	Manifesto	Speeches	Party score	Party score 2
Argentina	2011	FAP	0.2	0.25	0.225	0.23
Argentina	2011	FpV	0.5	0.25	0.375	0.33
Argentina	2011	FP	0.25	0.7	0.475	0.55
Argentina	2011	UCR	1.3	0.2	0.75	0.57
Argentina	2011	CF	0.1	1	0.55	0.7

³In Hawkins (2009) it was suggested that three to four speeches were enough for a reliable grade. However, there a politician's discourse was studied for all her time in office. Because we are limiting it to how populist are political campaigns – shorter in time –, it may be expected that there is less variability, and fewer speeches may be needed.

⁴Paraguayan texts have yet to be coded.

⁵Countries where this was violated: Norway and Bolivia, where only the three largest parties were included. In Belgium, since only Walloon parties were included, the vote-share used to define the sample was taken from results in the French-speaking constituencies plus Brussels, instead of looking at shares of the total national vote. In some countries, smaller parties are also present

⁶With the exception of Canada, where documents from the 2006 elections were used.

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Country	Year	Party	Manifesto	Speeches	Party score	Party score 2
Belgium-WL	2014	cdH	0.05		0.05	0.05
Belgium-WL	2014	Ecolo				
Belgium-WL	2014	FDF	0		0	0
Belgium-WL	2014	MR				
Belgium-WL	2014	PP	0.55		0.55	0.55
Belgium-WL	2014	PS	0.15		0.15	0.15
Bolivia	2014	MAS	1.55		1.55	1.55
Bolivia	2014	PDC	0.3		0.3	0.3
Bolivia	2014	UD	0.25		0.25	0.25
Brazil	2014	PSDB	0	0.15	0.075	0.1
Brazil	2014	PSB	0.075	0.15	0.1125	0.125
Brazil	2014	PSOL	1.1	1.65	1.375	1.47
Brazil	2014	PT	0	0.65	0.325	0.43
Canada	2006	BQ	0.75		0.75	0.75
Canada	2006	Cons	0.8		0.8	0.8
Canada	2006	Green	0.2		0.2	0.2
Canada	2006	Lib	0		0	0
Canada	2006	NDP	0.3		0.3	0.3
Chile	2013	PS	0.7	0.15	0.425	0.33
Chile	2013	UDI	0	0.025	0.0125	0.017
Chile	2013	PRO	0.3	1.15	0.725	0.87
Chile	2013	Parisi	0	0.45	0.225	0.3
Chile	2013	IGUAL	2	2	2	2
Colombia	2014	CD	0.35		0.35	0.35
Colombia	2014	C	0		0	0
Colombia	2014	PDA	0.1		0.1	0.1
Colombia	2014	PVC	0.1		0.1	0.1
Colombia	2014	U	0		0	0
Ecuador	2013	CREO	0.6	0.1	0.35	0.27
Ecuador	2013	Pais	1.7	0.95	1.325	1.2
Ecuador	2013	PRIAN	0.2	0.4	0.3	0.33
Ecuador	2013	PSP	0.1	0.75	0.425	0.53
France	2012	FG	0.9	0.25	0.575	0.47
France	2012	FN	0.4	0.75	0.575	0.63
France	2012	MoDem	0		0	0
France	2012	PS	0.1	0	0.05	0.03
France	2012	UMP	0	0.25	0.125	0.17
France	2012	Verts	0.15		0.15	0.15
Ireland	2011	FF	0.025		0.025	0.025
Ireland	2011	FG	0.25		0.25	0.25
Ireland	2011	Lab	0.3		0.3	0.3
Ireland	2011	SF	0.325		0.325	0.325

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Country	Year	Party	Manifesto	Speeches	Party score	Party score 2
Italy	2013	M5S	0.1	0.65	0.375	0.47
Italy	2013	LN	0.1	0	0.05	0.05
Italy	2013	PD	0.6	0.3	0.45	0.45
Italy	2013	PdL	0	0.35	0.175	0.23
Italy	2013	SC	0	0	0	0
Italy	2013	RC	0.4	1.5	0.95	1.13
Italy	2013	SEL	0.1	0.35	0.23	0.27
Germany	2013	CDU	0		0	0
Germany	2013	Grüne	0.2		0.2	0.2
Germany	2013	FDP	0		0	0
Germany	2013	SPD	0		0	0
Germany	2013	AfD	0		0	0
Germany	2013	CSU	0		0	0
Germany	2013	Linke	1.3		1.3	1.3
Germany	2013	NPD	1.4		1.4	1.4
Mexico	2012	PAN	0.1		0.1	0.1
Mexico	2012	PRI	0.05		0.05	0.05
Mexico	2012	PRD	0.95		0.95	0.95
Mexico	2012	PNA	0.05		0.05	0.05
Norway	2013	A	0		0	0
Norway	2013	FrP	0		0	0
Norway	2013	H	0		0	0
Peru	2013	AGC	0		0	0
Peru	2013	F11	0		0	0
Peru	2013	PNP	0.55		0.55	0.55
Peru	2013	PP	0		0	0
Peru	2013	SN	0		0	0
Portugal	2011	BE	0.4		0.4	0.4
Portugal	2011	CDS-PP	0.05		0.05	0.05
Portugal	2011	PCP	0.7		0.7	0.7
Portugal	2011	PS	0		0	0
Portugal	2011	PSD	0.05		0.05	0.05
Spain	2011	CiU	0.25		0.25	0.25
Spain	2011	IU	1		1	1
Spain	2011	PNV	0.25		0.25	0.25
Spain	2011	PP	0.4		0.4	0.4
Spain	2011	PSOE	0		0	0
Spain	2011	UPyD	0.1		0.1	0.1
Sweden	2014	M	0	0.1	0.05	0.05
Sweden	2014	C	0	0.1	0.05	0.07
Sweden	2014	FP	0.05	0.1	0.075	0.075
Sweden	2014	KD	0	0.1	0.05	0.07

Table 1: Populism in party manifestos and candidates’ speeches

Country	Year	Party	Manifesto	Speeches	Party score	Party score 2
Sweden	2014	MP	0	0.65	0.325	0.4
Sweden	2014	SAP	0	0.25	0.125	0.13
Sweden	2014	SD	0.1	0.15	0.125	0.17
Sweden	2014	V	0.2	0.45	0.325	0.37
Switzerland	2011	BDP	0.05		0.05	0.05
Switzerland	2011	CVP	0.1		0.1	0.1
Switzerland	2011	FDP	0.1		0.1	0.1
Switzerland	2011	GPS	0		0	0
Switzerland	2011	SP	0.3		0.3	0.3
Switzerland	2011	SVP	1		1	1
UK	2010	BNP	0.5	1.4	0.95	0.95
UK	2010	Lab	0.25	0.05	0.15	0.117
UK	2010	LibDem	0	0	0	0
UK	2010	C	0.05	0	0.025	0.017
UK	2010	UKIP	0.15	0	0.075	0.075
Uruguay	2014	FA	0.05		0.05	0.05
Uruguay	2014	PC	0		0	0
Uruguay	2014	PI	0.15		0.15	0.15
Uruguay	2014	PN	0		0	0
Uruguay	2014	UP	1.2		1.2	1.2
Venezuela	2013	PSUV	1.85	1.6	1.725	1.68
Venezuela	2013	MUD	0.8	1.9	1.35	1.53

Notes: **Manifesto** refers to the average between the preamble’s and list of issues’ grades in all countries except for Chile, Germany, Spain, and UK, where coders still gave one score for the whole document. **Party score** is the average between the manifesto and the mean of speeches; **Party score 2** is the average of all documents.

3.1 Manifestos versus speeches

This is the first time that holistic grading has been applied on a large scale to party manifestos, and some issues of adapting it to this kind of document emerged. First, as coders started to report results, many indicated that there were two very different tones in some manifestos, where the preamble, or introduction, sometimes contained high levels of populism, while the rest (always a list of policy proposals) had a more pragmatic or technical feel. We decided to ask coders to give separate scores for the preamble/introduction, where it existed, and the list of policy positions. The mean level of populism in preambles is 0.33, while that of the list of positions is 0.25. The

Manifesto column in Table 1 is a simple mean of these two scores.⁷ Because the preamble is usually shorter than the list of positions⁸, the net result is to weight the preamble more heavily.

The results confirm an intuitive expectation: manifestos are less populist than speeches. Given their nature as formal party documents for elite consumption, it is not surprising that the tone is more sober. The mean grade for manifestos is 0.3, while that of speeches is 0.51, with no difference between speeches from the beginning and end of the campaign. In categorical terms, this means the average campaign speech crosses the 0.5 threshold, indicating they have the necessary elements of populism, but weak or used inconsistently throughout the speech. This shows that populism in political campaigns might not be dominant, but still has a non-negligible presence.

The correlation between speeches' and manifestos' final scores is presented in Figure 1, on the left-hand side. It is relatively high – 0.63 –, and there was only one case of a party where one kind of document received a categorical 2 (a decimal score equal or above 1.5) and the other a categorical 0 (a decimal equal or below 0.5). This was the *Rivoluzione Civile*, in Italy, with an average for speeches of its leader, Antonio Ingroia, of 1.5, while the manifesto scored 0.4⁹. These results indicate that, when possible, it is ideal to have both manifestos and speeches coded to give a more complete picture of how populist a party is, but in the absence of speeches, manifestos still give a reasonable approximation.

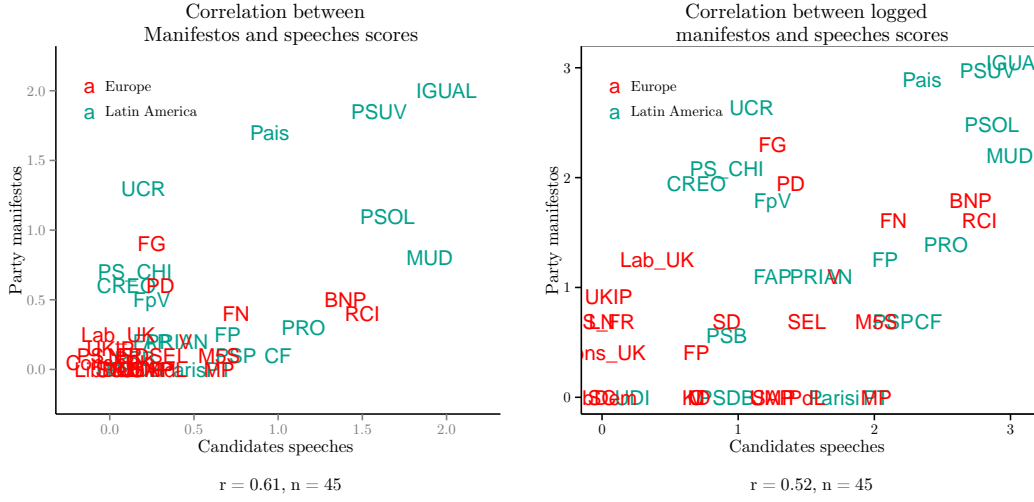
The right-hand side of Figure 1 has the same plot with logged scores for speeches and manifestos. If we look at the figure on the left, with original scores, it is possible to see that there are a few close to the top, some more or less scattered in the middle, and many parties around the lower-left corner, with low scores on both. Looking at the specific parties, we see that those on the top are PSUV – Chávez' party in Venezuela –, and other Latin American ones that closely follow his discourse – Alianza PAIS, in Ecuador, and Partido Igualdad, in Chile. While it is important to find that that very few parties, especially out of Latin America, are as populist as some of the prime examples of populism in the region, it blurs what can also be of interest: the variation in populism among

⁷This issue also emerged in Rooduijn et al. (2014), and the authors decided to count each paragraph of the preamble twice.

⁸The length of manifestos ranged from 4 pages, from the German *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD), to 810, from the Walloon *Ecolo*.

⁹This manifesto was one of the few that had no preamble, only list of policy positions, what may have contributed to its lower score.

Figure 1: Speeches' and manifestos' scores



all other parties that are not led by Hugo Chávez. For this reason, the plot with logged scores is presented, where it is possible to observe more clearly how levels of populism vary in the sample. ¹⁰

3.2 Intercode reliability

After the coding efforts in Hawkins (2009, 2013) showed high intercode reliability, it seemed to be possible to have only one coder doing some cases, in order to increase the number of countries and parties covered. Part of this sample, therefore, is based on the grades assigned by only one coder. For the other part (34 documents in total), two were kept, and the results of intercode reliability checks confirm that the method is reliable. Krippendorff's alpha is very high, 0.97, showing that using only one coder for part of the sample should not bring major measurement errors.

3.3 Aggregation

If we are to take the final populism score for a party, there are two possibilities of aggregation. The first is to assign half weight to manifesto, and half to the average of speeches' scores. The reasoning

¹⁰For the transformation, all original scores were multiplied by 10 and a constant value of 1 added, since many had an original final score of 0. The logarithm was taken from the resulting values.

behind this aggregation is that the manifesto represents the discourse of the party as a whole, while the speeches are an indication of the leaders' own discourse. Thus, both receive the same weight in defining the party final score. These results are in "Party score" in Table 1. The second is to assign the same weight for every document coded, which doubles the weight given to speeches relation to the manifesto. This is indicated as "Party score 2" in Table 1. In the subsequent sections, analyses are done with scores given by the first method of aggregation ¹¹.

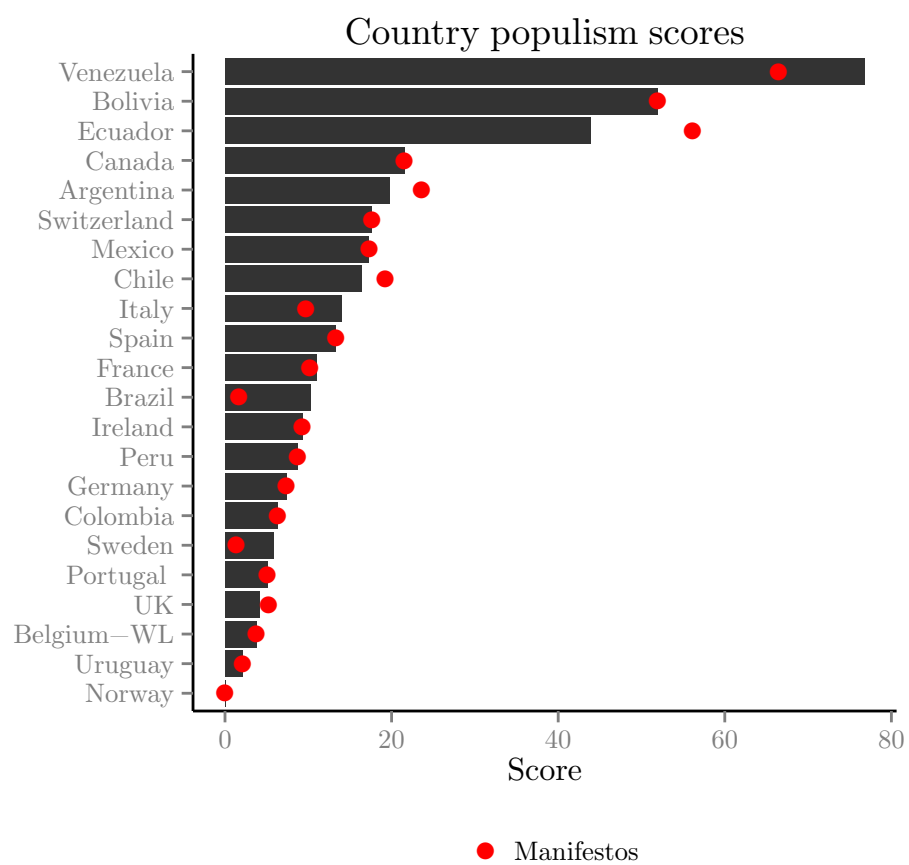
A second aggregation step calculates the average level of populism in a country, which allows regional comparisons. The proposed formula for this sums the products between each party populism score and its vote share, following Equation 1, where Pc is the country populism score, p_i the populism final score of party i , and v_i the vote-share of party i . Since the populism scale ranges from 0 to 2, and vote-shares from 0 to 100, results are divided by 2 to create a 0-100 scale.

$$Pc = \frac{\sum(p_i \times v_i)}{2} \quad (1)$$

Figure 2 presents the aggregate country scores. The bars are the scores based on total party grades, including manifestos and speeches, while the red dots indicate the same aggregation based on manifestos alone. The graph shows us that in Venezuela, in the 2013 elections, populism was the common currency among the two candidates. Nicolas Maduro, successor to Hugo Chávez and elected with 51% of the votes, has a score of 1.73, while Henrique Capriles, who got 49%, had an average populism of 1.35. This sums up to a country score of almost 78. In an intermediary position are Bolivia and Ecuador, where the two very populist candidates, Evo Morales and Rafael Correa respectively, had excellent performances in their reelection campaigns, driving most of the high scores. Behind these, and confirming that the three South American countries have today exceptionally high levels of populism, come the others.

¹¹Results using the second are very similar to the first. To compensate for the fact that many parties have only their manifestos coded, we also performed the analyses using only manifestos' grades instead of aggregated party scores. Results also do not change substantively.

Figure 2: Aggregate country populism scores



4 Comparing results

4.1 Regional differences

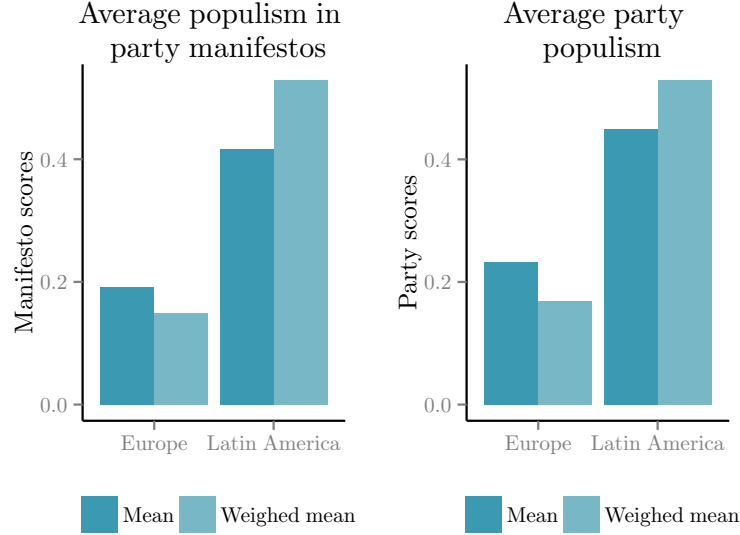
As the results show, populism is stronger in Latin America than in Europe. Not only there are more highly populist parties in the region, but the aggregate country scores in Latin America are higher than in Europe. This point is made again in Figure 3, which compares the means of populism in the two regions. The dark blue bars are unweighted mean scores of populism, while the lighter blue presents scores weighed by parties' vote-share. As the two panels indicate, results are similar if we use the combination of manifestos and speeches or only manifestos. What the figures also show is that, not only are Latin American parties on average more populist than Europeans, but populism in Latin America is used by electorally stronger parties. In other words, populism is a more mainstream discourse in Latin America.

This pattern is an important finding in itself. While this has not been openly expressed or argued for, the common assumption in studies comparing populist parties in both regions is that they are populist to the same extent. [Mudde and Kaltwasser \(2012\)](#), for example, study the difference between left and right populism, concluding that one is inclusionary (left) while the other is exclusionary (right). They select typical cases of each, which are the French National Front and the Austrian Freedom Party for right-wing populism, and Evo Morales and Hugo Chávez for left-wing. The underlying assumption, however, is that the only thing that differentiates these movements, at least in terms of their ideas, is their “thick” ideology – populism is taken to be constant. What we see here, however, is that the National Front, with a final score of 0.58, is not nearly as populist as Morales' MAS (1.55) or Chávez's PSUV (1.73).

4.2 Left and right populism in Europe

A cornerstone in populism studies is that it is, as a discourse, independent of left or right-wing ideologies. As a “thin-centered” ideology ([Mudde, 2004](#)), it can be combined with all kinds of “thick” ones. This has emerged from the simple observation that there are strongly populist parties on all sides of the political spectrum – the already mentioned National Front (France) and Austrian

Figure 3: Levels of populism by region



Freedom Party being examples of radical right ideology combined with populism, while *SYRIZA* or *Podemos*, to stay within Europe, are clear cases of populist discourse combined with left ideology. The idea is that the essence of populist discourse is a division between “people” and “elite”, and ideologies are used to fill in the blanks of who belongs to one or the other. [March \(2007\)](#) suggests that in left-populism the division is socio-economic: a rich elite versus the poor people, or the 1% against the 99%. Right-wing populism, on the other hand, sees the people as “the nation”, a nativist idea that the country belongs to nationals and that foreign aliens, in collusion with political elites, want to steal it ([Mudde, 2007](#)).

However, the fact that populism *can be* used both by the left and the right does not mean that it *is* equally used by both of them. In this section, we investigate how populist discourse is connected with right and left wing ideologies in the 64 parties from 11 West European countries present in the sample. ¹² Western Europe is often said to be living a wave of right-wing populism. [Mudde and](#)

¹²Latin American parties are excluded because the sample here contains only recent cases, meaning in the midst of the left-populist wave that started in the 2000s. A quick glance at the party scores for Latin America in Table 1 shows that the highest scores are almost all from left-populists with ideologies openly inspired by Hugo Chávez, such as Chile’s Roxana Miranda (IGUAL), Bolivia’s Evo Morales (MAS), Ecuador’s Rafael Correa (Pais), and Brazil’s Luciana Genro (PSOL), all cases with scores above 1.

Kaltwasser (2012), when choosing prototypical cases that represent populism in the region, select the radical right parties National Front (France), and Austrian Freedom Party, and state that “Populism is a relatively new phenomenon in Europe that has come to prominence with the formation of the populist radical right party family in the 1980s” and that “there are only a few isolated cases of successful non-radical right populism in contemporary Europe” (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2012, 155). Hanspeter Kriesi (2014, 369), explaining the rise of populism in Europe based on the idea of “winners” and “losers” of globalization, states that “So far, this new conflict between globalisation ‘winners’ and ‘losers’ has above all been successfully articulated by new populists from the right”. According to Zaslove (2008, 329), “in the current European context, populism is usually associated with center-right, or radical right populism” – after which the author proceeds to explain that left-populists in Europe should not be ignored, even if there are fewer examples of them (idem).¹³ While in theory populism is said to be possibly combined both with left and right ideologies, the common understanding today seems to be that the Latin American version is mostly left, while European populism is predominantly on the right.

One important aspect to note, however, is that the division of populism as left or right depending on who fills the blanks of “the people” and “the elite” refers to two distinct ideological dimensions. Left-populism is said to give priority to the socio-economic division of society, in a traditional economic understanding of ideological differences. Populists on the right, on the other hand, are said to be so because they are on the right in social-cultural issues, with nationalism being the most prominent part in their discourse, and in fact having the anti-immigration stance as the only common topic among all parties (Ivarsflaten, 2007). The two, however, are not mutually exclusive. In fact, it is not uncommon that populist parties labeled as right-wing defend economic policies that sit well with social-democrat or socialist ideologies, such as protecting the welfare state (see de Koster et al., 2012) or increasing economic protectionism (the new “winning formula”, as seen in de Lange (2007)). The difference is that these parties are particularistic in these demands, calling for more social benefits only for nationals, as opposed to universalistic appeals by the left.

¹³This is seen also in the media. Two examples of many are a *The Economist* cover on “Europe’s Populist Insurgents: Turning Right” (January 4, 2014), while a *Der Spiegel* headline warned of the threat to Europe posed by right-wing populists (“KAS-Studie: Rechtspopulisten werden zur Gefahr für Europa”, December 02, 2013).

Based on these theories, three hypotheses can be formulated:

- *H1* The more populist a party is, the more likely it is to be on the right in general terms
- *H2* The more populist a party is, the more likely it is to be on the right in socio-cultural issues
- *H3* There is no relation between parties' levels of populism and their positions on the economic left-right dimension

To test these hypotheses we use data from the 2010 Chapel Hill Expert Survey (Bakker et al., 2015). It was administered to party experts and asked them to classify individual parties' ideologies on a range of issues. To test the first hypothesis we use the general left-right placement question – “What is the position of the party in 2010 in terms of its overall ideological stance”, ranging from 0 = extreme left to 10 = extreme right. The second hypothesis, related to social-cultural issues, is tested with four separate questions on whether the party favors law and order, favors tough immigration policies, and opposes liberal policies on social lifestyle and more rights for ethnic minorities. For the third hypothesis, on economic positions, we use one general “economic left-right” placement, and three specific questions on support for tax cuts, support for market deregulation, and opposition to redistribution.

4.2.1 General left-right positioning

Figure 4 shows the scatterplot of the relation between parties' populism scores and their overall ideological stance, where 0 corresponds to the extreme left and 10 to the extreme right. The superimposed “loess” curve (Jacoby, 2000) shows a U pattern, with more populist parties equally towards both extremes and little populism among centrists.¹⁴ On the first panel in Figure 5, the continuous populism scores are split into two categories: those equal or above 0.5 defined as populist, and those below 0.5 as non-populist. We see that the mean ideology of populist parties is more left-wing than the average of non-populist parties. Weighing by electoral results (the lighter

¹⁴It must be noted that this result is sensitive to the two extreme right parties who received a 10 on the ideological scale. If they are removed, the line is almost flat on the right-hand side of the graph.

Figure 4: Correlation between populism and ideology

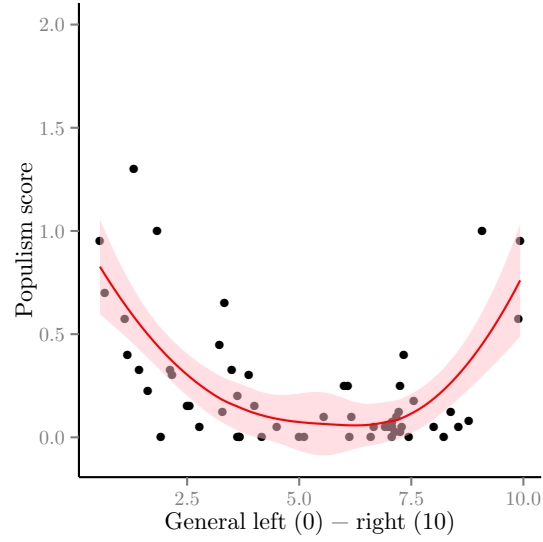
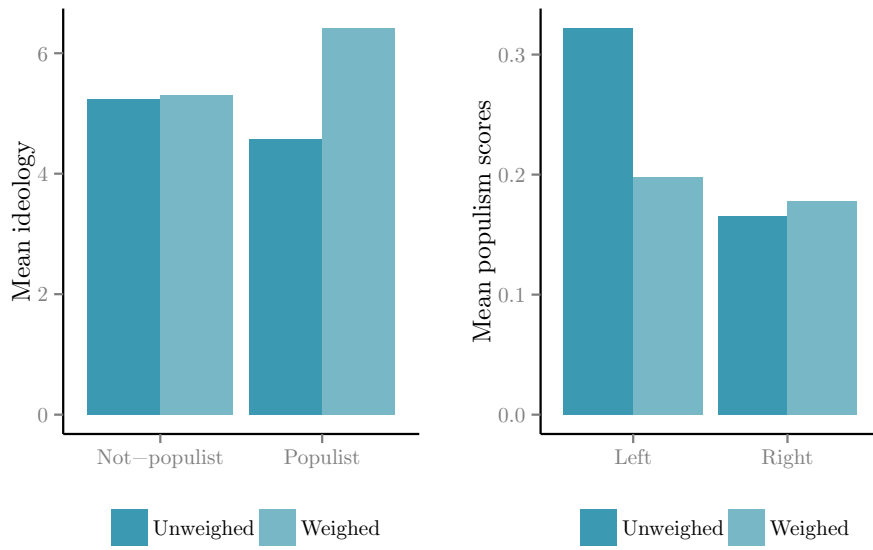


Figure 5: Populism and left-right parties



blue bars) shifts the ideology of populist parties to the right of non-populists.¹⁵ This indicates that there are more left-populist parties, but they are less successful than right-populists. The second panel categorizes instead parties as left or right (where above 5 = right, below 5 = left). The intention is to see in which side parties overall have more populism. Without weighing results, left-wing parties have almost double the populism score of right-wing ones (dark blue columns). Controlling for electoral success narrows the gap, but left parties are still slightly more populist. This confirms that populism in the left is stronger among smaller parties, while seeming to be equally distributed at a low level (around 0.18), among right-wingers.

These results are a negative to the first hypothesis: populist parties are not more right-wing than non-populists, and the relation between extreme ideology and populism cuts for both sides, not only the right. One reason for this might be the already mentioned division that when people talk about right-wing populism in Europe, they think of the socio-cultural right, and perhaps this failed to be captured by a question where respondents, when thinking of general left-right positions, still gave prevalence to economic issues, where populists have a more mixed record. The next two subsections will break down these relations into the two dimensions.

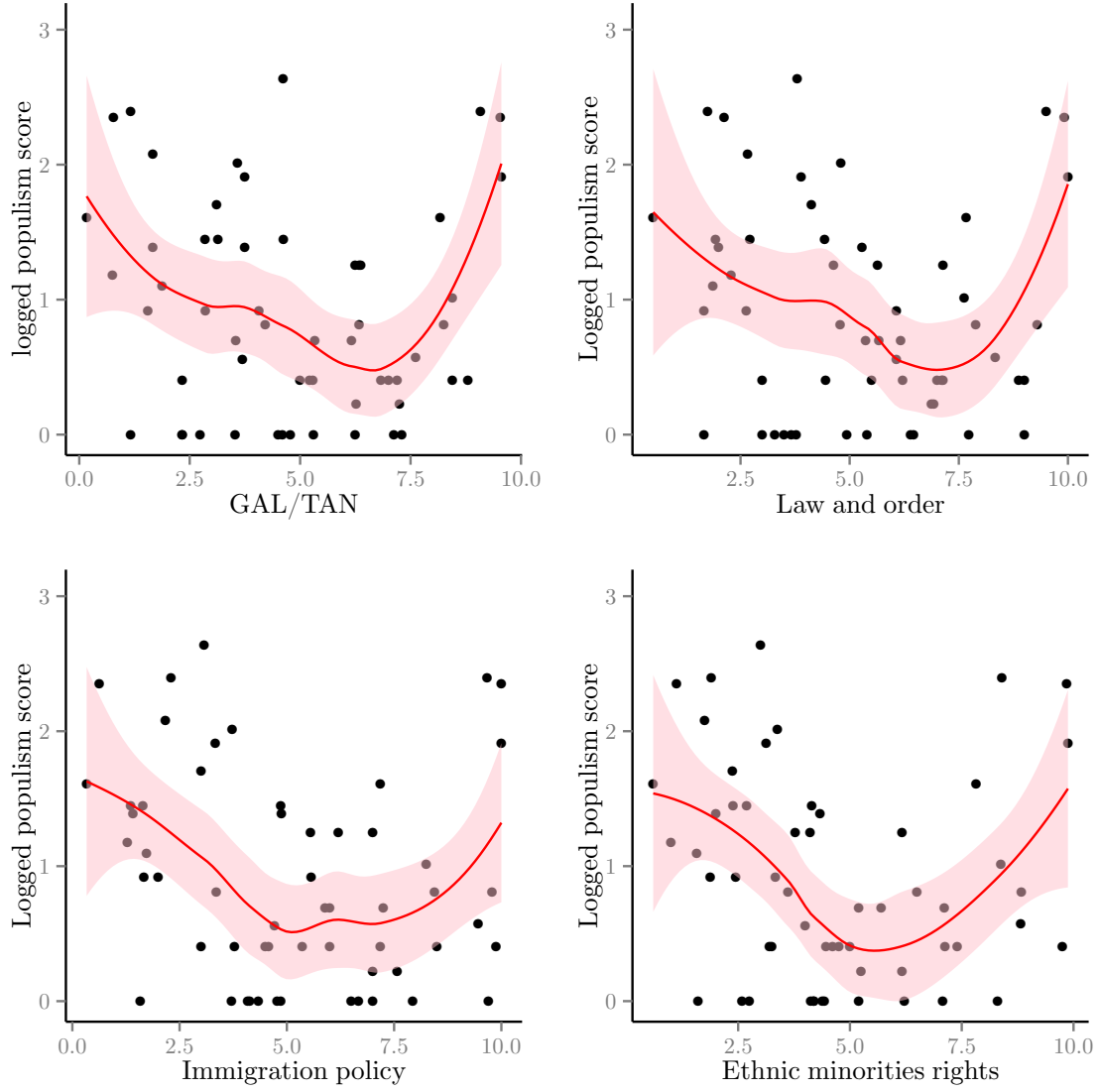
4.2.2 Socio-cultural issues

Figure 6 shows four scatterplots, again with “loess” curves superimposed, with parties’ level of populism and their ideological position.¹⁶ The first plot refers to a question on parties’ ideological stance on democratic freedoms and rights, divided in a continuum with extremes at “Libertarian-postmaterialist” and “Traditional-authoritarian” values. The top-right plot refers to the position on the dualism “civil liberties” versus “law-and-order”. The bottom-left looks at positions on tough immigration policy, while the bottom-right on whether the party supports more rights to ethnic minorities. In all plots, higher values indicate a more right-wing position – meaning, respectively, preference for “Traditional-authoritarian” values, law-and-order, tougher immigration policies, and opposition to more rights for ethnic minorities.

¹⁵This result is sensitive to the presence of the Swiss People’s Party (SVP), which has a score of 1 and is the most successful party in Switzerland. In its absence, the weighed and unweighed mean ideology for populist parties are virtually the same.

¹⁶Populism scores were used the logarithmic transformation to ease the visualization.

Figure 6: Parties' position on socio-cultural issues and populism



In these plots we once again observe a U pattern, where extreme-left and extreme right parties are more populist than those on the center. This may not come as a surprise for the right, as right-wing populism is seen as almost synonymous with support for right-wing policies along these dimensions. It must be noted, though, that the least steep upwards curve on populism towards the extreme right is that of immigration policy. It seems that increasing preference for a tough immigration policy, what is considered the one thing that unites all right-wing populists, is actually *not* related with much higher levels of populism even looking only at right-wing parties. If we look at the whole, extreme left-parties, meaning those that most strongly oppose tough immigration policies, use an equally strong populist discourse.

This brings the second relevant finding on these graphs: parties on the left in these dimensions are as populist as those on the right. As parties move from the center-left to the extreme left, they get gradually more populist on all four indicators. Therefore, hypothesis 2 is also not confirmed, since the level of populism is not associated with a more right-wing stance on socio-cultural issues in general, and also only somewhat related if we restrict samples to right-parties. What is more, it fails to be so exactly on immigration policy, often considered the paradigmatic domain of right-wing populism.

4.2.3 Economic issues

To test the third hypothesis we use four questions on parties' economic positions. The first plot, on the top-left corner of Figure 7, reflects overall positioning in economic issues. The one on the top-right asks about their position regarding redistribution from the rich to the poor; the bottom-left reflects preferences on the dichotomy between increasing public spending and cutting taxes, while the last plot refers to the position on (de)regulation of the markets. Again, higher numbers indicate the more right-wing position – respectively, opposition to redistribution, support for lower taxes, and supporting deregulation of the markets.

The left-hand side of each graph is similar to those in the previous part: the more a party moves from the center-left to the extreme left, the more populist it is. On the other side, there is no relation between higher levels of populism and shifts from the center-right to the extreme. This

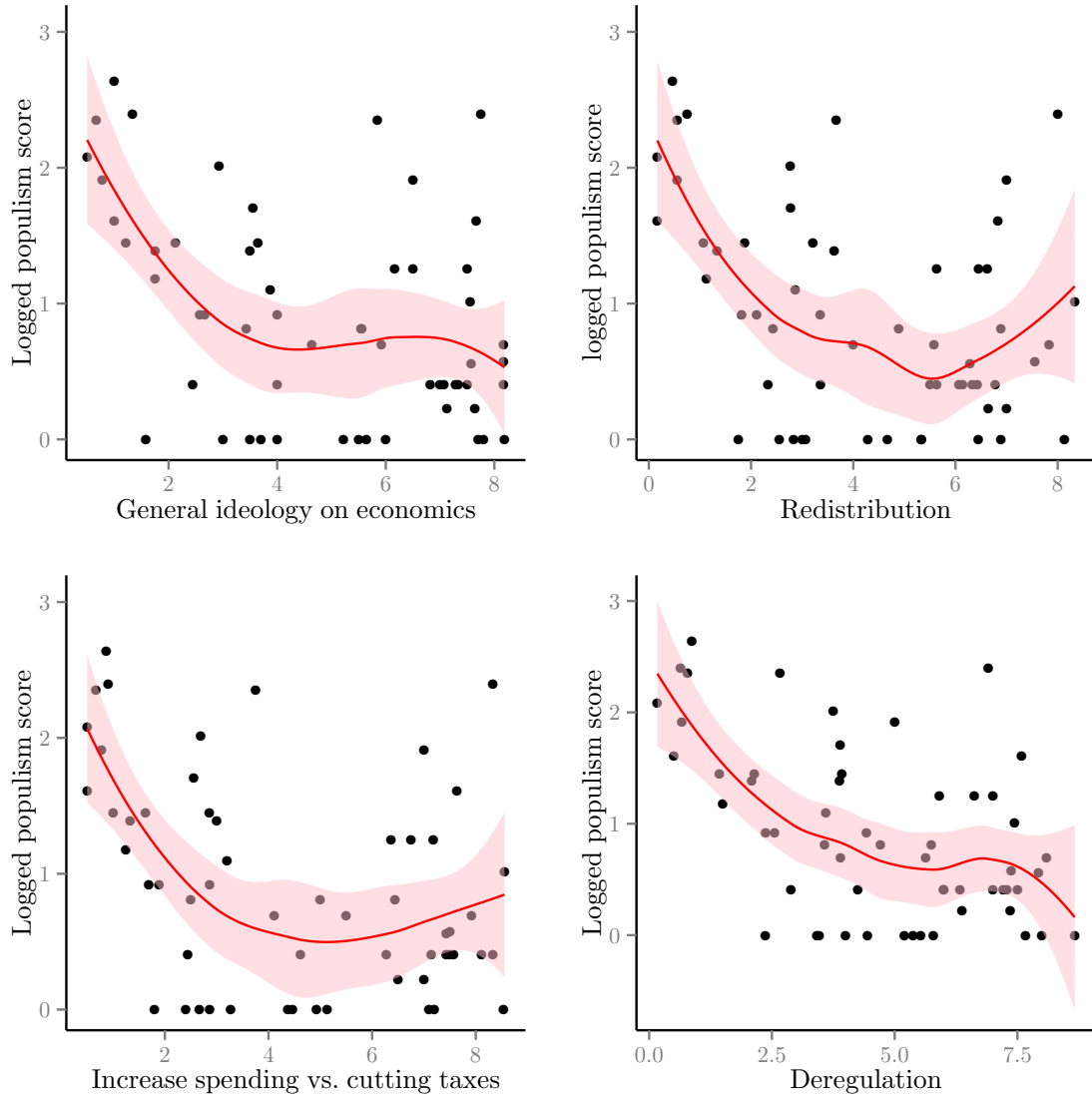
second part is expected since, as mentioned before, right-wing populists do not share a common economic ideology. Therefore, Hypothesis 3 is confirmed. On the right, there is no relation between populism and preference for free-market economic policies.

5 Discussion

This paper started by introducing what is, up to date, the most comprehensive data set of political parties classified by how populist their discourses are. We applied a technique of holistic grading to party manifestos and party leaders or candidates speeches, from Western Europe and the Americas, to see how much populism they displayed in these texts. From the methodological perspective, it was shown that the method can transition to manifestos – a novelty in its application – and that it is possible to use only one coder if resources are scarce, since intercoder reliability proved to be very high. What stood out from the observations were two empirical cuts: one regional and one ideological.

First, while there are populist parties in both regions, the level of populist discourse found among Latin American parties and politicians is much higher than in their European counterparts. A prototypical European populist, the National Front, had a score of 0.4 for their manifesto, and Marine Le Pen’s 2012 campaign speeches received an average of 0.75 out of 2. Other typical European populists did not fare much higher – Beppe Grillo’s speeches averaged 0.65, Berlusconi’s 0.35, and Nigel Farage’s a round zero. The Sweden Democrats, whose recent electoral success has spurred much debate in Europe about the rise of yet another radical right populist party, shows that it might be radical right, but is definitely not populist – it is not even the most populist party in Sweden. This does not mean populism was not to be found in all cases expected. Nick Griffin and the British National Party did get high grades, as well as the German extreme-right NPD. In any case, these are perhaps two of the most extreme populist radical right parties in Europe and, if we isolate only the populism portion of their discourse, they are still not as radically populist as a couple of Latin American examples. This has important consequences for future research comparing populist experiences in the two regions, a topic which is flourishing now. Considering that Latin

Figure 7: Parties' position on economic issues and populism



American populists are more radical in their populism than Europeans may have implications for explaining their support, as well as for the parties' and politicians' actions in office.

The second important cut is ideological, and requires a revision of a deeply held assumption in populism studies: about its adaptability to both left and right ideologies. While there are populist parties on both sides of the spectrum, the picture that emerged here was one where higher degrees of populism in European parties were consistently correlated with a more extreme ideologies, left and right, both in overall terms, as well as in socio-cultural and economic dimensions. Moreover, not only populism in Europe is not predominantly right-wing as it is usually thought to be, it sits comfortably with radical left ideology regardless of how the left is defined. In Europe, the number of radical right populists is not higher than the number of radical left populists, and there was no ideological dimension where populism was predominantly associated with the right over the left.

Another way of looking into these results is observing that populism in Europe is associated with extremism in general. In almost all indicators, the lowest levels of populist discourse were to be found among parties around the center. While it is possible to claim that populism can be combined with both left and right ideologies, it seems more accurate to say that populism can be combined with extremist ideologies, and does not go well with moderation. This is consistent with the idea of populism as a redemptive discourse opposed to pragmatism (Canovan, 1999). Once again, while this was expected among the right, the way that populism and the radical left walk hand-in-hand was difficult to foresee based on contemporary studies on European populism. What is more, if we bring Latin America back (which was excluded from the second part because there is little question that the highest populist parties are almost all on the left), the relation between left ideology and populist discourse seems even stronger, and perhaps in search of a reevaluation of our current theories.

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