

Measuring Populist Attitudes in Latin America's Parliamentary Elites

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Abstract: Populism has a long history in Latin America since many countries in this region experienced traditional forms of populism in the first half of the 20th century as well as modern forms of populism that reappeared after the third wave of democratic transition. Existing research has, focussed on the clarification of the concept of populism as well as on explaining the success of populist contenders. Recently, empirical research has also advanced in the task of measuring the complex phenomenon of populism, e.g. through textual analysis of political speeches or public opinion surveys to measure populist attitudes of voters. However, with the exception of key political figures like presidents, prime ministers and political parties in general, the inclination of parliamentary elites towards populist attitudes has yet to be explored. This paper sets out to close this gap and presents a first glance on data measuring populist attitudes of parliamentary elites in Panama. Therefore, we follow established conceptualizations of political attitudes into three categories: populist attitudes, pluralist attitudes and elitist attitudes.

1. Introduction

Populism in Latin America has a long history, many countries in this region experienced traditional forms of populism in the first half of the 20th century. After the Third Wave of democratic transition put an end to military rule, populism as well returned, although in different shapes (e.g. Conniff 1999, Di Tella 1965, Germani 1978, Roberts 1995, Torre 1998, Weyland 2001). Challenges of democratic transition and instable economic circumstances in the 1980s and 1990s offered favourable conditions for populist parties to emerge. Since then populism remains a common feature in the region, although the programs and styles of populists have changed, it still stays a promising strategy for political parties to mobilize support from mass constituencies. Some populists managed to remain in power over several electoral cycles and sustain the support of their voters over time (e.g. Carlos Menem (Argentina), Evo Morales (Bolivia)). Others were voted out of office after one term or replaced through other means (e.g. Alan García (Peru), Abdala Bucaram (Ecuador)).

The phenomenon of populism poses many challenges to comparatists around the world. Due to different perspectives on the topic researchers especially struggled with conceptual clarity. In recent years, however, researchers have come to more agreement on how to define populism (e.g. Akkerman, Mudde and Zaslove 2014, Hawkins and Rovira Kaltwasser 2013, Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2012, Panizza 2005). The emergence and success of populist parties is paralleled with some sort of economic or political crisis which come along with the dealignment of partisan attachments. This allows populist contenders to attract discontent voters with an anti-establishment appeal (Barr 2009). It is this kind of rhetoric that unites populist parties. In line with an ideational approach we define populism as a “thin-centred ideology” (Freeden 1998:750) based on the division of the society in two homogeneous and antagonistic groups: the people versus the elite (Hawkins and Rovira Kaltwasser 2013). The exact content of this ideology depends on secondary elements that may be combined with such an appeal. From this perspective populism may be related to many contents, structures, and strategies.

One major advantage of the ideational approach is that it lends itself well to measure the concept of populism in a comparative way. Based on this approach, empirical research has recently advanced in the task of measuring the complex phenomenon of populism, e.g. through textual analysis of political speeches or public opinion surveys to measure populist attitudes of voters (Akkerman, Mudde and Zaslove 2014, Hawkins, Riding and Mudde 2012, Hawkins 2009). However, with the exception of key political figures like presidents, prime ministers and political parties in general (Wiesehomeier 2015), the inclination of parliamentary elites towards populist attitudes has yet to be explored. This paper sets out to close this gap and presents a first sketch on data measuring populist attitudes of parliamentary elites in Latin America. First preliminary descriptive evidence is based on data provided by the Parliamentary Elites Survey in Latin America (PELA) conducted by the University of Salamanca (USAL) in Panama. To capture populist attitudes within the political elite, the PELA survey includes several items in its questionnaire that aim to capture populist attitudes, pluralist attitudes and elitist attitudes.

The paper sets out to answer the following questions: Is it possible to measure populism within the political elite with survey items taken from public opinion surveys that already captured populist attitudes successfully in the citizenry? In analysing this data, the paper also seeks to investigate populist attitude patterns and link them to other relevant aspects. For example, can we identify patterns within the political elite with respect to populist attitudes across political parties, across the ideological spectrum, or across other political values and attitudes?

The paper is structured as follows: In the following section we elaborate on the definition of populism and contrast the concept with the related concepts of elitism and pluralism. In the third section we discuss the measurement of our main concepts followed by a description of the parliamentary elites survey (PELA). We provide first descriptive empirical evidence on Panama in section four. Section five concludes.

2. What is Populism?

As mentioned before, for decades populism posed a conceptual challenge to comparative researchers. It has been defined along the lines of feature lists or core characteristics (e.g. organizational structure, social base) which led to many versions of populism with adjectives or prefixes (Schedler 1996:292) and finally to different case selections (see especially Weyland 2001). In recent years, however, researchers aiming at cross-regional comparisons have come to more agreement on how to define populism (Hawkins and Rovira Kaltwasser 2013, Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2012). Instead of focusing on narrow and region specific definitions of populism, they follow a broader conceptualization based on an ideational approach. In line with the common reference to an anti-elite, anti-party, or anti-establishment discourse, populism is defined as “an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ versus ‘the corrupt elite’, and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people” (Mudde 2004:543, italics in the original). This approach, nevertheless, is open to use narrower definitions of the concept to distinguish subtypes of the phenomenon. For example, the content of the rather vague ideology is not part of the concept but determined through other ideological, programmatic or personalistic elements (e.g. socialism, neo-liberalism, or charisma). Only the combination of the populist discourse with specific other contents determines the nature of the antagonism between ‘the people’ and ‘the elite’. Thus, the recurrence to an anti-elite rhetoric and the statement to be the true party or person to represent ‘the good people’ in terms of their general will unites all populist parties. Whereby, the other elements help to distinguish different forms of populism – such as left- or right-wing populism, neo-populism, or indigenous populism (Abts and Rummens 2007, Mudde 2004).

Moreover, this definition also enables us to determine opposite phenomena that are negatively associated with a populist discourse. Two concepts have been discussed in the literature in this respect: first, the relationship between populism and pluralism, and second, the relationship between populism and elitism (Hawkins, Riding and Mudde 2012, Mudde 2004, Plattner 1999). With respect to the former, populism is often aimed against one central element of liberal democracy, i.e. pluralism, since it sees the people as a homogenous group with an identifiable general will as opposed to a pluralistic view that sees political structures as important mechanisms to mediate between different groups within society (e.g. Hawkins 2009, Plattner 1999). With respect to the latter, populism overlaps with elitism concerning the clear division of society into the people and the elite, however, while populism sees the elite as the culprit to blame for the crisis of representation, elitism elevates the elite to embody the good as opposed to the corrupt people (e.g. Akkerman, Mudde and Zaslove 2014, Mudde 2004).

3. Research Design

Measuring Populism

As mentioned earlier, the ideational definition of populism lends itself very well to a systematic measurement of the concept. Based on this definition populism has been measured using several techniques of content analysis, e.g. holistic grading of speeches, sentence coding of party manifestos, or computerized content analysis of media texts (e.g. Hawkins 2009, Hawkins and Castanho Silva 2015, Rooduijn and Pauwels 2011). While these studies focussed mainly on the supply side of populism – political parties and party leaders – other studies use the ideational approach to measure populist attitudes within the citizenry as a means to explain the rise and mobilization potential of populist parties in different regions of the world (see Akkerman, Mudde and Zaslove 2014, Hawkins, Riding and Mudde 2012). We combine the insights from these latter studies that measure populist attitudes on the individual level with the focus of the former studies on the supply side of populism and measure populist attitudes within parliamentary elites. Only recently have researcher begun to transfer the items from public opinion surveys on populism to political elite surveys (Andreadis, Stavrakakis and Katsambekis 2015, Rovira Kaltwasser and Hawkins 2015). This approach has another advantage, namely that if we use comparable items to inquire after populist attitudes within the political elite we will be able to compare them to survey data measuring populist attitudes within the citizenry. This opens up the space for several highly relevant questions, for example, do parliamentary elites share the same attitude patterns as their constituencies? The comparison of elite and public opinion surveys would enable us to test if elites engage in relations of *polarizing trusteeship* or *moderating trusteeship* with their constituents (see Kitschelt et al. 1999:309-10), thereby either increasing or decreasing the importance of populism within political representation.

Survey items to measure populist attitudes within the public have been developed and tested recently by Hawkins, Riding and Mudde (2012) to analyse populism in the United States as well as Akkerman, Mudde and Zaslove (2014) to analyse populist attitude in voter in the Netherlands. Using factor analysis on several sets of survey items they identify a series of statements capturing populist attitudes, elitism and pluralist attitudes:

Populism Statements

- POP1 The politicians in Congress need to follow the will of the people
- POP2 The people, and not politicians, should make our most important policy decisions
- POP3 The political differences between the elite and the people are larger than the differences among the people.
- POP4 I would rather be represented by a citizen than by a specialized politician
- POP5 Elected officials talk too much and take too little action
- POP6 Politics is ultimately a struggle between good and evil
- POP7 What people call ‘compromise’ in politics is really just selling out on one’s principles
- POP8 Interest groups have too much influence over political decisions

Elitism Statements

- E1 Politicians should lead rather than follow the people
- E2 Our country would be governed better if important decisions were left up to successful business people
- E3 Our country would be governed better if important decisions were left up to non-elected, independent experts rather than politicians or the people

Pluralism Statements

PLU1 In a democracy it is important to make compromises among differing viewpoints.

PLU2 It is important to listen to the opinion of other groups

PLU3 Freedom depends on diversity

Sources: Hawkins, Riding and Mudde (2012:8-9) and Akkerman, Mudde and Zaslove (2014:1331)

To adapt these item lists to the purpose of elite surveys we consulted with several colleagues from the Team Populism project organized by Kirk A. Hawkins from the Brigham Young University (<https://populism.byu.edu>). A final list of six populism items, three elitism items, and two pluralist items were deployed in the present wave of the Parliamentary Elites in Latin America (PELA) survey managed by the University of Salamanca (USAL) – see item list below. Since the late 1990s the PELA team conducts representative surveys of parliamentary elites in 18 countries in the region at the beginning of each legislative period. The surveys are based on structured, face-to-face interviews including questions about the values of legislators, their behaviour, as well as their opinion on concrete issues of the region and the socio-political panorama of the respective countries. PELA includes questions on issues related to the quality of democracy, the ideological orientation of lawmakers and the position of their political parties and party leaders, their attitudes towards representation, democracy, and the economy. Moreover, the surveys include items on the organization of legislative parties and their social base.

The dataset has been used to study a wide range of topics like the ideological structuration of party systems and political competition along the left-right divide (Alcántara Sáez and Rivas 2007, Alcántara Sáez 2008, Kitschelt et al. 2010, Wiesehomeier 2010), the congruence between political elites and their constituents with respect to political issues or political values (Hawkins, Kitschelt and Llamazares 2010, Ruiz Rodríguez and García 2003, Saiegh 2009), the quality and structure of political representation (Carnes and Lupu 2015, Luna and Zechmeister 2010, Marenghi 2011), the nature of the executive-legislative relationship (García 2009), as well as legislative career paths and intra-party behaviour (Alcántara Sáez 2012, Carnes and Lupu 2015, Inácio and Magalhães Araújo 2011, Martínez Rosón 2012). Hence, the PELA surveys provide a valuable dataset with which we can inspect the relationship between populist attitudes and several other aspects of interest.

Pregunta 1: (Actitudes Populistas)

¿Qué tan de acuerdo o en desacuerdo se encuentra usted con las siguientes afirmaciones? Por favor utilice la siguiente escala: **LEER FRASES**

Frases	Muy en desacuerdo	En desacuerdo	Ni de acuerdo ni	De acuerdo	Muy de acuerdo	(No leer) No sabe	(No leer) No
Los políticos en el Congreso tienen que seguir la voluntad del pueblo	1	2	3	4	5	88	99
Las decisiones más importantes deberían ser tomadas por el pueblo y no por los políticos	1	2	3	4	5	88	99
Las diferencias políticas entre la elite y el pueblo son más grandes que las diferencias que existen en el pueblo	1	2	3	4	5	88	99
Es preferible ser representado por un ciudadano común que por un político experimentado	1	2	3	4	5	88	99
Los políticos hablan mucho y hacen muy poco	1	2	3	4	5	88	99
En política se llama consenso a lo que realmente significa renunciar a los propios principios	1	2	3	4	5	88	99

Pregunta 2: (Actitudes Elitistas/ Pluralistas)

¿Cuán de acuerdo o en desacuerdo se encuentra usted con las siguientes afirmaciones? Por favor utilice la siguiente escala: **LEER FRASES**

Frases	Muy en desacuerdo	En desacuerdo	Ni de acuerdo ni	De acuerdo	Muy de acuerdo	(No leer) No sabe	(No leer) No
A la gente común no se le puede confiar el tomar las decisiones correctas sobre los problemas del país	1	2	3	4	5	88	99
Nuestro país funcionaría mejor si las decisiones importantes fueran tomadas por expertos independientes	1	2	3	4	5	88	99
Los políticos deben guiar al pueblo antes que seguirlo	1	2	3	4	5	88	99
En una democracia es importante lograr consensos entre distintos puntos de vista	1	2	3	4	5	88	99
En una democracia es importante escuchar la opinión de todos los grupos	1	2	3	4	5	88	99

4. Preliminary Descriptive Evidence from Panama

Panama is the first country within the PELA survey that includes the new items on populist, elitist, and pluralist attitudes. Although the country is not one of the usual suspects when it comes to the study of populism in Latin America, charismatic and personalist leaders dominated the history of the country over a long time (e.g. Singer 2005). Especially two family clans were highly influential in politics in Panama: the clan of Arnulfo Arias and the clan of Omar Torrijos (Pérez 2011). The legacy of these personalistic leaders is still present in the party system of Panama since each clan founded its own political party: the *Partido Panameñista* (PA) was founded by Arnulfo Arias in the 1930s and the *Partido Revolucionario Democrático* (PRD) was founded by Omar Torrijos in 1978 (see Scranton 1995). Both parties were continuously represented in the Congress since the return to democracy in 1989 and were the main competitors for the Presidency until 2009. Since 1989 only one presidential campaign led to allegations of populist rhetoric by one candidate, i.e. Mireya Moscoso the widow of Arnulfo Arias (Navarro 1999, Ruth 2015). The third major party in Panama is the *Cambio Democrático* party (CD) which was founded in 1998 in opposition to the two traditional parties just mentioned. The CD is located in the centre of the ideological spectrum and declares itself to be a pluralist democratic party that aims at national unity (Pérez 2011).

Table 1: Results of the legislative election in Panama, 4 May 2014

Party	Votes	Votes (%)	Seats	Seats (%)	Change in seats
<i>Unidos por un cambio</i>					
Cambio Democrático	573,603	33.7	30	42.3	+16
MOLIRENA	121,815	7.2	2	2.8	+/-0
<i>El pueblo primero</i>					
Partido Panameñista	343,880	20.2	12	16.9	-10
Partido Popular	56,629	3.3	1	1.4	+/-0
Partido Revolucionario Democrático	535,747	31.5	25	35.2	-1
Frente Amplio por la Democracia	17,224	1.0	0	0.0	+/-0
Independents	52,184	3.1	1	1.4	-1
Total (turnout)	1,701,082	69.2%			

Source: Tribunal Electoral de Panama (<http://www.tribunal-electoral.gob.pa/html/index.php?id=1075/>).

The last general elections that filled the 71 seats in the national legislature as well as the presidency were held on May 4 2014. Electoral results for the legislature are shown in Table 1. Due to presidential term limits the then incumbent President Ricardo Martinelli from the *Cambio Democrático* party (CD) was not allowed to run again. Instead the former Vice-President Juan Carlos Varela from the PA won the race with 39.1% of the votes. The electoral alliance between the PA and the *Partido Popular* (PP), however, only managed to gain 18.3% of the seats in the present legislative period.

The PELA survey has been conducted in Panama in spring 2015 and covers the legislators who serve in the legislative period from 2014-2019. Legislators have been randomly sampled

and stratified by political party (see Table 2). For this wave of the Panama survey the sample includes 47 legislators which equal 66% of the legislature. The survey items on populist, pluralist and elitist attitudes, however, have only been included in a subsample of 32 legislators which decreases the coverage of the sample to 45% of the legislature. The survey is based on face-to-face interviews.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents per Party, PELA Survey 2015

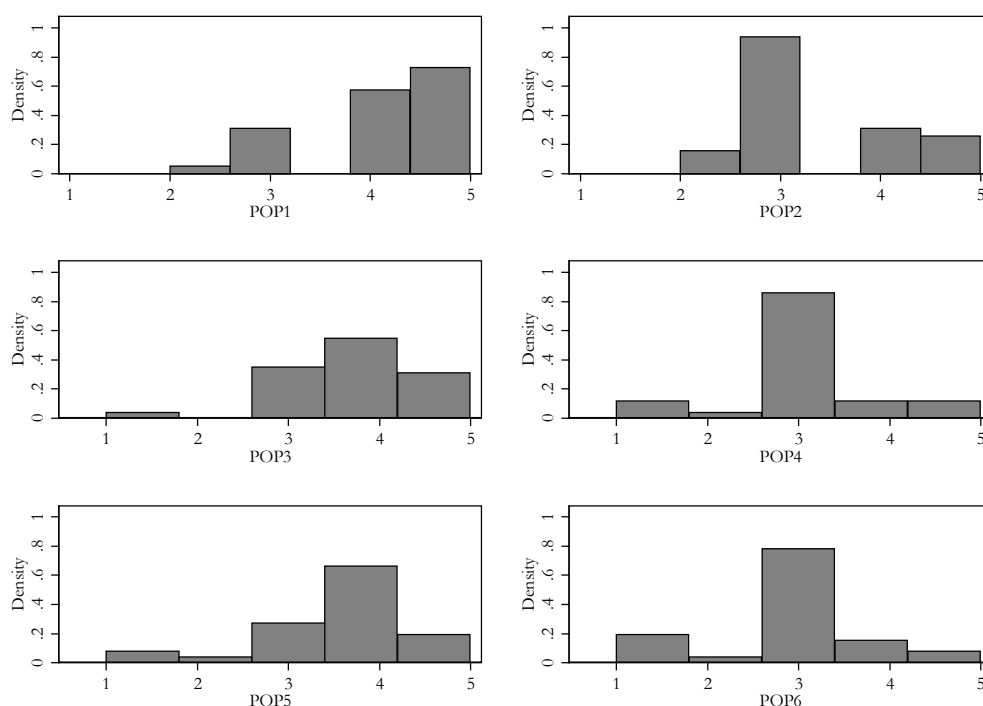
Party	Respondents	Respondents (%)	Seats (%)
Cambio Democrático	15	46.9	42.3
Partido Panameñista	4	12.5	16.9
Partido Revolucionario Democrático	13	40.6	35.2
Total	32		

Source: PELA 2015, including lawmakers who serve in the legislative period from 2014-2019.

Figure 1 reports the histograms for all six populism items included in the survey. The distribution plots indicate that items POP1, POP3 as well as POP5 (panels on the left hand side) show considerable variation with respect to the responses of lawmakers. POP2, POP4, and POP6 (panels on the right hand side), however, cluster heavily around the midpoint and show less variation in the answers of the lawmakers. Of the 32 legislators that answered the populist attitude items, 18 (or 56%) gave the answer ‘*neither/nor*’ (3) with respect to POP2 (*‘The people, not the politicians, should make the most important policy decisions’*). For POP4 (*‘It is preferable to be represented by a citizen rather than by an experienced politician’*) an even higher number indicated indifference towards the item, i.e. 22 (or 69%). Finally, with respect to POP6 (*‘What people call compromise in politics is really just selling out on one’s principles’*) 20 respondents (or 63%) chose the middle category. The extensive use of the middle category – which sometimes is also described as an escape category – may indicate a social desirability bias (e.g. Krumqal 2013). Legislators are inclined to avoid a clear answer on the topic instead of revealing their true attitudes towards it if they are given a ‘*neither/nor*’ answer option (see Podsakoff, MacKenzie and Podsakoff 2012).

With respect to general patterns, Figure1 indicates that populist attitudes range rather high on those items that are not prone to a midpoint bias. The overall mean of all survey respondents is highest for item POP1 with 4.19 (standard deviation of 0.86), and still in the upper range of the scale for item POP3 (mean = 3.88, sd = 0.91) and for item POP5 (mean = 3.69, sd = 0.99).

Figure 1: Histograms of Populist Attitude Items

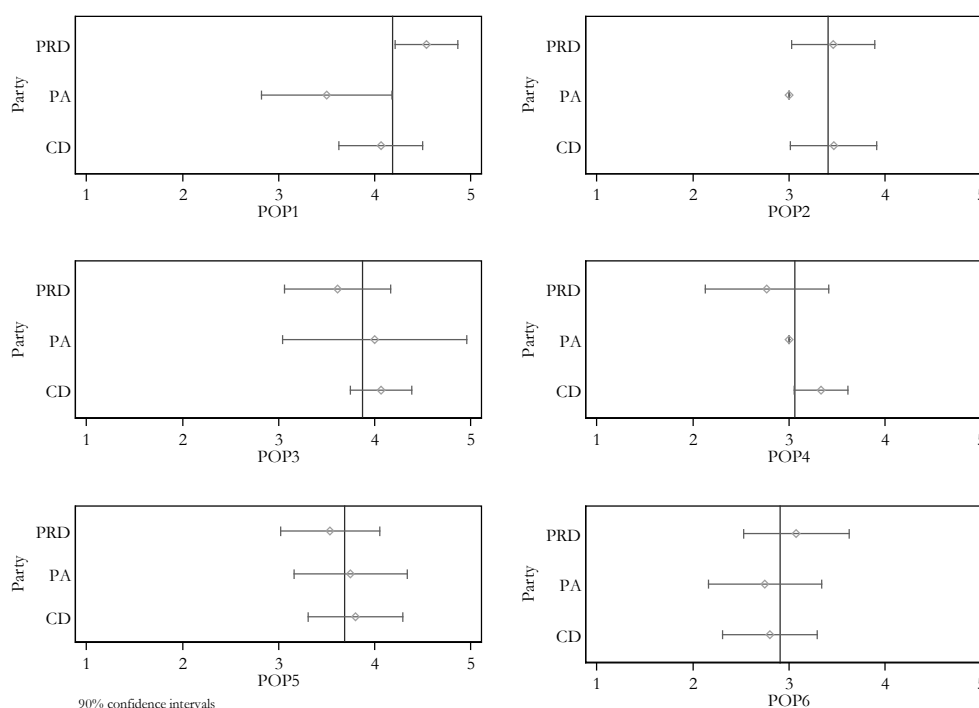


Note: POP1 = The politicians in Congress need to follow the will of the people; POP2 = The people, not the politicians, should make the most important policy decisions; POP3 = The political differences between the people and the elite are larger than the differences among the people; POP4 = It is preferable to be represented by a citizen rather than by an experienced politician; POP5 = Politicians talk too much and take too little action; POP6 = What people call compromise in politics is really just selling out on one's principles.

As mentioned in the introduction, measuring populist attitudes within the political elites gives us the opportunity to inspect their relationship with other political factors like political party affiliation, representational styles, and democratic values. First, we compare the mean scores on the populist attitude scales by political party affiliation of each legislator. Figure 2 also depicts 90% confidence intervals as well as the overall mean as a reference line on the x-axis. Results have to be interpreted with caution since the frequencies are very low, especially for the PA which is only represented through four legislators in the sample (see Table 2).

Although these graphs are based on a small sample we are still able to identify party differences for three of the six items: POP1, POP3, and POP4. The PRD has the strongest orientation towards 'following the will of the people' (POP1). Its legislators indicate populist attitudes on this item which range consistently above the mean of the legislature (see upper left panel). With respect to the items POP3 and POP4 the PRD legislators are more dispersed in their answers. Concerning the 'differences between the elite and the people' (item POP3, mid-left panel) PRD legislators are rather below the mean of the legislature. The same pattern is indicated in the right-mid panel of Figure 2, i.e. PRD legislators are rather below the mean of the legislature when it comes to 'being represented by a citizen rather than an experienced politician' (POP4).

Figure 2: Means and Standard Deviations of Populist Attitude Items by Political Party

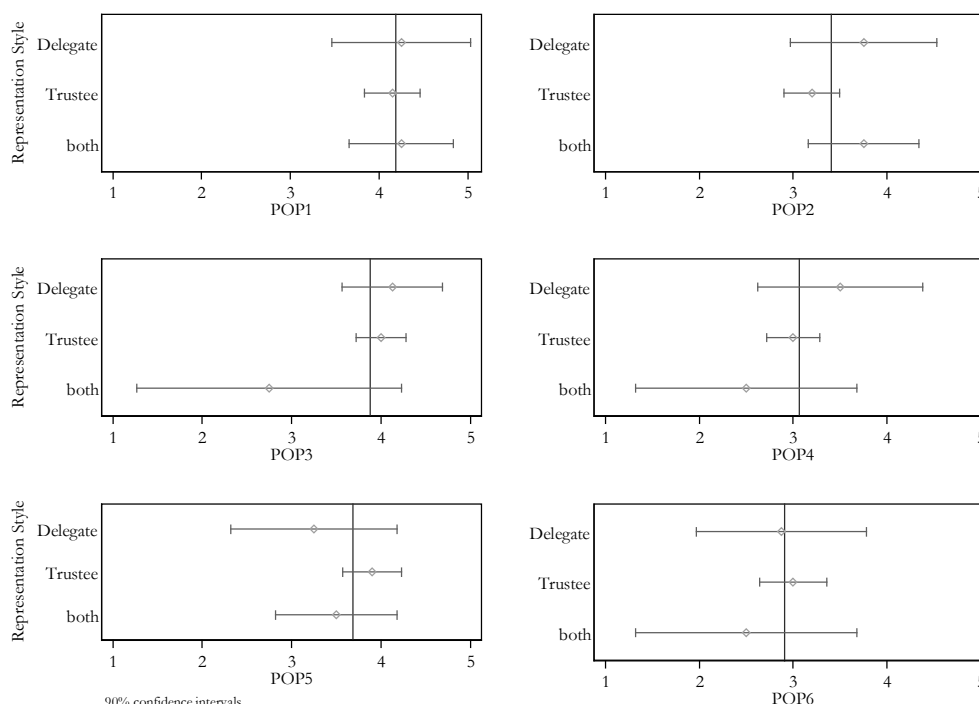


The PA has the weakest orientation towards ‘following the will of the people’ (POP1) and the legislators of this party are very dispersed with respect to this item, given the small number that is included into the survey (4). The same legislators are also dispersed on the issue concerning ‘the differences between the elite and the people’ (POP3), however, all of them responded to this item within the answer categories 3 or higher. Concerning the items POP2 and POP4, all PA legislators answered with the ‘neither/nor’ option.

The CD legislators are mostly scattered around the mean of the distribution. However, as Figure 2 indicates the legislators of the CD are more cohesive in their answers to nearly all populist attitude items compared to both the PRD as well as the PA (except for POP2 and POP4). CD legislators are most consistently above the legislative mean with respect to their attitudes towards ‘the differences between the elite and the people’ (POP3) and ‘being represented by a citizen rather than an experienced politician’ (POP4).

We now turn to the descriptive analysis of the relationship between populist attitudes and different modes of representation. This is especially important since populism has been theorized to have a tense relationship with representative democracy (see Hawkins 2012, Torre 1998). However, it is unclear how populist attitudes relate to different modes of representation within the legislature. While a populist discourse may be a perfect strategy to gain public office, it may be less suited for the daily business of lawmaking within the legislature (see Torre 2000). Eulau et al. (1959) theorize three types of legislators that can be distinguished according to their representative relationship with their voters: The ‘delegate’ who strictly follows the preferences of his voters, the Burkean ‘trustee’ who only follows his/her own judgement, and the ‘politico’ for whom it depends on the circumstances if he/she holds a trustee or a delegate orientation towards representation.

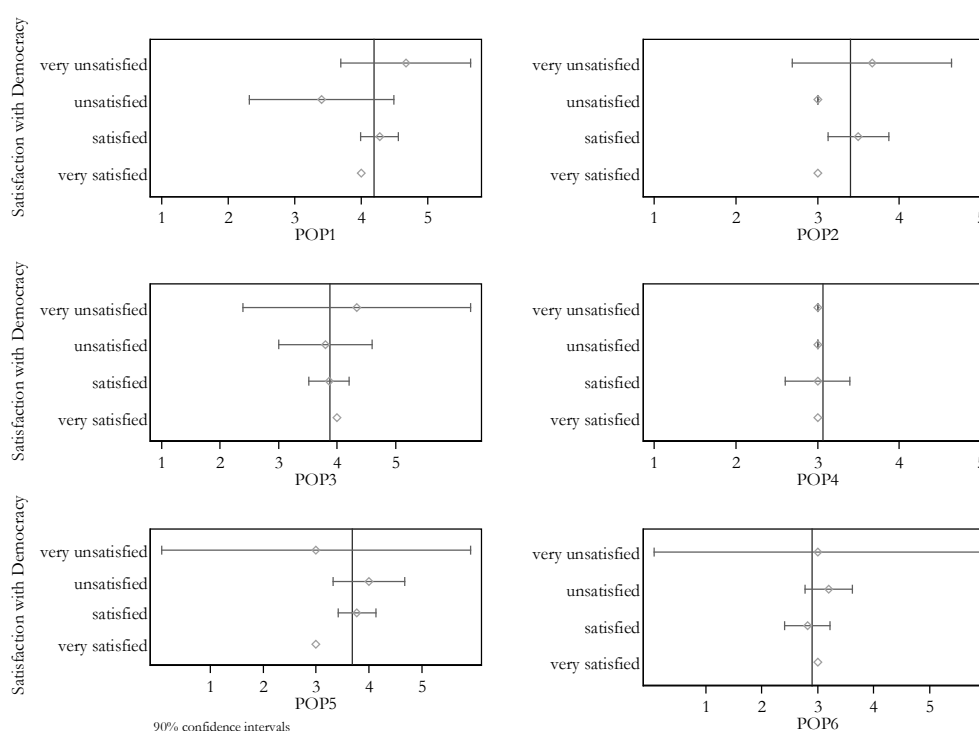
Figure 3: Means and SD of Populist Attitude Items by Representational Style



We can find different accounts in the literature with respect to the relationship between populist attitudes and modes of representation (e.g. Caramani 2015, Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2012). On the one hand, most populist leaders and parties criticize the traditional elites in the legislature for being detached from and irresponsible to the will of the people and they claim that they will restore democratic responsiveness (Caramani 2015). From this perspective, populist attitudes should be associated with the ‘delegate’ style of representation. On the other hand, especially in Latin America populist presidents present themselves as interpreters of the will of the people and expect the citizens to be a ‘passive but cheering audience’ (O'Donnell 1994:60) after an election (or a referendum) took place (see also Barczak 2001). From this perspective, populist attitudes should be associated rather with the ‘trustee’ style of representation. In Figure 3 we compare the mean scores on the populist attitude scales by the preferred mode of representation of each legislator. As in Figure 1 we also depict 90% confidence intervals as well as the overall mean as a reference line on the x-axis.

We can identify several patterns with respect to the style of representation and populist attitudes of Panamanian legislators. Differences in populist attitudes by representation style can be found for two of the six items: POP2, POP3 and POP5. Those legislators who rather follow a trustee mode of representation consistently cluster below the legislative mean with respect to item POP2 (‘the people should make the most important policy decisions’). In line with a trustee style of representation we find that legislators within this group mostly find more ‘differences between the elite and the people’ (POP3) than the mean of the legislature. Finally, trustee legislators cluster above the legislative mean with respect to item POP5 (‘Politicians talk too much and take too little action’). Those legislators that see themselves as delegates are on average more dispersed with respect to their populist attitudes compared to trustee legislators. However, with the exception of POP5 delegate legislators are either indifferent or cluster above the legislative mean with respect to their populist attitudes.

Figure 4: Means and SD of Populist Attitude Items by Satisfaction with Democracy

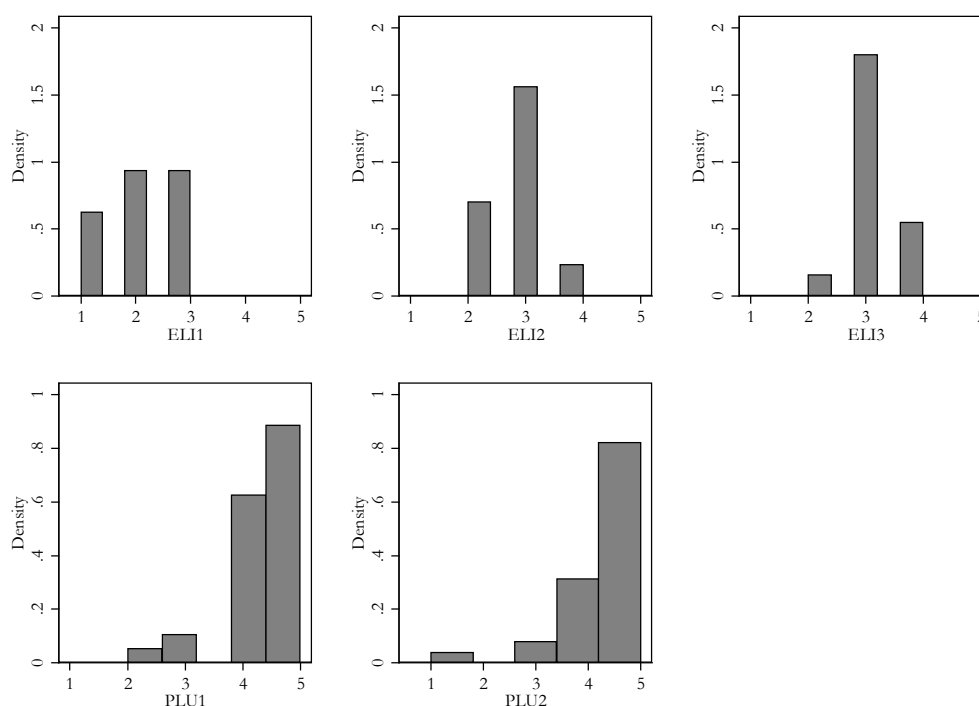


This leads us to our final comparison: the relationship between populist attitudes and the satisfaction of legislators with democracy. The connection between these two attitudes is straight forward. Since populist contenders attract discontent voters with an anti-establishment appeal and often capitalize on a crisis of representation, they should have a lower satisfaction with the way democracy works (e.g. Barr 2009, Mayorga 2002). Figure 4 shows the mean scores on the populist attitude scales by the degree of satisfaction with democracy of each legislator (with 90% confidence intervals and the overall mean as a reference line on the x-axis).

Unfortunately, we cannot identify a clear pattern between populist attitudes and the satisfaction with democracy. The only pattern that arises from these graphs is that (very) unsatisfied legislators are far more dispersed with respect to their populist attitudes than satisfied legislators. We cannot draw any conclusions with respect to very satisfied legislators, since this category only includes one legislator from our sample.

In the remainder of this section we will discuss the two concepts that are opposed to populism: elitism and pluralism. Figure 5 reports the histograms for three elitist attitude items and two pluralist attitude items included in the survey. The distribution plots indicate that the items ELI1 as well as PLU1 and PLU2 show considerable variation with respect to the responses of lawmakers. In line with what we saw for three of the populist attitude items, ELI2 and ELI3 cluster heavily around the midpoint and show less variation in the answers of the lawmakers. Of the 32 legislators that answered the elitist attitude items, 20 (or 63%) gave the answer ‘neither/nor’ (3) with respect to ELI2 (‘Our country would run better if decisions were left up to non-elected, independent experts’). For ELI3 (‘Politicians should lead the people, not follow them’) an even higher number indicated indifference towards the item, i.e. 23 (or 73%). This is another indication that legislators are inclined to avoid a clear answer on these topics and chose the ‘neither/nor’ option to avoid a clear answer (see Podsakoff, MacKenzie and Podsakoff 2012).

Figure 5: Histograms of Elitist and Pluralist Attitude Items



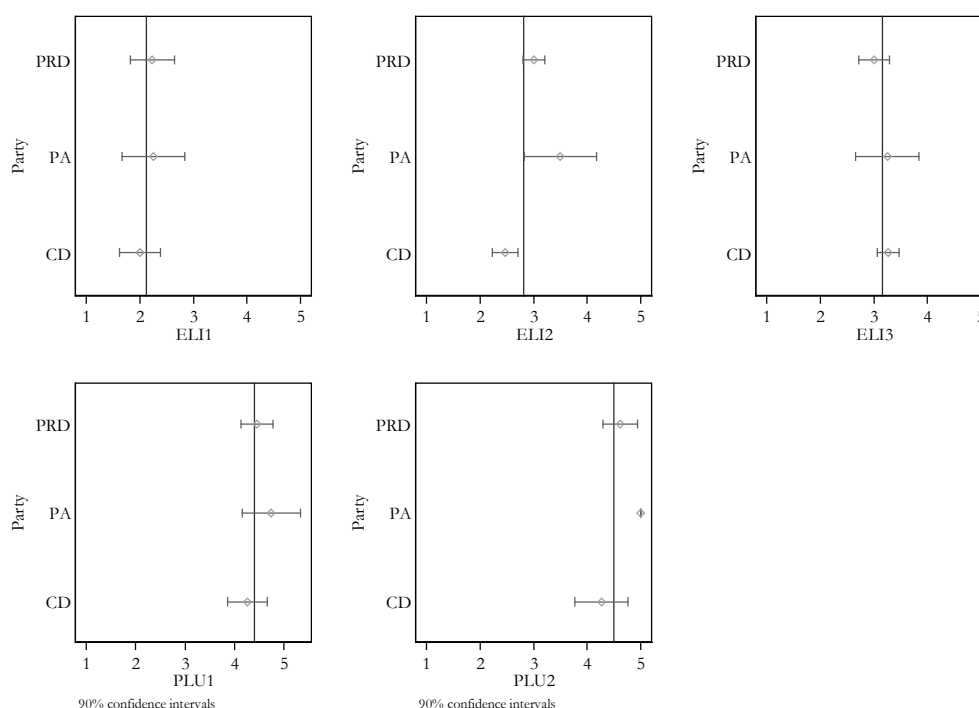
Note: ELI1 = Ordinary people can't be trusted to make the right decisions about our nation's problems; ELI2 = Our country would run better if decisions were left up to non-elected, independent experts; ELI3 = Politicians should lead the people, not follow them; PLU1 = In a democracy it is important to achieve compromise among differing viewpoints; PLU2 = In a democracy it is important to listen to the opinions of all groups.

With respect to general patterns, Figure 5 indicates that elitist attitudes range rather low within the Panamanian legislatures, however, this conclusion is based on only on elitist attitude item (ELI1: 'Ordinary people can't be trusted to make the right decisions about our nation's problems') due to the strong tendency of legislators towards the middle category in ELI2 and ELI3. Another interesting general pattern shown in Figure 5 is that legislators score high on both pluralist attitude items. The overall mean of all survey respondents is highest for item PLU2 with 4.5 (sd = 0.88), and only slightly lower for item PLU1 (mean = 4.4, sd = 0.76).

In the same way as for the populist attitudes above, we will now briefly discuss the general patterns that arise between elitist and pluralist attitudes compared to party affiliation and representational style. We leave out the comparison with legislator's satisfaction with democracy since we do not expect a connection between elitist and pluralist attitudes and this item.

Figure 6 displays mean attitude patterns with 90% confidence intervals along a legislator's party affiliation. We find clear party differences only for the items ELI2 and a bit less clearer for PLU1 and PLU2. With respect to the former, legislators from CD have the least elitist attitude when it comes to technocratic decision making ('decisions made by non-elected, independent experts would be better'). They position themselves consistently below the legislative mean and both the PRD and the PA legislators (see upper-mid panel). While PRD legislators cluster around the midpoint, PA legislators are the most elitist on item E2 compared to the other two parties, they are, however, also the least cohesive on this item.

Figure 6: Means and SD of Populist Attitude Items by Political Party

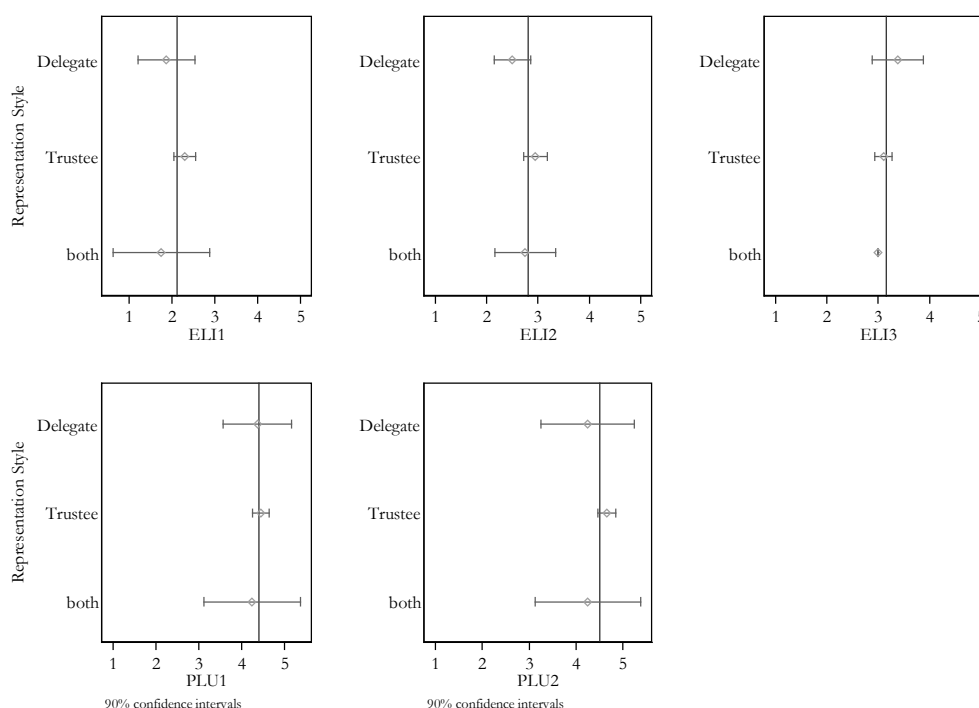


With respect to pluralist attitudes all parties score relatively high, however, PA legislators seem to display the highest scores on both PLU1 as well as PLU2 compared to both the legislative mean as well as the two other parties in the sample. For PLU2 all four PA legislators indicate the highest approval category (5) on the respective scale. Nevertheless, these mean scores need to be interpreted with care especially due to this low number of PA legislators included in the sample.

When it comes to representational styles, trustee legislators are expected to score higher on elitist attitudes than delegate or politico legislators (e.g. Caramani 2015). Moreover, we would expect those legislators who decide on being trustees or delegates based on the circumstances to score higher on pluralist values since pluralism relates to compromising between different preferences – a reasoning very similar to the representational type of the politico (Eulau et al. 1959). Figure 7 shows the mean scores of elitist and pluralist attitudes according to the three representational types delegate, trustee, and politico (both).

In line with our expectation, trustee legislators score consistently higher on elitist attitudes than delegate legislators, with the exception of ELI3 – which is prone to a strong midpoint bias. Delegate legislators, on the other hand, are more diverse in both their elitist and pluralist attitudes than trustee legislators. No clear tendency can be inferred with respect to pluralist attitudes and representation types.

Figure 7: Means and SD of Populist Attitude Items by Representational Style



Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to investigate if the measurement of populist attitudes in citizens may travel to political elites as well. In line with earlier studies on populist, elitist and pluralist attitudes in voters (Akkerman, Mudde and Zaslove 2014, Hawkins, Riding and Mudde 2012) we adapted a set of survey statements to deploy them in parliamentary elite surveys in Latin America. These were conducted by the University of Salamanca for the first time in the present wave of their parliamentary elite survey (PELA) in Panama. This paper presented a first glimpse at this emerging dataset on populist attitudes in Latin America's parliamentary elites.

Our results show that populist as well as pluralist attitudes are fairly widespread among lawmakers in Panama while elitist attitudes score rather low. In our descriptive analysis we use group comparisons of the degree of these three attitudes with legislator's party affiliation, their representational styles as well as their satisfaction with the way democracy works. We find the clearest differences with respect to populist attitudes and party affiliation and with respect to elitist attitudes and representational styles.

The PELA team plans to include these attitude items in their next surveys in Uruguay and El Salvador. Future research may hence also concentrate on cross-country comparisons between legislators from different contexts. Much more remains to be done.

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