

## POPULIST ATTITUDES, POLICY PREFERENCES, AND PARTY SYSTEMS IN SPAIN, FRANCE, AND ITALY

GUILLERMO BOSCÁN  
*Universidad de Salamanca*  
guillermoboscan@gmail.com  
ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4199-2160>

IVÁN LLAMAZARES  
*Universidad de Salamanca*  
illamaz@usal.es  
ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2947-6830>

NINA WIESEHOMEIER  
*IE School of International Relations (Madrid)*  
ninawiesehomeier@faculty.ie.edu  
ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0134-5647>

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### ABSTRACT

European party systems have witnessed the emergence of populist discursive elements among political parties with quite diverse ideological platforms. In this article we analyze the role and correlates of populist political attitudes in Spain, France, and Italy, three countries that present important differences in the nature of the parties articulating populist discourses. In the first place, we conduct factor analyses in order to explore the public opinion map of policy preferences and political attitudes in these three countries. These analyses reveal the presence of a clearly distinguishable dimension of populist attitudes in all these countries. In the second place, we examine the party system articulation of citizen preferences in the bi-dimensional spaces constituted by populist attitudes, left-right economic preferences, and preferences regarding immigration. Our analysis reveals strong associations between populist attitudes and left-right preferences at the party level, and the orthogonal relationship of populist attitudes and immigration preferences. Finally, our analysis of the socio-structural determinants of populist attitudes reveals the positive association of populist attitudes with lower income levels, less qualified occupations, and lower educational levels.

### KEYWORDS

Europe; France; Italy; Political parties; Populist attitudes; Public Opinion; Spain.

## ACTITUDES POPULISTAS, PREFERENCIAS POLÍTICAS Y SISTEMAS DE PARTIDOS EN ESPAÑA, FRANCIA E ITALIA

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### RESUMEN

Los sistemas de partidos europeos han sido testigos de la articulación de elementos discursivos populistas por partidos con perfiles ideológicos muy diferentes. En este trabajo analizamos el papel y los correlatos de las actitudes populistas en España, Francia e Italia, tres países que presentan importantes diferencias en términos de la naturaleza de los partidos que articulan discursos populistas. En primer lugar, llevamos a cabo análisis factoriales a fin de explorar el mapa de preferencias de políticas y actitudes políticas en estos tres países. Estos análisis revelan la presencia de una dimensión de actitudes populistas claramente distinguible en los tres países. En segundo lugar examinamos la articulación partidista de las preferencias ciudadanas en los espacios bidimensionales constituidos por las actitudes populistas, las preferencias económicas de izquierda-derecha y las preferencias relativas a la inmigración. Nuestro análisis muestra la presencia de una fuerte asociación, al nivel partidista, entre actitudes populistas y preferencias económicas, y el carácter ortogonal de la relación entre actitudes populistas y preferencias relativas a la inmigración. Finalmente, nuestro análisis de los condicionantes socio-estructurales de las actitudes populistas revela que estas actitudes tienden a estar positivamente asociadas con niveles de ingreso inferiores, con ocupaciones menos cualificadas y con niveles educativos más bajos.

### PALABRAS CLAVE

Actitudes populistas; España; Europa; Francia; Italia; Opinión pública; Partidos políticos.

## INTRODUCTION

European party systems have witnessed the increasing prevalence of populist discursive elements among political parties with quite diverse ideological platforms (Mudde 2004; Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2013; Andreadis and Stavrakakis 2017; Anselmi 2017). Scholars discuss a myriad of factors that have favored this political transformation, pinpointing to structural processes connected to globalization (Kriesi et al. 2008; Inglehart and Norris 2016), the crisis of European party systems (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2013; Roberts 2015; Anselmi 2017; Bornschier 2018) and conjunctural events, such as the Great Recession (Hobolt and Tilley 2016; Andreadis and Stavrakakis 2017) and the migration waves arriving from Africa and the Middle East triggering heightened perceptions of threat (Brubaker 2017; Ivaldi et al. 2017).

These studies echo previous comparative analyses on West European party systems that revealed a cleavage structure around new globalization-demarcation divides in two main dimensions, one of economic and another of political-cultural content (Kriesi et al. 2008). More recently, Häusermann and Kriesi (2015) have also revealed the crucial role that divisions between voters with particularistic and universalist orientations play in West European party systems.

The ideational theory of populism (Hawkins and Rovira Kaltwasser 2018; Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2018) indeed agrees that social contexts are necessary to explain support for populist actors. Yet, to fully understand the interplay between populist messages that draw on such contexts and the motivation for individuals to support populist parties, the ideational theory also distinguishes between populist positions on the supply-side (political parties) and on the demand-side (individual level). Once activated by the appropriate framing, individual-level latent populist attitudes can play an important role for vote choice. Recent empirical studies have explored the explanatory value of such latent dispositions and found evidence for the direct and indirect impact of populist attitudes on party support (Akkerman et al. 2014; Van Hauwaert and Van Kessel 2017; Lavezzolo and Ramiro 2017; Andreadis et al. 2018).

What is less known so far, however, is how these populist attitudes match up with both the social-structural characteristics of voters and their policy stances. Kriesi et al. (2008), for instance, have identified the location of radical right voters and parties in spatial competition, yet they have not specifically addressed the populist content of the attitudes of such voters. In addition, these authors focused only on party systems in which populist forces were located on the right side of the political spectrum, a bias that has led researchers to confuse the explanation of voting for radical right populist parties with the explanation

of populist attitudes (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2018). In this article, by contrast, we analyze populist attitudes in party systems in which the parties embracing populist discourses (as identified by Hawkins and Castanho Silva 2018) adopt very different ideological platforms. Other scholars (Rico and Anduiza 2017 and Rico et al 2017) have thoroughly explored the role that different attitudinal variables play in the explanation of populism. Their work has shown the importance of economic perceptions and feelings of anger in the formation of populist attitudes in Europe, and it has also led to emphasize the importance of subjective perceptions of economic hardship and relative deprivation over objective characteristics distinguishing between “losers” and “winners” of the globalization processes (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2018: 6 and 8).

Our analyses continue and complement these different studies by examining the role of policy preferences and populist attitudes in the structuring of public attitudes and in the articulation of party system maps in these three countries. While these three countries have experienced important party system transformations in the face of economic crises and in the context of encompassing globalization processes, populist discursive elements (Hawkins and Castanho Silva 2018; Ivaldi et al. 2017) have been articulated by parties adopting very different ideological and programmatic platforms (leftist in the case of the France Insoumise, Podemos, and Unidad Popular-Izquierda Unida, rightist in the case of the Front National and the Lega Nord, and centrist and/or ambiguous in the case of the Movimento 5 Stelle) and appealing to voters with different types of ideological, attitudinal, and socioeconomic characteristics. Furthermore, scholars have identified these countries as belonging to two different political-economic constellations connected to the economic role of the state (“capture” in the case of Italy and Spain, and “status” in the case of France; Beramendi et al. 2015). These political-economic characteristics could also have effects on individual policy preferences and the socio-economic coalitions articulated by political parties (Beramendi et al. 2015). Given the important differences that exist between these West European societies and party systems, it becomes a central task for comparative analyses to determine whether populist attitudes are a crucial element of the political-ideological maps of these societies and whether the party system articulation of populist attitudes and policy preferences is entirely contingent upon the idiosyncratic characteristics of each party and party system or whether, on the contrary, it obeys some consistent cross-national pattern.

Furthermore, if populist attitudes are a key dimension of European public opinions in general and of the attitudinal maps of these societies in particular, then it becomes necessary to identify their determinants by extending the analytical frameworks that

have been classically used in the analysis of preference formation in European politics. Scholars have rightly emphasized the thin-ideological character of populist ideas (Hawkins and Rovira Kaltwasser 2018; Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2018) and the presence of important qualitative differences in their articulation (Ivaldi et al. 2017). But this does not exclude the possibility that socio-structural characteristics do affect public populist attitudes. This also means that, even if it is the case that subjective perceptions and feelings provide us with the best empirical predictors of populist attitudes, we are not exempt from the task of analyzing and underscoring, if it is empirically justified to do so, the role played by different types of socio-structural determinants (such as education, income, and occupation), in ways that are similar to those used by Kitschelt and Rehm (2014) or Häusermann and Kriesi (2015) regarding the formation of public policy preferences in Europe. Certainly, very different kinds of substantive grievances could be connected to populist attitudes in contemporary democracies. However, given the fact that current economic transformations (including globalization and economic shocks) have hit much more severely individuals with less economic resources, lower levels of education, typically employed in less qualified occupations, we are led to hypothesize that it is the less educated, worse qualified and poorer individuals who will be more prone to holding populist attitudes. Of course, this does not exclude the possibility that more complex, interactive effects may be at work in the formation of populist attitudes. Furthermore, this expectation is also perfectly compatible with the fact that subjective perceptions will be, in the end, much more directly related to populist attitudes than socio-structural predictors. Finally, the effects of socio-structural characteristics do not preclude the possibility that such attitudes can be channeled by parties that articulate very different ideological platforms, in particular, as far as issues related to immigration and national sovereignty are concerned.

By exploring the role of populist attitudes in these countries' public opinions, their party system articulation, and their association with different types of socio-structural, non-attitudinal variables, our work aims at filling a gap between two different and parallel types of analysis of European party systems; one focuses on the structuring of policy preferences and the other on the attitudinal determinants of populist attitudes.

Our work is organized as follows. In the first section we conduct factor analyses in order to identify the public opinion maps of policy preferences and political attitudes (including populism) in Spain, France, and Italy. In the second section we examine the positions of different partisan groups in the main attitudinal dimensions identified by our analyses. This results in a comparative map of populist attitudes and policy preferences in public opinions, as well as in

empirical evidence as to the political articulation of these different types of attitudes in these three countries. In the final section we analyze and compare the strictly socio-structural determinants of populist attitudes in Spain, France, and Italy.

## 1. POPULISM AND THE ATTITUDINAL MAP OF PUBLIC OPINIONS

We understand populism in line with the so-called ideational theory (Hawkins and Rovira Kaltwasser 2018; Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2018). Accordingly, populism is a particular understanding of politics as a moral struggle based on a Manichean outlook that conceives of 'the people' as a virtuous homogenous group which is confronting an evil, corrupt and self-serving elite. Thus, full manifestations of populist ideas and narratives necessarily combine these three essential elements of people-centered, anti-elitist, and Manichean discourses that will attach themselves to more complex ideologies (Hawkins and Rovira Kaltwasser 2018). Most importantly, the ideational theory puts at the forefront the individual level and thus allows not only to explore the interplay between the supply and demand sides, but also to focus in particular on voters' characteristics in conjunction with populist attitudes.

Based on previous theoretical and comparative contributions, and in light of the recent trajectories of electoral behavior and party system change in the three countries covered in this study, we can lay out the main expectations that will guide and structure our exploration. In the first place, given the recent political trajectories in Spain, France, and Italy (public mistrust precipitated by economic and responsiveness crises, erosion of traditional parties and emergence of new political actors channeling discontent with established parties) we assume that a populist dimension that is clearly different from the policy preferences divisions, will be present in the public opinions of these three countries. The analysis of this dimension is thus necessary for the understanding of the attitudinal maps of these countries. Following previous contributions on the socio-demographic correlates of social discontent (Kriesi et al. 2008) and populist attitudes (Spruyt et al. 2016; Rico and Anduiza 2017), we expect negative associations between populist attitudes and educational levels and between populist attitudes and occupational and professional skills.

To measure populist attitudes at the individual level in the case of Spain and France we rely on an inventory by Hawkins, Riding, and Mudde (2012), subsequently developed into a six-item version (Akkerman, Mudde and Zaslove 2014). These studies show that populist attitudes are widespread and indeed pre-exist short-term changes in social context (Akkerman et al. 2014, Hawkins et al. 2012).

Furthermore, these items have been used successfully to measure populist attitudes and to explain vote choice (e.g. Andreadis and Stavrakakis 2017; Spruyt et al. 2016; Andreadis et al. 2018), they have been adapted to measure populist attitudes at the elite level (Andreadis and Ruth-Lovell 2018) and also used in experimental research that relates populist attitudes to wider behavioural outcomes (Busby et al. 2018).

Table 1 shows the wording of the survey questions for each of these concepts. We implemented these questions in online surveys of about 1200 respondents in Spain and about 800 respondents in France. The samples were selected from a commercial, by invitation only, on-line pool of respondents (ISO 26362 certified) aged 18-65 and included sex, age and regional quotas. In Spain the survey was fielded in the week before the general election in December 2015 and in France in the week before the first round of the presidential election in April 2017. For Italy unfortunately we cannot rely on the same battery. We therefore matched questions as close as possible using the 2013 Italian National Election Survey (ITANES), which provides us with just two items for populist attitudes. For policy preferences we rely on a broad list of issues related to the economic left-right, cultural attitudes, and attitudes towards the European Union. Again, as Table 2 indicates, the questions for Italy differ slightly due to availability.

In this first section, we present the results of the factor analysis conducted for each one of these three countries. Tables 3 to 5 show the structure of three principal components for each country that have been arrived at by implementing a *varimax* rotation as a method of representation. We discuss first the Spanish and French cases, since both analyses are based on exactly the same batteries of variables, and address the Italian case afterwards. Both in France and Spain the battery of populist indicators loads onto a single factor, always above the 0.50 threshold. This factor provides us with a strong uniform scale (eigenvalues of 3.16 in Spain and 2.86 in France),

and it accounts for slightly more than the 0.20% of the variance of these variables. A second factor measures classical left-right issues of predominantly, but not exclusively, economic content. Attitudes towards redistribution and the tradeoff between economic growth and environmental protection play decisive roles in this factor in both countries, in combination with attitudes towards gay marriage (particularly in Spain) and state economic intervention (particularly in France), and to a lesser degree, but also above the 0.4 level, privacy protection. Differences mainly concern the role of attitudes towards taxes (more important in Spain and absent in this factor in France) and privacy concerns (more important in France). The third and least important factor for this battery of questions has immigration attitudes at its center in both cases. However, there are important disparities in the other variables loading onto this factor. In both cases attitudes towards EU control of public budgets load onto this factor, but they do so in varying ways for each country (with the same sign as immigration attitudes in Spain and with an opposing one in France). In other words, individuals favorable to immigration are also favorable to having full national control of budgets (positive coefficient in both variables), whereas in France the opposite association holds. This is most likely the result of the different impact of EU imposed austerity policies in Spain and France, which may have led individuals with multicultural and universalist values to reject EU economic policies in the former. Finally, and contrary to Spain, attitudes towards taxes also load on this factor in France. In the latter case, opposition to immigration (negative coefficient in this variable), and assertion of national budget controls and tax cuts (positive coefficients for the last two variables) go hand in hand. Overall, these results show the presence of an attitudinal dimension revealing populist attitudes that is clearly distinguishable from policy preferences in both countries. In both cases a classical left-right dimension that integrates economic redistribution and traditional versus libertarian topics is also present.

**Table 1.**  
*Items measuring populist attitudes (scales are reported in parentheses)*

Items measuring populist attitudes in Spain and France (1-5)	
POP1	<i>The politicians in parliament should follow the will of the people.</i>
POP2	<i>The most important decisions should be made by the people and not by politicians.</i>
POP3	<i>The political differences between the elite and the people are larger than the differences among the people.</i>
POP4	<i>I would rather be represented by an ordinary citizen than by an experienced politician.</i>
POP5	<i>Politicians talk too much and take too little action.</i>
POP6	<i>What people call compromise in politics is really just selling out on one's own principles.</i>
Items measuring populist attitudes in Italy (1-4)	
POP2i	<i>If Italians could decide directly about important political matters, instead of relying on politicians, the country would be much better off.</i>
POP6i	<i>In politic, settling for a compromise actually means selling out one's principles.</i>

**Table 2.**  
*Policy issues (scales are reported in parentheses).*

Item	France & Spain (1-10)
State Intervention	In favour / against state intervention in the economy.
Redistribution	In favour / against redistribution of wealth from the rich to the poor.
Taxes vs. Spending	In favour of increasing taxes to improve services / In favour of reducing services to lower taxes.
Same-sex marriage	In favour / against same-sex marriage.
Liberties vs. Security	In favour of the right to privacy even if it makes the fight against crime difficult / In favour of restricting the right to privacy to fight crime.
Immigration	In favour of / against limiting immigration.
EU Authority	The EU should have more authority over the economic and budgetary policies of the EU Member States / Spain (France) should have total control over economic and budgetary policies.
Environment	The protection of the environment must have priority even if it is at the expense of economic growth / Economic growth must have priority even if it is at the expense of the environment.
Item	Italy
State Intervention	The Government should abstain from intervening in the economy. Fully agree/ Don't agree at all. (1-4)
Redistribution	The Government should intervene to reduce income inequalities among citizens. Fully agree/ Don't agree at all. (1-4)
Taxes vs. Spending	Reduce taxes and cut public services / Expand public services and increase taxes. (1-7)
Immigration	We accept too many immigrants / We could easily accept more. (1-7)
EU unification	Unification has already gone too far/ Unification should be further developed. (1-7)
Environment	It would be necessary to give greater priority to the protection of the environment. Fully agree/ Don't agree at all. (1-4)

Finally, a third dimension relates to immigration and, to a lesser degree, European integration issues, but the association between these two variables is disparate in these two countries, most likely as a result of the different role of EU institutions during the Great Recession in each one.

In the Italian case we rely on a battery of questions that most closely resembles the issues covered in the French and Spanish surveys. For populist attitudes we use one item that measures orientations towards direct democracy and anti-elite sentiment (*If Italians could decide directly about important political matters, instead of relying on politicians, the country would be much better off*) and another one that measures the rejection of political negotiations and compromises (*In politics settling for a compromise actually means selling out one's principles*). For policy issues we use relatively similar indicators for attitudes towards redistribution, state economic intervention, taxes, immigration, European unification (this time in a broad way), and the environment.

As in Spain and France, the factor analysis reveals for Italy a single populist attitudes factor in which our two populism indicators load above 0.6. However, in the Italian case attitudes towards state intervention and economic redistribution do also load on this factor, albeit to a lesser degree. The eigenvalue for this factor is lower than in France and Spain (1.4), but strong enough to speak of a uniform scale. As in the French case, immigration, attitudes towards the

EU, and towards taxes load on a single factor, anti-immigration, anti-EU, and anti-taxes attitudes being positively associated with each other. Finally, as in Spain and France, a separate dimension maps classical economic left-right attitudes (regarding redistribution and state economic intervention) and attitudes towards environmental protection.

## 2. ISSUE DIMENSIONS AND PARTY VOTERS

In the previous section we established the presence of a populist dimension in the attitudinal maps of these three countries' public opinions. Previous analyses have also shown that populist attitudes have direct effects on vote-choices in many European countries, including, at the least, Spain and France among these cases (Andreadis et al. 2018). Some of these analyses have already shown that the voting effects of populist attitudes are often conditional on other ideological orientations or policy preferences of voters. In this section we examine the characteristics of these three party systems at the demand-side level by presenting the distribution of party voters in the three dimensions we identified above. Our purpose here is not to assess the causal direct or indirect impact of populist attitudes on party choices, but to identify, from a comparative perspective, the different party system constellations of populist attitudes and policy preferences in these three cases. This analysis will allow us to locate the positions of party voters

**Table 3**  
*Factor analysis Populism and Policy issues, Spain. Varimax rotation with Kaiser normalization.*  
*Factor loadings greater than 0.5 are marked in bold*

SPAIN	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Uniqueness
<i>Principal components results</i>				
Eigenvalue	3.159	2.041	1.129	
Variance explained	22.562	14.575	8.066	
Cumulative Variance explained	22.562	37.137	45.203	
<i>Item and rotated factor loadings</i>				
<b>POP5</b> Politicians talk too much	<b>0.747</b>	0.005	-0.109	0.109
<b>POP2</b> People should make decisions	<b>0.716</b>	-0.116	0.210	0.210
<b>POP4</b> Represented by a citizen	<b>0.695</b>	-0.040	0.130	0.130
<b>POP3</b> Political differences	<b>0.663</b>	-0.165	0.080	0.080
<b>POP6</b> Compromise is selling out	<b>0.660</b>	0.088	-0.079	-0.079
<b>POP1</b> Follow the will of the people	<b>0.561</b>	-0.106	0.172	0.172
Redistribution	-0.167	<b>0.714</b>	-0.102	-0.102
Environment	-0.080	<b>0.703</b>	0.131	0.131
Same-sex marriage	-0.072	<b>0.640</b>	-0.071	-0.071
State Intervention	0.089	<b>0.557</b>	0.192	0.192
Taxes vs. Spending	-0.017	<b>0.534</b>	-0.134	-0.134
Liberties vs. Security	-0.083	0.410	-0.333	-0.333
Immigration	0.017	-0.147	<b>0.813</b>	0.813
EU Authority	0.123	0.100	<b>0.523</b>	0.523
N 1208				

**Table 4**  
*Factor analysis Populism and Policy issues, France. Varimax rotation with Kaiser normalization.*  
*Factor loadings greater than 0.5 are marked in bold*

FRANCE	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Uniqueness
<i>Principal components results</i>				
Eigenvalue	2.858	2.345	1.290	
Variance explained	20.417	16.748	9.212	
Cumulative Variance explained	20.417	37.165	46.377	
<i>Item and rotated factor loadings</i>				
<b>POP2</b> People should make decisions	<b>0.753</b>	-0.035	0.056	0.504
<b>POP1</b> Follow the will of the people	<b>0.717</b>	-0.121	0.067	0.554
<b>POP4</b> Represented by a citizen	<b>0.710</b>	0.005	0.007	0.449
<b>POP3</b> Political differences	<b>0.608</b>	0.032	-0.035	0.385
<b>POP5</b> Politicians talk too much	<b>0.601</b>	-0.048	0.128	0.344
<b>POP6</b> Compromise is selling out	<b>0.562</b>	0.123	0.060	0.721
Redistribution	-0.165	<b>0.725</b>	-0.025	0.328
Environment	0.011	<b>0.716</b>	-0.019	0.514
State Intervention	0.065	<b>0.705</b>	-0.050	0.533
Same-sex marriage	0.022	<b>0.569</b>	0.246	0.571
Liberties vs. Security	0.055	0.478	0.335	0.372
Immigration	0.021	0.248	<b>-0.812</b>	0.504
Taxes vs. Spending	0.035	0.260	<b>0.616</b>	0.380
EU Authority	0.310	0.179	<b>0.447</b>	0.335
N 803				

**Table 5**  
*Factor analysis Populism and Policy issues, Italy. Varimax rotation with Kaiser normalization.*  
*Factor loadings greater than 0.5 are marked in bold*

ITALY	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Uniqueness
<i>Principal components results</i>				
Eigenvalue	1.768	1.401	1.040	
Variance explained	22.102	17.517	12.996	
Cumulative Variance explained	22.102	39.619	52.615	
<i>Item and rotated factor loadings</i>				
Immigration	<b>0.753</b>	-0.143	0.031	0.565
Taxes vs. Spending	<b>0.714</b>	0.086	-0.083	0.430
EU unification	<b>0.696</b>	-0.133	-0.015	0.502
<b>POP2i</b> People should make decisions	-0.079	<b>0.747</b>	0.030	0.524
<b>POP6i</b> Compromise is selling out	-0.091	<b>0.633</b>	-0.148	0.588
Environment	-0.008	-0.126	<b>0.730</b>	0.551
State Intervention	0.049	-0.451	<b>-0.587</b>	0.549
Redistribution	-0.051	-0.449	<b>0.544</b>	0.500
<i>N 1112</i>				

in the three dimensions identified by our analysis, irrespective of the causal effects that populist attitudes may have on voting once all controls and explanatory factors are taken into consideration.

In the following graphs we present the average positions of party voters in the three attitudinal dimensions identified by our factor analysis. We have labeled as left-right the dimension that maps preferences for redistribution and state economic intervention and also, to a lesser degree, environmental protection and civic rights. The other dimensions map populist attitudes and particularism versus universalism preferences. In order to combine all countries in one single graph we have standardized (at the national level) average values in these dimensions.

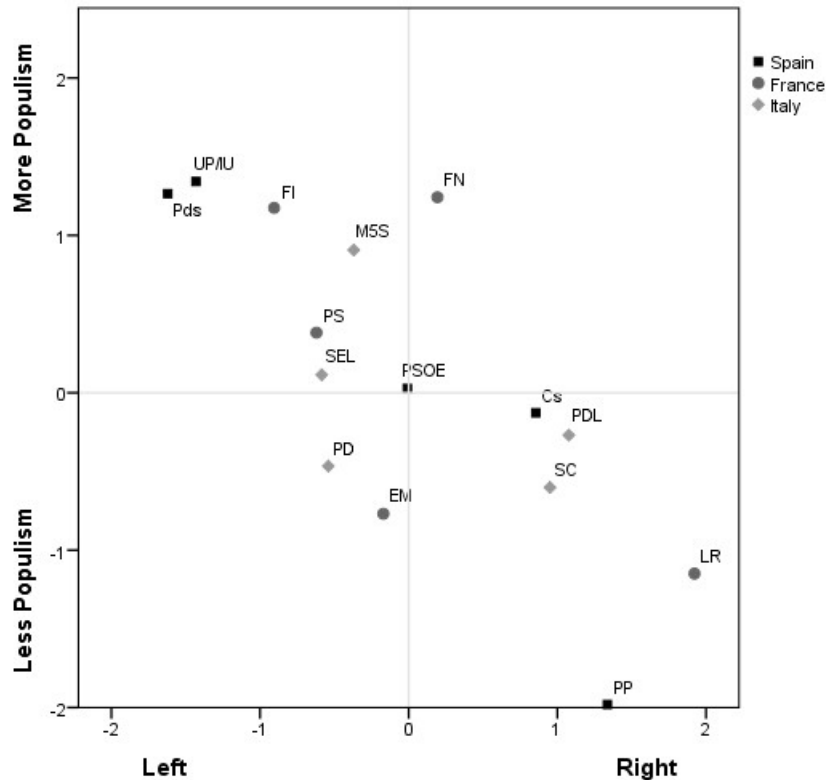
Figure 1 maps the positions of party voters in the left-right and populist attitudes dimensions and highlights a strong negative association between the positions of party voters in both dimensions. The diagonal pits populist leftists and conservative anti-populists against each other and results show that voters of economically leftist parties tend to hold more populist orientations in all three countries (Pearson correlation of -0.76, significant at the .001 level). At one extreme we find the left populist voters of Podemos (Pds), Unidad Popular-Izquierda Unida (UP-IU), and France Insoumise (FI) and at the opposite extreme the right conservative voters of Les Républicains (LR) and the Partido Popular (PP). The main cases deviating from the line that sets populist leftists and conservative anti-populists against each other are the voters of the Front National (FN), who hold populist attitudes and center-right preferences, the Italian Partito Democratico (PD) and En Marche!,

comprised of voters who hold anti-populist attitudes and center-left economic preferences, and, to a lesser degree, the Movimento 5 Stelle (M5S), whose voters are center-left and highly populist.

The voters of the Italian coalition Popolo della Libertà (PDL) occupy a more moderate position than those of French and Spanish conservative parties. In this case, it must be taken into consideration that this coalition, led by Silvio Berlusconi, also integrated the voters of the Lega Nord (LN).<sup>1</sup> The off-diagonal quadrants of rightist populism and leftist anti-populism are largely empty. Put differently, one of the most remarkable aspects of the location of party voters is that there is not a curvilinear pattern of locations, and that it is not the case that populist attitudes and generally extreme ideological locations go hand in hand in these party systems. Overall, these analyses reveal that for these three cases there is a clear association, at the partisan level, between populist attitudes and economically leftist, pro-redistributive attitudes.

Figure 2, in turn, shows the positions of party voters in the populist attitudes and particularism versus multiculturalism/universalism dimensions. It shows that their locations are characterized by their orthogonal character, i.e. all quadrants are populated by party voters. We find populist particularist party voters, such as those of FN and M5S, populist multicultural/universalist voters, such as those of UP-IU, Podemos or FI, anti-populist universalists (EM, SC, PD), and anti-populist particularists (LR, PP). What this disposition suggests is that contrary to positioning on the left-right dimension, populist attitudes can be attached to totally opposite preferences regarding cultural inclusiveness and universalism of national institutions and policies.

**Figure 1**  
Average positions of party voters in the general left-right and populist attitudes dimensions



We cannot address here whether the causes of this open pattern of articulation between populist demands and particularist orientations lie in structural socio-economic factors, individual features, or the characteristic party discourses and strategies. Whatever the causes, what we found is a remarkable contrast between a strong association of left-right economic preferences and populist attitudes and a lack of connection between populist attitudes and particularist-multiculturalist/universalist orientations.

### 3. THE SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF POPULIST ATTITUDES

The previous section has revealed that populist attitudes are one of the dimensions structuring public opinion in Spain, France, and Italy. It has also shown that the positions of party voters in the populist dimension and the mostly economic left-right dimension are strongly connected despite the fact that these countries present in theory very different kinds of partisan ideological configurations. Analyses of populism (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2018; Hawkins and Rovira Kaltwasser 2018) have stressed the thin-ideological character of populism and its contingent articulation to different kinds of political and ideological platforms. However, our previous empirical results underscore the need to assess the degree to which populist attitudes may be linked to a

common constellation of underlying socio-structural features affecting both economic preferences and populist attitudes. By conducting an analysis of this type our study complements works that have focused strictly on the determinants of economic and cultural preferences -without examining populist attitudes- (Häusermann and Kriesi 2015) and works that have focused on the determinants of populist attitudes, which have particularly addressed the role of different kinds of economic judgments and perceptions (Rico and Anduiza 2017; Rico et al 2017).

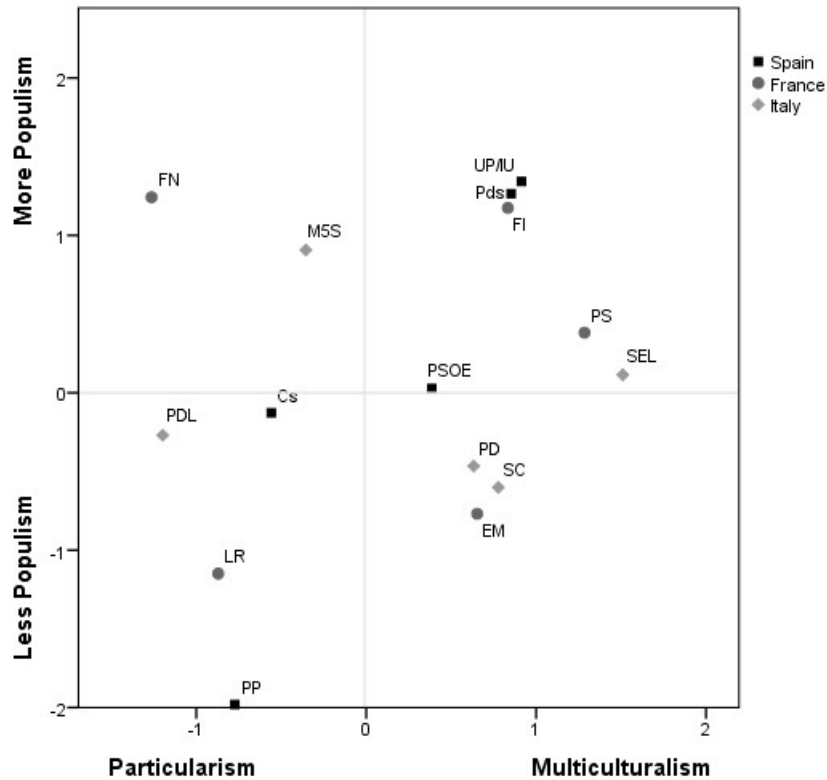
Therefore, in this section we turn our analysis to the study of the factors conditioning populist attitudes in these cases. With that purpose in mind we have conducted a general linear model analysis in order to ascertain the effects of different socio-demographic variables on populist attitudes. Thus, we are not interested in developing a full-fledged explanation of populist attitudes on the bases of other attitudes and perceptions, such as economic evaluations, perceptions of corruption, or political mistrust, a topic on which several insightful contributions already exist (Spruyt et al 2016; Rico et al 2017). Rather, we are interested in examining whether the locations of individuals in social structures predispose them to embrace populist attitudes in these countries.

In order to assess the influence of social and economic characteristics on populist attitudes we run an



**Figure 2**

*Average positions of party voters in the particularism versus multiculturalism and populist attitudes dimensions*



analysis of variance focused on the qualitative, nominal variables that could influence populist attitudes (a continuous variable in this case). These factors are, for all countries, education, occupation, gender, and age. In the case of Spain and France we also control for income, although our indicator maps household income in the first case and individual income in the second. Unfortunately, we lack any indicator for income in the Italian survey. We use a main effects generalized linear model ANOVA analysis aimed at ascertaining the effects of each of these factors on our dependent variable. This type of technique allows us to conduct further analyses that consider all possible combinations of levels and not just contrasts with one reference category. Compared to a simple t test, the generalized ANOVA analysis allows us to also reduce the risk of type 1 error, that is, of wrongly rejecting the null hypothesis when it is true (Lindsey 1997).

Our results show that income levels help to account for differences in populist attitudes scores in France and Spain. In the Spanish case, occupation does also affect populist attitudes. In the case of Italy we lack an indicator for personal or family income, which may be the reason why in addition to occupation also age and education are significantly linked to populist attitudes. Post hoc tests focusing on income, education, and occupation allow us to interpret better the specific effects that social characteristics have on populist attitudes.<sup>2</sup> We start first with the ef-

fects of income differences reported in Table 7, the variable that shows statistically significant effects in both France and Spain. The fact that our indicators for France and Spain are different (personal income in Spain and household income in France) does not constrain our ability to make some comparative inferences on the effects of income on populist attitudes. In the case of Spain, the analysis shows that individuals earning less than 1200 euros and therefore at the bottom level of income are more populist than individuals earning more than 1800 euros (significant at the .01 level). Analyses also show that individuals earning from 1200 to 1800 euros are more populist than individuals earning more than 1800 euros (significant at the .01 level). By contrast, there are no significant differences between the groups with lower and middle income levels in Spain. In the case of France, the difference between individuals from households earning less than 2000 euros and between 2000 and 5000 euros are significant at just the 0.109 level. Differences are highly significant, however, between individuals from these two groups and individuals from households earning more than 5000 euros (at the .01 level).

Table 8 shows group differences for education levels. The only common feature for these three cases is that college graduates tend to be less populist than individuals with upper secondary education (differences significant at the .01 levels in Spain

**Table 6**

*Generalized Linear Model (ANOVA Main Effects). Dependent variable: Populist attitudes (higher values indicate more populist attitudes)*

Variable	SPAIN		FRANCE		ITALY	
	F	Sig.	F	Sig	F	Sig.
<i>Corrected Model</i>	3.924	0.000***	1.670	0.064*	6.112	0.000***
<i>Intercept</i>	0.117	0.732	1.091	0.297	5.046	0.025**
Sex	0.006	0.938	0.135	0.714	2.677	0.102
Education	1.041	0.354	0.311	0.733	13.277	0.000***
Age	1.305	0.272	1.033	0.357	4.756	0.009***
Occupation	2.321	0.042**	0.892	0.500	2.886	0.014**
Income	8.242	0.000***	4.411	0.013**		
<i>R2</i>	<i>0.051</i>		<i>0.041</i>		<i>0.053</i>	

*P value* ≤ \*0.1 \*\*0.05 \*\*\*0.01

**Table 7**

*Multiple comparisons. Post hoc analysis: income and populist attitudes*

Personal Income (euros)		SPAIN	Household Income (euros)		FRANCE
I	J		I	J	
<1200	1200-1800	0.083 (0.080)	<2000	2000-5000	0.202 (0.109)*
	>1800	0.390 (0.079)***		>5000	0.572 (0.157)***
1200-1800	<1200	-0.083 (0.080)	2000-5000	<2000	-0.202 (0.109)*
	>1800	0.307 (0.090)***		>5000	0.370 (0.136)***
>1800	<1200	-0.390 (0.079)***	>5000	>2000	-0.572 (0.157)***
	1200-1800	-0.307 (0.090)***		2000-5000	-0.370 (0.136)***

*P value* ≤ \*0.1 \*\*0.05 \*\*\*0.01. I-J Mean differences with standard errors in parentheses. (DMS)

and Italy and at the .10 level France). In addition, in Italy individuals with basic education also tend to be more populist than individuals with college education. Overall, the data suggests that individuals with the highest education credentials are less populist than individuals with secondary, intermediate studies, whereas the contrasts with very low education groups are strong only in the Italian case.

Finally, our analysis turns to the effects of occupational differences on populist attitudes. We do not report all coefficients in Table 9, and leave out of our report and analysis groups, such as farmers and the self-employed, for which we do not have information on all countries. If we focus first on the differences between higher occupations (professionals and top managers) and the rest, we observe that professionals tend to be less populist than routine non-manual workers (in France and Spain), skilled workers (in all cases), and unskilled workers (in France and Italy). As for top managers and bureaucrats, they also tend to be less populist than skilled workers (in Spain and Italy), and routine non-manual and unskilled workers in Italy. Across all three countries, these two groups are the least populist. By contrast, skilled workers show the most consistent pattern of positive differ-

ences with professionals (statistically significant in the three cases) and managers and top bureaucrats (significant in Spain and Italy).

Contrasts among different groups of workers (routine non-manual, unskilled, and skilled) are less consistent across these cases. Skilled workers tend to be more populist than routine non-manual and unskilled workers in Spain, but less so than unskilled workers in Italy. And in the case of Italy, routine non-manual workers also tend to be less populist than unskilled workers. Contrasts among these groups are therefore less marked. Perhaps the most interesting characteristic for these groups lies in the presence of cross-national differences. In the case of Spain populist attitudes reach their highest levels among skilled workers, whereas in Italy it is among the unskilled that populist attitudes reach their highest scores. In France, by contrast, no differences between these groups of workers show up in this analysis.

## CONCLUSION

Despite the presence of some broad political and ideological commonalities, the party systems of Spain, France, and Italy have been characterized by

**Table 8**  
Multiple comparisons. Post hoc analysis: education and populist attitudes

Education		SPAIN	FRANCE	ITALY
I	J			
Basic Education	Upper Secondary	-0.091 (0.159)	-0.030 (0.143)	0.091 (0.095)
	College	0.165 (0.158)	0.136 (0.128)	0.565 (0.116)***
Upper Sec	Basic Education	0.091 (0.159)	0.030 (0.143)	-0.091 (0.095)
	College	0.256 (0.067)***	0.166 (0.103)	0.473 (0.083)***
College	Basic Education	-0.165 (0.158)	-0.136 (0.128)	-0.565 (0.116)***
	Upper Secondary	-0.256 (0.067)***	-0.166 (0.103)*	-0.473 (0.083)***

*P value* ≤ \*0.1 \*\*0.05 \*\*\*0.01. I-J Mean differences with standard errors in parentheses. (DMS)

**Table 9**  
Multiple comparisons. Post hoc analysis: occupation and populist attitudes

Occupation		SPAIN	FRANCE	ITALY
I	J			
Professionals	Managers/Top Bureaucrats	-0.160 (0.129)	-0.176 (0.195)	0.446 (0.313)
	Routine Non-Manual	-0.248 (0.077)***	-0.303 (0.134)**	-0.241 (0.173)
	Skilled	-0.603 (0.145)***	-0.364 (0.129)***	-0.359 (0.185)*
	Unskilled	-0.203 (0.128)	-0.351 (0.141)**	-0.744 (0.215)***
Managers/Top Bureaucrats	Professionals	0.160 (0.129)	0.176 (0.195)	-0.446 (0.313)
	Routine Non- Manual	-0.088 (0.124)	-0.126 (0.189)	-0.687 (0.279)**
	Skilled	-0.443 (0.175)**	-0.187 (0.186)	-0.805 (0.287)***
	Unskilled	-0.043 (0.161)	-0.174 (0.194)	-1.190 (0.307)***
Routine Non Manual	Professionals	0.248 (0.077)***	0.303 (0.134)**	0.241 (0.173)
	Managers/Top Bureaucrats	0.088 (0.124)	0.126 (0.189)	0.687 (0.279)**
	Skilled	-0.354 (0.141)**	-0.061 (0.120)	-0.118 (0.118)
	Unskilled	0.045 (0.123)	-0.048 (0.132)	-0.503 (0.161)***
Skilled	Professionals	0.603 (0.145)***	0.364 (0.129)***	0.359 (0.185)*
	Managers/Top Bureaucrats	0.443 (0.175)**	0.187 (0.186)	0.805 (0.287)***
	Routine Non- Manual	0.354 (0.141)**	0.061 (0.120)	0.118 (0.118)
	Unskilled	0.400 (0.174)**	0.013 (0.128)	-0.385 (0.174)**
Unskilled	Professionals	0.203 (0.128)	0.351 (0.141)**	0.744 (0.215)***
	Managers/Top Bureaucrats	0.043 (0.161)	0.174 (0.194)	1.190 (0.307)***
	Routine Non- Manual	-0.045 (0.123)	0.048 (0.132)	0.503 (0.161)***
	Skilled	-0.400 (0.174)**	-0.013 (0.128)	0.385 (0.174)**

*P value* ≤ \*0.1 \*\*0.05 \*\*\*0.01. I-J Mean differences with standard errors in parentheses. (DMS). Other levels of this factor have been included in the analysis but are not reported for the sake of simplicity. These levels are: farmers (Spain), farmers and semi-skilled (France) and self-employed (Italy).

important differences in the partisan and programmatic articulation of populist discourses. The quite different orientation of parties adopting populist discourses (radical right and left in France, radical left in Spain, and centrist and radical right in Italy) reveals the presence of wide variations in the political articulation of populist ideas in this region. We started our analysis with the intention of assessing whether,

despite the presence of these important differences, populist attitudes played a role in the structuring of the ideological attitudinal maps in these countries, in combination with the policy preferences dimensions that have been usually established by comparative analyses on European party systems. Our empirical results are consistent with this expectation, even if the measurement tools we had at our disposal,

particularly in the case of Italy, presented some limitations. In all these countries populist attitudes proved to be a clearly discernible attitudinal dimension, along with the most classical left-right dimension, strongly connected to redistribution and state intervention preferences, and with another dimension mostly mapping attitudes towards immigration and globalization. That is, despite the presence of some distinctive national characteristics, the attitudinal maps of these three countries presented strong similarities in terms of the substantive contents of their main attitudinal dimensions and of the role of populist orientations in them.

Our second, exploratory goal was to go beyond classical vote-choice models on the effects of populist attitudes and map the positions of party voters in the populist and policy preferences dimensions. Our exploration revealed a clear association, at the party level, between classical left-right, mostly economic preferences, and populist attitudes. In this case, party voters tended to populate a diagonal leading from redistributive populism to pro-market non-populism. Symmetrically, no party voters adopted populist and anti-redistributive positions or non-populist and pro-redistributive positions. By contrast, our data showed the absence of associations between populist attitudes and preferences regarding immigration and globalization. Overall, these results endorse the interpretation that, at least for this group of cases, populist orientations and pro-redistributive attitudes tend to go hand in hand. Important disparities among the parties representing populist orientations are observed in cultural demarcation attitudes. In other words, it is in this political-cultural dimension that the thin-ideological character of populism is more apparent and that the discursive content of parties representing populist orientations becomes more diverse (Ivaldi et al. 2017). Whether these different patterns

of discursive and programmatic articulation result from socio-structural factors or from partisan agency is a question that we cannot address here.

Finally, our analysis of the structural factors affecting populist attitudes showed that it is among groups with fewer occupational skills, lower income levels and lower education levels that populist attitudes tend to be stronger. These facts endorse the importance of structural factors in the formation of populist attitudes, notwithstanding the role that other subjective experiences and feelings can play in the emergence of such orientations. The effects of education, occupation, and income on populist attitudes help to understand why there are significant associations, at the party-level, between the populist attitudes of party voters and their preferences for redistribution. By contrast, the lack of associations between populist attitudes and immigration preferences is consistent with the fact that, in the cultural domain, structurally based economic grievances can be channeled by both universalist and particularist political parties.

This comparative and empirical study has aimed at analyzing the presence, political articulation, and socio-economic determinants of populist attitudes in Spain, France, and Italy. Future developments of this work should seek to include other types of societies and party systems in the analysis and to develop more complex and interactive multivariate models focusing on the socio-economic determinants of populist attitudes. These two goals remain the objective of posterior developments of this work.

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## NOTES

1. Given the low number of LN voters in the survey we had to exclude this party from the analysis.
2. We leave gender differences out of the analysis. Men's populist averages are lower than women's, but this difference has statistical significance only in the case of Italy.

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**GUILLERMO BOSCAÍN** holds a PhD in Political Science and an MA in Advanced Multivariate Analysis and Big Data at the University of Salamanca. His research work has mainly focused on the spatial analysis of voting. He has published his work in *Política y Gobierno* and *Studia Politicae*. Currently he is a researcher in the project "Economic crisis, social change and new political actors" at the University of Salamanca. He has worked as external consultant for the European Union, the EU-LAC Foundation, the Inter-American Development Bank, and USAID. He is Associate Professor at the University of Salamanca.

**IVÁN LLAMAZARES** is Professor of Political Science at the University of Salamanca. His main research interests lie in the party-political articulation of sociopolitical divisions in Europe and Latin America. He has published his research in the journals *Ethnicities*, *Revista Internacional de Sociología*, *West European Politics*, *Acta Politica*, *Social Forces*, and *Revista de Estudios Políticos*.

**NINA WIESEHOMEIER** is Professor of Politics at the IE School of International Relations in Madrid. Her research focuses on political parties, political institutions, ideology, and representation of women. She has published her research in the *Journal of Politics*, *Political Science and Research Methods*, the *Journal of Politics in Latin America*, and the *European Journal of International Relations*.