

# **Populism and the scales of statehood in Western Europe**

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## **Abstract**

The rise of populism in Western Europe is often explained as a mobilisation of the opposition against globalisation and supra-national integration. But the domestic-international divide is only one aspect of the more general question about the scalar organisation of government. In this article, we explore the relationship between populist attitudes and orientations towards state scales more generally. Drawing on a representative survey of 4033 citizens in Britain, France, Germany and Switzerland, we show that populism entails preferences for those state territories viewed as ‘closer to the people’ not only in a metaphorical, but also in a scalar sense. This finding suggests that the rise of populism should not only be explained as a response to a crisis of party government in a context of globalisation. It is also a response to a crisis of national statehood resulting from restructuring processes in which the nation state has lost its role as a unifying energizer.

**Keywords:** populism, populist attitudes, state re-scaling, state restructuring

## **1. Introduction**

Populist parties have been on the rise in Europe for more than two decades. Recent elections yielded record-highs for populist parties in many European countries, not only in those where populism has been looming since the 1990s (e.g. France, Switzerland, Austria, the Netherlands, Belgium), but also in countries in which populism is a relatively new phenomenon (e.g. the United Kingdom, Sweden, Greece, Spain, as well as Germany). While proximate preconditions – such as a crisis of representation in the party system, as well as the mediatisation of politics – appear as explanatory factors for the rise of populism (Kriesi, 2018) the populist phenomenon in European countries, at its core, entails mobilization in a conflict over appropriate territorial scales of government and governance. Indeed, the extant literature on the topic explains the rise of populist parties as a mobilisation of the deepening cleavage between winners and losers of globalisation (see Kriesi et al., 2006). In this perspective, populism is seen to thrive on the tensions between the supra-national and the national spheres of policy-making, pitting advocates of international integration against advocates of national sovereignty. Indeed, populists are essentially presented as critical towards processes of globalization and de-nationalisation, and as defending national sovereignty over supra-national mechanisms of governance. In Europe, European integration is particularly at stake: the question as to whether and how much nation state sovereignty should be ceded to (or recovered from) the European Union is at the core of populist mobilisation.

While it is definitely a core driver of populist mobilization in Europe today, the domestic-international divide is arguably only one aspect of the more general question about the scalar organisation of government. Modern states - be they federalist or unitary - encompass a multitude of institutions at different territorial layers, each with their own tasks, competences and more or less political autonomy. The definition of their relations to the national state has been a source of ideological and political struggles ever since. The long history of state-building in Europe is replete with violent conflicts over the attribution of powers between the periphery and the centre, i.e. between local fiefdoms and the nation state (Badie and Birnbaum, 1994). But also more recently, the question of how to articulate the relationships between national and sub-national layers of governments have been on the political agenda in many European countries. Since several decades, ethno-nationalist movements are questioning the legitimacy of the nation state in several regions of Europe: Catalunya, the Basque Country, Scotland, Corsica are just some of the more widely known examples. Less spectacularly, but more successfully, advocacy of local and regional autonomy has sparked institutional reforms

leading to devolution or decentralisation of power since the 1980s (Hooghe, Marks, & Schaekel, 2010; Ladner, Baldersheim, & Keuffer, 2016).

But what are the ideological and political positions related to the scalar organisation of government? And how do they relate to populism? The rise of populism in contemporary democracies denotes a crisis of representation - not only of representative institutions, but also of political parties as the main vectors of political representation (see Caramani, 2017; Kriesi, 2018; Mair, 2009). Representation, however, is not uniscalar. It should rather be conceptualized as “compounded representation” (Brzinski, Lancaster, & Tuschhoff, 1999), i.e. as the result of mobilizations that feed on political identities at various territorial scales. Political identities are like Chinese boxes: not only nations, but also sub-national territories – such as regions, counties, municipalities or even neighbourhoods - provide reference points for individual political identities. But the relationship between citizens’s scalar identification and populist attitudes remains to be explored. This is what we aim to do in this article. More precisely, we hypothesize that populism in Europe not only pits the international against the domestic sphere, but in fact portends what we call an ‘ideology of subsidiarity’, entailing a preference for those governmental scales that are viewed as ‘closer to the people’. The question we strive to answer is whether populist attitudes herald a particular perspective on the scalar organisation of political power in the modern state. We thereby seek to provide a more fine-grained understanding of the ways in which politics of scale, as well as the scales of statehood, are linked to populist ideology in Western Europe.

## ***2. Populism and the scales of statehood***

Given its widespread strategic use in the public debate, usually to denigrate political opponents, populism used to be a highly contested concept. Nevertheless, scholars increasingly agree on a common – ideational - definition of the term. Following earlier writings (see notably Akkerman, Mudde, & Zaslove, 2014; Canovan, 1999; Kriesi, 2014, 2018; Mény and Surel, 2002; Mudde, 2004; Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013), populism can be defined as an ideology that considers society to be separated into two antagonistic and internally homogeneous groups - the ‘corrupt elite’ and the ‘virtuous people’ - and that conceives politics as an unrestricted expression of the sovereignty of the people. This definition views populism not just as a kind of rhetoric, style or strategy, but as conveying substantive messages: anti-elitism (condemnation of the corrupt elite), people centrism (exaltation of the virtuous people), and unrestricted popular sovereignty (Kriesi, 2018: 7). As a “thin ideology” (Mudde, 2004), the

populist message can be easily combined with other ideologies. For example, right-wing populists draw on nationalism to defend particular cultural or ethnic communities, left-wing populists focus on the socio-economic situation of lower classes whose interests they seek to advocate (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013). But how do these components of populism relate to ideological categories involved in the debate about the scalar organisation of the modern state?

## 2.1 The politics of scale in Western Europe

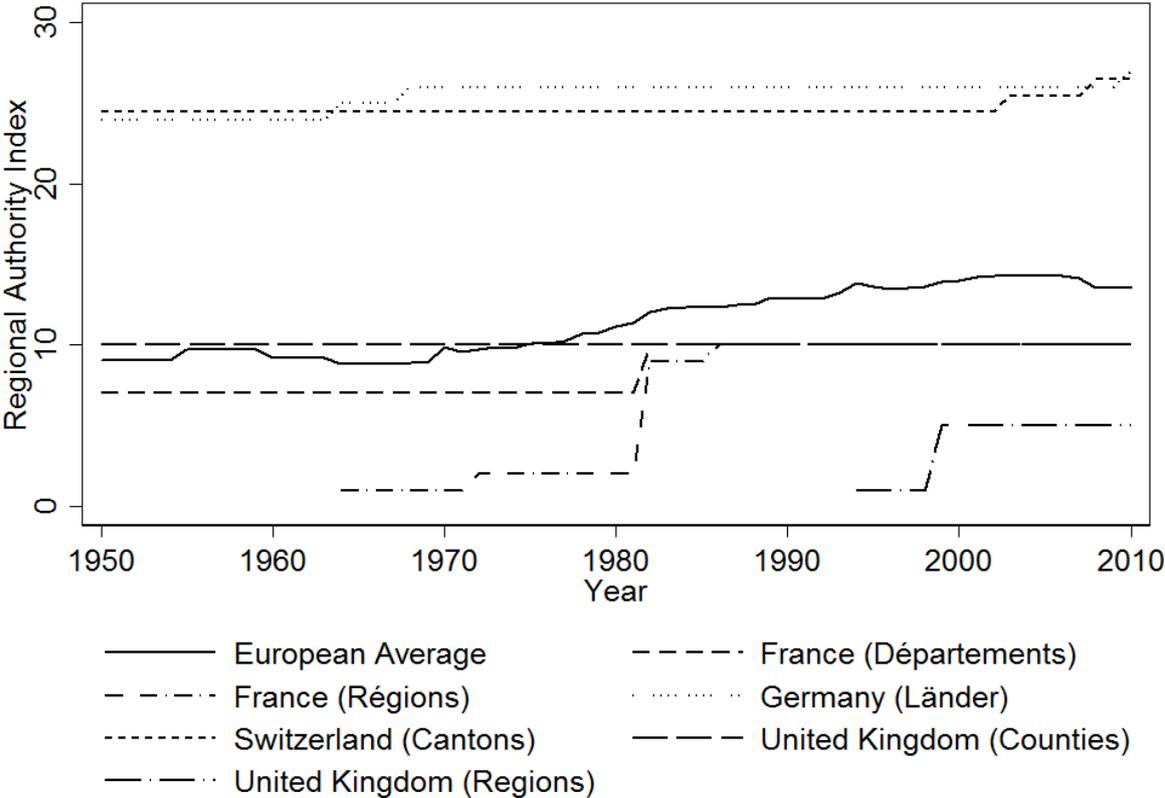
Geographical scales such as the local, the regional, the national or the global, are not something primordial but must be conceived as socially constructed and politically contested (see Brenner, 2002, 2004; Delaney and Leitner, 1997; Smith, 1993). The organisation of state scales, as well as the articulations between them, can thus not be viewed as taken for granted or politically neutral. Instead, the scalar organisation of the state should be seen as bearing a substantial political project, thereby fixing a particular framework of social, economic and political regulation.

According to King and Le Galès (2017) state organizational structures have been re-fashioned twice in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In a first phase, starting roughly after the Second World War, Europe (but also America) experienced “a supple combination of state action and managed economic activity” (King and Le Galès, 2017: S14) under a fordist accumulation regime. State action was characterised by expanding public expenditures, redistribution, investment in infrastructure, as well as standardisation of rights and norms. These programmes led to the Keynesian welfare states of the *trente glorieuses*, as well as to the reconstitution of statehood at the national scale as the most relevant locus for the unleashing of the “unifying energy” (King and Le Galès, 2017) of the state in this period. Many Western states also engaged in centralisation, as “effectively to redistribute income and resources across classes and regions necessitates centralised coordination” (King and Le Galès, 2017: S17). The economic crises of the 1970s, together with the transformations towards post-fordism and financialisation, induced a second, neoliberal phase of state restructuring. Under the combined pressure of increasingly globalised markets and the rise of supra-national organisations, policy-making authority has shifted away from national governments. Statehood has become more and more de-nationalized, and the distance between the state (elites) and the nation has grown.

This process of de-nationalisation entailed a shift of policy-making power away from the national government, in three directions: upwards (to supra-national institutions, such as the EU), sideways (to independent regulatory agencies and private governors), as well as

downwards towards sub-national authorities (Kübler, 2015). Downwards de-nationalisation has brought about profound changes in the organisation of sub-national territories, as well as altered the patterns of intergovernmental relations within nation states across Europe in the last 40 years (Goldsmith and Page, 2010). Traditional unitary states, such as France and the United Kingdom have devolved power to newly created regional entities. Belgium, Spain and Italy have embraced federalism. And in traditional federations such as Germany, Austria or Switzerland, the federate entities have been strengthened . What is more, the EU's approach to regions as targets and partners in its cohesion policy has contributed to a further reinforcement of Europe's subnational governments. Europe's "new regionalism" (Keating, 1998) has resulted in a strengthening of the intermediate, i.e. the regional tier, at the expense of the national state (Goldsmith, 2002). Besides the regions, European cities have reaped the benefits of the changing intergovernmental relations, too, and gained increased power and autonomy in the process (Le Galès, 2002). All in all, state authority at the subnational scale has increased during the 20<sup>th</sup> century: not only in the four countries under scrutiny in this article, but in Europe more generally (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Increase of subnational authority 1950 – 2010 in France, Germany, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and in the European average (Regional Authority Index)**



Source: Authors’ drawing using data by Hooghe et al. (2010)

In the wider perspective of the construction of state scales as political and thereby inherently conflictual processes, these changes have been viewed as a response to “the new socio-economic conditions and constraints of the post-Keynesian epoch” (Brenner, 2002: 4). In the Fordist-Keynesian era, local and regional state levels mainly operated as “managerial agents of nationally scaled collective consumption programmes” (Brenner, 1999: 440) devised by highly centralised and bureaucratised states that converged around the national scale as their predominant organisational locus. This is no longer the case: in the current regime of post-fordist and globalised capitalism, local and regional authorities serve as “entrepreneurial agencies” whose major goal it is to “enhance the locational advantages and productive capacities of their territorial jurisdictions as maximally competitive nodes in the world economy” (Brenner, 1999: 440).

The reconfiguration of the state, as well as the reconstitution of statehood at sub-national scales thus also portends a shift in the substance of state policies. These are no longer geared towards integration of social groups and territories via centralized redistribution and

service provision. Public policies in the reconfigured and de-nationalised state are devoid of ‘unifying energy’: they are vastly incapable to counter the rise of social inequalities. For example, the increasing manifestation of such inequalities in territorial terms - disparities between regions have grown all over Europe in the last decades - has not precluded European states to gradually reduce regional development, “signalling further policy neglect and social decline for the abandoned backward areas” (King and Le Galès, 2017: S27).

In sum, scale politics in European countries not only involved a strengthening of the sub-national at the expense of the national scales of government. The gradual re-constitution of statehood at the regional scale also epitomised the (neo-liberal) retrenchment of state policies geared towards redistribution of income and homogenisation of society. With the “rise of the meso government in Europe” (Sharpe, 1993), the European state at the same time lost “its role as a unifying energizer” (King and Le Galès, 2017: S16) of national societies.

## **2.2 Populism and the issue of state scales**

Scholars studying the surge of populist votes in many European countries have argued that the success of populist parties is a consequence of the inability or unwillingness of states to counter rising inequalities as a fallout of globalisation. Populist parties have indeed been viewed as mobilising the “losers of globalisation” (Kriesi, Grande, Lachat, Dolezal, & Bornschieer, 2008) not only in the economic but also in the cultural sense. Their electoral success in the regions threatened by decline (((ref needed))), in peripheries no longer served by state policies or infrastructure (((ref needed))), but also in the downtrodden places of otherwise thriving urban regions (Sellers, Kübler, Walter-Rogg, & Walks, 2013) suggests that they indeed mobilise an electorate that has suffered from the weakened capacity of states to address inequalities.

The vindication of a national scale for statehood would thus seem as the plausible stance for a populist take on scale politics - a nostalgic reference to the times of national welfare Keynesianism, when ‘America was great’, so to speak. However, the populist narrative on state scales appears to be more complex. Indeed, some of the parties that scholars today clearly classify as populist have roots and strongholds in particular regions of their respective countries. Illustrations are Italy’s *Lega Nord* or the *Vlaams Blok* (that later became the *Vlaams Belang*) in Belgium (Rooduijn, 2017). Their anti-elitism is not only targeted against those who allegedly surrender national sovereignty to supra-national institutions such as the EU, but also against a national elite that supposedly betrays the interests of the ordinary people in a particular region of the country - the North in Italy, Flanders in Belgium.

In a similar vein, many scholars have highlighted the commonalities between populism and localism - understood as an emphasis on and a largely positive view of the local as a scale of social, economic and political organisation (Ashton, 2010; Pied, 2011). Evans et al. (Evans, Marsh, & Stoker, 2013) define localism as the “devolution of power and/or functions and/or resources away from central control and towards front-line managers, local democratic structures, local institutions and local communities” (405). As Strebel (2018: 86) points out, localism entails not only a promise of a more direct and unmediated way of citizen participation and elite control. It also conveys a managerial rationale of efficiency and service quality as localised production of public goods promises a closer match with citizens’ preferences. While localism is compatible with more general ideologies about political organisation such as federalism (devised by Hamilton and Madison in the sense of decentralising power to prevent tyrannic rule) or liberalism (protecting individual freedom against a concentration of political power), it is obviously also compatible with populism. Indeed, populist narratives of the ‘ordinary people’ often entail references to local communities threatened by activities of the ‘elite’ accused of having lost touch with the base. Hence, “a major political expression of populism is advocacy of direct and very local democracy” such as “the town hall meetings and citizen assemblies” (Lauglo, 1995: 13). This relates back to the Rousseau idea of common determination of the popular will in frequent assemblies, which best works under conditions of smallness and proximity. As Allan Cochrane (2016) nicely shows in a recent piece, there are close affinities between populism and localism: localism “seems to offer an escape from the stranglehold of traditional politics and appeals to the common sense of ‘ordinary’ people” (909): the local tends to be considered as a “place where people come together more or less naturally” (910) portending the romantic view that place identity becomes more important than other forms of identity. What is more, the local has frequently been imagined as an “anti-bureaucratic metaphor” (Cochrane, 2016: 910) and as a bulwark against an overreaching state, thereby also potentially appealing to populists who advocate the break-up of existing power relations dominated by the elite they seek to denigrate.

But there is more about populism and localism than ideological affinities in the construction of a narrative. Indeed, as Wills (2015) has argued, the adoption of a localism agenda by mainstream parties in the UK suggests that localism has been an electorally successful message for populists. Intending to counter the challenges by populists, leading politicians from the three UK mainstream parties - Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat - have “adopted localism as their key political agenda for post-election reform” as a “product of popular, and populist, disillusionment with the nature and practice of mainstream politics” (Wills,

2015: 188), and as an effort to engage and reach out to the people lost to populists. The hunch that populism and localism have something in common is supported by empirical evidence from a study of the Ticino League, a right-wing populist party from Southern Switzerland, Mazzoleni (2005) shows that leaders of the League engage in “multi-level populism”: they pit Switzerland against the EU in international politics, the canton of Ticino against the Swiss confederation in national, and their core region within Ticino against the cantonal capital when it comes to cantonal and local politics. In case of doubt, populists thus tend to opt for the level of government that is ‘closer to the people’. In a similar vein, the findings of a recent study in Spain suggest that the electoral success of the left-wing populist party *Podemos* was crafted on a programmatic emphasis of the regional at the expense of the national scale (Rodriguez-Teruel, Barrio, & Barbera, 2016). In a move to adapt their populist messages to the complex, multi-leveled and regionalist identities in Spain, *Podemos* demonstrated sympathy and support for the secessionist movements in Catalonia, Galicia and the Basque Country, and was thereby able to garner electoral support from voters favourable to decentralisation.

These examples thus suggest that the recent success of populism entails a largely positive narrative about the local scale of government, politics and society that resonates with the electorate. But besides the above mentioned studies by Rodriguez-Teruel et al. on the Spanish and Mazzoleni on the Swiss contexts, empirical evidence on this conjecture is as yet unavailable. The aim of the present study is to fill this gap, by testing the hypothesis that populist attitudes in the electorate are associated with scalar orientations that prefer the local to the national scale of government and politics.

### **3. Data, variables and method**

We test this hypothesis empirically on the basis of individual-level data collected via a representative, mixed-method survey of citizens aged between 18 and 75 years in four European countries. Analyses were performed with SPSS Statistics Version 25 for Windows.

### 3.1 Sampling and survey

The survey on *Democratic governance and citizenship in Europe* (DemGovCit) collected individual-level data on political values and behaviour, as well as on attitudes and assessments of various aspects of democracy and governance.<sup>1</sup> The survey was fielded in fall 2015. Respondents were recruited offline on a randomized basis. Due to national differences in accessibility of address data, recruitment procedures differed slightly across the four countries. While official registries could be used for initial recruitment of respondents in Switzerland via ground mail, Computer Assisted Telephone Interviews (CATI) screening with random digit dialling (including mobile phones numbers) was used to select potential respondents in Germany, France and Britain who were then contacted by phone. Respondents were incentivised to participate in the survey: 10 EUR in Germany and France, 10 GBP in Britain, 10 CHF in Switzerland. Interviews were administered in mixed mode: online questionnaires as the standard procedure, paper questionnaires (including a prepaid return envelope) were sent to respondents without private internet access. The survey was conducted by commercial providers MIS Trend (in Switzerland) and TNS Infratest (in France, Germany and Britain).

Interviews could be completed with a total of 4033 respondents: France (N=1031), Germany (N=1111), Switzerland (N=924), and Britain (N=977). In order to correct sampling bias, sampling and post-stratification weights were calculated based on household size and number of phones (to correct for varying selection probabilities into the sample in the French, German and British sample) and on age, gender, education, employment status, and region (to correct for non-response bias). The analysis presented hereafter uses the weighted data.

### 3.2 Dependent variable : populist attitudes

The aim of this paper is to gauge the influence of respondents' perceptions of and attitudes towards various territorial scales of state organisation to populist attitudes. Drawing on the definition of populism elaborated by Mudde (2004) and further developed by Kriesi (2014, 2018), we conceive populist attitudes as a function of three dimensions: *anti-elitism*, *people-centrism* and demands for *popular sovereignty*. Following the work of Schulz et al. (2017), we operationalise these three dimensions on the basis of (a) two questions gauging a

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<sup>1</sup> The survey protocol and questionnaire were approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of Zurich on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of July 2015.

respondent's perception of the political elite (anti-elitism), (b) four questions regarding his / her perception of the people as a virtuous and homogenous group (people-centrism), as well as (c) two questions about the respondent's attitudes towards direct participation of citizens in political decision-making (popular sovereignty) (see Table 1). We construct summary indices for anti-elitism, people-centrism and popular-sovereignty based on mean scores of these items, and we calculate an overall index for populist attitudes operationalised as the geometric mean of the three preceding indices. The geometric rather than the arithmetic mean was used in order to make sure that the overall index for populist attitudes equals zero when one of its three components (scaled from 0 to 4) is zero.

### **3.3 Independent variables : scalar orientations and controls**

The main aim of our study is to explore the relationship between citizens' perceptions of and attitudes towards different territorial scales of government. More precisely, we seek to test the hypothesis, that populist attitudes in the electorate are associated with localist orientations. Building on earlier work about scalar scopes of citizens' social and political life (Kübler, 2018), we operationalise respondents' scalar orientations with three variables: emotional attachments to, interest in politics of, as well as satisfaction with democracy at different scales of state territories.

More precisely, localist scalar orientations in these three dimensions are calculated by subtracting the values of respondents' answers to survey questions about emotional attachment to / interest in politics of / satisfaction with democracy in their *country*, from the values of their answers to questions about their emotional attachment to / interest in politics of / satisfaction with democracy in their *municipality of residence*. Low values of these variables thus denote orientations towards the national scale, while high values denote that respondents are turned towards the local scale.

In terms of control variables, we have to consider that both levels of populist attitudes as well as scalar orientations are likely to differ across the four national contexts in which our study was conducted. As the aim of this article is to explore the relationships between populist attitudes and scalar orientations in general, we do not formulate specific hypotheses about how these differ between the countries under scrutiny. However, we need to take into account that national specificities could play a role and therefore include country dummies to control for these effects. At the individual level, we include socio-demographic control variables (age, gender and education) as well as left-right self-placement, in order to account for the fact that,

in the four countries under scrutiny, most populist parties are located on the right of the political spectrum.

## **4. Results**

### **4.1 Populist attitudes and scalar orientations : descriptives**

Our measures for the three dimensions of populist attitudes (anti-elitism, people-centrism, as well as popular sovereignty), as well as the overall index for populism show that populist attitudes are rather widespread in all four countries under scrutiny. Looking at the single dimensions, anti-elitist attitudes and emphasis on popular sovereignty are more widespread than people-centrist attitudes. In terms of differences across countries, anti-elitist attitudes are strongest in France and weakest in Switzerland, with Britain and Germany in between. People-centrist attitudes are strongest in Britain and weakest in Germany, with France and Switzerland in between. Finally, demands for popular sovereignty are higher in Britain and France than in Germany or Switzerland. As a result, overall populism as an attitude - measured as a function of the previous three variables - is stronger in Britain and France, than in Germany and Switzerland. Considering that populist attitudes conveyed by the citizens could be at least partially a function of the supply of populist messages by political actors, this result might be related to the political events at the time of the survey fielded roughly six months before the Brexit vote in the UK, as well as about a year before the presidential elections in France - both entailing heated public debates and frequent statements by populist politicians from parties such as the UKIP in Britain, as well as the Front National or France Insoumise in France.

Populist attitudes (operationalised by the indices described in Table 1) are strongly related to preferences for right-wing populist parties. In all four countries, respondents declaring affinities with right-wing populist parties score significantly higher on all three dimensions of populist ideology, as well as on the overall index of populism (see Table 5 in the appendix).

**Table 1 : Measuring populist attitudes: questionnaire items (scaled from 0 “totally disagree” to 4 “totally agree”) and summary indices in four countries (means and standard deviation)**

Question wording		Britain	France	Germany	Switzerland	Overall
Politicians are not really interested in what people like me think.	Mean	2.82	3.13	2.72	2.04	2.70
	SD	0.99	1.11	1.16	1.14	1.16
MPs in Parliament very quickly lose touch with ordinary people	Mean	2.88	3.28	2.91	2.24	2.85
	SD	1.04	0.96	1.01	1.08	1.08
Mean score: <i>anti-elitism</i>	Mean	2.84	3.19	2.81	2.13	2.76
	SD	0.94	0.95	1.00	1.00	1.04
Ordinary people are of good and honest character.	Mean	2.50	2.39	1.96	2.93	2.20
	SD	0.98	1.42	1.34	1.36	1.31
Ordinary people all pull together	Mean	2.24	1.77	1.40	2.35	1.69
	SD	1.09	1.34	1.24	1.23	1.28
The [citizens of country] are basically honest and upright.	Mean	2.51	1.86	1.80	2.27	2.10
	SD	0.92	1.17	1.17	1.11	1.14
The [citizens of country] are a coherent entity, rather than just a bunch of individuals	Mean	2.37	1.56	1.85	2.03	1.95
	SD	0.95	1.27	1.15	1.15	1.17
Mean score: <i>people-centrism</i>	Mean	2.39	1.91	1.74	1.92	1.98
	SD	0.82	0.95	0.97	0.99	0.99
The people should have the final say the most important political issues by voting on them directly in referendums.	Mean	2.83	2.98	2.65	2.84	2.82
	SD	1.03	1.21	1.34	1.18	1.20
The people should be asked whenever important decisions are taken	Mean	2.80	2.79	2.61	2.58	2.69
	SD	1.03	1.28	1.34	1.30	1.25
Mean score: <i>popular sovereignty</i>	Mean	2.81	2.88	2.62	2.71	2.75
	SD	0.94	1.14	1.21	1.08	1.11
Overall index for populism	Mean	2.68	2.66	2.39	2.25	2.50
	SD	0.68	0.79	0.82	0.75	0.79

Notes: weighted data

**Table 2: Attachment (min =0, max =10), interest in politics (min=1, max=4), satisfaction with democracy (min=0, max=10) at the local and the national scales by country (means and standard deviations)**

Variables		Britain	France	Germany	Switzer- land	Overall
How attached to you feel...						
...to the local authority area in which you live?	Mean	6.28	6.16	6.36	6.58	6.47
	SD	2.19	2.88	2.59	2.35	2.54
...to [your country] as a whole?	Mean	7.08	7.78	7.19	8.21	7.54
	SD	2.17	2.49	2.52	1.83	2.33
Local orientation of attachment	Mean	-0.79	-1.42	-0.56	-1.31	-1.00
	SD	2.19	3.02	2.79	2.32	2.64
How interested are you in the politics of...						
...your local authority?	Mean	2.75	3.02	2.94	2.79	2.88
	SD	0.81	0.81	0.88	0.84	0.84
... your country?	Mean	2.95	3.16	3.27	3.06	3.12
	SD	0.80	0.79	0.71	0.75	0.77
Local orientation of political interest	Mean	-0.20	-0.13	-0.33	-0.27	-0.23
	SD	0.70	0.88	0.93	0.86	0.85
How satisfied are you with the way democracy works...						
...in your local authority?	Mean	5.96	5.52	5.87	6.80	6.01
	SD	1.86	2.57	2.43	2.01	2.30
... in [your country]?	Mean	5.86	3.96	5.16	6.54	5.33
	SD	2.06	2.52	2.48	2.00	2.48
Local orientation of satisfaction with democracyt	Mean	0.09	1.60	0.71	0.24	0.68
	SD	1.29	2.66	2.09	1.86	2.13

*Notes:* weighted data

Scalar orientations of respondents encompass three dimensions: place attachment, interest in politics, as well as satisfaction with democracy at various territorial scales (Table 2). Patterns of spatial attachment are quite similar across the four countries. Negative values for local orientation of attachment suggest that, overall, respondents feel more attached to their country of residence than to their locality. This seems to be particularly the case for France and Switzerland. Interest expressed in politics at different spatial scales is the second measure we consider. The majority of respondents express high interest in politics in general: nearly two thirds say they are quite or very interested in politics in general. Regarding interest in politics at different spatial scales, it appears that interest is highest in national politics, but closely followed by interest in local politics. Our index for local orientation of political interest, shows quite similar patterns across the four countries. Respondents were also asked about their satisfaction with the way democracy works in jurisdictions at various spatial scales. Satisfaction with the functioning of democracy is higher for the municipality than for the national authorities, as is shown by the positive values of the index for local orientation of satisfaction with democracy. Across countries, France stands out with the highest discrepancy between (lower) satisfaction with democracy at the national scale, compared with (higher) satisfaction with democracy in the municipality.

#### 4.2 Relationships between populists attitudes and scalar orientations

An exploration of the correlations between the three dimensions of populist attitudes, the overall index of populism, as well as the three different measures for respondents' scalar orientations suggests that there is a 'scalar dimension' to populism (Table 3). Indeed, our indices of populist attitudes are significantly correlated with sub-national orientations in attachment, political interest and satisfaction with democracy. Respondents who feel strongly

**Table 3 : Correlations between populist attitudes and scalar orientations of attachment and political interest (Pearson's correlation coefficients)**

	Anti-elitism	People-centrism	Popular sovereignty	Populism (overall)
Local orientation of attachment	0.049***	0.078***	0.042**	0.075***
Local orientation of political interest	0.057***	0.131***	0.074**	0.115***
Local orientation of satisfaction with democracy	0.203***	0.020	0.148**	0.167***

Notes: weighted data, levels of significance \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

attached to their municipality, who have strong interest for politics at the local level, and who are more satisfied with democracy at the local level are also those with stronger populist attitudes.

In order to check the robustness of the association between scalar orientations and populist attitudes, multi-variate regression analysis was used. More precisely, four OLS models were estimated, regressing the three measures for scalar orientations on the four indices for populist attitudes (Table 4). Besides country-dummies, a number of individual controls were used in order to filter out confounding effects of socio-demographics such as age, gender and education. Given the association between right-wing political orientation and voting for (right-wing) populist parties established by other researchers (Rooduijn, 2017), we also included left-right self placement as a control variable.

The results allow fine-grained insights into the factors associated with populist attitudes. The coefficients for country dummies confirm the bi-variate cross-country differences reported in Table 1. At the level of the control variables, gender and education stand out as socio-demographic predictors. Anti-elitism and claims for popular sovereignty are stronger in female respondents. And all three dimensions of populist attitudes are less pronounced in respondents who have completed a tertiary education. Finally, respondents' self-placement to the right of the political spectrum is associated with strong anti-elitism and people-centrism, thereby confirming previous evidence showing that, in the four countries under scrutiny, populism is essentially a right-wing phenomenon.

Regarding the main question of interest in this study, the multivariate results generally support the hypothesis that populist attitudes are associated with scalar orientations –two of our measures for localist scalar orientations are significant predictors for overall populist attitudes. But the results of the different models in Table 5 also allow for fine-grained insights into this association. Anti-elitism and claims for popular sovereignty are significantly associated only with respondents' assessment of the functioning of democracy at various state levels. A more positive view of local democracy compared to national democracy also entails a more negative view of the (national) political elite, and makes claims in favour of direct citizen participation in politics more likely. People-centrism, however, is associated with emotional attachment to the local level, as well as with political interest turned to the local level. This suggests that it is mostly a positive perception of the local community, to which one

**Table 4: Scalar orientaints and populist attitudes (anti-elitism; people-centrism and overall): OLS regression models**

Independent variables	Anti-elitism	People-centrism	Popular sovereignty	Populism (overall)
<i>Country control dummies</i>				
Switzerland	-0.638*** (0.049)	0.152** (0.045)	0.158** (0.053)	-0.109** (0.036)
France	0.349*** (0.048)	0.138** (0.045)	0.243*** (0.053)	0.242*** (0.036)
Britain	0.099* (0.047)	0.718*** (0.044)	0.293*** (0.052)	0.370*** (0.035)
<i>Controls</i>				
Gender (dummy for female)	0.080* (0.033)	0.038 (0.031)	0.105** (0.037)	0.075** (0.025)
Age	0.002 (0.001)	0.002* (0.001)	-0.002 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)
Teritary education (dummy)	-0.257*** (0.036)	-0.409*** (0.033)	-0.540*** (0.040)	-0.401*** (0.027)
Lef-right self-placement	0.020** (0.007)	0.061*** (0.006)	0.011 (0.007)	0.031*** (0.005)
<i>Independent variables</i>				
Local orientation of attachment	0.011 (0.007)	0.013* (0.006)	0.007 (0.008)	0.011* (0.005)
Local orientation of pol. interest	-0.009 (0.021)	0.061** (0.019)	0.014 (0.023)	0.022 (0.016)
Local orientation of satisfaction with democracy	0.063*** (0.008)	0.013 (0.008)	0.067** (0.009)	0.048*** (0.006)
Intercept	2.575*** (0.072)	1.428*** (0.067)	2.694 (0.080)	2.231*** (0.054)
Number of observations	3357	3349	3355	3363
Adjusted R2	0.165	0.158	0.081	0.157
Model significance	***	***	***	***

*Note:* Weighted data. Table entries are unstandardized OLS regression coefficients, with estimated standard errors in parentheses. \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

feels emotionally attached, and in whose fate one is interested, is an important driver of people-centrism. The two remaining populist attitude dimensions – anti-elitism and claims for popular sovereignty – are more related to perceptions of the institutional workings of the local state.

## **5. Discussion**

The question asked at the outset of this study was whether and how populist attitudes relate to particular perspectives on the scalar organisation of the state in Western Europe. More precisely, we hypothesised that populist attitudes are associated with scalar orientations that prefer the local to the national scale of government and politics. Our findings are straightforwardly in support of this hypothesis. All three dimensions of populist attitudes— anti-elitism, people-centrism, claims for popular sovereignty – but also the overall measure for populism in citizens were found to be positively associated with a variety of indicators gauging scalar orientations with a preference towards the local rather than the national sphere. Our findings thus buttress the argument that populism portends a scalar dimension that goes beyond the widely discussed international-domestic divide: citizens with strong populist attitudes tend to value ‘closeness to the people’ not only in the metaphorical but also in the scalar sense.

In the extant literature, the rise of populism is interpreted as resulting from a crisis of political representation propelled by two different but complementary processes (Kriesi, 2018: 14ff). On the one hand, the declining ability of political parties in most Western democracies to mobilise voters and to channel political conflict has opened up new opportunities for populist protestors rallying against the supposedly privileged political class. On the other hand, the emergence of new structural conflicts has been emphasised, such as a deepening “transnational cleavage” (Hooghe and Marks, 2018) between winners and losers of globalisation processes, leading to an integration-demarcation divide in the political space, in which populists mobilise the opponents to supra-national integration to whom established parties have not been responsive. While this perspective obviously provides a convincing explanation for the populist furor against globalisation and supra-national integration, it is less evident how it relates to our findings that populism also feeds on criticism of the national scale of government.

Populists, we found, cherish the local rather than the national state. Our study does not provide clear-cut answers to the question of why they do so. However, our findings suggests that the rise of populism is not only a story of a crisis of party government in a context of globalisation. It is also a story of a crisis of national statehood as a consequence of restructuring processes in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century— aptly described by King and Le Galès (2017). Populists turn towards the local state not only because this is the scale of government allegedly closest to the people. They also do so because they feel abandoned by the nation

state, its representative institutions but also its policies and services. Due to weakening and dismantling of nationwide public policies and services, the nation state as the “unifying energizer” is gone. The findings of our study thus suggest that rise of populism, beyond a crisis of representation, also denotes a crisis of statehood.

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((To be added))

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## 7. Appendix

**Table 5 : Populist attitudes of respondents according to party preference in the four countries (mean index scores)**

Country	Party affinities	Anti-elitism	People-centrism	Popular sovereignty	Populism (overall)
Britain	Right wing populist parties	2.84	2.60	2.94	2.79
	Other parties	2.78	2.39	2.78	2.65
France	Right wing populist parties	3.54	2.17	3.28	2.86
	Other parties	3.09	1.90	2.77	2.50
Germany	Right wing populist parties	3.62	1.98	3.30	2.80
	Other parties	2.72	1.70	2.53	2.21
Switzerland	Right wing populist parties	2.60	2.45	3.33	2.79
	Other parties	1.93	1.71	2.55	2.07
Overall	Right win populist parties	3.03	2.34	3.25	2.87
	Other parties	2.68	1.92	2.65	2.42

*Notes:* Weighted data. Only respondents who declared having party affinities (CH: n=506; D: n=780; F: n=604; UK: n=597). Right-wing populist party classified for each country according to Kriesi and Pappas (2015).

**Figure 2: Populist attitudes according to party preferences (means and 95% C.I.)**

