1 Innovative methods and high-quality data for populism and euroscepticism research (DataPopEU): The project and the conference

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1.1 Introduction

Populism and euroscepticism are two phenomena that have recently gained increased scholarly attention. The research project entitled `**Innovative methods and high-quality data for populism and euroscepticism research**`(DataPopEU) aimed towards employing a rigorous research design the study of these phenomena. Specifically, it applied innovative and cutting-edge research techniques in order to study empirically these two phenomena both from the supply and the demand side of political competition, as well as from a media perspective. This research project was funded by the Hellenic Foundation for Research and Innovation (ELIDEK) for three years: from December 2019 to December 2022. Its main aim was to develop novel methods and techniques to collect, process (clean) and analyze internet and big volume data focusing on a systematic study of populism and euroscepticism (and their potential linkages) in the Greek context. Data used by the research project was collected from four different sources: printed press, web surveys, social media and the Compass for populism and euroscepticism (PopEUCompass) based on Voting Advice Applications (VAAs) which was developed during the project.

Within the framework of the project, its final conference took place at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki between 7 and 8 December 2022. It also attracted scholars not involved in the project who share common research interests regarding populism and euroscepticism. The overarching goal of the conference was to explore theoretically, empirically and methodologically the interplay between populism and euroscepticism in different contexts within and outside Europe.

This volume collects some of the papers presented in this conference. In this introductory note we will present the main objectives of the project and its linkage with other projects of the School of Political Sciences at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. Moreover,

we will briefly refer to other projects that researchers presented their findings in the conference. Finally, we will analyze the impact of DataPopEU project to the wider academic and scientific community.

1.2   Objectives of DataPopEU

The first and overarching objective of DataPopEU was to produce high quality data by developing and applying response quality indicators and data cleaning methods. To examine data quality, we can measure the participation rate, in terms of response rate and drop-outs, as well as response behavior. Possible response quality indicators include non-differentiation, non-substantive responses and response latencies. After the data collection process is over, we can ensure high data quality applying data cleaning methods relying on response quality indicators. The researchers in DataPopEU have used some of the following indicators to explore response quality: item-nonresponse (skipping, mid-point responses in Likert-type scale items, the time spent on questionnaire items (speeding, various patterns in answering to grid questions of the questionnaire, length of response to the open-ended questions, etc. In this project, we have combined a variety of response quality indicators to investigate all the different aspects of satisficing behavior. In this way, we were able to create an innovative multidimensional model to measure response quality that can help us define the criteria to identify respondents with indications of an overall satisficing behavior.

More specifically, for the web survey data, based on the theory of satisficing (using indicators like numbers of items skipped, time spent in each page etc.), we have developed new methods to check the engagement of the participants in answering the questionnaires and we have applied these methods to clean the collected data. The output of this objective is presented in the second chapter of this volume. Moreover, examining all these different indicators in web surveys of different population and sampling processes (both probability and non-probability samples) we can arrive at a better understanding of response quality. This way, apart from producing data of higher quality in our datasets, we can contribute to the scientific knowledge regarding satisficing and response quality, providing more evidence on how response quality indicators interact with each other.

The second objective of DataPopEU was to develop and apply innovative methods to collect, analyze and interpret social media data referring to populist and eurosceptic issues. The increasing use of social media permits their use as an alternative research tool, competitive to traditional research methods. By analyzing social media posts, it is possible to record the views of users on current issues and identify the most important issues of political competition depending on the frequency they refer to them. However, scholars have not established yet common rules and standards concerning the collection and the analysis of social media data. Previous studies which use social media data to examine public opinion are limited and most of them use them as a supplement to traditional research methods (Murphy et al., 2014). Other studies focus on political communication and the use of social media by political parties and their candidates (Kaczmirek et al., 2013; Larsson & Moe, 2014; Sang & Bos, 2012).

Yet, during the last few years, social scientists are trying to develop best practices to utilize this vast amount of data produced by Internet tools (e.g. Google trends etc.) and social media (Facebook, Twitter etc.) and they are relying on them to study different policy aspects as well as the political behavior of voters and political elites. In this attempt, for example, Internet and social media data have been used to add to more traditional data sources in order to study more thoroughly the importance of a variety of policies (Bromley-Trujillo et al., 2014; Mellon, 2014). In other cases, Twitter data have been used to study the network between left and right leaning users (Conover et al., 2011); likewise, Facebook and in particular likes have been used as a predictor for vote intentions (Kristensen et al., 2017). In addition, we used Twitter data from 2015 parliamentary candidates to supplement 2015 Hellenic Candidate Study (see below for this project) data in order to find out which was the most salient issue in Greece in 2015 and to cross-validate survey data and Twitter data (Andreadis et al., 2018).

As part of the DataPopEU project, we have collected posts by politicians on social media. We have used Twitter due to its popularity both among politicians and citizens. We have also collected tweets made by the public using relevant keywords (people, Europe etc.) and tweets by Greek news websites. Our work on Twitter is presented in the third chapter of

this volume, while some of the Twitter data collected by DataPopEU has been used in Kartsounidou et al. (2022).

The third objective of DataPopEU was to create open access corpora on populism and euroscepticism comprised by printed press articles. More traditional media (i.e. the press) can be another source of useful data. A methodological approach to analyze journalistic (media) discourse is through the lexicometric analysis of corpora which comprises articles of Press publications. In the last few years, it has been proposed that corpus driven lexicometric procedures can greatly assist in the study of political discourse. The combination of qualitative discourse analysis and computer assisted analysis, especially of a lexicometric approach, has already been tested in several analyses in the field of social sciences and in particular in the terrain of political science (Glaze, 2007). The lexicometric approach is based on Corpus Linguistics, a methodology which analyses corpora, i.e. text collections, set up for a specific purpose using language software tools (see McEnery & Hardie, 2012). Those corpora are fixed, but they may include many sub-corpora.

The (qualitative) approach of the so-called "Essex School" approaches populism primarily as a form of political discourse, as a network of meaning which structures political identities and inspires political practices and action (D. Howarth & Stavrakakis, 2000; Laclau & Mouffe, 1985; Laclau, 2005b, 2005a; Townshend, 2003, 2004). In this context, it sets out two basic operational criteria for the differential identification of populist discourse: (1) its articulation around the nodal point – the "empty signifier" – "the people" or around other corresponding nodal points, and (2) the representation of the political and social terrain in a way, which is fundamentally antagonistic and dichotomous, dividing the society into two major poles-chains of equivalence: the establishment, the power block, "the elites/establishment" against "the underdog", the "people" (Stavrakakis, 2004).

A lexicometric approach is considered compatible with discourse-theoretical analysis drawing on the "Essex School" of discourse analysis and it is deemed capable of contributing to its further methodological development, as it is based on three basic principles: (a) research

focuses on given discourse and not on the supposed intentions of his/her agent, which are sought behind discursive articulation, (b) meaning is taken as an element formed by the relationships between verbal elements within an articulated network, and (c) the partial and temporary nature of each articulation of discourse can be analyzed by comparing different corpora.

It is no coincidence that lexicometry is systematically applied in political discourse analyses, such as Polmine and Textopol, and to research projects, whose theoretical background is the "Essex School" theory (Nikisianis et al., 2019); (for the application of corresponding methods in the study of populist discourse see also Caiani & della Porta, 2011; for a first hybrid correlation of the two methodological approaches see Glasze, 2007, p. 664; Rooduijn & Pauwels, 2011).

As part of the DataPopEU project, we have created a Populism and Euroscepticism Press Corpus. This was done through qualitative desktop research as well as through the utilization of a press mining service that has been daily providing the production of individual articles published in the Greek press. The information gathered from the printed press has been used to refine the search terms we have used for social media data mining and in developing new question items to measure populist and euroscepticist attitudes in our surveys. The Populism and Euroscepticism Press Corpus is available at DataPopEU (2022). A lexicometric analysis (in Greek) of the corpora that have been produced by the Greek printed press with prominent references to the signifiers of populism, of "the people" and of euroscepticism is available at: http://www.datapopeu.gr/deliverables

The fourth objective of DataPopEU was to develop a compass for populism and euroscepticism (PopEUCompass) based on the main structure of Helpmevote (Andreadis, 2013). Helpmevote is a very popular Voting Advice Application which helps citizens to identify their proximity to political parties; it is used by hundreds of thousands of Greek voters before each election. Voting Advice Applications (VAAs) are widely used mainly because party identification is in decline, while the number of undecided voters is increased. Moreover,

the majority of voters tend to choose the party that its stances are closer to theirs (Marschall & Schultze, 2011). VAAs rely on the theory of issue-voting which explains electoral behavior according to voters' proximity to the positions of political parties concerning a set of policies (Carmines & Stimson, 1980). The stances or the placement of the parties towards specific issues are produced as a result of expert surveys. It is crucial for political scientists -especially those whose specialization is on political parties- to estimate the positions of parties in a variety of political dimensions. This knowledge allows us to compare parties in the same context. Furthermore, it permits us to study the formation of coalitions between parties. As Andreadis (2015) argues, this knowledge is important not only for scholars but for voters too, in order to choose the party whose policies matches their preferences.

Scholars use different methods of estimating the party positions. We can mention here as different sources a literature review and analysis of party manifestos as well as public opinion surveys, elite studies and, more recently, expert surveys. Expert surveys are widely used by scholars for decades to estimate party positions in a multitude of political dimensions, such as party placement in a left-right scale (Castles & Mair, 1984; Huber & Inglehart, 1995), European integration (Ray, 1999) or economic and social-ethical dimensions (Benoit & Laver, 2006). More recently, several expert surveys about populism and euroscepticism have appeared like Chapel Hill Surveys (Polk et al., 2017); other expert surveys on populism have been conducted by members of the Team Populism project (Andreadis, 2018; Wiesehomeier, 2019).

In order for the theory of issue-voting to be applied it is crucial for voters to be well-informed about party positions as well as to develop their own (Garzia & Marschall, 2012). Due to information cost, voters are not capable of concentrating and processing all the information needed for party and candidate positions. VAAs have motivated their users to search for more information, reducing the chance for abstention for voters using them; they have also affected the final electoral choice of their users (Andreadis & Wall, 2014; Carlson & Strandberg, 2005; Ladner et al., 2010; Marschall, 2008).

Although most VAAs are activated 3-4 weeks before the election day, it is possible to build online tools similar to VAAs that are not strictly tied to a specific election, but it can be used as a general political compass to help users locate their own position within the political spectrum. This is exactly the main difference between PopEUCompass and the usual versions of Helpmevote because the former is focused on populism and euroscepticism and it is not associated to a specific election. PopEUCompass[1] includes a series of statements related to populist and eurosceptic issues. Some of the statements have already been used in HelpMeVote 2015, some others have been translated from the Core Questionnaire of the Comparative Candidate Survey (CCS) other statements have been developed within Team Populism (Akkerman et al., 2014; K. Hawkins et al., 2012; K. A. Hawkins et al., 2018) and the Populismus project (Stavrakakis et al., 2017).

The fifth objective of DataPopEU was to develop revised questionnaires for the Hellenic Candidate Study and the Hellenic Voter Study (see below for both projects), as well as the PopEUCompass by i) analyzing the items related to populism and euroscepticism that have been used in the previous versions of these tools (especially in 2015) ii) using the collected information from social media and the Greek printed press. An index for measuring populism has already been applied in Greece with great success (Andreadis & Ruth, 2019; Andreadis & Stavrakakis, 2017; K. A. Hawkins et al., 2019; Stavrakakis et al., 2017). Populism and euroscepticism can also be studied using social media data. A fair number of studies has turned its attention to populist politicians and parties who use Facebook and Twitter and to the effectiveness of this kind of communication strategy (Bracciale & Martella, 2017; Ernst et al., 2017). Brexit, as the latest expression of (hard) euroscepticism has also drawn its share of attention. There are arguments in favor of social media influence to the Referendum Campaign (Hänska & Bauchowitz, 2017). Others try to find and measure most influential opponents and proponents of Brexit in Twitter (Grčar et al., 2016). According to Celli et al. (2016), social media data offered the ability to predict the outcome of the British referendum. The new items

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[1] The PopEUCompass is available at: https://popeu.helpmevote.gr/

were tested in pilot studies for the selection of the best items. The new datasets are available at: https://www.datapopeu.gr/data

Our final objectives of DataPopEU were to measure populism and euroscepticism in Greece and investigate their relationship, using the collected data and to conduct a comparative analysis using data gathered in 2015 and 2019. We have measured populist and eurosceptic attitudes among the elites, the voters, and in the press and we have studied their correlations and determinants. We have maximized the added value of our data by combining them. For instance, by combining elite and voter data we have studied the elite-voter congruence. Chapters 3,4, 5 and 6 of this volume are related to these objectives.

1.3   Datasets

The Hellenic National Election Voter Study includes a common module of survey questions provided by the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES), a collaborative program of research among election study teams from around the world. The 2019 Hellenic National Election Voter Study was conducted as a mixed mode survey. The sample was selected randomly via a Random Digital Dialing (RDD) approach. Respondents were recruited via SMS on their mobile phones. The design of a probability-based web survey of the general population, optimized for mobile users, using SMS as the main contact mode is a very innovative approach, which was implemented for the first time in the Hellenic National Election Voter Survey and it was based on a novel interaction between the server used for our web surveys with a SMS gateway service. Our novel method is based on the "push-to-web" method, i.e. a data collection method in which offline contact modes are used to encourage sample members to go online and complete a web questionnaire. The push-to-web method has been tested with postal mail as the contact mode (Dillman et al., 2009). In our innovative design we have replaced postal mail notifications with SMS notifications. A similar push-to-web approach (using landline calls as our contact mode) has already been used successfully in the 2015 Hellenic voter study (Andreadis et al., 2015). The selected respondents have received SMS notifications with a short URL link to participate in the survey, either to be activated directly from their smartphones or to be copied on their PC browser. In addition, we have

called the respondents who have not reacted to this invitation, and we asked them if they needed any help and if they preferred to participate int the survey via a telephone interview. At the end, we have overachieved our goal to gather a probability-based sample of 1500 completed questionnaires.

The Hellenic Candidate Study of 2019 has included a common core questionnaire provided by the Comparative Candidates Survey (CCS). Most of the Greek candidate MPs have e-mail addresses, which are usually available online especially during the period of electoral campaigning. We have collected their email addresses with two methods: i) using search engines and visiting websites related to the candidates or to the Greek elections in general, ii) asking political parties to provide us with a list of their candidates along with their email addresses. Combining the data from these two methods we have created a list of candidates with a known e-mail address. Following AAPOR (2016), we have defined this list as our target population, and we have sent to all of them an invitation to participate in our survey.

Expert surveys were another source of data. We have conducted two expert surveys that enable us to estimate the ideological positions of the main Greek political parties with respect to populist and eurosceptic issues. The first survey was used to build the initial version of PopEUCompass during the first year of the project and it was amended and finalized during the final year with the data of the second survey. For the items included in PopEUCompass we have relied on previous efforts regarding populism and euroscepticism (e.g. Chapel Hill, Team Populism and the Populismus project). In addition, we have relied on some CSES items and other surveys about populism and euroscepticism as well as on information collected from our project –web experiments, social media, printed press. We have combined the data from the two rounds of the expert surveys[2].

In addition to survey data, we have collected and analyzed internet-based data generated in the social media using R, a free software environment which enables Twitter data

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[2] All survey datasets are available at: http://www.datapopeu.gr/data

mining through its specific packages that allow to download tweets and all the relevant information from certain users provided that they have an open public account. These packages also permit the developer to download tweets containing certain keywords or hashtags (e.g. "people", "Europe" etc.). We have applied the most innovative R packages (e.g. tidytext) for the analysis of the collected social media data. After gathering tweets by parliamentary candidates, we have used frequency analysis to count how many times politicians mention words closely related to populism and euroscepticism.

We have also created open access corpora comprised by printed press articles on which a combination of discourse-theoretical and lexicometric methodologies have been applied to arrive at the collection of substantive data and to allow their comprehensive analysis. This have been done through the utilization of a press mining service that has provided the 'raw' material (reservoir of individual articles), a series of subsequent 'cleaning' processes, and, finally, the application of corpus linguistics tools (including AntConc and the lexicometric tool available through the POPULISMUS internet Observatory)[3].

1.4   The DataPopEU Conference (Thessaloniki 7-8 December 2022)

As mentioned above, our conference, has hosted, in the first instance, many papers that presented findings and methodological drawing in our research (see: Chapters 2-6). The DataPopEU conference, supported by ELIDEK, also served as a venue to present findings from the research project `Friends and Foes of the European Union: The consequences of the increasing gap in and for Europe´(ProConEU).[4]. Drawing on a systematic analysis of different data sources and their linkage– election manifestos for European Parliament Elections, social media data and public opinion surveys, ProConEU aims to systematically study the divide

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[3] The Populism and Euroscepticism Press Corpus is available at: http://hdl.handle.net/11500/CLARIN-EL-0000-0000-6A9F-7

[4] ProConEU investigates the consequences of Euroscepticism in terms of party politics, citizen politics and social media communication. The project is funded by the funding line Sticking together in tough times by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research in Germany. Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and the School of Political Sciences participate in this project as one of the four partners of the project. For more details see https://www.mzes.uni-mannheim.de/proconeu/

between supporters and opponents of the EU in times of multiple crises in Europe. The chapter entitled ´Trust towards the EU during the pandemic: a multilevel analysis´ in this volume aims to shed light on the impact of the pandemic crisis to the levels of trust in national and supranational institutions from autumn 2018 to autumn 2021.

Last but not least, it has hosted papers that further develop aspects of theoretical and conceptual innovation, which were taken into account in the project (like "Contemporary Populism Research: Challenges & New Directions" that focuses on the research potential of a discursive conceptualization of populism) as well as papers that enrich the overall scope of contemporary research on these issues by linking it to the broader circulation of such ideas in the international context, especially between Europe and Latin America ("The Populist Radical Right in Latin America and their Connections with European Populism") and by highlighting the continuing relevance of economic populism in today's Europe ("Economic positions of populist parties across Europe. The return of economic populism in the 21st century?").

1.5   Impact & Perspectives

The main long-term vision of this research project was to develop and use innovative methods and techniques on the Internet to produce clean and high quality political data from web surveys and social media posts. Our aim was to put forward methods that will serve as an example for other web surveys and projects focusing on politics globally. By applying our methods to study important political issues such as populism and euroscepticism we have aimed at attracting an increased interest by the research community to our methods and data.

All the aforementioned methodological approaches and the different sources of data have been used as substantive elements for the systematic investigation of the articulations and the conceptual patterns related to populism and euroscepticism. The theoretical and methodological reference basis have been the combination of discourse-theoretical as well as qualitative, quantitative and lexicometric methods. Combining high-quality survey data with social media and printed press data we have moved towards a multilevel analysis of populism and euroscepticism, taking into account the perspectives of political elites, of the electorate and the press in crisis-ridden Greece.

The newly gained knowledge for populism and euroscepticism is spread to citizens through an open access online tool named PopEUCompass, a compass mainly related to populism and euroscepticism. Greek voters by answering the PopEUCompass questionnaire are able to find out where they stand on the dimensions of (left or right) populism and (left or right) euroscepticism. In addition, they are able to compare their position with the position of the Greek political parties (assessed using expert surveys) on the same issues and on the same dimensions.

The DataPopEU conference, which attracted many students and citizens and has enjoyed much media attention, is also expected to advance the impact of the DataPopEU project and the broader dissemination of its results. The proceedings at hand, which include many of the papers presented, may also facilitate discussions beyond Greece and Europe, benefiting future research on the themes highlighted.

Acknowledgements

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