

The Rise of Left-Wing Populism in Spain and Greece



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Executive summary

Right-wing populism in Europe has been a returning problem since the beginning of the twentieth century. However, since the 2000s, especially after the Economic Recession of 2008 and the economic crisis of 2012, there have been many powerful, upcoming left-wing populist parties mainly in the south of Europe. SYRIZA in Greece and Podemos in Spain were two of the parties that reached tremendous popularity in a short time span. In this paper, there will be explored what the differences is between right -and left-wing populism and why left-wing populism gained its popularity after a time of economic insecurity. Furthermore, in two case studies on Podemos and SYRIZA is explained why the parties grew in these specific countries, what their voter groups are and how they differ from each other.

The issue is examined through the use of empirical research, mainly through qualitative research which will be supported by primary and secondary sources. Moreover, the analysis provided comparative research as the two case studies and different voter groups are compared. The analysis also points out that the left-wing populist parties do not necessarily all follow a similar rhetoric, and that the left-wing populist parties are not always focused on inclusiveness. Next to that, there is resulted that the economic crises between 2008-2012 were not the sole reasons why the left-wing populist parties gained popularity in Spain and Greece. There is also proven that economic instability did not necessarily cause left-wing populism to rise in other European countries.

All in all, the conclusion shows that a combination of circumstances in Spain and Greece triggered people to vote for Podemos and SYRIZA. It was therefore concluded that the cause of the rise of left-wing populism is a combination between the young constitutions that the countries have and their unstable framework that give much opportunity to corruption. These issues mainly came to light after the economic crisis and therefore together created an opportunity for left-wing populists to become more powerful.

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1. Introduction

Populism, a political program or movement that advocates the common person, usually by favorable contrast with an elite (Munro, 2017). Populism dates back to ancient Greece and the Roman empire and created great revolutions that shaped our contemporary world and society (Glaser, 2017). The French revolution, for example, was fueled by populists who could not stand the financial inequality and oppression of the poor French citizens during the time of king Louis XVI (Adam, 2017, p. 20). However, populism has also brought cruelty in our European history, with the Second World War started by the fascist and populist leader Adolf Hitler. The populist rhetoric has therefore many faces, which some see as a fierce and honest one that is there to help the people in times of oppression and crisis, while others see it as a selfish, polarizing face that is causing a threat to democracy (Kotroyannos, Tzagkarakis, Pappas, 2018, p. 12).

Nowadays, the popularity for mainly right-wing populist parties increases, also in Europe (Kotroyannos, Tzagkarakis, Pappas, 2018, p. 2). Research published by the Guardian shows that one in four Europeans voted populist in 2018 and that the number of Europeans living under governments with a populist party in cabinet has increased 13-fold since 1998 (Lewis, Clarke, Barr, Holder, Kommenda, 2018). Generally, populism and extreme ideologies have become increasingly mainstream all over the world (Mudde, 2019, p. 20). From small, regional, separatist parties in Cataluña and Scotland, to parliamentary parties such as *Partij van de Vrijheid* (English: Freedom Party) (PVV) in the Netherlands, to the ruling party Fidesz in Hungary. The right-wing parties mainly bring a nativist, xenophobic rhetoric and are classically polarizing the society between the good -and bad side (Ristov, 2017, p. 4). The good side being the majority of the people, and the hard workers. The bad side being the immigrants, mainstream media and the elites (Laclau & Mouffe, 2005, p. 40, 57).

Next to the extreme-right wing parties that gain popularity, Europe also seems to experience a growing popularity of inclusive left-wing populists. Countries in the European Union did not have a ruling left-wing populist party until the elections of January 2015, when SYRIZA in Greece won (Maltezou & Babington, 2015). Left-wing populism is as polarizing as the right-wing, however, academics noticed that the left-wing populist parties that gained popularity in Europe since the twenty-first century were less anti-immigrant (Katsambekis & Stavrakakis, 2014, p. 123; Ivaldi, Lanzone, Woods, 2017, pp. 363-364).

The left-wing parties mainly grew in the south of Europe, took inspiration from the left-wing extremists in Latin-America and were rapidly growing and multiplying after the Great

Recession of 2008 (Hawkins, Read, Pauwels, 2017, p. 13; Markou, 2017, p. 54). Even though left-wing populism is overall not gaining more popularity than right, there have been some cases where the parties gained ruling positions within four to ten years after the founding (Lewis, Clarke, Barr, Holder, Kommenda, 2018). These cases were Podemos in Spain, which is now coalition party, and SYRIZA, which ruled Greece from 2015 to 2019.

Today, there have been many questions on why the left-wing populists gained, for some sudden, popularity after Europe was mainly facing a rise of right-wing populism. Furthermore, many academics have been questioning why it happened in Spain and Greece and why it happened closely after the economic crises between 2008-2012. In the best way to answer the questions asked by many, this thesis will be focusing on what the socio-economic influences are on the rise of left-wing populism in Spain and Greece since the end of the twentieth century. The thesis will include some important aspects on the history of populism, the definition of populism and the cases of SYRIZA and Podemos. The methodology explains the trustworthiness of the sources and the research tactics. Lastly, the analysis will provide a critical examination of the facts stated and will help conclude if there are extreme differences between right -and left-wing populism in Europe. Essentially, the conclusion will answer the main question: *"What are the socio-economic influences that are causing the rise of left-wing populist parties in Spain and Greece since the end of the twentieth century?"*.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 Defining “populism”

Populism and democracy originally share the same roots according to Ph. D. Robert Adam (Adam, 2017, p. 20). Professor Adam states that the first form of modern populism was applied during the French Revolution, where the people were seen as the new sovereign instead of the aristocracy. He also names the *Narodniki* (English: peopleism), a Russian movement lead by left-wing intellectuals that fought against capitalism and westernization between 1850-1880 as an example of populism in its pure form (Adam, 2017, p. 20).

Populism is now again a rising phenomenon in the western world, and many scholars are making an effort to define the concept. According to Panizza, editor the book *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy*, the most important aspect for populism is, that there must be a leader or group of leaders that divide the society in two homogeneous groups. The first group consists out of the “normal” and good-hearted people and/or workers that are opposing the “enemies”. It is important that the enemies must always be seen as “the other” and the group that does not belong to the society in the minds of the “normal” people (Panizza, 2005, p. 3). In most cases the “others” are elites, who can be defined as wealthy and/or powerful, but also minorities and media can be seen as the opposition. The good-guy, bad-guy concept is a key element in populism, since there must be a group that is to blame for the issue that the populist leader proposes (Rocchetti, 2018, p. 6).

Political scientist specialized in extremism and populism, Cas Mudde added that populism has to contain two main elements in order to define it as populism. The political approach must consist the core features: anti-establishment and authoritarianism in order to call it populism (Mudde, 2007, p. 22). He also adds that he sees populism as a *thin-centered ideology*, which means that populist parties are able to change their features and positions based on the crisis and host ideology. This can be defined as a chameleonic quality. For example, populist leaders can agree with fascist, democratic, socialistic or liberal ideas and still be a populist at the core. This is a way, populist parties are able to gain more voters as they are easily adjusting to people’s needs (Mudde, 2004, p. 543).

Most experts agree that a charismatic leader is a fundamental aspect to make populism successful. A charismatic leader with populist ideas makes use of the moment of crisis and presents new and simple solutions for all the citizens to understand. Therefore, it is important to choose the right moment and time to present their ideas to the people (Skolkay, 2000, pp.

17-18; Rocchetti, 2018, pp. 7-8). Even though most populist parties did not manage to fulfill their promises or stay in power for a lengthy time, they gained many voters by presenting themselves as the spokesmen of the citizens.

Additionally, the populist rhetoric and communicational style are an important factor to persuade people to follow populist parties. Populist leaders mostly speak in an aggressive, frightening way in order to make people feel anxious about the situation they are in and feel that they are in need of a strong leader who guides them through it. The communicational style of the populists is mostly based on powerful, passionate slogans (Rocchetti, 2018, p. 8).

Now, the issue with defining populism is that all the features and keywords given by the experts (such as people vs. elites) are very broad. Academics have continuously repeated how the concept of populism is still not entirely worked out and how its meaning changes continuously. Mudde describes one of these issues, *conceptual stretching* (Mudde, 2016, p. 15). This seems to be a problem of today, as the influence of globalization is increasing and populism has become more mainstream, more opinions are involved with defining political and social concepts. As Mudde stated, many political parties suffer from conceptual stretching, as they are unrightfully labelled as populists (Mudde, 2016, p. 15)

In Europe, right-wing populism has had larger influence on national and international politics than left-wing populism. Therefore, researchers have mainly focused on recognizing the traits of the right-wing populists. However, since left-wing populism, or social populism, gained more popularity at the beginning of the twenty-first century, political scientists found that this type of populism had different traits than the radical right. Even though social populism was already known and frequently experienced in other continents such as Latin-America, many researchers are still researching and observing this in Europe.

3. Literature review

3.1 How and why did populism in Europe rise?

Firstly, Professor of political science Angelos Stylianos Chrysosgelos, believes that the 1980s were the times that populism officially began to re-emerge in Europe after the Second World War. He explains that this was mostly indicated by the rising popularity of Front National (FN) in France and the Freedom Party of Austria (German: *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs, FPÖ*) (Chrysosgelos, 2013, pp. 76-77). Because of mass-immigration and unemployment in the 1980s, people started to feel culturally and economically insecure. Therefore, the parties gained attractiveness through their anti-immigrant and radical conservative discourse. Rosa Balfour, a Senior Transatlantic Fellow at the Germany Marshall Fund of the US, adds that she believes that populism started thriving around the 1990s as a result of the Cold War. Balfour explains that America and Russia demonstrated that they were not involving the “normal citizens” in their political games and many people became disappointed in the political elites, which caused worldwide demonstrations and protests (Balfour, 2017, p. 57).

Dutch political scientist and professor Cas Mudde does not disagree with this idea but wants to specify that the growth of populism did not go in one straight direction. He believes that the form of populism that we know comes in waves and its popularity increases and decreases. He explains that we are now experiencing the fourth wave of populism since the beginning of the 20st century. Furthermore, he mentioned in his book *Far Right Today* that he does not see the 1980s or the Cold War as the beginning of contemporary populism, but he believes that it started around 1945 (Mudde, 2019, p. 11). In his book he explains that Klaus von Beyme, a political scientist specialized in economic social science, identified three waves of far-right politics from 1945-2000 in Western Europe (Von Beyme, 1988, pp. 1-18). He describes the neo-fascist period of 1945-1955; the right-wing populism period from 1955-1980 and the radical-right period from 1980-2000.

Mudde states that the characteristics of the fourth wave are not as different from those of the third wave. The only differentiating factor according to Mudde would be the mainstreaming of the far right (Mudde, 2019, p. 20). Even though Mudde established a fourth wave of populism, Bernauer, a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Data and Methods Unit of the MZES, doubts if a fourth wave is already definable. He described that populism always had a short period of success, as he states that:

“Populist parties tend to slow down in their electoral growth. Its impact remains an open question which depends on many factors such as further external events, the strategies of populist and mainstream parties as well as the substance of the wave argument. It is too early to tell whether we are moving towards a fourth wave of populism” (Bernauer, 2017, p. 18).

Based on the findings, several indicators are used in order to structure the literature review. These indicators are corruption, economic instability, electoral laws and globalization. Globalization will be divided in the sections: Euroscepticism, immigration and media. Afterwards, a separate section will explain how the subjects from the literature review apply to left-wing populism and if there is any difference to right-wing populism.

3.1.1 Corruption

According to professors Gerring and Thacker, political corruption is defined as “a violating act by political officials of laws or norms for private gains” (Gerring & Thacker, 2004, p. 300). Most academics, such as modern political analyst Kriesi, see corruption as one of the most influential causes of the rise of populism (Kriesi, 2014, p. 374). They state that corruption shows the unfairness of the system to the people and displays the political elites as untrustworthy. Professors Hanley and Sikk add that corruption is one of the reasons that made anti-establishment parties/populist parties in Central Europe successful (Hanley & Sikk, 2014, p. 17-18). Hawkins Read and Pauwels, writers of the chapter “Populism and Its Causes” from the *Oxford Handbook of Populism*, explain that the success of populist parties is because of the anger and disappointment of the citizens that cannot be channeled through the current political system. They would rather be represented by a “new” populist party that seems to understand the peoples will, rather than the “political elites” who were the ones to blame for the corruption in the first place (Hawkins, Read, Pauwels, 2017, p. 12).

However, Hawkins, Read and Pauwels, want to emphasize that populism does not necessarily have to come together with corruption (Hawkins, Read, Pauwels, 2017, p. 13). They give the example that liberal democratic countries like Norway, The Netherlands and Switzerland also have problems handling populist movements. They empathize that widespread corruption is one of the reasons that populism gains popularity, but that it is not necessarily linked to the rise of populism (Hawkins, Read, Pauwels, 2017, p. 13).

3.1.2 Economic instability

Most academics agree that economic recessions are also one of the important causes for the rise of populism. Hawkins, Read and Pauwel emphasize that countries which were hit the hardest by the crisis, such as in Greece, Italy and Spain, are experiencing the most trouble with the rise of populist movements who are basing their core arguments on economic issues (Hawkins, Read, Pauwels, 2017, p. 13). Greek political theorists Stavrakakis and Katsamberkis agree with this statement and add that 27% of the Greek people were unemployed in 2012 and 60% of the Greek youth were unemployed (Stavrakakis & Katsamberkis, 2014, p. 125). Taggart uses the facts given by Stavrakakis and Katsamberkis to explain that SYRIZA in Greece is one of the populist parties that partly rose as a response to the economic recession in 2008 (Taggart, 2017, p. 8-9). The Greek professors and authors Kotroyannos, Tzagkarakis and Pappas added that SYRIZA promised positive economic changes to people who lost their job or received a lower payment, which made them more popular (Kotroyannos, Tzagkarakis, Pappas 2018, p. 5).

Even though most scholars seem to be positive that economic instability is one of the reasons for the rise of populism, to Hawkins, Read and Pauwels it is important to mention again that economic recession is not necessarily linked to populism (Hawkins, Read, Pauwels, 2017, p. 13). For example, after the economic recession in 2008, North-Atlantic countries like Ireland and Iceland were not facing the same economically focused populist movements as less-wealthier countries like Spain and Greece. The authors are definitely agreeing that economic issues are linked to the rise of populism, but they want to emphasize that it is not the main argument for every populist party/movement (Hawkins, Read, Pauwels, 2017, p. 13). Rosa Balfour agrees with this statement and adds that populism has also grown in periods without economic crises in some Scandinavian countries and for example Netherlands (Balfour, 2017, p. 57). This does not mean however, that the countries did not experience an economic crisis. Rather, that economic problems were not necessarily linked to the rise of the populist parties in these countries.

3.1.3 Electoral laws

Political scientist Stijn van Kessel believes that electoral laws can have an influence on the growth of populism (van Kessel, 2015, pp. 19-20, 27). Van Kessel explains that countries in Europe with a proportional representation, such as the Netherlands, Spain and Greece, give small, populist parties enough space to grow. He explains that the electoral laws of a

proportional system make the number of seats in the parliament closely match the number of votes a party receives. He adds to this that a proportional system is more beneficial to small, new populist parties than to older, traditional parties (van Kessel, 2015, pp. 19-20). Authors specialized on authoritarianism Allen Hicken and Darin Self agree with this theory and add that it is harder for a small populist party to enter a parliament when the electoral laws are stricter (Hicken & Self, 2018, p. 1).

They, however, add that the already existing parties play a role too. If the electoral laws are open and the existing parties weak, it would be simpler for populist parties to have growing popularity. However, if the traditional parties are strong, the populist parties would be able to enter the parliament but would play a meaningless role (Self & Hicken, 2018, p. 2). Professors from the university of Bergen, Ivarsflaten and Gudbrandsen explain that both UKIP in the UK and Front National in France profited from a proportional political system (Ivarsflaten & Gudbrandsen, 2014, p. 4). The professors explain that UKIP gained successfulness during the proportional contest of the European elections, and FN made its breakthrough after the political rules changed from majoritarian to proportional in 1986.

However, even though the academics mentioned believe that electoral laws influence the popularity of populism, most of them realize that it does not cover all the factors that come with the rise. For example, Rovira Kaltwasser and Taggart believe that electoral laws and other institutional restrictions do not influence the chance for populist parties to enter the parliament once the party gains immense popularity (Rovira Kaltwasser & Taggart, 2016, pp. 213-214). Van Kessel agrees and adds that factors such as corruption and economic instability play larger roles in the rise of populism than electoral laws (van Kessel, 2015, p. 26).

3.1.4 Globalization

Because globalization as a cause for populism is a very broad term, it is divided into smaller sections: I immigration, II Euroscepticism and III media.

I Immigration

The authors of the academic sources used for the dissertation agreed that immigration is one of the most common indicators of mostly right-wing populism. Many authors such as Cas Mudde, Rosa Balfour, and sociologist Ayhan Kaya believe a large stream of immigrants or refugees, for example during the refugee crisis of 2015, can give people the sense that their

culture and identity is threatened (Mudde, 2019, pp. 31-33; Balfour, 2017, pp. 56-57; Kaya, 2011, p. 13-14, 44). Kaya explains this into detail and takes islamophobia as an example. He explains that most people feel safe when they live in a homogeneous society where most the cultural rules are similar. For a citizen of a western, Christian country, a growing Muslim society can be seen as a threat to their homogeneous culture as they have different habits, communities and beliefs (Kaya, 2011, pp. 40, 42). Mudde and Maarten van Rossem, Dutch historian and author, support this idea in their books *Far Right of Today* and *Waarom is de Burger Boos?* (Why are the Citizens Angry?) and add that the terrorist attacks of 9/11 made people of Western society even more fearful about the Muslim community (Mudde, 2019, p. 20) (van Rossem, 2010, pp. 38-40).

Mudde, Balfour and Kaya all agree that right-wing populists make use of this fear in order to gain more followers. Mudde and Kaya agree that blaming Muslims, refugees or any other minority for problems in society such as criminality, economic issues or general agitation will identify an enemy that the majority can turn against (Balfour, 2017, pp. 57-58; Mudde, 2019 pp. 32-34; Kaya, 2011, pp. 6, 13). Mudde supports this by giving an example of a conspiracy of the beginning of the twenty-first century called “the Great Replacement”. This was used by right-wing parties to create the idea that immigrants were culturally and physically replacing the “native” citizens (Mudde, 2019, p. 32).

Martin Ristov, professor of international relations at the Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, supports this idea by giving examples of right-wing European parties which make use of the xenophobic and nativist rhetoric of seeing immigrants as the enemy of society. He thinks Lega Nord in Italy, The Freedom Party in Austria and Rassemblement National in France are the most known for their anti-immigrant rhetoric (Ristov, 2017, p. 3). Balfour also adds that the Brexit party, UKIP, also supported the UK leaving Europe by spreading the same xenophobic rhetoric. She wrote that “Take back Control” was one of the Brexit slogans during the referendum campaign (Balfour, 2017, p. 58).

II Euroscepticism

Euroscepticism is a unique phenomenon of globalization which is connected to people’s doubt towards Europe and the European Union. Mudde explains that this is because “Brussels” is seen as a very high, distant political power that does not connect with the average citizen (Mudde, 2016, p. 29). Paul Taggart, professor at the university of Essex and author, adds two other reasons why European citizens could be Eurosceptic. Firstly, he describes that the

Maastricht Treaty of 1992, made part of the European citizens feel as if they were forced to integrate with other European countries and this made them afraid to lose their own identity. Secondly, Taggart explains that because of the Economic Recession of 2008, many citizens of wealthy countries sensed that they had to pay their hard-earned money to poorer countries like Greece, who in their opinion did not deserve it (Taggart, 2017, p. 9). On the other hand, professors Santana and Rama find it important that the view of Greece and Spain are also mentioned as they explained that their citizens felt like the “losers” of the globalization and felt belittled by the wealthier European countries (Santana & Rama, 2018, p. 13).

III Media

Many academics believe that the media played a large role in the growing popularity of populism, left and right, in Europe. Mudde explains the fourth wave of populism was characterized by normalization and mainstreaming populism through (social) media. He explains that media is attention and profit based, so he writes that the media does consider if news resembles good or bad behavior. Briefly, if something is shocking, the media will publish it (Mudde, 2019, p. 108). Gianpietro Mazzoleni, a professor at the university of Milan, adds that media is helpful for populist leaders, as they fundamentally make use of provocative language, dramatic divisions and extreme examples in order to gain more followers. Mazzoleni writes that these tactics make it more attractive for media channels to publish about the parties. He states that mostly social media is an appealing resource for populist leaders and their followers, as it is a platform that most people use and does not have to be academically written or validated (Mazzoleni, 2008, p. 52).

Mudde adds that many populist leaders such as Trump, Wilders and Matteo Salvini (Lega Nord) are actively spreading populist messages on Twitter. This causes opportunities for public debate and lets the leaders determine what their target audiences are (Mudde, 2019, p. 111). Sometimes the leaders reach a bigger audience than their followers, and sometimes they get criticized for using Twitter as a political platform. Either way, it effectively draws attention to the parties’ ideas. Mudde, however, wants to emphasize that media is not necessarily a *friend nor a foe* to the populist parties (Mudde, 2019, p. 112). One of his explanations is that media is most of the time not far-right oriented as they know that a far-right leader could mean the end of their freedom of expression.

Social and political researcher Tine Ustad Figenschou and professor in journalism Karoline Andrea Ihlebæk agree with Mudde’s statement. They explain that populist parties can

use media not only to draw more attention to themselves but also to censor other media sources (Figenschou & Ihlebæk, pp. 1228, 1233, 2018). For example, Trump is known to call left-oriented media sources spreaders of fake news. Salvini is known to invest in newspapers that are compound by the government and Wilders is known to boycott or ridicule pro-immigration activists. Many populist leaders purposefully claim that journalists, who do not share their beliefs, are part of the elites and are therefore invalid (Figenschou & Ihlebæk, pp. 1233, 2018).

3.2 Left-wing populism

Since this thesis is focused on left-wing populism, it is important to state the causes that sometimes differ from general or extreme right-wing populism. Firstly, academics mostly agree that left-wing and right-wing populism share common core principles. Yannis Stavrakakis and Giorgos Katsambekis, Greek authors and professors, wrote that left-wing populism, similar to right-wing populism, divides society in two blocks: the establishment and/or the elites, versus the people (Katsambekis & Stavrakakis, 2014, p. 123). Ivaldi, Lanzone and Woods, political scientists, agree with this idea and explain that both right -and left-wing populists believe that the sovereignty belongs to the people, instead of the elites or traditional politicians (Ivaldi, Lanzone, Woods, 2017, pp. 363-364). They add that the parties from the different sides of the specter support their beliefs with strong language and exaggerated examples in order to gain followers.

José Ignacio Torreblanca, a Spanish political analyst and political scientist, believes that populists from both sides are driven by corruption. However, he thinks that left-wing populism is more social based and is more focused on general social equality, which is undermined by corruption (Torreblanca, 2015, p. 11). Ivaldi, Lanzone and Woods argue that in some contexts, left-wing populists do not only direct their anti-establishment rhetoric at corrupt politicians, but also to the financial elites and state that they do not deserve to be above the rest of the people. This is something that the right-wing populist do not express often (Ivaldi, Lanzone, Woods, 2017, p. 360). Zúquete, a Spanish author specialized in populism and authoritarianism, believes that the rise of the left-wing populists is more focused on economic equality and social justice, while he thinks that right-wing populism is more based on a xenophobic and nationalist platform (Zúquete, 2018, p. 420).

Mudde, agrees with Torreblanca's and Zúquete's theory, and explains that right-wing populists are also, by all means, focused on economic inequality among the people, but they are doing this with a more nativist or nationalist focus, as they blame social inequalities on

minorities and immigrants (Mudde, 2007, p. 22). Ivaldi, Lanzone and Woods add that Podemos and SYRIZA are the most successful left-wing populist parties in Europe advocate minority rights, gender equality and civic liberty, something that extreme right-wing parties such as Rassemblement National in France and Lega Nord in Italy do not do (Ivaldi, Lanzone, Woods, 2017, p. 364). Therefore, Katsambekis, Stavrakakis, Mudde, Ivaldi, Lanzone and Woods all agree that right-wing populism is an exclusive type of populism and that left-wing populism is more inclusive.

Markou, a professor on the university of Thessaloniki, emphasizes that left-wing populist do feel a sense of patriotism and pride for their people, but he explains that this is different to nationalism (Markou, 2017, p. 59). He states that

“Patriotism taps the affective component of one’s feelings toward one’s country, while nationalism reflects a perception of national superiority and an orientation toward national dominance” (Markou, 2017, p. 59).

Pablo Iglesias Turrión, leader of Podemos, describes himself as a true patriot who is proud of Spain. However, he would never discriminate a minority that is part of Spain and its patriotic ideology (Ivaldi, Lanzone, Woods, 2017, p. 368). Ivaldi, Lanzone, Woods and Markou explain that the left-wing populists consider minorities and immigrants part of the society that need to be included (Ivaldi, Lanzone, Woods, 2017, p. 368; Markou, 2017, p. 59).

Lastly, based on all the theories, professor of the university of Thessaloniki, Alexandros Kioupkiolis, describes that left-wing populism is more focused on social movements and overall equality. He describes that the parties are more horizontally arranged compared to the right-wing populists, which are more vertically distributed (Kioupkiolis & Katsambekis, 2019, p. 48). Ivaldi, Lanzone and Woods add that parties such as Podemos promote pluralistic equality and grassroots democracy and are therefore more liberally oriented than parties such as Rassemblement National, which rejects pluralism (Ivaldi, Lanzone, Woods, 2017, pp. 369-370). Some authors, such as Zúquete, even argue that left-wing populism can be seen as the “good” form of populism, as it could work as a corrective tool for democracy instead of a threat (Zúquete, 2018, p. 420).

3.3 Challenges

What can be drawn from sources used, is that left-wing populism is nowhere near as successful in Europe as right-wing populism. The sources are therefore limited to certain time periods and mostly focused on the most famous cases, such as Podemos in Spain and SYRIZA in Greece. Also, populism in itself is a *thin ideology* (Mudde, 2004, p. 543). Therefore, it is difficult to determine if the arguments of the populist parties are considered populist or popular, something that many academics until this day struggle with. This means that many party leaders do or say things in order to gain relevance or popularity, but this does not mean that a party is necessarily a populist party. Academics find it therefore difficult to define whether or not a party is doing something in order to gain popularity or because the party follows a populist rhetoric. Furthermore, populism has a very general explanation: making use of exaggerated language, dividing the society in two blocks and blaming the elites for social or economic problems. However, the rise of left-wing populism in Europe has shown that even the core definition of populism is changing. These elements together are some of the fundamental challenges found during the research.

4. Methodology

The hypothesis states that extreme economic recessions and globalization issues such as *Euroscepticism* influenced most Europeans from the south of Europe to vote populism. This is due to their loss of trust in politics, politicians and the European or national system they live in. Because Podemos and SYRIZA are special cases where the parties grew rapidly within four to ten years to the second or first party of the country there is to be expected that the economic crisis was heavier in the south of Europe and therefore triggered the people to vote populism. Also, the hypothesis is that the electoral groups of right -and left-wing populism differ greatly from each other. There is expected that citizens with a low income and/or low level of education vote right-wing populists. While it is expected that more middle class, higher educated people vote for left-wing populist parties.

Lastly, there is expected that the socio-economic influences can be fueled by social media, getting in contact with the unknown due to globalization, and the feeling that there are no political parties that support or follow the ideas of the citizens. The last part of the hypothesis is given as most Europeans vote populist parties in order to vote for a new system that is against the classical elites, as they feel that the traditional parties do not listen to the opinion of the “normal” citizens.

Empirical investigation was fitting for this thesis as the conclusion is strictly drawn out a collection of concrete and viable data. There was chosen for an IMRaD format for this thesis which is a typically used for empirical research findings (PennState University Libraries, 2020). The IMRaD format is divided roughly into 4 parts: an introduction, methodology, results and discussion. In this thesis however, the discussion is named the “analysis”. The empirical structuring of the thesis helped defining the results of the research and made a clear overview for the reader.

For the research question: *"What are the socio-economic influences that are causing the rise of left-wing populist parties in Spain and Greece since the end of the twentieth century?"* there were four sub-questions selected in order to come to a fitting conclusion, which will be discussed in the analysis.

- Firstly, *"What are the differences and similarities between Podemos and SYRIZA?"*. This is where the two case studies are compared and where the corresponding influences or differences on both of the parties were indicated. This is an important factor for the conclusion of the thesis, as it shows the different or similar factors that make two left-wing populist parties rise.

- Secondly, “*What was the role of the economic crisis in the rise of populism in Spain and Greece?*”. The role of the economic crisis was explained in this sub question. It was important to determine if the economic crisis was the most essential factor in the growth of populism in Spain and Greece, or if there were more factors involved.
- Thirdly, “*What are the differences between the left- and right-wing voter groups?*” Research has shown that there are certain differences between the electoral groups of right -and left-wing populism. For the benefit of answering the main question, it is interesting to see why the voter groups differ based on the rhetoric of the populist parties. Next to that, it can help conclude whether or not it influenced the rise of left-wing populism.
- Lastly, “*In what way is left-wing populism inclusive?*” This question was asked to analyze if left-wing populism was as inclusive as academics stated.

There are two empirical research methods that could be applied in order to support the validity and reliability of the research: qualitative and quantitative research. Qualitative research is a research form that is based on observing and describing. Therefore, data in the form of books, articles, interviews and other pre-researched content. According to the writers of the article *How to Write Publishable Qualitative Research*, qualitative research is mostly focused on social studies or human behaviors (Stenius, Mäkelä, Miovsky and Gabrhelík, 2017, pp. 155-156). Quantitative research, however, is more based on systematic schemes, such as surveys and is more focused on accumulating data. A. Cropley, the writer of an *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods* states that quantitative research is mostly used when there is research on variables in standard or normal behavior (Cropley, 2019, p. 7). The main question of this thesis is mainly based on social behavior and is asking what is causing it, so quantitative research is not applicable to this question. Thus, qualitative research is the preferred research method within the central research question as qualitative research is about finding causes of certain human behaviors and collecting written data about similar subjects.

However, the limitation that qualitative research brings is that the sources are based on a limited field of research, and mostly on opinions of other academics. The sources can be too generalizing by saying that “all the people in Spain” or “most of the people in Greece” are doing something, while this can strongly variate among individual citizens. To minimize the effect of this problem, the interviews that were conducted with specialists can explain how the theory works and they can talk about their own experiences. Next to that, many new sources and news

articles can be used in order to stay up to date with the news on left-wing populism and form a conclusion that is more fitting.

Is it important that the sources for qualitative research are reliable and valid. In this case reliable means that the sources are trustworthy and strong and valid sources most importantly need to apply to the “real” world and the other variables involved with the thesis subject (Cropley, 2019, p. 6). To see if a source is reliable it is important to see where it is published and if it was checked on its overall validity. The sources were checked on their title, date and the number of times they were referenced. The title, the executive summary and the conclusion were read in order to see if the source was valid enough for the thesis and if they fit the contemporary left-wing populism.

There are two research methods applied in this thesis, which are primary and secondary research. Primary data is based on having direct contact with the sources in the form of surveys and interviews. However, statistical data that is found relating to the thesis subject is also considered primary data, even though it is not created by the author themselves. This form of research is mostly done when trying to answer questions that are requiring percentages, amounts and specific research. On the contrary, secondary data is based on summarizing, explaining and collecting research, such as academical articles and books. Secondary data is preferred for social and political sciences as concepts needs to be explained though already existing data of experts, such as sociologists and political scientists.

When for example the concept of populism is explained, the explanations and examples are based on summaries from sources and data that was required for this thesis. Other concepts such as *conceptual stretching* (p. 8) and *Euroscepticism* (p. 13) were likewise required though secondary research. One of the sources used for conceptual stretching *The Study of Populist Radical Right Parties: Towards a Fourth Wave*, from Mudde has validity as it has been published by the Center for Research on Extremism, The Extreme Right, Hate Crime and Political Violence, University of Oslo. Also, it has been edited by Professor Katrine Fangen from the Department of Sociology and Human Geography at University of Oslo Professor and Torkel Brekke, Deputy Director at the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO).

For this thesis, both primary and secondary research was done. Primary research was executed in the form of interviews, governmental documents and statistics. For the interview there was chosen to work with semi-structured questions. The less structured the questions, the more they are fitting to qualitative studies as the interviewee is more likely to express its thoughts and knowledge. For quantitative research, a questionnaire is more fitted as the answers need to fit the researcher’s expectations (Flick, 2009, p. 185). As a semi-structured interview

allows open answers the interviewee is more likely to form long, informative answers or start discussions based on the topic. The structure allows the researcher to focus on the freedom of the interviewee while still maintaining the validity and relevance in the interview (Flick, 2007, p. 185).

The interviews were conducted with academics of different nationalities to provide different subjective professional opinions.

- The first interviewee is a Dutch researcher and lecturer Koen Vossen, who is an author who is specialized in populism in The Netherlands. He mostly helped with the comparison between left -and right-wing populism and explaining the ideology of populism itself.
- The second interview was held with the Spanish political scientist José Ignacio Torreblanca, who is known for his political columns in El Mundo. In his interview, he explained the situation of the Spaniards after the crisis and helped with the understanding of the rhetoric of Podemos.
- The third interview with the Greek Stylianos Tzagkarakis has a similar context as the interview with mister Torreblanca, only he explained the situation in Greece and SYRIZA. Tzagkarakis wrote different pieces on the Greek referendum and the Greek welfare state together with dr. Kotroyannos.
- The last interviewee is the Belgian Ph.D. student Anton Jäger who works on researching populism in the United States. However, he also is very informed on European populism and explained the different causes and contradictions on the “danger” of left-wing populism.

In support of the findings provided by secondary research, governmental documents and statistical data were used to support the primary research. However, they were not made through surveys and were mostly obtained from internet searches and news websites such as the Guardian.com, bbc.com, and debate21.es. One example of a research report where much statistical data was found is “Euroreflections, leading academics on the European elections 2019” edited by Niklas Bolin, Kajsa Falasca, Marie Grusell and Lars Nord. The source is considered trustworthy as it is written and edited by numerous academics, that are specialized in the topics. Furthermore, the report had been published by a university in Sweden.

The advantage of primary research is that it can be done on a very precise level. The data obtained is mostly allowing exact information and facts that support the research. For example, the interview questions were formulated based on new findings from literature review

and research. The disadvantage of primary research is that it can be time-consuming. Arranging interviews, making transcripts and finding suitable candidates takes more time than finding articles. Also, primary research can be less supportive on its own if it is not supported by secondary research. Therefore, primary research was mostly used to support the secondary research and not the other way around.

However, secondary research was preferred above primary research because the thesis is mostly based on summarizing, collecting and comparing existing research in order to prove a point and answer the main question. Web-based sources were used to define some concepts and events. JSTOR.org, the Hague University database, academia.edu and ResearchGate are databases used to find books, journal articles and other academic sources. Books such as *Far-right today* and *Waarom is de burger boos?* (Why are the Citizens Angry?) from Cas Mudde and Maarten van Rossem (Mudde, 2019), (van Rossem, 2010) were obtained and purchased for its valuable insights. Next to that, news and informative articles were used from online sources such as the Guardian.com, Elpais.com and Cambridge.org. These articles were not used to explain concepts, political characteristics and populist terms, but were merely used to find factual information or to describe the situation of the political parties today.

The disadvantage of secondary research is that specific data may not always be available if the thesis was based on a new subject that not many academics wrote about. However, populism has become a mainstream phenomenon within contemporary politics and many political scientists have written about its peculiarity. Therefore, the problem of not finding enough valid and trustworthy sources was not encountered much during the process of writing.

Lastly, forms of comparative research are used for case studies and analysis. Mostly the individualizing comparison and the variation-finding comparison are applied to this research (Adiyda & Ashton, 2017, p. 2). The individualizing comparison is used to compare the characteristics and features of the two cases, Podemos and SYRIZA. This comparison helps to give a more in-depth view on the use of left-wing populism and the characteristics thereof. The variation-finding comparison is a more traditional form of comparative research where the differences between the two cases are compared. Also, the differences between left -and right-wing populism are compared in the Literature Review (p. 9).

An advantage of comparative research is that it provides a different perspective on a subject with several influential factors. Considering the research question, this method provides insights to different perspectives from political parties to eventually construct an objective academic conclusion. The disadvantages are however that comparing two cases cannot give a specific answer as many other countries and regions are influenced by populism. However,

Spain and Greece are two exceptional countries where left-wing populism has become very powerful and influential. Next to that, other left-wing populist parties such as the *Socialistische Partij* (SP) (English: Socialist Party) and *Movimiento 5 Stelle* (English: Five Star Movement) used for comparison with Podemos and SYRIZA. Therefore, there is a small chance that the comparison loses validation.

5. Results

Firstly, it is important to know the essential aspects of the populist ideology in order to define the influences causing it. Populist leaders are known for their simplistic contradictions and their simple discourses (Vossen, personal communication, November 15, 2019). It is very common for a populist party to divide society in two homogeneous groups who represent the “good” versus “bad” guys (Laclau, 2005, p. 40; Mouffe, 2005, p. 57). In a populist discourse, the “good” group are most of the time the people who succumb to the rules which are imposed by the “elites”. The elites, who seen as the “bad” group of society, receive the blame for the most crisis that the people are at that time experiencing. Also, the mainstream media and journalists can be seen as a part of “elites” since they are in the eyes of populists always corrupting the news and not sharing the populist beliefs (Figenschou & Ihlebæk, p. 1233, 2018).

Briefly, the populist parties believe that every powerful group, institution or organization that is not part of the “true people”, is part of the elites that are corrupting the system. An example hereof, according to Vossen, are the fictional characters “Henk and Ingrid” introduced by Geert Wilders, leader of the *Partij van de Vrijheid* (PVV) (English: Freedom Party). Wilders described Henk and Ingrid as hardworking people who did not get anything handed to them on a silver platter. They have always obeyed the rules of the “elites” and payed taxes while other people that did not deserve it profited from the work they did and the money that they spend (Vossen, personal communication, November 15, 2017).

Secondly, a charismatic leader is an essential aspect to gain success for a populist party (Ristov, 2017, p. 13). As populist parties are mostly characterized by promoting centralized power, it is important that there is a strong leader representing that power. The charismatic leader knows how to present, which seem, easy solutions in times of crisis. They know how to persuade people and know what the people want. Therefore, they make use of a simple discourse in order to make their speech convincing. Most populist leaders present themselves as the spokesmen of the people and gains its trust with powerful speeches and bold statements (Rocchetti, 2018, p. 7-8).

Lastly, there is a possibility that populism can grow without significant stimulating factor such as an economic crisis, or that the economic crisis did not increase the popularity of populist parties (Balfour, 2017, p. 57). However, most of the authors believe that the number of populist votes increases significantly during times of crisis, insecurity and economic instability (Kotroyannos, Tzagkarakis, Pappas, 2018, p. 2). Mudde has studied the history of populism and has noticed populism came in four waves since the beginning of the twentieth

century. He also found that there was a link between social -or economic crisis and the waves of populism. In order to understand the causes of the increasing and decreasing support for populism and extremism in these periods, Mudde gives a short explanation of every wave (Mudde, 2019, p. 12-21).

- First wave: *Neo-Fascism*, 1945-1955: After the Second World War, far-right politics were mostly abandoned and forbidden. Western-European society was adapting to a new form of liberal democracy, where there was no place for authoritarian, extremist or even nationalist ideas. However, there were still small groups of people that believed in fascism after the war and called themselves neo-fascist. These groups had secret meetings and were mostly supported by former Waffen-SS members, or their wives and children who were seen as traitors and had no rights on pension or state compensation.
- Second wave: *Right-Wing Populism*, 1955-1980: The right-wing parties of the second wave were mainly protesting against the post-war treatment of the agricultural sector and the development of the welfare state of their countries. Danish and Norwegian right-wing parties gained a surprising number of votes at the time and mainly protested against high taxes and elite governments. Because many parties were a hybrid of neo-fascism and the “new” right-wing populism, they often had a xenophobic, or nationalist influence in their speech. In the 1970s the British National Front (NF) already made use of slogans such as “Stop Immigration” and “Make Britain Great Again” (Mudde, 2019, p. 16).
- Third wave: *Radical Right*, 1980-2000: Because of a wave of mass immigration and unemployment, in the 1980s populist parties started to gain more attention and followers. The pioneers of the wave of radical right parties in Europe were *Vlaams Blok* (VB) (English: Flemish Bloc) and the Dutch *Centrumpartij* (CP) (English: Party of the Centre). The French party Front National, however, became the most successful in the middle of the 1980s and in the east of Europe, the extreme right parties gained the most success in post-communist countries. Mudde believes that this happened because the post-communist countries were used to authoritarianism and radical speeches (Mudde, 2019, p. 17).

Populism is an adaptive discourse. This means that it changes based on the representing parties, the level of dissatisfaction of the people and the upcoming crises of that time period (Jager, personal communication, December 30, 2019). Since 2000, we are experiencing a fourth wave of populism that is mainly fueled by three different crises. Mudde explains that the

terrorist attacks of 9/11 (War on Terror), the Great Recession of 2008 and the Refugee crisis of 2015 were three influencers in the increasing popularity of populism in the fourth wave (Mudde, 2019, p. 20). This wave, however, differentiates from the previous three waves. In the fourth wave, populism and right-wing politics gained a larger number of votes than in the past. The votes rose from 4,7% in the first part of the twenty-first century to 7,5% between 2010-2018 (Mudde, 2019, p. 21). Furthermore, populist parties have penetrated countries and governments that did not have successful populist parties after the Second World War, such as Sweden and Germany (Mudde, 2019, p. 21). Not to mention Spain and Greece, where the most successful left-wing populist parties of contemporary Europe arose.

5.1 Left-wing populism

There are many socio-economic aspects that influence the growth of left-wing populism and the demographic situation. It seems in many cases, however, that the Great Recession and general economic inequality had the most influence on the increase of votes of left-populist parties. Many political scientists were surprised to see the growth of left-wing populism in the countries that were most severely hit by the economic crisis, as they expected more support towards the right-wing populists (Santana & Rama, 2018, p. 3). This is because the right-wing populist parties were doing well and gaining more popularity before 2008 than left-wing populists did.

However, others explained that it was a logical choice of the people to support the left-wing extremists more rather than the right-wing extremists. Political theorists and university professors Stavrakakis and Katsambekis explain that most of the successful left-wing populist parties all over the world, from Latin America to Europe, are influenced by socialist-populist hybrids (Stavrakakis & Katsambekis, 2014, p. 123). The parties are after all left leaning, so their speech should one way or another link to socialist, communist or social-democratic rhetoric. Therefore, economic equality plays an important role to the left-wing populist parties. The author of *Populist Parties in Europe Agents of discontent?* Stijn van Kessel explained that the key-driver to right-wing populism could never solely be economic, as right-wing populists focus more on cultural problems next to economic problems (Van Kessel, 2015, p. 25).

In order to define the socio-economic influences on the left-wing populist parties in Europe, similar subjects of the literature review will be utilized. With the help of these subjects, it can be discussed if they had great, partial or little influence on the rise of left-wing populism in Europe.

5.1.1 Corruption

It seems that corruption had a great deal of influence on the rise of left-wing populist parties. Since the Great Recession of 2008, there have been a lot of governments exposed to the people because of their corrupt activities before, during and after the crisis. The countries that experienced the most corruption scandals during and after the economic crises were the Southern European countries. Due to the exposure to corruption citizens started losing faith in their traditional system and were desperately looking for a political party that will represent them. To give an example, shortly after the Recession, the Spanish peoples discovered that one of their most important banks, *Caja Madrid*, spend over 12 million euros on tax-free personal expenses, including vacations and jewelry. This worsened the crisis in 2011, as the bank almost went bankrupt and 14 million euros was spent to save the bank (Torreblanca, personal communication, November 25, 2019). The citizens, however, were losing their homes and jobs and there was no one to help them. This is the moment that Podemos, the left-wing populist party of Spain, had a peak in its poll-votes. Pablo Iglesias, the leader of Podemos, was there to represent the *losers of the economic crisis* and to voice the anger of the people on a broad platform (Torreblanca, 2015, p. 11).

The reason why the south of Europe is experiencing more problems with corruption, seems to be dating back to the period of dictatorship. Many of the countries in the south of Europe are early democracies, which means that their constitutions date back to the beginning of the end of the 1970s, except for Italy. In Spain, the constitution of 1978 was more or less made to prevent another civil war. Most of the topics that are an issue in contemporary Spain, such as the Spanish identity, the flag and social cohesion, were not discussed during the creation of the constitution (Torreblanca, personal communication, November 25, 2019). In Greece, there was a similar situation, which has caused an unstable development of the political parties. Furthermore, the parties have little political consensus when an important decision needs to be made (Tzagkarakis, personal communication, December 30, 2019). Jäger also explains that southern countries are more disorganized than northern countries (Jäger, personal communication, December 30, 2019). This makes it simpler for elites and politicians to commit corruption, as it is relatively easy to falsify papers, disorganize administration or bribe people of a lower position.

5.1.2 Economic crisis

For the people that got hit the hardest by the economic recession, it was not the crisis itself that drove them directly to vote populist. It was mainly the strict austerity measures that were imposed on the people that caused protests and dissatisfaction. After the Great Recession of 2008 and the European Debt Crisis of 2010-2012, many South-European countries such as Greece, Spain, Italy and Portugal (the PIGS) got strict austerity measures designated to them in the form of radical budget cuts, privatizations of companies and structural reforms in their politics and economy (Markou, 2017, p. 56; Vossen, personal communication, November 25, 2019). Many citizens felt that the austerity measures were unfair. It was the government that made the mistakes in their eyes and they did not understand why they had to pay such a high price to an “anonymous” union in Brussels (Vossen, personal communication, November 15, 2019). As many people did not personally elect the representatives in the European Union and did not know them as much as their own politicians, they conspired that the elites in “Brussels” did not care about them or did not understand the situation they were in. This caused enormous anti-austerity movements, such as *Aganctismenoi* in Greece and *Indignados* in Spain.

Many left-wing populist parties, such as SYRIZA and Podemos, gained popularity among the citizens by supporting anti-austerity movements (Stavrakaki & Katsambekis, 2014, p. 126). In their speeches they vocally expressed their negative opinions on austerity measures. As Iglesias for example said: “Our homeland is not a brand; our homeland is the people. They have wanted to humiliate our country with the scam they call austerity. Never again Spain without its people!” (Ivaldi, Lanzone, Woods, 2017, p. 368).

Jäger mentioned that other countries in Europe also suffered from a growth in the unemployment number and the economic crisis in general but did not make a direct course to left-wing populism (Jäger, personal communication, December 30, 2019). That is to say that, many Northern European countries had a growth in right-wing parties, but none of them won the election after or during the economic crisis (PisoIU & Ahmed, 2016, p. 168) (Annex 1). Furthermore, according to Rosa Balfour, a Senior Transatlantic Fellow at the Germany Marshall Fund of the US, some of the populist parties in the north and west of Europe grew in times without an economic crisis (Balfour, 2017, p. 57). On the contrary, austerity measures in combination with corruption scandals and protests in the south of Europe led almost directly to the increasing popularity of left-wing populist parties (Jäger, personal communication, December 30, 2019).

5.1.3 Electoral laws

The electoral laws in some European countries could cause an opening for populist parties to enter the national governments. As mentioned before a proportional representation in the voting system give small parties a rather simple opportunity to obtain seats because the number of seats is closely matching to the number of votes that the party receives (p. 11). As much as electoral laws seem to be a problem in many European countries, it seems that there is a greater political problem that influences the rise of left-wing populist parties. Jäger has explained this problem as the crisis of democracy (Jäger, personal communication, December 30, 2019). Professors of the university of Canberra further explain this by saying that people nowadays have a higher dissatisfaction in politics, there is a lack of political literacy and a declining membership of political parties in most parts of Europe (Ercan & Gagnon, 2014, p. 1). This caused the European countries to provide less accountable institutions for the citizens, such as labor unions which causes an increasing power in the private sector.

In the beginning of the twentieth century Europeans were often part of labor unions, voted for the same party, or a similar party, every year and taught their children to do the same. The most popular parties in the Europe were mainly the social democrats who frequently received more than 50% of the votes. Since many European citizens became less interested in politics, so to say, the number of swing votes increased and many of the parties that were previously the largest started receiving less votes every election (Annex 2). This caused fragmentation in parliaments and lack of representation of certain groups in society (Bolin, 2019, p. 20). Figures also show that the voter turnout of the European elections decreased with more than 7% in 1999 and continued to decline after until 2019 where it increased with 8,01% (Statista, 2019) (Annex 3). Nationally, Malta is the country with the highest parliamentary voter turnout in 2017 with around 90% between 1971 and 2019. While France and Portugal belong to the lowest voter turnout compared to the 1990s. The turnover in Portugal fell from 61,05% in 1999 to 48,57 and France fell with similar percentages (International Idea Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2019) (Annex 4 & 5).

An explanation hereof is the increasing neo-liberal influence in the European Union since the 1990s (Jäger, personal communication, December 30, 2019). According to Ercan and Gagnon, “the rise of neoliberalism as a political doctrine that reinforces a minimalist vision of the public sphere and democracy” (Ercan & Gagnon, 2014, p. 3). The European society is more individualistic than before, which also shows in the lack of political participation in some

countries and the different, smaller parties that represent different individual preferences of the Europeans.

5.1.4 Media

Right-wing and left-wing populist parties generally have in common that they want to ban out their negative publicity and increase the impact of their own speech. Many parties do this through (social)-media. Both populist streams have the tendency to spread hate and simple messages on social media, like Geert Wilders is known for spreading direct, anti-immigrant speeches on Twitter, and trying to control national media channels and journalists (Mudde, 2019, p. 111). Many mainstream media channels do not agree with the populist views or share objective news about the populist parties that can bring them into bad daylight. Populist parties therefore think that censoring or controlling the media channels that do not want to spread their views can limit their chance on a bad name (Figenschou & Ihlebæk, 2018, p. 1228, 1233). The view that “mainstream media” channels are corrupted, and a source of fake news is a general belief that populist parties spread. Therefore, the channels could be depicted by the populist parties as a media source that is used by the elites to prevent the people from voting for them (Figenschou & Ihlebæk, 2018, p. 1233).

A good example of a left-wing populist party that made use of media to its advantage is SYRIZA in Greece. When SYRIZA came to power in 2015, it tried to reform the law for television licenses, so it could close the channels that were not pro-governmental (Tzagkarakis, personal communication, December 18, 2019). The public channels, such as ERT, (Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation) (Greek: *Ellinikí Radiofonía Tileórasi*) that were financed by the government, were utilized to spread positive messages about the party. The television channel tried to portray that the situation in Greece was increasingly getting better and that the government had everything in control, while in fact it was not going as prosperous as the channel was indicating (Tzagkarakis, personal communication, December 18, 2019). The rest of the media channels in Greece were massively opposing and protesting against SYRIZA. The channels witnessed that media channels were bought by entrepreneurs who had direct contact with the state (Kouvelakis, 2016, p. 57).

However, next to spreading the wanted messages over social media and governmental tv, the left-wing populist parties also use their media platforms to create a form of direct participation of the citizens. Since most of the left-wing parties prefer direct participation over the democratic system that is implemented by Europe, they want to apply this in any way

possible. Podemos, for example, uses polls on social media and opinions on the internet as a form of direct participation and therefore wants to start more social movements and include the people of Spain more in his speech (Ivaldi, Lanzone, Woods, 2017, p. 372).

5.1.5 Immigration

Many academics noticed that hate against immigrants is not a part of the rhetoric of left-wing populist parties, who are mainly opposing elites and powerful politicians. Although right-wing populist parties mainly see immigrants and refugees as the “others”, the left-wing parties mainly think that the immigrants are also a victim of the system. Therefore, in their eyes, they belong to the masses and minorities that are suppressed by the powerful elites (Rocchetti, 2018, p. 11; Tzarakakis, personal communication, December 18, 2019). The greatest reason that most left-wing parties are doing this, is because their rhetoric is social-democratic based and therefore more focused on equalizing every part of the society.

José Torreblanca gives Spain as an example and explains that many young people in Spain are nowadays trying to find work opportunities in foreign countries. Also, in the 1950s there was a massive gulf of migration in Spain where many Spaniards moved to more prosperous countries, such as the Netherlands to work as a laborer. With all of this together, it would be unthinkable to have a left-wing populist party that did not respect immigrants, as most of the Spaniards have been an immigrant or had immigrants in their family (Torreblanca, personal communication, December 25, 2019).

In Torreblanca’s words: *“The figures do not reflect that, but there are 200.000 Spaniards abroad, there is massive youth unemployment in Spain, Spaniards are working in Costa café in London. So how do you come up with an anti-immigration speech? Saying immigrants are lazy people?”* (Torreblanca, personal communication, November 25, 2019).

Even though there are people in Spain that believe in the rhetoric against immigrants, there are not many parties who are representing this interest on the left-wing. Also, he explains that in Spain, people did not have the same experience with immigrants as many western countries. A great percentage of the immigrants in Spain is Latin-American. They speak Spanish and do not live in separated ghettos. Even with Muslims, they do not have a very negative experience (Torreblanca, personal communication, November 25, 2019).

Many other left-wing parties across Europe have the same experience as Podemos. However, some parties do not focus as much on minority issues. Koen Vossen describes that for example the left-wing populist party, *Socialistische Partij* (SP) (English: Socialist Party) prefers to stay focused on its core principles of the social and economic fight against the elites. (Vossen, personal communication, November 15, 2019). However, the party has changed its opinion on migrants during different time periods and although their anti-immigrant rhetoric was never as extreme as right-wing populists, the current leader Lillian Marijnissen still shares her concerns on the large stream of labor immigrants from the east of Europe (Markus, 2019).

Next to that, Movimento 5 Stelle (M5S) applies most of the time left-wing approaches, but also shows clear xenophobic motives. They execute this by parading with the Italian flag, show symbols of nationalism and having exclusionary speeches (Gerbaudo & Screti, 2017, p. 1-2). However, the party is hard to define, and many academics have expressed that the Italian party is not clearly defined on the left-right spectrum and therefore does not completely fall within the inclusive left-wing populist rhetoric (Ivaldi, Lanzone & Woods, 2017, p. 355.).

5.1.6 Euroscepticism

Left-wing populist parties are mostly Eurosceptic, but with different reasons than right-wing parties. Left-wing populist parties gained more followers in countries that had to cope with heavy austerity measures after the Great Recession of 2008 and economic crisis of 2012. Many citizens of these countries, such as Spain, Greece, Portugal and Italy, described themselves as the *losers of the globalization*. In comparison with wealthier European countries, they were now struggling to find a job and to pay the bills (Santana & Rama, 2018, p. 13). Populist parties used the idea of feeling inferior towards the other European countries as a way to gain followers. They blamed the neoliberal system of the European Union that brought them in this position and described it as an uneven race where they were the losing party (Van Kessel, 2015, p. 26). The right-wings, however, were more focused on the European Union as a foreign threat that would invite refugees in and steals all the hard-earned money of the citizens in order to give it to others that do not deserve it.

5.1.7 Electoral groups

Lastly, something that was not profoundly included in the theoretical framework and literature review but what was found during the research, was the voting groups for left-wing populism.

It seems that the voters of left-wing populist parties are mainly young, higher educated, progressive and diverse people (Santana & Rama, 2018, p. 13; Vossen, personal communication, November 15, 2019). On the contrary, voters for right-wing populist parties are mostly workers, conservative and part of the majority group in the West-European society (Mudde, 2019, p. 79). Even though right-wing populist voters also fight against the elites, they are most of the time more bourgeois than left-wing populist voters. Some argue that the voters for right-wing populists are less educated than left-wing voters, but the evidence differs per individual (Ivarsflaten & Stubager, 2013, p. 14-15; Rooduijn, 2018, p. 364).

The reason why right- and left-wing populist voters differ, is because of their situations. In most south European countries, it was the youth that suffered from the most impact of the economic crises. Their unemployment rate was extreme (Vossen, Personal Communication, November 15, 2019). The largest issue was therefore that the youth was disappointed and felt unrepresented. The element of unfulfilled expectations had a great impact on the rise of left-wing populist parties in the south of Europe (Jäger, personal communication, December 30, 2019). Jäger states that this means that people who just finish their degree and enter the labor market have a certain expectation on how their career will go. Mainly, young people with high degrees expected to find a well-paid job. However, during and after the crisis, many students were not able to find an employment or were fired from their current job. Furthermore, mainly children from professionals, noticed that their parents did not experience the same difficulties in their work life when they were younger. For their parents it was possible to start working in proper, well-paid jobs after their studies, while their children obtained the same degree, or higher, but had lower chances of reaching the same positions as their parents (Jäger, personal communication, December 30, 2019). The populist parties were therefore, mainly in Spain, attracting young, educated people.

6. Case Studies

6.1 The Case of Podemos, Spain

Podemos is a literal translation of “we can”. It was founded in 2014, five months before the European elections in May (Torreblanca, 2015, p. 10). The idea of creating Podemos came after the “Indignados movement” (an anti-austerity movement which translated to “the indignant movement”) of 2011 where people demonstrated against the high unemployment rates, welfare cuts and corruption in Spain (Ramiro & Gomez, 2016, p. 5). The party consisted of young intellectuals who were previous supporters of Izquierda Unida (English: Left United) or members of small, left-extremist parties, such as Anti-Capitalist Left. Generally, most members who formed the new party were already involved in social activist movements (Ramiro & Gomez, 2016). The secretary-general of Podemos, Pablo Iglesias, was one of the founders and was elected as head of the party during the primary elections. He studied political science in Madrid and was previously part of the Communist Youth Union of Spain (Ames, 2015; AFP, 2014)

Spain was one of the countries that was hit the hardest by the economic recession of 2008. It lost 15% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) between 2008-2013 and the unemployment rate increased to 8,2% with a peak of 26,2% in 2013 (Ramiro & Gomez, 2016, p. 3). Mostly young people were affected by the recession, and students who had just graduated from higher education were unable to find work within Spain. Later it became known that 55,5% of the people under 25 were unemployed in 2013 (Ramiro & Gomez, 2016, p. 4). Next to that, there was a massive number of Spaniards who were evicted from their homes or were not able to pay their mortgages during and after the crisis (Torreblanca, 2015, p. 11). The party members of Podemos declared that they saw the dramatic events as an opportunity to create a party for the people that would be able to promote a drastic socio-economic change in Spain (Ramiro & Gomez, 2016, p. 5).

Because Podemos supported the ideas of the many protestors, such as the Indignados Movement, it gained enormous popularity in a short period of time. When the party entered the European elections, after being created five months before, it received 8% of the votes and had five representatives elected for the European Parliament (Ramiro & Gomez, 2016, p. 4; Torreblanca, 2015, p. 10). In July, a month after the European election, Podemos doubled its votes to 15% and in November, it gained more votes at the polls than the largest parties PP (the conservative party) and PSOE (the socialists) (Torreblanca, 2015, p. 10). After the elections,

Podemos formed a block with the most popular socialist party in Spain, Izquierda Unida, to enter the national and municipal elections of 2015-2016 as a force against Partido Popular and PSOE. The party was therefore renamed as Unidos Podemos and received 21,1% of the votes, which made it the third largest in Spain (Kioupkiolis & Katsambekis, 2019, p. 47).

After 2016, Podemos started to grow more into a political party instead of an organization or a movement (Ivaldi, Lanzone, Woods, 2017, p. 369). First, before 2014 the party was more based on *grassroots democracy* and creating a horizontal structure within the party. Grassroots democracy is a political organizational structure that allows more authority and decision-making power to the lower social classes of society, for example with referendums. Podemos also tried to apply this within their own party so they can make decisions based on the impute of people who traditionally have less decision-making power.

However, more recently Podemos lined up more vertically, creating a stricter hierarchy within the party and is struggling to find a balance between majoritarian politics and direct participation (Ivaldi, Lanzone, Woods, 2017, p. 369). Ivaldi, Lanzone and Woods suspect that this happened, because of the struggle to create a new, horizontal, party within the old political structure of a country. Collective participation has very little possibility to succeed in a country where differing from the traditional political systems, such as the more centralized, vertical systems are made very difficult (Ivaldi, Lanzone, Woods, 2017, pp. 369-370).

Podemos' ideology is mainly left-oriented, because of the history of the party and the composition of its members. The left-extremist ideas of the party are drawn from the left-wing populist parties in Latin America, such as PSUV in Venezuela and MAS-IPSP in Bolivia. Iglesias also claims that Alexis Tsipras, the leader of SYRIZA in Greece, was a great inspiration for the party (Zúquete, 2018, p. 423; Torreblanca, 2015, p. 10). Podemos, like other left-extremist parties, wants to bring the sovereignty back to the citizens instead of the elites. The party's main goal is to redistribute wealth in a more equal way and to protect the social rights and freedoms of the people in Spain (Kotroyannos, Tzagkarakis Pappas, 2018, p. 9). It wants to reach this goal by increasing taxes for wealthier citizens, increasing the minimum wage, lower the age of retirement and the number of working hours (Torreblanca, 2015, p. 11).

The party mainly works with strong words that define and polarize Spanish society. For example, Iglesias uses the words *el pueblo* (the citizens), *la gente* (the people) and *la mayoría social* (the social majority) to describe the people that are the victim of the Spanish political and economic system (Kioupkiolis & Katsambekis 2016, p. 50; Kotroyannos, Tzagkarakis, Pappas, 2018, p. 9). The social majority, in this case, is a description of the majority of the country which means middle, to lower class people. The elites are most of the time seen as the

small percentage of a country and the “unreachable minority”. Iglesias defines the political elites as *la casta* (the caste), as they take the sovereignty from the “normal” people (Torreblanca, 2015, p. 11; Ramiro & Gomez, 2016, p. 6-7). Podemos wants to show with these statements that they are highly anti-establishment. Which means that they are mostly disagreeing with the neo-liberalistic structure of western politics. Iglesias believes that this modern form of liberalism has caused austerity and social problems within Spain and the EU (Kotroyannos, Tzagkarakis, Pappas, 2018, p. 9). He explains that neoliberalism destroyed the previous social democracy and that its system created strong divisions in European member states based on wealth.

Moreover, Podemos states that the political structure of neoliberalism has made it more accessible for elites to gain and stay in power. Also, the party believes that corruption is simpler to cover-up within the contemporary political system. Therefore, social inequality increases (Torreblanca, 2015, p. 11). This network of corruption and exploitation was seen as a plot by Podemos and therefore called it *la trama*. The party makes clear that a group of economic and political elites, which they call the *mafia de canape* (couch mafia), are forming the top of the hierarchy in Spain (Ivaldi, Lanzone, Woods, 2017, p. 360). This hierarchy establishment is unfair against the “normal” and hardworking people because the elites do not understand the living conditions of people who are gaining under or just above the minimum wage. Therefore, Podemos does not agree that the elites should be the ones making political decisions in Spain and the European Union.

Similar to other extremist or anti-establishment parties in Europe, Podemos not only criticizes its national, political and economic structure, but also the European Unions’s. Iglesias is mainly focusing on the disappointment that the globalization brought to the people in Spain, as he states that many northern and western countries in Europe are profiting from it, but most southern countries do not. Even though Spain and other southern European countries did profit in many ways from the system of the European Union, most of them use it in order to create a villain, victim contradiction.

In this case, Iglesias is describing the people in Spain as the victims who are hurt by the European austerity measures, even though the political and economic system in Spain was one of the reasons that lead to the strict measures in the first place. Iglesias wants to emphasize that the European Union was meant to be an egalitarian project that should not leave a member behind (Rocchetti, 2018, p. 11, 43). He explains that most German politicians are ruling the neoliberal game in Europe and make southern European countries feel inferior to them. He speaks of a “German colony” and states:

“There will be more unemployed people and more evictions, and Merkel will continue to take measures against the interests of citizens (...) We will now work with other parties from the south of Europe to make it clear that we don’t want to be a German colony” (Ivaldi, Lanzone, Woods, 2017, p. 367).

Iglesias’s foreign policy plan is therefore very much focused on these ideas and states that Podemos wants to “pull Spain out of NATO, make American soldiers leave the country (Spain) and rewrite the Lisbon Treaty by stating that the countries in debt will form an alliance against Germany” (Torreblanca, 2015, p. 11).

Even though Podemos seems to fit into the description of a mainstream left-wing populist/extremist party, there are certain aspects that make Podemos as different and original. Firstly, the party is mostly focused on emphasizing that it is different from the traditional left parties by blurring the left-right division (Ramiro & Gomez, 2016, p. 6). It is typical for right-wing populists to not define themselves as right-wing (extremists) in order to gain more followers and become more attractive to a greater part of the voters. However, most left-wing extremists or populists are proud to define themselves as a communist or socialist, but Podemos seems to avoid this label. Instead of classifying themselves within a political direction, they define themselves as the representatives of the people. This in order to avoid political labels (Torreblanca, 2015, p. 11).

Secondly, even though Pablo Iglesias is a proud patriot, he is not using exclusivism in his campaigns, like most populist parties. On the contrary, Iglesias advocates minority rights, gender equality, and anti-discrimination, as he believes in solidarity and inclusiveness are important within a democratic society (Ivaldi, Lanzone, Woods, 2017, p. 364). According to Adagio, Iglesias is willing to represent every part of the civil society of Spain, as long as he is not representing elites (Kotroyannos, Tzagkarakis Pappas, 2018, p. 9). Pablo Iglesias thinks immigrants have a good impact on Spanish society because they help Spain economically and bring cultural diversity (Rocchetti, 2018, p. 43). Next to that, Spain itself is also built on multinational and multicultural states (Torreblanca, personal communication, November 25, 2019).

Thirdly, academics have noticed that the voters for Podemos are different than most extremist/populist parties in Europe. Normally, people with a lower education level or living standard tend to vote for (right-wing) populists (Ivarsflaten and Stubager, 2019, p. 14-15). With Podemos, however, it is more likely that young people with a high education level vote for the

party than other groups (Ramiro & Gomez, 2016, p. 3). During the general elections of 2016, 31,4% of people between 18-24 years voted for Podemos which was around the same percentage of voters between 25-34 (Annex 6). Thereby, 37,3% of people who followed “Estudios Superiores” (higher education) and were younger than 25 voted for Podemos. An even higher percentage of 39% of people between 25-34 who followed higher education voted for Podemos (Annex 7). Ramiro and Gomez explain that this is because of the unfulfilled expectations that the young people of Spain had after the economic recession of 2008. Post-graduates who were highly educated could not find a fitting job because there were not enough available vacancies (Ramiro & Gomez, 2016, p. 3, 10, 13; Vossen, personal communication, November 15, 2019). Because Podemos was one of the parties that stands up for students, egalitarian campaigns and people who generally feel undervalued, higher educated people started to vote for Podemos, as they believed that the Spanish society did not give them what they deserved. Podemos has even been more successful in attracting high-educated voters than other socialist parties such as Izquierda Unida (Ramiro & Gomez, 2016, p. 22)

Despite Podemos’ popularity in 2015-2016, the party started to lose followers after and was never able to reach the first place in Spain’s government. Since the motion of no-confidence towards the reigning party of 2018, PP, center to right-wing parties, have made a comeback in the Spanish government. For example, the far-right party Vox has made its arrival during the Andalusian regional elections of December 2018 and is bringing issues such as immigration and the independence of Cataluña more to the spotlight. During the general elections of November 2019, Vox gained 28 seats and increased from 24 to 52. However, the reigning, socialist party PSOE and Unidas Podemos lost 10 seats in total. Podemos went from 42 to 35 and PSOE declined to 120 seats (Cué, Marcos, Junquera, de Blas, Hunter, 2019). Also, Podemos lost votes in important cities such as Barcelona and Madrid (De Greef, 2019).

Regardless of Podemos’ loss of popularity, the winning party of the final elections of November 2019, PSOE, decided to form a government with Unidas Podemos in order to form a block against the rising right-wing. The formation of coalitions is a rather new concept for Spain, but since PSOE did not have enough seats to cover the mandatory number of 176 seats there was no other option (Tieleman, 2020). Next to that, Podemos has changed its communist-like rhetoric to a more central left one. The two parties decided to make their focus point more about the crisis of Cataluña and since they together reached 155 seats by forming a coalition, they decided to add regional (separatists) parties such as “Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya” (English: Republican Left of Catalonia) (Tieleman, 2020) (Jones, 2019).

6.2 The Case of SYRIZA, Greece

SYRIZA (Greek: ΣΥΡΙΖΑ) is a Greek abbreviation for the Coalition of the Radical Left (Greek: *Synaspismós Rizospastikís Aristerás*). Like Podemos, SYRIZA was formed by members of previous socialist movements and communist parties, such as the KKE and the *Kommunistikó Kómma Elládas* (English: Communist party of Greece) (Kouvelakis, 2016, p. 48; Kotroyannos, Tzagkarakis, Pappas, 2018, p. 7). SYRIZA was officially founded in 2004, but the idea of the party came three years earlier, at the *Space for Dialogue for the Unity and Common Action of the Left* conference, also known as “Space” (Kotroyannos, Tzagkarakis, Pappas, 2018, p. 7). This was an important dialogue where many left-oriented and progressive Greek parties, activists and informal groups came together to discuss their possibilities to cooperate against PASOK, the governing party at that time. This conference was led and guided by the Greek leftist party Synaspismos which was known to be against the neo-liberal system that PASOK, in their eyes, supported (Markou, 2017, p. 68)

After the “Space” meeting many political left-wing coalitions and alliances were formed who presented themselves as candidate at the local elections of 2002. When SYRIZA first entered in the elections of 2004, the party gained relatively more importance and elected six members in the parliament (Kotroyannos, Tzagkarakis, Pappas, 2018, p. 7). After that, in 2008, current party leader Alexis Tsipras was chosen as chairman. In 2015, SYRIZA gained power for the first time and defeated the ruling party *Nea Dimokratia* (English: New Democracy), receiving 36,3% of the votes and 149 out of 300 parliament seats (Maltezou & Babington, 2015). Alexis Tsipras got elected as the prime minister of Greece and served from 2015 to 2019 with an intermediate period of one month. The party participated three times in the European elections since 2004. However, it obtained only one seat in the parliament in 2009. In 2014, the party improved its position in the parliament and obtained six seats (Kotroyannos, Tzagkarakis, Pappas, 2018, p. 8). SYRIZA still manages to keep the six seats after the elections of 2019.

The party has a similar rhetoric as Podemos in the sense that it is also left-wing, Eurosceptic, inclusive and anti-establishment. The economic recession of 2008 hit Greece as harshly as it hit Spain. The unemployment rate increased to 27% between 2008-2012 and the youth unemployment escalated to 60% (Stavrakakis & Katsambekis, 2014, p. 125). Next to the economic recession of 2008, Greece experienced a debt crisis in 2010, which made the country go bankrupt. Greeks therefore endured a 40% chance of poverty in 2013, the household median incomes stagnated to around 8.000 euro's and the health expenditure per capita dropped to 2.316 euros. Next to the economic problems and the increase of poverty, the mental wellbeing

of the Greek worsened tremendously. The suicide rate increased from around 380 in 2003 to more than 500 suicides in 2012, which was the year that the economic crisis had reached its highest point (Rodgers & Stylianou, 2015) (Annex 8). These drastic changes in Greek society created an anti-austerity movement called the *Aganaktismenoin*, which was inspired by the *Indignados Movement* in Spain. SYRIZA was at that time the only party that seemed to represent the needs of the protesters and met them on the streets to have conversations with them (Stavrakakis, Katsambekis, 2014, p. 126).

SYRIZA was therefore known to be the party that represented the workers, the leftists, the students, the immigrants and minorities (Markou, 2017, p. 61). Most of the voters for SYRIZA are young, educated and/or unemployed (Santana & Rama, 2018, p. 5-6). The young and unemployed citizens were a vulnerable group during and after the crisis, because of their job losses and their desperation. To gain the attention of the voters, Tsipras would use simplified slogans who were fueled by emotions (Mavrozacharakis, Kotroyannos, Tzagkarakis, 2017, p. 41). In the national elections of 2012 slogans such as “They decided without us” and “it is either us or them: together we can overthrow them” were used to support people that felt as if the Greek elites and politicians did not listen to the needs of the citizens. He is known as the typical charismatic, populist, leader that is crucial for a populist party to succeed (Galanopoulos, 2015, pp. 1-2).

Tsipras speaks directly to the people and stands above the organizational structure of the party. Next to that he can sooth his followers with his words by saying that he will “restore the old Greek system” or he can make them rise up by telling them to unite and resist the oligarchy and corruption (Galanopoulos, 2015, pp. 1-2). A peculiarity about Tsipras is that he is the leader of the only party in the Greek parliament that is in favor of LGBTQ+ rights and marriage (Markou, 2017, p. 62). This is because the members of SYRIZA found that minorities were not represented enough by the elitarian politicians even though they were also a part of the Greek society. Immigrants were for similar reasons accepted and even promoted by SYRIZA. They proclaimed to be in favor of every sub-group in the Greek and European society, as long as did not represent the elites.

SYRIZA does not only focus its anti-establishment rhetoric in Greece, but also against the elites and the neoliberal system in the European Union (Zúquete, 2018, p. 430). SYRIZA claims to represent the “real democracy” where the citizens of Greece are supposed to make decisions instead of the elites. SYRIZA aims to correct and protect the democracy in the neo-liberal system instead of abolishing it (Stavrakakis & Katsambekis, 2014, pp. 135-136). The party does not disagree with the Union itself, but only with its current neo-liberal policies. It is

therefore a misunderstanding to say that Tsipras does not want to be part of the European Union. On the contrary, the Greek people were very proud and excited to be part of the (monetary) Union. Southern European countries who were finally freed from authoritarianism, such as Portugal, Greece and Spain, saw the accession to Europe as a step to modernity and democracy (Kouvelakis, 2016, p. 45).

Because of the pride to be European that the Greek people felt, they were very disappointed when the European Union imposed strict sanctions after the Greek debt crisis of 2010. Austerity measures like structural discipline within the Greek system, budget cuts and privatization were demanded by the EU, the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (Markou, 2017, p. 56). On top of that, a memorandum measure was implemented, which was a loan agreement between Greece and lenders from prosperous states in the EU, such as Germany (Stavrakakis & Katsambekis, 2014, p. 126; Stone, 2015). This loan was widely hated by the people, because it did not help to get them back on their feet. It was mostly used to pay back the debt of Greece and therefore almost directly spend by the parliament after receiving the money (Tzagkarakis, personal communication, December 18, 2019). Many Greek people felt that the debt crisis was the fault of the Greek elites and not theirs and many felt belittled by the more prosperous countries in Europe. Tsipras supported this idea by stating that many southern European countries are not treated with the respect that they deserve and are not considered to be an equal member of the Union (Markou, 2017, p. 65). According to a member of SYRIZA, Costas Douzinas, the Brussels elites treat the south of Europe as a colonial project which they are constantly trying to reform and patronize with their neo-liberal structures (Douzinas & Papakonstandinou, 2011).

Before SYRIZA came to power, PASOK and New Democracy were the two most popular opposition parties in Greece after the fall of the authoritarian regime in 1974 (Kouvelakis, 2016, p. 45). In its early years PASOK represented itself as the radical left party and was the ruling party in 1981, the same year that Greece entered the European Communities (EC). The main positions of PASOK were that they represented the non-privileged people, that they were anti-American and that they were against the unequal economic development in Europe. However, the party was not against entering the Union, as it knew how much the Greeks looked up to it, (Kouvelakis, 2016, p. 45-46). Even though the party started off on a similar note as SYRIZA later did, the party's discourse quickly started to turn towards the center-left. The party stopped spreading its radical rhetoric in order to change it for a pro-European one. During its time in government, PASOK made sure that Greece integrated correctly and adapted to the custom union of the EC (Chrysosgelos, 2017, pp. 141-143).

After the death of PASOK's leader, Papandreou, the party realized that it had to maintain the relationship with the European Union in order to stay in power as they received much economical help from the European Communities. Political theorists Stravarakakis and Katsambekis even state that PASOK started an anti-populist rhetoric in the 1990s (Stravarakakis & Katsambekis, 2014, p. 124). Later on, after the de-radicalization of PASOK, many other radical right parties arose in Greece, for example LAOS and Golden Dawn (Greek: *Laikós Síndesmos – Chrysí Avgí*), an extremist right and neo-Nazi party. Therefore, Greece has had several experiences of authoritarian or extreme political parties who were representing different groups of society in the last 50 years. They had at one side the left-extremists who took an inclusive and social approach, and the right-extremists who had a more authoritarian and exclusive approach.

Even though SYRIZA gained much success after 2015 and was the reigning party for four years, it lost the national elections to New Democracy in 2019. The question that many academics asked themselves was: 'How come that a popular party such as SYRIZA gets "replaced" by a political central party?'. One of the most important reasons is something that strikes most of the populist parties in Europe, which is unfulfilled promises. SYRIZA gained popularity by promising people equality, sovereignty and economic/social prosperity. However, when SYRIZA came to power, almost none of their promises were fulfilled (Kouvelakis, 2016, p. 59). The most ambitious measures that SYRIZA promised to implement were: the abolition of property tax; the protection of people with a low income; the reduction of the bank debts; the abolition of the Memorandum; the reemployment of people who were previously fired due to reorganization and the nationalization of media and banks (Kotroyannos, Tzagkarakis, Pappas, 2018, p. 7). From SYRIZA's many promises, only two were legally implemented, which were the re-employment of the cleaners of the Ministry of Economics and the re-opening of the national TV and radio broadcast (ERT) (Kotroyannos, Tzagkarakis, Pappas, 2018, p. 7). However, the minimum wage was not restored, the reverse of privatizations was not successful, and the pension payments were not returned (Markou, 2017, pp. 68-69).

A very controversial move that SYRIZA also made during its governance was to form a coalition with ANEL, a Greek extremist right party. People did not understand how the party could prove that they were truly left-wing to their voters when they purposefully formed a coalition with ANEL (Tzagkarakis, personal communication, December 18, 2019). Perhaps the greatest mistake that SYRIZA made was to promise the abolishment of the Memorandum, the loan agreement of the EU. Almost immediately after winning the elections of 2015, Tsipras announced a referendum in which Greek citizens could vote to abolish or accept the economic

measurements of the EU. 61,31% of the Greek people voted against the Memorandum and therefore SYRIZA decided request a stop of the austerity measures in Greece (Arnett; Sedghi, Galatsidas; Clarke, 2015). However, the Council of the state declared that referendums about fiscal policies are not permitted within the Greek constitution. Furthermore, the Council of Europe had already declared the referendum unconstitutional, mostly because it was declared valid and official a few days after the referendum was announced. According to European guidelines, European citizens need at least two weeks of campaign material and information in order to form a completed opinion (Rankin, 2015). Most of the Greek citizens found the failure of the referendum one of the most disappointing aspects of the history of the party.

Even though the party failed in many aspects, its popularity was a special phenomenon in Europe. SYRIZA set an example of how a left-wing populist party can become very admired in a very short period of time. The fact that it gained seats in the European Parliament exposed the Eurosceptic sentiments of many Greek citizens and even though the referendum failed, it was seen as a massive protest against the European system. According to political philosopher Stathis Kouvelakis,

“The sequence of the referendum was vital in relaunching the process of popular radicalization. It showed a way to combine electoral success and popular mobilization. It was an important event: the first time a people has defiantly said ‘No’ to an ultimatum from Europe’s ruling powers, on such a scale” (Kouvelakis, 2016, p. 59).

7. Analysis

7.1 What are the differences and similarities between Podemos and SYRIZA?

Since the results explained more about the parties' rhetoric and their populist characteristics it is interesting to analyze the differences and similarities between the two parties. Starting off with the similarities. Since Podemos was formed later than SYRIZA, Podemos took inspiration from the rhetoric of the Greek party (Zúquete, 2018, p. 423; Torreblanca, 2015, p. 10). Both parties are proud to support anti-establishment and anti-austerity movements. The members of Podemos got the idea of starting the party because of the *Indignados* protests in 2011 (Ramiro & Gomez, 2016, p. 5). Similar to SYRIZA, which supported the *Aganaktismenoin* movement (Stavrakakis, Katsambekis, 2014, p. 126). Because both parties' members saw how much the people in Spain and Greece were suffering due to the recession of 2008, they decided that there should be a party representing the people that suffered the most.

Both parties gained more popularity in times of crisis. The difference here is, however, that SYRIZA was already founded in 2004, which was four years before the Great Recession (Kotroyannos, Tzagkarakis, Pappas, 2018, p. 7). Podemos was founded ten years later and immediately joined the elections in 2014. The party received popularity in a shorter timespan than SYRIZA and already obtained more votes than PP and PSOE in November 2014, even though the party was founded 11 months before (Torreblanca, 2015, p. 10). This raised the question if the members of Podemos joined the elections with sincere intentions. Did the party join in 2014 to help people at the time that the party was needed, or because it expected to gain more popularity if it would join the elections in the middle of the crisis? Koen Vossen suspects that the last matter is true.

He states that Iglesias, the leader of the party, is a previous television host and educated individual. Because of his experiences, he has a lot of social knowledge. Therefore, Vossen thinks that he would know which moment would be the right one to join the elections (Vossen, personal communication, November 15, 2019). Jose Torreblanca, however, does not think this is entirely the case. He states that the members of Podemos were already working in political fields and were very left-oriented. Pablo Iglesias was a member of many communist youth groups when he was younger. Therefore, he decided to have a more protagonist role during the *Indignados* protests (Torreblanca, personal communication, November 25, 2019).

Furthermore, the parties have a similar rhetoric and speech. Iglesias and Tsipras are both charismatic people that use simplified and persuasive speech tactics to get their message across

to the people (Galanopoulos, 2015, pp. 1-2). They use heavy and emotional statements, such as: “the elites are unreachable to the majority of the people” and “they made their decisions without the “normal people”. Both of the parties make use of (social) media in order to spread their message, to influence the citizens or to communicate with them. This is a common thing to do for many other populist leaders in Europe (Ivaldi, Lanzone, Woods, 2017, p. 370).

Most importantly, the parties are not only against the national establishment, but also against the neo-liberal structure of the European Union (Kotroyannos, Tzagkarakis, Pappas, 2018, p. 9; Stavrakakis & Katsambekis, 2014, pp. 135-136). Both parties state that the elites in the Union do not sympathize with “normal” people and that they therefore do not understand how disastrous the strict austerity measures were for the citizens of Spain and Greece. Many left-wing populist voters agree that the economic crisis was not directly their fault, but of their governments, and do not understand why they had to pay for the faults. Both of the parties are specifically unhappy with the power-division in Europe and claim that Angela Merkel, or Germany, treats the southern European countries as colonies (Douzinas; Papakonstandinou, 2011; Ivaldi, Lanzone, Woods, 2017, p. 367). They do not understand why a country like Italy, Spain, Greece or Portugal is being punished with harsh austerity measurements after they were already the victims of a heavy economic recession. On the other hand, right-wing voters in wealthier European countries, such as the Netherlands, Sweden, Germany and France, do not understand why they have to pay tax money in order to save the “lazy” countries that are always economically in trouble.

Lastly, another similarity that SYRIZA and Podemos share, is that they both lessened their populist rhetoric over time (Tieleman, 2020; Tzagkarakis, personal communication, December 18, 2019). Since SYRIZA gained power and Podemos formed a coalition with the socialist party of Spain, PSOE, both parties have been minimizing their direct speech and their passion to overthrow the elitarian government. Many political scientists suspect that the parties did this to fit into the existing political structures of the countries. After all, when SYRIZA gained power, the party made many promises that it could not follow up to, because the existing system was not supporting it and their promises were too ambitious. There is a great probability that the extremist parties changed their speech purely because they saw that they were not gaining more followers than they had. Changing the party’s point of view to a more centralistic one could recruit a more diverse group of followers for the parties (Tzagkarakis, personal communication, December 18, 2019).

However, there are some very important differences between the two parties. To start with the parties’ rhetoric. Podemos is more focused on decentralizing power, since the party is

known for its horizontal structure and SYRIZA is less. However, over the last few years, Podemos changed its structure in a more vertical one, mainly because of its struggle to maintain the horizontal party structure in a country where there is a strict hierarchy (Ivaldi, Lanzone, Woods, 2017, pp. 369-370). Normally, in Spain vertical structures in schools, work, political parties are the norm. Therefore, the horizontal structure that Podemos implemented was almost impossible to apply. SYRIZA finds a more horizontal structure also important but was more focused on its diverse representation. For Tsipras it was very important to show that SYRIZA was a left-wing party, and he did this by excessively showing that every minority of the Greek society was welcome. Therefore, the party was the first in the Greek parliament to be pro-LGBTQ+ and one of the only parties that invited refugees to stay in Greece (Tzagkarakis, personal communication, December 18, 2019).

On the contrary, Podemos did not focus on defining its party's orientation, while it was clearly in between socio-democratic and left-extremist (Ramiro & Gomez, 2016, p. 6). Torreblanca and Vossen suspect that the party did not want to have a political label and thereby would show that they were indeed different than the "traditional" parties in Europe (Torreblanca, 2015, p. 11; Vossen, personal communication, November 15, 2019). Torreblanca explains that Iglesias wanted to appeal to everyone on the political spectrum (Torreblanca, personal communication, November 25, 2019). Podemos thereby totally differs from SYRIZA, that wanted everyone to know how left-oriented they were and would take any measure to prove it to the Greek citizens (Tzagkarakis, personal communication, December 18, 2019). However, there are many political parties that are also following this tactic. For example, the orientation from the right-wing populist party PVV also differs from time to time. This is because the party supports LGBTQ+ rights and is advocating higher retirement wages (Vossen, 2011, p. 179-189). Next to that, as mentioned before, M5S is one of the populist parties in Europe that is also quite undefinable (Gerbaudo & Screti, 2017, pp. 1-2; Ivaldi; Lanzone & Woods, 2017, p. 355). Podemos thereby might be different than traditional parties in Europe, but not entirely original amongst the other populist parties in Europe.

Lastly, the most important difference between the two parties is their opportunity to govern. SYRIZA has been ruling the Greek parliament from 2015-2019 and Podemos has now reached the position of a coalition party (Maltezou & Babington, 2015). Therefore, it is important to mention that it is not sure if Podemos would have acted the same way as SYRIZA did if it did not have to form a coalition and be the only ruling party. When SYRIZA ruled, a lot of its promises were not fulfilled, since they were too ambitious. According to Torreblanca, Podemos would have been a similar story if it ruled in Spain (Torreblanca, personal

communication, November 25, 2019). Stelios Tzagkarakis agrees with Torreblanca, however, he thinks that Podemos has been “lucky” by losing the elections of 2015. Iglesias was able to see the mistakes that Tsipras made with SYRIZA and could therefore adjust their rhetoric for the better (Tzagkarakis, personal communication, November 15, 2019).

7.2 What was the role of the economic crisis in the rise of populism in Spain and Greece?

The economic crisis between 2008 and 2012 was something that immensely fueled the growth of left-wing populist parties in Spain and Greece. For the rest of Europe, it also powered right-wing populism and other extreme political views. The south European countries were affected the most by the crisis and the unemployment reached peaks of 26-27% in both Spain and Greece (Ramiro & Gomez, 2016, p. 3; Stavrakakis & Katsambekis, 2014, p. 125). The group that suffered the most from the crisis were the people under the age of 25. Their unemployment rate reached 55% in Spain and 60% in Greece (Ramiro & Gomez, 2016, p. 4; Stavrakakis & Katsambekis, 2014, p. 125). Next to that, harsh austerity measures were applied in the south of Europe that caused revolt in the two countries, since the people that already suffered from unemployment and increased prices now also had to cope with budget cuts (Markou, 2017, p. 56; Vossen, personal communication, November 15, 2019).

However, it is important to mention that the economic crisis was not the only reason why left-wing populist parties gained popularity in Spain and Greece. Firstly, one of the other factors was the “crisis of democracy” (Jäger, personal communication, December 30, 2019). Jäger and two professors from the University in Canberra, Ercan and Gagnon, explain that the crisis partly started with a shift in society and politics in Europe since the 1990s (Jäger, personal communication, December 30, 2019; Ercan & Gagnon, 2014, p. 3). They explain that since then people’s interest in politics decreased, while their dissatisfaction increased. There was a declining membership of political parties and there was less donation money to keep some political institutions standing. Therefore, labor unions and other accountable institutions grew smaller and less powerful in the beginning of the twenty-first century. This was noticeable in Greece and Spain since there was no governmental organization or union that supported the people that lost their jobs or money in times of economic crisis. Therefore, Podemos and SYRIZA gained more popularity by supporting the people in need that did not receive help from the government or unions (Torreblanca, personal communication, November 25, 2019; Vossen, personal communication, November 15, 2019).

Furthermore, the number of swing votes increased. The generations after the 1990s were not raised with the idea of voting for the same traditional party every election, like their parents were. Many people started to switch parties when they were not satisfied with the parties' results. Some Europeans stopped voting overall, and the voter turnout declined immensely in mainly the south and east of Europe (p. 29). Together with the increasing individuality and the neo-liberal structure that European Union adopted, more parties that fit the diverse needs of the individuals were created. This caused a declining popularity for once great traditional parties, and fragmentation within the national and European parliaments (Bolin, 2019, p. 20). In Spain this happened with the traditional parties PP and PSOE and in Greece with PASOK. Therefore, when the large parties declined, there was more space for Podemos and SYRIZA to enter the parliament.

The author Stijn van Kessel, argued that the proportional representation of the Greek and Spanish parliament also helped the populists to enter the parliament, since the number of seats is closely related to the number of votes the parties receive. He argues that countries who have a single member plurality system (SMP), such as the UK, give less opportunity to smaller (populist) parties to enter the British general elections (van Kessel, 2015, p. 144). However, many authors have argued that the populist parties British National Party (BNP) and the UK Independence Party (UKIP) still had a great voice in British politics. Authors Rovira Kaltwasser and Taggart, believe that electoral laws and institutional restrictions will not stop a populist party once it gained popularity (Rovira Kaltwasser & Taggart, 2016, pp. 213-214). Therefore, it would be incorrect to state that a proportional representation directly leads to the popularity of Podemos and Greece, although it most likely increased their chance to be in the parliament.

The second reason that left-wing populism gained more popularity in Greece and Spain, was because of the high rate of corruption and the unstable democracy due to the past dictatorships. Researchers find that anti-corruption parties are more popular in countries where the corruption rate is higher, which in this case the South-European countries (Polk, Rovny, Bakker, et al., 2017, p. 2). Mainly in these countries, corruption scandals have come to light since the economic crises from 2008-2012. Bank employees that spent fraud money, mortgage scandals and governmental investments that prioritize companies over people caused much revolt amongst citizens (Torreblanca, personal communication, November 25, 2019; Vossen, personal communication, November 15, 2019).

Next to that, Vossen states that many South European countries such as Spain, Portugal and Greece do not have a strong governmental foundation. Because their constitutions were formed in the late 1970s, when both dictatorships ended, their political fundamentals are not as

developed as most European countries who have a more advanced democracy (Vossen, personal communication, November 15, 2019). Torreblanca states that Spain even made its new constitution in a “hurry” to prevent a new civil war. He explains that therefore many political, social and economic foundations that were of importance during the economic crisis were not laid during the creation of the constitution (Torreblanca, personal communication, November 25, 2019).

All in all, the fragile democratic foundation and the corruption scandals were already existent before the rise of left-wing populism. The economic crises between 2008-2012 exposed political and constitutional problems that the South-European countries were already facing and gave the last push towards revolt and anti-establishment thoughts. Therefore, other countries in Europe that were also facing difficulties during the economic crisis, such as the Netherlands, did not have a left-wing populism party that gained power since they were struggling with less fundamental and corruption issues (Vossen, personal communication, November 15, 2019).

Furthermore, globalization seems to be a large factor for the rise of populism in general (Rocchetti, 2018, p. 4). What many people are experiencing nowadays with the increasing influence of globalization is that they are exposed to an information flow that their previous generations never had access to before. Media is showing the different news from all over the world in a more dramatic or disproportional way, in order to grab the attention of the viewers. Next to that, immigrants have easier access to other countries and to work abroad, which fuels mostly right-wing parties. People have access to more information, due to the internet and the media. However, it has not only made people more informed but also more anxious. Daily exposure to “strange” cultural habits or believes that are opposite to ours makes people scared to lose their culture (Kaya, 2011, pp. 40, 42). Next to that, seeing how people in their own country are losing jobs and gaining less money makes people lose their faith in their governments.

Additionally, the European Union is still seen by many European citizens as mysterious and complicated (Vossen, personal communication, November 15, 2019). Since people have much access to information nowadays, many are noticing that they lack information from institutions that are controlling and implementing their legislations. Populist parties create an enemy out of people’s insecurities. For right-wing populist parties these “enemies” are mainly immigrants, but the overall enemies of populist parties are the European Union, (financial) elites and journalists (Ivaldi; Lanzone, Woods, 2017, p. 360). By creating this friend-enemy rhetoric, they gain trust and empathy from the people, as they finally feel heard through all the chaos of information in their day-to-day life.

What Jäger finds very important to mention is that there is not one specific crisis or movement that can directly instigate left-wing populism in every country in Europe (Jäger, personal communication, December 30, 2019). As an example, he gives Portugal, a country that went through similar economic difficulties as Spain and Greece and also has a young constitution. However, there was not a populist party that gained immense popularity in Portugal compared to Spain and Greece (Carreira da Silva, 2018, p. 250). Isabel David, professor of political science at the Institute of Social and Political Sciences (ISCSP), explains why populist parties did not gain as much popularity in Portugal.

Briefly, she states that most Portuguese people are not in favor of the Eurosceptic part of the populists. Although, there are people against the EU-integration, most Portuguese citizens are thankful for the economic opportunities that the European Union brought to the country. Next to that, Portugal has one of the lowest voter turnouts in Europe. Therefore, it is difficult for new parties to receive enough votes to enter the parliament. Even after the economic crises, there has not been a new party that entered the parliament between 2011 and 2015, except for environmentalist party PAN (David, 2019). Lastly, the political stability in Portugal seems to be rather high at the moment. The current president is very loved and has, according to David, “successfully applied *affectionate politics*, which were especially effective during times of greater distress” (David, 2019). The author therefore claims that most Portuguese citizens currently do not find it necessary to bring a new, populist party to power.

7.3 What are the differences between the left- and right-wing voter groups?

Starting off with right-wing populist parties who have been broadening their voting base since the beginning of the twenty-first century. The modern parties are not only representing workers and employees, but also the people that are against immigration, live on a tight budget or generally feel overlooked by the political elites (Mudde, 2019, p. 80). An example of classical right-wing populist voters are the fictional characters Henk and Ingrid told by Wilders. Henk and Ingrid are decent Dutch people who work hard and do not get their happiness handed to them on a silver plate but are continuously treated less than the elites (Vossen, personal communication, November 15, 2019).

Maureen Eger and Sarah Valdez, two professors from the Stockholm and Carlos III university, state that many right-wing populist voters have the feeling that not only the elites are taking advantage of them, but also the immigrants. Many right-wing populist voters agree that it is unacceptable that immigrants are filling up vacancies and being paid by their tax money

in the form of social welfare. Right-wing populist parties, such as Rassemblement National and PVV, are supporting this idea and are also fueling it (Eger & Valdez, 2015, p. 116).

In times of crisis, radical-right parties tend to adopt a more socio-economic focus but with an anti-immigrant approach. In this way, they are appealing to the people who are not agreeing with the economic situation, but also believe that only the native population has a right to a prosperous economy (van Kessel, 2015, p. 26). This differs greatly from left-wing populist parties, which mainly focus on targeting the current neo-liberal system and the political and financial elites. A great number of the left-wing populist parties believes that immigrants and minorities are also a part of the “native” population and therefore deserve economic prosperity as much as the rest (Rocchetti, 2018, p. 11; Tzagrakakis, personal communication, December 18, 2019).

Research shows that the voters of Podemos and SYRIZA are mostly young, educated and with many unfulfilled expectations (Santana & Rama, 2018, p. 13; Vossen, personal communication, November 15, 2019; Jäger, personal communication, December 30, 2019). Santana and Rama add that people who generally have difficulties paying taxes or bills, who receive social welfare or are affected by the economic crisis in Spain and Greece are also more likely to vote for left-wing populism (Santana & Rama, 2018, p. 13). The unfulfilled expectations of the educated youth in Spain was mainly based on the governments promise that a well-paid job and a house would be guaranteed if you went to school, worked hard and got your degree. However, because of the economic crises of 2008 to 2012, many young people did not have the chance to find a job or a house after their studies (Vossen, personal communication, November 15, 2019).

When stating that left-wing populist voters are young and highly educated, it raises the question if right-wing populist voters are less educated. Many academics state that the latter is true. Santana and Rama have found that right-wing populists are mostly older, living in a rural environment and are the less-educated part of the working class (Santana & Rama, p. 13, 2018). Ivarsflaten and Stubager agree with this and explain that people who vote for right-wing populists agree with an anti-immigrant rhetoric, because they had a lower educational level. The professors explain that higher education teaches communicative skills and tolerance to the students. Libertarian values are generally more respected among the peers with a higher level of education in the western world (Ivarsflaten & Stubager, 2013, pp. 3-4). It is, however, not correct to qualify all the right-wing populist voters as lower-educated, since every voter has different reasons and backgrounds (Rooduijn, 2018, p. 364).

Lastly, although left -and right-wing voters differ greatly, mainly because of their different opinions on migration and equality, there is one similarity that drives both groups to vote for populist parties. This is the “losers of the globalization” sentiment. This means that in times of crisis, people that suffer tend to think that they have it worse than people that are less influenced (Santana & Rama, 2018, p. 13). Right-wing populist voters, in this case, feel as if they are worse off than the others, because they feel that their opinion is less valid in comparison to the immigrants’ needs (Mudde, 2019, p. 33).

Left-wing populist share the similar sentiment of being the victims of the globalization, but, as stated before, they have a more economic approach. The voters of left-wing populism are mostly people with economic difficulties and compare themselves to the wealthy people who are not struggling. In Spain and Greece, sentiment peaked during and after the economic recession of 2008. The citizens of the country witnessed that they had more economic problems compared to wealthier countries of the EU and therefore saw themselves as the underdog (Santana & Rama, 2018, p. 13). In their eyes, it is the neo-liberal system and the political leaders that are to blame. The citizens of the South-European countries view that the European Union is economically uneven, and that the wealthier countries are not willing to share their economic prosperity with the countries in trouble (Douzina & Papakonstandinou, 2011; Ivaldi, Lanzone, Woods, 2017, p. 367; Rocchetti, 2018, p. 11, 43). Both voter groups agree that their voices have become meaningless due to globalization. Therefore, they are trying to let their voice get heard through populist parties, who make themselves out to be the only viable representatives.

7.4 In what way is left-wing populism inclusive?

What has been shown in the research, is the inclusiveness of left-wing populism compared to right-wing populism. The most successful left-wing populist parties in Europe, SYRIZA and Podemos, seem to view immigrants and minorities as an important part of society. Pablo Iglesias describes himself as a patriot, but views immigrants that are settled in Spain as part of the Spanish citizens (Ivaldi, Lanzone, Woods, 2017, p. 364). Next to that, SYRIZA was the only party in the Greek parliament that was pro-LGBTQ+ marriage (Markou, 2017, p. 62). This, however, raised the question if the parties truly believed in inclusivism, or if they merely used it to attract more voters.

To start with, not every left-wing populist party is expressing its inclusiveness as much as Podemos and SYRIZA do. For example, the left-populistic party SP in the Netherlands had a slightly anti-immigrant rhetoric from the 1980s to the beginning of the 2000s. When guest

workers from Morocco and Turkey settled in the Netherlands at the beginning of the 1980s, the party published a report called *Gastarbeid en Kapitaal* (English: Guest Labor and Capital). In this report it was stated that,

“Those that are guided by the Islamic religion may find it difficult to adapt to the working and living habits of our country. The lag of development in regard to our country and the consistent views they have about their (Islamic) faith mean that they have little opportunity in our society” (SP, 1983) (Translated from Dutch).

However, their representation of exclusiveness has become milder over time. Nowadays, when mainly discrimination issues are discussed, such as a form of blackface tradition in the Netherlands called Black Piet, the party remains aloof of the issues (Vossen, personal communication, November 15, 2019). The SP tries to emphasize that it is focusing on the economic issues of the country and less on the socio-cultural issues that they have been vocal about in the past.

Next to that, Podemos was also not very much involved in the fight for the Catalan independence. The party stated that it was in favor of self-determination of the Catalans, however, it did not want to be determined as pro-independence for Cataluña (Torreblanca, personal communication, November 25, 2019). According to Vossen, Iglesias did not want to pick a side of the discussion. By being pro-independence, the party would support the socialists, but would lose an area with economic importance and a great number of voters (Vossen, personal communication, November 15, 2019). Therefore, the party would not necessarily represent the rights of minorities, being the Catalans in this case. However, Podemos has been entering the coalition with a Catalan pro-independence party since the elections of November 2019 (Tieleman, 2020; Jones, 2019).

Lastly, the argument of SYRIZA representing inclusiveness is also questionable. They have been the only party in the national parliament that represents LGBTQ+ rights. However, the question is whether the party members actually believe in inclusiveness or represent it just for the sake of being left-oriented. An example hereof is the treatment of the Syrian refugees in the refugee crisis from 2013-2015. Tsipras was convinced that the borders should stay open for refugees to pass through Greece in order to reach the rest of Europe. However, Tzagkarakis explained that this idea was a result of the failure of the anti-austerity memorandum and that Tsipras actually did not want the refugees to stay in Greece. The party had to prove to their voters that they were inclusive socialists. Therefore, Tsipras wanted to show the people that

everyone, including refugees, were welcome in the Greek society (Tzagkarakis, personal communication, December 18, 2019). However, the European Commission decided, based on the Dublin regulations, that the largest number of the refugees had to request asylum in the European country they entered first. Which was in many cases Greece or Italy (European Commission, n.d.). Therefore, many refugees stayed in Greece, but the government did not have the money to fund institutions that could provide houses and jobs for the migrants. There was eventually no plan to properly include the refugees in the society, and therefore only seemed as a political move to stay likable and represent inclusiveness instead of doing it out of morality.

All in all, there seems to be a mixture between the moral compass of the left-wing populist leaders and political strategies. These arguments show that the parties are more willing to represent inclusiveness rather than right-wing populist parties. However, the parties are also being careful not to represent one part of the minorities over the other, in order to stay popular and relevant for different groups in the society. Also, for the left-populist parties it is important that its rhetoric is primarily focused on the socio-economic struggle. After that, there is room to discuss issues around inclusiveness.

8. Conclusion

There was aimed to answer the following research question: *"What are the socio-economic influences that are causing the rise of left-wing populist parties in Spain and Greece since the end of the twentieth century?"*.

Populism nowadays has noticeable key-elements. Anti-establishment, polarization, and Euroscepticism. The results and analysis show the main rhetoric that the most populist parties share is dividing the society in the "others" versus the "normal" people. Most populists see elites as corrupt and minorities as disturbances in a homogeneous society (Laclau, 2005, p. 40; Mouffe 2005, p. 57).

Furthermore, results showed that Europe is experiencing a fourth wave of populism since the 2000s (Mudde, 2019, p. 20). This wave has created a much more mainstream form of populism in Europe. The parties are not only found locally, but also in national parliaments and the European Parliament. However, what has been interesting to most academics is that right-wing populism used to be the frontrunner of the populists in Europe. Though, after the economic crisis of 2008-2012 the south of Europe has experienced an immense rise of left-wing populist parties. The most popular being SYRIZA and Podemos.

In the results and case studies it was analyzed which influences were the most essential for the rise of left-wing populism in Spain and Greece. The hypothesis of this thesis was that "extreme economic recessions and globalization issues such as Euroscepticism influenced most European citizens to vote left-wing populism since they lost their trust in politics, politicians and the European or national system they live in" (p. 18). Next to that, there was expected that left-wing populism gained especially large attention in the countries that were most affected by the economic crises between 2008-2012. This hypothesis is partly true, however, research has found that economic problems were not the only reason of increasing popularity.

The results and analysis together show that several other factors influenced the general rise of populism in Europe. Globalization being one. The first problem that comes with globalization is media that provides an overload of information that has been working in the populist's favor. The parties can use it to spread their rhetoric, feed the people with fear or sensor other media channels and blame them of distributing "fake news" (Mudde, 2019, p. 111). Next to that, Euroscepticism also had a great influence on the rise. Brussels is by many European citizens witnessed as a "anonymous powerhouse" that has never sympathized with the "normal"

people (Mudde, 2016, p. 29). In times of crisis, people are more drawn to populist parties that present solutions directly, rather than the “mysterious” European union.

Research has also found that the factors involved in the rise of left-wing populism in Spain and Greece were more specific. Spain and Greece have suffered from many corruption scandals over the years, which mainly came into light during and after the economic crises. Compared to the northern and western European countries, corruption scandals are more normalized (Vossen, personal communication, November 15, 2019). This is mainly caused by the young constitution and unstable democracy that both Spain and Greece share (Torreblanca, personal communication, November 25, 2019). Since their constitutions were founded in the 1970s, they have been rather new compared to the north and west of Europe. All in all, it is concluded that this gave opportunity for Podemos and SYRIZA to blame the traditional elites for the disorganization and corruption in the system. Since Podemos and SYRIZA were both new parties, they claimed that they were never involved in corruption scandals of the past.

The differences that were found in this thesis compared to the existing research is that not every left-wing populist party in Europe is as inclusive as Podemos and SYRIZA (pp. 53-54). The reason why most academics see the parties as the main examples of the left-wing populists is because they were the most popular in the twenty-first century. However, left-wing populist party SP has been around for a longer time and was not known to be inclusive towards mainly Muslim immigrants in its early years (Vossen, personal communication, November 15, 2019). Also, the left -to center populist party M5S has a very anti-immigrant approach compared to Podemos and SYRIZA (Gerbaudo & Screti, 2017, p. 1-2).

Furthermore, in the research was found that some academics claimed that the voter groups of the left -and right-wing populists were almost complete opposites since they had different opinions on immigration, Europe and the economy (Santana & Rama, 2018, p. 13). However, research showed that this was not entirely true. The age and educational level generally differed but the reasons why the voters chose the populist parties were the same. Since both electoral groups felt negatively influenced by the crises in Europe, they chose a representative party that made them feel heard. They believe that the populists are the most viable option in times of crisis and insecurity (p. 52).

Another difference is that many academics claimed that crisis and corruption, or the combination thereof, is a direct cause of the rise of left-wing populism. However, many other European countries, such as the Netherlands, Portugal and Germany suffered from the economic recessions but did not have a ruling left-wing populist party after (Jäger, personal communication, December 30, 2019). Thereby, Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands

have only noticed increasing right-wing populist parties that in some cases even gained popularity without the aid of a crisis (Balfour, 2017, p. 57).

Taken all the research into consideration, it can still be concluded that economic insecurity in combination with the austerity measures together with many corruption scandals made Spanish and Greek citizens feel as if they were the *losers of the globalization* compared to the more prosperous countries in Europe. The other European countries did suffer from the crisis; however, they did not have a collapsed political and economic framework as much as Spain and Greece did. Many citizens of the wealthier countries lost their job but had a stronger democratic framework and constitution. Next to that, their austerity measures were not as heavy as Spain and Greece. When the heavy austerity measures were applied to countries in the south of Europe the citizens that voted for Podemos and SYRIZA therefore believed that the European Union were putting the more prosperous countries first and the less fortunate ones second. These reasons are together the socio-economic influences that are causing the rise of left-wing populist parties in Spain and Greece since the end of the twentieth century.

9. References

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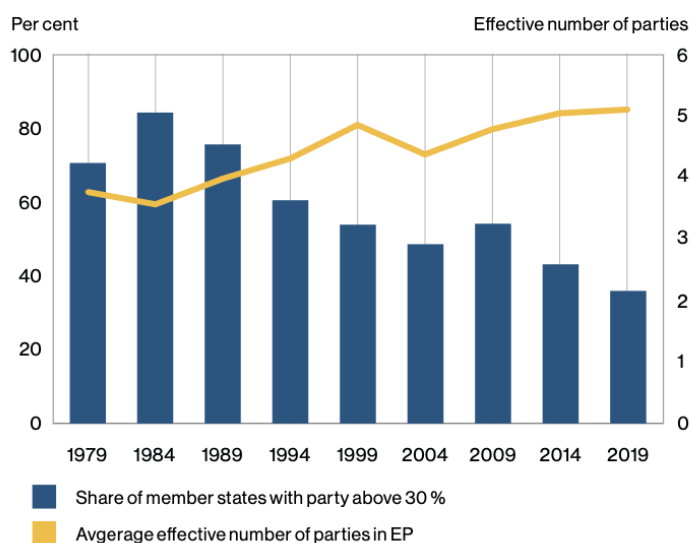
10. Annex

Table 1 Far-Right Electoral Gains (National Elections)

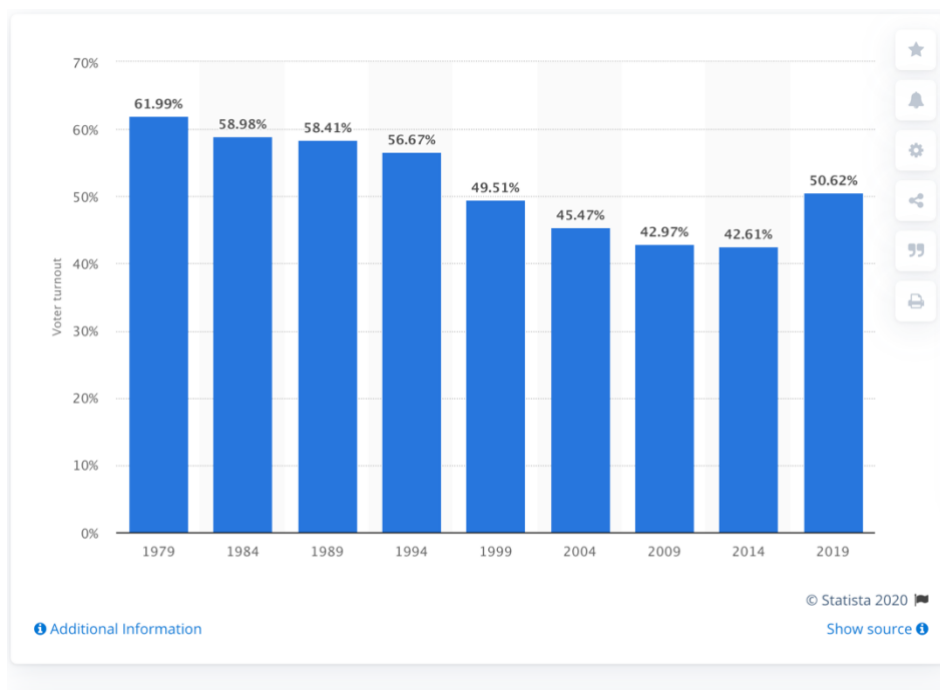
Country Party	Year Percentage of vote (ranking)					
Austria FPÖ ¹³	2013 20.5% (3)	2008 17.5% (3)	2006 11% (4)	2002 10% (3)	1999 26.9% (2)	1994 22.5% (3)
Denmark DPP ¹⁴	2015 21.1% (2)	2011 12.3% (3)	2007 13.9% (3)	2005 13.3% (3)	2001 12% (3)	1998 7.4% (5)
Greece Golden Dawn ¹⁵	Sept 2015 7% (3)	Jan 2015 6.3% (3)	2012 7% (6)			
Hungary JOBBIK	2014 20.2% (3)	2010 16.7% (3)	2006 2.2% (5)	2002 n/a 41.1% (2)	1998 n/a 28.2% (1)	1994 n/a 7% (6)
Fidesz ¹⁶	44.9% (1)	52.7% (1)	42% (2)			
Netherlands PVV ¹⁷	2012 5.9% (5)	2010 15.5% (3)	2006 10.1% (3)			
Sweden SD ¹⁸	2014 12.8% (8)	2010 5.7% (6)	2006 2.9% (8)	2002 1.4% (8)	1998 0.4% (8)	
UK UKIP ¹⁹	2015 12.6% (3)	2010 3.2% (4)	2005 2.3% (4)	2001 1.5% (5)	1997 0.3% (11)	

Annex 1, the percentages of right-wing populist votes before and after the economic crisis of 2008-2012. Source: (Pisoïu & Ahmed, 2016, p. 168)

Figure 1. Party system fragmentation 1979-2019

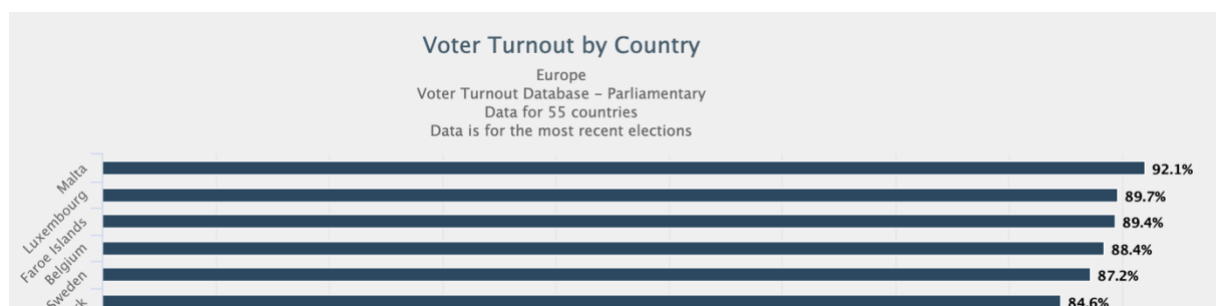


Annex 2, the fragmentations of the European parties and the percentages of parties with votes above 30% since 1979. Source: (Bolin, 2019, p. 20)

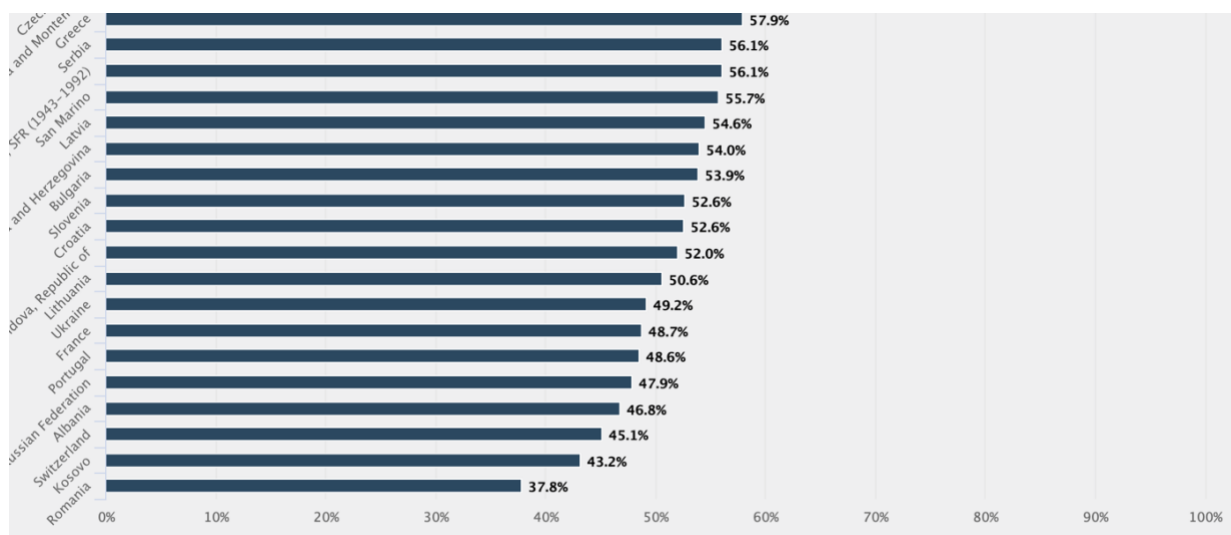


Annex 3, the decreasing voter turnout in the European elections from 1979-2019. Source: (Statista, 2019)

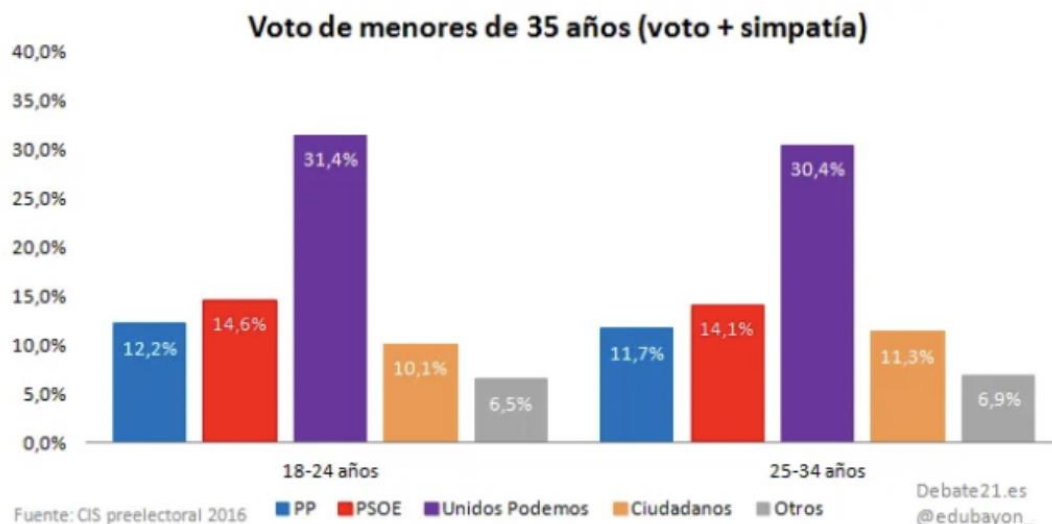
EU Parliament: voter turnout in the European elections 1979-2019



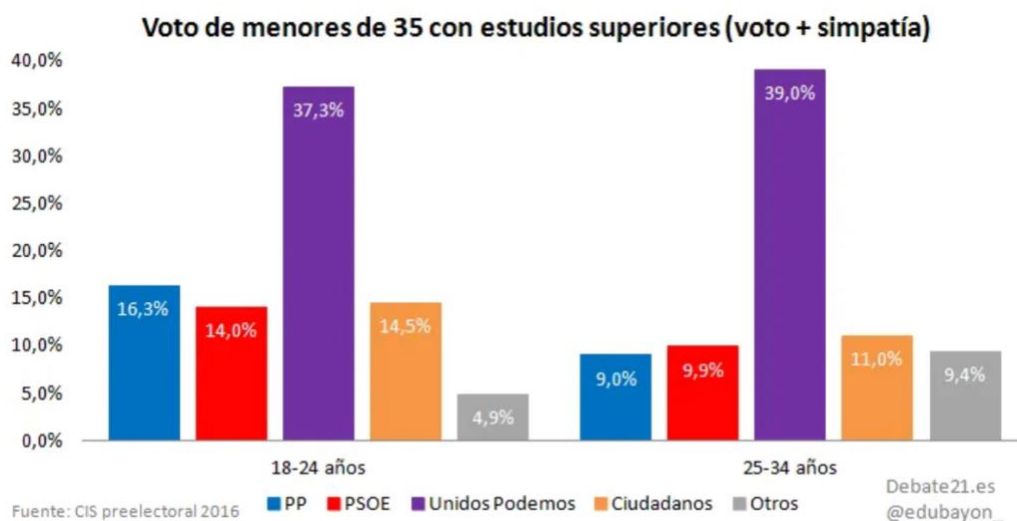
Annex 4, the countries with the highest overall parliamentary voter turnout from the recent elections. Source: (International Idea Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2019)



Annex 5, the countries with the lowest overall parliamentary voter turnout from the recent elections. Source: (International Idea Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2019)

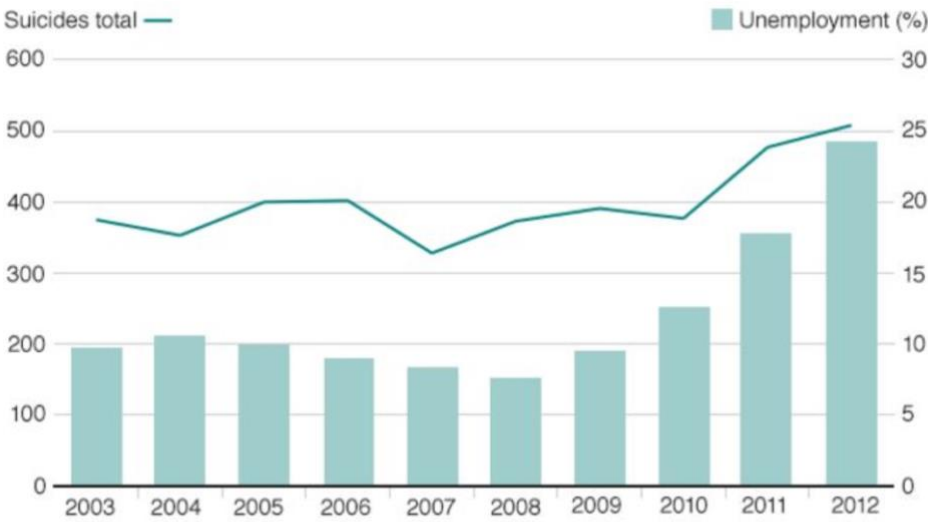


Annex 6, the percentage of votes for PP, PSOE, Unidos Podemos, Ciudadanos and others in 2016 based on the age of the voters [Votes from under 35 years (votes + sympathy)]. The statistics show that Podemos was the most popular party in 2016 among the voter groups of 18-24 and 25-35 years. Source: (Debate 21, 2016)



Annex 7, the percentage of votes for PP, PSOE, Unidos Podemos, Ciudadanos and others in 2016 based on the age and education level of the voters. Estudios superiores being higher education in Spain [votes from under 35 years with higher education (vote + sympathy)]. The statistics show that Podemos was the most popular party in 2016 among people under 35 that were highly educated. Source: (Debate 21, 2016).

Suicide rates in Greece



Source: BMJ, University of Thessaly, University of Oxford, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies



Annex 8, The suicide rate in Greece from 2003-2012, after the economic crisis. Source: (Rodgers & Styliano, 2015).

11. Interview Transcripts

Interview Stelios Tzagkarakis 18-12-19

Annick: Hello, my name is Annick Valdes Perez. I am a student from The Hague University which is in the Netherlands and thank you for doing this interview it actually helps me a lot. I am writing my thesis on left-wing populism in Europe and for my thesis I have two case studies which are about Podemos in Spain and SYRIZA in Greece. If you would like I would try to focus on SYRIZA, because I already had an interview about Podemos. So, what I wanted to ask first, because I am mostly looking at the populist aspect of SYRIZA and how it evolves and how it is different from other populist parties and the first question I would like to ask you is: would you actually define SYRIZA as a populist party or would you see it more as an extremist left party or a communist party?

Mister Tzagkarakis: It is definitely not a communist party. It is a populist left-wing party. Especially when before they won the elections in 2015. But also, after winning the elections they continued this populist rhetoric, but especially the period from 2010, the beginning of the crisis actually, until 2015 there was just the example of left populism in Greece.

Annick: Yes, because do you think that SYRIZA is like a typical populist party or is it different from other left-wing populist parties? How do you see that?

Mister Tzagkarakis: I believe they have several similarities. I mean for example when they were in, and I am talking about especially the period before the elections of 2015. So, when they were actually trying to win the elections, they have some characteristics. The first characteristic is that they actually have this **oversimplification** of politics. They believed that they could change even Europe. I mean they believed that they could change everything, and they can just **easily implement** a different policy. So, this is one characteristic. The second is that they have created this diversion between the elites and the people. So, this was the diversion between the anti-memorandum part of Greece and the pro-memorandum part. So, they were with the anti-memorandum part and they were against the elites. So, against the elites it means that they were also against most of the Europeans also before the election. So, they have this polarization between the friend and the enemy. This is the second characteristic. Another thing was that they were talking about **people as a mass**. They didn't define people with their individual

characteristics. They defined them all as a mass and that they are against the elites. So, they were talking about the people, the people, the people or the majority after the elections. So, this is another populist characteristic. So, keep the friend-enemy type, the simplification of policies, the people as a mass and the diversion between the elites and the people. So mostly they have these characteristics. You know, sometimes these characteristics are also characteristics the right-wing populism, but they also have the opinion that also the immigrants are enemies. What left populism does not have but the method they use, this **diversion** of the people and of the society, between the enemies and the friends, between the mass and the people, between immigrants for right-wing and the other people this is a method that the populists use. So that is why, if we try to just underline these three/four characteristics they used this populist strategy in order to win.

Annick: Yes, to win the elections and to actually gain popularity, right?

Mister Tzagkarakis: Yes, to gain popularity because actually they wanted was this. To gain popularity.

Annick: Yes, and why do you think that SYRIZA gained more popularity than other left populist parties in Greece?

Mister Tzagkarakis: Well, that period actually there was a parallel phenomenon (epiphenomenon). It was the PASOK, The Panhellenic Socialist Movement, the social democrats, you know this party?

Annick: I know PASOK, yes.

Mister Tzagkarakis: Yes, so this party was ruling Greece for several years and because they were the government when they started to implement this memorandum, they started losing a significant part of the electoral base. So, these people were not feeling represented by the government. The other options were not so many. I mean there was the communist party, but these people, this electoral base was not communist, and they didn't want to vote for a communist party. That's why because SYRIZA is not a communist party. So, the other choice they have was SYRIZA which was in the parliament so they knew this party and they had this

rhetoric that we can change it and we can change these policies. So that is why they actually, some people from PASOK voted SYRIZA.

Annick: That is very interesting. I did not know that, because I know that there is also New Democracy but maybe they are too right-wing?

Mister Tzagkarakis: Yes, they are right-wing. So, several of the PASOK voters couldn't actually vote New Democracy. This was not possible for them.

Annick: SYRIZA is one of, and I think it is maybe the only, left-wing populist party that gained the main position in Europe but why do you think it was struggling so much to get into the European Parliament?

Mister Tzagkarakis: SYRIZA? When?

Annick: Well, I have something written about this, because they gained the first place in Greece itself and then in the European Parliament, they were not very happy with the party, so it did not get more than six seats.

Mister Tzagkarakis: Yes, but this is the same percentage. They were in the first place also in the European elections at that time. I mean in 2014, not now. So, what happened was that they could not overcome, I mean take more than 35% even if they won the elections, their highest percentage was I think 35. Something like that. So why was that? I mean why they couldn't go to 40%. Because still there is like, 6-8% that remained in PASOK. Which is now called the movement for change or *Kinima Allagis*. So that is why all this electoral base is not a voter of SYRIZA, yet. I mean and now some parts of this electoral base have left also SYRIZA. They went to the new left party of Varoufakis. Yes, because Varoufakis he was, you know him. I suppose that you know him. So, Varoufakis has created a new party and about **3,5% of SYRIZA's voters** voted for this party. So, they lost this part. If you count that they cannot take all PASOK's voters. PASOK's, not Kinima Allagis the movement for things takes about 8%. So, they have about 30 something, 32% and they cannot do more than that. So, in European elections, they had first place in 2014 but the percentage was not more than 32% something like that. I don't remember exactly the percentage, but it was not so high.

Annick: No, it wasn't, and I thought maybe it is because the rest of Europe did not like the party because they saw it as a threat but they themselves present themselves as a corrective tool for the neo-liberal democracy. Do you actually agree that they actually wanted to be a corrective tool, or do you think it could be actually dangerous for the democracy that we have created in Europe?

Mister Tzagkarakis: Dangers for democracy? I am not sure if I can say this now, that they are dangerous for democracy because they were also in government and I am not sure if I can say that they are dangerous in that way. However, when they were in the government, they have implemented some policies which were not so democratic. They did that but I cannot say that they are so dangerous for democracy. Now they try to transform themselves into a **social-democratic** party, but they cannot with these members that they have.

Annick: Because it is mostly not like right-wing populist parties, because they are very anti-establishment, and these parties are anti-establishment too but maybe a little bit more inclusive and a little more corrective instead of abolishing. At least, I think.

Mister Tzagkarakis: Yes, they are a little bit but sometimes because they believe that they represent all people they say "we are the representatives of all people" they are actually, when they are implementing policies, they create some negative effect to some other people. So, this is something dangerous. For example, I don't know if you have seen that they tried, SYRIZA, when they were in government, they tried to reform the law for the television license for the moment. They failed because the court, the higher court, did not accept this because they wanted to diminish the licenses to four. They knew they had the capacity to have more than ten licenses. So, they tried to diminish this, because they tried to **close some channels** which are not pro-governmental. Yes, so it was something that was not positive.

Annick: Yes, because I did know that they tried to nationalize the tv channels and I think there was this tv channel in Greece and it was actually becoming private, but they wanted to stop the privatization.

Mister Tzagkarakis: Well actually they had this public television and really this television was like if you had the represents of SYRIZA party when they were in government. Really, it was like that. We have this channel **ERT** if you know. This is public television. So really if you see

the way they were saying about the government and everything it was like they were the representatives of SYRIZA. So, this is something that happened from the beginning of the television area. I mean, the public television was as a representative of the government, but it was not like that. I mean this period it was like if you see the news, they were trying to say that everything is very good. We have passed the crisis and something like that, but it was not like that. So, they used public television in this way, and this was very, very bad for democracy.

Annick: Because it reminds me of what happened with Victor Orban in Hungary, but he is a right-wing populist, so I thought maybe left-wing populism was less like that. However, if you describe it, it sounds the same to me.

Mister Tzagkarakis: Yes, sometimes it is like what I told you about the populists. Even if they are left or right, **the methods** they use are the same. They have differences with which are crucial for aspects like immigration, like the rights of women, like the rights of lesbians and such but these are the differences. The methods are the same.

Annick: I have two friends from Greece and I have talked with them about SYRIZA and I said: “what do you think that went wrong with the party or what do you not agree with, with what they did?” and one of my friends said: “well, they sort of invited all the refugees to stay in Greece and they said that they could have places for them to live and houses and now they are in camps because they did not have the money or did not have the resources to keep all the refugees”. Why do you think, because I know that SYRIZA wants to include everyone in Greece, but why do you think they accepted all the refugees even though they did not have the money for it at that time?

Mister Tzagkarakis: You know, they tried sometimes because they were implementing the **third memorandum**. That means that they implemented tough austerity policies. They tried in different ways to implement different policies which make them seem left wing. So, because they were accusing them that “you are implementing austerity policies, so you are a not a left-wing”. They used immigration issues for example to show everybody that they are not right-wing and that they are left-wing. So, for example, they used this and said that “okay yes, they can come here. We don’t want to close them in jail and everything, but they can pass and go”. So, they used this in order to seem like they are left-wing and want to accept everybody and they could be included and there is no problem with us. But they didn’t expect that when they

said “okay you can come and pass” then everybody from Turkey will try to pass from Greece to Europe and this will end sometime. All these people will stay here in Greece. So that’s why and then they didn’t have the money and because the European Union didn’t believe that they can use the money properly, they didn’t give all the funds for immigration to the government, but to NGO’s.

Annick: Which had to find solutions for the government instead.

Mister Tzagkarakis: Yes, because they didn’t have actual trust to the Greek government, because it was in the period of bad finance and all the negotiations and all this stuff. So, you can understand what happened in that period. For example, SYRIZA tried to create more public universities. They wanted to open a new law school in Patras, in the city of Patras. When at the same time we have three law schools and several lawyers with their degrees, and they **don’t have vacancies** to find a job. So, then they tried to open a new law school and the new government didn’t continue this. In order to seem to the people that “we are funding public universities and we want more people to be educated” but this is not the issue. I mean, the thing is yes everybody should be educated but they should also have the chance to be included in the labor market. So, this was the problem at that time. So, they tried to use whatever they could, for example these policies, to seem to the people that they are left. Because at the same time they were implementing the austerity.

Annick: Do you think that that’s the main difference, because I don’t know if you know Podemos really well but Podemos tries to not show what kind of direction they want to go. They are in principle a populist left-wing party, but they try to say “no we are in the middle, we will not define ourselves with political left or right-wing parties we are just representing the people” but do you think that that is the difference between SYRIZA and Podemos? That SYRIZA tried to show so hard that they were actually left-wing?

Mister Tzagkarakis: Yes, they want to do that. I mean this is the difference and why is this difference? If Podemos were in government in 2015, I think that the direction would be the same, but they were lucky, and they were lucky because SYRIZA took governance in 2015 and they saw what happened there. So Podemos stayed in this unclear position that they are left, and they were in the opposition and then they tried to support the socialists but, in a distance, they saw the situation in Greece and that’s why there is a **difference**. They were lucky in this

way, because SYRIZA was in front and they saw when they took the power of what happened. That's why they are different, because if you see the pre-electoral campaigns in Greece in 2014/15 Podemos' leader Iglesias came here, and they said the same things as Tsipras. So, they were in the same direction, but they saw what happened here so then they kept the distance.

Annick: Okay and do you think that there are also other big differences, or do you think that that is the main difference. I know that Podemos took a lot of its rhetoric from SYRIZA, but I don't know if there are many differences between the parties.

Mister Tzagkarakis: Well, the differences between these parties, in rhetoric they are the same, but the differences are that Podemos didn't have the power, so we have a limitation here. We cannot judge them as we can judge SYRIZA, because SYRIZA had the power for four and a half years. So, we can see here, you know the word *koloutoumba*? This is a Greek word and they use this word to show that they changed totally their beliefs when they came in power. Because for example when they were in the opposition, they said, "we will not implement memorandums and memoranda and we will do not anything about austerity" and when they took power, they implemented everything. So, this is the turn, the **U-turn**. So, we cannot say the same to Podemos, because we cannot accuse them of that. They didn't have the power, but in rhetoric they are the same yes.

Annick: Yes, because is that not similar to what happened with PASOK? Because PASOK started off as an anti-austerity party. They were against the European Union and then they were actually part of the European Union because they knew that Greek people wanted to be part of the European Union and then they started to be actually anti-extremism and anti-populism.

Mister Tzagkarakis: Yes, PASOK very, very, very soon, I mean before taking power in 1989 has changed its rhetoric in order to take also voters from the center. So yes, it started like that, PASOK started like a radical left party but then they changed very fast before the elections and they became the social democracy party.

Annick: Do you think that the authoritarian past of Greece and the extreme parties in Greece, because you have the Golden Dawn, you have the Independent Greeks and then you have extremist left. PASOK was also extremist left at the beginning. Do you think that that changed

the way that people vote in Greece? That they are just used to extremist parties, so they are accepting it more?

Mister Tzagkarakis: Well, no. For example, PASOK in order to attract voters they very soon stopped to be extremists and they became social democrats and then they took power. At the same time SYRIZA knew that if they implement their extremist rhetoric to policies, when they transform the rhetoric to policies, they knew that they people didn't want to go out of the Euro. So, the majority is not extremist. Then what about Golden Dawn. Golden Dawn is now is not in the parliament so there is also a party in Greece of extremist right, but this part is not so extended and is not so big. This extremism can grow in times of crisis. So, the thing is, when you are in crisis, what is important is to have this **consensus of the political parties**. That didn't exist in Greece for several years. This is the reason that extremism grew in Greece. For example, if they had the consensus to implement the past memorandum very well here in Greece from the beginning, we could have overcome the crisis very fast, but they didn't have this consensus. The political parties. So that's why extremism grew that period. It's not that the Greeks from the right or the left. There is a part, yes there is apart from the right and the left, but it is not so important. Most of the people believe that they are center left, center right, center. If you ask them, if you see some polls, they say that they are most of them, center left, center, center right. There is also a significant part that say that they are left or right, but far left or far right is not so many.

Annick: And you said in the moment of recession of crisis, do you think that the economic recession and the debt crisis of Greece were therefore also the most important reasons of the rise of SYRIZA?

Mister Tzagkarakis: Yes. SYRIZA is a party of the crisis. Golden Dawn is a party of the crisis. Independent Greeks, ANEL is a party of the crisis and even don't exist now. These are parties of the crisis. SYRIZA existed before, but nobody expected that they would become a government or even have more than 10% of the votes. So, they are part of the crisis. They grew up because of the crisis.

Annick: I didn't actually know that ANEL doesn't exist anymore.

Mister Tzagkarakis: They exist, but I mean don't expect to be around the next time.

Annick: Okay, because what I knew was that now New Democracy is ruling the Parliament in Greece and of course SYRIZA messed up with a lot of things, they promised a lot of things that did not happen, there was not a lot of action but do you think that the coalition with ANEL was one of their mistakes?

Mister Tzagkarakis: This was a big mistake that they accused themselves of in times for that coalition, because ANEL is an extremist right. Is a radical right party. So how can you say that you are a left party and you can make a coalition with the right and with this right? They are not just a right party they are a far right, radical right party and populist. They are the same thing. The rhetoric of SYRIZA and ANEL in that period, in 2015, was the same.

Annick: People were not happy was the same because it proved that they were not far left?

Mister Tzagkarakis: Yes, and actually even from the center, specially from ANEL, they left the party they asked themselves “ANEL made a coalition with SYRIZA, but how can we implement all this?”. And also, ANEL was destroyed because of the agreement for the name of **Fyrom, North-Macedonia**. You know this is a right party and they never dealt with the name Macedonia for this country. This party was called Fyrom, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and it was a name which was not the standard name, I mean they said that they should sometimes change this and that there should be an agreement, but Greece didn't agree with a name for Macedonia like that. Because you know there is also a big region in Greece called Macedonia. So, and because in history Macedonians were Greeks and so they said, “you are not Greeks and so how can you be called Macedonians” and this is where the rhetoric. ANEL said that we would never give the name Macedonia to this country, so then SYRIZA as a government agreed for the name North-Macedonia.

Annick: Yes, that is what I've heard about.

Mister Tzagkarakis: And so, ANEL couldn't do anything they just played the game. They were accused of that, that they gave the name Macedonia while they said that they would not give it.

Annick: From what I saw after SYRIZA lost its popularity and Podemos was actually never on the top, do you think that there is a chance that left populist parties will gain the popularity in

in Europe again and maybe form a threat? Maybe form the new elite? The same as right wing parties?

Mister Tzagkarakis: The left populism? I am not so sure about that in this period. I mean, I can see that generally the left is not doing so well and what I can see is that in several parties the social democrats are taking power. For example, in Sweden, in Finland also with coalitions but they have been taking power in Denmark and also in Spain. So, I'm not so sure that the left populism will grow and I'm believing that more possible is that the right populism will grow in Europe and this is a threat to democracy. I mean **Orban** is the example of a threat of democracy and there are several threats and I think the most important one is **Le Pen** in France.

Annick: We have one right wing populist party too actually; I do not know if you know him, he is called Geert Wilders and he leads the party of Freedom. He is very famous. Then we have an upcoming one with Thierry Baudet as a leader and the SP is a left populist party, but I agree that Le Pen is a great threat.

Mister Tzagkarakis: Yes, so this is the problem. I mean also look at **Italy**. In the next election if they go like this, the Lega Nord will win the election and I mean, this is also a threat. So, I think that, in this period the threat for democracy of Europe is from the right populism.

Annick: Okay, my last and main question is based on my main question of my thesis and my main question is actually "What are the social and economic influences that are causing the rise of left-wing populist parties in Spain and Greece since the end of the twentieth century?". So, what is your opinion about this? What do you think is the biggest social economic threat? You already mentioned the economic recession, but are there things you would like to mention which you think are important?

Mister Tzagkarakis: The **collapse of the social democrats**, which is something political but also comes from social reasons. Especially in Greece, and I don't know so much in Spain, but I think also in Spain, this was the same. The **collapse** of the middleclass. This is social and economic. I mean the economic crisis came with the crisis of the middle class. So, this gave turns to the parties to grow. This is an outcome of this collapse, because of the crisis. And I will say something else also. For Greece, an important reason of that is also the inability of the main parties, of PASOK and New Democracy, to really reform the state. So, this inability and this

problem, this inequality which existed before the crisis, was in development but this development was **not in a stable basis**. So that's why they couldn't create a strong state which would be efficient. These inabilities would have led to the crisis also.

Annick: Do you think that that has something to do with the new state they formed after the dictatorship in the 80's?

Mister Tzagkarakis: Yes, this state was formed in that period and they had also some problems, some structural problems from the beginning. They tried to change this in Greece, in the 1990's but they could not do this, and they didn't finish the job. This also was an effort of PASOK and New Democracy, both of them and I think that mostly New Democracy, in the last period, they governed before the crisis. The period of 2004 to 2009 they were the most irresponsible government in terms of economy, so all of these structural things led to collapse of the middle class and also to the rise of inequalities, to the rise of poverty and to the crisis.

Annick: That makes a lot of sense. I think the middle class is very important. Mostly for the citizens to feel included in society.

Mister Tzagkarakis: Yes, and you know in Greece the middle class was the main sources of voters from every party to become a government. I mean, PASOK before 1981, they have abolished this radical left part in order to catch the middle class and become government. The same happened with New Democracy and again and again because they were switching the power. The main part was the middle class and this class was that elected SYRIZA.

Annick: Yes, the story is very clear. You told me a couple of things that I actually did not know so I am going to include that in my thesis, and I would really like to thank you for your interview.

Interview Anton Jager 30-12-19

Annick: Hi, I will present myself in advance. My name is Annick Valdes Perez and I am a student from The Hague University. I am studying European Studies and right now I am working on my dissertation about left wing populism. My case studies are about Spain and Greece, but I wanted to ask something. You are writing your PHD about American populism, right?

Mister Jager: yes, so its American populism in the late 19th century, so its not exactly the contemporary case, but I am still interested in contemporary questions.

Annick: I would like to start with the four waves of populism, are you familiar with them? The waves that have been introduced by Cas Mudde?

Mister Jager: Yes, I mean I've read several versions of that thesis but if you are referring to the last version then yes, I am familiar with that. I mean I am not completely sure about the periods. I know the four waves, but I don't know exactly what time periods he puts on every period.

Annick: I think that the fourth wave started in the end of the twentieth century, but I wanted to ask you what your opinion is on the cause of the fourth wave of populism and why you think it comes into waves. Why isn't it a stagnating line?

Mister Jager: Yes, good question. Well, I don't think there is one cause for every wave of populism. So, I don't think it makes sense to say that there is one factor that can explain the rise of populism as a phenomenon. I think there is always an interplay of different factors which go from economy to how political representation functions, to how parties' function, to how people relate to the state, to how states relate to each other. So, I don't think it really makes sense to look at one factor that can explain the rise of populism. What I do think is the reason that it comes in waves and does not stagnate is because populism is indeed an intrinsically **modern phenomenon** so it's a form of democratic politics what arises in the context of representation. The reason populism is bound to return in a context of representation is because representation is intrinsically a dissatisfying mechanism. It can never be perfect. There is no way to have **perfect representation** mechanisms in a liberal democracy. It is very, very difficult to perfectly define the people and a democracy. So even if we decide all those different factors it would be incredibly difficult to ever make sure the representation functions perfectly and there are all sorts of factors that will distort representative mechanisms so , that means populism will be a

wave like phenomenon because it is very closely tight to **modern representation** and modern representation is a very unstable mechanism.

Annick: ah okay, so it changes with its time actually.

Mister Jager: Yes, it does but at the same time I think the crisis to which populism responds is not the same crisis. So, in the late 19th century populism was a very specific response to certain crises, and I think we are now in a very different kind of reason then what we were in in the late 19th century.

Annick: The economic recession of 2008 is named as one of the greatest influences on the rise of left populism, mostly because the middle class disappeared, and people were unhappy about their economic situation. Why do you think that the economic recession is found to be the greatest cause? Why maybe not another political or economic cause.

Mister Jager: Well, I think there are different versions of that thesis. I think the economic crisis only unchained or uncatalyzed something that was already there, so I don't think it is the only factor driving left wing populism. What is very clear is that all the left-wing movements that you mentioned such as SYRIZA and Podemos and even the movement of Cinque Stelle in Italy. All rose very directly in response to **austerity measures** that were implemented as a response of the 2008 or the Euro crisis. So, there you could just track a very direct course. Like okay, so I mean in the north it is not very clear what the recession does to populism, but in the south, I mean, these movements themselves they were the reason why anti-austerity policies were implied in response to 2008/2009. So, it is actually not very difficult because the movement themselves insisted that that's the reason they exist. I think the best way to explain it is to say: the reason these movements are rising is a combination of a political and economic crisis. So, the economic crisis causes a lot of stuff in sovereign societies, and all this anger and all this frustration cannot be channeled through the classical party system, because the party systems have been declining for the last ten years. It is precisely this combination of a political crisis and an economic crisis that creates this opening for left wing populism.

Annick: I've also heard people mention that Greece and Spain do not have a stable democracy, because they just started their democracy in the 80's. Do you think that that also has influence, because they didn't build up their country, let's say strong enough? So, do you think an unstable democracy also has to do with the rise?

Mister Jager: Well, but there is appearance of left-wing populism in the north as well, so you have to say that you can't claim the success of left-wing populism was due to the unstable democracies. Another question is, is the idea that left populism arises in unstable democracies that are subjected to the economic crisis in which there are not enough representative mechanisms to endure the shock of the crisis? But if you look at **Portugal** it is very clear that they didn't really have the rise of left wing populism, they just stuck to an older form of social democracy, but they also have a very, very tough time to endure the crisis but not as tough as Greece of course. So, it's not entirely clear that the explanation always works. What I think is true is that, because their democracies are so much younger, and they both has social democratic parties that were very important in the transition from a dictatorship to democracy, this kind of changes the political landscape of the crisis. In both cases, in Spain and in Greece, social democratic parties had a very, very rough time to their participation in austerity to their approaches.

Annick: Do you think next to the economic influences, do you think that there are very important social influences on the rise of populism? Because I know, for example, right wing parties with the refugee crisis. That could be called a social influence, because people had the feeling refugees and immigrants stole their jobs and you can also add other influences if you want, but what do you think the greatest social influences in Europe are?

Mister Jager: I think again that that depends on different kinds of contexts and I don't think every country has the same set of factors to drive populism and from the right in the left. But I mean it is very clear in the north, there are non-economic drivers for populism so something like the refugee crisis or even if we look at The Netherlands and the rise of the FVD. Or even if you look at Belgium for example and the rise of Nieuw Vlaams Belang, it is very clear that you cannot use the same factors as in the south by saying that the 2008 crisis hits and then you have an austerity period and there you have populist responses that period. This is not what happened in Flanders, this is not what happened in Belgium. Belgium did not have proper austerity measures up to 2009, because it didn't have a government and still it has a very strong Vlaams Belang that is now returning as a party. So, you cannot claim that economic factors are in any way key to that development. At the same time, I would say, yes, it is also correct that immigration as an issue is a driver, but immigration is not a pre-determined variable. So, there is no way of saying that immigration will always show up as a problem. Immigration only shows up as a problem in specific kinds of context, whether is it politicizing in a certain way, whether it is framed in a certain way. Only then people will perceive it to be regarding,

important issue and I think one of the most important social factors next to being immigration as a standard factor, is the **crisis of party democracy** across Europe. The crisis of party democracy doesn't just come from austerity, it also means that in the last 30 years parties have lost members, they find it very difficult to connect with other institutions in the civil society. People vote less, people are not members of parties anymore. That means the way parties connect to the state, the way parties connect to the society changes quite dramatically and I think that is actually where the most important drives for populism is because populism is very much a response to the crisis of party democracy as well. That's a social factor, I think.

Annick: I also read something about the electoral system that in a liberal democracy it is very easy for parties to have access to the parliament. So, do you think that the electoral system indeed in Europe makes it very easy for populist parties to grow?

Mister Jager: Well, I mean it's not clear and it's also a question of for example the UK is a majoritarian democracy but I am not sure people would call it a liberal democracy and I think it has other features that you can call liberal but still it is very, very difficult for something like UKIP or even the BREXIT party to ever get something like a parliamentary seat. So, the system just makes that practically impossible. So it didn't give much space to grow to a populist party due to its electoral system, but I mean if you look at BREXIT or if you look at the success of the BREXIT party, not in terms of seats but in terms of policies then it's very clear that you can still do a lot of things even within the majoritarian system. If you look at the Dutch or the Belgium system, then it is very clear because we have such a big parliament. We have such a varying parliamentary landscape; it is very easy for small populist parties to grow. But even in a majoritarian system or even in a typical democratic system it's a difficult story. It depends on what your **definition of success** is I'd say.

Annick: Yes, because other academics that I spoke have already found being the opposition party success or being in the parliament, and other said: "no you're not a successful populist party if you do not take the power in a country" so it really depends.

Mister Jager: Yes, I don't know but if you look around in the FVD or the way that PVV has completely changed is very interesting. So, I mean the PVV did take party in government, but indirectly, I guess.

Annick: So, what I have noticed now, mostly in the south with Podemos and SYRIZA is that the voters of the party are mostly young, educated students who can't find a job. Just mostly highly educated people who are not necessarily very unsuccessful but are just frustrated that

they can't find a job. Why do you think that differs from right-wing populist voters, which are mostly workers who are also not satisfied but in a different way?

Mister Jager: Yes, absolutely. Well, I think in the UK there is an interesting case study as well there is that there are different sets of expectations. So that people come into the labor market, or people finish their degrees with a set of expectations on how their career is going to go and what kind of offers the economy is going to make them and what happens in 2009 with Spain and Greece for that large group of highly educated, mainly **children of professionals**, is that the economy is in a very, very rustic state. It's not fulfilling any of its promises. So, their attraction to left wing populism is also an **element of broken promises**. For example a lot of them were promised professional careers, there was this idea that there would be a enough job opportunities even within their professions and they would all have the diplomas and the educational credentials for it and then it turned out that it didn't work out at all. So, most of them actually radicalized in the last ten years, while before that a lot of them weren't being natural allies to radical politics yet. So, it is very much about an internal crisis in the European professional classes where the children of professionals cannot have, and this is also important, do not have the same career prosperities as their parents. So, all of their parents might be professionals who studied in the 1970's/1980's and then got very good, well payed jobs. But for them, they have the same degrees and even got better degrees and they see that their life chances are much lower. So, this creates frustration where they feel that they are actually doing worse than their parents. While what you see with the right-wing populists is, a lot of their frustration did not start ten years ago. I think the crisis of 2009 actually made it worse but a lot of trends of the masses started at the industrialization, the increasing labor market, the experiences with certain contracts. This is something that only started with professional services in the last 10 years, but it has been only going on in the most mainstream labor markets in the last 30 years. So, the success of right-wing populists is I think it is more durable, because they actually are rolling on trends that are much older actually. They date back to the 1980's 1990's when so many European countries industrialized and liberalized their economies.

Annick: You said something about right-wing populism being more successful because of their old rhetoric, but do you think that left-wing populist parties are also able to gain more success even in this neo-liberal democratic system or even with the austerity measures implemented on most of the countries such as Spain and Greece? Because they cannot do anything about the austerity measures if they want to stay in the European Union. So, do you think that there is space for them to move or to grow bigger?

Mister Jager: Yes, I think it is very, very difficult. I'm trying to write a bit about how the last decade of left populist experiences are proven very, very difficult to contain and to actually manage this experience. But I think the problem that left populists have is that their **goals are far more ambitious**. So, they have a higher treasurable success which means that they cannot just fight cultural wars, they cannot just engage in rhetorical decisions. I mean Salvini is not the greatest policy maker, he is not the best governor, but at the same time he has a very, very clear path of communication and he now represents a large section of the Italian society which is just frustrated. He does not necessarily have to keep the results through all the way, but he can just claim to represent the frustration that is enough for political success. You saw that with Podemos and SYRIZA is that they at a certain point the idea was not to just get higher minimum wage but it was to actually maybe leave the Euro and actually rewind Europe's austerity program and this means that you never really have to work with much harder to get what you want. But they also have less organizational means to get what they want, because they are operating next to classical social democrat parties, next to classical unions. It will take them a long time to build up a mass space. They never got a mass space, so a lot of them were through the internet. So, they were never able to get together very large parties and not solid clientele. At the same time, they both live in societies which are very, very **disorganized**. So, in which if you actually want to force the state to change you need power in society such as unions, or you need a mass movement and none of that was available. So, there is both a time constraint in a sense that they didn't have enough time to grow to a bigger party and there is an organizational constraint in so far that society self was not organized enough. The third one is, were the goals very ambitious. These three are very specific to left wing populism and also mean that left-wing populism always will have a more difficult time than right-wing populism on that front.

Annick: Do you think that Podemos and SYRIZA are very different from traditional left-wing populist parties or do you think that they set the tone for the new and upcoming left-wing parties?

Mister Jager: So, you mean, something like the SP in The Netherlands for example

Annick: Yes, for example.

Mister Jager: Yes, I do think they are different, mainly because it is related to how austerity was such a direct process in certain states. It was so much more brutal, and it was implemented in a very, very sudden, imposing way. So that also means that the two left-wing populist parties

can draw from the frustrations and energy in society. Which was more difficult to drawn by the SP and in the aftermath of the crisis although SP was doing very, very well in 2010/2011, but then of course lost those elections. I think there are a lot of similarities, but I think what is different from Podemos and SYRIZA both is the social-democratic party in the historical crisis. So, they were facing a party that was really on the brink of **extinction**. This made it easier for them to articulate that position of left-wing populism. Was it for the SP or Die Linker or PvdA in Belgium or even what you see with France now is that it took longer for social democrats to actually enter into crisis in those countries? So, the PvdA in The Netherlands or the SPD in Germany they are doing very badly now, but this is the only moment that decline has fully set in while in the south it started earlier. I think that changes how the left-populism response looks.

Annick: Left wing populism is actually fighting inequality, but also for immigrants. Well the SP does not necessarily do that, but I am talking about Podemos and SYRIZA that are very inclusive towards minorities. Also, women rights and gay rights, which is actually fairly new for and extremist party, but into which extend do you think left-wing populism is acceptable? Because it is still an extremist idea, but it not maybe as aggressive as right-wing populism. So, do you think it might be acceptable?

Mister Jager: I think I n an extremist movement are just too absent in left-wing populism. I mean, you really have to exaggerate the danger of their plans or you really have to exaggerate their rhetoric to actually make them seen as an extremist party. A lot of things they are proposing or a lot of the policy ideas they have in the case of SYRIZA which sometimes plan something similar as BREXIT are very, very standard proposals for **social democracies**. If you look at any economic program of social democrats from 1980 to the 1960's it looks pretty much like SYRIZA and Podemos' program, so in that sense I don't know if the word extreme really works. As you say they are quite inclusive do they don't agree with the exclusive variations in the north or SYRIZA and Podemos have both quite been hospitable to refugees. They have been quite hospitable towards gay rights and I actually think that a lot of the **liberal hysteria**, I guess towards these two parties has not been driven by any concrete fears of what they are going to do in government. It is very difficult for them to get in government although Podemos is not in government of course. But it has to do with a certain attachment to how the European Union functions and how the European Union organizes its policy. Which is shown to be highly irritational, which has shown to be very, very ineffective and which has shown itself to be that way but to which people still claim to because they don't want to lose credibility, or they don't want to lose their political capital. I think that the reactions towards left-wing populism as it's

supposed to be pro-totalitarian or dangerous actually speak more to people who are not willing to see that their political formulas are not working rather than a real threat. It is true that Podemos had ties to the Chavez regime and it is true that some people within SYRIZA had the same, but I mean Chavez and those Latin American populist movements operated in such a different context. That's such a different political economy, that's such a different electoral system. I don't think it really makes sense to compare it that much.

Annick: It is interesting that you mention this. Only some sources claim that Podemos is to correct the liberal democracy we are living in and that some EU institutions shove it away and say that its extremist and that we shouldn't have that in Europe. While mainly Podemos and SYRIZA are not trying to abolish democracy, they are only trying to correct it in a way that is more equal.

Mister Jager: Yes, I definitely think that's true. I actually the extremist right is not helpful for understanding the problems with Podemos. I feel like from a liberal standpoint, Podemos is actually is a very sensible party. I don't think liberals have much to object to that. I mean what I think is a different question is from the left maybe how Podemos is going to enforce changes in society or how it is going to maintain the base. That's a different question from saying that it's going to abolish democracy or anything else. I don't think that that's ever been the case for Podemos.

Annick: Have you next to, while you already mentioned a little bit that you think that it will be threatening or extreme, but do you think that there might be a chance that is the left-wing populists parties come to power that they might turn into the new elites instead of the traditional political parties.

Mister Jager: You mean once they come to power, they will become a danger to liberal democracy?

Annick: I mean, once they come to power there is a chance that they will become the new elites because it is human nature to grab the power.

Mister Jager: Yes, I mean I think that's very much what happened with SYRIZA. So, after the failure of the 2015 battle with European authorities, after the referendum, they did manage to win the elections even after they failed with the referendum, because it was clear that there were **no other alternatives** to offer. But they pretty much turned into a substitute for PASOK, so they designated PASOK as a party, but it is now just become a substitute of a social democrat

party that has just like PASOK decided over austerity. So, they themselves implemented austerity as PASOK had before. So, I think you are very much right that they have become the new elites and the new left version of elites. They have become a classical sort of governing party that was unable to sustain the social movements that are actually undergirding it and I mean; it depends on who that is a danger for. So the problem of becoming the new elites for SYRIZA is that people realize very quickly that, well if you're going to implement austerity just like PASOK, why can't we just vote for the honest people and vote for New Democracy because at least they are very clear headed about what they are doing while they don't have to lie about why austerity is horrible. So, I think left wing populism, when they become the elites, they have more of a difficulty to maintain their basis, because people just prefer the right when it comes to austerity, because at least the right is honest about the austerity and it's not double faced.

Annick: Yes, and I think there was just a lot of disappointment with SYRIZA and that people were like "well if you are not going to fulfill your promises then we might just vote for the parties that we already have because you said that they were so bad, but in the end you were the bad guy or you did not fulfill your promises".

Mister Jager: Yes that's actually right and I think that's what happened when they fought against PASOK as an insurgent party, but they failed to implement the austerity program, they became a substitute PASOK and now they are slowly undergoing the same thing as PASOK because people realized that "well if you're just a PASOK redux, a PASOK rebooted, why would we vote for you?".

Annick: And then my last question is actually based on my main research question which is: "what are the socio-economical influences that are causing the rise of left-wing populist parties since the end of the twentieth century?" is there something else you would like to mention on that? Is there something that you would say about "oh you really missed this, or you did not mention this even though it is really important".

Mister Jager: Yes, I'd say the two different causes. So, you have the **catalyst** left populism in the south which is the economic crisis, and the kind of social dislocation which follows from this, but I think there is a deeper causal factor which is the crisis of party democracy. So, I not say it's just the economic crisis that is the driving factor of left-wing populism. I think the combination of the economic crisis together with the crisis of party democracy. Which means that there is energy within the society that cannot be channeled into parties, because parties

decoupled themselves from society and people look for other ways of expressing their frustration. I mean they have a repertoire of action and a repertoire of action is much tighter, because there are not a lot of members in parties and unions and that's why the left wing populist option becomes possible, because you need to do something with all this political capital which has no way in where to invest. So, I'd say, I think there is an economic factor that is a crisis, but I think there is a deeper political factor which is the declining party democracy.

Annick: And do you think that the declining popular democracy is caused because people are insecure, are not happy with the situation they are living in and they try to channel that to let's call it "elite parties" or "classical parties" and they don't listen? They just follow their own rhetoric.

Mister Jager: Yes, I think the crisis of party democracy is a much broader phenomenon which dates back to the 1990's and the Maastricht treaty. Where the way European economies have been changed at their bases. Also, the large party membership and close connection to the state are no longer possible in the economy we live under now. So the economy is mainly based on credit, is also based on low wages which makes it possible for people to take out easy loans which we saw in Greece for example in 2000, those massive bank loans of the north to the southern banks and what it means is that you cannot have institutions like unions and parties making excessive amounts in the state, because your whole model is based on loans and increased wages. So instead of increasing and giving out bigger loans, if you have large unions and large parties people will make different kinds of demands. They will actually ask out wages and the crisis of party democracy has a lot to do with this in so far as the order of the contemporary economy cannot tolerate large, mass memberships. This means that people leave parties, they leave all these society institutions and they go other ways in expressing their politics and once 2008 hits and that economy doesn't work anymore, you realize that you also have no institutions available to make your will heard and this is when left wing populism will become an attractive option.

Interview Jose Ignacio Torreblanca 25-11-19

Annick: So, I am from the Hague University in the Netherlands and I am writing my thesis about leftwing populism in Europe. My research question or main question is: “What are the socio-economical influences that are causing the rise of the left-populist parties in Spain and Greece since the end of the twentieth century” so my case studies will be about Spain and Greece. So, what I was wondering, because I have read “The Rise of Populism of Podemos” that you wrote in 2015.

Mister Torreblanca: Okay so you read in Spanish?

Annick: Yes, I do!

Mister Torreblanca: Ah okay! Not for the interview but I was just curious if you were able to read things in Spanish

Annick: Yes! Your source that I used was actually very perfect and I referenced to it a lot and I was very happy that you wanted to do the interview with me. So, thank you. There are ten to eleven questions that I prepared. The first question that I have was: do you think that Pablo Iglesias purposefully established the party in a moment of crisis? Because I read that Podemos has made clear that they saw a window opportunity at the moment that the crisis appeared, but do you think that they were like “okay let us do it now?” Or do you think it came sort of more fluently?

Mister Torreblanca: Well I mean I think that they were already in politics in different capacities and probably moments. So, I mean it is not that they decided to enter politics at the moment of the crisis in order to do this or to have found this political party. They, especially Iglesias but also **Monedero** were previously working with the far left, Izquierda Unida, as advisors, they had a big part in visiting the campaigns, Iglesias was a member of the youth communist organization “the Communist League”. So, they were all in politics, but the crisis made them decide they wanted to have a more protagonist role and they could not because they saw their parties, especially the communist parties blocking them in the accident to positions of power. So, the funny thing is that here the communist party (Izquierda Unida) had allowed Pablo Iglesias to be or to feel like a candidate to the European Parliament in the elections of 2004. Like it was his original proposal. So maybe he would not have made a comeback afterward. In fact, Willy Meyer, the guy that was part of the communist party had to resign afterward and so and so. I think that we always say that these guys **revolted** against the two-party system and

the socialists and so on, but I think their first aim was that their organizations, such as the unions but also the party, were **versified** and open to young political entrepreneurs like them. So, at the moment they didn't see the possibility of progress within the party. This is when they decided to do their own party. I think this is more or less how it went. So, going inside of the moment of crisis in which they thought that their ideas would be **effective** in order to make the progress. So, they had already worked on some electoral campaigns and they already wanted to do this diagonalizable thing and so on. They have been working for governments in Venezuela, but also had their own political experiences. So, I think it was a combination of the **sudden moment** and they didn't see that the party and the organization in which they were was **fit for their purpose** and they really needed that it was going to be a huge opportunity for them and a lost opportunity if they did not take advantage of it.

Annick: Yes, because I read that they already established at the moment of the “Indignados Movement” and that is already in 2011. So, I can imagine that they already established earlier and then indeed how you said it: not took the opportunity but more or less say “okay let us try it now”.

Mister Torreblanca: Yeah, yeah but they were before the Indignados Movement. I mean, the Indignados movement was the moment in which they say: ‘we’re right our party has missed this and there will need to be able to use this thing to make anything good of this’. Only we can do it. That was a **confirmation** that the decision that they have taken was right and that it was the opportunity. But Pablo Iglesias was already **touring** the country before that with the youth communist organization giving talks here and there and it was a very marginal organization, but he was already affiliated with them.

Annick: Yes, because what I was wondering. Most of my academic sources like Cas Mudde and Ramiro and Gomez defined Podemos as hundred percent populist. I am really doubting about that because I know that Iglesias used populist quotes and populist rhetoric in Podemos, but would you really define Podemos as a populist party?

Mister Torreblanca: Well, as you know the problem is how do you define populism and so on? To me there are some common features in populist parties. I think sometimes it's more of an instrument and technology, you know? More **Political technology** than an ideology by itself. So, I think there was a confluence of a discovery. One thing is to **become popular** and for them they had different personal experiences and the five founders of Podemos, I sometimes make fun of them like “the five superheroes” and each one is bringing a different power. For Iglesias,

it was that he knew very well the Italian communist party, and this was a party which has always been very popular. It was a party who had been able to talk to people beyond in industrial cities of the north and hear a lot about other people and be able to reach them you know? So, for Iglesias it was **possible to be popular**, let us say. You know the communist party; you could go beyond class identification and so on. So, he knew about that because of the communist party and managed to have a huge appearance based on **national values**, fighting for democracy against Mussolini and so on. Similarly, that is where the Latin American experience came in with **Errejón**, Monedero and others because they had also seen that the left in Latin American had also taught to Chavez and the other Bolivian movements to become popular as well and to appeal to larger segments of the world without asking people first to **identify** themselves as Marxists or leftwing and so on. In fact, they were looking at national liberation movements of the '60s in many decolonizing countries in which they were demonized from the left and there were popular fronts and popular movements in Spain. You know in the civil war we also had the fight against the popular front. These people knew they had to leave the far left in order to become popular and populism was, I think, big and valuable at the moment because some of them have been playing within Venezuela or Bolivia. But also, they showed it was effective in Italy. So yeah, I think that they were **not populists** in the sense that, you know “I found populism”, or “I came across populism, this is a good idea I’m going to create a populist party.” Right? So it is that: I’m in politics and I want to be popular, I want to represent the people and to appeal to the people and now I found a way to do it with fits in the ideas that I have and I think it can work at the moment. So, they are not strictly populist in that sense, but they are fully populist in that they adopted all the technology, all the ideas of populism. The idea of **enlightened populism** is that for the first time the left and the far left knows how to win elections, because it is doing what the social democracy did after the second world war. That is to become popular. Even if that **includes lying a bit or manipulating facts**, people or ideologies. So, I wouldn’t be so strict into the definition of populism, because this is a definition that **each party adopts**, and leader adapts to itself. So, they are populists, yes but don’t be too rigid about a perfect example of left-wing populism, because I don’t think there is such a thing, right?

Annick: No, I agree with you and I also read a part about conceptual stretching, which Cas Mudde said, but it is very hard for me to give an example of conceptual stretching. In my opinion, there is not a lot of actual, pure, left-wing populist parties in Europe at least.

Mister Torreblanca: You're right, because an issue also related to authority and traditional values and being anti-liberal democracy, but from a different perspective of course. So, it is true that SYRIZA was truly a populist party, but not in terms of destroying democracy directly as far-right parties. So also, they are very much anti-capitalist and they adapt very much to it. There was a moment in the beginning in which Pablo Iglesias would adopt, who is the enemy in Spain? Is it the banks? Is it the financial elites? Is it Europe? Then he calls for the liberation of the oppressed people of the south of Europe against German colonialism as is Spain was outside Europe, right? But then in Madrid he could also link to **Spanish nationalism** in a public rally commemorating the fight against the French troops, which was totally absurd, because the French troops were during the enlightenment during the time of Napoleon. The people in Madrid were revolting against bringing an absolute monarch back to Spain. They would rather have a Spaniard as an absolute monarch than a French as a liberal leader. It is true that there is a lot of conceptual stretching, because they themselves were **playing and experimenting** with things in order to correct themselves. You have to be as intelligent as they are to understand that they were very pragmatic, and that Iglesias was a pure **Leninist**. This was true in the sense that he fully understands and has written about this. That means are justified by ends and that Lenin, and he has written about this, promised bread, lane and peace. The rest of us didn't get that for 70 years so, haha. You know, Lenin was fully aware of the fact that, yes: you can gang up with Germans in order to come to power, you could say all these things in order to get people's support and so on. So, when you have this moral superiority of the left because you cause is just, you can use any means. This is why, if you are too fixated in concepts with someone who is willing to sacrifice concepts for the final end, then you're going to be running behind a moving target all the time. Because Iglesias has been playing, if you look to his writings and when he was with El Pays, he can portray himself as a true social democrat in the sense that the social democrats are no longer **defending social democracy**, but he is the new interpreter of social democracy. But at the same time, he can sell himself as a true populist, appealing to everyone, or as a communist if he needed to be. So, they are totally **flexible**, because they just look at the goals. As the national liberation movements in the '60s, they saw these as an opportunity, and this is why they say: this is our communist moment. There is a popular revolution with has **no ideology** and we need to colonize this movement and to bring our ideology to it. So, to capture the strength for us. This is what they wanted to do with the Indignados Movement and soon right? Classically, in the end, are they populist? Yes, but you know this is a very classical reading of Lenin and Trotsky and classical communism tactics to capture power. They did the same between February and October 1917, they accepted being in

a bourgeoisie government in order to later on overturn it. In order to come to power and have all the resources of power to overturn it. So, their actions towards liberal democracy are exactly the same. If we need to be there in order to get a grip on the power, then we will figure out what to do, but just because we are working with democracy doesn't mean we are liberal democrats.

Annick: That is the thing because they have grown super-fast, from 2014 to 2016 I think, mostly because they also reunited with Izquierda Unida. However, why do you think Podemos is still not number one in Spain?

Mister Torreblanca: Well eventually, when they joined Izquierda Unida, this is when they started going down. The greatest populist ideologue is Íñigo Errejón and he is the one who has the wisdom to say: "we need to connect the dots of the three things that are wrong in this country". You know it is the **institutional crisis**, because of the crisis of the monarchy, the crisis of the party system, corruption and so on. Then there is the **economic crisis**, you know, people are losing their jobs, there is youth unemployment, there is this feeling of unfairness and then there is a **social crisis**. That there is inequality, people are losing their homes, people are truly being dispossessed, because the political system is unfair and has protected only the banks and the middle classes but has left a lot of people behind. So, Errejón is the guy that would say: "let us turn this and give a **new meaning to democracy** and to the people and so on. In 1978, the Spanish democracy was about delivering to the people after decades of inequality and oppression and so on. Now we are going to show that this has failed to them and that they need a new thing, but they don't need to become left-wing communists. There is no ideology, **we appeal to everyone**. Because these goals can be accepted by anyone and this idea of floating or empty significance or whatever they use in the populist term. If you look at polls, the moment in which Podemos was highest in the polls, coincides with the week that was made public that the people in the executive comity of the savings bank Caja Madrid, which was like a German savings bank of parties, entrepreneurs and you know a public bank. But it was the moment in which it was discovered that these people had a secret credit card which they did not need to declare to the treasurer and there were spending like a lavish amount of money without any justification or anything. This was the savings bank that had created the 2011 crisis because of what the bank had done in the past and we've lost like 14 billion euro's in rescuing this bank. Which we are not going to be recovering and at the same time politicians were having all this privilege of living with these secret credit cards and so on. So, this was the moment when people connected the dots. People were **losing their homes**, like old people committed suicide because they were losing their homes. Sometimes they had given their homes in guarantee loans for

their sons and their sons lost their jobs and then there was **massive corruption** and then the banks were being saved, but **the people were left behind**. And this is the moment in which they do best in polls and in this is in the fall of I think 2014, right after the elections of the European Parliament and this is their sweetest moment up to 2015. In 2015 in December, they are very close to the socialists and they think this is their PASOK moment. They are **just half a million votes behind the socialists**, which is amazing because you know in 2008 the socialists had got 10 million votes in the last election before the crisis and now, they had 5 million votes. Podemos was almost 5 million votes, 4.5 I think, so the left had been split in two and this is where they think that they can eliminate the socialists if there is another election. So, Iglesias decides to join forces, because they make this calculation and say “together Podemos and Izquierda Unida had more votes than the socialists” and this is a historical event. They think “we’ve been so stupid because we went in two parties and because of the electoral systems the socialists were first”. So, they decided to vote no against the socialists give way to Rajoy, to a second election, thinking that if the join with Izquierda Unida they will be first. But that movement is when they, instead of winning one million votes they in fact lost one million votes because they got **too far to the left** and they had not been able to cooperate with the socialists. Íñigo Errejón and the kind of more populist theorists within the party oppose Iglesias, because they say “no you cannot have votes like that. You’re getting votes because you are not seen as a traditional left-wing party like Izquierda Unida. You’re doing something great which is abiding people of the center. Forget about those million votes, you can do without them. You can continue growing in the center”. But Iglesias as he is also himself, kind of a member of the youth communists and he is a left-wing guy, he said, “no we have to go together” and all the **troubles** of Podemos start precisely with those elections in which they split in two internally. They decided to become the opposition to the socialists instead of being in a government with them. They fought against them and then they have not ever done so well as they did ever since.

Annick: What is concluded by a lot of academics is that left-wing parties like Podemos and SYRIZA, are very inclusive in opposition to the right-wing populists who are mostly against immigrants, against sometimes homosexuals and female rights. Podemos has made clear that they are actually very inclusive with immigrants and that they see everyone who is actually a part of Spain as a part of patriotism. Do you really think that Podemos is that inclusive or do you think that they are using this narrative in order to gain more followers?

Mister Torreblanca: Well this is always been an issue in Podemos in extent to which they have had this debate and there have been various moments in which people would say “look

immigration is always an issue for working classes” and they, you know kind of the more French and people who follow France and Italian politics say look immigration and the working-class are natural rivals at some point. You may risk working-class voters for populist parties because of immigration issues and so on. The thing is that, at that time in Spain there was not a far-right party campaigning on the anti-immigration platform. So, this was not an issue of electoral competition. If you were working class and were not happy about immigrants you didn’t have a party representing you but you had a party like Podemos who are appealing to your interests and saying that the system had let you down, that the rich were paying no taxes and that the banks were corrupt and that Europe was not working for you and so on. So that was good enough and also because in Spain, Spanish nationalism is discredited, or was discredited, because of the association with Franco. So, because this is a country of immigrants, Íñigo Errajon was part of a movement that was called ‘Youth without Future’ and they were complaining all day about how Spaniards were forced to emigrate to the rest of Europe, since the crisis of 2008. Many Spaniards also left for European countries in the ’60s. There were Spanish immigrants in exile after the Second World War and the Spanish Civil War. So, it was very difficult for them to articulate that this causes anti-immigration, when Spanish young people were the ones leaving at that time. They said: “The figures don’t reflect that, but there are 200.000 Spaniards abroad, there is massive youth unemployment in Spain, Spaniards are working in Costa café in London. So how do you come up with an anti-immigration speech? Saying immigrants are a bunch of lazy people?” You know that they are going to The Netherlands to get jobs right, haha. So, even if there were some people looking at this with interest, but you didn’t need the extra power of anti-immigration. You would figure out that it would work against you, because this was the **typical banner of the far-right** across Europe. It was enough to be anti-American and you know our immigrants, a good number of them, are from Latin-America. There are no ghetto’s, they are first-generation. Even with Muslims, there is **no islamophobia** because we haven’t had the experience that other countries have had in terms of these Muslim ghetto’s in cities and so on. So, it didn’t get any traction you know? I think these parties, especially in Spain, there were not nationalist in the classic sense. I think in Greece it’s different, because they are in government with **ANEL**, right?

Annick: Yes, true.

Mister Torreblanca: With the right and they get in the ministry because these people were nationalist and anti-establishment, and they were very right-wing. For SYRIZA, I mean it’s funny that SYRIZA had never to justify the fact that they preferred to be in government with

an anti-establishment party from the right to complete their majorities than with any other one. So, it was totally a free right from them on that. For politicians in Spain this would have been absolutely impossible, because of the association with Franco. So, I think the nationalists grew stronger in Greece and in Spain it didn't 'work. Also, because Podemos is a kind of pluractional party believing also that Catalans have rights for self-determination. So, you know you cannot be a diehard Spanish nationalist if you are in Podemos and then defend, that the Basques and the Catalans are part of the Spanish nation and they have also their nation and that we are a nation of nations, right? So that doesn't work for them, even today.

Annick: I have heard from another academic, his name is Koen Vossen, he is a Dutch academic writing about Dutch populism. He said to me that Podemos does not really talk about Cataluña that much because they are trying to make every party happy. So, if they schedule it on their agenda too much, they might say something that will offend other people. Do you think this is true?

Mister Torreblanca: When Erraón was number two, it was very clear for him that he wanted to create a new sense of **patriotism** in kind of a way that happened in Venezuela and in Bolivia by defining the people and the nation. Saying that the nation is those who were excluded from the institutions and from a kind of normal politics because they were poor, disenfranchised and so on. So, you have a new meaning of the nation, which is that everyone **coming together**, specifically those who have been marginalized and, in that way, you save yourself the trouble of telling whether you are Basque, Catalan or Andalusian. It doesn't matter, you are part of those who are being left out and the evictions movements and the social crisis in Catalonia were as huge as it was in some other places. So, you give people a new identity **overcoming the usual, national identities** which are kind of right-wing and they do not unite you they divide you. So, this was Errejón, because he was very close to what Morales and others did in Bolivia and Venezuela. To don't care whether you are Catalan or Andalusian, you're just a victim of a faulty system and that is what you have to concentrate on. Whereas the traditional Izquierda Unida is being kind of a very federalist party, a very classical left-wing party, beginning with the right to self-determination of the right of all the peoples. Of course, across the world, but also Spain and that gets them into trouble because then, as it happens now with Podemos and Iglesias, you know your electoral platform, we make the analogy that it's a blanket that is too short. So if you cover your feet, your chest goes cold, when you cover your chest your feet go cold, because if you say that you are in favor of the self-determination referendum in Catalonia, great then you become first or second political force in Catalonia, but then in Andalusia and other places

people don't see you as a Spanish party representing their interests. So, Errejón wanted the party to stay away of this territorial of the national identity they mention, because they thought it was a loose lose thing, but Iglesias is been more vocal and part of his problem now is that he is now seen as a pro Bask and Catalan party rather than a party representing the interest of everyone.

Annick: Because that is what I also thought about Catalan and Bask country. Because I can imagine that they have a lot of local populist movements, which I guess are a bigger problem than Podemos or a bigger populist than Podemos. Do you agree?

Mister Torreblanca: Well I think that is the case for the Catalans. To me that is academically a case of post-2008 financial crisis populism. Because in the Basque country it is not in order. The mainstream parties, especially the conservative, nationalist, moderate center-right is still there. The Bask nationalists have been in power since 1978 in and out, but a part of the system and even if they formally would want to have their own nation and so on. But they are happy with a high degree of decentralization and also because there was terrorism demanding dependency in the Basque country, it is **not legitimate** to side with terrorists. The terrorists defeat your goal, because people say, "look those who are pro-independence in the Basque country, are siding with terrorists or we will end up in a country that has gained its independence on killings and so on". So, the idea of self-determination was very discredited in the Basque country and this is a very cohesive society that did not suffer after 2008 and the major trauma. On the contrary to this, Catalonia has suffered a great trauma after 2008 their mainstream, right-wing, moderate, nationalist party has been obliterated in allegations of corruption. The party has been destroyed. It is kind of the Torie party in Britain and the republicans then finding themselves out of power and joining the marginalist society. Which was pro-independence, which was the banner of the radical left in Catalonia. There was only one pro-independence party in Catalonia before 2008 and it was a left-wing party. So, when the finances in Catalonia turned to a crisis, when you have austerity, when unemployment grows, and these parties are not legitimate anymore to sustain the system the leaders decided to go for independence because this was a safe landing and a safe target. Which will help them to kind of wash all their things. Therefore, they adopt this pro-independence agenda, they adopt this discourse of Spain robs us, we pay far too many taxes to Spain, let us get rid of Spain in order to prosper and so on. This is a very populist discourse in terms of the enemy is Spain. All our problems come from Spain and therefore we need to break free. So, we always make the comparison that Catalonia's exit process is more of a Brexit thing and a Scottish thing, because you know it was not there before

and it is part of the manipulation of the elites. Even like in Brexit you had these promises that, you know we are sending full hospitals, 750 million pounds a week to Brussels and we will get that money back. In Catalonia it was kind of the same thing, that every Catalan paid 10.000 euros too much to the Spanish budget. “If we are independent, we will repay all our debt and we will be kind of happy and so on”. So, they have this populist moment also. In Catalonia it coincides with the hype of the crisis. It correlates very well with unemployment and this is why now it is going down. Because when the crisis is over, people started thinking that maybe independency is not a great idea.

Annick: Yes, that is the thing, and do you think that, this is a whole other question, but do you think that you could compare SYRIZA to Podemos? Because they are both left-wing populist parties?

Mister Torreblanca: Yes, they are both successful left-wing parties. I mean, we are going to see what happens in Spain in December. When Podemos was at its weakest point, they enter government right? So, the process which SYRIZA has done which is to go very far to the left, in order to become a standard social-democratic party you may think whether or not this is the case in Spain. But anyway, I think it's true that these parties are the only experiences across Europe in which you have left-wing populism coming very close to power or even as in Spain's regional government, with Podemos being in place and being in place for a while. I think that the one difference is that Podemos has a lot of **Latin American influences**. So, it is a party that is more sophisticated in their ideas, theories. It is richer I would say, ideologically. Whereas, my impression is that SYRIZA was never able to elaborate more on, I mean SYRIZA is just the product of too many parties disappearing because of the financial crisis. The **conservatives and the socialists** were seen as responsible for the crisis and therefore people went for other options. Still I think, you know the issue in SYRIZA was there was always a left-wing to the left-wing, like Varoufakis and the communists and so on. Which created a lot of problems and then they split and so on. The split, kind of the radicals in SYRIZA left SYRIZA, whereas the radicals in Podemos stayed in Podemos and were the modest or the more classical guys left. So, in Podemos the more orthodox people, like Iglesias and these guys and his group. The orthodox had won at the party and now they look much more like a traditional post-communist party. Podemos is like the PDS, like the German form of the communist party. I say, Iglesias is a former communist in the sense that communism has disappeared, but they have not come up with any kind of new idea about why and how should do things. So now Iglesias is a very classical post-communist with very not any kind of ideological elaboration. Whereas, Tsipras

looks much more like a standard, classic **social democrat**. So, I think they are very different in their trajectories and where they have ended and who has won the battle within the party.

Annick: Also, because Podemos is not really open about that they are extreme left. They try to be more center and SYRIZA is more like yes, we are the new extreme left. Isn't that a difference too?

Mister Torreblanca: Well, I mean I think Iglesias does not often say that he is a social democrat. I mean, if he says he is not he is maybe thinking of 1905 you know? When the communist party was called the social democrat party. He is the true social-democrat, because for 90 years social-democrats have been wrong or something like that. If you look at some markers like Cuba, Venezuela, DDR and stuff like that, they haven't come to the conclusion that something is wrong in the way communists look at the state, the democracy and so forth. If you sit down with them, they will tell you that communism is a good idea, but it has been wrongly applied or it has been defeated because capitalists and others have made it fade. So, they will never say "no it is a bad idea, because every time it was tried it was wrong" which is what social democrats would say. It is a bad idea; you know and the fact that it goes wrong confirms that it is a bad idea and not that you have to try better the next time.

Annick: Yes, which makes more sense in my opinion but let's see. Because right now Podemos is like, how you describe it and most academics describe it, kind of a party who tries to not make democracy fade or start a communist party where democracy is not very common but they try to actually adjust the neo-liberalistic democracy that is now common in Europe. They to make into a more social democracy, but do you think that there is any threat with the upcoming of left-wing populism which is not named right now or visible right now?

Mister Torreblanca: Well, I think there are latent threats like is the case with right-winged populists, you know it is impossible that they all say they are by democracy. It is very clear that their idea of democracy is not a liberal democracy, it is a majoritarian democracy. The minute they have the majority, they will think they have the right to change all the institutions, to change the constitution. They cannot understand liberal democracy, the laws about the people. I mean whenever they are in a debate about this, they say "how come that the law is about the people, if the majority of the people want to do something, they need to do something". Whereas the liberal understanding of constitutionalism is precisely that one, that there are limits to what the majority can do no matter what this majority says. So, I think there are various things in Podemos, like you know all these parties which are latent. You don't see them, because they

didn't win elections. For example, they have a big suspicion of the private means of production. So especially in some key sectors where there is finance, they would rather go for **public banks** because they think banks are bad. Private banks are evil, they are bad, they are a bad idea. So, they would not nationalize all the banks, but they will make sure that they don't prosper, and they would try to set up public banks wherever they can to empty these banks. So, this is one thing which is very important. Then they will indeed nationalize utilities. So, there they think that even if the state may allow private banks to exist, but energies, transport and all those things should be very clear in the hands of the state, because they are public services. So that is another latent threat to me, to private property and private means and so on. I think they are also very suspicious of **media** freedom. In the sense that again, they are not going to be banning media, but they think that the state has the obligation to provide strong, sound and I will say dominant public media. So, they are maybe willing to accept private media if they are marginal and they will devote a lot of time to building a strong public media sector especially. So, you know I think of course they will go to, and Iglesias has sort of written about this, they will make extensive use of the referendum in order to push the things to change things very fast. Like the monarchy and basic features of the 1970 constitution. You know again, the self-determination of Catalonia and so on. I mean it is not that they are anti-democracy if you put all these things together and you deliver all those things, you will have a total transformation of your democracy into a kind of **popular democracy**. Which will be an illiberal democracy according to standards of liberal democracy right? So, I mean I think it is very simplistic when we say, "they are authoritarian/they are not authoritarian". No, I think it will end up like that. If they could they will end up like that. They have a reflex to end up in a system that is authoritarian. But when you look at what they say about Venezuela. They are not critical of Venezuela in terms of the plan was wrong they thought it went wrong for some reason, but they shared the plan. Of course they don't agree with people in prison and with tortures and with all those things, but all along the different instances in which there were key terms in Venezuela in which we knew that things would not be the same as before and that you would live in this routine now they were totally silent because they didn't think that this was a problem.

Annick: Okay, what I have been noticing is that most of the articles I read, if they are talking about the future in populism, they are mostly saying it is positive, but they are mostly focusing on the inclusive part of populism. They say 'well it is not like right-wing populism, so they are not excluding females, female rights, they are not excluding immigrants. So, in that case it could

be positive, but as you just said if it is going to be referendum based it could be horrible for the economy for example and for the rule of law which is in my opinion also very important.

Mister Torreblanca: Yes, because you can see in like Bolivia for example, you would end up manipulating the constitutional court to tell that there cannot be a constitutional court which is about the will of the people. If the constitutional court says such a referendum does not fit in the constitution, we will move the constitutional court. We will do a referendum in order to change the constitutional court, you know so you will always win. That is why they say democracy is the power of the people right? So, there cannot be limits to the power of the people if it has not been ideally expressed in an election or referendum which is not fake and so on. So, if Morales wants to stand for a third term, and people want him to stand for a third term then he should stay for a third term, right? The problem is that, when people in Bolivia said they didn't want him to stand for a third term, Morales changed the constitution in order to get his third term. So, they will always get their way and also economically I think we shouldn't underestimate that when you introduce this kind of taxes and inflation because you break expenditure limits and create inflation, you create more poverty, you make people more dependent from the state and therefore you buy alliance because people are not independent to confront you. This is what we have seen in Venezuela, if I take all your economic dependency and you depend from the state with a food coupon or a subsidy you know for a minimum salary, then you are not going to revolt against the government because it is giving you basic means of life. So, the way they look at this kind of equality or the way they look at the economy is destroying individual freedom in the sense that people cannot oppose you, because they don't have the means anymore and if you oppose, they will nationalize your firm, they will fire you or like Chavez did they will make public who voted against Chavez. Because they have the public consensus and also the voting records and you will have the stigma of being the opposition, being anti-people, paying paid by the oligarchs and whatever you know. So, I mean I am not saying that they are anti-democracy, but I think that the decisions and the chain of decisions and how they will react to the problems they meet, will lead them into a deeper hole and never get themselves out of the hole.

Annick: Yes, that is actually a good conclusion which I agree with actually. Do you think that the economic recession of 2008 had the greatest impact on the growth of left-wing populism in the south? Because what I know is that both Greece and Spain had dictatorships, so I thought maybe that also had to do something with the growth of populism, because maybe people are used to that?

Mister Torreblanca: No I think the 2008 financial crisis is the absolute explainer of why they did become popular and also in relation to the past why they could link, because people still had memories, they could link to the past but not in order to justify authoritarianism but to say ‘this country made a huge effort to bring democracy in 1974/1975 like it was in Greece and Spain but the elites engaged in deals among themselves which were ineffective to the people. The 2008 financial crisis was the confirmation that there was something wrong in the agreement between the left-liberal bourgeoisie in the ’70s. So, what they do is a **revision of the past**. In Spain and in my understanding in Greece it is similar, what Pablo Iglesias would say is that ‘look, 1978 is a failure, because the king orchestrated all this to protest nationalist integrity and the fortune of the entrepreneurs on the cost of the people. The communist party was foolish to give in to this stupid liberal democracy which does not work, and workers have made all the sacrifices in 40 years and now what have they got? Nothing.’ The failed system was saving the banks and was not saving the people. People are losing their homes and so on. So this is the kind of narrative, they say ‘we want to open de lock of 1978’, because in 1978 a lock was put on political change and we could not move beyond liberal democracy, because of fear of military intervention, fear of financial markets leaving us behind like in 1981 in France and so on. So, they say in **1978 the constitution** is not a free pact, it is a pact made out of fear. By installing fear to the people, they accepted to limit their rights especially right to property and those things. So now is the time to open the lock and break the lock of 1978. Nationalize, bring the monarchy down you know? So, all those things that we didn’t dare to do in 1978 we will do them now, because we have the right. This is how they connect dictatorship and democracy.

Annick: Okay, that makes a lot of sense. My last question is actually based on my main question, but you have already explained it a little bit now. My main question was “What are the socio-economical influences that are causing left-populism in Spain and Greece” but in this case in Spain. So, you named the lock 1978, you named the economic recession as one of the explanations, but is there another thing that you would really link to populism in Spain?

Mister Torreblanca: Yeah, I mean you know because of Franco, this is a center-left country. A progressive country. Precisely, the social pact in 1978 was the acceptance of liberal democracy with integration in Europe, the monarchy and of course market economy but in return you would have a social market economy, you have decentralization, you have public health, public education. It was a huge welfare package agreed on the back of this 1978 constitution. Kind of a German Social Schaft economy. So, this is what makes it possible for a populist party, it makes it easier for a populist party to insert itself in a situation of crisis coming from the left

and coming from the right, because the system values progressive politics, social cohesion. So, when all these things were missing, then you can commonly claim an anti-system. It is the system that has turned against me, I want the system to work by the book and these elites that are in power of the system. You can only have, as we have seen in the last year, an insertion of right-wing populism if it is on a **national question**. So, it is only when Catalans' accession movements become important, when you can pull out the Spanish nationalist on the center-right, because you could not come up with that in the past because people would say that you are a nostalgic of Franco. Whereas now, you can have a populist right saying 'we are not nostalgic of Franco, we are defending the constitution against the revolting Catalans in Catalonia. So, in as much as the classical right-wing parties in Europe they become defenders of democracy and women's rights against Islam, right? You know, Spanish far-right becomes kind of the defender of the constitution against the enemies of democracy and constitution which is a huge step forward in terms of the narratives. So, they don't want to go back to Franco, they want to have the constitution to be applied to Catalonia which is a huge development right? So, that is why you could not have a right-wing populist party claiming that the financial crisis had proven them right, but you could have a party from the left-wing saying that. Also, because the communist party was very legitimate in Spain compared to other places, because they had been also in the opposition to Franco. So, people had not seen, the DDR. They had not seen, the disaster which communist parties can create once they come to power. It was the party that was siding with workers, miners, students, in the opposition to Franco. So, communism was not attainted and a discredited idea, contrary to that it was very legitimate, and everyone recognized that they have made a huge sacrifice in 1978 by accepting lots of things which they did not like. Which is especially the monarchy, the flag the constitution and all those things you know?

Annick: Yes, I think it was eventually a quick solution for the chaos that it brought. So, in that case, but if you of course later think about it one might be like "oh we could have chosen something else to do".

Mister Torreblanca: Which isn't true in a sense, because the communists were not strong and didn't have any chances. Probably like in Germany you could have done without a communist party and the rest of Europe would not have cared much in the sense that there are democracies with communist parties. So, I mean the communist party of the time, the leadership I think they were right. In the sense that it was good enough to become, precisely like the Italian communist party. To accept the rules of the game and try to become popular within the system rather than

operating into the system. So, the Spanish communists of the '70s decided to go for Eurocommunism, they broke with the Soviet Union and all those things, so they were quite reasonable and quite nice. They also saw that in the 30s they made a lot of mistakes during the civil war. That they had sided with Stalin and all those things. So, yeah it was pretty reasonable what they did because people in Spain were sick and tired of Franco, but they didn't want another civil war. So, because they had this trauma. Everyone was very reasonable, so that is why the 1970 constitution was a great equilibrium point in which everybody would lose things but would be happy at the same time, because the communists are being legal, they are being popular, they are having their unions recognized and they were accepted in the army because they have been fighting for the civil war. So, at the time it was a very successful transition to democracy. It was not peaceful, because there were people killed and so on, but it was very successful and a motive for the rest of Latin America and any other country. So, this is why Podemos is trying to revise history. It is on false premises and on a diagnosis that is too opportunistic. It is exciting people to believe that things could have been better and different, when it is not actually the case and they would break the country if they do so right.

Annick: Yes, I agree with you. I am very happy with the interview, because I got the answers that I thought about, but I didn't have the sources to support it. It is very nice that you are saying this, and I didn't know that about the constitution that people were unhappy about it. So, I am very much going to include that in my thesis.

Mister Torreblanca: Yeah, well you know people were happy about it in a sense, but then when the crisis came some people took advantage of that of course.

Annick: Ik zal nog even een introductie geven: In principe is mijn hoofdvraag: What are the social-economical influences that are causing the rise of left-populist parties in Spain in Greece since the end of the twentieth century”. Ik wilde eerst vragen: u heeft vooral, naar wat ik weet, rechts populistische partijen bestudeerd. Ziet u gelijkenissen tussen rechtse partijen zoals Fidesz en Rassemblement National en bijvoorbeeld Podemos en SYRIZA?

Meneer Vossen: Ja allebei hebben ze dat populisme natuurlijk. Wel op een andere manier ingevuld, maar het populisme betekend dus dat je heel sterk anti-elite bent en die elites ook echt ziet als een blok waar weinig verschil tussen is. Ook dat de elites **vervreemd** zijn geraakt van het gewone volk. Dus dat heel sterk uitbuiten dat zie je bij al die partijen wel terug. Maar ze zijn voor de rest wel anders. Je kunt het in Nederland ook zien met de SP die zijn oorspronkelijk ook een links populistische partij. Dus die overeenkomsten en verschillen die kun je wel zien.

Annick: In de bron van de partijen?

Meneer Vossen: Ja ook wel in de bron. Het is heel sterk gericht op het idee van: de gewone normale mensen hebben hele andere problemen dan waar de elites zich druk om maken. De elites denken vooral aan zichzelf. Dus Podemos had het altijd over “La Casta” – de kasten en dan “La gente” – de normale mensen. Zo zie je dat overal. Overal heb je dat soort hele **simplicistische tegenstellingen** die vaak ook een beetje in goed, kwaad termen worden gezet. Dus tis niet vaak alleen dat ze hele andere belangen hebben, maar het volk is ook goed, dat zijn goede hardwerkende mensen die het beste willen, en dan heb je de elites en die zijn gewoon corrupt en die deugen niet. Dat hele **simpele discours** dat delen die partijen.

Annick: Oke, in mijn scriptie leg ik uit wat populisme precies is en hoe het begon en wat de core elements zijn. Alleen ik heb het daar over conceptual stretching, een term gebruikt door Cas Mudde. Daarvoor heb ik uw bron: “Classifying Wilders” gelezen, uit 2011. En toen heb ik dat een beetje gezien als wat u bedoeld met conceptual stretching, maar ik weet niet of ik dat goed heb gezien. Zou u misschien willen uitleggen of u het daar nog steeds mee eens bent, dat Wilders een form van conceptual stretching is en waarom u dat eigenlijk vindt. Want in principe komt hij best veel overeen met populistische partijen.

Meneer Vossen: Conceptual stretching. Wat dat betekend is dat je een term zo aan het uitrekken bent dat het overal voor gaat gelden he. Dus op een gegeven moment alles populisme is. En dat is natuurlijk voor wetenschappers iets waar ze altijd voor waarschuwen. Let op, bij bijvoorbeeld

Cas Mudde die zegt, en ik denk terecht, van populisme is niet hetzelfde als opportunisme. Populisme is niet altijd hetzelfde als demagogie, weetje? Of als populair. Populair is niets mis mee in wezen. Dat is niet meteen populistisch. Maar wat bij Classifying Wilders heb gedaan, is ten eerste altijd een belangrijk nadeel bij. Als je je met iets bezighoudt wat nog in het heden is, een **moving target** zeggen ze ook wel eens, is dat Wilders zich aan het ontwikkelen was. Ik schreef dat in 2010 zo'n beetje en het is in 2011 gepubliceerd. En toen zag je bij Wilders nog heel sterk dat hij aan het zoeken was en hij ging langzaam de kant van het populisme op, maar nog niet zo erg als nu. Hij is daar later sterker in geworden dan toen in 2011. Dus ik weet nog dat hij in 2012 kwam met het moment dat hij **Henk en Ingrid** introduceerde als de gewone Nederlander. Henk en Ingrid waren gewoon hele hardwerkende mensen die het niet cadeau kregen in het leven en die de hele tijd gepakt worden door de elite. Nou dat was echt klassiek populisme. Dat is "textbook populism". Dat zag je in 2012 dus terug en in Classifying Wilders wil ik dus aangeven: hoe kun je die man nou classificeren? Waar past hij nou volgens de richtlijnen. Nou, vervolgens zie je dat hij, en dat is het interessante, uit een wetenschappelijk oogpunt afkomstig is van een liberale partij. De VVD, een liberale partij met altijd een sterke conservatieve vleugel. En je ziet al zo rond 2005/2006, 2004 begint het eigenlijk al, de opkomst van het neoconservatisme in Amerika met George W. Bush, maar ook in Nederland. En daar gaat Wilders heel erg in mee. Dat neoconservatisme is eigenlijk een soort fase geweest richting echt het populisme. Dus je ziet een soort ontwikkeling van die man en die heb ik toen in dat artikel willen schetsen.

Annick: Ja, dat heb ik inderdaad gezien, maar zijn er bijvoorbeeld partijen, in Europa, waarvan u zegt 'iedereen zegt dat dit een populistische partij is, maar ik vind dat eigenlijk best wel meevallen' of 'ik vind het dus inderdaad een vorm van conceptual stretching'.

Meneer Vossen: Naja, bijvoorbeeld Macron. Je hebt wel eens mensen zeggen dat is een populist, maar ja nee dat zie ik niet zo. Dat vind ik echt conceptual stretching. Dan ga je echt alles populistisch noemen.

Annick: En ook bijvoorbeeld, ik heb ook dingen gehoord over Rutte dat hij een populist wordt genoemd.

Meneer Vossen: Ja dat vind ik dus ook niet. Nee kijk, **een zwaluw maakt nog geen zomer** bij dat soort dingen. Je kunt echt wel eens een keer een populistische opmerking hebben gemaakt zonder meteen een populist te zijn. Dat heeft Mark Rutte wel eens gedaan en dat was natuurlijk

heel duidelijk om Wilders een beetje de wint uit de zeilen te nemen. Dat hij wel eens daar die kant op is gegaan, maar nee ik zou dat geen populisme noemen.

Annick: Oke, en ook over Podemos en SYRIZA. Veel academici zeggen dat de partijen eigenlijk meer neigen naar populisme, maar dat het meer link-extremisme is aangezien zij niet zo machtig werken dat ze het volk echt in de hand hadden. Vooral Podemos.

Meneer Vossen: SYRIZA, wat ik ervan weet, is dat het oorspronkelijk wel komt uit de communistische beweging in Griekenland. Die hebben wel heel sterk het verhaal gehouden van: we hebben de normale, gewone Griek die wordt door de corrupte elites en daarbovenop nog door de EU gepakt en uitgebuit. Daar komen we voor op. Kijk, het communisme heeft natuurlijk in die zin populistische elementen, dat ze natuurlijk ook altijd het idee hebben gehad van het vrome volk en het proletariaat die dan superieur zijn aan de kapitalistische elites. Wat het verschil wat wel is geweest met de meeste communistische partijen is dat je ziet dat ze meer een soort voorhoede partij idee hebben. Dus dat je het volk ook moet opvoeden en moet voorlichten en dat is dan weer niet populistisch en bij die links populistische partijen zie je nog wel eens dat voorhoeden idee. Van dat je een voorhoede hebt die het volk moet leiden en ik durf dat over SYRIZA ook niet helemaal te zeggen. Ik weet iets meer van Spanje. Daar is dat populisme ook heel sterk een uitvloeisel van een directe aanleiding van de crisis van 2009/2010/2011. Toen die banken omvielen, en toen Spanje een van de zogenaamde **PIGS** werd, dus Portugal, Italië, Griekenland, Spanje. Dus de landen die het zwaar hebben, die het moeilijk hebben, die schulden hebben en waar de EU allerlei sterke bezuinigingsmaatregelen oplegt. En toen heb je zo'n hele beweging gehad, ik heb dat toen zelf nog een keer gezien in Barcelona, de Indignados. Dat ze allemaal van die tentjes hadden. Een soort Occupy, maar dan veel groter. Dus die heb je toen gekregen en daar is Podemos eigenlijk een beetje uit voort gekomen. Maar in Spanje zijn er in de transitie naar de democratie in de jaren 70 wat losse eindjes geweest die na een lange tijd, een jaar of 20, 30, toch aan de oppervlakte kwamen zal ik maar zeggen. Dus, onvrede over het nieuwe stelsel. Die twee partijen die zo dominant zijn. De Partido Popular en de PSOE. Allebei toch wel wat corruptieschandalen en toestanden. Allemaal niet zulke fraaie dingen en dat Podemos komt dan op en wat daarbij ook een belangrijke rol speelt, denk ik, is er was een groep in Spanje die echt het meest getroffen waren en dat waren jongeren. Die jongeren werkloosheid was enorm. Die gevestigde partijen en vakbonden die keken toch vooral naar de belangen van ouderen in die zin en de jongeren voelden zich gewoon **niet vertegenwoordigd**. Dus linkse jongeren voelden zich ook niet meer door de PSOE vertegenwoordigd, want zij hadden het idee dat de PSOE

vooral stond voor de oudere werknemer. En die heeft allerlei rechten en de jongeren hebben gewoon pech. Dus je had heel veel mensen die prima opleidingen hadden gehad. Die hadden gestudeerd en die moesten weer bij hun ouders gaan wonen omdat ze gewoon geen baan hadden. Of er zijn er ook best wel wat naar Nederland gekomen. En daar zag je dus veel onvrede en uit die hele combinatie is Podemos uitgekomen denk ik en die hebben eigenlijk verrassend veel succes gehad. Omdat je aan het begin dacht van ‘oh dat is een beetje zo’n jongeren partij, een beetje GroenLinks achtig he’ maar die hebben toch ook wel echt de Spaanse arbeiders weten aan te spreken een tijd lang. Ik vind het zo tussen de SP en GroenLinks in zitten. Ik vind het iets intellectueler dan de SP, maar het is weer iets arbeider achtig dan GroenLinks die misschien iets te elitair zijn. Podemos let ook niet zo op het milieu volgens mij. Het grappige bij Podemos is dat die Pablo Iglesias en nog een paar van die figuren **politicologen** waren destijds en die kende het populisme goed theoretisch. Die hadden er heel veel over gelezen, vooral het Latijns Amerikaanse populisme keken ze ook naar. Dus die dachten als het waren ‘dit gaan wij ook eens proberen in Spanje’. Dus die tegenstelling maken van volk en elites en hele simpele slogans. Podemos, alleen de **naam** al is simpel. “Wij kunnen”, “Yes we can” komt het eigenlijk een beetje vandaan van Obama. Dus ja dat hebben ze denk ik een beetje uitgeprobeerd.

Annick: Dus denkt u dat het een beetje met voorbedachten rade is gebeurd?

Meneer Vossen: Nou dat vermoed ik altijd een beetje ja, omdat het politicologen zijn. Ze werken op de universiteit en die Pablo Iglesias dat was ook een populair **televisiepresentator** he trouwens? Dus die had een talkshow. Dus dat was een beetje zo’n Matthijs van Nieuwkerk achtig figuur. Dat was een bekende Spanjaard al. Ze keken ook naar Zuid-America, Laclau dat is zo’n politieke filosoof, misschien ben je die naam wel eens tegen gekomen, daar keken ze heel erg naar. Chantal Mouffe enzo die was een beetje de inspiratiebron.

Annick: Want u had het inderdaad over de economische crisis in 2009. Denkt u echt dat dat de grootste invloed is geweest op de groei van populisme in het zuiden? Of denkt is dat het te makkelijk is om dat te zeggen ‘nou economische crisis, dus populisme’?

Meneer Vossen: Naja ik denk dat dit soort dingen een combinatie zijn. Het ene land heeft een huis opgebouwd wat sterker staat als het gaat stormen en in een ander land begint het te kraken en te piepen. Dat is in Spanje denk ik een beetje, dat het begint veel meer te kraken en te piepen daar, omdat ook dingen nog niet helemaal goed gevestigd waren **sinds de jaren 70**. En die economische crisis die in Spanje dus wel bijzonder groot was en waar je vooral een enorme

vastgoed bubbel had. Iedereen bouwde daar huizen vanwege de lage rente, vanwege de makkelijke hypotheek en toen ontplofte dat helemaal. Ja het heeft in Spanje zo veel meer ingegrepen dan in Nederland wat dat betreft. Kijk, hier in Nederland was het natuurlijk ook wel behoorlijk, maar daar kwamen ook allemaal **corruptieschandalen** aan het licht, wat in Spanje ook gewoon een groter probleem is. In die zin heeft het populisme wel gelijk. Kijk populistten kunnen ook wel eens **gelijk** hebben, want die elite is corrupt. Maar in Spanje waren daar wel meer tekenen van dat die elites goed voor zichzelf zorgden. Om het zo te zeggen. Dus ik denk die combinatie. Je hebt de elite die vrij goed voor zichzelf zorgt, je hebt een democratie die nog net iets **minder sterke fundamente**n heeft dan bijvoorbeeld een Nederlandse en een crisis die daar ook nog harder aankomt. In zekere zin kun je je zelfs afvragen waarom het niet nog sterker is geworden in Spanje.

Annick: Ja, dat vroeg ik mij namelijk af, want SYRIZA is wel aan de macht gekomen en toen hebben ze dat Memorandum proberen af te schaffen en daarmee de boete die ze moesten betalen aan de Europese Uni. Dat is alleen allemaal niet van de grond gekomen en ze hebben ook heel veel vluchtelingen toegelaten. Nou uiteindelijk moesten ze die weer terugsturen of in kampen stoppen. Ik heb dus twee vrienden uit Griekenland en ik vroeg wat ze daarvan vonden en zij antwoordden ‘Ze proberen natuurlijk een soort van een beetje de communistische partij uit te hangen, maar het lukte gewoon niet zo goed’, dus veel mensen zijn daar nu een beetje teleurgesteld in. Podemos heeft nog steeds eigenlijk niet de macht, want het is nog steeds PSOE die het voor het zeggen heeft. Ik vraag me gewoon af waarom denkt u dat Podemos niet meer macht heeft kunnen krijgen in de afgelopen jaren?

Meneer Vossen: Ik denk dat in Spanje PSOE toch behoorlijk gevestigd is als partij en sterk geworteld dus ook. Dat op de eerste plaats. In de tweede plaats denk ik dat Podemos misschien net iets te **intellectueel en van de jongeren is**. Dat zou een rol kunnen spelen. Je zou ook eens naar het **kiesstelsel** moeten kijken hoe dat in Griekenland en in Spanje zit. Dus daar kunnen soms ook belangrijke verschillen in zitten. Hoe een kiesstelsel werkt. En ik weet van Podemos dat ook daar wel wat **schandaaltjes** zijn ontstaan. Dus die Pablo Iglesias die had een iéts te groot huis gekocht, begreep ik, en hij heeft zijn vriendin op nummer twee gezet op de lijst. Dus er waren ook weer mensen die daar ook niet zo gelukkig mee waren. Ik denk dat dat de voornaamste elementen zijn. In Spanje heb je natuurlijk ook **die Catalaanse kwestie**. Podemos weet ook niet zo goed hoe ze daar mee om moeten gaan. Al die partijen vinden dat lastig. Het is een belangrijk stuk van je land, maar toch ook maar weer zes miljoen Catalanen in een land van veertig miljoen en je kunt niet alles op die zes miljoen zetten. Je hebt ook niet die 34 andere

miljoen waar je mee te maken hebt en die, voor een heel groot deel, de Catalanen vreselijk vinden. Die hebben het daar niet zo op, op die Catalanen. Dat vinden ze maar een beetje een arrogant volkje.

Annick: Ja, maar dat is ook in Andalusië bijvoorbeeld. Zij denken daar juist van “die hoeven wij niet meer” maar Andalusië wil er juist graag weer bij horen.

Meneer Vossen: Ja, ja Andalusië staat dan weer een beetje bekend als een beetje lui ja, dat zijn clichés natuurlijk. Maar ja Spanje is natuurlijk een land van regio's waar het nooit helemaal lekker een eenheidsnatie is geworden. Maar dat zijn wel wat van die factoren waarom Podemos niet verder is doorgetrokken. Het leek er even op, zo rond 2015, toen ze behoorlijk goed ervoor stonden, maar het is inderdaad niet helemaal lekker doorgebroken.

Annick: En wat er nu ook gebeurd is, omdat natuurlijk uitkwam dat de regerende partij zo'n groot schandaal had dat iedereen ontslag moest nemen, vind ik het juist zo gek dat Pablo Iglesias niet meer macht kreeg maar een nieuwe extremistisch rechtse partij die er ineens is bij gekomen. Dat snap ik dan niet, want die partij die aan de macht kwam was heel centralistisch vind ik zelf, en in plaats van dat mensen voor links kozen dachten ze nu van ‘naja dan doen we maar rechts’.

Meneer Vossen: Ja maar dat is een hele andere groep kiezers. Ik ken de kiezersonderzoeken niet hoor in Spanje, maar ik durf daar wel wat op te verwedden dat er behoorlijk wat kiezers van Partido Popular naar Vox zijn gegaan en niet van Podemos naar Vox. Ik denk dat daar de overloop niet zo heel groot is. Maar Vox, ja kijk waar Vox heel erg op inspeelt is dat sommige Spanjaarden vinden dat ze veel harder tegen die Catalanen moeten optreden. Dus dat ze veel te soepel nog zijn. Dus die Catalanen moeten echt terug hun hok in. Het tweede is ook in Spanje, en dat zie je natuurlijk weer in alle westerse landen, komen partijen op die zich keren tegen immigratie. Die gewoon zeggen van we hebben veel te veel immigranten. Die mensen die maken gebruik van onze voorzieningen, de grenzen staan veel te veel open, die mensen vertegenwoordigen bovenmatig de criminaliteit en ze zijn ook nog moslim en dat leidt tot gedoe en dat willen we niet. Ja in ieder land heeft dat een bepaalde weerklank. Het was daar ook weer. Het was eerder verwonderlijk dat dat nog niet eerder was gekomen in Spanje. Maar goed, nu is Vox er ook bij gekomen. Nu speelt in Spanje ook nog wel het **verleden** een rol. Kijk, je hebt natuurlijk die burgeroorlog gehad in de jaren 30 en dat is lang geleden natuurlijk. Bijna iedereen is dood die het heeft meegemaakt, maar die dictatuur van Franco heeft nog tot 75 geduurd. Dus, dat zijn allemaal wel wonden en littekens die spelen allemaal in Spanje nog wel. Nou je zag ook dat die hele discussie rondom het lijk van Franco wat uit het mausoleum gehaald werd en

de vraag daarbij. Dus links wil dat men meer, en daar stond Podemos ook voor want die vond dat dat te weinig gebeurd was, gaat afbreken met Franco en dat oude verleden. Kijk Vox dat zijn juist mensen die zeggen van 'hey zo slecht was Franco niet en links moet oppassen, want in de burgeroorlog staken ze nog allemaal kerken in brand en voordat je het weet gebeurt het weer'.

Annick: Dat is de issue daar, want er zijn gewoon nog heel veel Francistas in Spanje en ze zijn ook heel onbeschaamd, dus dat is heel normaal daar.

Meneer Vossen: Ja inderdaad, en bij Valle de los Caídos waar dat grote Franco monument was, daar kwamen ze altijd samen en daarom wilden ze dat lijk daar ook weg hebben van Franco. Dat was een soort verzamelplek geworden voor Falangisten en Frankisten.

Annick: Klopt, wat ik wel heb gelezen en ik vind het ook grappig dat u dat noemde over Cataluña, is dat veel academici zeiden: rechts populisme is heel exclusief, heel erg anti immigrant, heel erg anti gay-rights, heel erg anti- soms ook vrouwen of vrouwenrechten.

Meneer Vossen: En zeker Vox he.

Annick: Ja, maar wat ik dan ook las is dat heel veel mensen zeiden dat links populisme daarentegen heel inclusief is, dat SYRIZA zich betreft met vluchtelingen en dat Podemos uitspraken heeft als "iedereen is een spanjaard zodra die hier woont en iedereen is deel van onze samenleving". Maar dan hebben ze het over Cataluña en dan vindt Podemos in principe dat Cataluña niet het recht heeft om eruit te stappen, want dat zijn gewoon Spanjaarden in hun ogen

Meneer Vossen: Nou ik geloof dat met Podemos, wat ik ervan weet hoor want ik heb ook weer niet zo'n enorme kennis van Spaanse politiek dat ik het allemaal op de detail weet, maar wat ik weet is dat Podemos wel voor dat referendum was en dat er een referendum kon worden gehouden. Ze waren er geloof ik ook wel voor dat het optreden van die politie destijds veel te hard was, maar eigenlijk bleek het dat ze gewoon niet zo goed wisten hoe ze ermee moesten omgaan. Het was gewoon niet de strijd die zij wilden voeren en ik denk dat dat het is. Het **doorkruist** gewoon de plannen voor veel van die partijen, want die willen zich helemaal niet bezighouden met Catalonië en ineens moeten die Catalanen weer zo nodig en dan moet men daar een standpunt over hebben. PSOE weet ook niet goed weten wat ze moeten met die Catalanen. Podemos weet het niet, een paar weten het wel dat is Vox. Die weet wel wat ze willen die zeggen gewoon ze moeten hun mond houden. Dat vinden die anderen weer te

moeilijk en zeggen: “nee dat kun je ook weer niet zeggen”, maar ze willen Catalonië duidelijk niet kwijt natuurlijk.

Annick: Nee, maar denkt u dat het echt zo zwart wit is van: rechts populisme is exclusief, links populisme is inclusief en dus indirect beter?

Meneer Vossen: Nou je ziet dat het bij links populisme moeilijk is om daar een algeheel beeld van te maken maar je ziet bij sommige links populisten, van wat ik weet, wel degelijk ook **anti-immigratie** sentimenten. Of dat nou geldt voor de **SP in Nederland** of voor **Die Linke** in Duitsland met die Schara Wagenknecht, of de vijf sterrenbeweging in Italië. Podemos geloof ik inderdaad wat minder, maar bij SYRIZA weet ik het niet zeker. Maar ja dat echt niet alleen maar inclusief hoor, dat willen ze zelf graag doen voorkomen, maar dat zou ik niet zeggen. Je ziet alleen wel dat ze over het algemeen wel wat minder negatief staan tegenover, inderdaad wat jij ook zegt, gay-rights, vrouwenrechten enz. Aan de andere kant, bij de SP zag je van oudsher dat ze wel inclusief waren, maar ze wilden wel dat de **kern altijd de sociale, economische strijd** moest zijn. Vrouwenrechten en dergelijke vond men daar wel aan ondergeschikt. Weetje, het gaat ten eerste instantie om de klassenstrijd, om dat even heel klassiek te zeggen. Dat zie je denk ik in die partijen wel een beetje terug.

Annick: Ja, dus dat ze hun prioriteiten wat meer bij de economie leggen.

Meneer Vossen: Precies, dus bijvoorbeeld de Zwarte Piet-discussie zoals in Nederland vindt de SP gewoon lastig, omdat ze daarin gewoon wegblijven. Zoals de PvdA ook.

Annick: Maar het is ook gevaarlijk als je een populistische partij bent en je gaat het over dat soort dingen hebben. Je gaat altijd mensen boos maken.

Meneer Vossen: Ja je gaat altijd mensen boos maken en dat wil je niet. Je wil gewoon niet die strijd voeren en wat doen politici vaak, dan negeren ze het. Ja dan denken ze van “ja okay hier gaan wij geen mening over hebben want dan kun je alleen maar mensen boos maken.” Je wint er niks mee, je maakt mensen boos, dus dan houden we ons gewoon **op de vlakte**. Dus dat is hoe politici dat meestal doen.

Annick: En links populisme is nog vrij opkomend, dus daarom is het moeilijk om daar nu al een conclusie over te trekken, maar ik dacht misschien heeft u daar een mening over. Denkt u dat er zich dezelfde gevaren gaan vormen als bij rechts populisme. Dat dit eigenlijk de nieuwe elites gaan worden, of denkt u dat er andere gevaren komen, zoals gevaren voor de democratie?

Meneer Vossen: Nou als je de gevaren voor links populisme wilt zien dan heb je hele duidelijke **voorbeelden zoals Latijns-Amerika**. Vooral Venezuela. Chavez is een vrij klassieke links populist. Je hebt natuurlijk in Bolivia ook Morales, die nu natuurlijk zeer actueel is. Waar zeker bij Chavez links populisme op een gegeven moment wel allemaal nare territoriale kantjes kreeg en waar ook met een onverantwoordelijke manier met de schatkist is omgesprongen. Nou, Chavez heeft het geluk gehad dat hij vrij vroeg is overleden, want alle proberingen kwamen eigenlijk pas toen hij dood was. Alle problemen die door hem veroorzaakt zijn die kwamen onder Maduro flink naar boven en nu is het een enorme crisis natuurlijk in Venezuela. Het halve land loopt leeg. Dus, in Argentinië heb je dat vroeger al gehad met Peron. Dat is al veel langer terug. Morales in Bolivia, aan de ene kant hij heeft goede dingen betekend voor de inheemse bevolking. Dat betreft bijna niemand. Aan de andere kant zag je daar ook wel weer dat hij daar moeite had om afstand te nemen van de macht, dus zonder gevaar is dat helemaal niet hoor.

Annick: Nee, want het lijkt mij dat elke vorm van links of rechts-extremisme uiteindelijk een gevaar gaat vormen, maar ik zag heel dat heel veel mensen daar niet over schreven.

Meneer Vossen: Nee, naja dat is natuurlijk ook een beetje hoe je daar zelf in staat in sommige gevallen. Ik vind links populisme, zoals je dat ziet bij Chantal Mouffe, te **conflict gericht** voor mij. Ik bedoel, we hoeven niet allemaal vrienden van elkaar te worden in een land, maar dit is wel heel erg polariserend allemaal. Je moet **zo veel mogelijk polariseren**, want dan maak je politieke keuzes duidelijk. Ik weet niet of dat altijd zo'n succes vormt.

Annick: Nee, ik ben het met u eens dat denk ik helemaal niet en ik denk ook dat als je naar Podemos kijkt, zoals u zei dat zijn vrouw dan op de tweede van de lijst staat. Uiteindelijk wordt hij dan toch een vorm van nieuwe elite.

Meneer Vossen: Ja dat ook, dat is automatisch. Kijk, elitevorming is wat dat betreft een sociologisch proces wat zich altijd voordoet. Dus daar is veel over geschreven en dat gaat zich ook bij populistische partijen voordoen. Kijk naar Wilders bijvoorbeeld, die is gewoon in zijn eentje de elite. Bij Thierry Baudet hebben we ook het een en andere gezien bij die partij. Dus, ja dat gebeurt vanzelf.

Annick: En dan heb ik de laatste vraag voor u, gebaseerd op eigenlijk de hoofdvraag. Dus het is een beetje een samenvattende vraag over de socio-economische invloed die ervoor zorgt dat het links populisme in Spanje en Griekenland aan de hand is. Wat is eigenlijk uw mening

daarover, of wat denkt u dat de grootste socio-economische invloed is? Dus inderdaad de crisis of nog iets anders?

Meneer Vossen: Ja de crisis is inderdaad heel belangrijk geweest in die landen en dan vooral dat de EU-bezuinigingsmaatregelen ging opleggen, terwijl het een vrij anoniem machtscentrum is ergens ver weg in Brussel. Zeker vanuit Griekenland ver weg. Dat men dat toch ziet als een elite die daarvoor moet buigen, een elite die ook zeker in Griekenland er een behoorlijke puinhoop van gemaakt hadden. Die oude partijen die hadden de boel op de fles in Griekenland om maar bij de EU te komen en maar bij de Euro te komen. Dus die hadden de boel bedrogen om het zo te zeggen. Dus dat speelt denk ik wel een belangrijke rol. Het zijn ook niet voor niets Zuid Europese landen. Het zuiden en dus die PIGS, om het zo te zeggen. Dus Portugal, iets minder trouwens, Italië, met de 5 Stelle, dus die Vijf Sterren, Griekenland met SYRIZA en Spanje met Podemos. Ja, dat is niet voor niks denk ik.

Annick: Ja ik ben het met u eens, maar het is fijn om het onder woorden te krijgen.

English Summary:

Koen Vossen is an author, historian and university professor that is specialized in populism in the Netherlands. He is mainly doing research on Geert Wilders, leader of the Partij van de Vrijheid (PVV) (Party of Freedom). Also, he extends his research to other Dutch political parties. Vossen starts to explain that both right -and left-wing populists both share a strong-anti elitism feeling since the populist parties both think that the elites are estranged from the normal people. Next to that Vossen explains that both right -and left-wing populism makes use of simple opposites, such as the good group versus the bad. He calls this a simple discourse.

When asked about conceptual stretching, Vossen explains that this is a phenomenon where every statement of a party is seen as a populist statement. He thinks that a party can develop into a populist party or the other way around. As an example, he gives Wilders, which he calls a moving target because his development is still in the present. He describes that 2012 was the point where Wilders was most populist oriented. In this year he introduced *Henk and Ingrid*. Two fictive people that were “normal” Dutch citizens that worked hard and payed their taxes, only for the elites to abuse. This was according to Vossen textbook populism. He also says that he does not agree that Rutte and Macron are populists, since many people accuse them to be, and says *een zwaluw maakt nog geen zomer*. Which translates to “one swallow does not make it summer”. Thereby, Vossen explains that party leaders can make populist statements once in a while, but this does not necessarily define them as a populist party.

After, there was asked if SYRIZA and Podemos are actually left-wing populist or if they were more left-extremist Vossen replied that they both were influenced by communism but that they differed from the populist rhetoric. Vossen explains that the communist rhetoric is about educating and “raising” the citizens on how to behave. The populist rhetoric does not have this.

Next, when asked what he most important reasons were for populism to grow in Spain and Greece, Vossen states that the crises of 2009-2011 had a strong influence on the PIGS countries. Which are: Portugal, Italy, Greece and Spain. The austerity measures that came from the crisis caused mass protests, such as the Indignados movement. He also mentions that the rough transition from a dictatorship to a democracy in Spain in the 70s made problems of that time come to light 20 or 30 years later. The youth was the most negatively influenced by the crisis and they needed someone to represent them. Vossen explains that PSOE was left but was more seen as a representative party for the old workers, not the youth. Podemos, on the other hand, was more intellectual. In the opinion of Vossen the party was too intellectual to solely be a youth party.

He explains that Iglesias and other party members were already political scientists when they started the party, so many knew how to draw the attention to people. Vossen thinks that that is why they chose the name “Podemos” since it is grabbing and simple. He suspects that the party started with premeditation to gain as much followers as possible. He explains that this is because Iglesias was also a TV presenter. Next to that he explains that they already took a lot of their inspiration from Latin American populism, Laclau and his wife Chantal Mouffe.

He summarizes his arguments by stating that the cause of the rise of populism in Spain is combined with the unstable democracy during the transition in the 70s as well as Spain’s big real estate culture that caused the economic crisis to become more significant. Next to that, there were many corruption scandals that came to light during the crisis. Therefore, he states that the populists in Spain were maybe partly right, since corruption is very large in Spain. He also wonders why populism has not been bigger in Spain.

When there was asked why Podemos did not gain more power in its peak, Vossen answers that the party made some mistakes that influenced their popularity. The party had some minor corruption scandals, did not exactly know how to handle the Catalan matter and was labeled as the intellectual youth party. When asked why the right-wing extremists were growing more over time, Vossen explains that he does not think that these are the same voters that once voter for Podemos. He states that there is more probability that the previous voters from *Partido Popular* (PP) (The Popular Party), were switched to Vox. The right-extremist party that was against the Catalan independence and anti-immigrant in general.

Vossen explains that the grow of the right-extremists is maybe linked to Spain's past. Since many people are still agreeing with Franco, the previous dictator of Spain, they want to go back to that by voting Vox. Podemos is also not as outspoken as Vox. With the Catalan matter, Podemos struggled to decide which side to pick. Vossen states that Podemos did not want to lose Cataluña as a part of Spain, but also wanted to grant them independence.

After, there was asked if Podemos and SYRIZA, and left-wing populist parties in general, are as inclusive as academics claim them to be. Vossen did not agree that every left-wing populist party is inclusive, and he gives SP and Die Linke in Germany as examples. He states that they mainly want to make people believe that they are inclusive. Also, he explains that most left-wing populist parties are not focusing as much on inclusiveness. He states that many populist parties fly under the radar with national or cultural discussions like SP does with *Zwarte Piet* (translated to Black Pete), a tradition where blackface is practiced in the Netherlands.

Vossen states that the example of how left-wing populism can become in the future lies in Latin America. He states that after Chavez died, Venezuela struggled with deep financial problems and that Morales was very authoritarian, but on the other hand very meaningful for the native community in Bolivia. He thinks that left-wing populism can become a threat, like right-wing populism, but to a certain extent. Vossen states that the left-wing populist theory of Mouffe is too conflict based and can form a danger because it is as polarizing as possible. He also thinks that the left-wing populist leaders can possibly become the new elites in the future, if they stay in power.

To conclude, Vossen thinks that the economic crisis of 2008 was an important factor of the rise of left-wing populism in Spain and Greece, but also the anonymity of the "power center" Brussels, and the way that people believe that they have to bow for the elites. He also states that in Greece it was also gaining popularity since the country had to go through a lot of trouble in order to stay in the European Union.

12. Forms

Appendix 6.4 – Informed Consent Form

Can be found on Blackboard

Informed Consent Form

1) Project Title :

"What are the social-economical influences that are causing the rise of left-populist parties in Spain and Greece since the end of the 20th century?"

2) Project Description

The research question is focused on the rise of populism in Europe and how it shapes the politics of nowadays. This problem would benefit from further research, as it is an issue that Europe is struggling with more than ever nowadays. By looking more into the situation, and mostly on the left winged part of populism, this could give an interesting overview of European countries with a leading left-extremist party and how they are responding within the European framework.

If you agree to take part in this study, please read the following statement and sign this form.

I am 16 years of age or older.

I can confirm that I have read and understood the description and aims of this research. The researcher has answered all the questions that I had to my satisfaction.

I agree to the audio recording of my interview with the researcher.

I understand that the researcher offers me the following guarantees:

All information will be treated in the strictest confidence. My name will not be used in the study unless I give permission for it.

Recordings will be accessible only by the researcher and relevant university assessors. Unless otherwise agreed, anonymity will be ensured at all times. Pseudonyms will be used in the transcriptions.

I can ask for the recording to be stopped at any time and anything to be deleted from it.

I consent to take part in the research on the basis of the guarantees outlined above.

Signed:

Date: 31/12/2019



Stelios Tzagkarakis

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Date: 01/01/2019

Anton Jager

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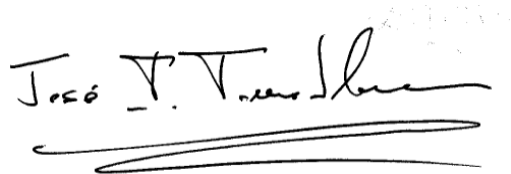
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I consent to take part in the research on the basis of the guarantees outlined above.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "José V. Torreblanca", with a horizontal line underneath it.

Signed: DR. JOSÉ IGNACIO TORREBLANCA **Date:** 2 JANUARY 2020

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Koen vossen

Signed: _____



Date: _____

15-01-2019

Appendix 6.3 – Student Ethics Form

Format to be found on Blackboard

European Studies Student Ethics Form

Your name: Annicka Valdes Perez

Supervisor: Martijn Lak

Instructions/checklist

Before completing this form you should read the APA Ethics Code

(<http://www.apa.org/ethics/code/index.aspx>). If you are planning research with human subjects you should also look at the sample consent form available in the Final Project and Dissertation Guide.

- ☒ Read section 2 that your Supervisor will have to sign. Make sure that you cover all these issues in section 1.
- ☒ Complete sections 1 and, if you are using human subjects, section 2, of this form, and sign it.
- ☒ Ask your project Supervisor to read these sections (and the draft consent form if you have one) and sign the form.
- ☒ Always append this signed form as an appendix to your dissertation. This is a knock-out criterion; if not included the Final Project/Dissertation is awarded an NVD.

Section 1. Project Outline (to be completed by student)

(i) Title of Project:

The Rise of Left-Wing Populism in Spain and Greece

(ii) Aims of project:

To research the socio-economic influences that cause the rise of left-wing populism

(iii) Will you involve other people in your project – e.g. via formal or informal interviews, group discussions, questionnaires, internet surveys etc. (Note: if you are using data that has already been collected by another researcher – e.g. recordings or transcripts of conversations given to you by your Supervisor, you should answer 'NO' to this question.)

YES / NO

If no: you should now sign the statement below and return the form to your Supervisor. You have completed this form.

Student Ethics form

This project is not designed to include research with human subjects. I understand that I do not have ethical clearance to interview people (formally or informally) about the topic of my research, to carry out internet research (e.g. on chat rooms or discussion boards) or in any other way to use people as subjects in my research.

Student's signature _____ - date _____

If yes: you should complete the rest of this form.

Section 2 Complete this section only if you answered YES to question (iii) above.

(i) What will the participants have to do? (v. brief outline of procedure):

I will interview the participants over Skype, or in some cases real life, and ask them interview questions that they can answer in the way that they prefer.

(ii) What sort of people will the participants be and how will they be recruited?

academics, authors, political-scientists and people that have studied populism.

(iii) What sort stimuli or materials will your participants be exposed to, tick the appropriate boxes and then state what they are in the space below?

Questionnaires[]; Pictures[]; Sounds []; Words[X]; Other[].

(iv) **Consent:** Informed consent must be obtained for all participants before they take part in your project. By means of an informed consent form you should state what participants will be doing, drawing attention to anything they could conceivably object to subsequently. You should also state how they can withdraw from the study at any time and the measures you are taking to ensure the confidentiality of data. A standard informed consent form is available in the Dissertation Manual.

(vi) What procedures will you follow in order to guarantee the confidentiality of participants' data?

All of the participants have signed the informed consent forms.

Student's signature:  date: 30-04-'20

Supervisor's signature (if satisfied with the proposed procedures): date: 04-05-'20

