

Chapter 1: Populism in Europe during crisis: an introduction

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Populism and the crisis

This book aspires to be the first large-scale comparative work on the impact of the early twenty-first century's recession on European populism. At a time when the former Italian Prime Minister Mario Monti appealed to electorates to avoid "a return to populism", the French President Francois Hollande warns against "populist excesses", and EU President Herman van Rompuy sends alarming messages about the "winds of populism" currently threatening Europe, we propose a precise assessment on whether, and to what extent, populism has interacted with the crisis. Furthermore, working on the distinction between the economic and the political aspects of the crisis, but also being sensitive to the timing of events in each of our country cases, we attempt to assess the different effects of the crisis on populism at both the national and the EU levels. Finally, we hope to be in a position to offer a theoretically robust and time-dynamic evaluation of contemporary European populism, and make credible predictions about its future course.

In the aftermath of the Lehman Brothers' bankruptcy in September 2008, to be sure, populist arguments have been made in political discourse throughout Europe, and populist short-cut solutions have been proposed. As austerity became the new policy norm, economic and social inequalities grew larger, and European integration appeared to many constituencies as a hopeless project, newly emergent populist leaders rose in some countries to defend the powerless people against sinister elites including politicians (both at national and the EU levels), bankers, and industrialists – in short, the powerful and wealthy. In some countries, formerly mainstream

political formations went into decline, some irreversibly, and new populist parties appeared, some of which skyrocketed to electoral success at polls.

The economic crisis included three intertwined dimensions (Shambaugh 2012): first, a *competitiveness crisis*, which caused the slowing down of economic growth in most of Europe; second, a *banking crisis*, due to undercapitalization of banks and their consequent lack of liquidity; and, third, a *sovereign debt crisis*, especially in countries that could not fund their public themselves because of rising bond yields. To be sure, the economic crisis was not uniform in terms of its causes, manifestations, and outcomes. Not all European countries endured all three dimensions, nor was the crisis felt in the same way throughout the Continent. A few countries (most notably Norway and Switzerland) did not really experience a crisis at all, while others were spared some of its dimensions. For those countries faced with an excessive sovereign debt, the problem became the most acute. Unable to refinance their respective governments' debts, some of them (Greece, Portugal, Ireland) had to be bailed out by the so-called *Troika* (consisting of EU, ECB and IMF).

Although the crisis initially appeared as a purely economic one, it had important political consequences as well. As with economics, however, one has to distinguish between degrees of political and social disturbance. In most countries, the crisis led to the punishment of incumbent governments – a phenomenon widely observed across Europe since only in very few countries (most notably Germany) sitting governments were able to maintain their position. In several countries, new political actors emerged forcefully during the crisis on both the radical right and the radical left (e.g., Syriza in Greece or the True Finns in Finland), while already established parties of the radical right were reinforced (e.g. FN in France). In addition, new populist contenders rallying against the old political order emerged (e.g., Grillo's M5S in Italy, or Jon Gnarr's 'Best party' in Iceland). Everywhere, the crisis contributed to the erosion of existing party systems. In the countries hardest hit, the economic crisis developed into a deep political crisis. In

some countries (mostly in Europe's South), it gave rise to intense social unrest, including mass mobilization and the occasional use of street violence, and even led to the rise of political extremism on both the right and the left (most ominously in Greece), and to the collapse of the entire party system (again most obviously in the case of Greece).

We should not forget, however, that populism has not been the unique product of the Great Recession in Europe (Kriesi 2014). In Western Europe, the rise of populism has been a long-term process that has already been well underway at the time of the intervention of the Great Recession. This process has, for some time, been driven by the malfunctioning of representative democracy, especially by the deficiencies of the party system, the main intermediary system linking the citizens to political decision-making (see Mair 2002). These deficiencies of representative democracy, in turn, have different origins, depending on the countries we are looking at. In Western Europe, mainstream political parties have been less and less able to mobilize the voters: indicators are declining party membership and party identification, declining voter turnout, increasing volatility of the vote and declining shares of voters who choose the mainstream parties. Mair (2009) attributed this erosion of the mainstream parties' representation function to the increasing tension between 'responsibility' and 'responsiveness', i.e. the tension between their role as representatives of the national citizen publics, and their role as governments being responsible to a range of domestic, inter- and supranational stakeholders. According to this view, the lack of responsiveness of the mainstream parties to specific new demands from society provided new challengers who appeal to the unrepresented demands arising from socio-economic change with the opportunity to mobilize successfully.

In particular, the lack of responsiveness of established parties to the plight of the 'globalization losers' provided a chance for their mobilization by the new populist right. As Kriesi et al. (2006, 2008, 2012) have argued, globalization has transformed the basis of politics in Western Europe

by giving rise to what they have called a new ‘integration-demarcation’ cleavage: processes of increasing economic, cultural and political competition linked to globalization created latent structural potentials of globalization ‘winners’ and ‘losers’. According to their analyses, the mobilization of the group of ‘losers’ by parties of the new populist right and by transformed established parties of the liberal and conservative right has provided the key impetus for the transformation of the party systems in the six West European countries they had studied. As they also showed, the success of the new challengers was mainly due to their appeal to the cultural anxieties of the ‘losers’, which, given the ‘losers’ heterogeneous economic interests, provided the least common denominator for their mobilization. The long-term tide of populism was, in other words, not driven in the first place by economic, but by cultural motives. It is an open question whether the Great Recession has added economic fuel to the cultural fire.

For different reasons, Central and Eastern European party systems have also been characterized by a considerable estrangement between the citizens and the established political elites long before the economic crisis intervened. In Central and Eastern Europe, party systems have *not yet* produced stable mainstream parties that reliably represent their constituencies: in contrast to the party systems of Western Europe, the party systems in Central and Eastern Europe have never been institutionalized to the same extent. In other words, in this part of Europe, parties have not yet developed stable roots in society, their organization has been unstable, and they are hardly considered legitimate by the citizens of their countries. The most important empirical evidence for the lack of institutionalization of these party systems comes from Neff Powell and Tucker (2013), who show that the very high level of volatility in these systems since the democratic transition has above all been due to the entry and exit of parties, and not to switches between established parties.

In Central and Eastern Europe, the low level of institutionalization of the party systems has provided a general opportunity for the rise of new populist challengers. This opportunity became all the more important, given the widespread dissatisfaction of the Central and Eastern European publics with their political elites. The low level of political and administrative performance has contributed to the constitution of anti-elitist sentiments which provide a general breeding ground for populist challengers. Thus, a strong majority in all Central and Eastern European EU member states perceives public officials as acting in a corrupt manner when exercising their power. As survey data show, the levels of public distrust in political authorities are especially high in Bulgaria, Romania, Lithuania and Slovakia. Across Central- and Eastern Europe, there is a deep-seated disenchantment of citizens with democratic politics, which is, as Linde (2012) shows, largely explained by perceptions of corruption and feelings of unfair treatment by authorities. As a result of this particular combination of circumstances, ‘centrist’ populist mobilization, i.e. a ‘pure’ version of populism that is reduced to anti-establishment posture without any other ideological element (Ucen 2007: 54), has characterized Central and Eastern Europe already before the crisis.

The most general question we try to answer in this volume is whether and to what extent the Great Recession has served to enhance these overall trends and contributed to the general ascendancy of populism across Europe. At the outset of our endeavor, our hunch is similar to that of the politicians we cited at the beginning of this introduction: whether of a rightist, leftist or centrist hue, represented by old as well as brand new parties, we expect populism in its many manifestations to have been a beneficiary of crisis at the expense of liberal democracy as it developed during the long postwar decades.

Definitions

Of course, populism needs clear defining. Fully aware of the term's slippery nature, the contributors to this book rely on well-tested concepts of populism. For our part, given the wide comparative scope of this research project, and the great number and variety of cases it includes, we have favored a 'family resemblance' approach to populism. In contrast to the classic necessary *and* sufficient condition approach, the family resemblance concept structure requires criteria that are sufficient *without* being necessary (Goertz 2006: 35-39). Such an approach allows for a more flexible and more broadly encompassing understanding of populism even when not all classificatory criteria are present. To extract those criteria, we more specifically have conceptualized populism in three different ways which we take from the literature – populism as an ideology, as a political communication style and as a political strategy. First and foremost, populism is an *ideology* that splits society into two antagonistic camps, the virtuous people and some corrupt establishment, effectively pitting one against the other (Canovan 1999: 3; Laclau 1977: 172-3; Mudde 2004: 543; Wiles 1969: 166). Second, populism as an ideology manifests itself in specific *discursive patterns* for identifying foes and solidifying the community of friends (Hawkins 2009: 1042; Jagers and Walgrave 2007; Pauwels 2011). Third, as a complement to the concept of populism defined in terms of ideology, populism may also be conceived as a *political strategy* by personalistic leaders to win power (Weyland 2001). Populism as an ideology and as a political strategy tend, but do not have to go together.

Let us briefly explicate each one of these elements. First of all, following Mudde (2004: 543), we conceive of populism as an *ideology*, 'an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups – 'the pure people' versus the 'corrupt elite', and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people'. This definition includes

- the existence of two homogenous groups – ‘the people’ and ‘the elite’,
- the antagonistic relationship between the two,
- the idea of popular sovereignty, and
- a ‘Manichean outlook’ that opposes the positive valorisation of ‘the people’ combined with the denigration of ‘the elite’.

As has been pointed out by Stanley (2008) and Stanley and Ucen (2008), this conceptual core is distinct, but ‘thin’, in the sense established by Freedman (1998, p.750) of an ideology unable ‘to provide a reasonably broad, if not comprehensive, range of answers to the political questions that societies generate’. Populism’s ‘thinness’ is a product of the vagueness and plasticity of its core concepts, which allows it to be combined with a variety of ‘thick’ ideologies, such as nationalism or socialism, that add more specific content to it. ‘Conceiving of populism as a thin ideology’, as Stanley and Ucen (2008: 8) observe, ‘resolves the persistent problem of how to account for the variety of political content associated with manifestations of populism whilst simultaneously positing a set of common elements, but it also illustrates the dependent relationship of populism on ‘fuller’ ideologies that project a more detailed set of answers to key political questions’.

For all kinds of populists, ‘the people’ is paramount and whatever their specific view of the people, they share a *monolithic* conception of the people. As Canovan (2002: 34) points out, the people is always conceived as a homogenous category, a unity, a corporate body capable of having common interests and a common will – a ‘*volonté générale*’. All populists also share the notion of *people as sovereign*, and all of them deplore that democracy is not working because the sovereignty of the people has been eroded and is threatened with being ever-further eroded. In addition to this conceptual core notion and depending on the ‘thick’ ideology with which the ‘thin’ ideology of populism is combined, ‘the people’ may also be conceived as ‘nation’ (right-

wing populism) or as ‘common man’, the ‘littly guys’, the ‘poor’, the ‘downtrodden’ and the ‘exploited’ (left-wing populism).

The monolithic conception of the people as a homogenous unity not only implies the antagonism between the people and the elites, but also opens the possibility of the *exclusion of ‘others’* – non-elite groups who do not belong to ‘the people’. Depending on the ‘thick’ ideology that is complementing the thin populist core, specific groups of ‘others’ may be singled out as scapegoats who, in addition to or in combination with the elites, are to be blamed for the predicament of ‘the people’. Examples of groups excluded by right-wing populists comprise all kinds of ethnic minorities (e.g. Roma or Jews), immigrants, and the undeserving beneficiaries of the welfare state (those who benefit from social security without having contributed to it).

While populism is ‘a shadow cast by democracy’ (Canovan 1999: 3) and populists see themselves as true democrats, it is important to keep in mind that their ‘thin’ ideology implies quite a specific, *illiberal vision of democracy* (Pappas 2013, 2014). We can identify three illiberal components of the populist vision of democracy: it takes ‘government by the people’ literally and rejects all liberal checks and balances (the ‘constitutionalist dimension of democracy’ in the terms used by Mény and Surel 2002); it is hostile to all kinds of intermediaries between the people and the decision-makers, and against political parties in particular (Pasquino 2008: 21) and pleads for a more direct linkage of masses to elites (Taggart 2002: 67); and it is also illiberal because of its monolithic (or unanimous), and, we should add, predetermined conception of the will of the people (in the populist vision of democracy, there is no room for pluralism or deliberation) (Mastropaolo 2008: 34f.).

Jagers and Walgrave (2007) have introduced the conception of populism as a *discursive pattern or political communication style*. This notion does not add another theoretical element to the

definition of populism, but it is very helpful for attempts to operationalize populist ideology. Populist ideology becomes visible in the political communication strategies or discursive patterns of the populist actors. Conceiving of populism as a communication style is complementary to the definition of populism as an ideology. The populist communication style puts an emphasis on the fundamental role of the people, claims that the people have been betrayed by those in charge, i.e. the elites are accused of abusing their position of power, and that the primacy of the people has to be restored (Mény and Surel 2002: 11f.). March (2012) has usefully proposed three indices to operationalize the populist ideology based on an analysis of the discursive pattern of political texts (such as party manifestos): an index each for people-centrism, anti-elitism and popular sovereignty.

From populism as an ideology or a political program, we should distinguish populism as a *political strategy*. Some authors, most notably authors writing about Latin America conceptualize populism as a specific way of competing for and exercising political power. Thus, Weyland (2001: 14) argues that populism is best defined as a political strategy through which a *personalistic leader* (our emphasis) seeks or exercises government power based on direct, unmediated, uninstitutionalized support from large numbers of mostly unorganized followers'. According to this definition, the connection between the people and the leader is mostly based on direct quasi-personal contact, not on organized intermediation. This definition cannot be applied too literally to European party systems, because several of the populist parties in Western Europe (e.g. the Lega or the SVP) are highly organized at the grassroots level. However, we would like to suggest that the element of the personalistic leadership is not incompatible with the existence of grassroots organization. In some cases, the personalistic mobilization strategy may be the only one available for a political leader, in other cases (such as the Lega or the SVP) it may coexist with more organized forms of mobilization. Even allowing for less than pure cases of populist

strategies, we can still propose to define them in terms of personalistic leadership. This kind of personalistic leadership should be distinguished from the general personalization of politics, which is an omnipresent phenomenon nowadays that, in turn, serves to fuel populist strategies (Poguntke and Webb 2005). Personalistic leadership means that, as Eatwell (2006: 153) has pointed out, ‘some leaders become the personification of a party or regime’.

The personalistic leader does not belong to the established political elites, but is an outsider (a new challenger), who incarnates the demands of ‘the people’. He (it’s most often, although not always (see Marine LePen) a man) has direct, unmediated access to the people’s grievances, and acts as *the* spokesperson of the vox populi (Abts 2011: 930). The leader as the spokesperson of the vox populi is, in fact, one with the people whose deepest feelings he (or she) articulates. The monolithic conception of the leader (there is only one) and of the leader’s (hierarchically structured and centralized) political organization (if there is one) corresponds to the monolithic conception of ‘the people’ of the populist ideology. In this very specific sense, populism as an ideology and as a political strategy are complementary, and tend to, although they do not need to, go together. The direct, populist form of representation by a personalistic leader promises to make politics transparent by offering ‘a short-cut that bypasses philosophical disputes and institutional niceties’ (Canovan 2002: 34).

Guiding hypotheses

Having defined our key object of analysis, we aim in this book to examine *where, when, how, and how much* populism profited during, and because of, Europe’s Great Recession. Beginning from the assumption that populism is an intrinsic and ever-evolving phenomenon within contemporary democratic policies, we expect it to manifest itself in particularly pronounced ways when

democracy undergoes severe crisis. We moreover expect populist occurrences to be qualitatively different depending on whether the crisis is primarily economic or political (or both). When the crisis has been experienced primarily in the domain of economics, as widespread economic hardship and growing economic inequality between the majority of citizens and a minority of rich, we expect populism to be restrained and mostly limited to the opposition parties. But when societies experience the crisis in both its economic *and* political dimensions, populism may become pervasive. It may be associated with widespread social unrest and, in some cases, even contaminate entire political systems (Pappas 2014).

All in all, we are sensitive to and try to analyze populism-during-crisis in two specific modalities: discourse and electoral outcomes. First and above all, we want to detect populism through the detailed analysis of its *discursive patterns* before and during the crisis. Second, we shall also evaluate the *outcomes* of populism by examining electoral contests during the crisis and assessing the transformative power of old or upcoming populist parties on each country's overall political and party system.

Given its essentially anti-elitist orientation, populism can be expected to thrive on popular dissatisfaction with the elites. As we have already pointed out, this dissatisfaction can have different origins, depending on the national context. We would like to distinguish between economic and more narrowly political factors. First, we suggest that a deep *economic crisis* enhances the antagonism between 'the people' and some political or economic elites, which serves to intensify populism-*qua*-discourse (H1). Where the economic crisis creates socio-economic misery and deepens economic inequality, populist discourse falls on fertile ground. In other words, we expect the Great Recession to enhance the long-term trends that have been giving rise to right-wing populism for the past decades. In addition to enhancing right-wing populists, the Great Recession also provides an opportunity for left-wing populism, which has always been framing its

anti-elitism in economic (class) terms. We expect left-wing populism to get its chance especially in the countries hardest hit by the crisis.

Right-wing populist, as we have already argued, mobilize their constituency mainly in cultural terms, which means that they emphasize the negative consequences of cultural diversity and political integration, and reframe economic conflicts in cultural terms. For example, they attribute the loss of jobs not to economic globalization but to the influx of migrants. The fact that the Great Recession in Europe manifested itself mainly as a sovereign debt crisis actually provides right-wing populists with a golden opportunity to reframe economic conflicts in nationalistic terms. Typically, the elites attacked by populists are domestic elites, but given that the sovereign debt crisis has led to a conflict between ‘debtor’ and ‘creditor’ countries in the Eurozone, the elites that come to be the object of populist attacks may also be supranational elites (e.g. the ‘Troika’) and/or elites from other nation-states (e.g. the German Chancellor Angela Merkel for the Greeks). Moreover, given that the programs to solve the European debt crisis require increasing solidarity between European ‘states-peoples’, they tend to create ‘others’ in terms of nationalities. Thus, some peoples of ‘creditor’ states (e.g. the Finns) turn against the peoples of ‘debtor’ states (e.g. the Portuguese). Note that the inverse does not seem to have taken place so far: the peoples of ‘debtor’ states did turn against the ‘creditor’ states’ governments, but not (yet) against their peoples.

Second, as we have already pointed out for the Central- and Eastern European countries, populism not only thrives on economic, but also on *political* crises. A political crisis is the result of poor governance in general, not just of poor economic performance. It results from corruption and partiality, lacking rule of law, and general ineffectiveness of government. One manifestation of poor governance are large-scale scandals. The emphasis here is on ‘large-scale’: although national elections are increasingly held in the shadow of political scandals, these events have typically been

inconsequential for voter satisfaction. Only major scandals, involving more than one party tend to have an impact on the voters (Kumlin and Esaiasson 2011). Another, much more serious form of political crisis is a crisis of representation and the eventual breakdown of mainstream parties and even the collapse of the entire party system. The Latin American experience shows that mainstream party breakdown occurs when two conditions are jointly met (Lupu 2012, Roberts 2013): a) the dilution of the party's brand, which weakens the voters' attachments to the party, leads to de-alignment and, eventually, to a breakdown of programmatic linkages, and b) poor performance of the party in office, which, in combination with a) leads to an extraordinary sanctioning by economic voting. The dilution of the party brand, in turn, is a function of inconsistent signals of the party to the voters and/or of ideological convergence of the mainstream parties. Both inconsistency and convergence may be the results from an exogenous shock like the Euro-crisis that forces the parties in government to renege on their programmatic commitments. This is what happened to some Latin American mainstream parties from the left in the 1980s and 1990s, which when in government, had to implement austerity programs imposed by the Washington consensus. This is what also seems to have happened to the Greek socialists of PASOK, who, when in government, were forced to implement an austerity program that was entirely incompatible with their programmatic commitments and electoral promises that they had made only a few months before.

Political crises create anti-elitist sentiments on which populists feed. In other words, we expect more intense populism in countries characterized by a *political crisis* (H2). Let us emphasize that a political crisis is not entirely exogenous to the development of populist reactions. If political crises provide an opportunity for populist mobilizations, they are in turn aggravated and brought to a climax by the populists' mobilization themselves. Note also that the political crisis may precede the economic crisis or occur independently of an economic crisis. But the latter is also likely to

serve as a catalyst for the development of a political crisis. Indeed, when the economic crisis leads to a political crisis, we expect the *combined effect of the two crises* to be particularly conducive to populism (H3). This hypothesis is supported by empirical findings, which show that electoral punishment of poor governance (corruption in particular) is conditional on the economic performance in many, although not all countries. When the economy performs well, citizens do not tend to punish the executive for corrupt behavior; conversely, citizens are more punitive when incumbents are perceived to be corrupt and incapable of delivering economic performance (Zechmeister and Zizumbu-Colunga 2013, Manzetti and Wilson 2007). As the experiments of Klasnja and Tucker (2013) suggest, there may be exceptions to this generalization: while the conditional relationship holds in a new democracy like Moldavia, voters seem to be unforgiving with respect to corruption under all circumstances in an established democracy like Sweden. Quite generally, however, not only economic performance, but also corruption moves up on the voters' agenda in times of crisis (Singer 2013).

Finally, in the countries least hit by the economic crisis, we expect populism to develop according to the long-term trends and to vary in the short term according to more narrowly political factors. Among the latter, we consider the question of whether the populists were part of the government or not as a crucial consideration. In several West-European countries, populist challengers have become part of the government (e.g. the Italian LN, the Swiss SVP, the Austrian FPÖ, or the Norwegian Progress Party) or have been supporting the government coalition without having become formally part of it (e.g. the Dutch PVV or the Danish People's Party). The same applies even more so to Central- and Eastern Europe, where populists have governed in almost every country. Our fourth hypothesis suggests that, when in power, populists tend to tone down their populist discourse/ behave more like mainstream parties (H4).

Selection of cases and operationalization of the crises

The chapters of this book cover most of the European countries where populism has been a significant political phenomenon before and during the crisis and some more. They include four countries from Central and Eastern (Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Poland), two countries from Southern Europe (Greece, Italy) plus Ireland – countries that have been particularly hard hit by the economic crisis, five countries from North-Western Europe (Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland and the UK), and five countries from Continental Western Europe (Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands, France and Switzerland).

We shall use three indicators to characterize the *economic development* of these countries since 2000: unemployment rates, growth rates, and public debt. For unemployment and growth rates, *Figures 1.1 and 1.2* present quarterly data, while yearly data are presented for the public gross debt in *Figure 1.3*. For comparative purposes, we include also Germany, the biggest European country, and Spain, another Southern European country hard hit by the crisis, in these figures, although we do not treat Germany and Spain in this study. *Figure 1.1* shows that, with the exceptions of Norway and Poland, the growth rates collapsed in all the countries in 2009. Hungary is exceptional to the extent that its economy already slowed down to a considerable extent before the crisis set in. Generally, the European economies recovered rather rapidly after 2009, with the notable exception of the Southern European countries and Ireland. By 2010, they were growing again. But growth was not sustainable in most of the countries. Already in 2011, it started to decline again and several of the countries had fallen back into a recession by 2012.

<Figures 1.1-1.3>

While growth rates display a lot of similarity, the unemployment rates presented in *Figure 1.2* point to great differences with respect to the economic trajectory of the various countries. In the

hardest hit countries – Greece, Spain and Ireland –, unemployment has grown enormously. Italy is the exception in Southern Europe. In Italy, unemployment has increased as well, but more slowly and less heavily than in the other three countries. By contrast, unemployment has been relatively stable in Continental Western Europe, except for the Netherlands, where it has considerably increased, too, but from a low level. In Germany, unemployment actually decreased from comparatively high levels in the early 2000s throughout the Great Recession. In North-Western Europe, Denmark in particular experienced rising unemployment rates, in Central- and Eastern Europe, unemployment rates rose above all Slovakia and Hungary. Gross public debt generally increased in the course of the crisis, but in some countries, Greece, Ireland and the UK, it literally exploded. As shown in *Figure 1.3*, the increase of public debt was also rather accentuated in France, Spain, Italy, Hungary, Germany, the Netherlands and the Czech Republic. Hungary is again exceptional to the extent that public debt started to increase long before the crisis set in.

To summarize these trajectories, we take the difference between the average quarterly rates for the pre-crisis period 2001Q-2008Q3 (or the average annual levels for 2001-2008) and the corresponding rate for the post-crisis period 2008Q4-2013Q2 (2009-2012). We then submit these three differences to a factor analysis. The results are displayed in the first part of *Table 1.1*. The three indicators equally contribute to the underlying factor that corresponds to the impact of the crisis on the national economy in the 19 countries. The resulting factor is our summary indicator for the economic crisis in a given country.

<Table 1.1>

For the characterization of the *political crisis*, we follow the lead of Mainwaring et al. (2006), who have suggested some measures for the ‘crisis of democratic representation’ in Latin America. We shall use a behavioral and two attitudinal indicators. Our behavioral indicator refers to electoral

volatility. More specifically, we measure electoral volatility for the last national election before the crisis, and for the most volatile post-crisis election. In calculating electoral volatility, we followed the procedures of Neff and Tucker (2013), who distinguish between two types of volatility. But we only use total volatility here. In most countries, there was just one post-crisis election, but in some cases, there were two or, as in Greece, even three post-crisis elections up to and including the first quarter of 2013, the last quarter covered by our analysis. We use as our indicator the difference in volatility between the pre- and post-crisis elections. An increase in volatility serves as an indicator of the destabilization of the party system in the course of the crisis, while a decrease in volatility serves as a sign of party system stabilization and suggests that the party system might have been going through an unstable period before and unrelated to the Great Recession. The first graph in *Figure 1.4* shows that the countries that suffered most from the economic crisis also tend to have the highest electoral volatility in the aftermath of the crisis. Thus, electoral volatility has increased enormously in the Southern European countries and Ireland, as well as in Hungary and the Czech Republic. By contrast, volatility has considerably decreased in the first post-crisis elections in Poland and Norway. In the other countries, volatility has not changed that much.

<Figure 1.4>

Our two attitudinal indicators for a political crisis refer to trust in parliament and satisfaction with the way democracy works in one's own country. We have again pre- and post-crisis measures for these indicators. The pre-crisis measurement comes from the Eurobarometer 68.1, which went into the field in September-November 2007; the post-crisis measurement is from the Eurobarometer 77.3, fielded in May 2012¹. For each country, we measure the share of respondents who trust their national parliament as well as the share of respondents who are very or fairly satisfied

¹ We have no measures of SWD and trust in Parliament for Norway and Switzerland, given that they are not covered by the Eurobarometers. As a proxy, we attributed both countries the mean values for Denmark, Finland and Sweden. We shall not interpret these figures, however.

with the way democracy works in their country (SWD). The second graph in *Figure 1.4* shows the difference between pre- and post-crisis measures of trust in parliament and SWD. Both SWD and trust in parliament have decreased across Europe during the crisis years. The only exceptions to the general pattern are Poland and Sweden, where trust in Parliament has actually increased. The greatest loss of trust and satisfaction occurred in Greece, Spain, Italy, the Czech Republic and Ireland. In Hungary, another country hit hard by the crisis, there was no loss of trust or satisfaction, but as is shown in the third graph in *Figure 1.4*, this is because both were already at very low levels. Notable are also the declines in SWD in Germany and Austria, as well as the decline in trust in parliament in the UK (where it was already rather low), Austria and Denmark. To summarize our six indicators for political crises – the three differences and the three levels in 2012, we perform again a factor analysis. The results are presented in the second part of *Table 1.1*. The six items all belong to the same underlying factor, which suggests that they are all indicators of a political crisis. As it turns out, both types of crises are closely correlated ($r=.71$): economic crises tend to go together with political crises. However, the correlation is not perfect. As can be seen from *Table 1.2*, which provides the country-characteristics on the two indicators, and which is sorted according to the gravity of the economic crisis in the different countries, there are two countries, Italy and the Czech Republic, that have not been as hard hit by the Great Recession as Ireland, Greece or Spain, but which have suffered from a very serious political crisis. On the other hand, there are three countries, the UK, Finland and the Netherlands, which have not experienced a political crisis according to the indicators used here, although they have been relatively hard hit by the crisis.

<Table 1.2>

Combining the two indicators provides us a typology of countries according to the incidence of the two crises. For this typology, we dichotomize each summary indicator in two different ways:

once at the mean and once at the median. Since the impact of the crises has been highly skewed, the mean is more selective than the median. Both ways to proceed define a crisis in relative terms, i.e. they conceive of the economic and political situation in a given country as more or less critical, compared to the other countries in our sample. *Table 1.3* presents the two versions of the typology. Given that the two types of crises tend to occur together, the majority of the countries are located in the main diagonal of concordant combinations. Ireland, Spain, Greece, Hungary and (just barely) the Czech Republic belong to the group of countries that cumulate both types of crises according to both criteria. When we use the median, Italy and Slovakia also belong to this group, while these two countries are characterized by a political crisis only if we use the mean. According to both criteria, the UK is the only country hard hit by the economic crisis without a political crisis. Using the median instead of the mean, Finland and the Netherlands join the UK in this off-diagonal group, Germany (barely) changes into the opposite off-diagonal characterized by a political crisis in the absence of an economic crisis. According to the criterion of the median, the remaining eight countries experienced neither a sharp economic, nor a serious political crisis: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Norway, Poland, Sweden and Switzerland.

<Table 1.3>

This classification is exclusively based on the limited number of elements we used here. With respect to political crises, additional criteria, which are more country-specific may have played a role. Among them are political scandals or government crises. Thus, Finland experienced a major political scandal concerning election finances in 2008-2011. This scandal has certainly added to crisis perceptions in the crucial 2011 crisis election. In Belgium, the problems of government formation caused a serious political crisis, which we do not capture by our indicators either: after the 2010 elections, government formation took a record number of 543 days. In the final analysis, whether there is a political crisis or not depends on the public's perception of the situation in a

given country. And the perception, in turn, very much depends on the standard of comparison. If you compare the economic situation in your own country with that of Germany, as the French seem to do, you may be dissatisfied even if your own country fares rather well if compared to the overall mean. The country chapters will build on our typology and, based on more detailed knowledge of the country-specific situation, may modify the overall assessments which we propose here.

Organization of the volume

For each country, we have asked the authors to construct a “timeline of crisis” from mid-2008 to late 2013. After locating the peaks of the crisis and all significant events associated with it (such as elections, mass mobilizations, or other social disturbances) each author has analyzed the discourse of the parties identified as populist, thus producing a “barometer of populism” during the long crisis. When that barometer shows high “pressure”, the authors look at whether new populist parties have emerged or old mainstream parties have turned populist. They also examine the intensity of populism-qua-polarization and try to assess the relative weight of the populist appeals. For, as Stanley (2008: 108) notes: “At any given point, certain [populist] parties and social movements will be ‘more populist’ than others” and some may even develop populism as a “full ideology”. Be that as it may, we aim at a qualitative description of populist phenomena during crisis, based on the following sources of political communication: Speeches by party leaders, party manifestos and other materials from party websites, party newspapers, and, depending on author selection, twitter messaging.

In each country case, the authors are asked to proceed at four steps:

- *Populism until 2008.* (a) Map the populist parties/forces in x -number of European countries by 2008 and assess their electoral strength; (b) make sense of the variation within this group of countries; (c) examine the political discourse used and key messages transmitted by such populist parties up to that point.
- *Economic crisis, 2008- .* (a) How did the fiscal and economic crisis affect each of the countries? Establish variation relative to crisis impact; (b) examine each state's capacity to deliver social welfare benefits to various groups in society; (c) examine post-2008 patterns of social unrest in Europe.
- *Post-crisis populism.* (a) Examine whether/how old populist parties reacted to the crisis; (b) examine whether/which new populist forces have emerged *because of* the crisis. How? (c) analyze the new political discourse used by the new populists as enriched by crisis-related themes. Who is to blame for the crisis?
- *New electoral politics.* (a) Examine post-crisis electoral politics as the chief manifestation of new populist politics in Europe; (b) assess both the nature and strength of new populist parties/forces; (c) discuss the reasons of success/failure of such parties by placing particular emphasis on the interplay between economic *and* political factors.

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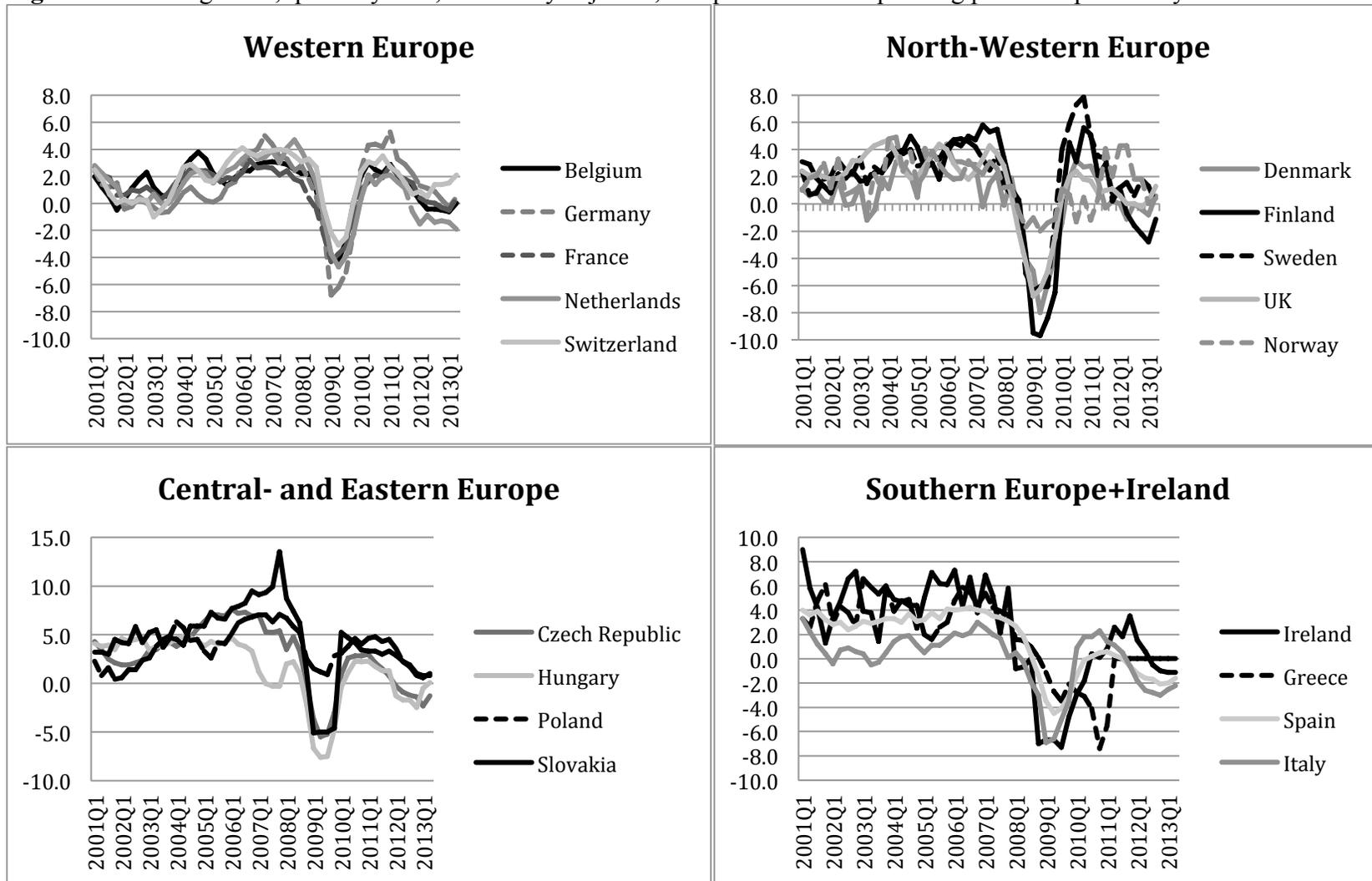
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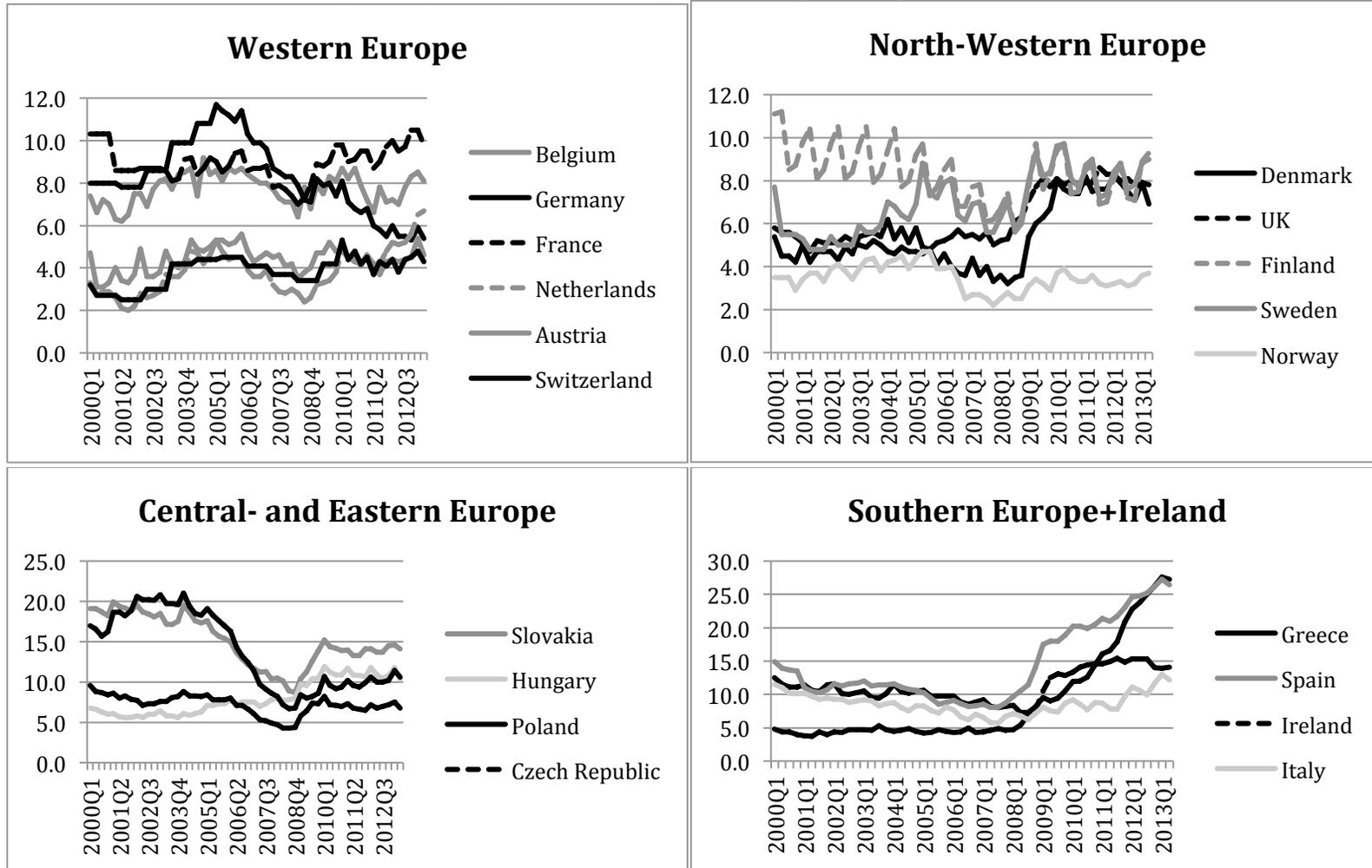
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Figure 1.1: GDP-growth, quarterly data, seasonally adjusted, compared to corresponding period of previous year¹⁾



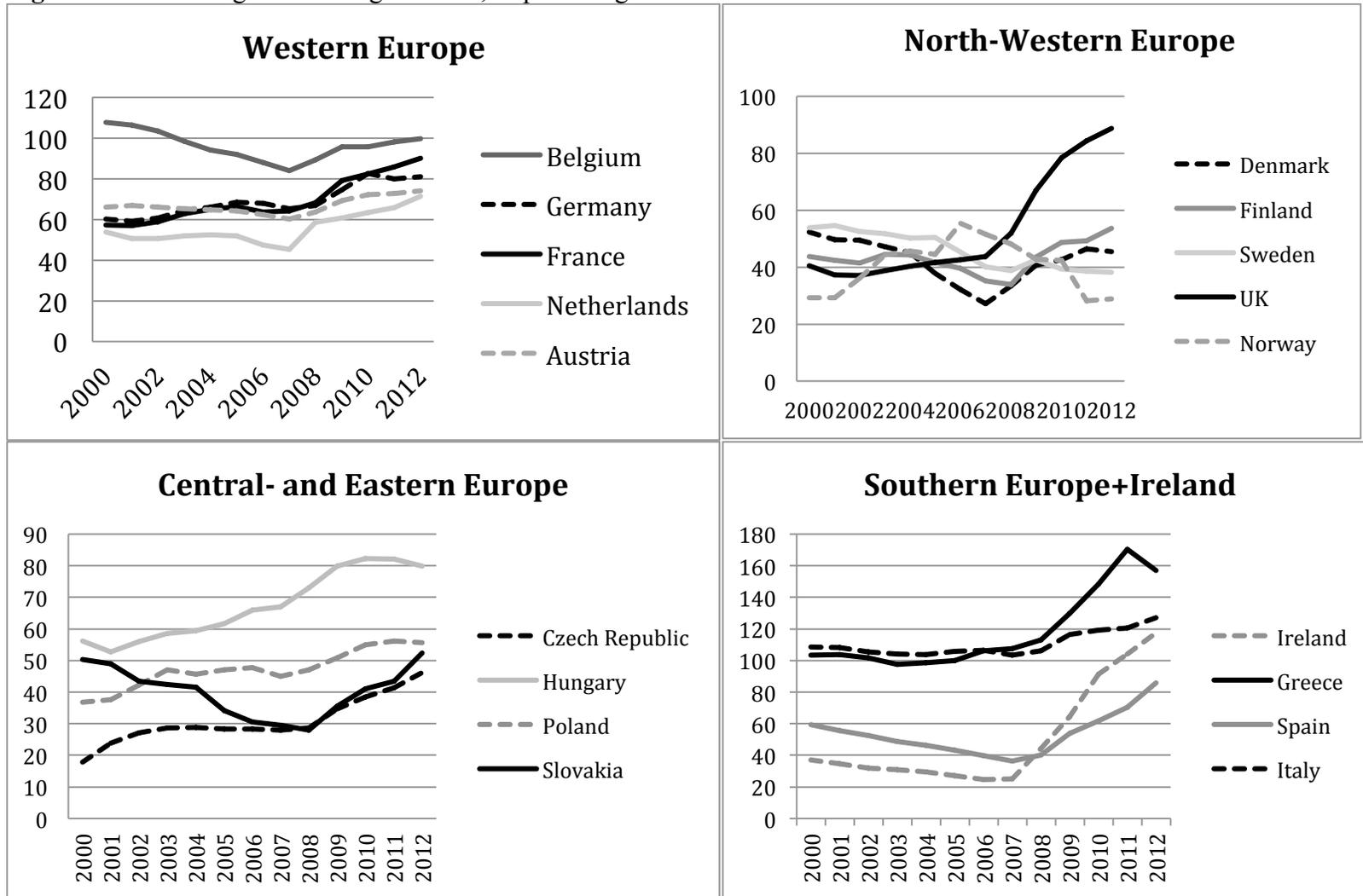
1) Source: Eurostat [namq_gdp_k]

Figure 1.2: Level of unemployment, quarterly data (2000Q1-2013Q1): percentage¹⁾



1) Source: Eurostat [lfsq_organ]

Figure 1.3: General government gross debt, as percentage of GDP¹⁾



1) Source: Eurostat [tsdde410]

Table 1.1: Factor analysis of the indicators for the two types of crises: factor loadings, factor scores, and Eigenvalues

economic crisis	Factor loading	factor score
d_unemployment	0.72	0.28
d_growth	-0.78	-0.37
d_debt	0.77	0.36
EV	1.71	N=19
political crisis		
d_volatility	0.85	-0.27
d_sw_d	-0.91	0.17
d_trustparl	-0.65	0.08
volatility2012	0.89	-0.15
swd2012	-0.92	0.29
trustparl2012	-0.86	0.15
EV	4.31	N=19

Figure 1.4: Indicators of political crises

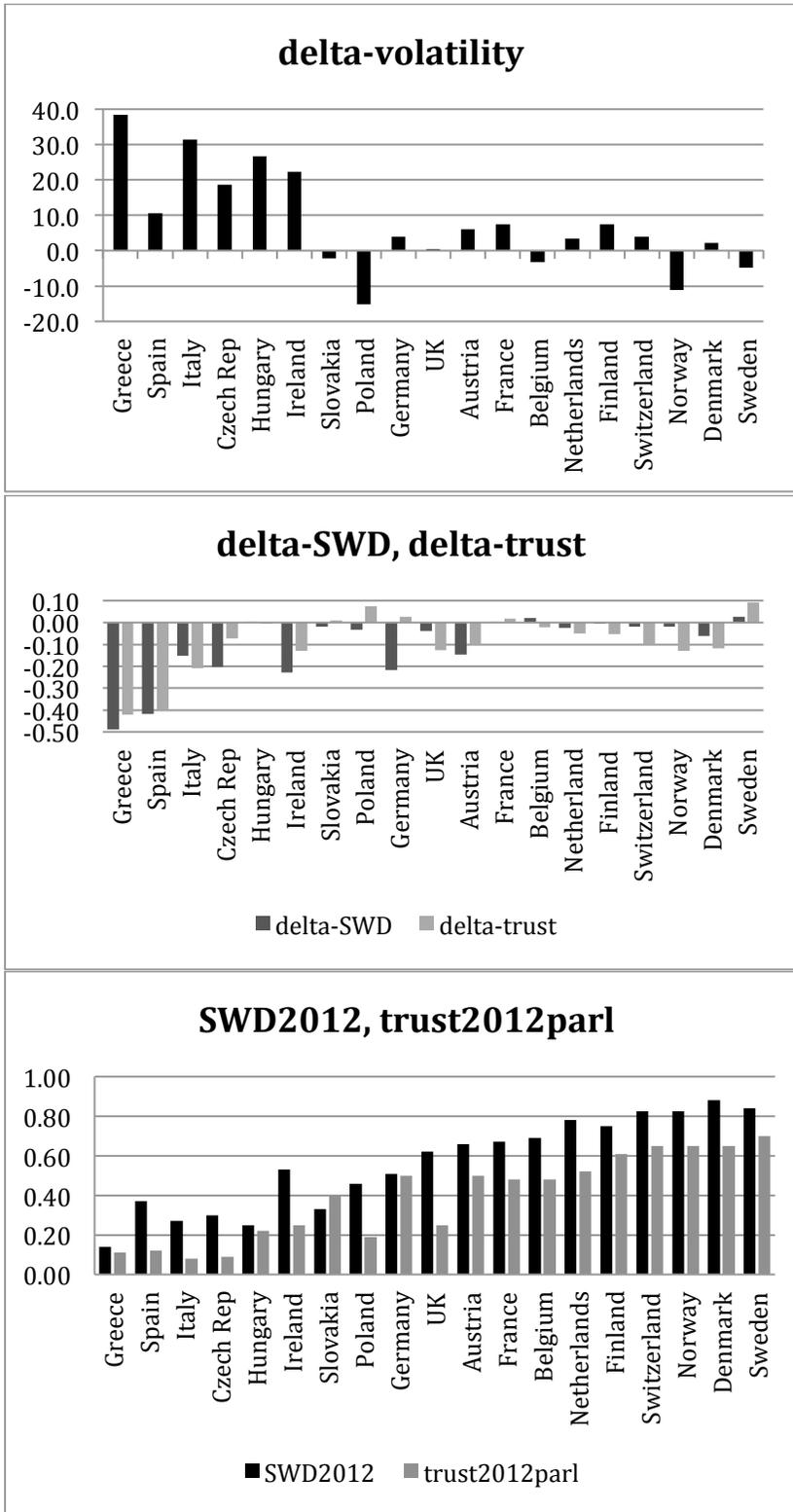


Table 1.2: Summary indicators of economic and political crisis, by country: countries ordered according to gravity of economic crisis

country	Economic crisis	Political crisis
Poland	-1.03	-0.34
Norway	-0.92	-1.24
Switzerland	-0.80	-0.92
Germany	-0.75	-0.13
Sweden	-0.69	-1.19
Belgium	-0.67	-0.62
Austria	-0.50	-0.37
Denmark	-0.33	-1.08
France	-0.23	-0.31
Netherlands	-0.13	-0.56
Italy	-0.12	1.51
Slovakia	-0.10	0.09
Finland	-0.06	-0.52
Czech Rep	0.23	1.15
Hungary	0.57	1.07
UK	0.61	-0.31
Spain	1.09	0.90
Greece	1.76	2.26
Ireland	2.08	0.62
Total	0.00	0.00

Table 1.3: Typology of crises

a) based on means

economic crisis	political crisis	
	weak impact	strong impact
weak impact	AU,BE,DK,FIN,FR,GER, NL,NO,POL,SWE,SWI	ITA,SLK
strong impact	UK	CZ,HU,GR, ES,IRE

b) based on medians

economic crisis	political crisis	
	weak impact	strong impact
weak impact	AU,BE,DK,FR,NO, POL,SWE,SWI	(GER)
strong impact	FI,NL,UK	CZ,HU,GR,ES,IRE, ITA,SLK