

The Rise of Populism in South of Europe: Negativity Bias of Society and Economic Distress?

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ABSTRACT

Why do newly populist parties appeal to the core of middle-class voters regardless of ideology since 2008? Who are the supporters of new populist parties in Italy and Spain? Focusing on the M5S in Italy and Podemos in Spain, respectively, the study examines how welfare state changes has affected middle-class voting preferences over parties. The analysis sheds light on the individual preferences towards social protection and the kind of crisis perceived and resentment felt by supporters of POD and M5S since 2008. The study offers a perspective on the micro-foundations of populist voting behavior European politics for the period following the financial crisis of 2008-9. Findings suggest that the perception of economic developments are among the driven factors of the vote for POD, while in Italy the mains driven factors of the M5S electorate seem to be the negative perception of the all establishment. While POD electorate aim is to actively replace and punish the left, M5S electorate is punishing the entire elite because of corruption and privileges. In both countries, the elite is perceived as scarifying the public elements of welfare state, which do not fit with the sense of community and social cohesion.

Keywords: Populism, Welfare State, Politics of Retrenchment, Podemos, Five Star Movement

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Relevance of the Study	1
1.2 Defining the Problem	3
1.3 Research Question	4
1.4 Mixed Methods Design	6
1.5 Case Selection.....	7
1.6 Outline of the Chapters	8
Chapter 2: THEORETICAL STARTING POINTS: WHY THE POPULARITY OF POPULIST PARTIES IN CONTEMPORARY SPAIN AND ITALY?	9
2.1 What are Populism and Populist Parties?	9
2.1.1 The Rise of Populism in Europe	11
2.1.2 The Rise of Populist Parties in Spain and Italy.....	12
2.2 Theoretical Explanations: Policy Rigidity and the Political Implications of Welfare State Retrenchment for Middle-Class People	17
2.3 Protest Vote and Economic Concern	18
2.4 Blame Avoidance and Negativity Bias.....	20
2.5 Clientelism and Corruption.....	22
2.6 Conclusions and Justification of the Research Question	23
Chapter 3: METHODOLOGY: DESIGN, DATA COLLECTION & ANALYSIS...	24
3.1 The Research Design	24
3.1.1 Rationale for Using the Mixed Methods	24
3.2 Phase One: The Large-N Analysis	25
3.2.1 Data.....	26
3.2.2 Methodology and Measurements	27
3.2.2 Empirical Analysis: Results	30

3.2.3 Conclusions and Limitation	33
3.3 Phase Two.....	34
3.3.1 Sampling Middle Class People in Spain and Italy.....	35
3.3.2 Focus Group and In-depth Interviews : The Unit of Analysis	36
3.3.4 <i>Interviews and Focus Groups</i> : Analysis.....	42
Chapter 4: DATA ANALYSIS	45
4.1 Issue One Based on the RQs: The Nature of Resentment	45
4.1.2 The Healthcare System.....	46
4.1.2 The Pension System.....	49
4.1.3 The Education System	50
4.1.4 The Labor Market.....	52
4.1.5 Determinants of Protest and Punishing.....	55
Chapter 5: CONCLUSION.....	61
5.1 Addressing the Research Question.....	61
5.2 Main findings.....	62
LIST OF REFERENCES	74
APPENDICES	65

Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Relevance of the Study

Representative governments in Western and Eastern Europe post-industrial society have been characterized by the gap between responsive and responsible government (Mair, 2009; Bohle and Greskovits 2012). Democratic theories have emphasized that the essential characteristic of democracy is responsiveness of the government to the preferences of its citizens (Dahl 1961; Putnam, 1994). As Putnam (1994:64) points out, “who governs?” and “how well?”, are both essential questions of political science. Following Putnam’s argument, institutional success and performance are based on indicators such as comprehensiveness, consistency and reliability in governance. However, these dimensions of measurement of democratic institutional performance need to be addressed considering the views of voters, the context, and the internal and external facts which might affect, positively and negatively, democracy and its functionality in a given country. Specifically, Mair’s argument is based on the idea that although parties in government should be and be perceived to be both responsible and responsive, this is not the case anymore in Western European democracies.

According to Mair’s framework, responsive government is intended as a representative government, which cares about voters and public opinion, while the responsible government is focused on what has been called ‘problem-solving’ and stands for legal procedure and international obligations (Mair 2009; Bohle and Greskovits 2012). The impact of the European Union (EU) and developments such as globalization and the related technological changes, which have effectively made governmental performance less accountable for important decisions in the open markets economy, is a crucial aspect because it can explain the nature of the new form of opposition, which Mair (2009:14) defines as irresponsible or semi-responsible government. For instance, it is worth mentioning the sovereign debt crisis and the difficulties of countries such as Spain and Italy to refinance their debt. In such a circumstance, the European Commission (EC) started to use more

and more formal instruments such as recommendations. The recommendations, implicit and explicit, have become increasingly accurate and detailed, imposing a plan of austerity, started in 2010 (Crum, 2013, Léon et al. 2015) and still in place.

Such a scenario can explain the increase of the tension between responsiveness and responsible government. To put it in other words, in a context of budgetary constraints and pressure from EC, national governments have little space for manoeuvre. Under these circumstances, where policy making processes are left with fewer options, it is not a hazard to argue that responsible governance is more likely to be pursued. Therefore, following Mair's framework, a natural evolution is the bifurcation of the party system between 'mainstream parties' which keep stressing their ability in governing (and engage in responsible governance) and the new form of opposition, which emphasize the argument of representation and discontent (and, implicitly, responsive governance). In the scenario mentioned above, I argue, emerging parties such as Podemos(POD) (ESP) and the Italian Five Stars Movement (M5S) (IT) could be defined as forces perceived as semi-responsible or irresponsible oppositions. Both parties seem to stress the populist claim to "represent the people" and to "return power" to the people. Using the plebiscitary link, they have proposed a new political style, suggesting accountability and a correction to the Spanish and Italian economic context. (Barr, 2009: 38). Moreover, they have been doing increasingly well over time in national and European elections (2014, 2015 – 2016, Spain and 2014 – 2013, Italy). Therefore, it is worth investigating the nature of these new movements and the reasons behind their attractiveness for voters. Is it the promise of responsive – rather than responsible – governance that makes these parties increasingly more appealing to core constituencies in Italy and Spain? This study investigates the implications of the politics of welfare state retrenchment and the consequences over the electorate in Italy and Spain since 2008. For the study, the implications of change in the welfare state politics put in place after 2008 along with corruption, are considered explanatory factors for

the electorate backlash and rise of new parties with populist features. The mechanism could be explained by the integration of economic and protest voting. On the one hand, voters are upset with the economic performance, on the other hand they are punishing the traditional elites because of unpopular reforms, corruption scandals and nepotism in the public administration.

1.2 Defining the Problem

The populist pattern, I argue, is present in both POD and M5S. It seems that Podemos and M5S share populist features and their rise follows the same logic of emergence (Pappas, 2012:4). Both movements are led by a charismatic leader, who is a political outsider and a new face of the political realm. Moreover, both parties are born with the idea to overcome the traditional distinction between left and right, insisting on the moral content, dividing the corrupted elite (“la casta”) and the “pure” people.

The economic crisis and the global recession have particularly hit the South of Europe (Guillén and Pavolini, 2015:147; Pappas and Kriesi, 2015:305). Specifically cuts on social expenditure in the welfare state have been imposed, as well as labor reforms in Italy and Spain. (Léon et al. 2015:187). The phenomenon requires attention because parties such as M5S and POD seem to reflect the symptoms of political dissatisfaction and resentment because of socio-economic hardship. The birth of both movements coincides with welfare reforms implemented between 2010 and 2011, which changed the policy-making process dramatically (2015:198). Moreover, populist parties appear to be the only force able to reflect this resentment and galvanize new forms of political engagement in a period of decline of political participation (Gidron and Bonikowsky, 2013). A good example could be the above-mentioned M5S and POD’s strategy centering on online membership. However, it is not obvious which segment of society those new populist parties appeal to, and *why*. Moreover, M5S and POD seem to represent a vehicle for political

representation of responsive government, in the language of Mair's framework. Both parties appear to outline financial insecurity and they tend to adopt the same argument, which is anti-elitism and a demand for direct democracy. Therefore, their electorate serves as a good dispositive to analyze and understand the realistic claims and the resentment behind the phenomenon *per se*.

Previous research has addressed the populist socio-economic pattern mostly in South America (Roberts, 1995; Weyland, 2001). However, the global recession, which seems to fuel the rise of populist parties, gives me reason to believe that these circumstances might also exist in Europe. As a result, people might be more likely to support and recognize themselves in the populist parties when governments and traditional elites are not perceived to be performing at the level that is expected of them and when changes in social policy are perceived as illegitimate. Therefore, they tend to punish mainstream parties electorally, by shifting their votes or not voting at all. South European middle classes could be more likely to punish the elite, and to shift their preferences towards left/right populist parties not necessarily because of their economic policies' appeal but because they are frustrated with the economic changes taking place in their country and pushed through by the traditional elites (Swank and Betz 2003; Esping-Andersen, 1999). Furthermore, the fiscal stress, the slowdown in economic growth, governmental obligations and population ageing, are likely to increase in the future (Pierson, 1995). To conclude, it is scientifically relevant to understand the political consequences of welfare state retrenchment on the society.

1.3 Research Question

In Europe, national governance in most cases translates into welfare state retrenchment. The politics of retrenchment pictures the elite as not being able to re- distribute wealth, imposing loss of benefits on the electorate. In this context, the message passed by mainstream parties, then, seems

to be that a complete 'primacy of politics is unrealistic' (Mudde, 2004:556). My primary explanatory model would be the following: the middle classes' consensus towards newly formed populist parties can be explained by the ability of these new political parties to channel the resentment towards traditional elites. This resentment is provoked by the de-legitimization of traditional elites, caused by the rigid economic policies implemented by them under EU pressure. Populist parties are proposing a new agenda focused on accountability: they claim to promote political independence ("direct democracy") and economic changes (anti-austerity policies). Consequently, my model contends, they are legitimized in the eyes of the middle class to an extent that the traditional elites do not experience anymore. To test my model, I analyze the perception of the electorate of populist parties towards the implementation of austerity policies. As argued by Léon et al. (2015) austerity measures in Spain and Italy have led to the loss of support not just for the party in office, but also for the party in opposition. Taking this aspects into account, the central research question is: why do populist parties appeal to the core of middle-class voters of left/right spectrum since 2008?

To guide the study, I developed the following research questions:

- 1. What are the determinants of the vote for newly formed populist parties?**
- 2. How and why are voters of populist parties, from left to right, punishing mainstream parties, if at all?**

Apart from comparing the policy shift towards austerity in Italy and Spain, I investigate to what extent middle-class populist party voters are negatively biased by the recent change in welfare state politics and what are the appealing factors of populist parties for these individuals. The phenomenon of populism has been studied mostly at a macro-level, looking at mobilization of social movements and parties (Hawkins 2009; Pauwels 2011; Schumacher et al. 2012). However, as Gidron and Bonikowski (2013:30) suggest, to capture the individual-level populist attitude and to uncover narratives macro-level analysis should be complemented with micro-level

investigations. It is worth noting that despite the relevance of the topic of populism in Europe, little research has been conducted at the micro level in relation to the welfare state retrenchment and its conflict with partisan politics (Korpi & Palme, 2003:425), which could explain the rise of new populist parties in Europe.

1.4 Mixed Methods Design

This study is a within – case analysis of two single cases, Italy and Spain, and it has an explanatory purpose. The argument, the hypothesis and the questions are explored through a mixed method (Morse, 2016). The overall research question for the mixed method is: why do populist parties appeal to the core of middle-class voters regardless of ideology since 2008? Answering the central question requires the integration of sub-questions which aim to individuate the (1) segment of the society more likely to vote for newly formed populist parties (question 1) and (2) the determinants of this vote (question 2). Therefore, the quantitative method will be employed to provide an overview from a large representative sample in Italy and Spain. Using logistic regression, I estimate whether; (1) middle-class individuals with a negative perception of future national economy aspects are more likely to vote for a populist party; (2) whether middle-class people who experienced financial strain within the household are more likely to vote for newly formed populist parties.

The macro-level exploration delves into micro-level analysis and is followed by the collection of qualitative primary data in Spain and Italy. The analysis of qualitative data using *focus groups* and *in-depth interviews* among the electorate of both Podemos (ES) and M5S (IT) belonging to the middle-class segment including students and workers from the private and public sector. In doing so, it will be possible to explore processes and narratives present in the individual context, investigate why the new populist parties become appealing and active.

1.5 Case Selection

In Italy and then in Spain, new parties with populist rhetoric were formed. The new populist parties, POD and M5S share a political discourse which attacks austerity policies and corruption (Léon et al. 2015:197) and represents themselves as a viable alternative to an entrenched political elite that is unable and/or unwilling to act in the best interest of the nation. These conditions make it possible to test the relationship between welfare state retrenchment and the appeal of newly formed populist parties among middle-class citizens. One can argue that Greece and Portugal should have been selected as part of the analysis because they belong to the Mediterranean welfare state model and have been hit by the economic crisis and austerity policies also. However, the decision to not include these countries in the analysis is driven by several factors. First, in Italy and Spain, we have seen the birth of newly formed so-called populist parties between 2013 and 2014. Both, Podemos and M5S were not members of any national government and can be considered purely new political actors. In Greece and Portugal, we do not see such a phenomenon. In Greece, the anti-austerity party Syriza already had members in the parliament since 2004 (Stavrakakis and Katsambekis, 2014:120). Moreover, contrary to Podemos and M5S the party has been leading the country since 2014. In Portugal, the formation of new parties challenging mainstream parties did not take place (Salgado and Zúquete, 2017:2).

Due to the nature of the study, other considerations concerning the character of the Mediterranean welfare state model are necessary. Spain, Greece and Portugal are countries that inaugurated the "third wave of democratization" (Huntington, 1991). Consequently, the current welfare state is a recent creation compared to other European countries, including Italy. Considering differences in the economic sectors, what Spain, Greece and Portugal have in common is a recent transition from a despotic-corporatist welfare state model to a social democratic model that happened in the mid 1970s, while the Western Welfare state model was coping with its first crisis. Therefore, the

selection of Spain, which is the fifth largest economy in the EU, can lead to a better understanding of changes in the welfare state in Greece and Portugal, which are economies mainly based on the rural and services sectors (Hoggart, 2014:76). However, cases were selected considering resource constraints and language issues. The study would benefit from further research which can cover all the Southern European region and maybe explore Portugal as a deviant case.

1.6 Outline of the Chapters

The overall structure of the study takes the form of five chapters. The second chapter establishes a theoretical framework of analysis through a critical literature review and it describes the populist nature of POD and M5S, under which are the economic grievances and policies domains highlighted in their claims, which might have middle-class appeal consensus. Hence, in this chapter using the literature on populism and politics of welfare state retrenchment, I discuss the theoretical implications of a set of concepts such as voters' negativity bias, sticky welfare state institutions to explain voting behavior. The third chapter discusses the research design and elaborates on the mixed method study employed. Finally, the fourth chapter, which constitutes the core part of the study, will explore and review the finding at macro and micro levels to answer the research questions and test the hypothesis. I outline the gap in the literature about the application of austerity policies since 2008 and their impact on the development of a populist mindset in Southern Europe if there is one at all. The policy domains I will be looking at are unemployment benefits, pensions, healthcare and public education. Thus, I will investigate how policy changes affected middle-class citizens at the individual level and their vote.

Chapter 2: THEORETICAL STARTING POINTS: WHY THE POPULARITY OF POPULIST PARTIES IN CONTEMPORARY SPAIN AND ITALY?

The purpose of this chapter is to define the main concepts which will be used in the study. Therefore, the idea of populism and the populist party will be explained and framed using the existing literature. Based on the conceptualization of populism, possible theoretical implications will be offered, building on the theory of welfare state politics and voting behavior. Specifically, the conceptual framework will focus on politics of welfare state retrenchment, protest and economic voting.

2.1 What are Populism and Populist Parties?

Populism is a very complex concept with multiple applications. Consequently, it has been studied from various prospective. Despite some disagreement concerning the methodological aspect involved in measuring the phenomenon of populism, scholars have identified notional aspects, which allow theoretical investigations. Populism in democracy can be defined as an ideology that considers society as two internally homogeneous and antagonistic groups, “the genuine people” versus “the corrupt elite” (Mudde, 2004). Ernesto Laclau (2005:18), one of the most authoritative scholars in the field, refers to populism as a political logic which unfolds through imprecise dichotomies (i.e. people vs. the elite, masses vs. exploiters), simplifying the political sphere. Populism is, therefore, rhetoric which entails the vagueness and the indeterminacy of the addressed audience. Depending on social context, the nature of the rhetoric is subject to variation (2005:67). More recent studies approach populism as a mode of political expression that is employed strategically by right, left, liberal and conservative parties (Gidron and Bonikowski, 2013). However, building on Taggart (2000) and Canovan (1981)’s definition of populism as a

communication frame that identifies with people and speaks in the name of the forgotten people, Jagers and Walgrave (2009:322) propose a thick definition which is more comprehensive, but it remains terse. According to the latter, populism is a political communication style adopted by political actors (politicians, political parties or movements leaders) who refer to the sovereignty and the will of the people, using colloquial language and an informal dress-code (2009:323). In accordance with the context, political actors shape and profile the content and the communication style (Hawkins 2009, Pauwles in Gidron and Bonikowski, 2013). However, consistent features can be traced in the populist political talk: (1) the anti- status quo rhetoric and (2) the focus on the enemy of the people, usually the elites. In contrast with the ideological and discursive approach, populism has been defined as a political strategy which polarizes politics, creating new divides, notably the people against the establishment (Pappas, 2012:2) and it follows a specific “logic of emergence” which implies an outsider political leader who materializes during a period of crisis. (2012:4). The political strategy approach also focuses on policy choices and defines populism as the implementation of policies that receive support from a significant fraction of the population, applying for pro-redistribution positions (Acemoglu et al. 2011: 31), which could be perceived as a responsive government.

Defining populism as a phenomenon of social crisis, when political resentment is perceived by members of society who then rise when a reactive charismatic leader can mobilize people (Mudde, 2004), the first question that should be addressed is whether these new political actors share populist features. As it is argued by Canovan (2004), although populist parties and movements might be proposing different policy prescriptions, they share some distinct features. All these parties and movements claim to represent the sole source of legitimate power, to speak in the name of forgotten, politically sidelined people in general, and all are critical toward the traditional elite: career politicians, the media, bankers. The policy preferences, when they exist, are tied to the

context and the establishment they are challenging. The programmatic content of populist appeals varies case by case and over time (Levitsky and Roberts, 2011:7). Populist parties are all characterized by a strong, charismatic leader (Taggart 1995; Pauwels 2011; Pappas 2012). Scholars have argued that the charismatic leader is a crucial element for political mobilization because of the tendency to capitalize on the “politics of personality” (Taggart 2000:101) and not on ideological grounds.

Moreover, populist parties call for issues of popular concern to be decided by referendum, bypassing traditional political mechanisms and the ruling elite (Canovan 2004). However, other scholars (Bengtsson and Mattila 2009; Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2002; Cas Mudde 2004) have showed that the claim for direct democracy is not necessarily the reason people shift to populist parties. When citizens claim more direct democracy, they are in fact calling for a representative democracy that works better (Donovan and Karp 2006, Bowler et al. 2007). Therefore, the claim is that institutions are responsive, implementing policies that are in line with their expectations.

2.1.1 The Rise of Populism in Europe

As a matter of fact, since 2008, with the beginning of the economic crisis, national governments with high sovereign debt have faced a high degree of financial pressure and the urgency to correct the public finance. Therefore, unpopular reforms are framed as inevitable consequences of sovereign debt crisis in the context of recommendations by European institutions (Sacchi, 2015). In Europe, on the one hand, it seems that mainstream parties, either in power or the opposition, send mixed messages. While they claim to be powerless in front of unpopular policies, such as reform of social protection, labor market policies and adverse economic developments, they seem to give the message of being in full control in the case of popular policies.

Between 2009 and 2014 the phenomenon of populism seems to have increased progressively all around Europe, and it appears to be strong especially in countries like Italy, Spain, France, Poland, Austria, United Kingdom, Hungary, but also Germany and some Scandinavian nations (Deloy, 2014). In the latest European Elections (2014) so-called populist parties with anti-systemic claims on the agenda gained, on average, 12.5 % of the vote (Mudde, 2015). Attention has been dedicated to right-wing populist party French Front National. The party seems to have shifted to the left of the economic spectrum and new communication tactics which have the aim of changing public perception (Ivaldi, 2013:2). This strategy can be defined as a kind of catch-all strategy. Catch-all politics are often highly personalized, and it sets out to appeal to the people (Canovan, 2014:243). As strategy that has been followed also by the right-wing party UKIP in United Kingdom, leading to a substantive mobilization for the Brexit vote (Ford and Goodwin, 2014: 262). The same dynamics and policy prescriptions have been the milestone of the new Polish government campaign. During the campaign discourse, the party leader Jaroslaw Kaczynski focused on strong Euroscepticism, an increase in social expenditure and expansion of social programs, stressing the condition of middle-class people. In this case, also, the strategy was successful, and although Poland is the sixth-largest economy within the European Union, the conservative Eurosceptic Law and Justice Party (Pis) won the parliamentary elections in October 2015 (The Economist, 2015). The spread of populism in Europe is consistent, however most of the studies focus on the traditional approach concentrating on the discourse and the political strategy. However, too often the “demand side” (Mudde, 2007: 257) of the phenomenon is overlooked.

2.1.2 Populist Parties in Spain and Italy

More interesting, for this study, are the developments in the South of Europe. In Spain and Italy, we have witnessed the birth of two new political forces: POD and M5S. POD was born out of the

social movement the *Indignados*, also referred as 15-M, created in Spain in May 2011 to lead protests the economic and established political system (Castañeda, 2012:310). The protest was carried out against cuts to social expenditure and government budget put in place by Prime Ministry Zapatero (Socialist Party) and later implemented by the Rajoy government (Popular Party) as a response to the demand from the European Central Bank and international investors (Castañeda, 2012:310). Specifically cuts to education and social programs were contested, along with the high unemployment rate and income inequality (2012:309). As it has been argued elsewhere, the *Indignados* movement signals the beginning of the realignment in party preferences, which translated into the institutionalization of Podemos in 2014, when the European Parliament Election took place (Rodríguez-Teruel, 2016:3; Ramiro and Gomez, 2016:110). Thus, Spain has seen the rapid rise of Podemos (“We Can”) – having formed only 28 days before the European Elections. Having put in place an electoral program named “An economic project for the people,” focusing on social policies, labor market and increases in public spending, Podemos managed to gain five seats out of 54 (European Parliament). The results obtained in the European elections were impressive, the support for Podemos was confirmed at the national level by the Spanish National Election in 2015. The party, led by Pablo Iglesias, reached 20.65 % and became the third largest party in the federal legislature (Party and Election, 2016). It is worth mentioning that these results show growing support for the party. More importantly, it signaled the disruptive end of the traditional Spanish party system, altering the inter- party dynamics (Segatti and Capuzzi, 2016:51). The discourse of Podemos has a variety of social elements related to the economic crisis and neoliberalism (Ramiro and Gomez, 2016:112). What they are claiming is the right to employment, housing, social protection, health, education and the end of austerity policies with the renegotiation of the national debt (Kiouпкиolis, 2016:101). Also of note is the new strategy applied by Podemos, using social media intensively on platforms such as Facebook and Twitter to engage with and communicate

with citizens. Also, they built their online platform, *Plaza Podemos*, which uses a software called Reddit. Through this platform, members can interact online, forward public proposals, and vote on party policies (Kioupkiolis, 2016: 105).

The M5S developed from a network of local groups and municipal lists (Segatti and Capuzzi, 2016:50) and was officially institutionalized in 2009. Its leaders are Beppe Grillo, a comedian, and Gianroberto Casaleggio, the financier and founder. The public mobilization started in 2007 by the comedian Beppe Grillo through his blog, with the operation *Parlamento Pulito* (Clean Parliament). In September 2007, the operation *Parlamento Pulito* unfolded in a big mobilization named *V-Day* where corruption, privatization, financial system, and labor market reforms¹ at national level were contested. The aim, among others, was to mobilize people and to collect signatures to demand changes to the electoral law, introducing candidate preferences, banning the nomination of candidates with criminal records or nominees that have already completed two terms in office (Mosca, 2014).

The M5S arose in a moment of acute economic crisis and amidst longstanding political scandal. In 2008, Italy was hit by a fall in GDP per capita and the rise of unemployment and public debt (Pappas and Kriesi, 2015:313). As a result, in 2009 the European Commission opened the Infraction Procedure for Excessive Deficit (EDP). In 2011, the issues surrounding the Italian debt were highlighted in the ECB sending a confidential letter to Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi on August 5th. Significant measures to increase growth were called for: privatization of local public services and professional services, reform of the collective bargaining system, changes in hiring and dismissal in the labor market and the establishment of unemployment insurance (Sacchi, 2015). Moreover, to improve the sustainability of public finance, reform of the pension system, reduction

¹ Beppe Grillo Blog: <http://www.beppegrillo.it/2007/06/vaffanculoday.html> Access: June 23, 2016

of the cost of public employees as well as reduction of wages were demanded.² Berlusconi resigned, losing his Parliamentary majority after the austerity package reforms were approved in November 2011. He was replaced by the technocrat and economist Mario Monti (Pappas and Kriesi 2015:314). The Monti interim government took office to solve the financial and economic emergency (Marangoni 2012:136). As with Spain, this was a crucial moment for Italian politics because it showed the weakness of the traditional parties (2012:147), and the inability of the traditional elite to be responsive in the face of an economic crisis. Moreover, the Monti government had to implement a series of unpopular reforms through the package “Rescue Italy” to apply the fiscal consolidation asked by the ECB and the EC (Fornero, 2013).

In this context, M5S announced their intention to nominate candidates to run in the 2013 General Elections. The interesting point is that for the first time in Italy, the candidates were chosen by party members, regular citizens, through an online primary. In the parliamentary elections in 2013, the Five Stars Movement received 25.55% of the vote in the Chamber of Deputies, becoming the party with the most votes. Moreover, the party reached 23.79% in the Senate election. No poll predicted such a high result (Mosca, 2014), as no poll predicted the inability of M5S to maintain the same results in the next European Election in 2014. The cornerstone of the M5S’s discourse, as in the case of Podemos, is direct democracy as the evolution from representative democracy. (Mosca, 2014). For instance, the M5S used members’ online voting to help decide important national decisions like the nomination of the President of Republic. The idea is that citizens do not delegate to traditional parties, which are corrupt and inefficient, but they rather claim direct democracy and cyber-participation as regular citizens. The economic agenda is a call for the

²The confidential letter sent by the ECB to the PM Silvio Berlusconi was published by the National newspaper on September 29, 2011: http://www.corriere.it/economia/11_settembre_29/trichet_draghi_inglese_304a5f1e-ea59-11e0-ae06-4da866778017.shtml

regulation of the financial sector, limiting the power of banks and financial institutions, the abolishment of private and public monopolies, and privatizing public assets such as railways, highways and energy supplies (Mosca, 2014). However, their economic program also calls for a great increase in social expenditure for health care, education, research and investment in renewable energies (Turner, 2013: 107).

Podemos and M5S seem to be parties born from different pre- electoral conditions (Segatti and Capuzzi, 2016: 49) and they place themselves on different sides of the ideological spectrum. While scholars have recognized Podemos as a left-wing populist force which combines anti-establishment and anti-elitism with distinctive democratic socialist socio-economic policy proposals (Ramiro and Gomez, 2016:112), M5S remains ambiguous in their policy orientation (Negri and Franchino, 2017). It is obvious, therefore, that the policy locations of this party are, at the time of writing, far from being ideological and instead reflect policy concerns that are topical at the time of elections. However, the present inquiry is primarily concerned with the populist traits that both parties share. First, their appearance in the political arena followed the populist logic of emergence: they progressed from a protest movement to party politics, when an outsider political leader materializes during a period of crisis (Pappas, 2012:4) and could mobilize resentment towards mainstream parties. Second, they share the populist discourse which unfolds in anti- elitism because of austerity policies and corruption. The discourse frames the elite as the enemy of “us”, the people. Third, they have a strong claim for direct democracy, which is exercised by party members through new forms of political communication.

2.2 Theoretical Explanations: Policy Rigidity and the Political Implications of Welfare State Retrenchment for Middle-Class People

The domestic impact of the 2008 economic crises varies across Europe. Countries such as Italy and Spain belong to the group of countries that has been hit particularly hard by the recession and cuts in social expenditure, labor market reforms have been imposed to meet the Maastricht criteria through conditionality and “backroom” diplomacy (Pavolini et al., 2015:141; Sotiropoulos, 2015:234). Pressures for restructuring the welfare state and labor market to address unemployment have been a priority for almost a decade, but policies have been gaining momentum since 2012 (OECD, 2013) and these changes translated to substantial retrenchment and/or policy drift (Pavolini et al., 2015:149; Fornero, 2013).

Both countries are labelled as conservative welfare state models in the seminal Esping-Andersen (1990) typology. These countries all have comparatively high levels of social expenditure, strong support for early retirement, unemployment and disability programs, high levels of payroll tax financing and explicit and implicit family policy (Pierson, 1998:445). Nonetheless, a consistent body literature argues that Mediterranean countries constitute a separate regime or a subcategory of the corporatist- conservative model (Leibfried, 1992; Ferrera,1996; Bonoli,1997: Katrougalos, 1996). The peculiarities of the Mediterranean model are identified by Ferrera (1996) and include first, a dualistic system which polarize welfare state beneficiaries, with the highest level of generosity (i.e. high pension, maternity leave, sickness) for hyper- protected groups (public and private–wage earners working full time with permanent contract), and gaps of protection for under- protected workers (i.e. workers without job security, young and long-term unemployed) (1996:20). Second, the National-Health-Insurance (NHI) is grounded on universalistic principles (1996:22). However, a collusion between public and private actors is perpetuated and results in manipulation between private contractors and politicians, spare and particularistic appropriation of public money

(1996:25). Third, the existence of the exchange vote: transfers to support those with low income and provide jobs in the public sector are supplied in exchange of votes (1996: 26-27). Following Ferrera's (1996) classification, it is possible that middle-class people, the hyper-protected categories, have developed a form of resentment and are changing electoral behavior because of austerity plans which affected their *status quo*. In fact, due to the scale of the benefits, public opinion developed a consolidated political support for the welfare state (Pierson, 1998:446). However, the Mediterranean welfare state model faces the need for significant reforms for expanding employment, and reducing expenditure cutting benefits (1998:447). The economic crisis resulted in urgent demand for fiscal retrenchment and cost containment, impossible to delay further, which are costlier for the mainstream parties.

2.3 Protest Vote and Economic Concern

Arguing that class divisions shape political outcomes, class voting could be a crucial point of departure in understanding consensus towards political newcomers. Taking this prospective, it has been a decades-long debate among voting behavior scholars that social class is a strong correlate of party preferences in advanced capitalist polities in Europe (Lipset, 1960, Korpi and Palme, 2003:425, Evans, 2000, Andersen and Heath, 2000). Nevertheless, since 1970 it has been widely accepted that class voting was in severe decline in advanced post- industrial societies because of the emergence of new societal differences (Clark and Lipset, 1993; Nieuwbeerta, 1996)³. Using a resource power approach and considering welfare state as the outcome of a struggle between classes and between interests' groups, partisan politics plays a crucial role (Korpi and Palme 2003:425). However, this body of work is unable to explain why the middle classes would “swing”

³For a review of the debate on methods and application for testing class voting theories and voting behavior see: Evans, Geoffrey. "The continued significance of class voting." *Annual review of political science* 3.1 (2000): 401-417. and Evans, Geoffrey. *The end of class politics?: class voting in comparative context*. Oxford University Press, 1999.

in large numbers towards completely new parties in a consolidated party system, regardless of which is the middle class. Moreover, unlike Pierson (1993,1995,1998), Korpi and Palme (2003: 426), do not distinguish between the politics of welfare state retrenchment and the politics of welfare state development in advanced capitalistic society, therefore as a framework of analysis it cannot explain the demand side of populist parties.

Theoretically, the consensus toward newly formed populist parties could be explained by the protest voting body literature. For instance, Mudde & Van Holsteyn (2000) explain the protest vote through the resentment of the electorate and the decline of trust towards the mainstream parties (Van Der Brug & Fennema, 2007:478). However, it fails to explain *why* and *how* the resentment develops on the demand side of the political market. To understand the reasons behind resentment, the protest model should be integrated with the study of measures of policy voting and the nature of resentment (Van Der Brug & Fennema, 2007:479). Others have argued that protest voting is pursued by the loser of modernity and globalization, and that voters express their resentment towards immigrants and the traditional political elite (Betz 1994, Swank and Betz 2003, Lubbers and Scheepers, 2000:67). However, these models do not focus on how the decision-making process experienced by the voters happens (Van Der Brug and Fennema, 2007). In other words, the model does not have empirically tested micro-foundations. In fact, that most of the studies have been conducted using aggregate level data and, in doing so it is hard to capture phenomena such as the formations of new parties and movements outside the institutions. It is worth noting that in the case of Spain and Italy, both POD and M5S were acting first outside the Parliaments at the local level.

From this prospective, neither economic voting literature (Kramer, 1971; Powell and Whitten, 1993; Nannestad and Paldam 1994) can satisfactorily explain the phenomenon since they focus mainly on the variation and popularity function of the government. The body research asserts that

economic conditions are linked with electoral outcomes. However, the indicators which are mainly considered in assessing the electoral outcomes are related to macroeconomics variables such as growth, unemployment and inflation (Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier, 2000:184). The argument is that weak economic performance affects the incumbent negatively, favor the party in opposition failing to explain the vote for newly formed parties under economic hardship.

An integration of the protesting vote model with the economic model could explain the consensus towards newly formed political parties in Southern European countries. In the framework of this study, besides investigating the perception of the retrospective and prospective national economic development (economic voting), specific policy domains (nature of protest and resentment) and social policy are considered as possible explanatory factors to explain the vote for newly formed populist parties.

2.4 Blame Avoidance and Negativity Bias

Because a large segment of the electorate relies on social provision, the institutions of the welfare state has been defined intense; it is associated with a higher rate of political mobilization and it is considered a determinant of voting behavior (Pierson 2001:413). Therefore, a large part of the electorate is more incentivized to preserve the *status quo* instead of facilitating any kind of change. Following this line of argument, among the possible explanations, the rise of Podemos and M5S parties might be related to the punishment by middle-class citizens of mainstream parties for welfare state retrenchment that ensued in Spain and Italy in response to the recession. Specifically, in Italy and Spain, the impact of austerity policies has caused a strong debate about retrenchment of welfare benefits and labor market liberalization (Guillén and Pavolini, 2016:142). It is worth noting that the current crisis has imposed not only the perception, but losses to the working middle-class segments of the voting population (Fornero, 2013). Therefore, these losses are the

results of cutbacks in social programs, which results in a change in the voting calculation (Pierson, 1995:18) of the hyper-protected recipient of the welfare state.

Contrary to welfare state expansion, retrenchment is a different process and it operates following distinctive logic and specific politics (Pierson, 1995), which are more likely to explain the rise of new populist parties. In fact, retrenchment politics affect and impose losses on specific groups for uncertain and long-term benefits. Precisely, the politics of welfare state retrenchment is unpopular and the costs might be perceived, at individual level, to be much greater than the benefits of its expansion, causing dissatisfaction and a desire to electorally punish parties seen to do harm to ‘us’, ‘the people’. This phenomenon is explained by the existence of a “negativity bias” across voters who are welfare state recipients and therefore supporters of the *status quo*; hence, voters react more intensely to potential loss, more than to possible gains (Pierson 2001:413). Consequently, it is worth noting that in times of recession, decision-makers are left with little space for redistributive politics. This is true also because global changes are not the only determinants of what Pierson (2001) defines “permanent austerity”. Under these circumstances, the policies’ goals are more likely to conflict with the aging middle class’s electoral ambitions, increasing the likelihood that the largest constituencies, expressly those belonging to the working and not working middle class, will engage in electoral behavior to punish the traditional elite for setting changes in policy path.

Following these dynamics, parties in power during the reforms should lose consensus, while the opposition should gain votes, exploiting the favorable dynamics. However, the winners of the game seem to be newly formed populist parties. This could also be related to the discourse of mainstream parties. Thus, since the eruption of the financial crisis in Spain and Italy, retrenchment policies and cuts in social spending have been justified by left and right governments due to "no alternative

measures" (Léon et al. 2015:182). In both countries, governments have constructed the narrative that unpopular reforms were triggered by exogenous pressure (Heald and Hood. 2014:14), passing the message that parties are not able to cope with domestic issues.

In countries like Italy and Spain, the welfare state includes a high level of spending and benefits for labor market insiders (Pierson, 1995). Moreover, unions and employees play an important institutional role in the administration of these funds (Pierson 1995; Ebbinghaus and Visser 1999; Ferrera 1996). Therefore, the elite-challenging contention on the welfare state retrenchment process is more likely to create a form of protest under adverse economic conditions (Bailey 2014:6) and it is expected that electoral punishment for welfare program retrenchment will be stronger than in other polities. In short, the political elites of the welfare states of Spain and Italy are primed for electoral backlash.

2.5 Clientelism and Corruption

As it has been mentioned previously the Mediterranean welfare state model has a peculiarity which distinguishes it from the others. The collusion between public and private actors, the relationship between private suppliers and politicians, the appropriation of public money, along with the existence of exchange-vote (Ferrera, 1996:25-27) are aspects that should be considered. As it has been argued elsewhere, the perception of corruption and unfairness in the welfare state dimension, can have a negative effect on partisan identification (Kumlin and Rothstein 2005, Gilley 2006:57). Hence, it is possible that the perception of corruption along with the resilience of institutional change, blame avoidance strategies, all together can explain the punishment and the vote for newly formed populist parties. Moreover, when clientelism is part of welfare state arrangements, transfers are more likely to favor special constituencies or groups (Kitschelt, 2001; Wood and Gough, 2006),

and parties who are successful encourage the clientelistic ties (Grzymala and Busse, 2008). Nevertheless, the protection of hyper-protected categories along with the unfair redistribution can generate distrust among most the population (Rothstein et al., 2012:5). To conclude, it can be argued that the fear of the hyper-protected groups to lose their benefits and the discontent of most the population play a crucial role in the electoral choice when incumbent and opposition are not able to deliver what is expected.

2.6 Conclusions and Justification of the Research Question

Scholars have argued that Spain and Italy belong to a separate regime with limited social insurance coverage, which is partially rooted in clientelism (Ferrera 1996; Leibfried, 2011). Therefore, it is conceivable that after 2008, countries exposed to unpopular reforms and corruption scandals have developed a strong negativity bias, explaining the electoral attractiveness of new parties whose core message is: no more austerity and you, the voters, should be deciding how best to tackle socio-economic hardship in the context of the recession. However, besides considering the social mobilization, a second welfare state politics related explanation could be advanced. Specifically, it is plausible that in Southern Europe, the institutionalization of new parties with populist features might be the consequence of distributional conflict and the blame avoidance strategy of the incumbent and opposition (Heald and Hood, 2014:12). In the EU context and the economic recession, the blame avoidance strategy put in place by the domestic political actors, the tendency to attribute austerity measure to exogenous factors, (2014:13), along with domestic corruption scandals fostered the rise of populist forces.

Chapter 3: METHODOLOGY: DESIGN, DATA COLLECTION & ANALYSIS

3.1 The Research Design

In this chapter, I explain the research design how this approach serves my research questions. Since this study is divided into two phases, first I will discuss the macro-level analysis, which is conducted using a quantitative method using secondary data. After that, I will discuss the qualitative phase and the data collection that includes the sampling procedures, methods and the unit of analysis.

3.1.1 Rationale for Using the Mixed Methods

The overall research question for the mixed method is: why do populist parties appeal to the core of middle-class voters regardless of ideology since 2008? To answer the central question requires the integration of sub-questions which aim to individuate the (1) segment of the society more likely to vote for newly formed populist parties and (2) the determinants of this vote. Both questions can be investigated at macro level, using a large sample, and underline the voting behavior general trend. Therefore, the operationalization of the quantitative analysis aims to individuate the determinants of middle-class voters hit by the recession or fearing to be hit by the recession. Once the general trends have been investigated, the interpretative qualitative work, looking at the micro-level processes, can provide valuable information and empirically outline some theory of process. The idea of employing a mixed method is born with the desire to address complementary problems using different datasets and to engage pragmatically through the collection of primary data on the subject of my research. A mixed method design has been recently defined as a rigorous research project that can be driven by the inductive or the deductive theoretical approach and can include a qualitative or quantitative core component with a qualitative or a quantitative supplementary component (Morse 2016:14). Therefore, in this study the statistical analysis serves as a *supplementary component* and will be conducted to understand which *groups* within the Spanish and Italian society

are more likely to vote for newly formed populist parties. Therefore, through the qualitative analysis, I will explore at the individual level *why* specific groups are more apt to vote for these parties and which are the primary concerns of the populist electorate. An inductive theoretical approach drives the *qualitative core component* of the analysis. Pattern and regularities within the experience of the Podemos and M5S electorate are observed to drive conclusions about the phenomenon of populism in Spain and Italy.

3.2 Phase One: The Large-N Analysis

As it has been mentioned in Chapter 1 this study attempts to identify the relationship between the vote for newly formed populist parties in Spain and Italy and the economic dimension. Thus, the scope of the empirical analysis is to (i) identify which segment of the society is more likely to vote for these parties and to (ii) estimate the determinants of the middle class vote for newly established populist parties in Spain and Italy, (iii) and to understand to what extent national economic developments affect voting behavior. Theories of economic voting suggest that the impact of economy on electoral choices can be different. This aspect is relevant because social protection can impact the perception of the economic developments and the reaction to changes in the economic conditions (Esping-Andersen, 1990 in Van der Brug et al., 2007:28). Furthermore, voters can decide prospectively (based on what they expect) or retrospectively (based on the past), therefore choosing to punish or recompense the incumbent accordingly (Paldam and Lewis –Beck, 2000:114; Dutch and Stevenson, 2008:46; Beck and Stegmaier, 2000:188). Additionally, the choice can be sociotropic (dictated by the perception of the general economic situation), or egocentric (dictated by their own financial conditions) (Paldam and Lewis –Beck, 2000:114; Van der Brug et al., 2007:4). Building on the economic voting theory and using attitudinal indicators, the analysis aims to test if the vote for populist parties is driven by economic concern and which is the nature of the economic

distress. To conclude, the aim of the analysis is to estimate whether the negative perception of the economic dimension influenced voter preferences for populist parties. Based on the economic voting's theoretical framework, to explain what individual factors can explain the vote for newly formed populist parties, Podemos and M5S, in the 2014 EP elections the following hypotheses were formulated:

H1 (Prospective hypothesis): Middle-class people who are skeptical about the future of national economic development are more likely to vote for newly formed populist parties.

H2 (Egocentric hypothesis): Middle-class people who experienced financial strain within the household are more likely to vote for newly formed populist parties.

3.2.1 Data

To understand which social groups are more likely to prefer newly born populist parties in Spain and Italy and to estimate how the negative perception of middle-class people about the economic dimension is a determinant of the party choice national survey data from the European Election Study (EES) is used. Specifically, I will use the Voter Study 2014. The First Post-Election Survey consists of an EU-wide survey including electoral behavior and questions on party choice at European and national level. The survey sample size includes 1.100 respondents in each European Union country, and the data was collected between 30 May 2014 and 23 June 2014 in the case of the two covered countries. This survey is the most pertinent for my research because it considers the European Election 2014 and therefore includes items about Podemos. Alternatively, the European Social Survey (ESS) could have better served my research question with more specific and nuanced attitudinal items. However, while data about Italy is included in the last round, Podemos data is missing at the time of writing.

3.2.2 Methodology and Measurements

To test the hypotheses, logistic regression will be used. My dependent variable (Party Voted) is categorical (y/n), so it is not normal distributed, and it has just one possible outcome. The model will give me the probability that one of the two outcomes occur. As suggested by Van der Brug et al. (2007:4-15), a variety of factors influences the voting choice, therefore, this technique is the more appropriate because it allows for additional factors to enter the analysis separately. Hence, the effect of each independent variable can be estimated. Thus, it allows quantifying the impact of various simultaneous influences upon the single dependent variable. The analysis is separately performed in Italy and Spain.

3.2.2.1 Dependent Variable

To estimate the incidences of the economic perception of middle-class voters on party choice, this study used Party Voted at the last European Election in 2014 (**PARTY VOTED**) as the independent variable. The wording of the survey question is “*Which party did you vote for in the European Parliament elections?*” The original categorical variable for Italy and Spain has 18 categories, and both have been recoded and collapsed as dichotomous one: vote for Podemos and M5S takes the value of 1, and the vote for other parties takes the value 0. However, the research question would have benefitted from a dependent variable measuring support, instead of vote for Podemos and M5S. Hence, this type of variable would have help to overcome the problem which was raised because of the nature of the EU election, which suffer from a low turnout (Reif and Schmitt, 1980:3).

3.2.2.2 Explanatory Variables

This study uses as explanatory variables **VOTERS CONCERN** The wording of the survey question is “*What are the issues which made you vote in the recent European elections? Firstly?*”. Because the study is concerned with the perception of the economic dimension on electoral outcome, the

categorical variable has been collapsed to isolate the economic dimension. The original categorical variable has 19 levels of measurements. It has been recoded as dichotomous: Economic Concerns (Unemployment, Economic growth, the single currency, the Euro, the future of pensions, Inflation and purchasing power) takes the value of 1 while other, non-economic, issues take the value of 0. To control if economic changes in the household (decrease of income and unemployment) influenced the vote preference the variable **LOSS OF JOB IN THE HOUSEHOLD** in the household is used. The wording of the survey question is “*You or someone in your household lost his or her job*”. Additionally, I will use the variable **DECREASE IN INCOME**. The wording of the survey question is “*You or someone in your household experienced a decrease in income*”. Both variables control if the vote is dictated by the respondent's own financial situation and is treated as dichotomous. Negative experience in household takes the value 1, while no negative experience take the value of 0. To control for voters' ideological placement left/right, the economic variables **SUPPORT FOR STATE REGULATION, DISTRIBUTION** and **SPENDING** will be used. These variables are all treated as continuous, on a scale from 1 to 11 (1=You are fully for state intervention, redistribution and raising taxes, 11=You are fully opposed to state intervention, redistribution and for cutting public services). To control if the vote is based on the past perception of national economy and negative changes perceived by the electorate, the variable **RETROSPECTIVE ECONOMIC PERCEPTION** will be used. The wording of the survey question is “*What do you think about the economy? Compared to 12 months ago, do you think that the general economic situation in ITALY/SPAIN incomplete??*” The variable is treated as dichotomous. It takes the value 0 if there is perceived improvement or stayed the same (Is a lot better, little better, stayed the same) and 1 if negative change is perceived (It is worse, a lot worse). To control for the perception of the future of the national economy the variable **PROSPECTIVE ECONOMIC PERCEPTION** will be used. The wording of the survey question is “*And over the next 12 months,*

how do you think the general economic situation in ITALY/SPAIN will be?" The variable is treated as dichotomous, it takes the value 0 if improvement or no change are expected (Is a lot better, little better, stayed the same) and 1 if negative changes are expected (It is worse, a lot worse). To build an appropriate model to test economic voting and can place voters in terms of their economic concerns (Van der Brug et al., 2007:27) demographic variables like age, education, and social class will be included. This choice allows controlling for middle-class groups. The variable **LEVEL OF EDUCATION** measures the year of studying. It has been recoded according to the educational system in Spain and Italy. It is treated as a categorical variable and takes the value 1 = low level of education, 2=middle level of education, 3=highly educated people, 4=Student, 5=No education. The variable **AGE** is also treated as categorical and takes the values 1=16- 39, 2=40-55. While these age group are slightly too broad, the original dataset uses this coding and it is impossible to break it down. To control for social class, the variable **OCCUPATIONAL STATUS** has been recoded following the British National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification (NS-SEC) introduced in 2001, which is a further development of the Goldthorpe class classification (Appendix, 1). Instead of controlling for income, the sociological approach seems more appropriate for the model, since it focuses on the position in the labor market and type of profession or skill level, considering also the categories outside the workforce, such as unemployed, retired and students. (Goldthorpe, 1992). Therefore, for the study, the 2001 British National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification (NS-SEC) will be used to identify social classes⁴ and for coding purposes. The categorical variable takes the following values, 1 = Salariat, White collars and Petty Bourgeoisie, 2=Blue Collars and Working Class, 3=Unemployed, 4=Retired People and Disabled, 5=Student. Although there are some limitations, it is my belief that the decision made in

⁴The British National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification (NS-SEC) introduce a further development of the Goldthorpe class classification, in which classes are derived not just from the position in the labor market but also from employment relations (Goldthorpe and McKnight, 2004).

variable choice and the recoding represents a viable compromise for efficiency of the analysis. After accounting for the missing values, the number of observations (Spain: N=1106, Italy: N=1091), is satisfactory for run the analysis.

3.2.3 Empirical Analysis: Results

3.2.3.1 Spain

In Spain results of the logistic regression provided confirmation for the *Prospective hypothesis (H1)*, (Table.1). Voters with a negative perception of the future national economy are more likely to vote for Podemos. The negative perception of the national future increases the likelihood of vote for Podemos. The odds of voting for POD become 3 times larger for each unit of increase of the variable which measures the negative perception of the future national economic development. Students are more than 5 times more likely to vote for POD compared to employed upper and lower class people. Moreover, employed working class people are 92% less likely to vote for Podemos compared to upper and lower middle class people.

The Hosmer test turns out to be insignificant, which means that the predicted values of the models do not match the observed values of the outcome value. This implies that the predictors included in the model are not enough to explain vote choice for Podemos in a satisfactory way. This does not mean that the predictors that have been found to be significant in the model don't influence the party choice. However, it suggests that the model with the current set of predictors leaves a lot of variance unexplained.

Substantially, the regression results indicate that it is students and people who believe that national economy will not change and it will be worst in the future, who are most likely to be Podemos voters. This can be explained by several factors: (i) students might be more concerned about country future and economic development because of the Spanish high unemployment rate and

freezing of public hiring. Thus, it might be possible that they might fear not finding a job after completing their education. Furthermore, (ii) Podemos was founded by a group of academics, just 28 day before the European Elections (2014). At that time, it is possible that students identified themselves in the leaders of the party and their discourse which mainly focused on the socio-economic dimensions. Moreover, the analysis shows that people belonging to the working class are less likely to vote for Podemos.

Table 1: Logistic Regression Analysis of the determinants of vote for Podemos

Independent Variables	B	s.e.	Z-ratio	Odd Ratio
Voters Concern	0.37	.34	1.09	0.64
Prospective Vote	1.19**	0.42	2.83	3.31
Retrospective Vote (Sociocentric)	-0.08	0.37	-0.2	0.91
Egocentric Vote (Income)	0.16	0.42	0.39	1.18
Egocentric Vote (Job)	0.33	0.36	0.90	1.39
Age	0.14	0.39	0.37	1.15
<i>Ref. Lower Educated</i>				
Education2 (High)	0.69.	0.45	1.53	2.00
Education4 (No Education) <i>Ref, Up and Lower Middle Class</i>	0.90	0.91	0.99	2.46
Occupation2 (Working Class)	-2.44 *	1.07	2.26	0.08
Occupation3 (Unemployed)	-0.22	0.45	-0.5	0.79
Occupation4 (Retired)	-0.51	0.48	-1.0	0.59
Occupation5 (Student)	1.70 *	0.71	2.3	5.49
Redistribution	0.08	0.06	1.2	1.09
Spending	-0.06	0.05	1.11	0.93
State Regulation	0.03	0.05	0.5	1.03
Model statistics				
N= 1106				
Hosmer-Lemeshow Test =				
X-squared = 6.1193, df = 8, p-value = 0.6339				

Note: The dependent variable in this analysis is Party Voted so that 0 = Voted Other Parties in 2014 and 1 = voted Podemos. ** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05; . p < 0.10.

Source: Data from 2014 European Election Study(EES)

However, since it is not possible from the analysis to identify the students' households these

findings do not invalidate the middle-class hypothesis. The Egocentric hypothesis (H2) is not confirmed in the analysis. In fact, negative experience within the household and job loss have not affected electoral choice. Therefore, it is possible that the nature of their choice is driven by financial insecurity and fear of losing their *status quo*. To conclude, it can be argued that in the Spanish context the vote is economic and prospective.

3.2.3.2 Italy

In Italy, the results show a different picture. The results of the logistic regression provide no confirmation of the formulated hypothesis. Thus, the vote for M5S seems not to be driven by economic developments. Retired people, compared to upper and lower middle class people are 74% less likely to vote for M5S, instead of another parties. People over 40 years old are 60% less likely to vote for M5S compared to voters between 16 and 39 years old. Additionally, it seems that the highly-educated are 60% less likely to vote for M5S compared to less educated people.

Substantially, the analysis shows that retired people, middle aged voters and highly educated voters are less likely to vote for M5S compared to the lower educated. Moreover, it seems that the vote for M5S is not driven by economic concern. Therefore, it can be argued that the M5S popularity functions are not related to the economic dimensions, but other aspects should be investigated to understand the nature of the resentment and the determinants of the vote. As for the Spanish model, the Hosmer test turns out to be insignificant (Table 2), which means that the predicted values of the models do not match the observed values of the outcome.

Table 2: Logistic Regression Analysis of the determinants of vote for M5S

Independent Variables	B	s.e.	Z-ratio	Odd Ratio
Voters Concern	-0.43	0.26	-1.6	0.64
Prospective Vote	0.07	0.26	0.28	1.32
Retrospective Vote (Sociocentric)	-0.28	0.30	0.92	1.32
Egocentric Vote (Income)	0.01	0.27	0.05	1.01
Egocentric Vote (Job)	0.44	0.31	1.44	1.56
<i>Ref. Age 16-39</i>				
Age (40-Over 55)	-0.89**	0.28	-3.1	0.40
<i>Ref. Low Educated</i>				
Education (Medium)	-0.54	0.33	-1.6	0.58
Education (High)	-0.9*	0.38	-2.3	0.40
Education (No Education)	-14.9	562.3	0.02	0.00
<i>Ref. Upper and Low Middle Calls</i>				
Occupation2 (Working Class)	0.13	0.34	0.39	1.14
Occupation 3(Unemployed)	-0.03	0.43	-0.08	0.96
Occupation4 (Retired)	-1.33**	0.50	-2.6	0.26
Occupation5 (Student)	0.66	0.56	-1.18	0.51
Redistribution	-0.04	0.04	-1.02	0.95
Spending	-0.10>	0.05	-1.83	0.90
State Regulation	0.06	0.04	1.39	1.06
Model statistics				
N= 1191				
Hosmer-Lemeshow Test =				
X2 = 10.246, df = 8, p-value = 0.2482				

Note: The dependent variable in this analysis is Party Voted so that 0 = Voted Other Parties in 2014 and 1 = voted M5S.

** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05; ">" p < 0.10.

Source: Data from 2014 European Election Study(EES)

3.2.4 Conclusions and Limitation

Substantially, the analysis shows that the developments of national economy are more relevant for Spanish voters, while the analysis fails to explain the driver of the M5S vote. In the next session, focusing on specific policy domains, the Spanish and Italian context will be investigated to understand the nature of the concerns and which are the policy domains which matter the most

for POD and M5S electorate. The analysis presents some limitation which relate to the dataset. As was previously mentioned, to answer the research question, choosing the EES was a tradeoff. Nevertheless, the data was collected just after the European Election. This constitutes a problem for the investigation concerning Podemos. In fact, Podemos was formed just 28 days before the EU election, therefore the results should be interpreted taking this aspect into account. It is possible that the people were not familiar yet with the program and the party itself.

3.3 Phase Two

To answer the research question *How and why are voters of populist parties, from left to right, punishing mainstream parties, if at all?* a combination of two qualitative methods will be employed. Specifically, focus groups and in-depth interviews have been used as a tool for collecting qualitative data:

1) **Focus Groups:** organized and conducted with the POD and M5S electorate, including activists and politicians. The groups were almost homogeneous. The method was chosen to identify a range of opinions and reasons behind the participants' electoral behavior. Thus, the aim was to seek, inductively, the groups' belief and feedback about the role of parties in distributive politics. Focus groups, through interactions, can provide a large amount of opinion, clarification and justifications in a short amount of time (Hennink et al. 2010:55).

2) **In-depth semi-structured interviews:** conducted with the POD and M5S electorate. The method was chosen with the idea to capture participants' reflections (positive and negative), accessing narratives (Silverman, 2013:225) about welfare state arrangements and changes over time, which could explain electoral behavior. Specifically, the aim was to identify individual perception and personal experience (Hennink et al., 2010:45) with healthcare, pension system, education system and labor market to gain in-depth

information about the perceived role of parties in the distribution and management of public recourses.

Following Silverman (2013:197), to set focus group discussions prior to the in-depth interviews help to clarify the issues raised and identify which ones deserve more attention and therefore should be explored deeper. Furthermore, while focus groups allowed the author to reach a wide range of people, in-depth interviews are considered the right tool to follow up with individual participants to explore and identify experiences, opinions and perspectives deeper (Morgan, 1996:134, Hennink et al., 2010:53, Silverman 2013:202). The integration of the two methods serves the scopes of my research questions, since the study is interested in identifying the existence of resentment towards traditional elites, experience with policy area and common concepts which travel across Spain and Italy and across middle class groups, which might have lead people towards the vote for newly formed populist parties. Additionally, using in-depth interviews, discussions about personal experience with healthcare, the pension system, education and unemployment are more likely to be discussed and shared. Since the focus groups were mainly composed of people who knew each other, participants might not want to share personal experience with acquaintances (Morgan, 1996:139). To summarize, incorporating in-depth interviews was a choice driven by three factors: (i) expand the population (ii) the intention to reduce the “group effect” on the data generation process and (iii) to explore deeper specific patterns identified during the group discussion.

3.3.1 Sampling Middle Class People in Spain and Italy

As for the quantitative analysis, middle class people have been sampled purposively following the British National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification (NS-SEC). The NS-SEC was constructed from the sociological classification of the Goldthorpe Schema (Appendix 1) and it measures

employment relations and occupational conditions (Goldthorpe, 2007:56). These aspects are consistent in explaining variation in social behavior such as change in voting preferences, and social phenomena (The National Statistics Office, UK) like populism. Moreover, the scheme is operationalized consistently with the main recipients of the Mediterranean welfare state model proposed by Ferrera (1996), which can be classified as middle. Therefore, the sampling has been conducted considering essentially occupational status and the mode of employment, controlling for age, education level and gender (Appendix 6). This choice was driven by the theoretical assumption that in modern society crucial importance is attached to employees who represent the large majority of the active population (Rose et al. 2007:14). As basis for the analysis, the three-class model (Rose et al. 2007:38) was used and the recruitment was conducted attempting to select participants belonging to the following categories: managerial and professional occupations, intermediate occupation, routine and manual occupations. Additionally, for convention the choice to include retired people, full time students and long-term unemployed was made. The latter categories are also exposed to welfare state changes and are considered crucial for the analysis. Furthermore, because of time availability, retired people, full time students and unemployed people are easier to mobilize.

3.3.2 Focus Group and In-depth Interviews : The Unit of Analysis

In total, 25 participants took part in the study. Individual participants belonging the Podemos electorate were 16, while the participants belonging to the M5S electorate were 9.

3.3.2.1 Recruiting Electorate of Podemos (POD) and Five Star Movement (M5S)

The first step of the study was to recruit and select the participants. The recruitment took place from another country (Hungary), therefore employing the *snowball technique* (Silverman, 2013:194) was the most convenient choice. The snowball sample was accomplished using social networks of two initial informants in Spain and one initial informant in Italy. The recruitment for both countries

took place between September and November 2016. The first stage of recruitment consisted of communicating informally with possible volunteers by emails, and to stimulate interest for the project. The content of the emails explained the nature of the study, listed the necessary features to participate in the study and was completed with preliminary information concerning the possible location, the financial compensations and the protection of anonymity and confidentiality. Furthermore, to increase the likelihood that other people would be interested in participating in the focus group or in the in-depth interviews, other inexpensive publicity channels were used, such as social media through online publication (Facebook Groups and Pages).

Since it is hard to identify the rationale behind the policies associated with the term populism, the term is often used by the actors (media and oppositions) in some pejorative ways (Bale et al. 2011:121). Therefore, to avoid discouraging potential participants, the aim of the study was explained in the email and in the internet publication in general terms, and the word “populism” was avoided. The emails (Appendix 2) and the advertising (Appendix 3) referred to a discussion concerning the “rise of new parties in Southern European countries and the economic distress”. This choice was driven by the idea to secure and maintain trust, avoiding appearing judgmental towards the values and practices (Silverman, 2013:206) of the M5S and POD electorate and, to avoid influencing the respondents and the data analysis process, the research question should never be asked directly (2010:197).

In terms of volume of response, compared to the online publicity, the snowball technique produced more valuable results. It could be possible that due to the symbolic financial contribution (5 Euros per participants) and the length of time needed to participate (2 hours), people in online platforms were not incentivized to participate. Consequently, most of the participants were selected mainly by email using social networks of initial informants.

The recruitment aimed to obtain detailed socio-political orientation and to select the participants and start to form the groups, while scheduling the timeline. For this purpose, a preliminary online questionnaire was built to take the potential participants' profile (Appendix 3) and proceed with the sampling. Specifically, the scope of the questionnaire was to individuate demographic data (age and gender), social class positioning (occupational status and educational level) and political orientation (Vote for POD and M5S). Since the author was recruiting electorate of a specific party, the question can have a sensitive nature, therefore asking potential participants to involve acquaintances facilitated the process. However, one limitation of this choice led to the common problem of the snowball technique's, which is the loss of control over the composition of the groups. In fact, in Spain, the applicants were mainly students, researcher and activists and there was a lack of higher social categories (i.e. entrepreneurs, managers). Unfortunately, for what concerns higher social categories, it was not possible to restore social balance because of practical constraints linked to the low budget, the deadline set for the recruitment and the organization of the focus groups. Consequently, to overcome this problem the social categories have been broadened to include unemployed participants and retired people, who are easily mobilized as they have more flexible schedules. Nevertheless, variation across the two cities (Madrid and Rome) in terms of gender and age was archived (Appendix 5). After the first round of email and the survey, 3 focus groups were assembled in Madrid while in Italy people were less prone to cooperate through emails and social media. At this point, official invitations were sent out to participants.

3.3.2.2 Fieldwork in Spain and Italy

One of the main practical limitations in organizing focus groups is to persuade the selected participants to meet at the same place at the same time. The more the groups are definite, the more it is likely to have problems in meeting the criteria. Although participants were contacted in advance

and groups were assembled from Hungary by email, the recruitment process was carried out during the fieldwork period also. The fieldwork took place in Madrid over one week between 17 and 22 December 2016. Hence, the time constraints and the imminent holiday season both had a significant impact on the selection of the participants, the organization of the groups and the management of the emergency. In fact, group composition has been adjusted to the needs of participants and last minute cancellations. To meet efficiency criteria and cope with unforeseen cancellations, during the fieldwork week, new candidates were shortlisted and contacted by phone. In my fieldwork, I based myself in a district where there is a considerable number of POD cultural centers, therefore I increased the likelihood of meeting participants who were part of the POD electorate. Hence, in this context three additional candidates were recruited among regular citizens: one activist and two workers with permanent contract. Thus, the activist was employed as replacement for a focus group, while the other two candidates were selected for in-depth interviews. All the new candidates were selected based on their profession, gender and age to archive homogeneity in terms of socio-economic classes and heterogeneity in terms of age and gender.

To conclude, it was possible to organize two focus groups and three in-depth interviews in Madrid. The first focus groups included seven participants, from urban areas. All the participants were bachelor students. The discussion lasted 1.45 minutes. The second focus group included senior and junior researchers in different fields, except for one activist. The discussion lasted 1.50 minutes. The focus groups took place at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, and in a co-working space where a space was rented, in a location easy to reach by all the participants. The follow-up interviews were conducted with two workers in the private sector and one public employee.

In Rome, the field work took place between 3 and 8 January 2017. Two focus groups were organized. Both groups were heterogeneous in terms of socio economic background and ages. However, one group was not gender balanced and all participants were male. The first group was constituted by one students, two workers and one parliamentary assistant. The second group was formed by one unemployed and two self-employed participants. One of the participants is part of the municipal council of a town on the outskirts of Rome⁵.

The three follow-up in-depth interviews took place in the outskirts of Rome. Due to the gender bias in the second focus group, the decision to select women was taken. One interview was conducted with a retired person in her house. The two participants were a lawyer and a private sector employee. Both were supposed to participate in the second focus group. However, due to time constraints it was not possible to fit the participants into one of the focus groups. Nevertheless, the participants were willing to express their point of view, therefore the decision to proceed with the Skype interview was made.

3.3.2.3 The Focus Groups and the In-Depth Interviews: Pilot Guide

As it has been previously explained (Section 3.3), focus groups were chosen to collect information on a range of opinions about voting choices and discontent concerning social policies. To conduct the focus groups and the in-depth interviews, the same pilot guide was used (Appendix 5). The pilot guide's instrument was structured on the policy domains of interests and linked to the questions concerning the role of parties in redistributive politics. To build the instrument, Hennink et al. recommendations were followed (2010:112- 117).

⁵The presence of participants directly involved in politics risks to monopolize the debate. Therefore, it has been considered during the empirical analysis.

3.3.2.4 Ethics: Data Protection

Data collection and field work are practices which involve ethical considerations since contact with humans is involved (Thorne, 1980:284; Silverman, 2013:161). Considering all the risks and benefits in participating, the study did not raise major ethical issues. However, the standard ethical proceedings were followed, including making sure that the study participation was voluntary and the interviewees maintained the right to withdraw at any moment. A symbolic financial compensation was offered to the participants (5.00 Euros for each participant) for the time dedicated to the research project. All the participants were also guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity rights. Thus, it was made clear that nobody else besides me and my supervisors would have had access to the data. All these aspects were highlighted in the first round of emails that were sent out for recruitment. To not jeopardize the research, as it is mentioned in Section 3.3.3.1., the decision not to use the word “populism” was made. However, after assessing the potential risks (Silverman, 2013:162), the author used her judgement, and concluded that the choice does not harm the participants.

The digital records were transferred to the author’s personal laptop and deleted from the mobile device. Each focus group and interview was conserved in a specific folder with the anonymized transcripts and demographic information. The act of transcribing was conducted by the author. However, the Spanish digital records were initially transcribed by a native Spanish speaker. The person was paid and was not made aware about the identities of the participants. The transcripts have been checked and integrated with missing parts by the author. The transcript and the digital records will be cancelled after the submission of the scientific work.

3.3.3 Interviews and Focus Groups: Analysis

In this section the proceedings, the methodological choices and constraints regarding the data management are discussed. Thus, the decisions and strategies undertaken by the author about the act of recording and transcribing the primary qualitative data will be explained.

3.3.3.1 Recording

The interviews and focus groups were recorded using a digital recorder which has a powerful microphone. Therefore, the audio files, in mp3 format, were easy to transfer on my computer. The quality of the audio was pre-tested before the beginning of each focus group and interview (Silverman, 2013:214). Testing the quality of the data is crucial, since the aim was to understand not just what participants say, but also how they said it (i.e. change in tone of voice). In most cases the quality of the audio recordings was excellent. Only in 3 cases were there minor difficulties in understanding the speaker due to background noises (in 2 interviews) or overlapping discussion (in the focus groups), presenting minor problems at transcription, but not compromising the clarity of the narratives in the verbatim transcripts.

3.3.3.2 Transcripts

Due to the nature and intent of the study, which is to systematically explain the vote for newly formed populist parties and the relation with the changes in the welfare state politics, verbatim transcripts were produced. As suggested by Hennink et al. (2010:215), this is the appropriate choice for grounded theory research and implies “a replica of the words spoken” by the participants and the interviewer. The verbatim transcripts were produced in the original language (Italian, Spanish

and one English language interview)⁶. The decision not to translate the data was driven by two factors. First, the fact that the researcher's mother tongue is Italian, therefore able to identify the appropriate meaning of the conversation. Moreover, the author can understand and read Spanish. However, for the latter, to avoid translating errors, support from a native Spanish speaker was asked during the process of transcribing. Second, translations can lead to a loss of nuances and cultural references, which could be important in understanding and clarifying the meaning of specific concepts, which arise from the empirical data (Hennink et al., 2010:215). While transcribing, the data was integrated with notes (i.e. body language, pause, moment of silence) that were taken by the author during the group discussions and the interviews. Once the transcripts were completed, the data has been anonymized and names and references to other names were substituted with codes, from all the documents. In total 10 verbatim transcripts were produced, including 5 from the fieldwork in Spain and 5 from the fieldwork in Italy.

3.3.3.3 Data Management

Once the verbatim transcripts were completed, the files (Word) were uploaded to a software to perform computer assisted analysis of qualitative data (CAQDAS). The software Atlas.ti was chosen to process the empirical data. There are several reasons why CAQDAS was chosen to perform the analysis: (i) to identify patterns systematically in a large volume of qualitative data rapidly; (ii) to assign codes to words and entire bodies of text, create sub-categories, change the codes, use entry searching and inter-link the codes; (iii) to count how many times the themes and the categories occur, it improves rigor and reliability (see Silverman 2013:253-255). Once all the files had been uploaded on Atlas.ti, it was possible to proceed with the code development of the empirical data.

⁶ One of the participant was a teacher of English and expressed the desire to be interviewed in English.

3.3.3.4 Developing Coding

Codes are issues and topics that are discussed by the participants and that can be identified from the data (Hennink et al., 2010:216). The point of saturation is usually reached when it is not possible to identify new topics in the data. To develop the codes, the analytic inductive and deductive approach has been used. Codes were initially built following the structure of the pilot guide. Furthermore, during the analysis, emerging codes were analyzed. The analysis has been conducted comparing codes, analyzing in which context and how they were used. Concepts have been analyzed considering the context and the recurrent link across the data.

Chapter 4: DATA ANALYSIS

In this section, the findings of the qualitative study will be presented and discussed. Through the inductive and deductive thematic data analysis, this chapter aims to explore and understand which are the determinants of the vote for newly formed populist parties in the two national contexts included in this thesis. Specifically, the question is how and why POD and M5S middle class voters are punishing mainstream parties? It was hypothesized (Chapter 1, Section 3) that the vote for newly formed populist parties is driven by changes in welfare state politics. Specifically, it was expected that the politics of retrenchment, affecting specific policy domains (pensions, education, healthcare, labor market) activated resentment and, thus, the populist mindset, creating a ‘demand’ for new political actors. Because of the implications of the politics of retrenchment, it was hypothesized that stickiness of institutions in the Mediterranean welfare state model could be associated with the rise of new populist parties. Therefore, exploring the nature of the resentment and issues associated with these perceptions and feelings, this section attempts to explain the vote for newly formed populist parties in Spain and Italy.

4.1 Issue One Based on the RQs: The Nature of Resentment

As part of the analysis, the study is trying to understand what the nature of the resentment is and which are the most problematic policy domains that might have led to the support of newly formed populist parties among study participants. In Italy and Spain since 2010 a cost-containment strategy and policy drift have been put in place in the National Health Insurance (NHI) and education systems (Pavolini et al., 2015:148). In Italy, the set of rules introduced includes an increase of co-payment fees and a hiring freeze (2015:149). In Spain, salaries of health professionals have been reduced and working hours increased (2015:148). Therefore, changes affected hyper-protected categories. Nevertheless, the discontent is discussed by participants in both countries, not as

consequential to the implementation of austerity policies, but as a result of poor governance over time. In Italy and Spain, generally, when participants were asked “*How do you think the economic crisis affected your country?*”, healthcare, the labor market, and the education system seem to be the main sources of concern. In most of the interviews and focus groups, this narrative came out without the interviewer asking specific questions about policy domains. The main source of dissatisfaction with regards to politics seems to be highly related with redistribution. In particular, public sector irregularities, corruptions, and mismanagement of public funds were mentioned.

4.1.1 The Healthcare System

The healthcare system in Italy is discussed by the participants mainly as highly dysfunctional and inefficient. The main problematic areas are: the long waiting lists to get access to examinations, increasingly more difficult access to preventive procedures and the inefficiency in public hospitals. For those reasons, all welfare state recipients that were part of the study personally experienced problems in getting access to basic healthcare, expressing the feeling of being “forced” to turn to the private sector. This is in line with Korpi and Palme’s (2003) argument in the Corporatists welfare state model, wherein middle class citizens switch to private solutions when change in universalistic benefits happens. However, his theory suggests that a split of interest between the middle class and the working class is likely to take place as a result. According to his model, in these circumstances the middle class is less likely to pursue support for the public sector, while the working class is dependent on public support (2003:443). Although the data seems to partially confirm the theory, the split towards the private sector is perceived by the middle class as unjust for lower classes. Hence, the nature of resentment and the demand clearly highlight support for public programs, while the resentment seems to rise from dysfunctionalities and clientelism. This concern for people less well off among middle class voters seems to signify strong social cohesion,

with resentment stemming not only from personal experience, but especially the costs borne by less well-to-do social strata. It also tells us that voters of populist parties in Italy are not necessarily the losers of modernization (Kriesi et al., 2006), but that middle class people are risk-averse and are afraid to lose their benefits in the future or are not happy with the service provided.

Furthermore, participants argued indirectly about healthcare as dominated by private interests and highly dysfunctional. Often they refer to their privileged positions as workers and so able to access private service. However, the underlined narrative seems to suggest that for long time labor market insiders were not bothered by how the system worked (based on clientelistic relationships). The cost-containment strategy, the scandals concerning the appropriation of public funds by private actors and politicians, along with the dysfunctions of the system, all together play a crucial role. Hence, first, in Italy the involvement of private actors in the healthcare system and in education is seen in a negative light. This is especially true among M5S voters, who argue extensively against the outsourcing of public goods, as the later is linked to clientelism. In fact, another source of resentment comes from the perception that private suppliers and politicians make agreements to exploit public money. While in Spain the collusion between private and public sectors is sometimes discussed as positive because it increases the quality of services, in Italy it is discussed as a source of corruption and a waste of public funds, fueling dissatisfaction with politicians and the state of affairs more generally.

In both countries, the dysfunctions are attributed to cuts in social expenditure, which translated into the reduction of staff and closure of hospitals in smaller towns. Concerning the quality of the healthcare system, differences between the north and south were highlighted in Italy. Hence, the healthcare system seems to be perceived as less dysfunctional in the north and in the urban areas, while people from small towns and peripheral areas underlined that in the last years small hospitals were closed, creating problems for disabled people and for families which have difficulties

commuting to visit relatives and do checkups. Another issue that has been frequently discussed is the increase of public health charges. Most of the participants in the study made clear that they could afford it, but they often opted for the private sector provision to avoid long waiting lists. None of the participants expressed concern about the inability to access public or private healthcare due to a lack of resources. However, the increase of the public health charges was discussed as unfair and too costly for lower classes, as well as for people receiving the minimal pension. In Italy, this argument is often linked to the irresponsibility of politicians, who benefit from annuity (“golden pensions”) and high salaries, but they are not making efforts to increase the menial pensions which are considered extremely low. Therefore, voters are expecting the M5S to reform the contributory system of parliamentarians and reduce their salaries. This is an intense source of resentment among all the voters of M5S, while it seems not to be an issue in Spain. In Spain the nature of the resentment seems less tied to the healthcare policy domain. Hence, participants show discontent about the cost-containment strategy and when asked about changes, dysfunctions such as long waiting lists to get access to examinations were mentioned.

To sum up, the narrative in both countries contends that over the years, mainstream parties have sacrificed universal public elements of the healthcare system through privatization, imposing losses to welfare state recipients and unsettling against the poor and their socioeconomic disadvantages. In Spain, the underlying narrative suggests that the shift towards privatization and dysfunctions are the unavoidable consequences of the implementation of the neoliberal agenda. Voters show resentment towards a traditional left unable to address the crisis without shattering the universal healthcare system. In Italy, the narrative suggests that the healthcare system is perceived as falling apart because the elite have been engaged in transferring wealth to themselves and their friends.

While people fear potential losses, opportunistic intentions are assumed in every actor belonging to traditional mainstream parties, which are unwilling to give up their privileges.

4.1.2 The Pension System

Concerning the pension system, in both countries young participants (between 23 and 35) do not seem to expect that they will receive a pension in the future. In both countries, parties are expected to find a solution for the future generation, which is suffering from high unemployment. POD voters argue that this situation is the consequence of changes to the global economy and demographic problems. However, the pension system is expected to be brought into reform by a left-wing coalition. To put it in Pierson's (1998:419) words, unlike the Italian case, the implication of the narrative shows that left parties such as Izquierda Unida, still have credibility and legitimacy. In Italy, the narrative is different: M5S voters agree that none of the other parties are willing and able to address the issue and that no reforms will take place unless the M5S will win the elections. Moreover, unlike in Spain, the source of the problem seems to be linked to the mismanagement of public affairs and to the annuity and high salaries received by politicians and leaders. This can be explained as a backlash of the last pension reform passed in 2011 (Riforma Fornero), which has been defined as "the least generous institutional framework in Europe" (Pavolini et al., 2015:143). The reform was radical, imposed losses especially for hyper-protected groups, shifted the pension system towards a "pay-as-you-go" system, reduced the possibility to access seniority pensions, and increased the retirement age (Pavolini et al., 2015:143). As with cuts in healthcare, the pension reform was justified by the Monti technical governments as the only solution to save Italy from economic disaster. Because they are deeply institutionalized, pension programs are resistant to radical reforms (Pierson, 2001:416), the punishment for mainstream parties seems to be consequential to a mix between unpopular reform, politicians' privileges, and

blame-avoidance strategy. From the narrative, it seems that the resentment is consequential to the retrenchment move undertaken by the Monti cabinet. The narrative underlines that the technical government was not legitimized and credible to carry out the pension reform. Therefore, to put it in Pierson words, (2001:418), the political cost of mainstream parties and the electoral backlash were consistent.

In Spain, pension were frozen and access to early retirement was limited in 2011 by the Socialist Party and afterwards by the People Party (Pavolini et al., 2015:144). However, the change in the pension system is infrequently discussed by Spanish participants unless asked, and doesn't seem to play a crucial component in the narrative compared to labor market issues. This can be explained by the fact the two parties were legitimized and still credible in the eyes of voters at the time of the reform. Furthermore, unlike Italy, in Spain the path change in the pension system started in 1980 and structural reforms took place in 1996, 2003, and 2007 (Pavolini et al., 2015:139). Hence, people rely less on the contributory pension, and private pension coverage is relatively high compared to Italy (OECD, 2011).

Ultimately, contrary to Spain, in Italy the pension reform is a source of resentment, not only because it imposed direct losses on labor market “insiders”, unsettling the *status quo* but it generated resentment because it confronted the reality of low minimal pensions compared to the high salaries and pensions of politicians.

4.1.3 The Education System

Changes in the education system are extensively discussed most of the time without being asked, participants referring to it as an important dimension related to the labor market. Italian

participants are dissatisfied with the quality of the structures and the allocation of resources to private universities. The narrative accentuates that privatization took place in the education system and seems to favor “special interests”. In Spain, participants dispute about the role of the Catholic Church in compulsory education, while in Italy the enemies appear to be corporate interests. Although participants claim to be able to afford private services, they express concern for lower classes, which are dropping out from higher education or suffering for lack of quality in the education system. Both in Italy and Spain, participants find it unjust that private universities have access to public funds, while public universities are increasingly becoming ineffective. This narrative is highlighted by participants who hold a university degree and students who assert to have witnessed the deterioration of public universities and the increase of fees. It is argued that because of structural problems in the education system, the increase of fees, and the lack of scholarships, higher education is becoming a privilege for wealthy people. While Spanish people expect education to be free, Italians believe that less wealthy people should have free access, while the rich should contribute more. The condition of compulsory education is also brought into discussion. The problematic areas are the student/teacher ratio in primary and secondary schools and often the lack of school supplies. Another aspect that occurs in the Spanish context and is a source of concern, is the skills mismatch between university education and labor market. Higher education seems not able to provide adequate skills to access labor market. The education system is contested by labor market insiders and outsiders.

Hence, the nature of resentment seems to come mainly from the perception that the educational system has been gradually ‘destroyed’ by the political class because of the expenditure rationalization and cut-backs, while the private universities have been highly supported. According to the narrative, it seems that elite have been favoring all sorts of welfare state politics, which goes

against universalism. This is especially true for the education and healthcare systems. Since quality and accessibility are undermined by cuts, the narrative seems to underline that elites are sacrificing universal, public elements of the welfare state, with private provision, disturbing the *status quo* and the lower classes. These conditions are sources of resentment which fit poorly with the Spanish and Italian sense of community and social cohesion.

4.1.4 The Labor Market

The labor market dimension is the most problematic policy domain for participants in both Spain and Italy. Both countries have high levels of unemployment⁷, which is a source of insecurity for all the participants. In Italy issues related to the labor market are linked to the existence of clientelism and nepotism. The job search is associated with vote exchange and mainstream parties are considered highly responsible for this situation. According to their narrative, the possibility to find a job in Italy is highly dependent on one's political network, where the only possibility to access the job market is by exchanging favors with politicians. The employment centers are considered inefficient and unable to support workers in their job search. The M5S is perceived as the only movement that can reestablish a meritocratic order and address this issue. Moreover, because of high fiscal pressure, wages—as pensions are considered low and insufficient to guarantee a dignified standard of living. This tale is also associated with the high salary received by politicians: the Italian narrative contends that while people are struggling to have a permanent contract and a decent salary, politicians from the right and the left benefit from high salary for doing little or nothing. Hence, economic insecurity is expressed also referring to unpaid internships and short-term contracts, which are encouraging the youth to leave the country. All together, these dimensions are

⁷ The unemployment rate in Italy and Spain corresponds respectively to 18.7% and 11.8% of the labor force. OECD (2017), Unemployment rate (indicator). doi: 10.1787/997c8750-en (Accessed on 29 May 2017). The youth unemployment rate in Italy and Spain corresponds respectively to 44.5% and 37.8% of the labor force. OECD (2017), Youth unemployment rate (indicator). doi: 10.1787/c3634df7-en (Accessed on 29 May 2017)

framed as unjust and are a great source of resentment. Both in Spain and Italy, unemployment, along with the poor work conditions, are the main sources of discontent. When participants refer to “poor working conditions”, they are referring to the partial liberalization of the job market. The narrative seems to suggest that a change in the range of opportunities is not perceived. In fact, in Spain students are expecting to be hired in the public sector and they are feeling insecure about the future because of the reduction of public employment, shift of hiring with short term contracts, and salary cuts in the public sector (Sotiropoulos, 2015:235). In the private sector, the source of distress is the legislation which increases uncertain and unstable employment. Hence, they refer to the reduction of the dismissal costs for full-time contracts, which has been implemented in 2012 with labor market reform. The labor market reform introduced in Spain a list of changes which increase the duration of training contracts, limit the costs of dismissal, and increase company flexibility (Eurofund, 2015). This reform directly affected the “insiders” of the system, making them more vulnerable, but it could make companies less reluctant to hire. However, young people feel insecure about the job market and they seem to be in favor of stricter worker protection. Consequently, when participants were asked about which policies they are expecting to be implemented if POD or M5S were to have the majority to govern, the answers were different. M5S voters argue extensively about expected policy reforms. Specifically, a labor market reform with the introduction of the universal basic income is expected. However, in Italy, all the participants showed confusion about the policy instrument. Hence, universal basic income is discussed as unemployment insurance (UI). All the M5S participants discuss the implementation of universal basic income as a program that pays benefits to unemployed people until they can find a job. In reality, the universal basic income is a form of social security in which all citizens receive an unconditional income transfer which reflects the local cost and sets a minimum wage, regardless of their position in the labor market (Wills and Linneker 2014:183). This was particularly interesting

since the UI coverage has been broadened with the recent labor reform (Job Act, 2015) enacted by the Renzi cabinet. The new regime applies not only to employees losing their job but also to dependent self-employees. Moreover, the duration of the benefits has been expanded to 24 months (before it was from 10 to 16 months)(Eurofund,2015). Nevertheless, the reform also included a reduction of protection from dismissal for permanent contracts, and this is considered a crucial negative aspect. The reform is not discussed in details, it is labelled as inconsistent and unable to solve unemployment problems and assure protection to the workers. As I argued before, a similar path has been undertaken by Spanish governments. Although,POD voters are less detailed when it comes to expected policies, they are also in favor of universal basic income. First, they do not expect the party to gain a majority and thus they would not be able to implement national reforms. Second, the arguments about expected policies are general and always vague and in most of the cases participants were not aware of the POD programmatic agenda. Voters in Spain showed strong disappointment and concern for the last labor market reforms. They refer to the labor market reform (2012) as a shift towards neoliberalism that needs to be corrected and they see POD as able to address this issues.

In contrast, Italian voters reflect exposure to their parties in their resentment objects: high level of corruption, clientelism, high salary of politicians, and unwillingness to change. Moreover labor market insiders and students both show a negativity bias towards change in labor market. Potentially, the new welfare state arrangements can facilitate youth employment and firms could hire more if the costs of dismissal are reduced. Moreover, the expansion of the UI can more consistently cover social risks, which are often mentioned by participants. Nevertheless, the reduction of protection from dismissal, which imposes a direct loss on labor market insiders making them more vulnerable, plays a crucial role in the narrative compared to the possibility of future benefits (unemployment benefits) and coverage of new social risks. These dynamics confirm

my hypothesis: voters' preferences are closest to the *status quo*, therefore it is possible that the nature of resentment is consequential to radical reforms imposed unilaterally without negotiating consensus with social actors, due to national budget constraints (Pierson, 1998:418).

To sum up, the nature of resentment towards mainstream parties in Italy and Spain is driven by the unsettling of the status quo of the “insiders” and a negativity bias of the “outsiders”. Young participants perceive potential losses (less protection, short term contracts) more than future benefits (being hired more easily, unemployed benefits). In Italy, along with fear of losing their benefits and the youth negativity bias, nepotism and clientelism in the labor market are the main sources of resentment and translate into a backlash towards the entire establishment.

4.1.5 Determinants of Protest and Punishing

Analyzing the data in the Italian and Spanish cases, the vote for M5S and POD seems to be driven by resentment and the willingness to reject the traditional political parties. Elements that belong to the protest vote theory emerge from the beginning. The protest vote is not driven by ideology. Hence, it is characterized by the willingness of the electorate to show discontent and/or resentment towards the ruling parties and politicians, showing a lack of political trust, (Fennema and Van Der Berg, 2007:478-479) voting the most stigmatized party across the political spectrum. Interestingly, POD and M5S were not stigmatized by mainstream parties. What played a crucial role, according to the data, is the immobility and the unresponsiveness of traditional elites in front of the rise of both social movements, before party institutionalization. This played in the favor of both parties, because they could stigmatize the traditional elite arguing that the will of the people was not in their interest.

As was previously mentioned (Chapter 2), both POD and M5S result from the participation of collective efforts. Both movements can be considered the result of mass mobilization. What played a crucial role in the development of the consensus towards the two movements was the ability of both would-be parties to bring people together in the street using new and simple communication strategies. This was always mentioned when participants were asked, “*What was the moment you started to be interested in M5S/POD?*” In some cases, the question was not asked, but participants referred positively to the protest as the birth of both parties. This narrative is often associated with the non-response of governments and other parties to the collective actions unfolded from protests organized by 15-M(ES) and the mobilization of V-DaY (IT). Therefore, both parties seem to be perceived as the irresponsible oppositions (Mair, 2009), which using the plebiscitary link through new forms of political communications, proposed a participatory form of politics able to return power to the people, while proposing a political strategy that aims to correct the economic context.

All the participants expressed enthusiasm for M5S and POD, referring to them as new, young political forces able to mobilize their voice. What emerges in both cases is the willingness to participate in politics, a right that all of the participants perceive as having been denied to them by the mainstream parties for along time. In both cases, mainstream parties are perceived as distant and unable to represent the will of the people because of corruption and inefficient governing.

In the Italian case, the M5S is framed and straightforwardly described as a window to express an old *malaise* developed because of traditionally corrupted elites. Therefore, all voters reject the left/right dichotomy, giving it a negative connotation and defining it as an old categorization exploited by politicians to control people through ideology. This aspect is confirmed by the fact that the study’s participants were heterogeneous in terms of ideology. In fact, this raised

contradictions: while some were arguing that M5S will implement typical social democratic policies, other participants stated that they have always been voting for right-wing parties, but they recognize themselves in the values of M5S. This narrative highlights and confirms the ambiguity of the policy orientation of the party (Segatti and Capuozzi, 2016:49). Not surprisingly, during the focus groups the major areas of disagreement among the participants concerned immigration policy and civil rights. The discussions always moved towards redistribution, with participants agreeing, however, that the instrument of direct democracy will solve areas of disagreements.

Contrary to the Italian participants, voters of POD identified with left-wing values and combined anti-establishment and anti-elitism claims with social democratic claims, which is in line with the argumentation of Rodríguez-Teruel (2016:112). For instance, they claim universalistic benefits and social rights belonging to the leftist ideological spectrum. Also, the voters are aware of their ideological positioning. All participants in the focus groups and in-depth interviews identify themselves as left-wing and they have not changed their ideological positioning. However, they disregard the PSOE (Spanish Socialist Worker's Party), as corrupt and not able to deal with internal and external economic pressure. These findings show that the strategy put in place by POD during the last national election (2016) was successful. In fact, at that time, to marginalize the PSOE, POD formed a left-wing electoral alliance (UNIDOS PODEMOS) including the radical left party Izquierda Unida (IU). The electoral choice also appears to be strategic. In fact, participants were persuaded to cast a vote to neutralize and isolate the biggest traditional left-wing party, otherwise they would have voted for IU. This narrative shows that voters are not protesting and punishing the whole establishment, otherwise they would have expressed resentment towards the left which betrayed policy expectations pursuing changes not ideologically aligned.

Furthermore, the fact that POD and M5S are newly formed parties is always mentioned as appealing to voters. Nevertheless, while in Italy this aspect is seen to immunize the new political force from general corrupt behavior and to neutralize the entire party system, in Spain, POD is perceived as an opportunity to reshape the left with a young and fresh political elite. In the discourse about POD, most of the participants expressed trust because of the level of education of the party members, and they view them as prepared to make relevant decisions at the national and regional level. In Spain, however, the electorate of M5S seems aware of the inexperience and inadequacy of the party members, but the narrative contends that the inexperience of the candidates is a good quality for a systematic change because it decreases the possibility of corrupt behavior. Thus, the anti-establishment traits and the distrust for the traditional parties seem more prominent in the Italian case.

However, in Spain and Italy the nature of the protest unfolded differently. Comparing the narratives, it appears that in Spain the vote choice is a sign towards the old elite, driven by discontent because of lack of political participation, dealing with universalistic welfare state domains such as healthcare and education and neglected support towards lower classes. In Italy the protest seems to be more radical, the vote is change-oriented, and it excludes the possibility for settling with old elites regardless of what they do and what they propose. The discourse contends that while parties from the left to the right continue to make arrangements among themselves to remain in power, they mainly focus on particular interests at the expense of the citizens. The vote is driven by strong resentment because of corruption and clientelism, policy drift in universal dimension of the welfare state, and lack of trust towards old political elites, including media. Traditional political elite are perceived as not willing to represent the interests of the people, and therefore need to be punished. Unlike Spanish participants who give to the EU a positive connotation, the Italian

narrative contends that mainstream parties have been unable to protect national interests, which have been sacrificed because of the European agenda.

In both countries the electoral choice is driven by resentment because of bad governance and distrust towards traditional parties, which are perceived as not able to represent the will of the people, specifically in terms of welfare state reform (rather than, say, immigration, security, or climate change policy). This narrative is more consistent in Italy where there is a strong demand for radical change and a willingness to punish the old establishment, without a clear strategy and without caring for the more traditional democratic game. In Italy voters do not seem to have taken the time to think about what comes next and what if M5S will not deliver or will deliver not as expected. In Spain the nature of resentment and discontent is expressed by the will to replace the old left in an active way, with a long term strategy and seriousness about wanting to change policy orientation. The resentment of the POD electorate finds its roots in the implementation of austerity policies. POD is perceived as a force that can stop the application of the neoliberal agenda or at least open up a discussion about it. The neoliberal agenda is perceived as threatening the social status, the sense of social cohesion, weakening labor, and increasing inequality.

Retrenchment in the labor market imposed potential losses on labor market insiders in both countries. Hence, labor market “insiders” show a resentment and fear to lose their *status quo*. This can be explained by the dualism of the Mediterranean welfare state, where the “outsiders” rely on the “insiders”, the so called hyper-protected categories. Attempts to reduce the dualism in Spain and Italy seems to meet the stickiness of old institutional arrangements and the negative bias of the insiders which translates into political mobilization. However, in Italy the shift towards labor market liberalization and pension reform created a strong resentment not just because of the fear

to lose their status quo. The mobilization and the consensus towards a newly formed opposition is dictated by the idea that any kind of change which imposes losses is outrageous compared to the governmental performance, the level of corruption and dysfunction in healthcare, clientelism in the labor market, and privileges enjoyed by the all elites from the left to the right of the spectrum. Left and right governing coalitions are seen as a practice which aims to maintain the politicians' status quo, while increasing economic insecurity of middle class people (through fiscal pressure and cuts in social expenditure).

To sum up, in Italy, the cost-containment strategy pursued has been not legitimate by part of the electorate who seem to be protesting, willing to punish the entire establishment. In Spain, changes in welfare state politics led to the delegitimization of the left and the POD electorate is engaged in protest voting driven by a conscious policy strategy and willing to rebuild a left able to pursue social democratic policies.

Chapter 5: CONCLUSION

The aim of this chapter is to bring together the main findings and discuss the contribution of the study. Furthermore, the chapter discusses the implication of the work for future research.

5.1 Addressing the Research Question

Going back to the initial question this study tried to explain the nature of new form of populist oppositions in Italy and Spain, focusing on the M5S (IT) and POD (ES) where since 2012 newly formed parties have stressed the populist claims. The study aimed to explore if politics of welfare state retrenchment contribute to the rise of populism, and if yes to what extent. The central questions were (i) what are the determinants of the vote for newly formed populist parties and (ii) how and why voters, from left to the right, are punishing mainstream parties, if at all. This thesis attempt to answer the questions employing a mixed method. The large-n analysis, using logistic regression estimated if the vote for POD and M5S is economic and which segment of the society is more likely to be a supporter. The small-n analysis explored the narrative and the reasons behind vote choice and why voters are punishing traditional *elites*, if at all.

The birth of the new populist parties is analyzed in the framework of the Mediterranean welfare state model where a dualistic system which polarize recipients in hyper-protected groups and under-protected workers (Ferrera, 1996) and the scale of the benefits consolidated high political support (Pierson, 1998). Following the Golthorne scale, the study identified middle class with the hyper-protected categories. The birth of both movements coincides with welfare reforms implemented between 2010 and 2011, which changed the policy-making process dramatically (Pavolini et al. 2015).

For the purpose of the study, populism is defined as a political strategy put in place by a reactive charismatic leader able to mobilize people in time of crisis, challenging the political and economic elite, when political resentment is perceived by members of the society (Weyland, 2001:14; Roberts, 2010:6; Pappas, 2015:3). Through the analytical literature review differences and similarities between POD and M5S were analyzed. The analysis suggested that the both movements followed the (1) populist logic of emergence in time of crisis, they share a (2) populist discourse which frame the elite as enemy and (3) both share a charismatic leader able to exploit the societal resentment and engaged in new form of political participation using new form of political communication.

Therefore, the study advanced the general hypothesis that the nature of middle-class's resentment and the vote for new formed populist opposition is provoked by the de-legitimization and backlash against traditional elites, and it is triggered by the politics of retrenchment of welfare state

5.2 Main findings

Through the macro-level analysis, the study has shown that in Spain students with a negative perception of national economic developments are more likely to vote for POD compared to working class people. Negative personal experiences seem not to have an impact on voting choice. The most likely explanations of this findings are that vote choice is driven by the economic insecurity and fear to lose the *status quo* in the future. In Italy findings suggest that the popularity function of the M5S is not related to economic developments. Retirees seem to be more reluctant to vote for M5S compared to working class people. The most likely explanation for this finding is that elder people are less likely to use internet and therefore their vote choice was less influenced by the M5S communication strategy. The above analysis does not enable me to determine which are the main driven factors which influenced vote choice.

The small-n analysis suggests that in Spain and Italy the nature of resentment is associated with the perception of poor governance over years. Privatization of universalistic pillars of the welfare state such as education and healthcare are great source of resentment. The narrative underlines that this mechanism fits poorly with the Spanish and Italian sense of social cohesion. In both countries, labor market policy reforms combining change in benefits and facilitating flexibility are perceived in both country as unsettling the “insiders” *status quo*, while students showed a negativity bias towards potential losses for the future. The pension reform in Italy seem to meet the stickiness of institutional changes and is a source of resentment either because impose direct losses on the labor market insider, either because it has been passed by a delegitimized government. Moreover, dysfunctionalities, privatizations and reforms are perceived unjust because these aspects confront the reality of a corrupted system which is based on nepotism, clientelisms and corruption perpetrated by all mainstream parties which are unwilling to renounce to their privileges. Hence, the M5S electorate is protest voting and it is engaged in punish the entire establishment, regardless their policy agenda. Economic distress, stickiness of institutions and high level of perceived corruption seems to explain the popularity function of M5S.

In Spain, the nature of resentment is expressed towards the old left and it seem the results of accumulation of previous policies. The resentment is driven by politics of retrenchment and the implementation of neoliberal agenda pursued also by the Socialist Party. The neoliberal agenda is perceived as unsettling the *status quo* and the sense of social cohesion. The vote translated in a form of protest and punishment against the left and it is driven by a mindful policy strategy with the aims to pursue a social democratic agenda.

The study aims to extend our knowledge about the relationships between politics of welfare state retrenchment and party politics. The present work showed that changes in the Mediterranean welfare state model have led to the establishment of new form of oppositions. Newly formed populist parties seem to be consequential to the increasing resentment towards mainstream parties and economic insecurity. However, the study is limited to Spain and Italy. Since Portugal and Greece belong to the Mediterranean welfare state model and have been hit harshly by the economic crisis, for generality purpose, based on the Ferrera (1996) and Pierson (1994) conceptual frameworks of analysis, further research could explore the existence of the same path.

The above analysis enables us to determine that populism assumes a different connotation in Italy and Spain, and it seems to be a reaction to systematic changes in welfare state politics and entails a strong demand for responsive governance. While POD takes seriously the possibility to govern and compromise through a clear policy agenda defined also in ideological terms, M5S is a party with no clear policy recipes nor identification in terms of old ideological labels. To put it in Mair's (2009) words, it can be identified as "irresponsible opposition" which is symptomatic of a large gap between the Italian establishment and the electorate.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Correspondence of the Classes of the Goldthorpe Schema and the NS-SEC Socio-Economic Classification and Common Descriptive Terms

Goldthorpe Schema	NS-SEC	Common descriptive term
I Professional, administrative and managerial employees, higher grade	Higher managerial and professional occupations	SALARIAT (OR SERVICE CLASS)
II Professional, administrative and managerial employees, lower grade; technicians, higher grade	Lower managerial and professional occupations	
IIIa Routine non manual employees, higher grade	Intermediate occupation	INTERMEDIATE WHITE-COLLAR
IV Small employers and self-employed workers	Employers in small organizations, own account workers	INDEPENDENTS (OR PETTY BOURGEOISIE)
V Supervisors of manual workers; technicians, lower grade	Lower supervisory and lower technical occupations	INTERMEDIATE BLUE-COLLAR
VI Skilled manual workers	Semi-routine occupations	WORKING CLASS
IIIb Routine non manual workers, lower grade	Routine occupations	
VII Semi-and unskilled manual workers		

Appendix 2

Exemple of email for participants:Madrid (ES)

RE: Master Thesis: Field Work on voting behavior and politics of welfare state-Central European University

Dear xxxx,

I am Sharon Belli, a second-year master student in Political Science at Central European University in Budapest. I am preparing the fieldwork for my master's thesis, the focus of which is middle class voting behavior and politics of welfare state. My aim is to examine how welfare state changes and the impact of austerity policies in Italy and Spain have affected middle-class voting preferences over parties. The analysis aims to shed light on individual preferences towards social protection, redistribution and the type of crisis perceived and resentment felt by supporters of new political actors such as Podemos and the Five Star Movement since 2012. For the purpose of my study I will first investigate which is the socio- economic background of the Podemos electorate. Taking the socio-economic background of the electorate into account, my research question is: why do new parties appeal to the core of middle-class voters of left/right spectrum since 2008? Apart from comparing the policy shift towards austerity in Italy and Spain, I will investigate to what extent change in politics of welfare state and fiscal squeeze are determinants of the voting shift.

In order to conduct my study, I plan to organize focus groups in Madrid as soon as possible, ideally in November, and I am trying to put together potential participants. The reason why I am contacting you is to ask for help in the recruitment process. I would like to kindly ask you if you could share some potential contacts who might be interested in participating. If this would be too time consuming for you, it will be very helpful if you could refer me to someone else who will be happy to help. Eventually you are willing to help me and/or address me to someone else, I will be glad to contact you and discuss all the details regarding potential focus groups participants, the actual focus groups process and the ethical procedures.

Should you regard this as necessary, please do not hesitate to contact my supervisor, Dr. xxxxx (email address) and, for her profile, (Background Info), who will be happy to provide you with further information about the project.

Thank you in advance for your availability and I am looking forward to hearing from you. Best Wishes

Appendix 3

Example of social network' advertisement for participants: Madrid (ES)

Mi nombre es Sharon Belli, soy un estudiante de segundo año de maestría en Ciencias Políticas en la Universidad Central Europea de Budapest. Estoy preparando el trabajo de campo para la tesis de mi maestro, cuyo enfoque es el comportamiento de voto de la clase media y la política del estado de bienestar. Mi objetivo es examinar cómo los cambios del estado de bienestar y el impacto de las políticas de austeridad en Italia y España han afectado las preferencias de voto de clase media sobre los partidos. El análisis tiene como objetivo arrojar luz sobre las preferencias individuales hacia la protección social, la redistribución y el tipo de crisis percibida y el resentimiento sentido por los partidarios y votantes de nuevos actores políticos como Podemos en España desde 2008. Llevar a cabo mi estudio, estoy planeando organizar grupos focales en Madrid y reunir posibles participantes. Su opinión es muy importante para mí y para el propósito de mi estudio, y tendrá un valor científico crucial. Para los propósitos del proyecto, los datos que recojo seguirán siendo confidenciales-no compartir más. Además, los datos recopilados serán anónimos, por lo que no será posible rastrear a la persona entrevistada y su opinión y pensamientos.

Grupos Focales-Madrid-Entre el 16 y el 22 de diciembre de 2016

(La fecha y la ubicación se comunicarán a los participantes una vez que la asistencia se confirme mediante un procedimiento formal)

Remuneración: 5 euros por participante, un regalo simbólico por tomar el tiempo y la energía para ayudarme en el estudio.

Por reservar : <https://goo.gl/forms/JFQBvIlcDGxeeW833>

Disponibilidad: Los participantes deben estar disponibles 1 día (19, 20, 21) para un máximo de 90 minutos en total.

Si estás dispuesto a participar, rellena el cuestionario y te contactaré personalmente y te enviaremos la invitación formal con todos los detalles, incluyendo fecha, lugar, procedimiento y ética.

Programaré los grupos de enfoque de acuerdo a la disponibilidad y el perfil de los participantes por lo que es muy importante que se sienta esta forma.

Por favor, hágamelo saber si necesita más información en:

Belli_Sharon@student.ceu.edu

Gracias de antemano por su ayuda,

Saludos cordiales,

Sharon Belli

Appendix 4

Exemple of the Online Questionnaire: Madrid (ES)

Focus Groups:

Mi nombre es Sharon Belli, soy un estudiante de segundo año de maestría en Ciencias Políticas en la Universidad Central Europea de Budapest. Estoy preparando el trabajo de campo para la tesis de mi maestro, cuyo enfoque es el comportamiento de voto de la clase media y la política del estado de bienestar. Mi objetivo es examinar cómo los cambios del estado de bienestar y el impacto de las políticas de austeridad en Italia y España han afectado las preferencias de voto de clase media sobre los partidos. El análisis tiene como objetivo arrojar luz sobre las preferencias individuales hacia la protección social, la redistribución y el tipo de crisis percibida y el resentimiento sentido por los partidarios y votantes de nuevos actores políticos como Podemos en España y el Movimiento de las Cinco Estrellas en Italia desde 2008. Llevar a cabo mi estudio, estoy planeando organizar grupos focales en Madrid y Roma y reunir posibles participantes. Su opinión es muy importante para mí y para el propósito de mi estudio, y tendrá un valor científico crucial. Para los propósitos del proyecto, los datos que recojo seguirán siendo confidenciales-no compartir más. Además, los datos recopilados serán anónimos, por lo que no será posible rastrear a la persona entrevistada y su opinión y pensamientos.

Grupos Focales-Madrid-Entre el 16 y el 22 de diciembre de 2016.

(La fecha y la ubicación se comunicarán a los participantes una vez que la asistencia se confirme mediante un procedimiento formal)

Remuneración: 5 euros por participante, un regalo simbólico por tomar el tiempo y la energía para ayudarme en el estudio.

Disponibilidad: Los participantes deben estar disponibles 1 día para un máximo de 90 minutos en total. Si estás dispuesto a participar, rellena el cuestionario y te contactaré personalmente y te enviaremos la invitación formal con todos los detalles, incluyendo fecha, lugar, procedimiento y ética. Programaré los grupos de enfoque de acuerdo a la disponibilidad y el perfil de los participantes por lo que es muy importante que se sienta esta forma.

Por favor, hágamelo saber si necesita más información en:

Belli_Sharon@student.ceu.edu

Gracias de antemano por su ayuda,

QUESTIONNAIRE

*Required

Nombre

.....

Años *

18-30

31-40

41-50

Over 50

Other:.....

Ocupación *

.....

¿Es usted parte del electorado de Podemos?

No

Yes

Número de teléfono *

.....

Lenguaje que prefiere para comunicarse con el investigador. *

Español

Inglés

¿A qué hora del día prefiere participar en la discusión? *

Mañana

Tarde

Al final de la tarde

Appendix 5

Pilot Guide: Focus Groups and In-Depth Interviews

WARM- UP

Please, introduce yourself to the other member of the group.

Name, field of study and employment situation/status.

KEY QUESTIONS

Change in the economic conditions since 2008

1. We often hear about the 2008 economic crisis in southern Europe, how do you think this affected generally people in Spain?

(Probes: Perception of the crisis, policy domains)

2. How the crisis has been addressed by the Spanish national government?
3. Should have this been done differently in your view? If so, differently how?

(Probes: perception of the elites, dissatisfaction with traditional elite, critical policy domains)

(expected time: about 10 minutes)

POLICY DOMAINS: Understanding of the social policy changes since 2008

(Probes: change, satisfaction with the policy changes, expected changes).

Healthcare

1. Which are the main changes you experienced within the system since 2008, if any?
2. Does the quality of the services fulfill your expectations? Was it better during earlier years?
3. What would you like to change about it?
4. Which party in Spain has proposed a solution which can improve this policy area? How?

(expected time: about 10 minutes)

Unemployment Insurance/Benefit

1. How working people are protected when they are unemployed?
2. How unemployment insurance guarantee a decent standard of life and how this could be improved better?
3. What changed since 2008?

4. If you wanted to change anything about the experience, apart from whether you got better or not, what would you change?
 5. What changes would need to be enacted so that the unemployment assurance really protect people from the risk of poverty if they lose their job or while they, looking for another job?
 6. Which party in Spain has proposed a solution which can improve this policy area? How?
- (expected time: about 15 minutes)*

Pensions

1. What do you think about old-age pensions? How have reforms affected pensions in recent years?
 2. Does this amount guarantee a decent standard of life?
 3. What changed since 2008?
 4. In what ways does the old-age pension system need to change to be better, more effective for elderly, if at all?
 5. Which party in Spain has proposed a solution which can improve this policy area? How?
- (expected time: about 15 minutes)*

The role of parties and elite in social policies

(Probes: Elite role, Podemos role, expectations from the elite, parties impact on social policies)

1. How do you see the Spanish welfare state be restructured by parties? Is it a system that generally make you feel protected?
2. Since 2008, which parties have proposed and put in place the best solutions for improving health care, labor market protection and pension policies?
3. Do you think the appropriateness of these benefits and how they are allocated are a political choice for parties in power and at the opposition? In which way?
4. Do you see objective fiscal reasons why those benefits should be cut or restructured?
5. Thinking about the party you voted being in power. How do you think they will restructure the policy areas we have mentioned during the discussion? How these changes will protect, if at all people at risk of poverty?

(expected time: about 15 minutes)

CLOSING QUESTION

This is the final part of our focus group. Many of you have told stories about health care, education, pension systems and unemployment assurance experiences, but I was wondering whether any of you here have been directly involved in some personal experience in one of these domains. If any of you have had that experience, would you please spend a little time telling me about it?

(expected time: about 12 minutes)

THANK YOU

Your stories have been very insightful and interesting. I would like to thank you all for participation. If you want to have other information feel free to write me. I will leave you my contacts with the envelope containing the symbolic compensation we agreed on.
(expected time:about 2 minutes)

Total = 60-75 minutes

Appendix 5

Socio-Economic Characteristic of The Study's Participants (N= 25)

A. Age and Gender

			Madrid	Rome
Gender	Male		10	6
	Female		5	4
Age	23-30		7	2
	30-35		6	4
	36-40		1	3
	Over 50		1	1

B. Occupational Status

OCCUPATIONAL STATUS	Madrid	Rome	Mode of regulation of employment	Madrid	Rome
Managerial and professional occupations	1	1	Permanent/ Long Term Contract	2	4
Intermediate occupations	3	3	Temporary/ Short Term	5	1
Routine and manual occupations	1	1	Full Time Student	6	2
Full Time Student	1	2	Unemployed	1	1
Unemployed	3	1	Retired	1	1
Retired	1	1			

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