SUBNATIONAL VARIEGATIONS OF POPULISM AND LEFT-BEHIND PLACES IN THE UK AND GERMANY

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ABSTRACT

Populism plays a pivotal role in shaping economic, political, and societal discourse and outcomes, highlighting left-behind places as hotspots of the geographies of discontent as a focal point for understanding contemporary socio-political dynamics. This study draws upon Geographical Political Economy to emphasize the importance of considering time, space and context dependent knowledge in understanding this phenomenon. It undertakes a comparative analysis of Tees Valley, England and Duisburg, Germany, to identify and explain the drivers of populism, and to explore populism's variegated nature across regions. Addressing the gap in work at the subnational level, the research aims to understand and explain the complexities of populism by examining its causes and manifestations at the regional level with a focus on left-behind regions and old industrial areas. Employing a multi-method approach, including quantitative and qualitative analysis, the thesis finds, first, that economic decline plays an important role in the geography of discontent and second, that beyond statistical indicators, left-behind feelings and loss of identity are also significantly influential in the production and manifestation of discontent especially in the old industrial regions which traditionally have a strong identity and sense of community. The thesis introduces the concept of variegated populism, which goes beyond conventional varieties perspective and dichotomies of economy versus culture. It demonstrates that populism is interconnected and interdependent, recognizing its articulated nature across various ideologies and actors. This highlights the complexity and nuance inherent within populist politics and populist reasons which have multiple dimensions as being real, perceived and mediated by politicians. The research demonstrates the nuanced interplay between economic trajectories, regional identities, and political representation which are the three key element of regional variegations of populism and offering fresh insights into the roots of populism and regional discontent in left-behind places.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION: THE RISING GEOGRAPHIES OF POPULISM

1.1. Populism and Left-behind Places

"Populism is the revolt of the places that don't matter against the people who think they matter too much." - Andrés Rodríguez-Pose

The thesis concerns the geography of discontent and left-behind places, especially old-industrial regions, as places of populist movements that are getting support. The rising populist movements and votes all over the globe, especially with the Brexit vote and the election of Trump in 2016, have attracted growing political and academic attention. In the attempt to understand explanations, left-behind places are frequently depicted as centres of tension. According to Rodríguez-Pose (2018: p.190), "the places that 'don't matter' have increasingly used the ballot box (and, in some cases, outright revolt) to rebel against the feeling of being left-behind; against the feeling of lacking opportunities and future prospects". Accordingly, populism receives high levels of support in regions that have experienced prolonged economic decline and have a pessimistic future trajectory.

In this context, the term left-behind refers to a catch-all term for regions that are facing economic stagnation or decline, especially post-industrial districts and rural areas that are being negatively impacted by the concentration of skilled knowledge economy jobs in cities (MacKinnon, 2023). The combination of the economics of concentrating in cities and metropolises with a neoliberal regime that has widened geographical inequalities in economic welfare and social conditions since the 1980s has exacerbated socio-economic and spatial polarisation (Sandbu, 2020) and led to the emergence of left-behind places as the nexus between the

increase in regional inequality and the problem of political stability (Martin et al., 2022a) which has grown since the global financial crisis of 2008 (MacKinnon et al., 2024). Consequently, voters in left-behind areas in many industrialised nations believe that mainstream politicians and their policies have forgotten them, or worse, they are purposefully ignoring them in favour of wealthier areas and metropolitan centres (Martin et al., 2022a).

While much work has been done on the national and regional level, there is still a need for further regional type of populism and case study research. Moreover, the explanations focused on categorised distinctions of populism, such as right, left, cultural, economic, etc. This study aims to address these gaps by focusing on subnational variegation, especially in left-behind and old industrial areas. In this context, the fundamental aim of the research is to explain why populist politics manifest in particular places and times with a focus on left-behind places. Rather than imposing preconceived notions or categorisations onto populist phenomena, I am seeking to dynamically engage with the multifaceted nature of populism and its spatial differentiation. Additionally, it aims to offer a more holistic and interconnected understanding of populism, exploring through variegated regional populism, regional dimension, old industrial regions and inequalities that contribute to its rise in contemporary democracies. Alongside these, the research aims to see whether the populist drivers resulting from multi-state studies are still valid when individual states are considered, or whether local specificities lead to differences between drivers. Furthermore, another aim of the research is to see whether the role of the state, local identities and economic structures and transition make differences in the perception of the feeling of being left-behind when the local context is considered.

To execute these aims, we adopt Geographical Political Economy (GPE) perspective, whose mission is to critically examine capitalism's inherent tendency to reproduce and reinforce socio-spatial inequality (Sheppard, 2024) in line with the emergence process of left-behind places and geography of discontent. Secondly, as regions appeared as hotbeds of

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political upheavals, focusing on the regions is required as a unit of analysis in the context of inequalities and uneven development. The analysis delves into the underlying mechanisms shaping identities and discourses by examining how places are affected by economic shifts. This approach is inherently geographical, as it acknowledges that causal explanations for economic-geographical phenomena cannot be divorced from their spatial context (Yeung, 2023). Thirdly, building on Peck's work (2017), this analysis uses a conjunctural approach which articulates causality through causal mechanisms, and emphasises situational analysis and historicisation (Yeung, 2023). Such an approach combines reflexive theorising with socially engaged inquiry, offering context-rich and historically situated explanations (Peck, 2023a). It is exploratory in nature, aiming to map out new understandings of the relationships between economic changes, political shifts, and regional dynamics (Peck, 2023a).

In this context, the research questions are as follows:

- Based on the characteristic features of left-behind regions, what determines right-wing populist votes in Germany and England?

- How is populist discourse produced and transformed into regional expression in media and politics, and how does this vary between cases?

- How is the relationship between left-behindness and populism perceived by regional actors and experts?

1.2. Structure of the Thesis

The remainder of the thesis is made up of 8 chapters. The following chapter forms the Literature Review, which reviews populism, the geography of discontent and left-behind places literature. It also introduces the variegation of populism concept derived from Peck's (2023b) variegation of

capitalism approach and applies this to the examination of subnational populism. In this context, it concludes with research aims and contributions.

Chapter 3 introduces and explains the adopted philosophical grounding, research methodology and data collection methodologies. Moreover, it explains case selection methods and how we apply them to possible countries and eventually, it presents justification for cases.

Chapter 4 sets the scene for the cases. It provides contexts for both cases, including identity, political history, economic structure, economic evolution, economic transition and similarities and differences between cases which serves us to comprehend the context and link the past to today.

Chapter 5 forms our first analysis and examines and compares the relationship between the votes of the populist parties of these countries and the drivers revealed in the concept of left-behindness and the geography of discontent studies with quantitative analysis. Data, design and models for the analysis are explained in this chapter. The chapter contributes comparatively to the debate on drivers of populism in England and Germany. It also provides a comparative element for the results of qualitative chapters. This chapter's main argument is the importance of considering country-specific characteristics and the geographical dimension in understanding and addressing populism. It also provides evidence for regional economic decline among the drivers of populism, especially the decline and relatively lower increase in total employment in England and Germany.

Chapter 6 contains two parts: part one looks at national-regional newspapers and how populist elements were used in the 2017 local elections in Tees Valley and Duisburg. The second part presents the result of the discourse analysis of the speeches of elected mayors of both cases in 2017, namely Ben Houchen for Tees Valley and Sören Link for Duisburg. This chapter reveals the variegation of populism produced and expressed at the regional level for cases and argues that the analysis of Ben Houchen's statements as an insurgent, show that he uses populist language and

rhetoric in his speeches, emphasising themes such as national sovereignty and decentralisation and positioning himself as a champion of the ordinary citizen against centralised authority. Sören Link, on the other hand, is less populist as the incumbent, but in line with the current German agenda, he is also committed to anti-immigration rhetoric with a focus on East-European migrants.

Chapter 7 is the last chapter of the analysis, which is formed by interviews with local professionals. It aims to provide an understanding of how populism is perceived between and within regions by different actors, explore the factors contributing to regional variations in voting patterns, and examine populist elements in interviews. This chapter argues that regional inequalities and the perception of being left-behind are complex issues influenced by historical narratives, economic transformations, and political dynamics, with variegated populism emerging in Teesside and Duisburg, emphasising the need for nuanced, region-specific approaches to address these challenges effectively.

Chapter 8 is the last and concluding chapter. This chapter presents and summarises empirical findings from quantitative and qualitative analysis, compares them with literature and shows the contributions to the literature. In addition to empirical findings, this chapter elaborates on conceptual and theoretical findings. These are variegated populism, a new spectrum for the conceptualisation of populism and three settings, which we determined throughout the study that regionally establish the variegated populism and help to uncover underlying structures, mechanisms and causal relations. Lastly, it points out the reflections and future direction of work.

CHAPTER 2. UNDERSTANDING POPULIST BACKLASH

2.1. Introduction

Trump's victory and the Brexit vote in 2016 took everyone's attention to populism. Moreover, the rise of populism is not limited to these countries; it has also achieved serious electoral success in European countries such as Germany, Italy, France, and Sweden. This emergence on the world's agenda has increased the need and efforts to understand populism. In 2018, a new journal, 'Populism', was founded.

This chapter offers a review of populism with regard to its roots and its connection to regional dimensions. The aim of this chapter is to critically review the emergent and relevant literature surrounding populism and left-behind places. In this chapter, we delve into literature to gain insights into these concepts and debates. By examining existing studies, we aim to enhance our understanding and identify any gaps or limitations in the current literature. In this way, the contribution of the thesis to the debate and literature and the research questions have been identified.

This chapter consists of five main sections. In connection with the chapter's aims, after this introduction, the second section examines the meaning of populism, its agreeable or disputed characteristics, its historical, political frameworks, and the forms it takes in the political arena, especially in the parties. The third section examines the literature on the sources of populism, which became especially prominent after the 2008 Crisis. In addition to the debates between cultural and economic reasons, globalisation and neoliberalism are provided as interconnected factors. Moreover, it offers a new concept, variegations of populism, to theorise populism due to static and independent approaches to populism in the literature. The fourth chapter examines the concept of left-behind at the individual and regional level in the context of the debate on who supports

populist movements and how the explanatory power of the regional dimension emerges as stronger. In addition, we broaden left-behind places concepts with the concept of left-behindness in which the increase in populist votes is often driven by perceptions and feelings as well as statistics. The fifth and final chapter eliminates the gaps in the literature and reveals the aims, objectives, and contribution of the thesis, especially the conceptualisation of regional variegations of populism and concludes with the research questions raised.

2.2. Populist backlash: Understanding the phenomenon

Populism is widely regarded as a vague concept due to its adaptability across diverse political landscapes and ideologies. Scholars such as Mudde and Kaltwasser (2017) emphasize that populism lacks a stable ideological core, describing it as a 'thin-centred ideology' that can attach itself to a wide range of full ideologies, like nationalism or socialism, to gain specific political traction. This fluidity makes it challenging to pin down a concrete definition, as populism is often used as a rhetorical tool rather than a coherent belief system (Stanley, 2008; Schwörer, 2021). Bonikowski (2016) further argues that populism's foundational binary - dividing 'the people' from 'the elite' - offers a simplistic moral framework without a comprehensive policy platform, allowing populist rhetoric to address various grievances and adapt to different sociopolitical contexts

Nevertheless, populism as a concept is not an unfamiliar word to history, especially in the last decade, it has started to be used frequently in daily politics and academic discussions. At this point, despite its difficulties, it has become an academic endeavour to identify specific characteristics that can be used to measure and delimit the concept. The questions that need to be answered mainly focus on how populism is defined, conceptualised and theorised and what makes a policy or a politician populist.

2.2.1. Definition of populism

In 2017, populism was declared the word of the year by the Cambridge Dictionary; in its explanation, populism is defined as "political ideas and activities that are intended to get the support of ordinary people by giving them what they want". If we continue from a dictionary statement, the definition of populism in the Encyclopaedia Britannica: "political program or movement that champions, or claims to champion, the common person, usually by favourable contrast with a real or perceived elite or establishment. Populism usually combines elements of the left and the right, opposing large business and financial interests but also frequently being hostile to established socialist and labour parties." The common point of the two definitions is the claim that populism acts for common people.

The second feature emphasised is that populists identify a rival to the common people they defend. In a basic and inclusive sense, populism is defined as the contrast between the people and the elite. While populists claim to speak on behalf of the people in this context, they suggest that they are against elites who do not represent the people (Cleen and Glynos, 2021: p.2; Rooduijn, 2019: p.363; Margalit, 2019: p.152). Cox (2018, p.8) also shares a similar opinion that populism approaches the established order with suspicion by claiming that it works for its own interests, not for the benefit of the common people.

From this point of view, one approach sees populism as a thin-centred ideology and an ideational approach. Here, dividing society into two heterogeneous parts - elite and people - populism claims that politics should reflect the general will of the people (Mudde, 2007). In this sense, Mudde and Kaltwasser (2017: p.6) emphasise that populism is a structure that blends into other ideologies rather than being an inclusive system of ideas. The second approach, which is more formal and discursive than ideational, focuses on how populists construct a politics of opposition, portraying the people as oppressed and disappointed by the elite (Cleen and Glynos, 2021: p.3). Regarding this discursive approach, Muller (2017) argued that

populists claim to talk in the name of the people in his work 'What is Populism?', in reality, however, populists who seek power will create an authoritarian state which excludes those who do not count as proper people by populists. In other words, the two characteristics that Muller identified are the claim that populism speaks for the people and the desire to establish an anti-democratic, authoritarian state.

The definition of populism is complicated due to the conceptual difficulties it poses. This complexity is further emphasised by the various forms it takes. It also requires a critical analysis of whether populist leaders genuinely advocate for the interests of the general public or if their claims could potentially lead to the establishment of authoritarian regimes. The usage of populism by politicians to label other politicians or ideology with a pejorative meaning contributes to making it difficult to define and analyse. Populism is not a clear ideology; it can be associated with the left or right, and there is no clear policy style attributed to it. For example, it can be associated with increasing or decreasing the role of the state; we can observe this feature even in the same party in different time periods on France's National Rally (National Front until 2018); while Jean-Marie Le Pen's National Front advocated small state, neoliberal economic policies in1970s, today daughter Marine Le Pen's National Rally stand up for an interventionist state and protectionist economy (Berman and Snegovaya, 2019: p.9). Alternatively, we can observe the right-wing populist party proponents in Austria (Freedom Party of Austria) or Netherlands (Party of Freedom), while left-wing populist parties are active in Greece (Syriza) and Spain (Podemos). For further point, in the USA, in the same election in 2016, two different poles present populist candidates: Trump as a right-wing and Sanders who was among the prominent candidate nominees of the Democratic Party but was not selected as a candidate, as a left-wing. These examples also show that populism does not have a definite ideology and they are directed towards policies that can be of interest to the public. Political actors can turn to populism in a particular context, leave populism, or give it a less central role when the context changes.

These characteristics—its ideological fluidity, rhetorical nature, and core binary between 'the people' and 'the elite'—underscore the challenge of defining populism in precise terms. Yet, despite its conceptual vagueness, populism consistently positions itself as the voice of the general will, adapting across both left- and right-wing ideologies to resonate with public sentiment. In this context, I consider populism a form of political tactics and discourse that can be articulated to all kinds of ideologies and parties. It views society as fundamentally divided into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups—the 'pure people' and the 'corrupt elite'—and argues that politics should be an expression of the people's general will. This definition serves as a useful analytical tool, allowing us to examine diverse ideologies, politicians, and policies that employ this rhetoric and binary framework, regardless of the specific ideological stance they adopt.

2.2.2. Components of populism

The definition of populism finds wide acceptance in terms of the anti-elitist stance and the implementation of the will of common people. Apart from these, there are also other controversial features attributed to populism by academics, like nativism, demagogy, and anti-democracy. Timpro (2022) identifies populism with three features. Firstly, those involved in populist mobilisation no longer define themselves as individuals but as members of a group exploited by elites. In this sense, the populist view aims to restore power to the people. Parallel to this, according to Gordon (2018: p.97), the essence of populism is the rejection of the moral, intellectual authority of the socio-political order in favour of the authentic, prudent reactions of ordinary people. The two essential elements to mobilise populism are the idea that unites potential promoters against the elites who only serve their interests and the entrepreneurial politicians who will mobilise this rejection. Thus, the idea of uniting the people against any kind of elites who serve only their own interests and the opportunistic politicians who mobilise this rejection provides the mobilisation of populism.

The second component, according to Timpro (2022), is that the idea of people taking control refers not to a pluralist approach but to a majoritarian approach, that is, often defined against minorities and cultural 'others' and minority rights that could be jeopardised. Mukand and Rodrik (2017, p.7) define three groups in society: the elite, the majority, and the minority. The elite's distinctive feature is their wealth, and the minority's are some labels like ethnicity, religion and immigrant status. Populist movements mobilise support against one of these divisions. On this point, right-wing populism mostly puts minorities on target, and their mobilisation focuses on identity politics, while left-wing populism focuses on elites in class politics.

At this point, nativism is one of the concepts frequently associated with populism (Cox, 2018: p.8; De Cleen and Glynos; 2021: p.2). The nativist and exclusionary policies of some populist parties in Europe today lead to a perception that this is a general characteristic of populism. However, this is the wrong inference and generalisation. The first point to be mentioned here is that nativism is not associated with populism in general but only with the right-wing, because the same result is not encountered in left-wing populism which separates itself from nativism. Cox (2018) emphasises that populism takes the definition of people in a narrow sense. People's perceptions differ according to the types of populism; while right-wing populism sees people as 'native' people in a narrower sense, left populism adopts a more inclusive understanding. Second, Rooduijn (2019: p.365) argues that populism and nativism have different constructions: "Where populism concerns the vertical relationship between the people and the elite, nativism is about the horizontal antagonism between the nation and dangerous others."

The third element of populism is that populism promotes a strong state for the implementation of the popular will. For this reason, they oppose supranational organisations, global trade relations and immigration, which will erode the state's power. A more controversial issue associated with populism is that it is a challenge to liberalism and/or democracy. According to Dunn (2019: p.64), populism threatens democracy's competitive nature

based on free media with 'fake news' claims and its relation to 'alternative facts'. While Roberts (2019: p.188) claims that populism recently poses a challenge to both liberalism and democracy, Galston (2018) argues that populism threatens liberal democracy because they perceive liberal democracy as an impediment against the people's will. These opinions are put forward because of the populist opposition against immigrants and minority groups for economic or cultural reasons or their suggestion of authoritarian rather than democratic ways of changing the established system.

On the authoritarian tendency debate of populism, Rodrik (2018b) examines economic and political populisms. Rodrik (2018b) makes a risk analysis between them and establishes a relationship about when one dimension is preferable if needed. Populists, with the claim that they represent the people on behalf of people and for people, consider that restrictions on the political executive undermine the exercise of the will of the people. They perceive these constraints in the economic sphere and the political sphere. While the economic side often deals with policies like autonomous regulatory agencies, independent central banks, and international trade agreements (Rodrik, 2018b: p.197), the political side deals with the separation of power, independent judiciary, or free media. These two dimensions do not always go hand in hand; in some situations, according to Rodrik (2018b), it is acceptable to erode the prevailing restrictions in economic policy that are established and not used for the good of the people. So, lifting some established economic restraints by a populist policy can reveal overall positive results in some contexts. On the other hand, political populism is almost always harmful to democracy (Rodrik, 2018b: p.199). So, to conciliate people's uprising against the established order, economic populism is preferable to avoid political populism, which could worsen outcomes in the case of application.

In summary, when populism works for the people, it creates an enemy, usually elites, sometimes minority groups. While defending the people, some populists define these people as 'native' in a narrow sense and exclude

immigrants or minorities. The claim of a challenge to the established order and the abolition of restrictions preventing the exercise of the people's will ascribe the populists the feature that the populists have chosen an undemocratic path by gathering power in their hands. Attitudes that show discrimination between citizens show that populism is an illiberal attitude. However, nativism, anti-liberal and anti-democracy cannot be considered a feature of all populist movements. Populism's opposition to the established order and to criticism of existing parties as a political tactic, even though criticism sometimes comes from another mainstream party, to mobilise the public can be accepted as a general characteristic.

2.2.3. Right and left-wing populisms

The most important form of populist movements emerging is the political parties with the potential to influence the masses and challenge the established order. This can be seen through the establishment of a new populist political party or as an existing party adopts populist politics. Naturally, these parties reflect the characteristics of populism while pursuing their political aims. Moreover, this subheading illustrates the different attitudes of the right and left wings of populism and the differentiation of Latin American and European populisms.

In the literature, different characteristics are underlined for populist parties by different academicians. Guiso et al. (2017) focus on political tactics and define the populist party as a structure that advocates short-term protection policies regardless of their long-term costs. Some focus on populist policies; in this regard, according to Van Kessel's (2015) classification, for a party to be considered populist, it must regard the people as virtuous and homogeneous, defend popular sovereignty against the elitist government and position itself against the established political order acting against the interests of the people. Goodwin (2011) identifies four features in what he calls populist extremist parties: immigrant opposition, cultural diversity,

anti-establishment attitude towards mainstream parties, and indecision against liberal democracy.

Furthermore, Rodríguez-Pose (2020: p.4-5) labelled these parties as illiberal and explained the distinctive features of these populist, illiberal democratic parties with three stances: First is an anti-elite discourse that populist parties claim they defend people's interests against those on top. Second is an anti-immigration stance that is used to gather a majority of people by creating a perceived threat to national identity. Lastly, nationalism is instrumentalised in labelling other countries as enemies.

While such a characterisation of populist parties is necessary to define them, it is impossible to put them all in the same boat. On this note, the most striking feature of populism in the political arena is its articulation with a movement of the right or the left. By claiming that populists protect people's will and interests, right-wing populism defines minorities and foreigners as enemies of the people. Right-wing populism also emphasises a cultural cleavage, the national, ethnic, religious, or cultural identity of the 'people' against outside groups who allegedly pose a threat to the popular will (Rodrik, 2018a: p.13), like Trump's declaration of Mexican, Chinese as outsider and transgressor.

Moreover, Essletzbichler et al. (2018) highlight the political strategies behind the electoral victories of right-wing populists such as Trump, Brexit, and Austria. These strategies include opposition to globalisation, European Union (EU) integration, and immigration. Additionally, they capitalise on issues like job losses, deindustrialisation, public discontent and the perceived clash between cosmopolitan elites and traditional values.

As the globalisation shock becomes more prevalent in the form of immigration and refugees, it is easier for populist leaders to mobilise the people against immigrants and ethnic minorities than complicated connections between technological transition, globalisation, neoliberal austerity policies and resource constraints (Essletzbichler, 2018: p.76; Rodrik, 2018a). The aforementioned globalisation, economic crisis,

migration waves, and other reasons that they have triggered are explaining the success of right-wing populist movements in Europe and the US.

Contrarily, while migrants and minority groups are the natural enemies of right-wing populism, the financial elite are the natural enemies of left-wing populism. In this sense, left populism primarily focuses on economic division, which is the people at the bottom class who have little access to power, are dominated by a wealthier class which determines economic rules (Rodrik, 2018a: p.13). Especially in times of economic crisis, it is easier to mobilise people around income inequality and social classes. These examples of left populism can be seen in Southern Europe, Latin America, and North America in the form of Bernie Sanders (Rodrik, 2018a).

Furthermore, there is a difference between the continents in the emergence of left-wing populism. Europe's long-term welfare understanding of the state has played a role in the differentiation between Europe and Latin America. In Latin America, there was a perception among the people that national sovereignty was eroded; democracy had been usurped and captured by unelected elites and supranational bodies that worked for the capital class and were active in government (Brown, 2020: p.9). So, the defining features of Latin American and, more generally, left-wing populism are the anti-elitist and anti-global capitalist stance.

Another argument of Brown (2020: p.11) is that economic insecurity, the exclusion of decision-making processes, led to the emergence of an anti-neoliberal, democratic and progressive movement in Latin America. The aim of taking over the political vacuum created by the traditional left-wing parties that had converged to the right in terms of economic policies encouraged these progressive populist movements. Also, as an overall difference from Europe, no nativist approach makes the distinction between 'us' and 'them' (Brown, 2020: p.12). Another reason why populism has taken a different course in Latin America is that the apparent shocks associated with globalisation have taken different forms here than in Europe. While Europe experienced the negative effects of globalisation as

immigration and Brussels administration, Latin Americans experienced this rapid trade opening, financial crises, IMF programs, and foreign companies entering sensitive local sectors such as mining or public services. These negativities were mobilised against these forces and the local collaborators. This is directed by left-wing populism based on economic class cleavage, not by right-wing's cultural cleavage (Rodrik, 2018a).

Left-wing populism gained traction in Spain and Greece following the 2008 crisis, particularly due to the economic hardships exacerbated by austerity measures. This dynamic was driven by the effective utilisation of economic cleavage by left-wing populist movements in these countries (Rodrik, 2018a).

Right-wing populism's path in Europe is more complicated. In the 1980s, a new group of populist politicians emerged, rooted in the far-right authoritarian tradition of Western European politics. This new radical right, appealing to the cultural authoritarianism and economic insecurity of the people emerging in times of economic hardship, targeted the corrupt elites and immigrants as responsible for the alleged economic and moral crisis. Kitschelt (1995) called this combination the winning formula, which was authoritarian, with strict attitudes on issues such as crime, law and order, and immigration, and also economically neoliberal. The supporters of this movement, which can be called part of the conservative political spectrum, were mostly middle-class, especially the part that felt most economically and culturally vulnerable (Chryssogelos, 2013: p.76). Jean-Marie Le Pen, leader of the National Front in France, and Jorg Haider, leader of the Freedom Party of Austria, were representatives of this movement in that period.

In the 1990s, with the end of the Cold War and the acceleration of globalisation, the new radical right consolidated and expanded its power. During this period, the stance of the populist movement was Euroscepticism, at the point of defending national sovereignty, which melted with the acceleration of globalisation and free trade. The anti-elite discourse

continued to be against companies and organisations that could influence decisions with international integration. In this period, populist parties started to attract supporters from other classes, although the main part was still the conservative middle classes (Chryssogelos, 2013: p.77). Another important feature of this era is that the neoliberal agenda was adopted by centre-left parties as well as centre-right, together with the social-democratic consensus. Blair's New Labour in the UK, Clinton's New Democrats in the US, and Schröder's SPD in Germany were representatives of this cooperation (Berman and Snegovaya, 2019). So, populist parties became capable of attracting working-class voters in the void that emerged from the left parties' adoption of neoliberal policies (Roberts, 2019).

In the 2000s, populism took on a new form, embracing cultural and economic protectionism against the pro-openness centre-right and centre-left (Cyryssogelos, 2013: p.78). Countries with low authoritarian traditions, such as Denmark and the Netherlands, adopted an anti-immigrant policy while upholding liberal democratic values, claiming cultural hegemony over immigrants (Cyryssogelos, 2013: p.78). The ideological shift of populism on the radical right directed the left from a working-class focus to a potential through the middle class and non-ideological voters. After the 2004 EU enlargement, another type of populism developed in the former communist bloc states, combining authoritarian right and protectionist left views. (Cyryssogelos, 2013: p.78).

Therefore, the controversy surrounding the characteristics of populism, aside from its role as a political mobilisation tool using anti-elite and anti-establishment discourse, arises from its association with different political spectrums and its diverse manifestations across geographies. When aligned with right-wing politics, populism tends to be conservative, excluding foreigners and initially adhering to neoliberal policies before 2000, later adopting protectionist measures with the effect of globalisation and filling the gap in policy as the result of the convergence of left-right parties into neoliberal policies. This trend is commonly observed in America and Europe.

Conversely, left-wing populism provides a more inclusive definition of the people, focusing on a movement against economic elites.

Despite their apparent ideological differences, left and right-wing populisms often share common ground in their critiques of established elites and their promise to represent the interests of the common people. Both strands of populism capitalise on anti-establishment sentiment and a sense of economic disenfranchisement among certain segments of the population. For instance, while right-wing populism may target immigrants and cultural diversity as threats to national identity, left-wing populism focuses on economic elites and income inequality as barriers to social justice. Recognising these overlaps can lead to a more nuanced understanding of populist movements and potentially foster dialogue across political divides, acknowledging where their grievances intersect and where their divergences lie.

2.3. Sources of populism: exploring underlying factors

There is an increasing trend in the vote share of populist parties in the world. It is more striking to observe it in Europe. The increasing appeal of populism and its effect on politics makes understanding the reasons an actual and important field. Inglehart and Norris (2016) show that the average vote share of Western European populist parties in the European parliamentary and national elections has more than doubled, from 5.1% to 13.2%, since the 1960s. Another study indicates that the rise of populism in Europe has been rapid, at which point the populist vote rose from below 5 percent in the late 1980s to over 20 percent in 2011-2015 (Rodrik, 2018a). According to the Guardian's research (Henley, 2018) results from 1998 to 2018, European populists' votes rose from 7 percent to 25 percent in national elections. While there were populists in only two governments in Europe in 1998, nine new countries were added to these countries in 2018. Since 1998, the number of Europeans led by a government with at least one populist in its cabinet has increased from 12.5 million to 170 million.

The trend continues with the highest vote share of populist parties in Europe in 2023, which is shown in Figure 1 (Rooduijn et al., 2024).

A range of political, economic, and cultural factors are specified as sources of populism in the literature. Under these main headings, trade, changing generation, immigration, globalisation, neoliberalism, neo-liberalisation, deindustrialisation, automation, cultural backlash, discontent, economic insecurity, and distrust of elites can be counted as factors that can have effects on these reasons. Often, we find these reasons intertwined, the real cause and the perceived cause; the reasons that are subject to politics or are ignored make it difficult to identify the main reasons despite the empirical studies.

Figure 1: The vote shares of several categories of parties over time
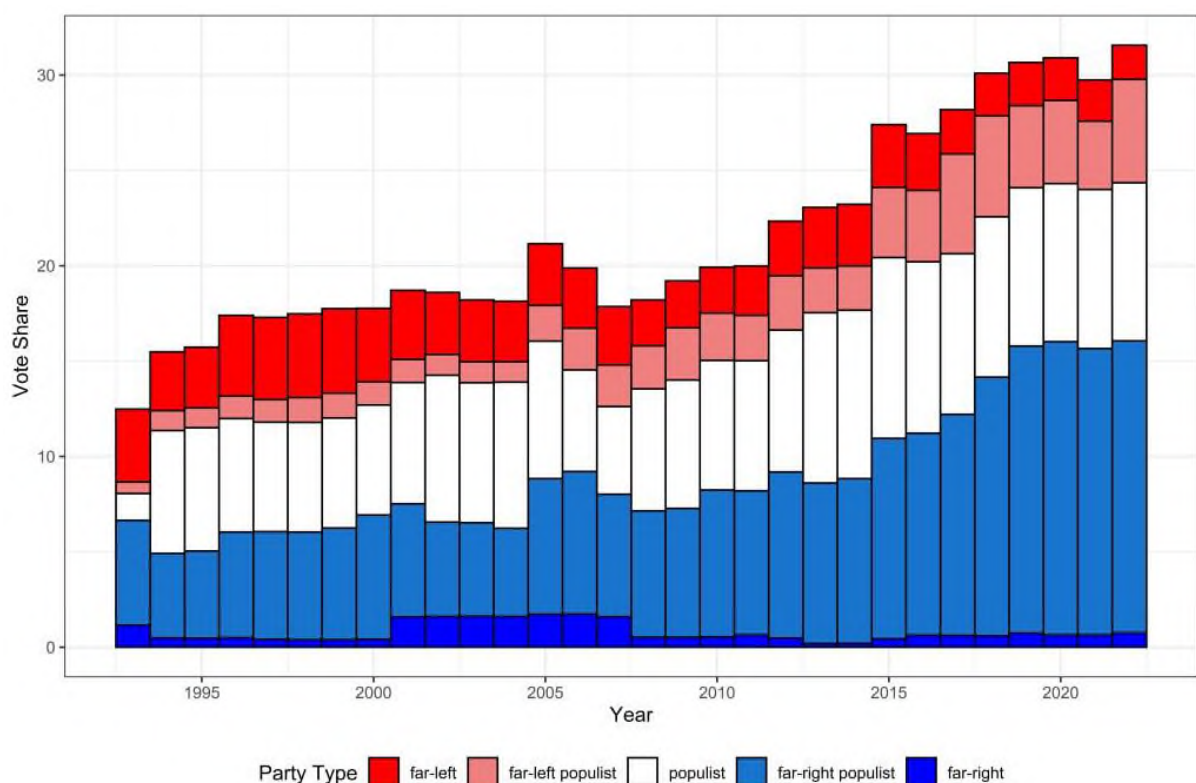
Source: The PopuList, Rooduijn et al., 2024

2.3.1. Economic roots of populism

One of the main debates about the causes of populism is whether economic or cultural reasons are the main cause. For some, the economy has been seen as one of the most important triggers of populism. Economic factors such as globalisation, technological progress, and the financial crisis have caused the losers of these processes and created economic insecurity among common people. The working class, former industrial regions, and rural regions were particularly affected by these factors. These changes caused discontent among the public; hence, a distrust towards established political parties and a tendency towards populist parties emerged.

Unemployment has been shown to be a driver of populism in several studies (Becker et al., 2017; Los et al., 2017). Low-income individuals are also among the drivers (Ford and Goodwin, 2014). Guiso et al. (2017: p.4) emphasise the role of economic insecurity and declining trust in traditional parties in fuelling the demand for populism, while they find that populist parties are more likely to emerge where political segregation is high, checks and balances are slow, and forces driving populist demand are strong. Economic theory, as argued by Rodrik (2018a), suggests that the later stages of globalisation, particularly financial globalisation, contribute to populist reactions. Acemoglu (2020) also focuses on globalisation; according to it, globalisation and the rise of its technologies have led to rapid social change, with inequalities and economic disruption brought about by un-shared gains. In result, those who could not benefit from the economic growth were disappointed with the political system in areas where imports from China and automation led to the loss of American jobs; voters turned their backs on moderate politicians and tended to vote for the more extremists. Frey et al. (2018) link the 2016 US presidential election outcome to job losses due to automation, revealing that constituencies exposed to automation are more likely to support Trump. The study suggests that economic loss, especially from job losses and wages due to automation, directs regions towards populism. Lastly, financial crises, such as the 2008 crisis, play a pivotal role in strengthening populist ideas.

MacKaay (2020) shows the 2008 crisis can be viewed as a populist reaction. Funke et al. (2016) provide a comprehensive analysis of the electoral consequences of financial crises, highlighting a rise in far-right vote share following systemic financial crises. This effect is statistically stronger for post-World War II periods and not applicable to regular business cycle recessions or macro shocks.

2.3.2. Cultural sources and their influence

The source that is placed against economic reasons and seen as a more important trigger is culture. According to Goodwin (2011), the cultural threat that people perceive from immigration and multiculturalism is the most important driving force of their support for populism. Norris and Inglehart (2019) also argued that populism is a protest against the perceived decline and diminishing influence of a once-dominant group, and the main drivers for populist parties in Europe are cultural and attitudinal but weakly related to economic insecurity. Additionally, among cultural issues, Inglehart and Norris (2016) argue that generational differences and rejection of 'progressive' values are among the important factors which cause authoritarian populism because the younger generation is prone to more diverse, secular values, whereas the older generation holds on to religiosity, traditional family structures. Moreover, the older generation is alienated from their society; although their numbers are small, they are more active in politics and influence the percentage of votes more.

Kaufmann (2016) supports the cultural perspective, asserting that the Brexit referendum was primarily about personal values rather than economic factors. Moreover, individual analysis by Goodwin (2011: p.6) reveals that supporters of populist parties typically belong to the middle or working class, are either too young or too old and have limited educational qualifications. Populist extremism tends to be weaker among individuals with a university-level education who feel economically more secure. Margalit (2019: p.153) also argues the association of populist votes with

economic reasons is overstated. His point is that economic factors as outcome significance have an important effect on Brexit, while overall explanatory significance has a modest effect in 52 percent of the vote, not as much as it is emphasised. The second (p.163), while immigration is one of the prominent factors for populist voters, is that the economic impact of immigration perceived by the public and its impact on populism is low.

There are also studies combining economic and cultural elements. Jennings and Stoker (2019: p.159) attribute the rise of populism and Brexit to two main forces backgrounds. One side is the cultural backlash, which stems from anti-immigration, racial resentment, and authoritarian attitudes; the second side is economic insecurity, which is caused by global financial crises, the recession of the neoliberal growth model and the erosion of trust in established politics and politicians. Rodrik (2019) argued that economic reasons have a direct effect on anti-elite politics, while cultural issues have a causal indirect effect. Rodríguez-Pose (2020: p.5) also shows the cleavage between cultural and economic among the reasons of populist backlash, according to it cultural variables created by generational change and economic insecurity created by inequalities between individuals.

While cultural anxieties, such as those related to immigration and multiculturalism, may drive support for populism among certain groups, economic insecurities resulting from globalisation, technological change, and financial crises also play a significant role in fuelling populist sentiments. However, it's crucial to recognise that these factors are not mutually exclusive; rather, they often intersect and reinforce each other. The next section delves into these intertwined dynamics.

2.3.3. Globalisation, neoliberalism, inequality: interconnected drivers

When we look at the sources of the recent populist movements in the US and Europe, we see that the changes that have taken place since the 90s,

whether economic or cultural, have not satisfied some segments of the population and that this dissatisfaction has not found a political addressee or overlooked by mainstream parties. This provided a fertile ground for anti-establishment parties to flourish. Moreover, while neoliberalism may create fertile ground for discontent, its influence is not deterministic. Neoliberalism's impact is varied and shaped by national and local conditions, meaning that places may respond differently to neoliberal pressures. Thus, while neoliberalism may create structural conditions conducive to populism, the rise of populism is also a product of national and local political dynamics and the way national and regional actors interpret and act upon neoliberal changes (Le Galès, 2016).

The culture versus economy debate creates a clear distinction within populism, but it also fails to acknowledge the common ground underlying both aspects. As a result, it leads to the existence of different populisms. However, despite the differences between countries, there is an interconnected area where the last wave of populism as a phenomenon is interconnected. This interconnectedness is the process of globalisation (Rodrik, 2021) and neoliberalisation (Brenner et al., 2010; Harvey, 2007) which are among the drivers of inequality (Jessop, 2018) and the starting point of long-term decline for some regions (McCann, 2020).

We have seen mentions of globalisation as in the root of populism (Acemoglu, 2020; Rodrik, 2018a). Furthermore, although neoliberalism is not shown among the sources of populism alone, we can see its elements shown under cultural, economic, and political sources. However, this approach avoids emphasising the importance of the elements associated with neoliberalism. Emphasis on neoliberalism alone is essential to have a coherent understanding of the recent historical course and to correctly read the populist increase after 2008. There are four economic policies that define neoliberalism according to Montier and Pilkington (2017): "the abandonment of full employment as a desirable policy goal and its replacement with inflation targeting; an increase in the globalisation of the flows of people, capital, and trade; a focus at a firm-level on shareholder

value maximisation rather than reinvestment and growth; and the pursuit of flexible labour markets and the disruption of trade unions and workers' organisations." The negativities caused by these policies and the solutions that were brought especially after the 2008 crisis proved that the system was dysfunctional, causing people to revolt against the system and vote for populist political candidates.

However, more than imposed 'from above', neoliberalism is also shaped by national and local socio-political dynamics. Patrick Le Galès (2016) argues that while neoliberalism has played a significant role in transforming urban spaces, it should not be viewed solely as a global force imposed on cities or regions. Instead, cities actively participate in and negotiate neoliberal policies, leading to varied outcomes depending on local capacities and political agency. Thus, we see that neoliberalism, in addition to its inequality-creating effect, also has an unequal effect on places. So, the effect of neoliberal policies rather than being uniformly negative, both imposed and adapted (Le Galès, 2016). For example, Mamonova and Franquesa (2019) highlight that neoliberalism's effects in Europe are uneven and vary by local context. They emphasize that regional factors, such as political history and local economic structures, shape how neoliberalism is experienced in different rural areas. For instance, the structural crisis brought by neoliberalism manifests more acutely in rural regions due to the neglect of local needs and priorities by national policies aligned with neoliberal frameworks.

Uneven characteristics of neoliberalism and globalisation are commonly highlighted. This uneven character is mostly expressed in the economic area. According to Stiglitz (2024: p.2), the important note for neoliberalism, after being a predominant ideology for 40 years, is its failure to deliver promised faster and more stable growth, resulting in increased well-being for all, as advocated by its proponents, and instead being associated with lower overall growth and heightened economic inequality. Harvey (2010: p.28) gave examples of how countries produced income inequalities by adopting neoliberal practices. Also, Krugman (2008: p.134) argues that as

a feature of globalisation, the rise in imports of manufactured goods from developing countries has contributed to an increase in inequality and long-term decline in former industrial regions in the developed nations. The phenomenon of trade openness engenders individuals or groups facing adverse outcomes, representing not an anomaly but rather an outcome consistently observed across various models, particularly those wherein labour lacks mobility among sectors and regions (Rodrik, 2018a: p.3).

The advantages derived from globalisation have manifested disparately (Rodrik, 2018a: p.16), with capital owners predominantly accruing the benefits of this disparity in distribution. The implicit assumption was that wealth diffusion would occur once advantages for capital were prioritised and secured. The lack of such diffusion has sparked public discontent, creating fertile ground for populist movements to rally around perceived injustices. This discontent emerges not only from neoliberal policies imposed 'from above' but also from those actively adopted and implemented by governments. In this way, populism has used the widening political divide between the winners and losers of globalisation. Here, the losers confront the cultural dimension of globalisation with xenophobic and anti-immigrant claims combined with exclusivist nationalism.

Neoliberalism and its adaptation by governments produces both winners and losers in globalization (Lamp, 2020). It is not just an economic project but also an ideological one, aiming to convince us that there is no alternative (Hadjimichalis, 2011: p.267). This leads a convergence of centre-left and centre-right parties on neoliberal policies which result centre-left parties in leaving traditional left and labour class policies and advocates unrepresented. According to Berman and Snegovaya (2019: p.8), who studied a similar point with left politics, with the left's shift to the centre on economic issues and acceptance of neoliberal policies, voters turned to anti-system parties, thinking that traditional left parties no longer represented their complaints. Another result is the utilisation of state power by neoliberalism for top-down planning policies, which fosters a perception among individuals that their involvement in decision-making processes is

diminished. Similarly, Iammarino et al. (2017: p.21) also argue uneven development has been the main factor behind the rise of populism throughout Europe, including the Brexit vote.

Although Fraser (2017) argued Trump's election victory over the Brexit decision, the parties that have a say in the European governments are marking the collapse of neoliberal hegemony; according to Peck and Theodore (2019: p.262), neoliberalism, in its contemporary authoritarian forms, seeks to establish viable governance conditions and distorted forms of popular consent. While it cannot be denied that these are representing populist movements, whether they are neoliberal is debatable. Neoliberalism's changeable nature, taking different forms in the region where neo-liberalism is applied, and its ability to be articulated in different political movements make it difficult to define its role here. According to Peck and Theodore (2019: p.263), in the Trump era, neoliberal policies continued unabated even if they did not accelerate. At the same time, Jessop (2019) argues that combined with Poulantzas's concept of authoritarian statism, neoliberal regime changes go hand in hand with authoritarian populist and authoritarian statism discourses and practices. Moreover, Bruff (2014) describes the increasing populism after the Great Recession as the rising authoritarian neoliberalism. While this authoritarisation transforms the state into a less democratic entity with further legal changes in the name of economic necessity, at the same time, the state becomes fragile by becoming the target of popular demand, discontent, and struggles.

Another effect of neoliberalism that contributed to the populism that emerged in the 2008 crisis was that it also prevents intervention towards a solution. According to Sandbu, as Tomaney (2020) stated, contrary to the expansion and rising standards of living after the Second World War, after the Great Recession, we see, with the multiplier effect of the pandemic lately, inequality increased, incomes fell, and productivity growth slowed down. This change in the uneven redistribution of global income formed the basis of a populist extortion policy claiming that the right of livelihood was

stolen by foreigners. Moreover, Hadjimichalis (2011: p.256) argued that the EU is unable to handle the crises because of neoliberal implementation and pacts like the Lisbon Pact, which prohibits any intervention to help national economies facing a crisis.

In this case, it is an expected tendency for societies to show an anti-elite stance by seeing transnational organisations as the culprit of the crisis with the perception that the IMF and the EU protect the capital and force the worker to austerity, that is, increasing inequality and expanding neoliberal practices. Besides the inequality that neoliberalism and globalisation have created, the 2008 crisis further undermined the promises of this transformation, and the austerity policies implemented afterwards caused the mentioned classes to become victims of this order more deeply (Cox, 2018).

While neoliberalism has served as the dominant global framework for fostering economic growth over the past 40 years, on the other hand, it has contributed to geographical inequality and has sowed seeds of the financial crisis through deregulation (Tomaney et al., 2010: p.771). So, while waiting for the neoliberal model to be reformed after the 2008 crisis, it continued its dominance, and even a more radical model was adopted at the expense of further crushing of people. While austerity policies increased the feeling of economic insecurity among the middle class and have further exposed the regional inequality in the UK (MacKinnon, 2017: p.141), the mainstream parties not forming an alternative model created an environment for populist parties to flourish (Brown, 2020: p.6). After the 2008 crisis, neoliberalisation as a form of regulatory restructuring (Brenner et al., 2010: p.330) intensified, and the separation and discontent it had generated over the years increased and deepened. However, the perceived inequality and discontent were not attributed to neoliberalism. Despite the neoliberal order that has been operating for years, according to Peck (2010), it is worth noting that economic failures are still linked to unions, incompetent bureaucrats, and invasive regulations.

In summary, in the literature, cultural and economic reasons are placed at opposite positions, which, while offering some explanation of varieties of populism, covers the interconnected nature of the concept. In the realm of European politics, we understand that in terms of economic policy, the left and right centres were oriented towards neoliberal policies, but the cultural-political divide persisted, the left more liberal and the right more conservative. The argument that populists garnered support primarily based on cultural differences could be plausible if established parties did not already diverge on cultural issues. However, the reality is that these parties were already entrenched in separate cultural stances, providing voters with a discernible choice in this domain. Conversely, in the economic sphere, where centrist parties advocated for neoliberal policies, a dearth of alternative economic platforms emerged for the electorate. This vacuum was subsequently filled by populist parties, thereby addressing the economic-political void. It is imperative to note, however, that this economic explanation does not diminish the significance of cultural factors. On the contrary, sources are interrelated to greater or lesser degrees in different places over time based on historical evolution and context. So, these explanations overlap, and the real reason, the reason perceived by the public, and the reasons instrumentalised by populist politics may be intertwined. These difficulties make it complicated to distinguish these causes.

Beyond conventional cultural and economic explanations, the interconnected effects of globalisation and neoliberalisation can account for the rise of populism in all of its forms. Globalisation and neoliberalisation, which maximise corporate wealth and flexible labour markets, produce winners and losers in the economy and create discontent. This has been reinforced by mainstream parties, making disadvantaged groups feel unrepresented and without an alternative. However, neoliberalism is not merely imposed but is often actively adopted and adapted by national and local governments, who modify its principles to align with national and regional goals and conditions. These policies and implementations have become more intense in the post-2008 era, with the growth of populist

parties as alternative voices and economic uncertainty being fuelled by austerity policies and the lack of alternative models from mainstream parties.

2.3.4. Introducing the variegations of populism: toward a holistic understanding

In exploring the multifaceted nature of populism, its characteristics of territorial differentiation, ideological articulation and influence by local setting and context make it impossible to identify as a singular and universal model. Moreover, as mentioned above, the different responses of governments to common causes of populism create divisions. Thus, populism, rather than conforming to a static and predetermined framework, exhibits a variegated nature that is dynamic and subject to change over time.

Our approach is inspired by Peck (2023b)'s variegated capitalism theorisation, which critiques the varieties of capitalism approach which categorises national political economies into two ideal types: liberal market economies (LMEs) and coordinated market economies (CMEs) (Hall and Sockice, 2001), by highlighting its focus on taxonomic differences between different national systems. The variegated capitalism perspective argues that merely cataloguing institutional features and attributing economic dynamics to these institutional differences fails to capture the interconnectedness between different forms of capitalism (Peck, 2023b: p.124). One of the main criticisms is that the varieties approach tends to treat each form of capitalism as isolated and independent without adequately addressing the connections and interdependencies between them (Peck and Theodore, 2007: p.763). Variegated capitalism emphasises the need to consider the relationships between different forms of capitalism, such as the co-dependency between Chinese capitalism and American capitalism. Furthermore, variegated capitalism criticises the varieties approach for its taxonomic nature, arguing that it merely categorises

differences without fully understanding the underlying phenomena (Peck, 2023b: p.103). Instead of viewing capitalism as a static set of institutional features, variegated capitalism sees it as a dynamic and interconnected system with various forms that are variegated but interconnected (Peck, 2023b: p.123).

In the light of the variegated capitalism approach of Peck (2023b), our nuanced understanding challenges the literature that seeks to neatly categorise populist movements into distinct ideological boxes. Instead, I call for an appreciation of the interconnectedness and interdependence of different manifestations of populism across various territorial settings not focusing on only national scale.

The notion of variegated populism acknowledges the diversity inherent within populist movements, recognising that they can take on different forms and ideologies depending on historical contexts, socio-economic conditions, and cultural landscapes. For instance, the evolution of populist parties from advocating for neoliberal policies to embracing interventionist measures exemplifies the dynamic nature of populism. This shift underscores the fluidity of populist agendas and their responsiveness to changing political and economic realities.

Furthermore, variegated populism challenges the simplistic binary of left-wing versus right-wing populism by highlighting the overlapping characteristics and shared grievances that transcend ideological divides. While left-wing populism may focus on challenging economic elites and advocating for social justice, right-wing populism often targets cultural diversity and immigration as threats to national identity. However, both strands of populism capitalise on anti-establishment sentiment and a promise to represent the interests of the common people.

Moreover, the variegated nature of populism underscores the importance of recognising the complex interplay between economic and cultural factors in driving support for populist movements. While economic insecurities stemming from globalisation and technological change may fuel populist

sentiments, cultural anxieties related to immigration and multiculturalism also play a significant role. These factors are not mutually exclusive but often intersect and reinforce each other, shaping the trajectory of populist politics in diverse ways.

In embracing the variegation of populism, it is essential to adopt a dynamic perspective that acknowledges its ever-evolving nature. Populist movements are not static entities but dynamic processes that adapt and evolve in response to shifting political landscapes and socio-economic conditions. By rejecting the notion of a singular, universal model of populism and embracing its variegated nature, we gain a deeper understanding of its complexities and nuances. This nuanced perspective enables us to navigate the intricacies of populist politics more effectively and to foster dialogue across diverse ideological divides.

Furthermore, the illustration of how populism is interrelated with the uneven development of capitalism through neoliberalisation and globalisation serves as a crucial point of connection within this variegated framework. The interconnected effects of neoliberal policies and globalisation, which produce winners and losers in the economy, contribute to the fertile ground for the rise of populist ideas in certain regions and among specific demographics. This integrated approach bridges the varieties of territorial differentiation of Latin America versus Europe and cultural versus economic reasons with the variegations of populism, offering a comprehensive understanding of the underlying factors shaping the landscape of contemporary politics.

2.4. Geography of populism: regional patterns

Populism finds groups to blame for the results, with or without real connection. Those accused are generally foreigners on the right and generally elites on the left, but there are no strict lines between these subjects and causes. These groups to blame can be deduced from the

economic and cultural indicators. Economic regression can be attributed to external factors influencing decisions with globalisation and increasing immigration, or culturally, changing culture with immigrants, or a change in traditional values with increased cosmopolitanism. Populism mobilises these existing or perceived explanations. One of the questions that arises at this point is who votes for populists?

This question has been analysed extensively in the literature, and an explanation has emerged that focuses on specific individual inequalities. Van Hauwaert and Kessel (2018: p.77-80) found that individuals with an above-average populist attitude tend to align with parties that offer populist agendas, challenging the perception that populist voters are apolitical; instead, they are politically engaged but express lower satisfaction with democracy. Furthermore, the study revealed that left-wing economic and culturally liberal voters gravitate towards left-wing populist parties, while those with authoritarian and anti-immigrant views are more likely to support right-wing populist parties for economic or cultural reasons. Another study reveals populist party supporters are middle- or working-class men who are either too young or too old with few educational qualifications. Populist extremism is weak among individuals with a university-level education who feel economically more secure (Goodwin, 2011: p.6). Beyond these, one definition that has been highly influential in this context is Ford and Goodwin's (2014) use of left-behind voters to describe "older, working-class, white voters, citizens with few qualifications, who live on low incomes and lack the skills that are required to adapt and prosper amid the modern, post-industrial economy."

However, voting schemes offered by individual analysis like these often leave blurring points, for example, in New York, and Los Angeles, the poorest parts of ghettos, along with the upper classes, vote for Hillary Clinton, and "the inhabitants of the HLMs (Habitations à loyer modéré or public housing) in the suburbs of northern and north-eastern Paris" did not vote for Le Pen (Rodríguez-Pose, 2018: p.201), or as indicated by Rodríguez-Pose (2020: 6) 'the very wealthy suburbs of West Philadelphia

voted for Hillary Clinton alongside the deprived Philadelphia Badlands to the north of the City' while these disadvantaged groups expected to vote for populist candidates. The situation was no different for London; UKIP only showed success in the areas which are historical instances of the National Front and the British National Party (Evans et al., 2019: p.11), but not in most deprived areas in London.

Moreover, Rodríguez-Pose (2020) found in his work that rising populism is not attributed to increasing inter-individual inequality or merely interregional inequality but to the revenge of people living in places that have seen much better times. So, Rodríguez-Pose put this as that it is the "places that don't matter, not the people that don't matter" (Rodríguez-Pose, 2020: p. 201). Populist voting in lagging regions in countries where populism rises suggests that populist appearance and advancement are not explained by class politics or interpersonal inequalities but by the left-behind, declining regions. Thus, the topic of 'geography of discontent', referring to the unhappiness experienced by people living in a mix of regions of stagnation and low productivity (Dijkstra et al., 2020: p.744), has opened up a new and important space for explaining the populist backlash.

2.4.1. Importance of regional dimension

Various studies examining populism through a regional lens contribute nuanced insights to the broader debates on the roots of populism and who votes for populists. Essletzbichler et al. (2018) emphasise the significance of economic variables at the subnational level, revealing that economic factors perform well in explaining the subnational variation in both the Brexit and Trump votes. They highlight the role of politics surrounding anti-immigrant sentiments and attribute populist support to unsuccessful economic policies. The study identifies regions with rising immigrant shares, old industrial areas, smaller regions, and those slow to recover from the Great Recession as having higher populist voting rates (Essletzbichler et al., 2018: p.73). McCann (2016) similarly revealed that populist votes were

concentrated in places that experienced prolonged economic decline. Jennings and Stoker (2016) made the 'Two Englands' analogy to this issue. Accordingly, as a result of the inequalities created by global economic developments, there is a division between multicultural, liberal, and more global cosmopolitan regions and relatively illiberal, more local in identity and negative about immigration and the EU provincial backwaters, especially in the post-industrial North and Wales as well as seaside towns, especially on the East coast (Boswell et al., 2020: p.5). Furthermore, according to Wilkinson (2019), globalisation, technological development and other economic changes have benefited urban areas, especially mega-cities. This is expanding cultural gaps between urban-rural areas, smaller cities, and towns. This dynamic provides fertile ground for the rise of right-wing populism. In essence, urban centres become spaces where multicultural and liberal values thrive, while rural and smaller urban centres tend to adhere to more conservative and less diverse values, as argued by Wilkinson (2019).

Lee et al. (2017) underscores the regional dimension, presenting the populist trend as a reaction to globalisation's effects. From an economic standpoint, some cities and regions benefited from globalisation's economic development, while others felt left-behind, exemplified by the populist reaction to Brexit. This regional divide is also evident in the context of immigration, where globalisation-induced migration diversified previously homogeneous communities, prompting populist reactions in certain regions (Lee et al., 2017: p.3). On the same topic, Acemoglu (2020) attributes rising populist movements to left-behind people or places which the established order could not or did not want to protect and which were established as a result of globalisation and the rise of its technologies which have led to rapid social change, with inequalities and economic disruption brought about by un-shared gains.

The association of this regional dimension with populism has revealed that the explanation for the votes of populist movements can be related to space. Studies have also focused on the US and European countries where

populist backlash has emerged. In this context, among European countries, the UK is one of the countries with the highest interregional inequality (MacKinnon, 2020; Pike et al., 2020b; McCann, 2020), and the increasing success of populist parties and especially Brexit, have made it one of the most important cases studied in the region-populism relationship. Hence, there is some research about the regional dimension of populism in the UK. Apart from the UK, we can see the economic and cultural effects of neoliberalism and the acceptance of the region-populism relationship as an academic case in the USA, in Europe and elsewhere in the world.

Among these studies, many cultural-economic or intertwined but regional causes have been highlighted, according to Bell and Machin (2016), the spatial distribution of Leave votes in Brexit was correlated with low and stagnating real wage levels. Fetzer (2019) finds that places which are more vulnerable to import competition from low-income countries show substantially greater support for the option to Leave. According to Becker et al. (2016), austerity, immigration, demographic characteristics, and industrial structure presented as having an effect on the Brexit vote. Colantone and Stanig (2016) also analysed Brexit and find while the regions that were more affected by the impact of the import from China voted for Leave, those who were more affected at the level of the individuals also voted for Leave with the participation of different conditions such as education. Ballard-rosa et al. (2021) also find from an original survey of the British population indicate that residents in areas where the local job market was notably influenced by Chinese imports exhibit a notable increase in authoritarian values.

Jennings and Stoker (2019) claim that places that have lived through economic decline have become more closed; on the contrary, places with relative economic growth have become more socially liberal. In the Brexit vote, the distinction between the cities, which are enriched by the globalised knowledge economy, and the periphery, which consists of rural areas and towns, was observed. The city-town divide in the UK plays a role in the political divide between the cosmopolitan view, which advocates greater

global openness, and communitarianism, which advocates national sovereignty and tighter borders. In this context, Labour increased its votes in places that showed the least economic decline, whereas, in regions with high economic decline, it lost votes between 2005 and 2017. Conservatives, on the other hand, increased their votes in falling regions and followed a reverse trend (Jennings and Stoker, 2019: p.160).

Iammarino et al. (2017) introduce the opposition between developed and lagging regions as a driving force behind populism throughout Europe and the UK, emphasising the regional disparities fuelling populist sentiments. Also on the EU, Dijkstra et al.'s (2020) study shows that the anti-EU vote in the EU-28 is mainly a result of local economic and industrial decline, with low employment and a less educated workforce.

In the US, similar to Europe, some features stand out in the regional dimension of populism. Autor et al. (2016) argued that the Chinese trade shock has influenced the political polarisation in the United States, with the regions more affected by the shock turning more to the right and left. Moreover, Bayerlein (2020) argues that populist voting can be partially explained by the spatial inequality brought about by globalisation, wherein certain regions experience significant benefits from global integration, while others, less involved in the globalised economy, face marginalisation and left-behind.

While numerous studies have provided valuable insights into the regional dynamics of populism, particularly highlighting the role of economic, cultural, and spatial inequalities, this body of work often stops short of examining the multifaceted ways in which these inequalities interact at a subnational level. Many analyses, for instance, underscore the importance of economic decline or anti-immigrant sentiment but fail to account for how these factors are contextually mediated by local histories and socio-political conditions. This limitation points to a gap in the literature: a need to move beyond aggregated national perspectives and towards a framework that can capture the layered and regionally distinct drivers of populism. By doing so,

the current study seeks to address this gap, moving from a general understanding of populist voting patterns to a nuanced, multi-scalar analysis that will investigate how development trajectories, regional identities, and political representation converge to shape local expressions of populist discontent. This approach aims to 'redraw the map' of populist dynamics, building on existing knowledge while advancing a more context-sensitive understanding that aligns with the empirical analysis to follow.

2.4.2. Left-behind places and geography of discontent

It is possible to expand these studies, but if we focus our attention on what they have in common, we see the regions that are disadvantaged by the inequalities and long-term decline created by globalisation and neoliberalisation. These regions emerged as left-behind regions by combining the concept of left-behind applied by Ford and Goodwin (2014) at the individual level with the explanatory power of the regional dimension. From this point of view, left-behind is attributed to a place that is associated with economic decline. Thus, in the regional dimension, in MacKinnon (2023)'s definition "left-behind acts as a shorthand label for places experiencing economic stagnation or decline, particularly post-industrial districts and rural areas marginalised by the concentration of skilled knowledge economy jobs in cities."

No agreed, clear definition or criteria to identify left-behind places exist (Martin et al., 2021), but there are different dimensions of it. Left-behind regions are marked by significant economic underperformance, resulting in lower living standards, evidenced by low pay and employment rates. These areas, often linked to historical factors such as deindustrialisation and long-term unemployment, exhibit poor productivity and relatively poor population health. In this multifaceted analysis, indicators encompassing employment rates, pay, health, and formal education collectively capture the complex nature of inequality between these regions. Broadly categorised, left-behind areas include towns, former industrial regions with

persistent unemployment, coastal towns experiencing declines in fishing or tourism, and isolated rural areas. Coined within a geography of discontent, the term left-behind denotes economically lagging and declining regions, encompassing social, demographic, political, and cultural concerns. These areas are also sometimes characterised by factors such as lower education levels, poverty, out-migration, poor health, limited infrastructure, and political disengagement (Davenport and Zaranko, 2020; Martin et al., 2022a; Pike et al., 2023; MacKinnon et al., 2021). Places may contain a measure or more among these for to be left-behind.

The explanatory power of left-behind places is also reflected in the literature. Rodríguez-Pose (2020), Hendrickson et al. (2018), McCann (2016; 2020) and Dijkstra et al. (2020) depict rising populism as a reaction of people in regions experiencing prolonged economic downturns, recognising it as a sentiment concentrated in left-behind regions.

In addition to examining the regional dimension of populism, its connection with neoliberalism, globalisation and different response of governments to these processes that foster inequality has also found a place in the literature. Peck and Theodore (2019: p.257) argue that the rise of neoliberal reactionary politics, particularly in left-behind places, is not coincidental for countries grappling with populism. MacKinnon (2020; 2017: p.144) expands on this perspective by attributing the Brexit vote to the impact of globalisation and neoliberal economic policies, which left post-industrial regions, notably the North and Midlands of England, feeling impoverished and neglected. The concept of left-behind places, reflecting a considerable portion of contemporary socio-economic spaces, underscores the inadequacy of the neoliberal focus on 'winning' sectors and undifferentiated 'place-based' funding schemes for less developed regions. According to Martin et al. (2022: p.14), these policies have proven generally ineffective, benefiting only a few regions already well-equipped with social and institutional capital. Together, these perspectives highlight the interconnectedness of regional disparities, populism, and the impact of

neoliberal policies, particularly in fostering discontent and the rise of reactionary politics in marginalised areas.

2.4.3. Left-behindness: complementing the stats

As stated before, to understand populism, there is awareness that there are different segments for reasons like the real reason, the reason perceived by the public, and the reasons instrumentalised by populist politics which can be found together or separately. When defining left-behind regions, we talked about some statistical and mathematical aspects, such as economic decline, population loss, low education rates, etc. But what was also insisted upon in the literature were the perceptions and feeling of being left-behind beyond these mathematical and statistical indicators. In my view, unlike the economic and statistical approach, which tends to have a narrower scope, the label left-behindness refers to a more broadly defined situation by adding perception and feelings, which broadens the discussion of left-behind places and also contributes to interdependence and interconnectedness of the populist causes.

Rodríguez-Pose (2018: p.190) defined the reaction of the left-behind regions as 'rebelling against the feeling of being left-behind; against the feeling of lacking opportunities and future prospects'. This sentiment is further elucidated in the assertion that areas witnessing a prolonged decline, migration, and brain drain, those reminiscing about better times, and those repeatedly told that their future lies elsewhere utilise the ballot box as a tool to express their discontent with the establishment (Rodríguez-Pose, 2018: p.200). One of the salient points here is that the populist reaction is explained by a sense of left-behind and hopelessness about the future, in addition to statistical negativity.

Importantly, Rodríguez-Pose (2018: p.201) argues that, even when considering long-term economic and industrial decline, it is often the relatively well-off individuals in well-paid jobs or with pensions who align

with populist movements. Other than him, Gordon (2018) argues that populist votes reflect a revolt against perceived prosperity in certain regions by those who feel left-behind. Cox (2018: p.12) argues the feeling of powerlessness that ordinary citizens felt as a result of changes in their environment, the feeling of having no control and the inability of Western politicians to respond to these changes manifested itself as the support of populist movements that promised to restore power. Result of focus group of Warren (2018: p.96), people in the Tees Valley where among populist discontent in the UK, think that the political establishment is neglecting the North and Northeast to serve the interests of London and the Southeast. Therefore, the increase in populist voting often stems from perception in addition to statistics. Rising populism is fuelled by perceived injustice rather than mere inequality, as those who voted for immigrant hostility are from places with the least immigrant population (Melin and Enarsson, 2018). The fear of having no future leads to populist political consequences (Rodríguez-Pose, 2018: p.196). It is not inequality alone but perceived injustice that triggers populism (Rodrik, 2018a).

2.4.4. Regional variegation of populism

In exploring the intricate geography of populism, it becomes evident that the variegated nature of populist movements extends beyond ideological divisions, encompassing a nuanced understanding of spatial differentiation, historical context, and socio-economic dynamics. Drawing on Peck's (2023b) conceptualisation of variegation as an approach to spatial difference and specificity, we delve into the complexities of why populist politics manifest in particular places and times, emphasising the need for a conjectural, dynamic and multi-scalar analysis. A geographical approach to variegation allows for a nuanced understanding of the combinations of underlying factors that contribute to populism in specific regions. Moreover, to fulfil this aim, we adopt the idea of Subrahmanyam (2005), "redraw maps that emerge from the problematics we study rather than invent

problematics to fit our pre-existent cartographies." So, my approach suggests a methodology that prioritises understanding the complexities and nuances of populist movements as they naturally unfold in diverse socio-economic and cultural contexts. Rather than imposing preconceived notions or categorisations onto populist phenomena, this approach seeks to dynamically engage with the multifaceted nature of populism and its spatial differentiation.

Variegation, as a theoretical framework, acknowledges the socially and spatially differentiated character (Peck, 2023b: p.104) of populist phenomena. It recognises that populism emerges in diverse contexts shaped by historical legacies, contemporary conjunctures, and localised grievances. Unlike static models, variegated populism embraces the temporality and spatiality of political dynamics, understanding that populist movements evolve over time and manifest differently across various geographical scales. At its core, understanding the regional variegation of populism requires moving beyond simplistic national-level analyses. Instead, it necessitates a multi-scalar approach that accounts for the complex interplay of factors at local, regional, and global levels.

Moreover, understanding the regional variegation of populism allows us to uncover the underlying structural inequalities and power dynamics that shape political outcomes. It highlights the importance of historical trajectories, institutional configurations, and localised forms of resistance in shaping the contours of populist politics. By contextualising populist movements within their spatial dimensions, we can better grasp the complex socio-economic processes that drive political discontent and mobilisation.

On the one hand, variegated populism reflects how populism is shaped by global and national influences and, crucially, by the inherent adaptability of populist discourse. This approach allows for a holistic understanding of populism, recognizing that it's more than a fixed ideology - it's a responsive and evolving discourse. On the other hand, regional variegations highlight

the unique, place-specific forms of populism as influenced by local socio-political and economic factors. Here, the concept does not just consider populism's inherent flexibility but examines how specific regional histories, cultural identities, and economic conditions give rise to distinct expressions of populism. This, the distinction between variegated populism and regional variegations of populism lies in that while variegated populism refers to the adaptable nature of populism in general, regional variegations of populism pertain to how this adaptability takes on unique characteristics in specific places. The distinction between variegated populism and regional variegations of populism can also be understood through a top-down versus bottom-up perspective. Variegated populism operates as a top-down framework, reflecting how populism's flexible discourse adapts to broad national or global conditions, shaped by overarching ideological and political trends. In contrast, regional variegations of populism are more bottom-up, as they capture how localized factors - such as regional grievances, identities, and economic histories - shape populism's expression uniquely within specific regions. This bottom-up approach shows how regional contexts actively shape and reinterpret populist discourse to address their specific concerns and experiences.

In this context, overarching idea of populism acts as a flexible framework and is adapted to fit various ideological, national, and regional contexts rather than having an adjective before it such as right-wing, Latin American, authoritarian, cultural. This 'core' populism could be understood as a discourse or political tactic centred on a few fundamental principles: the division between 'the people' and 'the elite,' the prioritization of the people's will, and opposition to established power structures. These foundational elements provide the basis for populism's variegation. This overarching populism serves as a baseline that can be moulded by different socio-political, cultural, and economic contexts, giving rise to its 'variegated' expressions. For instance, the core populist framework can adapt to forms such as American populism, often blending nationalism with economic grievances (Inglehart and Norris, 2016); economic populism, which prioritises wealth redistribution and challenges to corporate elites (World

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Bank, 2023); or democratic populism, which advocates for direct public engagement in politics (Wiesehomeier & Ruth-Lovell, 2024). These variations enable populism to address specific regional grievances and identities, resulting in distinct regional variegations shaped by local histories, economic conditions, and cultural contexts.

At this point, we introduce that the settings and context that influence the regional variegation of populism are grouped around three main factors. The first factor is the trajectory of development. The effectiveness of the regional development trajectories in explaining populism has been observed in the literature about the characterisation of left-behind places (Pike et al., 2023; MacKinnon et al., 2021) and in explaining the rise of populism in certain regions with being left-behind (Rodríguez-Pose, 2018; Rodríguez-Pose et al., 2023). The second main factor is regional identities, which are shaped by historical contexts and the specific socio-economic conditions of a region. So, the analyses consider the time and place dependency of information when analysing. We have witnessed two debates in the literature that point to the role of regional identity. The first is the association of discontented or left-behind regions with places that have experienced better times in the past and have a high sense of nostalgia and place attachment (Rodríguez-Pose, 2018; Martin et al., 2021; Tomaney et al., 2023). Secondly, in urban versus rural or city versus town debates where rural and town are defined as being prone to populist voting and being left-behind (MacKinnon, 2023; Jennings and Stoker, 2019). The third factor is political representation (Rodrik, 2018a), which reflects the space in which populism emerges as a crisis, reflecting a moment and process of formation (Hay, 1996), and emerges as a social and political formation and plays a role in the reproduction of the crisis. In our framework, political representation reflects the convergence of mainstream parties' policies towards neoliberalism, resulting in a shift towards alternative parties by those who feel unrepresented. This trend is particularly pronounced in regions with a social democratic tradition, where voters turn to different parties due to the perception that their votes are taken for granted. By adopting a variegated perspective, we can 'redraw maps' of populist politics

that reflect the complex geography of these movements, taking into account development trajectory, regional identities and political representation.

2.5. Conclusion, aims, contributions and research questions

In particular, the rise of populism, highlighted by the UK's exit from the European Union and the election of Trump as the President of the United States in 2016, has sparked numerous debates and intensified discussions on the ongoing threat of populism in strong European democracies. Within this context, this chapter delves into a literature review, beginning with the definition of populism, its political representation, and the demographics of those supporting populist movements.

In the course of these discussions, after demonstrating that the debate on the causes of populism is dominated by the economy vs culture debate, our first contribution to this debate is to offer an integrated approach to this dichotomous approach. In order to broaden the debate caught between these two explanations, our contribution moves beyond conceptually differentiated populisms, moving from varieties of populism to variegated populism, focusing on its dynamic, interconnected and conjunctural nature. Related to this, the second contribution is introducing variegations of populism to expand the debate on the causes of populism by examining this interconnected nature through uneven capitalist development through globalisation and neoliberalisation.

In the literature, examinations of populism focus on national cases and discussions on the explanation of those who support populist movements often centre on the individual dimension, prominently featuring the concept of the left-behind. However, acknowledging the shortcomings and limited explanatory power of the individual dimension, our third contribution is to examine the spatial dimension with a focus on sub-national units as an aspect that has been largely overlooked. Furthermore, while economic and statistical approaches often have a narrower scope, our focus broadens with

the label left-behindness, incorporating perceptions and feelings alongside statistical indicators. In this light, our fourth contribution highlights that the increase in populist voting often stems from perceptions of injustice rather than mere economic inequality, elucidating the complex interplay between perceived injustice, feelings of being left-behind, and the rise of populism.

Finally, the fifth contribution is the conceptualisation of the regional variegation of populism, which we have presented with the explanatory power of the regional dimension. Exploring the intricate geography of populism reveals its variegated nature, shaped by spatial differentiation, historical context, and socio-economic dynamics. By adopting a variegated perspective, this approach highlights the importance of development trajectories, regional identities, and political representation in understanding the complex and dynamic manifestations of populist movements across different regions.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY, A GEOGRAPHICAL POLITICAL ECONOMY APPROACH THROUGH COMPARATIVE CASE STUDIES

3.1. Introduction

Research design is important in order to answer the research questions posed for the project in a logical, effective and comprehensive manner. This design creates a plan for collecting, measuring and analysing data. According to Yin (2018), "the design is the logical sequence that connects the empirical data to a study's initial research questions and, ultimately, to its conclusions." This process involves what questions to study, what data are relevant, what data to collect, how to analyse the data and how to interpret the results.

In the light of debates, gaps and contributions mentioned in the former chapter, the overall aim of the research is to understand and examine the relationship between the left-behindness of particular regions with rising regional disparities and rising populist movements. Moreover, the research aims to offer a more holistic and interconnected understanding of populism by exploring variegated regional populism, the regional dimension, old industrial regions, and the inequalities that contribute to its rise in contemporary democracies. In this context, the project focuses on how variegated populism at the regional level emerges and differs and aims to uncover and compare these processes. Specifically, the project will address the following research questions (RQs):

1) Based on the characteristic features of left-behind regions, what determines right-wing populist votes in Germany and England?

2) How is populist discourse produced and transformed into regional expression in media and politics, and how does this vary between cases?

3) How is the relationship between left-behindness and populism perceived by regional actors and experts?

In order to fulfil this aim, the research will conduct case studies in a comparative framework; also, taking a Geographical Political Economy perspective, we use mixed-method research in order to build up a complete picture. For this purpose, the research combines extensive research with quantitative analysis of regression analysis of populism and characteristics of left-behindness, and intensive research with qualitative analysis of discourse analysis of local newspapers and political leadership and semi-structured interviews. In general, this chapter explains the data collection, the data analysis, and the data interpretation procedures, discussion, and strategies for validating findings.

After this introduction, in the second section, I will show how this research is grounded in a geographical political economy and critical realism, theoretically and epistemologically. The third, fourth, and fifth sections present our standing on intensive and extensive research methodology, as well as explanations of case studies and comparative frameworks as part of the research. The sixth section discusses the selection of the two cases with a focus on case selection criteria and investigation of possible countries and regions. In the focus of selection criteria, Duisburg from Germany and Tees Valley from England are selected as case studies. The seventh section enlightens how the mixed-method research is conducted, which data sources are used, how they are analysed, and how their validation is issued. The ethics and conclusion sections are the last sections.

3.2. Philosophical grounding - Geographical political economy

The philosophical stance has an important place in the research, as Yeung (1997: p.54) puts it: "We need a philosophy to inform our practice and, at the same time, through our practice, we would inform our philosophy in dialectical ways". The research focuses on how populism at the regional

level emerges, differs, and variegated. Also, the research aims to uncover and compare these processes. In order to achieve these goals, it is necessary to emphasise the dependence of knowledge on time, place and context. Moreover, it is important to recognise the importance of critical elements in understanding society (Sayer, 2010: p.27). By adopting and using the interpretative approach to social sciences together with empirical and statistical methods in order to describe regularities and to provide causal explanations, critical realism accepts the existence of reality independent of human consciousness but accepts that this reality can only be researched and understood through methods of data collection and analysis that are partial and fallible (Yeung, 1997; Whiteside, 2019). As Sayer (2010: p.49) puts it: "Although social realities cannot exist without the actions of their creators, they are usually of an independent existence as compared to the individual or individuals who are studying them". While stating critical realism as a philosophical stance for the research, our theoretical stance throughout the project will be defined through the GPE.

I emphasise the importance of combining scientific methods with a critical approach when accumulating knowledge about an object. This approach is crucial for understanding both the factual aspects (positive side) and the guiding principles (normative side) in the field of social sciences. According to Sayer (2007), it is a misconception to view the normative perspective as purely subjective. Instead, he argues that this perspective is essential for grasping the normative dimension of social sciences. Sayer (2007) asserts that the normative viewpoint is related to the inherent nature of human beings, acknowledging their capacity for suffering and development. Excluding normativity from the analysis, according to Sayer (2007), can be oppressive in political contexts, as it involves neglecting fundamental aspects of human nature. Thus, Sayer (2007) advocates for an integrated approach, arguing against a separation between normative and positive thinking in the study of economic life. He contends that such a divorce is not only unnecessary but also damaging, as it overlooks crucial elements related to human experiences and development in the social realm. Lastly, I accept an understanding that individual assumptions are influenced by

social and historical forces while criticising the positivist value-free epistemology.

In combining the context-dependent and critical elements of GPE, it becomes apparent that GPE offers a distinct advantage over classical economic approaches. Unlike classical economics, GPE recognises the importance of considering both time and space, providing a framework that takes into account the dynamic and contingent nature of social, political, and geographical contexts. The key point here is that GPE allows for the observation and analysis of the integration and variegation of concepts within the context of this contingency. It acknowledges that expressions of relations, processes, and mechanisms in time and space may be contingent and varied. However, the crucial insight is that underlying causes can still be identified and found to be similar. In other words, while the manifestations of economic phenomena may differ based on time and space, GPE allows for the identification of common underlying factors, enabling a more comprehensive understanding of the complexities involved in the global economic landscape. This approach is what makes a difference in our perspective on varieties and sources of populism debates and binding them in interconnected features.

In the context of our research, GPE enables the examination of regional development, which has an interdisciplinary nature and variegated concepts related to political, social, and geographical conditions, without being restricted by solely economic formulas. Thus, GPE offers a suitable perspective for the investigation of relatively abstract, value-laden concepts and geographical complexity and differences (Pike, 2021: p.4). In this context, one of the reasons why the GPE provides an appropriate framework is that geography is both constitutive and causal as the place where regional inequality and regional populist voting take place. Furthermore, GPE is consistent with the case selection criteria, as will be shown in the next sections. So, space emphasis with a regional focus and spatial uniqueness with variegation make GPE a naturally suitable approach.

However, as Martin and Sunley (2015) stated, there is no single unified, integrated or generally agreed form of geographical political economy. Different economic geographers can use different GPE versions. While some argue that the Marxist approach emphasises the deterministic role of economic powers, some criticise to see culture and ideas as the product of this economic base and ignore it in some sense (MacKinnon and Cumbers, 2019: p.41). In this point, we emphasise the intertwining interaction of economic, cultural, social and political processes. In this context, we argue that geographical space is not exogenous but constituted and co-evolves with political, cultural and biophysical processes in line with the GPE (Sheppard, 2011). Taking economic reasons together with social and political causes instead of separating them from other causes provides a more inclusive, pluralistic and holistic perspective to the 'new' GPE (MacKinnon and Cumbers, 2019: p.53).

Although we admit that the GPE cannot answer all of the questions and provide the only truth, it has been modified from different -like the cultural, institutional and evolutionary -perspectives (MacKinnon and Cumbers, 2019: p.42). Our approach offers the pluralistic version of GPE, which is holistic and contextual, not independent of context, but connected with processes and things (MacKinnon and Cumbers, 2019: p.28). This approach seeks more comprehensive, holistic, and systematic accounts of the coevolution of economic, social, political, cultural, and biophysical relations and processes (Pike et al., 2016: p.129). Thus, the approach recognises the roles of a range of actors rather than being deterministic and restrictive.

In GPE's handling of structure and agency, while it emphasises the mutually constitutive and recursive relationships between agents and structures (Pike et al., 2016: p.127), attention is drawn to the power of the structure to change the future within the agentic process, rather than its deterministic determination, by considering different types of agencies for change (Kinossian, 2019: p.64). In parallel with this, critical realism speaks of the continuous process of structuration between structure and agency without regular conjunctions in open systems (Yeung, 1997). The emphasis on this

agentic process and its power to change the future makes it easy to address questions about differences in growth between regions with similar structural preconditions (Grillitsch and Sotarauta, 2018: p.5). In addition, the agent-oriented approach is parallel to the place-sensitive approach, taking into account the structural characteristics of each region in the context of creating opportunities to develop new path development and creation of opportunities for actors in regions that seem preconditionally disadvantaged or left-behind in connection with the notion that actors are influenced by the past as well as the perceived future (Grillitsch and Sotarauta, 2018: p.11).

One of the main reasons for the adoption of GPE is its approach to regional inequality and left-behindness, which is one of the project's concerns, and its relationship with the neoclassical economy, neoliberalism, and capitalism. These are the issues of the political economy, along with uneven development, social exclusion, and poverty (Varro, 2015: p.29), in a more general sense. From this perspective, capitalism is seen as a producer of uneven development and socio-spatial inequality, according to Harvey (1990) and Sheppard (2011). Capitalism reproduces and multiplies this inequality, far from mitigating the socio-spatial inequalities that preceded it (Sheppard, 2011; 2018: p.161). The neoliberalism that dominates today's understanding and is based on the neoclassical economy sees regional differences in economic performance as temporary or a result of government intervention (Agnew, 2000: p.101) and proposes 'just wait long enough and everything will iron out'. In another saying, what is anticipated is that, in growing economies, wealth will trickle down to underdeveloped regions over time or, as a phrase, a rising tide (of general economic growth) raises all ships. Neoclassical economic theory advocates that flows of capital towards less developed regions where costs are lower; in this way, neoclassical economy claims that it will provide regional convergence over the long term, while in the Marxist view, it is the generating part of this unequal regional development pattern (MacKinnon and Cumbers, 2019: p.38).

Due to the regional divergence that has continued since the 1980s in Europe (MacKinnon et al., 2021: p.1), the differences between the rich and poor regions continue to be a serious problem today (Kinossian, 2019: p.61). Prioritising certain metropolitan regions that came with the adoption of neoliberal policies, and the failure of promise that the wealth produced there would create benefit for all; and the failure of policies that aim to close the gap between regions have created discontent with the austerity practices that came after the 2008 financial crisis against the mainstream political actors and ideologies. Thus, one of the dimensions of the populist wave was the uneven development at the intersection of political economy and geographical political economy.

One of the visible effects of the GPE approach to the thesis is that I place inequality and the systems that produce it at the centre. Second, with the new GPE approach, I consider economic causes together with political and cultural causes, which is important in determining the characteristics of left-behindness and, moreover, in examining the influence of perceptions and feelings. Thus, it affects the analysis of the first and third questions directly. Third, the GPE provides the theoretical underpinning for the transition from varieties of populism to variegated populism, as mentioned in the literature review chapter, and for the discovery of shared underlying causes, offering a more thorough comprehension of the complexity present in the world economy.

3.3. Intensive and extensive research methodology

The distinction between intensive and extensive research is, at one point, the distinction between being descriptive or explanatory in the context of our research. On the one hand, extensive research is associated with quantitative methods and establishes formal relations between taxonomic groups over similarity or regularities. While the results are descriptive, according to Sayer (2010), as shown in Table 1, they are mostly based on statistical analysis, large surveys and formal questionnaires. Although the

validity of the reproducibility is higher, it is argued that the claim of generalizability of results to other populations may cause ecological fallacy, the misconception that the results are representative of the entire population (Sayer, 2010). On the other hand, intensive research focuses on uncovering detailed connections and mechanisms behind specific events, establishing causal relationships within particular contexts without aiming for representativeness (Sayer, 2010).

Table 1: Intensive-extensive research summary

	INTENSIVE	**EXTENSIVE**
Research question	How does a process work in a particular case or small number of cases? What produces a certain change? What did the agents actually do?	What are the regularities common patterns, distinguishing features of a population? How widely are certain characteristics or processes distributed or represented'?
Relations	Substantial relations of connection	Formal relations of similarity
Type of groups studied	Causal groups	Taxonomic groups
Type of account produced	Causal explanation of the production of certain objects or events, though not necessarily representative ones	Descriptive 'representative generalisations, lacking in explanatory penetration
Typical methods	Study of individual agents in their causal contexts, interactive	Large-scale survey of population or representative sample, formal

	interviews, ethnography. Qualitative analysis	questionnaires, standardised interviews Statistical analysis
Limitations	Actual concrete patterns and contingent relations are unlikely to be 'representative', 'average' or generalisable. Necessary relations discovered will exist wherever their relata are present, e.g. causal powers of objects are generalisable to other contexts as they are necessary features of these objects	Although representative of a whole population, they are unlikely to he generalisable to other populations at different times and places Problem of ecological fallacy in making inferences about individuals. Limited explanatory power
Appropriate tests	Corroboration	Replication

Source: Sayer, 2010: p.163-164

Extensive research provides a useful tool for producing descriptive and representative generalisations. Our research contains features of extensive research especially for the first research question which includes statistical analysis and rely on formal relations of similarity, creating taxonomic groups based on shared characteristics within a population. In addition to extensive research, our research foci and aims require examining substantial relations, causal explanations, and study of context-dependent cases, namely intensive research methodology (Sayer and Morgan, 1985). Especially with the qualitative nature of the second and third research questions, the focus of our research on individual cases and acknowledgement of non-generalisable findings align with the principles of intensive research.

According to Sayer (1999: p.20; 2010: p.163), while intensive research tries to understand what kind of meaning there is in specific cases and

particular situations, extensive research shows how extensive a particular phenomenon and pattern is in populations. In our research, we combine the strengths of extensive and intensive research to explain causal relationships and generate meaning from context. In addition, this combination will give us an opportunity to complete the whole from the parts and explain the working mechanisms. Also, this approach is compatible with our case comparison and the use of different types of analysis. The project's comparison of two cases and examining how the phenomenon of populism variegated in these two cases is in line with extensive and intensive research examining causal processes and mechanisms in specific cases and emphasising abstraction rather than empirical generalisation (Lowe, 2001: p.11). While specifying this epistemological approach to highlighting space-specific effects and reproduction of a space rather than attempting a generalisation (Krehl and Weck, 2020: p.1860), this approach helps to uncover the variegated of populism. In this way, we move from a taxonomic approach that catalogues differences of populist processes and creates varieties to a causal approach which underlines they are not isolated but co-dependent.

The joint application of intensive and extensive research context is compatible with the GPE approach by establishing a time and place and context-dependent knowledge. While intensive research supports our comparative case study as it contains fewer samples than extensive research and uncovers causal explanations, extensive research guides us to find regularities among patterns with statistical analysis. Sayer (2010: p.159) calls 'synthesis' the research that tries to explain the major parts of the whole system or phenomenon while completing each other's deficiencies with the combination of extensive and intensive research and their findings in this way.

3.4. Case study

Answering research questions and achieving the research aims requires up-close, in-depth and detailed investigation. In this sense, the project will conduct a case study. Case studies are a design of inquiry found in many fields, especially evaluation or contemporary events, in which the researchers develop an in-depth analysis of the case, often a programme, event, activity, or process. Cases are bounded by time and activity, and researchers collect detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period of time (Creswell, 2014, p.14; Creswell and Creswell, 2018; Krehl and Weck, 2020: p.1861; Simons, 2009, p.10). Therefore, it helps our project to scrutinise place-specific features of populism and how populist expressions differ in different geographies in relation to regional inequality. Our research focuses on complex contemporary events with economic, cultural, political, and historical aspects that are affected by environmental circumstances and are not fully explained in terms of components and boundaries. A case study is an appropriate method to examine such a phenomenon which contains "a how or why question is being asked about a contemporary set of events over which the investigator has little or no control" (Yin, 1994: p.9); which shows complexity and particularity (Stake, 1994); and existing theory seems inadequate (Eisenhardt, 1989: pp. 548–549). Moreover, the case study produces a type of context-dependent knowledge (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Goodrick, 2014: p.2); this is necessary to understand the reasons why populism differs across geographies and, at the same time, getting further to taxonomic categories and finding interconnected nature of populisms.

At this point, the time boundary of our research is in the post-1980 period, as this is the time when the effects of the selection of cases in former industrialised regions were evident. The first research question deals with the period from 1980 to the present to examine the argument of long-term decline in left-behind regions. For the second and third research questions, we consider the period after 2008, when populist voting was more visible,

but again, it was consistent with the post-1980 period as the impact of deindustrialisation is considered for the analysis.

Stake (1994) defines three types of case study: intrinsic case study, instrumental case study, and collective case study. While an intrinsic case study is the study of a case wherein the case has the primary emphasis and the researcher's intent is to understand the case better; an instrumental case study uses a case to gain insights into a particular situation and provide insight into a phenomenon for researcher in order to help to refine a theory. The case plays a supportive role in the instrumental case study. Collective case studies are similar to multiple case studies which use a common set of research questions to examine each case.

Table 2: Stake's three types of case studies

Type of Case Study	Emphasis and Purpose	Role of the Case
Intrinsic Case Study	Primary emphasis on understanding the specific case.	Central focus on the case itself.
Instrumental Case Study	Utilises a case to gain insights into a particular situation or phenomenon.	The case plays a supportive role in achieving insights.
Collective Case Study	Similar to multiple case studies, examining cases with common research questions.	Each case contributes to a collective understanding.

Source: Author's Table according to Stake (1994)

As a complementary to Stake's classification, Yin (2009) identified four case study designs, the primary distinction is between single- and multiple-case designs. Each design also creates two sub-branches as holistic and embedded case studies. While the embedded case study examines the case in its larger context, examining the links and linkages between the case and its surroundings, the holistic case study focuses on the case as a whole, striving for a thorough understanding. The resulting four types of designs for case studies as shown in Table 2, are holistic single-case designs, embedded single-case designs, holistic multiple-case designs, and embedded multiple-case designs.

Table 3: Basic Types of Designs for Case Studies
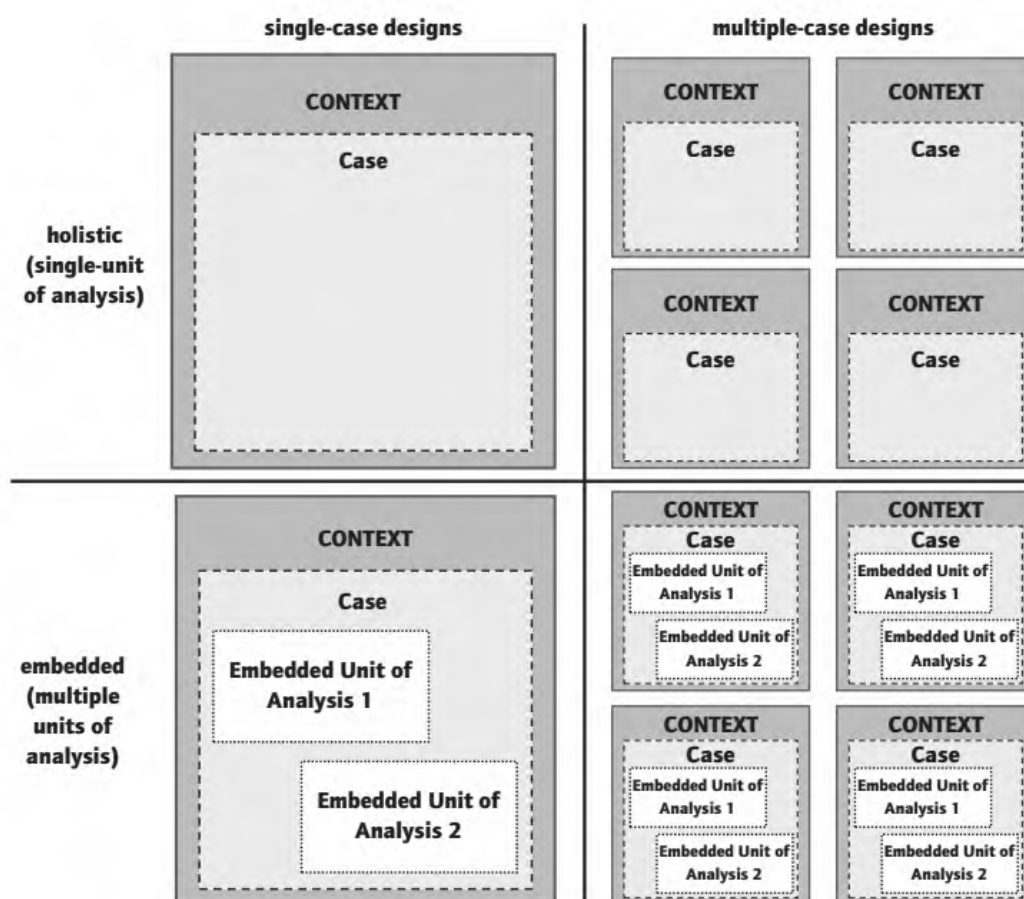
Source: Robert K. Yin, (2018) Case Study Research and Applications, p.46

Our approach has some characteristics of each type of study in terms of Stake's distinction. However, it can mainly be classified as an instrumental

case study because we use cases to examine, challenge and develop our understandings and arguments about the broader phenomenon of populism, its geographic variegation and regional inequality. In terms of Yin (2018)'s classification, the research uses an embedded multiple-case study, so there are important sub-units for comparisons in each case like regional inequality, populist politics and decentralisation level.

Another point is that, according to Yin (2018), the case study is compatible with the realist perspective, which advocates the existence of an external reality independent to the observer. In this parallel, our approach, with critical realism, says that while accepting a reality outside of human consciousness, the conclusion reached by the researcher who studies this reality is always fallible because this meaning is constructed from their perspectives and experiences. In connection with our research aims and philosophical approach to research, the case study will be providing data that is space-specific, emphasises a reproduction of space, accepts non-linear development trajectories, and is not necessarily generalising; conclusions are contingent upon time and space (Krehl and Weck, 2020: p.1861). There is a relevance here with the GPE approach taking space and time as endogenous and prominent features (Sheppard, 2011); that is, there is a harmony between the epistemological approach and the research method. Another point that makes the GPE approach compatible with the case study and our research is that it emphasises the distinctive features of individual places, taking diversity and differences seriously (MacKinnon and Cumbers, 2019: p.54). Therefore, this GPE approach enables the investigation of the populist variegation over different geographies and digging deeper into the geographies and variegations provides a clearer understanding and deeper explanation.

To make another point about the case study, there is a common analogy in Karl Popper's falsification principle. According to it, the hypothesis that "all swans are white" can be falsified by observing a black swan. This analogy can also be used to promote case study analysis. Flyvbjerg (2006: p.228) states it as follows: "The case study is well suited for identifying black swans

because of its in-depth approach: What appears to be white often turns out on closer examination to be black." In the context of our project, the case study has an important place in recognising the difficult-to-decompose nature of populist sources and case-specific variegations and the interconnected populism's real reason, the reason perceived by the public, and the reasons instrumentalised by populist politicians.

The generalizability problem of social sciences is relevant to case study research (Rice, 2010: p.232). We mentioned how the GPE approach highlights space, time and context-specific nature rather than generalizability. In the search for generalisations, according to Sayer (1999: p. 14): "Consistent regularities are only likely to occur under special conditions, in closed systems." These closed systems, on the other hand, do not occur spontaneously, especially in the social world, and in some cases, they can be created artificially in the natural world. In open systems in the social world, the same events may give different results, and different events may produce the same result. This approach has two important implications for this research. First, it supports the claim of variegated populism in different places within the same events or the same results. Second, it makes a claim of generalizability in the social sciences more questionable. Regarding the problem of scientific generalisation, as an open system of the social world, I accept the argument that the same phenomena can produce different results and that different phenomena can produce the same result. At the same time, it is not that phenomena are always different everywhere but that there are commonalities and generalisations that are distinguishable and integral to conceptualising, theorising and explaining those phenomena. Our research is a reflection of these assumptions to arrive at varieties of populism by examining the occurrence of different types of populism in different regions and then finding the interconnected nature between these different types and capturing variegated populism through these cases.

This approach is also parallel with intensive research methodology. If we look from another angle, Stake (1994) emphasised that while discussing

ideas about whether the outcome of the case study is generalisable or that a case study is a small step towards generalisation, this issue should not draw attention away from the understanding of the case itself. We use the case as a means to uncover causal relations and mechanisms rather than generalisations about a wider population.

3.5. Comparative framework

As highlighted above, the detailed information collected from case studies can reveal general structures and casual relationships that can be used to construct models, theories and hypotheses (Harvey, 1969 cited in Rice, 2010: p.232). We can use Mossberger's (2009, cited in Ward, 2010: p.477) sentence about cities, "comparison can strengthen theory and explain the causes and consequences of similarities and differences between cities", for regions to support Harvey's view of using data from case studies to construct and uncover causal relationship. So, we can find variegation highlighting differences and contextual specificity. On the GPE side, the comparative framework underlines the importance and value of comparison in explaining the interrelationships between places, and how broader processes unfold in particular places (Boschma and Frenken 2009, cited in Pike et al., 2016: p.135); thus, allows to gain deeper insights and to question the soundness of theoretical explanations (Massey 1995, cited in Pike et al., 2016: p.135).

According to Collier (1995: p.105), comparison is a fundamental analysis tool that sharpens the power of definition and plays a central role in concept formation by bringing meaningful similarities and contrasts between cases into focus. A comparative case study explains patterns, relations, similarities and differences across two or more cases (Goodrick, 2014: p.1) and provides a better understanding and detailed information (Esser and Vliegenthart, 2017: p.2; Rice, p.230). Therefore, the explanation and development of sociocultural theories emerging in the regions, like populist

surges on a regional scale, can be made through comparative studies (Ward, 2010: p.473).

Moreover, geography is causal and constitutive (Pike, 2020: p.4) and questioning the existence of a causal relationship between regional inequality, centrality, and population is important in answering research questions. According to Pierre (2005, cited in Krehl and Weck, 2020: p.860), comparative research is one of the most successful research strategies in revealing causal relationship patterns. Therefore, a comparative cross-case analysis is a method that involves the in-depth exploration of similarities and differences across cases and comparative studies play an important role in understanding the similarities and differences between regions and can help understand the pathways of different regions (Krehl and Weck, 2020: p.1860).

Cross-case analysis is a research method that facilitates the comparison of similarities and differences between regions, which are units of analysis in case studies (Khan and VanWynsberghe, 2008). If a study contains more than one case, Yin (2009 cited in Stufflebeam and Coryn, 2014: p.300) finds cross-case study appropriate since the pattern and logical argumentation can be made by determining similarities and differences. The cross-case analysis is important in providing an understanding of how populism variegated and how it is affected by the regional dimension by revealing similarities and differences between different cases. This provides opportunities for understanding across regions and concepts by gathering evidence from different sources, as well as making it possible to develop critical ideas for policy modification to the problem.

Two research techniques are used to conduct co-comparative analyses. On the one hand, variable-oriented approaches tend to pay greater attention to variables and compare cases in order to depict reasons or differences that cause particular outcomes. On the other hand, case-oriented approaches tend to show commonalities between cases and conditional generalisation (Khan and VanWynsberghe, 2008). In parallel with the

instrumental case study selection in the previous section, our approach can be classified as the case-oriented technique here because it focuses on understanding the unique characteristics of cases. At this point, the selection criteria in the comparative case study and the determination of the common and varying factors of the cases will be mentioned in the next section.

3.6. Selection of Case Studies

This section focuses on comparison units, case selection strategies, establishing the criteria for the selection of cases for the study, and examining possible countries and regions.

3.6.1. Regions as Comparison Units

There are different case-selection strategies (Gerring, 2008; Seawright and Gerring, 2008), and in-depth case-study research samples are ideally selected strategically in accordance with the conceptual and theoretical foci of the overall study. Since we are examining underlying causes and variegated populism in a similar type of place, we will provide common and varying criteria and narrow our potential cases according to them. Therefore, as a case selection strategy, in line with the purpose of the research, which is understanding and explaining the relationship between the left-behindness of particular regions with rising regional disparities and rising populist movements, we are going to look at the samples which are similar in terms of causal factor of theoretical interest and outcome but different on specified variables (Seawright and Gerring, 2008: p.298).

First of all, as a reflection of the necessity of researching populism in terms of economic geography and regional development revealed in the literature gap, we will use the regions in comparison. Among the reasons we chose the region, firstly, on the philosophical side, within the GPE approach,

Harvey (1990) interprets capitalism as the producer of uneven development and socio-spatial inequality. Also, Yeung (2019: p.289) puts uneven development as a raison d'etre for human geography. As Hudson (2006) stated, GPE sees the evolution of capitalism in space as an open-ended process; in this sense, the region is valued as one of the areas where uneven development is produced and sustained in the capitalist system. Secondly, there is already a long-standing debate on regional balance or city-centred approaches to development (MacKinnon et al., 2021; Pike, 2018; Kemeny and Storper, 2020). On the one hand, city centrism sees cities as the engine of development and claims that the spatial concentration of economic activity on big cities will trickle trickle-down throughout the wider city-region. On the other hand, the place-based approach that takes different geographies of urban and regional development into consideration argues that the city-centric approach and clustering produce a winner-take-all situation (Florida, 2021: p.621), producing economic decline and uneven growth in small cities and rural areas, also leave the economic potentials of other places underutilised (Rodríguez-Pose, 2018). Our research is closely related to this debate in terms of the production of uneven development, left-behind places and feelings of left-behindness. Thirdly, despite its constructed nature and different definitions produced in different contexts, regions are used as a unit by states, transnational or independent organisations to collect data within their established limits. The existence of the data provided by these sources for the regions, which are accepted by the authorities and whose geographical boundaries have been determined, facilitates the comparison of these regions, especially through quantitative data.

So, in parallel to the need to select a geographical scale, the region provides a coherent unit for conceptual, theoretical and empirical reasons covering the economic, social and political concerns the study is addressing.

3.6.2. Case Selection Criteria

After explaining why the region is the unit of analysis, we can talk about the case selection criteria in accordance with the research questions and objectives and the analyses that will be mentioned hereinafter. We are going to define common and varying criteria across cases, which will allow us to select possible countries to compare and then the regions. The case selection strategy is one in which cases show similarities in terms of theoretical interest and outcome but differences in terms of other variables. In this way, we are aiming to explore and understand variegated populism and its expressions in the left-behind regions.

Moreover, to address the inherent limitations that come from focusing on regional cases within different national contexts, this research also engages with Burawoy (1998)'s 'extended case method.' This approach situates each region's experiences and political dynamics within its broader national context, considering how each state's policies, economic structures, and political climates uniquely shape subnational realities. Burawoy (1998)'s method emphasizes that local experiences, are not isolated phenomena but are influenced by larger historical and structural factors which we mention broadly in the Chapter 4. This method allows for a reflexive examination of how national-level forces - such as economic restructuring policies or shifts in national political discourse - create distinct conditions in each region. In this way, our approach balance the need to focus on regional expressions of populism with an acknowledgment of the broader, top-down forces that contribute to these expressions. Thus, rather than treating each region in isolation, this method underscores the interconnectedness of national and subnational factors, enhancing our ability to interpret regional variations in populism within a comprehensive, multi-scalar framework.

Common criteria:

Based on the case selection strategy, the main point in identifying common criteria between the cases is the gaps we have identified in the literature and the research questions we have posed to fill them. In line with this, our

common criteria will be increasing regional inequality and left-behind regions in terms of theoretical interest and the presence of populism in terms of outcome.

Variety of expressions at the regional level:

Neoliberalism, which gained prevalence and became the dominant idea in the 1980s, caused changes in economic and political approaches. The economic period that started with this transformation was marked by the increase in inequality in the world. The inequality between EU regions started to increase in the 2000s rapidly after the decline in the 1990s due to the concentration of high-technology and knowledge-intensive sectors in large metropolitan areas and the long cycle of regional evolutionary features that caused a lack of innovation and reaction in declining regions (European Commission, 2019; Iammarino et al., 2017). This economic transformation, growing inequality, globalisation-induced losers (Rodrik, 2021a; Rodrik, 2021b; Colantone et al., 2021), the increasing austerity policies after 2008 (Fetzer, 2019; Gray and Barford, 2018), the failure to fulfil the neoliberal promises (Hopkin, 2020) have caused people's distrust towards mainstream political actors and ideologies (Olivas Osuna et al., 2021) and have given rise to populist tendencies. Moreover, after regional economic inequalities intensified with the impact of the global financial crisis in the 2008 crisis (Fetzer, 2019), further widened by the Covid-19 pandemic recession (Davenport et al., 2020).

At the end of these developments, populist parties began to influence European and US politics, with their increase in votes, which was previously insignificant, then their success in the European parliamentary and national elections, and finally their participation in governments in various countries (Henley, 2018; Inglehart and Norris, 2016; Rodrik, 2018a). So, the rise of populism has become an undeniable reality with the Brexit vote, Trump's election victory in 2016, as well as the movements and parties that received high votes in many Western European countries such as France, Italy and Germany. The number of Europeans voting for populist parties in national

votes has surged from 7% to more than 25% between 1998 and 2018 (Henley, 2018).

Left-behind regions:

According to Iammarino et al. (2017), continuing regional inequality is economically unproductive and has become politically and socially dangerous, manifesting in increasing populism. When the classes and places where populism draws attention were examined, the left-behind concept emerged. Left-behind places came out one of the places where populist movements found support, and this is seen as the revenge of people living in regions that have seen better times and prolonged falls (Rodríguez-Pose, 2018: p.201; Rodríguez-Pose, 2020: 6; Evans et al., 2019: p.11; McCann, 2016). The notion is that the left-behind is not an absolute or fixed state but rather a relative and dynamic condition and situation that places find themselves in. The classification of lagging regions is more dynamic and arbitrary, but former industrial regions and coastal and isolated rural areas (Davenport and Zaranko, 2020: p.316; MacKinnon, 2021) tend to be counted among these regions.

The relationship of old industrial regions with left-behindness is related to the deindustrialisation that emerged with the shift of production to places with cheap labour and the easy flow of capital in the neoliberal system, in relation to capitalist socio-spatial inequality and Smith's uneven development theory. In other words, deindustrialisation refers to a process of structural change in which the importance of manufacturing is declining (Pike, 2009). In this transition, some of the old industrial regions faced economic decline and difficulty in adaptation and recovery. Deindustrialisation, Clark (2020: p.4) claims, worsens the gains of the middle class in the Global South or the North with job losses and wage erosions. Also, McKibbin and Fernando (2020) argue that COVID-19 has a potentially aggravated effect on the problems of deindustrialisation in many left-behind places. While ideas such as city centrism and economic clusters fed this theoretically, the 2008 crisis and the pandemic are factors that

made it difficult to get out of this situation. Therefore, regional development and left-behindness are closely related to old industrial regions, which experienced strong structural changes throughout the 1970s and 1980s (Telford, 2022).

As the industries concentrated in certain regions, these regions were particularly affected by the downsizing, closure and the flow of capital to low-cost places. These negativities of the regions where deindustrialisation has occurred explain the feeling of being left-behind in these regions and make them suitable case choices. According to Pike (2020), deindustrialisation has been overlapping and associated with increasing social and spatial inequality and political-economic discontent since 2008 in the left-behind regions of the global North. Moreover, some of the regions where the populist backlash was demonstrated are formerly industrialised cities and regions specialised in manufacturing sectors (Pike, 2020b: p.2; Rodríguez-Pose, 2018). Thus, we see those old industrial regions come to the fore in the case of selection within the concept of left-behind in connection with populist voting and regional inequalities.

Looking for cases through common criteria:

After the old industrial regions are identified as common elements with the populist reaction, the next step is to take a look at the areas where they intersect in case selection. While deindustrialisation is a process that has developed with neoliberalism, the flow of capital to low-wage places and, thus, the shift of industrial production under neoliberal policies has been fully experienced in North America and Western Europe (Telford, 2021; Clark and Gibbs, 2020; Emery, 2018; MacKinnon and Cumbers, 2019: p.37). Accordingly, the left-behind regions, especially the former industrial regions, came to the fore with their contribution to the populist discontent wave in Europe and North America and their populist votes in elections such as Brexit and the election of Donald Trump in the US in 2016 (MacKinnon et al., 2021; Rodríguez-Pose 2018; Dijkstra et al. 2020). In addition, the collapse of the social democratic parties and the rapid emergence of populist

parties make Western Europe a key area to focus on. So political change appears to be another factor since old industrial regions were traditionally more Left and/or social democratic, but now those parties are experiencing a decline in vote rate.

Beyond this, Western Europe's being subject to common governance definitions, statistical institutions, and some common policies within the scope of the European Union (the UK until 2020) will enable stronger inter-country and inter-regional comparisons. Western Europe thus presents a very viable option for observing the adoption of neoliberal policies, deindustrialisation and the associated populist discontent.

With the advantage of having a similar Eurostat classification, we come across certain regions from France, the UK, Belgium, Italy, Germany and Spain when we examine the old industrial regions which are defined as areas that were at the forefront of early industrialization, often centred on coal mining and other raw material exploitation, from the mid-19th century to the early 20th century in Western Europe (Birch et al., 2010: p.40) in order to be evaluated within the scope of left-behindness. Although these countries have their own important differences that shape their politics, they show similarities with populist politics, which takes place in the political arena with some success and has old industrial regions. In this context, examining the populist politics of these countries and the position of former industrial regions in this context will be decisive in case selection.

In terms of regional inequalities, in the regional economic equality analyses made by the OECD (2020: p.55) among the member countries, the inequalities in terms of time that have been showing a decrease or steady trend from 2000 to 2008 in large regions (TL2) start to worsen after 2008 (Figure 2). Since the OECD classification for European countries is largely consistent with the Eurostat classification so, it is important for the insights put forward for the countries we mentioned. Inequality between countries, inequality within countries and total inequality in large regions followed a steady or slightly increasing trend after a falling trend until 2008. In

addition, in small regions (TL3), inequalities displayed a slightly increasing trend between 2000 and 2018. This effect is particularly evident within countries' inequality. Among our potential countries, when comparing the ratio of the richest 20% to the poorest 20% in GDP per capita, in terms of large regions, Italy exhibits the highest inequality, followed by France, the UK, Belgium and Germany, respectively, as can be seen in Figure 3. Another striking feature is that the inequality rates in these countries, except Germany, increased in 2018 compared to 2008. While Germany is relatively low in inequality but still subject to substantial inequality, there is a decrease compared to 2008. Inequality is even more striking in smaller regions; at this level, the UK shows the highest inequality, followed by Germany, France, Belgium, and Italy. Germany and Belgium displayed a decreasing inequality in 2018 compared to 2008. In the results of this research, while the impact of the 2008 financial crisis becomes evident, the inequality between the small regions referred to as TL3 in the OECD classification and NUTS3 in the Eurostat classification is more striking.

Figure 2: Trends in regional economic disparities in OECD countries
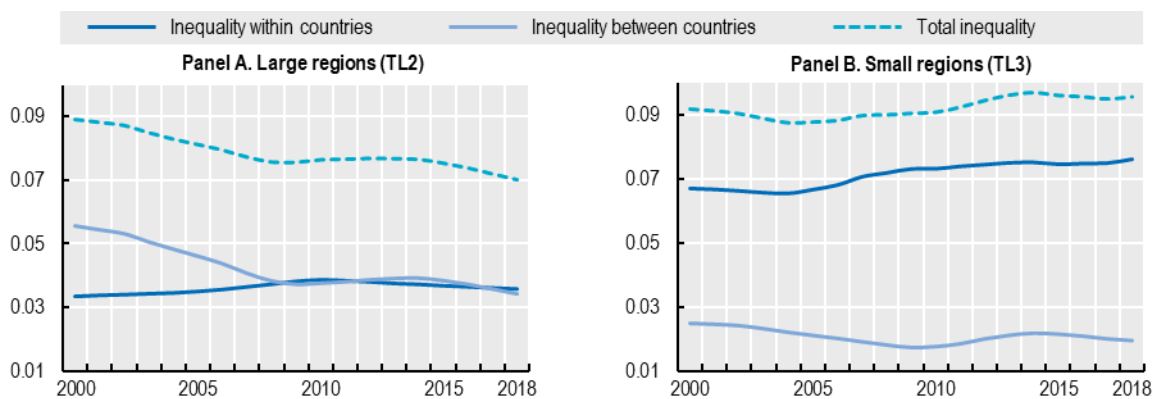
Source: OECD Regions and Cities at a Glance 2020, p.55 (Theil inequality index of GDP per capita, based on large and small regions)

Figure 3: Index of regional disparity in GDP per capita

In terms of populist politics, in the UK, UKIP achieved election success in the 2010s as a populist party, but despite their disappearance after Brexit, populist politics continue through rhetoric in established parties, especially Conservatives, and in movements outside parliament. When we analyse the Brexit map, we can spot overlap between regional inequality, old industrial regions and populist voting. According to the results of the study examining the vote distribution of the former industrial regions for the Inclusive Growth Commission, most of the former industrial regions in England and Wales voted to leave the EU, above the England and Wales average of 53%. Secondly, more than half had 'Leave' vote percentages of 60% or more, making up a significant portion of high-Brexit voters (Shafique, 2016). Via economic transition, globalisation, neoliberal economic policies, social liberalism and the relative prosperity of other regions, post-industrial regions, especially North and Midlands of England feel impoverished, left-behind and voted for Leave as a reflection of these feelings (MacKinnon, 2020; MacKinnon, 2017: p.144). Among European countries, the UK is one of the countries with the highest interregional inequality (MacKinnon, 2020;

Pike et al., 2020; McCann, 2020), and the increasing success of populist discourses, especially Brexit, make it one of the most important cases studied in the region-populism relationship.

In France, the right-populist parties and candidates are very successful. In 2017, Le Pen competed against Macron as the presidential candidate in the last round and got 33.9% of the votes, while the populist party National Rally became the party with the most votes, with 23.34% in the 2019 European Parliament election. France shows the same trend as England in terms of former industrial regions voting for populist parties. North-east France and Lorraine regions, the former industrial region of France, are at the forefront of the regions where populist movements gained the most votes.

When we examine Spain, a unique picture emerges. While Podemos, one of the successful left-populist parties in Europe, achieved some electoral successes, we see that the distribution of votes is not compatible with the old industrial regions. Among the reasons for this, we can say that the politics of industrial regions, such as Catalonia-Basque, are based on ethnic politics rather than left-behind and old industrial regions.

Belgium, which shows a structure where we can talk about three main regions: Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels, and has a complex structure with its three official languages, is also a country with old industrial regions and populist politics. Although the Dutch-speaking Flemish region is more prosperous than the Wallonia region, the right-wing Flemish Interest party is a successful example of populism. While West Flanders is an old industrial region in this region, there is no populist movement that differs from other Flemish regions. The populist party has not succeeded in the French and German-speaking Wallonia region, especially in the former industrial region of Hainaut. Thus, it does not meet the criteria.

Italy is one of the countries where populist parties have come to the fore and gained election success. On March 4, 2018, voters elected the 630 seats of the Italian Chamber of Deputies. Populist, anti-establishment parties

were the big winners of the vote, ranking in a combined total of more than 50 percent of the vote. The 5Stars, led by then-31-year-old Luigi Di Maio, emerged as the largest party, and Matteo Salvini's far-right League became the most popular force on the right. The long-standing South-North distinction about Italy has attracted attention in studies on regional development differences, but the regional secessionist roots in the Lega Nord party makes the Italian case distinctive and less favourable for our study.

Germany is similar to France and England in terms of populist movements that emerged along the existence of former industrial regions. The populist party that came to the fore with the votes it received in Germany is the right-wing Alternative für Deutschland (AfD). AfD, which was established as an EU-sceptic single-issue party in 2013 (Berning, 2017: p.17), increased its right-wing discourse over the immigration crisis in 2015 and gained 12.6% votes in 2017, becoming the third-largest party in the parliament. With 10.3 percent of the votes, AfD received in 2021, it continued its success even though it decreased its vote rate and its share in the parliament. The AfD's heartland is eastern Germany, but AfD is not just a fact of East Germany, with the success of some parts of Bavaria, Baden-Wuerttemberg, and North Rhine-Westphalia. In this case, there are places where the AfD has achieved success in some areas of West Germany which has a high immigration rate (Evans et al., 2019: p.19), and as a result of the structural transition experienced with deindustrialisation, especially in the Ruhr Area (Berning, 2017: p.19).

As a result, since I will be conducting this research from the UK, it is appropriate that one of the regions to be compared is from the UK, as it has a high rate of regional inequality and is associated with left-behindness and populism. The determinant of ethnic identity politics for Spain and Belgium and partly Italy makes them difficult to deal with the theme of left-behindness in relation to old industrial regions. So, we are losing our left-behind, old-industrial region criteria in these countries. France has a similar appearance to England, even with a more pronounced populist trend. When

comparing the old industrial regions to be selected from these two countries, the existence of accepted populist discourses and how left-behindness is effective in perceptions can be understood. However, this comparison would be unlikely to reveal the difference between the emergence of different aspects of populism rooted in diverse causes and its varying appearance in the same type of region. A region to be chosen from West Germany is noteworthy in terms of the emergence of populism, a study of the variegation of populism, the perception of left-behindness and the comparison of the elements that affect the response of populist rhetoric. As a result, according to the selection of criteria and common elements, Germany is highly suitable for the selection of the region to be compared to England.

Varying criteria:

In the study of social phenomena, the principle of plural causality is valid, where several conditions can cause a phenomenon independently of each other. Our specified variables, which vary between cases, do not, in this context, reflect all the causal relationships between the theoretical cause and the result. Rather, it focuses on the variables that differ in the sample countries that potentially emerge according to common criteria in the political outcome created by the regional uneven development. The varying criteria that emerge from this perspective are decentralisation, which has an important place in regional development debates, and, in connection with this, regional political leadership that plays a role in the expression of populism.

Decentralisation and governance structure:

This theme offers a comparison opportunity through federalism versus centralism and the difference between the metro-mayor system applied in England and the application in the management of regional states and lower units in Germany. The allocation of powers and resources from national to sub-national levels of government is known as decentralisation. There are various forms of decentralisation, ranging from the highest level,

devolution, to the lowest level, administrative, differentiated by their powers and resources (Pike et al., 2020c: p.403). The main reason why centralisation is a comparative element is that it is at the centre of a long-standing debate on inter-regional inequality (Pike et al., 2012; Muringani et al., 2018) and discontent (Ezcurra and Rodrigues-Pose, 2013; Brancati, 2006). The three dimensions of decentralisation - economic, political and administrative - overlap with the sources in which populism is rooted: political, economic and cultural. Thus, left-behindness and the level of centralisation are associated with the emergence of regional inequality and populism.

There are two important indices in the measurement of local governments and decentralisation levels in European countries. These are the Local Autonomy Index (Ladner et al., 2015) and the Regional Authority Index (Hooghe et al., 2010). These indices analyse and report changes in the extent of decentralisation in countries on the basis of their coding schemes. Moreover, the data of the two indices combined contribute to understanding the internal organisation of the countries and their allocation of tasks, competencies and responsibilities to the different layers of the state. Also worth noting is that the UK figure is complicated by its multinational state and devolution in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Therefore, England is much more centralised. According to the LAI (Ladner et al., 2015: p.68), Germany exhibits a high level of decentralisation, while the UK, on the contrary, exhibits a high level of centralisation. According to the level of decentralisation, Italy, France, Belgium and Spain, respectively, fall between Germany and the UK. When RAI is added to this index (Ladner et al., 2015: p.70), we see that federal states come to the fore. However, Germany's feature of being the most decentralised among these countries and the UK's feature of having the lowest level of decentralisation does not change.

On the one hand, the UK is one of the most centralised governance, especially in England (Pike et al., 2020b). Also, the UK has one of the highest levels of regional inequality (MacKinnon, 2020; Pike et al., 2020c). Another feature of UK regional policy is asymmetric devolution. Asymmetry

here means different devolution of authority and resources in different places. Although it is also applied in various countries of Europe, if the difference between these devolved powers and resources is too great, it creates a feeling of injustice (Pike et al., 2020b: p.4). Therefore, it can create an empowering effect on the feeling of being left-behind and thus the populist tendency. On the other hand, decentralisation could be associated with a reduction of regional inequality in Germany (Rodríguez-Pose and Ezcurra, 2010). The inclusion of decentralised policies in the formation and reflection of populist politics, as well as theories on this subject, makes this concept more relevant. The clearest indicator is decentralisation attempts like the 'levelling up' agenda in England. Thus, decentralisation is a variable that varies between potential cases, while the comparison remains logical between England and Germany.

Political tradition and political leadership:

Political tradition and political leadership are important in terms of how populism gets articulated, expressed and enacted in particular regions.

Historically, the North-South or rural-urban distinction was among themes that defined British politics; in this regard, while Conservatives have safe seats in relatively rich rural areas and shires, Labour has safe seats in old industrial centres (Evans et al., 2019: p.10). When UKIP emerged, it managed to get votes from the Conservative shires and the pro-Labour working class, which was described as left-behind (Evans et al., 2019: p.10). In the 2015 elections, while UKIP votes were concentrated in rural areas, small towns, and medium-large towns, the voting rate was low in city or suburban neighbourhoods. After Brexit, UKIP seemed to complete its role and withdraw from political life, but the populism was not easily ended after the UKIP's vanishing off.

MacKinnon (2020) states that in the post-industrial Northern and Midlands cities, Labour is losing votes; these seats, namely 'Red Walls', which have been in the hands of Labour for decades, were won by Conservatives in the last elections in 2017 and largely 2019. Of course, the Brexit vote and the

opposition of some voters to Jeremy Corbyn also played a role in this loss, but Labour, which its votes have concentrated on, especially in big cities, needs towns to ensure a majority in the parliament. One of the important factors affecting the attitudes and priorities of voters who switched to the Conservative Party in 2019 is a sense of economic and political separation and isolation from the rest of the country.

Conservative Party has used this momentum and produced statements and policies by Conservatives to alleviate this feeling of being left-behind, especially Levelling Up has been a key policy agenda of the government, it focuses on addressing regional disparities and boosting economic growth and opportunities in areas outside of London and the Southeast, which have historically received more investment and development. According to Heppell (2020: p.17), the Levelling Up policy was deliberately designed for Labour Party voters who were sceptical of the conservatives' economic approach but voted for Leave. The Conservatives built rhetoric on reducing austerity policies and eliminating regional inequalities. While this approach was contrary to Thatcher's economic understanding, promises of reform on immigration and a tougher approach to crimes contrasted with Cameron-era social liberalism (Heppell, 2020: p.17). This created deep contradictions for the various factions within the Conservative Party with strong geographical dimensions. Johnson's combination of policies marks the uptrend of Conservatives as a populist in this period. So, this agenda was geared towards new voters who are socially conservative but economically interventionist and approached globalisation and economic liberalism with suspicion for their own region and future and wanted to hear more about the redistributive role of the state.

At the 2019 general elections, Boris Johnson made Levelling Up agenda centre of his campaign. And it helped to gain seats, especially in the Midlands and North-East. So, the left-behindness feeling of these regions over economic and cultural factors since the 2008 financial crises used by Conservatives, Johnson blamed the politicians for the problems of these regions like "endemic health problems, generational unemployment,

deteriorating high streets and a sense of helplessness among young people" (Tomaney and Pike, 2021: p.23). Using rhetoric on people's anxiety over being ignored by politicians and regional left-behindness, Conservatives use populism, which has gained momentum for UKIP's success and Brexit. But there is a discussion about the agenda's progress and results, like ambiguity and the government's inconsistent effort, under-resourced and missing parts like devolution (Tomaney and Pike, 2021: p. 24, 25).

Conversely, Furlong (2019: p.2) challenges the notion that left-behind places are moving from Labour to Conservative, introducing three different definitions of left-behindness and examining the results of general elections in England and Wales between 1997 and 2017 in a regression analysis. These definitions are conventional ("older age profile, lower educational levels, higher proportions of routine/semi-routine and manufacturing occupations, low ethnic diversity and gross migration, less urban and a large distance from a 'cosmopolitan' city"); economic deprivation ("higher proportions of social housing, rates of deprivation, unemployment, and poor health"); and precarious employment ("higher proportions of insecure employment"). According to Furlong's results, starting from Ford and Goodwin's, namely conventional definition, Labour is losing the left-behind regions to the Conservative (p.10). However, if we consider the definition of economic deprivation, it is premature to claim it. Namely, the constituency-level characteristics of the left-behind definition have not become increasingly negatively associated with Labour vote shares and have not become increasingly positively associated with Conservative vote shares (p.10). Lastly, considering the definition of precarious employment, the Conservative voting rate was not positively affected by left-behind (p.10). Although the research is important in diversifying the concept of left-behind, these results are related to the relative success of Labour in 2017. In the next 2019 elections, Labour lost nearly 8 points and 59 seats. According to Payne (2022)'s book, 4 Red Wall seats returned to the Conservatives in 2017, 31 more seats were added to this number in 2019, and the number of seats remaining in Labour as Red Wall is 12 from 47. In

this case, it is obvious that it is necessary to re-evaluate the definitions other than the traditional definition.

In this debate, Germany's experience appeared in the UK Levelling Up debates. Boris Johnson (2021) stated that: "to a large extent, Germany has succeeded in levelling up where we have not." In Germany, after the reunification, policies were produced that aimed to address historical disparities between East and West Germany, striving for convergence across the country. Efforts have been made to bridge the economic and social gaps that emerged after reunification, with a focus on investing in infrastructure, education, and economic development in the eastern regions. And Germany applied 'equal living conditions', which constitutionally refers to ensuring that all citizens, regardless of their geographic location or socioeconomic status, have access to comparable standards of living.

But this does not mean they overcome the inequalities and their political results. Historical inequalities between East and West can especially be shown in the AfD's success. Brandenburg, Thuringia, and Saxony appeared as strongholds of the AfD (Chazan, 2023). Although it fell from being the third party to the fifth party in 2021, its vote rates in the polls have been increasing in the past period, and they are above 30 percent in these three regions. This rise is not limited to East Germany; some West German regions like Hesse, Bavaria, and Ruhr have come forward with AfD votes. Parallel to the decline of the Labour Party in England, the SPD is losing its voters as well as other established parties (Bremer, 2017).

In addition to federalism and centralism, this theme shows that political tradition, populist movements, and political leadership vary between countries. Both countries have witnessed the rise of populist movements, but their dynamics and impact differ. In Germany, the AfD has gained traction, particularly in former East Germany, while in England, populist sentiments have influenced Brexit and shifts in traditional party allegiances. We also see that countries have different historical contexts, historical divisions and approaches to equality policy. In addition to this, there seems

to be a reshaped political leadership model with the recent populist influences. This reshaping is more visible in the UK than in Germany.

Regional inequality, left-behindness, the transformation of social democracy and the emergence of populist tendencies and policies, and the emergence of devolution initiatives in this context brought the governance structure and political leadership to the fore. In the next section, we are going to delve into the selection of regions as case studies.

Looking for regions:

After England and Germany are determined as the countries from which the cases will be selected, we are going to select case regions.

According to MacKinnon et al. (2021: p.3-4), the place is the combination of economic disadvantage, lower living standards, population loss/contraction/low growth, a lack of infrastructure and political neglect and disengagement. "Relative economic under-performance and decline, expressed in below-average pay, employment and productivity; lower levels of educational qualifications and skills; higher levels of poverty and disadvantage (compared to national averages); out-migration, ageing and demographic shrinkage; poor health; limited connectivity and investment in social and economic infrastructure; reduced service provision; political disengagement, neglect and discontent; and a lack of civic assets and community facilities" could be among the key features of left-behind places. So, former industrial regions, as well as coastal and isolated rural areas (Davenport and Zaranko, 2020: p.316; MacKinnon, 2021), tend to be counted among left-behind regions. According to IFS's left-behind index, which is shown in Figure 4 below, North East, North West and parts of the Midlands come forward in England.

Figure 4: Quintiles of illustrative left-behind index
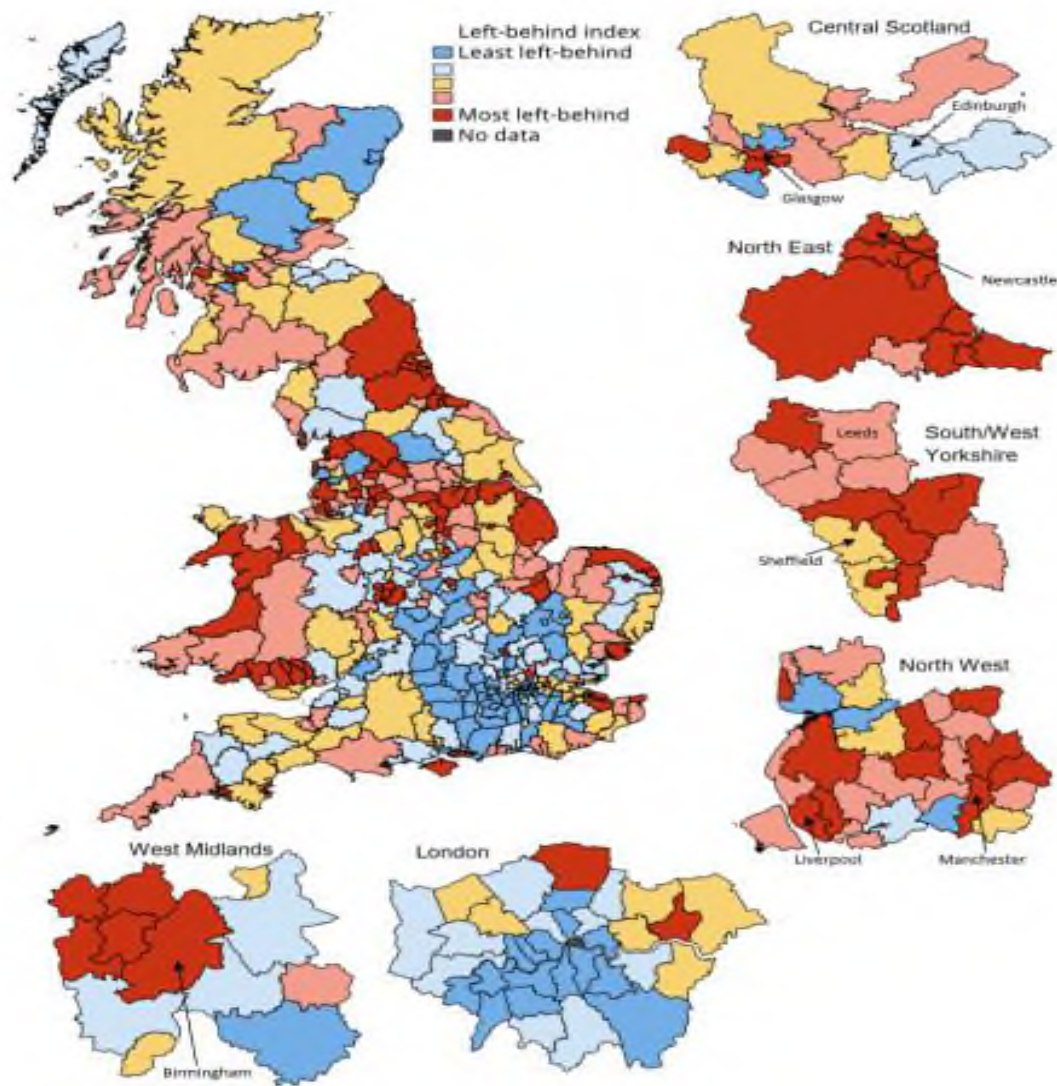
Source: Davenport and Zaranko (2020), p.337

A similar study for Germany was done by Institut Der Deutschen Wirtschaft (Hüther et al., 2019). In this study, the left-behind regions are determined by examining the regions according to a total of 12 indicators - unemployment rate, GDP per capita, purchasing power, over-indebtedness of private households, fertility rate, life expectancy, average age, population, broadband service, doctor density, municipal debt, real estate prices - under the headings of economic development, demographic development, and infrastructural development. Accordingly, while economically endangered areas are mostly in West Germany, demographic risks are concentrated in East Germany. In terms of infrastructure, the risk

can be observed throughout the country. Figure 5, formed by the sum of this combination, is as below.

Figure 5: Regions in Danger in Germany
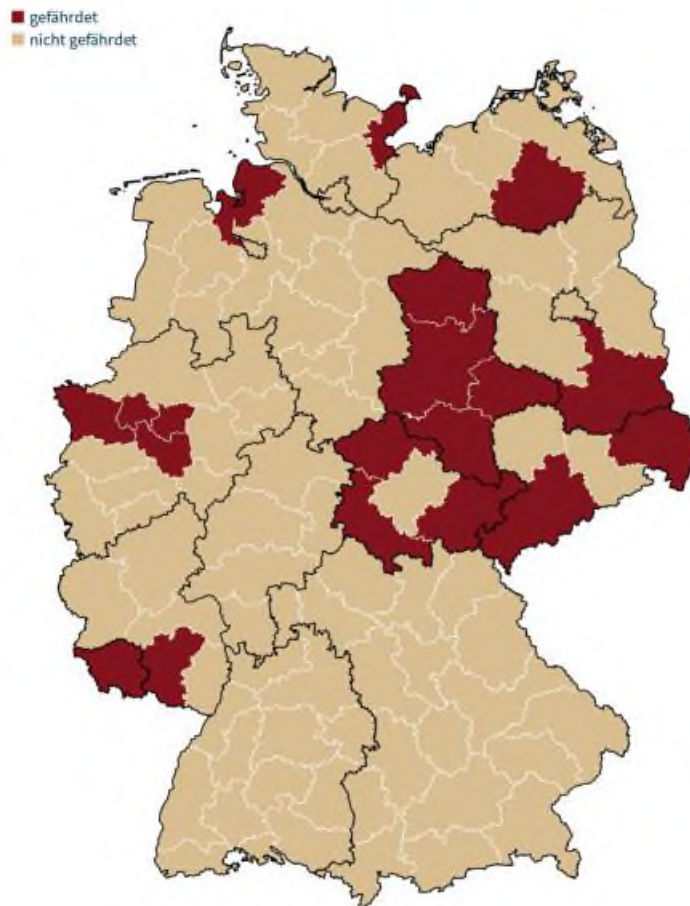
Source: Hüther et al. (2019), p.108

Note: Areas marked in red indicate areas that lag behind in terms of economy, demography and infrastructure and require action.

After we looked at left-behind regions in each country, we will take a look at Birch et al. (2010) old industrial region map (Figure 6) for where these left-behind regions intersect with former industrial areas, which are in our theoretical interest as the subject of regional inequality and left-behind places.

Figure 6: Map of Old Industrial Regions in the Largest European States

Source: Birch et al. (2010), p.39

In the light of the data given throughout this article, as displayed in Figure 7, the intersecting regions in England are presented as NUTS2 regions: Tees Valley & Durham, Northumberland, Tyne & Wear, Lancashire, and South Yorkshire. It should be noted that the North-East parts show a higher level of left-behindness according to the index. The intersecting regions in Germany are also presented as parts of NUTS2 regions: Dusseldorf, Munster, Arnsberg and Saarland. However, since the cities in these regions show dissimilarity in terms of being left-behind or not, Figure 7 shows the units as cities.

Figure 7: Intersect set of Left-Behind and Old Industrial Regions in England and Germany

B- Germany Left Behind Regions

"Südsachsen" "Schleswig-Holstein Ost"

"Lausitz-Spreewald" "Westpfalz"

"Magdeburg" "Halle/Saale"

"Oberlausitz-Niederschlesien" "Nordthüringen"

"Mecklenburgish Seenplatte" "Südthüringen"

"Bremerhaven" "Düsseldorf"

A- England Left Behind Regions

"Merseyside"

"West Yorkshire"

"Lincolnshire"

"West Midlands"

"East Riding and North Lincolnshire"

"South Yorkshire" "Gelsenkirchen" "Saarbrücken"

"Lancashire" "Duisburg" "Dortmund"

"Tees Valley and Durham" "Bochum" "Hagen"

"Northumberland and Tyne and Wear" "Essen" "Herne"

"Greater Manchester" "Hamm" "Mülheim"

"Shropshire and Staffordshire" "Krefeld" "Münster"

"Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire" "Mönchengladbach" "Oberhausen"

"Remscheid" "Solingen"

"Wuppertal" "Bonn"

"Köln" "Leverkusen"

C- England and Germany Old Industrial Regions

Source: Author's own figure

The last determinative feature of the case studies is about local governance. In this context, combined authorities come forward in England because devolution deals and combined authorities stay in the middle of the Levelling Up, left-behind places, decentralisation, and elimination of regional inequalities discussions. Therefore, the case studies we will consider will be at the combined authority level in England. We will consider as our potential cases the combined authorities that are located within the NUTS2 regions shown in Figure 7 and are formed by the amalgamation of several NUTS3 regions. These are Tees Valley Combined Authority, North of Tyne Combined Authority, Sheffield City Region Combined Authority and Greater Manchester CA. On the German side, we select urban districts of Germany due to their local governance status and compatibility with NUTS3 regions. The potential cases identified in this context are Gelsenkirchen, Saarbrucken, Duisburg, Dortmund, Bochum, Hagen, Essen, Herne, Hamm and Mulheim. All the potential cases appear to be from the North-Rhine

Westphalia, with the exception of Saarbrucken. You can see the potential cases below in Table 4 in terms of meeting the conditions and their population and sizes.

Table 4: Potential Cases in England and Germany

Column1	OLD INDUSTRIAL	LEFT BEHIND	LOCAL GOVERNANCE UNIT	POPULATION	SIZE
Tees Valley Combined Authority	√	√	√	675.944	795 km²
North of Tyne Combined Authority	√	√	√	833.167	5,210 km²
Sheffield City Region Combined Authority	√	√	√	1.409.020	3,484 km²
Greater Manchester	√	√	√	2.835.686	1,276 km2
Gelsenkirchen	√	√	√	270.028	104.9 km²
Saarbrucken	√	√	√	181.227	168 km²
Duisburg	√	√	√	504.358	232.8 km²
Dortmund	√	√	√	588.462	280.7 km²
Bochum	√	√	√	385.729	145.7 km²
Hagen	√	√	√	198.972	160.4 km²
Essen	√	√	√	593.085	210.3 km²
Herne	√	√	√	172.108	51.42 km²
Hamm	√	√	√	185.327	226.4 km²
Mulheim	√	√	√	170.921	91.28 km²

Source: Author's own

The next step will be to examine the existence of populism in these regions. While social movements and regional organisations can be indicators of populism, the most basic indicator of this is the examination of the election results. For England, the Brexit election, general elections and the mayoral elections and for Germany, the vote rates of the populist parties in the general elections and mayoral elections will be taken into account, in addition to the comparability of potential regions in terms of other factors such as size and population which presented at Table 4.

As shown in Table 5, in 2015, UKIP's striking success can be observed in all these four authorities, however, Tees Valley and Sheffield City Region stand out more because they have more constituencies as a ratio that exceeds UKIP's national average and UKIP is selected as the second party in their constituencies more than others also as a ratio. When we consider the Brexit vote, it seems that rural and medium-small cities voted Leave while city

centres voted for Remain in regions other than Tees Valley. All units in Tees Valley voted to Leave. One of the prominent phenomena in the last general elections was the transition of the Red Wall regions to the Conservatives. Although the four regions we examined are traditionally Labour regions, a transition from the regions held by Labour to Conservatives has been observed in the four authorities in the last elections. However, if this transition is compared in terms of the ratio of Labour losing seats to Conservatives, Tees Valley comes forward. Finally, in the election of the mayors of these authorities, despite the changes in the traditional attitude in other elections, Greater Manchester and Sheffield City Region, together with all the lower districts councils, voted for the Labour candidate and elected the mayors from the Labour party. In the North of Tyne, the more-populated Newcastle upon Tyne and North Tyneside Labour candidate elected the Labour candidate, although the conservative candidate in the Northumberland district received more votes. However, Tees Valley has chosen the Conservative candidate in the mayoral election while getting the highest votes in each district by following its attitude in 2015 UKIP votes, the Brexit vote, and the loss of Red Wall to Conservatives in the general elections.

Table 5: Important results on the general election in potential cases in England

		2015 UKIP	Brexit	2017	2019
North of Tyne	Berwick	11	55 Leave	C	C
	Hexam	10	55 Remain	C	C
	Blythe	22 (2nd)	60 Leave	L	C
	Wansbeck	1800%	56 Leave	L	L
	North Tyneside	16	59 Leave	L	L
	Tynemouth	12	52 Remain	L	L
	Newcastle North	16	56 Leave	L	L
	Newcastle Centre	15	52 Remain	L	L
	Newcastle East	12	59 Remain	L	L
Tees Valley	Darlington	13	58 Leave	L	C
	Hartlepool	28 (2nd)	70 Leave	L	L
	Middlesbrough	18 (2nd)	66 Leave	L	L
	Middlesbrough South & Cleveland East	15	65 Leave	C	C
	Stockton North	19	66 Leave	L	L
	Stockton South	10	57 Leave	L	C
	Redcar	18	67 Leave	L	C
Sheffield City Region	Barnsley Central	21 (2nd)	68 Leave	L	L
	Barnsley East	23 (2nd)	71 Leave	L	L
	Wentworth and Dearne	25(2nd)	70 Leave	L	L
	Doncaster Central	24(2nd)	66 Leave	L	L
	Doncaster North	22(2nd)	71 Leave	L	L
	Don Valley	23	68 Leave	L	C
	Rotherdam	30(2nd)	68 Leave	L	L
	Rother Valley	28(2nd)	66 Leave	L	C
	Sheffield South East	22(2nd)	66 Leave	L	L
	Sheffield Brightside and Hillsborough	22(2nd)	60 Leave	L	L
	Sheffield Central	7	68 Remain	L	L
	Sheffield Hallam	6	66 Remain	L	L
	Sheffield Heeley	17(2nd)	57 Leave	L	L
Greater Manchester	Altrincham and Sale West BC	8	61 Remain	C	C
	Ashton-under-Lyne BC	22	62 Leave	L	L
	Blackley and Broughton BC	16 (2nd)	50	L	L
	Bolton North East BC	12	58 Leave	L	C
	Bolton South East BC	13	63 Leave	L	L
	Bolton West CC	15	55 Leave	C	C
	Bury North BC	12	54 Leave	L	C
	Bury South BC	13	54 Leave	L	C
	Cheadle BC	8	57 Remain	C	C
	Denton and Reddish BC	18	61 Leave	L	L
	Hazel Grove CC	12	52 Leave	L	L
	Heywood and Middleton CC	32 (2nd)	62 Leave	L	C
	Leigh CC	20	63 Leave	L	C
	Makerfield CC	22 (2nd)	65 Leave	L	L
	Manchester, Central BC	11	63 Remain	L	L
	Manchester, Gorton BC	8	61 Remain	L	L
	Manchester, Withington BC	4	75 Remain	L	L
	Oldham East and Saddleworth CC	19	60 Leave	L	L
	Oldham West and Royton CC	20(2nd)	61 Leave	L	L
	Rochdale CC	19 (2nd)	57 Leave	L	L
	Salford and Eccles BC	18	53 Leave	L	L
	Stalybridge and Hyde CC	18	60 Leave	L	L
	Stockport BC	13	53 Remain	L	L
	Stretford and Urmston BC	11	51 Remain	L	L
	Wigan CC	19	63 Leave	L	L
	Worsley and Eccles South CC	18	60 Leave	L	L
	Wythenshawe and Sale East BC	14	51 Remain	L	L

Source: House of Commons Library

Note 1: The first Column shows the combined authorities, the second column shows electoral districts in those CAs, the third column shows UKIP's vote in the 2015 elections (2015 UKIP general vote 12.6) and the position of UKIP's if it is in the first or second place, fourth column shows Brexit vote results and vote shares, fifth column shows which party won the constituency, and sixth column shows the which party won the constituency. C means Conservative, and L means Labour.

Note 1: The note shows mayoral election results and which party had a higher vote in constituencies in the mayoral election. C means conservatives, and L means Labour.

North of Tyne Mayor Election %62 Labour (2019) (Northumberland: C, Newcastle upon Tyne - North Tyneside: L)

Tees Valley Mayoral Election %72 Conservative (2021) (Darlington - Hartlepool - Middlesbrough - Redcar and Cleveland - Stockton-on-Tees: C)

Sheffield City region %47 Labour (2018) (Barnsley - Doncaster - Rotherdam - Sheffield: L)

Greater Manchester & 67 Labour (2021) (Bolton - Bury - Machester - Oldham - Rochdale - Salford - Stockport - Tameside - Trafford - Wigan: L)

While the structures that come to the agenda within the scope of governance in England are CAs, the most mentioned region of the left-behind agenda, combined with the political leadership, is Tees Valley. Tees Valley can be defined by strong Labour support in history. Tees Valley Combined Authority was created in April 2016 with the combination of five authorities: Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar & Cleveland and Stockton-on-Tees. The purpose of the authority is to support economic growth along with job creation under devolution deals with the government. With Brexit, Conservatives had chances to win the Tees Valley after decades (Payne, 2021). The first election in 2017 was won by Conservatives with a close difference (%39.5 Conservatives-%39 Labour), but in May 2021 Ben Houchen, allegedly the most popular politician in the country (Balls, 2021) and Conservative Mayor and candidate, managed to widen the gap (72.8 percent to 27.2 percent). The reason for this success, according to Payne (2021), is Hounchen's formula, which is replacing Thatcherite small state and low spending with a more active state and extra investment. 'Taking back control' and 'delivering for people' themes were effective in the 2017 election, especially in making the local airport functional again with public ownership (Payne, 2021). These themes continued in 2021, and 'bring steelmaking back to Teesside' was his new project in this election (Balls, 2020).

Another result of the Tees Valley example is its applicability to the rest of the country. Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and

Communities, said if you want to see "levelling up in reality come to Teesside" (Nolan, 2021). Its success makes delivering with more active state type of policies, attractive for other constituencies. This also turns out to be Johnson's style of Conservatism as long as it provides success, especially in previously Labour-led regions. According to the political philosopher John Gray (cited in Payne, 2021), Johnsonian Conservatism is a mixture of "the individualism of Thatcherism with the big-state paternalism of the New Labour era." Such an approach, after the neoliberal order disappointment, the bigger state role in the economy and effects such as job creation has meant that people have a chance to find the alternative they lost. At the same time, devolution and increasing the power of local administrations with a 'levelling up' agenda, although it was criticised by opponents for being vacuous, ambiguous or can take form according to the government's political needs (Parker and Bounds, 2021) comes to the fore, and Tees Valley stands out as an important example.

When we explore Germany, the most prominent populist party is the right-wing AfD. The AfD was founded in 2013, 7 months before the general election, and was then defined as a single-issue party due to its birth from the neoliberal political movement and its focus on the Euro. The party that missed entering the Bundestag with 0.3 points and won 7 seats in the European Parliament the following year did not carry a populist and radical element in its manifesto, but according to Berning (2017: p.18), over time, its Eurosceptic stance, its opposition to the refugee crisis, its acceptance as far-right became widespread and its success in the general elections also improved.

The regional divide of the AfD votes is obvious; at this point, East Germany is the heartland of the AfD votes (Evans et al., 2019: p.18). But, more interestingly, the AfD received an above-national average in some West-Germany cities, especially North Rhine-Westphalian traditional manufacturing cities (Bayerlein, 2020), such as Gelsenkirchen (Berning, 2017: p.19). Evans et al. (2019: p.18) also point out AfD's success in some deindustrialised North Rhine-Westphalian cities like Gelsenkirchen or

Duisburg. Historically and politically (Grün, 2017), the North-Rhine Westphalia is identified with the centre-left Social Democratic Party (SPD). Especially the Ruhr Valley in this region, named as the 'Rust Belt of Germany' associated with SPD votes because of its industrial heritage (Stehkämper, 2021; Goldenberg, 2020). However, with the transition of economy and social democracy, Bayerlein (2020) reveals that high spatial inequalities in Germany are associated with right-wing populism. Places that fit this conclusion are places with high inequality in East Germany, which resulted from the historical East-West Germany divide, and in the Ruhr Area, which resulted from being an old industrial region. Another important result of the study (Bayerlein, 2020) is about how some regions that exhibit high spatial inequality show moderate populist support. The answer, he says, is the role played by the provision of public goods in the impact of spatial inequality on populist voting. According to his conclusion, when public good provision (medical care, education, travel infrastructure, and internet infrastructure) is added to the formula where spatial inequality rate is associated with populist voting, the highest populist vote share is found in regions with high spatial inequality and low provision of public goods and vice versa. Moreover, Burkhardt (2019) quotes the views of the Institut der deutschen Wirtschaft (IW) economists Michael Hüther and Jens Südekum that if equal living standards are not provided in the structurally weak and at-risk regions that feel 'left back' compared to the metropolises, social tensions will increase. They pointed out 19 regions at risk in the future and acute need for action which have the potential to affect people's perception of being left-behind; these include eleven regions in the east of the country, four in North Rhine-Westphalia along the Ruhr, as well as Bremerhaven, Saarland, Schleswig-Holstein East and the West Palatinate (Balser, 2019). In this context, the North-Rhine Westphalia draws attention to the effect of governmental districts and the authorities devolved to them on the relationship between regional inequality and populism remains unanswered, especially in comparison to the CAs of England.

In Table 6, while cities show potential cases, the first vote and second vote show general election results in respective years. According to the German

election system, the first vote allows the elector to vote for a direct candidate of their constituency who applies for a direct mandate in the Bundestag. The second vote allows the elector to vote for a party whose candidates are put together on the regional electoral list. While vote rates show AfD's share in respective cities, vote numbers show how many people vote for the AfD. The mayor election and city council provide some information about municipal elections. In the mayoral election, the first line shows the party of the winning candidate and its share, and the populist party's share is shown. In the city council election column, AfD's share in the respective councils and how many seats it gained in the council are shown.

Table 6: General and Local Election Results of Potential Cases in Germany

2017					
	First Vote Rate	First Vote Number	Second Vote Rate	Second Vote Number	Mayor Election - 2020
North Rhine Westphalia	8.1	799777	9.4	928425	%7.4 AfD(Landtag/State election)(2017)
Gelsenkirchen	16.9	19836	17	20113	%40 SPD - %12 AfD
Duisburg	13.4	30291	13	29343	%57 SPD - %3 NPD(2017)
Dortmund	9.9	29718	10.2	30713	%35 SPD – No AfD
Bochum	11.1	31574	11.3	32194	%62 SPD
Essen	11.2	45680	11.1	45274	%55 CDU, %6 AfD
Hagen	11.1	16716	11.8	17622	%51 Independent, %8,5 AfD
Hamm	10.4	17713	11.2	19068	%41 SPD, %4 AfD
Saarbuck	8.9	12950	9.7	14042	
2021					
	First Vote Rate	First Vote Number	Second Vote Rate	Second Vote Number	City Council - 2020
North Rhine Westphalia	7.1	70502	7.3	71751	16 seats of 199 (2017)
Gelsenkirchen	14	15555	12.8	14204	%13 AfD 11 seats of 88
Duisburg	11.2	24242	9.9	21636	%9 AfD 10 seats of 102
Dortmund	7.5	22393	7.4	22036	%5 AfD 5 seats of 90
Bochum	4.3	11863	8	22114	%6 AfD 5 seats of 86
Essen	8	31944	7.8	31054	%7.5 AfD 6 seats of 86
Hagen	10.1	14419	9.6	13760	%9.3 AfD 5 seats of 52
Hamm	9.3	15562	9.3	15497	%4.7 AfD 3 seats of 58
Saarbuck	9	12569	9.3	13006	

Source: Die Bundeswahlleiterin

Note: The 2017 AfD vote rate was 11.5 (5,317,499), and the second vote was 12.6 (5,878,115).

2021 AfD vote rate: first vote 10.1 (4,695,611), second vote 10.3 (4,803,902).

Some cities are separated into two or more electoral districts in general elections:

(Duisburg 1 - Duisburg 2)

(Dortmund 1 - Dortmund 2)

(Bochum 1 – Bochum/Herne 2: There are not any AfD votes in Bochum 1 in 2021, which means there was no direct candidate for AfD)

(Mulheim/Essen 1 - Essen 2 - Essen 3)

(Hagen/Ennepe-Ruhr-Kreis 1 - Ennepe-Ruhr-Kreis 2: Ennepe is the rural region outside of Hagen. I took only Hagen Ennepe-Ruhr-Kreis 1 into consideration)

(Unna 1 - Hamm/Unna 2: Unna is the rural region outside of the Hamm. I took only Hamm/Unna 2 into consideration)

According to Table 6, all old industrial and left-behind cities vote for the AfD higher than the average rate of North-Rhine Westphalia. In 2017, on the national level, while all cities show close rates to the national average of the AfD votes, Gelsenkirchen and Duisburg show noteworthy higher rates. In 2021, alongside with national trend, AfD votes decreased in North-Rhine Westphalia. However, potential cases still show higher rates than the average of North-Rhine Westphalia. Nevertheless, the difference between cities' AfD rates and the AfD's national average in terms of vote rate increased compared to 2017. Although in terms of the mayoral election, AfD candidates had not a notable success, only in Gelsenkirchen did AfD candidates reach more than 10 percent, in terms of the city council election, AfD is more successful. Gelsenkirchen, Duisburg and Hagen are cities with the highest rates.

As a result, Tees Valley appears to be the best case study region in England because of salient populist tendencies in elections. Also, in national politics, Tees Valley is shown as a true example of levelling up policy, which, on the one hand, aims to lift left-behind regions and to regenerate those people's perceptions towards the central government (McKay et al., 2021), on the other hand, the target of criticism about how the policy stays as ambiguous and rhetorical, and it is driven by electoral calculation (Tomaney and Pike, 2020). In addition, Ben Houchen's success in previously Labour-led regions

provides fertile land to track populist Johnsonian Conservatism, which is a mixture of "the individualism of Thatcherism with the big-state paternalism of the New Labour era" (Gray, cited in Payne, 2021; Heppell, 2020). On the German side, Duisburg appears to be a suitable case, with its populist tendencies in elections. Other than this, these regions are also close to each other in terms of population, which strengthens their comparability. Duisburg's selection allows us to observe different types of populist discourse, such as economic causes-driven discourse in England and cultural causes-driven discourse in Germany. But from a general angle, this comparison will enable an examination of left-behind places in different national contexts in the light of our common and varying criteria and the transition in voting behaviour for former industrial regions that have traditionally been characterised as a social democrat towards populist politics and non-left parties. Therefore, we are going to fulfil the aim of exploring and understanding variegated forms of populism and their expressions in the same type of left-behind regions. Moreover, GPE will also provide an appropriate framework for describing variegated conditions and problems of places experiencing unequal economic, social, spatial, political and institutional changes created by deindustrialisation Pike (2020b: p.5), ensuring that the design is coherent.

3.7. Mixed methods of data collection

The project will be conducting mixed-method research. Mixed research is the synthesis of qualitative and quantitative research methods (Burke et al., 2007: p.113). A general definition of mixed research method is according to Burke et al.'s (2007; p.123) work based on the exploring of definitions of many researchers: "Mixed methods research is the type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches (e.g., use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, inference techniques) for the broad purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration." In addition, our research shows a mixed-method feature

with the descriptive results of extensive research by examining formal relationships, as well as the causal relationships and in-depth explanations provided by intensive research.

The mixed-method research offers a suitable method for examining the variegated populism, and it is compatible with the comparative case study in three ways. Firstly, multiple ways and sources of data promote and deepen the empirical material and enable corroboration and triangulation. Thus, it is basically an appropriate tool to produce a reliable result to provide wider corroboration and confidence in the conclusion. Secondly, according to Creswell and Plano Clarke (2018, p.116): "A mixed-method case study design is a type of mixed methods study in which the quantitative and qualitative data collection, results, and integration are used to provide in-depth evidence for a case(s) or develop cases for comparative analysis." Mertens and Hesse-Biber (2012: p.78) argue that quantitative and qualitative data can be mixed in order to provide a more complete understanding of the studied concept. In addition, according to Yin (2018), mixed-method research can allow researchers to tackle more complex research questions and collect a broader set of evidence. The specified features of the mixed method are necessary for answering complex questions and presenting a complete and deeper understanding by examining the political, economic and cultural causes of populism at a regional level in a comparative framework. The mixed-method to be used for the purposes listed here is in harmony with the case study as it takes into account the individual space and provides in-depth context, and with the comparative framework as it presents the nature and causes of variegation by examining the similarities and differences. Yin (2009) stresses using mixed methods when conducting a case study. In this context, using the mixed method justifies the case study selection and increases the reliability and validity of the holistic design of research. Thirdly, mixed-method research, with a strong qualitative approach, helps define the limits and problems of populism and regional inequality without being confined to just quantitative models; on the other hand, it offers a more comprehensive analysis without excluding mathematical and

statistical formulations. According to Sheppard (2011: p.328), fostering mixed-method research in his approach to geographical political economy is a third option besides the fully quantitative, mathematical, empirical, or fully qualitative theoretical.

There are different methods for combining quantitative and qualitative methods. Our approach can be classified as explanatory sequential mixed methods: explanatory because initial quantitative data results are explained further with the qualitative data; sequential because the qualitative phase comes after the quantitative phase (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). Sayer's causal approach is also illuminating here. According to him (1999: p.14), the explanation is not about how many times an event has happened but about the causality mechanism and the discovery of the conditions under which it was activated. Thus, we use the descriptive side of quantitative analysis for the introductory and identification of cases, while we use the qualitative method for in-depth investigation and uncovering the causal mechanism. Moreover, according to the design, quantitative data collection and analysis will be carried out first, and the results to be obtained from this will be explained and evaluated together with the results of qualitative data collection and analysis. This design is necessary for a complete picture to capture the complex situation, to develop a complete understanding (Creswell and Creswell, 2018), and to ensure further insights to understand the data at a more detailed level by using qualitative follow-up data collection to help explain quantitative results. Constructing causal explanations based upon mixed methods' statistics from quantitative and narrative from the qualitative method will provide a holistic design to explain geographical variegation, inequality and decentralisation relation with populism.

The last but not least important feature of mixed-method research is validation. For this purpose, triangulation can be used to check the reliability and validity of research findings obtained using different methods (Martin, 2021: p.4). According to Denzin (1978: p.291), triangulation is the combination of methodologies used in the study of the same phenomenon.

The conclusion achieved by using the two methods increases the belief that the research is not a methodological artefact but a valid result (Bouchard, 1976: 268). "Denzin (1978) outlined the following four types of triangulation: (a) data triangulation (i.e., use of a variety of sources in a study), (b) investigator triangulation (i.e., use of several different researchers), (c) theory triangulation (i.e., use of multiple perspectives and theories to interpret the results of a study), and (d) methodological triangulation (i.e., use of multiple methods to study a research problem)" (Burke et al., 2007: p.114). This research applies data triangulation that combines different types of sources and methodological triangulation between (across) methods; namely, the research involves the use of qualitative and quantitative data collection and data analysis to examine populist variegation with a focus on regional dimensions. These various techniques and instruments generated a rather rich and comprehensive picture of populism and regional development. This project naturally uses data triangulation as it uses different data sources and methodological triangulation because it uses different research methods. In this way, triangulation will strengthen our belief that the results obtained using more than one method are valid and not a methodological artefact. In addition to the robustness of the results with triangulation, richer data can be reached (Burke et al., 2007: p.113). Moreover, with similar logic, according to Yin (2009), multiple sources of evidence and member checks were used to establish construct validity. Therefore, this project will present validity with the different data sources it uses and different data processing techniques.

3.8. Methods of data collection and analysis

As we say, the research is applying mixed-method research. So, it will conduct both qualitative and quantitative methods. However, the qualitative method will be predominant because, as we mentioned throughout this unit, being explanatory rather than descriptive, uncovering causal mechanisms and producing in-depth context-dependent knowledge are important in answering research questions and are compatible with the GPE philosophy

and synthesis of extensive and intensive approaches we adopt. In this context, the project contains three different analyses. First is quantitative regression analysis, the second is qualitative discourse analysis, and the third is qualitative semi-structured interviews.

3.8.1. Quantitative method, Regression analysis

Firstly, the research is going to conduct a quantitative method to address the first research question: Based on the characteristic features of left-behind regions, what determines right-wing populist votes in Germany and England? On this aim, quantitative data are planned to be representative and robust enough to present a general picture of the populist wave in those countries. This quantitative data shows relations between concepts but is inadequate in explaining why populist waves occur in some regions; what is the reason behind that backlash, and do these reasons and expressions of populism differ between cross-countries? Thus, the first analysis provides both a picture of the overall situation and an idea of the countries, helping and validating the selection of countries and regions to be compared. As a quantitative method, regression analysis aims to map, uncover, and compare the regions and their multi-actor and multi-scale relationships and contexts across spaces. Quantitative research can help identify the areas of interest for a deeper qualitative study.

Quantitative methods are not used to find causal relationships but are useful for finding empirical regularities between objects. Moreover, as Yeung (1997: p.57) says, quantitative methods are also useful for drawing attention to possible relationships between objects. Probabilistic inferences will be made about the region from which the data is taken through inferential statistics (Rice, 2010) for comparison. Regression analysis in inferential statistics will be used to inference about populism (dependent variable) according to the long-term decline and inter-regional inequality levels (independent variables) of the regions.

Secondary sources will be used in the process of obtaining data for the regression analysis. The principal source of secondary data is normally the government; since states form sub-units hierarchically, the information they collect is strongly spatially referenced (White, 2010: p.62). In addition, the project will benefit from official statistics as the main sources of quant data like ARDECO, Eurostat, and OECD. The reason for using secondary data is the fact that the regions accommodate a large part of the population, and the data covering a large part, such as the census and vote counts, are secondary (White, 2010: p.62). In the light of secondary data - vote results, census, surveys, and statistics data collected by states or independent organisations - quantitative analysis will be used in the comparison to be made through economic, social and political elements. Socio-economic data from sources like census, voting results or surveys of government or independent agencies will be analysed statistically in order to find patterns and relations between left-behindness and populism in declining regions and provide a basis for the qualitative research. This type of analysis will also help to have a deeper understanding of selected cases.

Another point is that the analysis is conducted at the NUTS3 level. There are three important reasons for selecting this level, details of which can be found in the case selection section of the methodology chapter. Firstly, regional inequality at NUTS3 is more striking than at the NUTS2 level. Also, the NUTS3 values of inequality within countries and total inequality show an increasing trend, especially after 2008 (OECD, 2020: p. 55). Secondly, both here in the explanation of votes and further analysis of cases, we focus on local governance, political demands and supply sides of populism and political leadership in these local government units, and the NUTS3 level is the closest statistical level to local administrative units and is coherent for both countries. Last but not least, since the NUTS3 level is established as a statistical territorial unit, data availability is relatively better than that of local governance. Overall, for the consistency of the analysis and for the explanatory level to be at the highest and related level to our research aims, we consider the NUTS3 level. In Germany case, election results are published at the NUTS3 level. However, for England, election results are not

published at the NUTS3 level. To overcome this issue, we needed to convert and aggregate constituency-level election results data to the NUTS3 level. In most situations, NUTS3 regions cover several constituencies or in some cases, NUTS3 regions match to constituencies. In this context, we do not have boundaries conflict. In our study, a total of 534 NUTS3 regions, 133 from England and 401 from Germany, have been subjected to analysis.

3.8.2. Qualitative methods

As a complement to quantitative analysis, qualitative analysis is another part of the research. Qualitative research, when combined with quantitative methods, as we use in mixed methods, can help us interpret and better understand the complex reality of a situation as well as the implications of quantitative data. Qualitative methods should be used to deepen meaning rather than to uncover regularity in parallel with intensive research. Qualitative research is conducted because the variegation of populism and its relationship with regional inequality needs to be explored, and a complex, detailed understanding of it is needed (Creswell and Poth, 2018). Also, quantitative methods make it hard to embrace concepts and cases by themselves because the measurement problems of some abstract concepts like being left-behind or lack of future feelings and reality, have different reflections as perceived differently by politicians, the people, and a researcher according to context, space and time.

Discourse Analysis:

The second method is qualitative critical discourse analysis, which is going to answer the second research question: How is populist discourse produced and transformed into regional expression in media and politics, and how does this vary between cases?

According to Jorgensen and Phillips (2002), discourse is a particular way of talking about and understanding the world or an aspect of the world, and discourse contributes to the construction of social identities, social relations,

systems of knowledge and meaning. In addition, Sayer (2007: p.104) stated that "Social phenomena are influenced by discourses and actors' concepts, and these need to be interpreted and their causal effects examined". Furthermore, discourse analysis emphasises the contextual meaning of language. Discourse analysis is basically related to methods of examining language use and its role in social life (Potter, 2008).

According to Sayer (1999: p.17), there is always an interpretative element in social science because meaning cannot be measured or counted and, therefore, must be understood. This is especially true in discourse analysis. The discourse analysis supports the idea that reality and construction exist together, which we adopt philosophically. According to Laclau and Mouffe (cited in Varro, 2015: p.32), discourse includes the construction of meaning, together with language and actions, namely meaning and practice. Discourses include all dimensions of a message, namely the content of the message, as well as different dimensions such as the speaker, the audience and the purpose of the speech.

Different sources can be analysed on different levels. In this context, vocabulary, structure of text, and genre of text influence the interpretation of discourse. We paid attention to the populist elements in regional newspapers and speeches of politicians, as well as the choice of words and the emphasis on populist concepts. The LexisNexis database is used for the articles. The speeches and articles are obtained from party websites and newspapers as secondary data. In addition, attention is paid to ensuring that the articles, politicians and their discourses are related to case studies in order to provide regional analysis. Literature review and other analyses related to the comparison of cases will provide the necessary context information for conducting discourse analysis. Afterwards, the selected texts will be examined in terms of words, sentences, paragraphs, and overall structure, and they will be associated with populist themes and the research question.

Discourse analysis is a broad field that uses various approaches to analyse language and communication. In parallel to the philosophical grounding of the research, we adopt critical discourse analysis (CDA). Based on Chouliaraki and Fairclough (2022: p.35), while we accept discourse as a moment in the dialectic of social practice and that changes in discourse are capable of creating new social possibilities, we stay away from an approach that sees the social as nothing more than discourse and reduces it to discourse only. Thus, CDA is consistent throughout the study; that is, while the discourse theory accepts the existence of the world outside of humans, it rejects the existence of one certain shape of the world (Torfing, 2005). In addition, discourse analysis will play a role in understanding the point of political instrumentalisation, which is part of our regional dimensional study of populism, in order to examine real, perceived, and politically instrumentalised sources.

The CDA sees language as a social practice and pays special attention to the relations between language and power (Wodak, 2001; Weiss and Wodak, 2003). CDA focuses on social problems; works on texts and speech (as well as objects, gestures, photographs, images, etc.) to reveal the discursive sources of social phenomena such as power, hegemony, inequality and prejudice; explores how these discursive resources are sustained and reproduced in particular social, political, and historical contexts.

CDA focuses on social problems as being critical, interdisciplinary and emancipatory (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 2022) and helpful to us in two different ways. The first is the usage of populist elements in regional newspapers and political leaders' speeches, and the second is the analysis of populist variegation in the expression and discourses of politicians in unique cases. Thus, it also deepens the regional analysis by emphasising the relationship between actor and structure by taking into account the space. Therefore, CDA, in parallel with the chapter's aim, is going to help the examination of politics and society to demonstrate the possibility of gaining a greater comprehension of our world.

According to Varro (2005, p.32), discourses generally embody temporary meanings. The manifestation of political decisions in the construction of the incomplete and open character of the society constitutes the discourses. When the establishment is faced with an event that the discourse cannot 'domesticate' or explain, changes in the discourse conceptualised as 'dislocation' occur. Thus, the ground for political struggle and new discourses is formed. This approach is important in our research to evaluate populist discourse in the post-2008 context, to examine the impact of the increasing populist trend on the discourse of mainstream politicians as well as populists, and to examine how local characteristics are reflected in discourse and variegate populism through regional newspapers.

In this light, the chapter is going to apply CDA to regional newspapers and speeches of political leaders. To explain populism's success, the media, in particular, have been regarded as an important supply-side factor (Mazzoleni 2008). Thus, to conduct regional newspaper analysis, we need to apply time limitations and keyword searches for the sources. The points to be considered at this stage are that the analysis of the data to be reached should be large enough to be done by one person - as this is a PhD project -, time interval and key concepts should be compatible with each other, and the two should also be related to the main themes of the thesis, namely populism, left-behindness and its variegated nature with expression on local politics. In this regard, for Teesside, we chose the first TCVA mayor election period, which is two months before the elections and about two months after. The first election term is selected because it was the first combined authority mayoral election, which also happened in 2017, about one year later after the Brexit referendum in 2016, so populism debates and populist discourse were still on the agenda, and importantly, all constituencies which are part of TVCA voted for Leave which was contradictory to Labour Party. For Duisburg, 2017 is also chosen because the most recent mayoral election was held on 24 September 2017. In addition, the general election at the same time was the first serious election of the AfD in Germany. Therefore, these four months are a period in which election debates are intense, candidates make their promises before the election, and the election results

can be evaluated. The specified date ranges are 01/03/2017-01/07/2017 for Teesside and 01/08/2017 – 01/12/2017 for Duisburg.

In the literature review chapter, we mentioned that we consider populism to be a thin ideology that sees populism as a style of political communication in which political actors refer to the public. Populism is thus a framework of communication that appeals to the public, identifies with the public and pretends to speak for them (Jagers and Walgrave, 2007: p.322). This makes the place of political actors' discourse in the study of populism all the more important. In this context, in the second part of the discourse analysis, we examine the statements of the mayors of Tees Valley and Duisburg, which are selected as cases in terms of populist elements for the period from the aforementioned elections until today. In doing so, we aim to contribute to the ongoing debate, arguing that different types of political actors strategically use populist political communication to maximise their votes or increase their power.

Semi-structured interviews:

The last analysis is qualitative semi-structured interviews with academicians, policymakers, representatives from labour unions and community organisations from each region as primary data collection. This analysis is going answer the third research question: How is the relationship between left-behindness and populism perceived by regional actors and experts? The answer to the third question will be sought with a semi-structured interview. This analysis provides the opportunity to produce context and space-dependent information by measuring the different perceptions of different actors on left-behindness and populism and to examine regional analysis in depth.

The selection of individuals to interview was based on ensuring a variety of academic, political, and business viewpoints, as well as the connection of interviewees to regions. The interviews were conducted with individuals who possessed fundamental characteristics such as knowledge, experience, and active engagement in local and regional policies. These interviewees

represented various sectors, including government (across all levels, with a particular focus on the local and regional), the business sector (primarily business associations and individual entrepreneurs), and civil society (including diverse organisations, with an emphasis on academics and non-governmental organisations (NGOs)). In total, 32 interviews were conducted in two cases, 16 each. The sample structure of interview questions can be found in Appendix A.

The research employs interviews as a key research method to delve into the underlying contextual information that shapes events, issues, and challenges involving both firm and non-firm actors and institutions, as emphasised by Valentine (2005). Interviews play a pivotal role in the data collection process, providing primary data that complements and works alongside secondary data, as noted by Bryman (2012). This investigative method, prominently featured in qualitative research, aims to tap into participants' perceptions, opinions, agency, and involvement concerning specific subjects, events, and situations, as highlighted by Punch (2013).

In regard to our research, an interview is a suitable method for a search for meaning, acknowledging the complexity of variegated, time, space, and context-dependent 'truth'; useful to triangulate with/complement other methods; useful to find local comments and perceptions with open-ended questions. Interviews are also optimal for collecting data on space-specific perspectives and perceptions through local experts because the semi-structured interview, in which the interviewee can speak comfortably in the context in a structure that has not been prepared before, and the course of the interview can vary accordingly, is effective in producing information specific to the context and measuring perceptions. There was no strict structure of questions; the interviews were guided by the speakers' answers, but we tried to capture the historical perception of deindustrialisation, regional decline, the current effect of economic and political developments since then and the projection of the future for left-behind and former industrial regions. The research process involved informing interviewees in advance, obtaining their informed consent,

conducting interviews either in person or via video conferencing, recording and transcribing the majority of interviews, and analysing the findings to identify unique themes from diverse perspectives. Thus, interviews help us to examine what particular characteristics of left-behindness are perceived by local experts and how they establish the connection between past, current and future in terms of left-behindness, populism, regional development and policies and future implications. This way we will be able to assess similarities and differences within and between cases. We are also able to assess how professional individuals from different backgrounds understand our concepts.

In addition, the interview helps us to validate the case study as it helps to promote in-depth understanding. Therefore, it helps to understand the geographical variegation of populism and its geographically affected sources. So, it supports to see how populism roots and variegation of populism are perceived in the eyes of geographically formed understanding.

Using NVivo as an interview analysis:

We conducted 32 interviews in total, 16 for each case. It is fair to say that there is a significant divergence of views from those interviewed, and the aim of the interview chapter is to present these views as accurately as possible. In order to achieve this aim, throughout the research process, we relied on specialised software, NVivo 14, to handle various tasks, including transcription, coding, analysis, and the transformation of extensive interview data (more than 250 pages) into distinct conceptual themes, both directly and indirectly linked to the study's research questions. NVivo is an effective tool for supporting qualitative data, and it made a major contribution to interview analysis in a number of different ways. Specifically, NVivo facilitated efficient data management by allowing us to import, organise, and manage interview transcripts and other relevant materials. Additionally, its robust coding system enabled us to classify text passages, identify themes, and extract significant quotes from interviews. We

leveraged NVivo's search tools to locate specific terms or phrases within the interview material, facilitating the identification of relevant information and recurring themes. Moreover, NVivo facilitated comparative analysis by enabling us to compare and contrast coded parts across interviews, aiding in the identification of patterns and variations in participants' responses.

In our analysis, the preliminary stage is 'description', which involves the transcription of the interviews. The subsequent phase of analysis is the classification of data obtained from the transcripts. During this step, the material is broken down into its individual components and systematically arranged into comparable categories, known as coding, as inspired by Kitchin and Tate (2000). The data I gathered includes both the commonalities and distinctions in respondents' answers. I improved the efficiency of comparing replies by separating or combining pre-existing categories. Using hierarchical coding, first, broader thematic codes are applied to common and comparative issues from the interviews, followed by categorisation with sub-codes. This approach allowed us to analyse specific topics in greater depth while maintaining an overview of the data. Additionally, during coding, the authenticity of participants' voices is preserved by including quotes or phrases that directly captured their language and expressions.

3.9. Ethical Issues

The application of ethical rules is important because our research covers contemporary and socially relevant issues. Consideration of ethics is needed, especially since it involves primary data collection techniques and processes of contact with human subjects in the field. First of all, a scientific researcher must conduct honest and truthful research. Secondly, the researcher considers the falsification of data and results on the project and its discipline and even prevents unconscious mistakes by methodological tools. We are planning to act firmly within Newcastle University's ethical frameworks, understanding that any disregard for or failure to uphold such

ethical principles could significantly undermine the theoretical and empirical contributions of the research. In this context, ethical approval has been obtained by the university's committees.

Among our analyses, the ethical approach is particularly important in the semi-structured interview. The data collection process involved interviewing academicians, policymakers, representatives from labour unions and community organisations. During the research process, the interviewees were informed in advance, their informed consent was obtained (Appendix B), interviews were conducted face-to-face or via video conference, and their consent was obtained for the interviews to be recorded, transcribed and used in the research. In this note, participants were identified by name as participators (Appendix C), but as seen in the interview chapter, quotations and attributions were made in accordance with the rules of confidentiality and anonymity.

3.10. Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter reveals a reasonable sequence and analytical outline of what questions to study, what data are relevant, what data to collect, how to analyse the data and how to interpret the results. In order to answer research questions in a way that complements research objectives and defined literature review, it is essential that appropriate data and analysis methods be presented with a coherent philosophical approach. Here, the philosophical approach affects the nature of knowledge, the place of the researcher in social science, and the way in which the project is handled. In this context, we first emphasise critical realism and its view of reality that while it exists outside the human consciousness, the reality that the researcher can observe is falsifiable because it depends on the researcher's methods and observation. Secondly, we underline the importance of the geographical regional dimension and that information is produced, changed and reproduced depending on this dimension. After that, we argued that the researcher should take a normative stance in terms of

being critical of the structure that produces inequality. The GPE approach meets these requirements while providing an appropriate approach to examine relatively abstract, value-laden concepts and geographic complexity and differences. This approach also supports the central argument that a geographical perspective is essential for understanding the multi-dimensional nature of populism.

Table 7: Research Design

Overall aim	The overall aim of the research is to show the relationship between the left-behind feeling of old industrial regions with rising regional disparities and rising populist movements; and to understand and explain the emergence of different forms of populism and their causes by examining how populism is variegated and expressed across different geographies.		
Philosophical Stance	Critical Realism		
Theoretical Framework	Geographical Political Economy		
Research Design	Instrumental + Embedded Case Study Cross-national Comparative Framework		
Methodological Approach	Mixed Method: The Synthesis of Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods Explanatory Sequential Method		
Research Question	1)Based on the characteristic	2) How is populist	3)How is the relationship

	features of left-behind regions, what determines right-wing populist votes in Germany and England?	discourse produced and transformed into regional expression in media and politics, and how does this vary between cases?	between left-behindness and populism perceived by regional actors and experts?
Research Methods and Analysis	Mixed Method		
	Quantitative Regression Analysis Secondary Data (vote results, census and statistics)	Qualitative Critical Discourse Analysis Secondary Data (local newspaper articles)	Qualitative Semi-structured Interviews Preliminary Data (interviews with academicians, policymakers, representatives from labour unions and community organisations)
Units of Analysis	NUTS3 Regions		

The inability of existing research to clearly determine the causes of the populist surge, its variegation due to geographical reasons, and the deficiencies of the research in the regional dimension provide us with the need to conduct an in-depth and detailed study on the regional dimension. This can best be achieved through a case study. Tees Valley from England and Duisburg from Germany are determined as case studies through detailed criteria and their signs in possible countries and regions. The case studies of Tees Valley and Duisburg were selected based on their distinct historical, economic, and political contexts, which provide a rich basis for comparative analysis. Two cases from different countries are scrutinised, and they will also be used to understand populism and variegation. Thus, it will be possible to examine populism within the GPE approach as it takes into account individual space and variegations. The purpose of examining the two regions is to reveal the patterns, relationships, similarities and differences between them. The case study with a cross-national comparative framework also allows for advanced understanding and policy implications. Cases are selected from countries with a sense of left-behindness, with different levels of centralisation, and experienced a populist surge in accordance with the comparison of populism over regional inequality and regional decline. Furthermore, in the case selection, deindustrialised regions associated with being left-behind after 2008 are highlighted.

The mixed method is applied to this research. Primary and secondary sources that pay attention to the regional context are relevant for making such a complex and in-depth study. For this purpose, within the scope of quantitative analysis, regression analysis is first done in order to find a correlation between populist surge and left-behindness with the data to be obtained from the reports of the state and independent organisations. Secondly, qualitative discourse analysis on regional newspapers and politicians' speeches obtained from databases, websites or newspapers are scrutinised in order to dig into and understand populist elements, intents and structure. Last and third, interviews with experts from the regions are

made and interpreted. Triangulation with different data sources and different methods are used for validation.

Within this research design, the purpose of the research is to create a more in-depth understanding of the reasons for the emergence of populism in certain regions by explaining the underlying causal mechanisms and how processes develop binds to geographic consequences in a particular context that cause a populist wave in those regions rather than just a process or just descriptive statistics. We bring together the explanatory power of integrating quantitative analyses of indicators with the qualitative interpretation of critical discourse analysis and semi-structured interviews. Lastly, our research demonstrates how observed patterns in quantitative data, correlations with regression analysis, and demonstrative causal explanation with qualitative data of discourse analysis and semi-structured interview, thus, provide corroboration and triangulation.

CHAPTER 4: CULTURE, POLITICS AND STRUCTURAL CHANGE IN GERMANY AND ENGLAND

4.1. Introduction

Periods of economic expansion frequently replace phases of structural change, such as when deposits are depleted or cease to be economically viable for various reasons in mining regions (Dahlbeck and Gärtner, 2019: p.15). These changes are always different and are subject to different national or global changes, such as raw materials running out, depreciation, decreasing demand or other national or global changes, as well as different political factors, such as the political power's view of the declining sector and the creation of new sectors in those regions. This is exactly what happened in Teesside and Duisburg when their economic structure based on industrial production began to shatter with deindustrialisation.

In the methodology chapter, in the section on the selection of cases and points of comparison, the political and economic situation of the cases that shed light on the present day was mentioned. This chapter aims to set the scene and provides contexts for both cases, including identity, economic transition and similarities and differences to make our further analyses more comprehensible, with the regional identity, political history, economic structure, economic evolution and restructuring of cases which shares a common industrial structure and economic shocks.

The structure of the chapter is as follows: After this introduction, in the second section, we are going to look into elements of regional identity which explain the short historical existence of regions in relation to industrial production, relationships between actors and institutional arrangements and local governance of the regions. The third section analyses economic restructuring, which started with deindustrialisation. In this section, we examine how the economies of the regions have been affected by

deindustrialisation and what the region's outlook for industrialisation and economic reinvention efforts has been since the 1970s. The fourth section focuses on the dominance of political parties and the policies developed in the context of economic existence, deindustrialisation, and the crisis, as well as the economic picture that emerged in its aftermath. The fifth and last section presents the conclusion.

4.2. Regional history, culture and identity

In this section, we will look at elements which shaped the identity of regions with history and culture. These elements are the impact of industrialisation on the cases, the relationships between actors and the institutional and governmental change they experienced.

4.2.1. Early industrialisation and urbanisation

The fate of both cases is closely linked to the discovery of coal and iron, the industrialisation of mining and the associated development of steel and other industries. In 1801, Middlesbrough was a small hamlet of 25 people (Young, 2019: p. 23), and Stockton on Tees and Yarm were small market towns (Beynon et al., 1994: p.11) and then the discovery of significant ironstone reserves started a huge transformation for the area. Iron ore was discovered in the Cleveland Hills near Eston, and the geographical location of the area, having river by side, closeness to the sea and the coal deposits to the North, created a favourable basin for development, with the railway improving connectivity. In this context, in the 19th century, the region emerged as a prominent hub for the manufacturing of iron and, later, steel. The region experienced such a boom in iron production that by the 1870s, it was producing about 30 per cent of the UK's pig iron and about 14-15 (Yasumoto, 2011) per cent of the world's pig iron. In addition, the engineering and shipbuilding sectors have also developed during this period. From the 1920s onwards, the chemical industry became one of the

main actors in the region (Evenhuis, 2018: p.7). Billingham developed in conjunction as a 'company town' with the chemical industry located here and setting up its plans here. Most of the houses in the area were built by the company, which also offered many social amenities (Warren, 2018: p.154). The growth of iron in the area led to it becoming known as 'Ironopolis' and during a visit to Middlesbrough in 1862, the then Prime Minister William Gladstone referred to the area as the famous 'Infant Hercules' with a famous quote "This remarkable place, the youngest child of England's enterprise, is an infant, but if an infant, an infant Hercules" (Warwick, 2017).

Although until the late 18th century, Duisburg was a rural area, historically, it was on the medieval trading route connecting Western and Eastern Europe (Berger and Golombek, 2019: p.200). Already in the Middle Ages, coal was mined in the Ruhr area for personal use. In the 18th century, state regulated horizontal mining near the surface began. In the 19th century, with the acceleration of industrialisation and technological advancement, deeper mining started along with this. From 1894 to 1914, the Ruhr area experienced a phase of strong growth in the labour market, with the mass production of iron and steel concentrated in Duisburg along the Rhine (Hassink, 1993). Alongside this growth, the population increased very rapidly (Dahlbeck and Gärtner, 2021: p.30). From the mid-19th century until the 1920s, the population increased tenfold to about 3.8 million (Dahlbeck and Gärtner, 2021: p.30). Furthermore, because of industrialisation, the Ruhr area saw a huge rise in immigration, which happened very quickly. According to Berger (2013: p.59), "in 1880 there were a mere 38,000 migrants in the Ruhr, but thirty years later there were 497,000". So, despite its mediaeval heritage, the Ruhr region mainly formed during the industrial era (Goch, 2022: p.150). With concentrated production and diversified industrial work like coal mining, coal chemistry, iron and steel, Ruhr areas has earned the title of 'industrial heart' of the Federal Republic of Germany.

4.2.2. Relations Between Capital, Labour and State

One of the important elements shaping the identity of these two cases, whose destinies and governance structures were shaped by the mining of underground resources and their processes, emerged from the interaction between capital owners, organised labours and politicians. As Teesside's economic destiny changed with the development of industry, so its political destiny was shaped by the capitalists who played a role in it. German-born Henry Bolckow and his business partner, John Vaughan (Young, 2019: p. 23), were among the first economic migrants to capitalise on the discovery in the 1850s. Their role in politics alongside the economy shows how they are intertwined. The first mayor of Middlesbrough was Henry Bolckow. He was followed by his partner, John Vaughan, in 1855. In 1868, Bolckow was elected as the town's first Member of Parliament; he held that position until his death in 1878 (Warren, 2018: p.67). Also, he was the first President of the Chamber of Commerce when it was incorporated in 1963 (Beynon et al., 1994: p.56). This shows that in addition to the role of the economy in the growth and urbanisation of the region, the industrial past also plays a major role in the formation of political activities.

Although Duisburg has grown with the industrial era, the landowners, with their existing economic relations, have been active in the municipal administration since its establishment in the 1850s. Nevertheless, it is a fact in this case that developing industrial economic relations will have a profound effect on society and politics. One of the important actors in this note has emerged as labour organisations. The Ruhr area is associated with a strong identity, with an industry based on coal and steel and the associated political and social organisation (Zimmermann, 2023). In Duisburg, workers' organisations emerged with the Industrial Revolution, and in the 1860s, Catholic workers' associations were founded in the Ruhr (Berger, 2013: p.44). The unionisation of the workforce resulted in a significant rise in strike activity, with strikes ranging from local actions to coordinated regional efforts, such as the notable 1872 strike involving 21,000 Ruhr miners (Berger, 2013: p.44). The trade unions were strong

representatives because they had high membership numbers, and it was part of their identity to protect each other, which came from working together in labour-intensive and dangerous jobs (Dahlbeck and Gärtner, 2021: p.74). Even in the revolution of 1918-19, after the military defeat of the German Empire in the First World War, many workers and unions in the mines and steelworks in the Ruhr were radicalised and formed an army which is called the Red Ruhr army (Berger and Golombek, 2019: p.201). Political events such as these were instrumental in the region's identity evolution.

In Teesside, with the adequacy of production in steel and other industries and post-war policies favouring full employment, workers enjoyed good economic earnings and stability. Nevertheless, the balance between workers, employers and administrators is weaker than in Duisburg due to, among other things, the above-mentioned interplay between employers and politicians. During the period of generally strong labour movements, there were several factors that undermined this strength in Teesside, the first of which was that large companies, benefiting from the paternalistic traditions of the region, had developed an internal labour market, often recruiting generations of the same family from the residential areas surrounding the factories (Beynon et al., 1994: p.41). Beynon et al. (1994: p.41) note that in the post-World War II period, less than half of ICI's manual labourers were union members. A second reason for limited unionism was that employees in Teesside, especially from the coal mines in Durham, were thankful that they could find work at the surface with better conditions than mines (Beynon et al., 1994: p.41). In addition, the development of civil society and political activities in the region in connection with large companies shows that the function of trade unions to bring people together has been taken over by companies (Beynon et al., 1994: p.53).

For these reasons, Beynon et al. (1994: p.72) interpreted Teesside trade unionism as "a history of compliant and deferential trades unionism". In the period of economic boom and full employment, this situation may not have been too disturbing, but then deindustrialisation happened, and the

situation got worse to the disadvantage of workers. Due to their heavy dependence on one or two dominant industries during the 1970s and 1980s, industrial regions like Teesside were frequently severely impacted by deindustrialisation (Evenhuis, 2018: p.3). Structural crises like the oil crisis and the steel crisis in the 1970s enabled capitalism to leave full employment and social safety policies and focus on the rate of profitability (Harvey, 2005). According to Evenhuis (2018: p.13), from 1976 until 1984, more than two-thirds of employment, which is about 35,000 jobs in steel, was lost; moreover, the number of jobs in shipbuilding-related sectors fell from 18,000 to nearly 0 between 1982 and 1987. These changes in the region and changes in the understanding of government in the world and in the UK, which have created more short-term contracts and precarious jobs, have led to flexibilisation in the labour market (Evenhuis, 2018: p. 26; Warren, 2018: p.79). 'Job for life' concepts demolished. Lost employment in the industrial sector could not be replaced by employment in the service sector.

Both central and local governments became intricately linked to major companies, positioning them at the core of significant projects, and this interdependence justified extensive state financing of private sector activities, according to Beynon et al. (1994: p.189). In Teesside, political strategies based on the primacy of capitalist production produced a system to the detriment of workers, while on the other side, as Albert (1993: p.18) stated, the German model of capitalism, which emphasises collective success, consensus, and long-term concerns, was more effective and fairer compared to a neoliberal model which is based on individual success and short-term financial gain. Moreover, this difference is reflected in the fact that in the German model, referred to by Hall and Sockice (2001) as coordinated market economies, the link between employers and trade unions plays the main role in decision-making processes, whereas the UK economy, which falls within liberal market economies, involves company-based and uncoordinated wage bargaining, thus relegating the employer-employee relationship to a lesser importance.

This setting helped Germany to develop a 'culture of consensus of the elite'. "This culture was characterised by a strong emphasis on unanimous decisions and strategies agreed between business and politicians, and an equally strong inclination to not allow conflicts to come about in the first place" (Bogumil et al., 2012, p. 14). In this context, the concept of 'Montanmitbestimmung', which means 'co-determination', has even been developed in Germany. Accordingly, a system of industrial co-determination has developed in the coal, iron and steel industries, in which workers participate in the decision-making processes of the companies, ensuring that structural reforms are carried out peacefully (Goch, 2022: p.152). In the Ruhr area, a consensus culture among a coalition of elites from business, politics, and trade unions, characterised by corporatist structures and a commitment to avoiding open conflicts, aimed to ensure social and political stability, along with the development of large-scale industrial infrastructures (Bogumil et al., 2012). This approach was well-received by the population, fostering a sense of protection against economic crises and mitigating defensive distrust toward the governing elites (Goch, 2001). Moreover, these led to the success of the social partnership model in Germany, which gave workers the power to balance their rights against the companies and politicians with collective bargaining autonomy, where social partners negotiated collective wage agreements and worked on social plans during workforce reductions. As a result, deindustrialisation in Duisburg diverged from Teesside with the prevention of large numbers of redundancies, especially with social benefits such as early retirement (Dahlbeck and Gärtner, 2019: p.44).

At a time of strong labour movements, particularly in labour-intensive sectors, the state in Germany acted as a mediator between workers and employers. It maintained social peace as well as economic efficiency, although it could not completely protect Duisburg from the major consequences of deindustrialisation. In Teesside, on the other hand, the balance between workers and companies has tipped in favour of the latter, while the state has not been able to play a balancing role. The relationship

between the state and large corporations will be scrutinised in the policy responses section.

4.2.3. Institutions and Governance

The identity of Teesside as a political unit is subject to discussion because there is no such town as Teesside today, and its parts had former identities. And people who live there refer themselves but to the conurbations or sub-districts in which they live rather than as Teessiders. Despite the difficulty of defining, Warren (2018: p.17)'s approach is quite clear: "It was and remains to a great extent geographical and political shorthand for a conurbation of towns that have certain things in common, the most obvious one being a geographical proximity to the river Tees and its estuary".

Before 1968, local government in Teesside consisted of numerous districts which were part of Durham and North Riding of Yorkshire. A local government unit comprising the Tees Valley area was established in 1968 with the creation of Teesside County Borough, which covers Billingham and Stockton-on-Tees from Durham and Eston, Middlesbrough, and Redcar from North Yorkshire. In 1974, Cleveland took the place of Teesside Country Brough as a non-metropolitan county which existed until 1996 and had four boroughs: Hartlepool, Stockton-on-Tees, Middlesbrough and Langbaurgh-on-Tees. In 1996, the County Council was abolished, and its powers transferred to the district councils, which are Middlesbrough, Stockton-on-Tees, Hartlepool, and Redcar and Cleveland. Langbaurgh-on-Tees was renamed as Redcar and Cleveland.

Nonetheless, these changes in local government show that, despite the different transitions in the region, today's TVCA, with the exception of Darlington, already has a basis for an identity as Teesside. However, Darlington is not entirely outside the region. In addition to Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar and Cleveland and Stockton, it was part of the Tees

Valley Joint Strategy Unit in 1996 and then in Tees Valley Unlimited in 2010, which became the Local Enterprise Partnership for the Tees Valley area.

In 2014, the Tees Valley City Deal, which includes job creation and funding in the regions and intends a spatial balance between South and North (Martin, 2015), was signed between Tees Valley Unlimited and the government to help develop major industrial sites, create new jobs and encourage investment in local infrastructure. In 2015, a Devolution Deal was agreed upon, leading to the establishment of the Tees Valley Combined Authority in 2016, which was set up to develop a Tees Valley-wide strategic policy on economic development, planning, housing, tourism and transport in partnership with the public and private partnership (Heseltine, 2016: p.11).

Besides the identity, the TVCA also has a basis in local government experience. However, on the other hand, the constantly changing local government structure of the region and the constant handover of responsibilities between these structures also point to a lack of stability and consistency in the creation of institutions. According to Barnett et al. (2021), over the past 40 years, repeated reforms and reductions in funding, powers, accountability, services, and size have progressively weakened local government in England, leading to increased centralisation and negative impacts on local communities, as the central government has disproportionately influenced the political, policy-making, and democratic landscape.

Figure 8: Map of Tees Valley Administrative Boundaries

Source: LIPSIT (2020)

The governance structure in Tees Valley has changed with the creation of the Tees Valley Combined Authority in 2016, with the five local authorities in Tees Valley and the Tees Valley Local Enterprise Partnership signing a devolution deal with the Government to coordinate economic development efforts across the region and build a Teessider identity. This identity also involved having a separate governance structure from wider NE and breaking free from the shadow of the Newcastle dominance perception. The local authorities of Middlesbrough, Stockton-on-Tees, Redcar and Cleveland, Hartlepool, and Darlington established the Tees Valley Combined Authority (Figure 8) in 2016. Under the devolution deal with the Government, TVCA gained new powers, including transport, planning, skills and investment, for the purpose of economic development and job creation. With the election of a combined authority mayor in 2017, the Tees Valley Mayor has been given a central role in driving economic development, overseeing strategic land use, managing funding allocations and leading initiatives to increase education, skills and employment opportunities in the area (Heseltine, 2016: p.24).

One of the points where the two regions diverge is that the Tees Valley has been a combined authority that has included different sub-units since 2016, while Duisburg is a city in the Ruhr area (See Figure 9). Due to the multi-layered structure in Germany, I should point out that the federal government refers to the national government in Berlin. Germany operates under a federal system featuring a decentralised structure where power is distributed among its states (Länder) and the federal government. In contrast, the United Kingdom employs a unitary system, where authority is predominantly centralised in the national government, creating a more uniform governance structure across its constituent countries such as England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. To avoid confusion, we refer to the regional government as Länd, which is mostly mentioned as a state in the English literature on Germany context, which in our context refers more to the parliament of North-Rhine Westphalia (NRW).

Back on the Ruhr, the region is not a political or historical entity; instead, it became an entity and functional region as the result of industrial development first coal, iron and steel later (Berger and Golombek, 2019: p.200). The Ruhr does not reflect an administrative unit, but North Rhine-Westphalia state spatial planning defines the city-region 'Ruhr' as a territory for regional planning. In this context, after Länd, the municipality of Duisburg presents the local administrative unit. Nevertheless, the fact that the Ruhr is a spatial planning unit means that in some policies, we will refer to the Ruhr as a whole instead of Duisburg. Germany's federal structure and the Ruhr area's role in regional planning mean that policies for Duisburg are sometimes coordinated with the federal government, sometimes with Länder and sometimes with the Ruhr area, with the different responsibilities between the federal, Länder and local authorities. Their responsibilities are primarily stipulated by the Grundgesetz (German Basic Law): "The federal government is responsible for tasks that are of importance for the whole nation, while the states and municipalities are primarily allocated tasks with a solely regional or local impact (as well as the implementation of federal government provisions)" (Dahlbeck and Gärtner, 2021: p.51).

Figure 9: Map of Ruhr Area and Duisburg
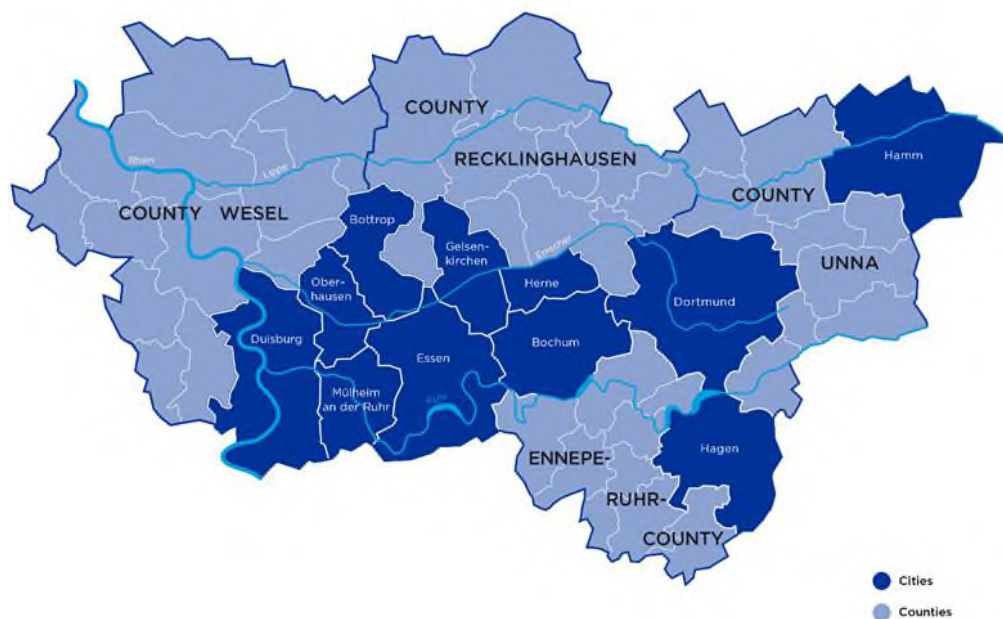
Source: Regionalverband Ruhr (2023)

Another difference between regions' administration is that while Teesside falls on the side of town development in the town/city and urban/rural divide (MacKinnon, 2020), which often appears in political discourse (Spectator, 2020), Duisburg is located in a dense and polycentric urbanity (Zimmermann, 2020). According to the OECD (2023) statistical regions, the population density per square kilometre of the TVCA is 822.9028 with 813 square kilometres of area. Duisburg is denser, with 2095.914 people per square kilometre, despite having a smaller area (233 square kilometres). Nevertheless, with similar industrial production, economic shocks, deindustrialisation and finally, a similar subject of political backlash, the two cases have as many, if not more, similarities than differences.

After describing the historical, cultural and administrative structure of the region, we will provide an in-depth analysis and understanding of the cases by examining the changes around deindustrialisation up to the present day.

4.3. Economic Restructuring

This section analyses the economic evolution of the cases in the context of industrial production. Since the processes of the regions are not exactly the same, we will continue with thematic topics in order to discuss the historical evolution as well as the political economic concepts. We will first look at the industrial conditions of the regions before deindustrialisation. Then, we will look at when, how and with what severity these processes were experienced in these regions. We then examine how countries and regions responded to these processes and whether their institutional and governance experiences differentiated them. After that, we will conclude this section by analysing the political efforts of countries and regional governments in response to these problems and the impact of the 2008 crisis on this process.

Classifications of the transformation of these two major European industrial centres have been developed. According to Evenhuis (2018: p.4-5), the economic evolution of Teesside over the past half-century can be categorised into four distinct periods. During the initial phase, which lasted from the late 1960s to the mid-1970s, the region was designated a growth pole, which resulted in substantial investments and an emphasis on modernisation and expansion. Hence, new investments in heavy industry and infrastructure stimulated economic expansion. The period between 1976 and 1984 was marked by a severe crisis in heavy industry and manufacturing, which resulted in closures and reorganisation. Moreover, central government responses to the region's requirements were insensitive, and governance arrangements were inadequate throughout the economic crisis that raged from the late 1970s to the mid-1990s. From 1984 to 2007, although local actors assumed a more proactive stance in policy formation beginning in the late 1990s, with the assistance of local authority structures and New Labour policies, the third episode was characterised by stagnation and sluggish expansion, although it lagged behind the British economy as a whole. The fourth episode, spanning the years 2007 to the present, examines the repercussions of the Great Recession. Although the region was not as severely impacted as others, its recovery slowed around

2011. However, a more synchronised strategy endured, culminating in the formation of the Tees Valley Combined Authority in 2016, which is planning to play a significant role in fostering renewed economic vitality in the region.

Table 8: Economic periods and key features of Tees Valley and Duisburg

Periods	Key Futures	
	Tees Valley (UK): Designation as a growth pole, substantial investments, focus on modernisation and expansion, economic expansion.	**Duisburg (Germany):** Implementation of integrated policies and subsidies by FRG and NRW to address coal price differentials and stabilise domestic coal demand.
1960-1976		
1976 - 1984	**Tees Valley (UK):** Severe crisis in heavy industry and manufacturing, closures and reorganisation, insensitive central government responses, inadequate governance.	**Duisburg (Germany):** Response to the oil crisis, rising oil prices, and the resurgence of coal as a viable option. Shift in planning responsibility from Ruhr to NRW, transitioning from local to central planning. Planning refocused on the Ruhr in the early 1980s.
1984 - 2007	**Tees Valley (UK):** Stagnation and sluggish expansion, local actors becoming more proactive in policy formation, assistance from local authority structures and New Labour	**Duisburg (Germany):** Deepening crisis in coal and steel industries, formulation of regional future policies with funding from the federal government, states, municipalities, and the European Community.

Periods	Key Futures	
	policies lagged behind the British economy.	
2007 - Present	**Tees Valley (UK):** Repercussions of the Great Recession, slowed recovery around 2011, synchronised strategy, formation of Tees Valley Combined Authority in 2016 for fostering renewed economic vitality.	**Duisburg (Germany):** Adoption of sector-oriented policies and a cluster-based strategy influenced by the EU's Lisbon Strategy.

Source: Author's table according to Evenhuis (2018), Dahlbeck and Gärtner (2021) and Kreuzer (2023)

For Duisburg, there are two studies for a similar periodic evolution, the first one is Dahlbeck and Gärtner (2021)'s approach which focuses on structural policy interventions, which are divided into four periods from 1966. The other is Kreuzer (2023)'s four periods starting in 1958, which focus on different economic objectives and their organisation. Studies also take whether the policies are centralised/top-down or local/bottom-up into consideration. In my view, despite the first coal crisis in 1958, after the economic boom with rapid industrialisation with the interruption of the world wars started a new era of economic evolution of the region, 1966 can be considered as a starting point in terms of the government's structural policies. In this context, the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and NRW implemented integrated policies and subsidies to eliminate the large price differential between domestic and foreign coal and to stabilise the demand for domestic coal between 1966 and 1974. The second period between 1974 and 1987 is related to the oil crisis, the increase in oil prices, the return of

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coal as a good option, and the responsibility for planning shifted from the Ruhr to NRW, from local to central. In fact, by the beginning of the 1980s, planning had started to focus back on the Ruhr. The third period, however, was from 1987 to 1999, when the crisis in the coal and steel industries deepened, and policies for the future of the region were formulated with funding from the federal government, states, municipalities and the European Community. The fourth period after 2000 is characterised by the sector-oriented policy and cluster-based strategy, which started with the EU's Lisbon Strategy.

4.3.1. Industrial Structure Until Deindustrialisation

In fact, the 1960s were seen as a time of hope and continued growth for Teesside. In the 1960s, a modernisation programme was initiated by a consensus of governments, local authorities and employers. This programme involved the modernisation and rationalisation of existing heavy industry, the expansion of the region's infrastructure and the provision of industrial land, and the attraction of new employment in light manufacturing and services (Evenhuis, 2018: p.10, p.41). Also, this initiative was positive in terms of being one of the early steps in diversifying the region's economy and building a stronger economic structure. Nationally and locally driven government strategic plans to expand key industries led to a period of great optimism, marked by low levels of unemployment and high wages in the 1960s and 1970s (Shildrick et al., 2012), and Teesside became one of the largest construction sites and allegedly most dynamic industrial hubs in Western Europe during the 1970s (Beynon et al., 1994: p.2).

In 1973, the announcement of Teesside as one of the five areas where steel production would be concentrated in the framework of the Ten Year Development Plan created an expectation of expansion for the region. This approach was predicated on the closure of smaller inland plants and the substantial expansion of capacity in five main coastal or quasi-coastal locations in order to support the construction of contemporary fully

integrated facilities and aiming to cut production cost (Hudson and Swanton, 2012: p.9). This led to the development of a 5-stage plan to create a new site at Redcar. However, when the expected growth in demand for steel did not materialise, the expansion expectation was reversed, the plan was abandoned after step two (Hudson and Swanton, 2012: p.10), and the expansion policy was replaced by a contraction (Beynon et al., 1994: p.77).

Despite these optimisations and initiatives, according to Beynon et al. (1994: p.72), the local setting remained significantly influenced by the needs of chemical and steel manufacturers. In addition, the continuity of the policies produced lacked political continuity as well as global economic developments. For example, Redcar Blast Furnace was part of the expansion plan for efficient steel production in the 1970s, opened in 1979, and went through the reorganisation and downsizing of British Steel in the 1980s. During this period, it went through privatisation in 1988 under a Conservative government. (Warren, 2018: p.36).

The world wars in Duisburg and the Ruhr, the possession of underground resources and the proximity to France and Belgium had a strong influence on its fate. Before and during the Second World War, the coal and steel industry of the Ruhr area was of central importance for the German arms industry. After the Second World War, although the Allies blamed the industry for supporting Hitler and had factories in Duisburg detonated or stripped, the ascension resumed in the late 1940s, and the region began to grow rapidly (International Directory of Company Histories, 1999) again with the reconstruction of Germany. The promotion of hard coal was extremely important in post-war Germany. Over time, coal production became even more important because of the links between electricity and steel production. Thus, the coal and steel industry has made the Ruhr area the largest agglomeration in Europe.

As oil-burning and nuclear-powered generating plants became more widespread in the 1950s, the use of coal declined, and the coal industry

entered a crisis. As a result, coal was largely replaced in domestic, industrial and transport use by electricity generated from oil, natural gas or renewable energy sources. The Ruhr region accounted for around 70 to 75 per cent of coal production in the Federal Republic, and for the first time, pit closures came to the fore. Between 1957 and 1968, the workforce in hard coal mining decreased by more than half. The number of employees fell from 495,800 in 1957, the year of the highest level of employment, to 210,300 in 1968 (Dahlbeck and Gärtner, 2019: p.26). However, these coal miners could find another job in the Ruhr Area (Hassink, 1992: p.49). In 1968, nineteen companies in the Ruhr area combined to form Ruhrkohle AG to adjust optimal cost-effectiveness with the 'withdrawal of all benefits' threat of the German federal government if a collective company was not established by the mining companies (Dahlbeck and Gärtner, 2021: p.53; International Directory of Company Histories, 2004). By the end of 1990, the workforce had fallen to around 130,000.

At the end of the 1950s, the decline of coal production and employment marked the coal crisis "due to a price drop that resulted from the liberalisation of coal prices" (Oei et al., 2019: p.967) and cheap foreign imports (Kreuzer, 2023). Among the initiatives taken to alleviate this situation, resources have been allocated for subsidies for domestic use and social measures for redundancies. One of these measures "in 1974, the implementation of the 'Kohlepfennig,' also known as the coal penny, involved the introduction of a unique consumer tax on electricity to subsidise the sales of domestic hard coal in Germany. However, in 1994, Germany's Federal Constitutional Court overturned this compensation payment" (Dahlbeck and Gärtner, 2019: p.38). An important point: in 1968, the Ruhr Development Programme (Entwicklungsprogramm Ruhr, EPR) replaced the sectoral focus with a more integrated system for the structural change and development of the region as a "former industrial area" (Dahlbeck and Gärtner, 2019: p.39). Later, the steel crisis in 1971 accelerated the situation in the region, leading to a dramatic drop in sales to the steel industry since the steel industry is one of the largest buyers of commodities alongside the heating and electricity sector (Dahlbeck and

Gärtner, 2021: p.31). And these unemployed discharged steel workers had fewer opportunities to find new employment than those in the coal crisis (Hassink, 1992: p.49).

Both cases were significant industrial areas with a focus on heavy industries such as iron and steel, in addition to chemicals for Tees Valley and coal for Duisburg. Duisburg is an integral part of the Ruhr region; the intertwined production of coal and steel in this region and the signals given by the coal crisis led Germany to develop plans for the future of industrial production earlier. England, on the other hand, developed plans for modernisation and diversification of production for Teesside at an early stage, but its success stayed questionable.

4.3.2. Deindustrialisation

Both Tees Valley and Duisburg have experienced significant deindustrialisation, but the management and institutional responses in each region have varied, influencing the rise of populism in different ways. Like many social phenomena, deindustrialisation is difficult to define with precise starting moments. Deindustrialisation is defined as "the reduction of manufacturing within an economy" (Pike, 2020a). This can be traced in cases first in the decline in the number of workers and then in the decline in production and economic values of large industrial sectors. Britain has gone through bigger and faster deindustrialisation than any other country (Beatty and Fothergill 2016: 4). The ideological stance of the government, which was in power at the time with the slogan 'there is no alternative' (Independent, 2013) which means the commitment to free-market economic policies and a limited role for the state and allegedly it was not just a matter of preference but a response to the failures of previous economic models, also played a role in this situation. Old industrial areas like Teesside were among the most affected, as they were the focal points for industrial job losses (Beatty and Fothergill 2016). In Teesside, the fall in employment in steel and chemical production has been dramatic. In 1987,

unemployment in Middlesbrough had reached 21%; in 1965, it had been only 2% (Hudson, 1990: p.74). Figure 10 shows the decline in employment in the industry sector between 1980 and 2018, which shows a declining trend and halved employment in the industry sector.

Figure 10: Tees Valley Employment by Industry Sector
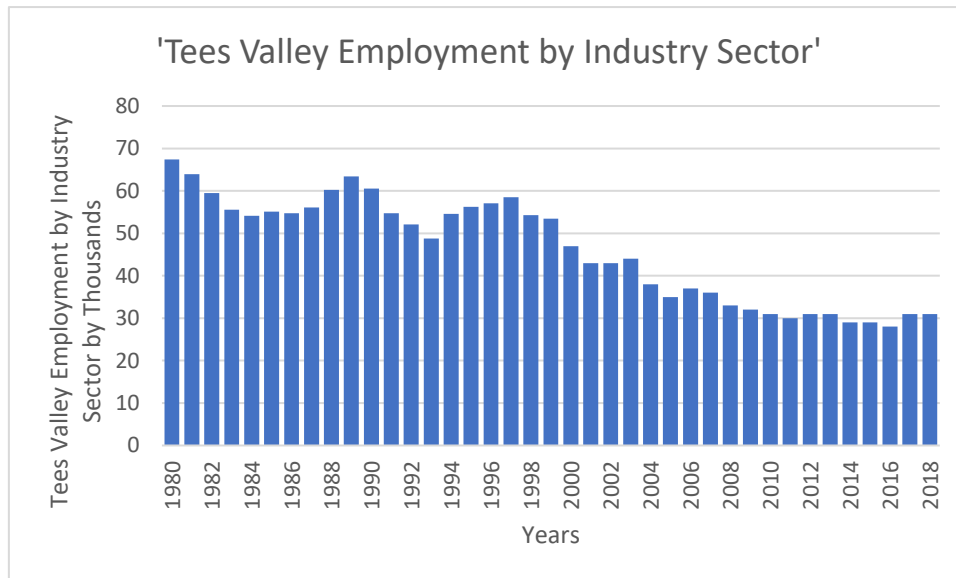
Source: ARDECO database

Some developments in the world economy in the 60s-70s have been at the disadvantage of the region. The first of these is the decline of the North-East's industrial complex and the region's exposure to global markets (Evenhuis, 2018: p.11) and disadvantaged position in terms of labour cost and the increasing accessibility of coking coal and, subsequently, low-cost, high-grade iron ore on the global market (Beynon et al., 1994: p.72). The steel crisis led to a decline in the demand for steel, a substantial surplus in production capacity, and increased competition from more economically efficient steel producers in Asia (Evenhuis, 2018: p.13). The second is global shocks, especially the steel crisis that raged from 1975 to the mid-1980s severely impacted the region (Evenhuis, 2018; p.12). It translated into dramatic cutbacks and labour reductions. When it merged with the neoliberalist perspective of Thatcher, employment losses were exacerbated. Early in the 1980s, the Conservative government issued a threat to withdraw financial assistance to the British Steel Corporation, resulting in

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additional organisational restructuring and workforce reductions (Evenhuis, 2018; p.13). Moreover, since the five steps planned for the transformation of the region in the 70s were abandoned, a large part of the steel produced in the region became semi-finished steel with lower added value and more volatile demand (Evenhuis, 2018; p.13). This was one of the factors that jeopardised the existence of the steel industry in the region.

Thirdly, globalisation has reduced the localisation of companies, and large firms have become part of larger corporations headquartered outside the area (Evenhuis, 2018: p.11). Hence, the search for local interests of large companies lost priority against seeking lower costs. Fourthly, the priorities of central government and local governments to address economic challenges were also subject to divergence (Evenhuis, 2018: p.35, p.43). With the loss of the region's status as an economic growth pole, the initiatives desired by local governments are no longer attractive to the national government. Governments' approach that ignores equality between regions has also contributed to this divergence. Moreover, Thatcherite policies included the replacement of permanent lifetime jobs in Teesside with precarious work in a flexible labour market (Beynon et al., 1994: p.2). Fifthly, although manufacturing is a labour-intensive sector, developments in production technologies did affect the employment of workers disadvantageously (Warren, 2018; p.27).

In Ruhr and Duisburg, the deindustrialisation process began in the 1960s but underwent a more gradual shift, allowing for smoother adjustments, as can be seen in Figure 11. Worker losses in the Ruhr began with the closure of mines in the 1960s. In Ruhr, industrialisation started earlier because it was exposed to the coal crisis itself, and such responses began earlier. According to Dahlbeck and Gärtner (2019: p.26), there was a decline in the number of employees from 495,800 in 1957, which marked the peak of employment, to 210,300 in 1968. In the 1970s, Germany initiated a transition to the service sector in response to crises and the associated decline of industries. In the Ruhr area, however, this transition started later

due to the heavy dependence on the coal and steel industries (Dahlbeck and Gärtner, 2019: p.34).

Figure 11: Duisburg Employment by Industry Sector
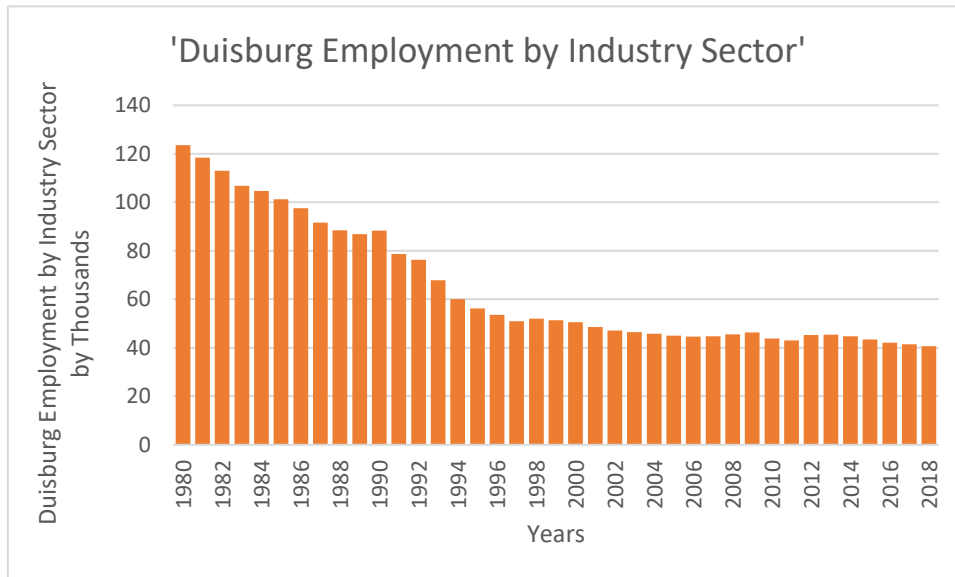
Source: ARDECO database

The significant decline in employment in the Ruhr region was caused by similar problems in Tees Valley, namely over-capacity, as companies struggled with surplus production capabilities that exceeded market demand (Hudson and Swanton, 2012: p.12). As a result, companies responded strategically by pursuing mergers to facilitate industry consolidation. Furthermore, the employment crisis was worsened by excessive production, as companies faced difficulties in maintaining a workforce that surpassed the actual demand for goods. To address these challenges, companies in the Ruhr region chose to enhance their position in the steel industry by adopting more intricate and technologically advanced methods, thereby increasing their value proposition. Concurrently, a significant change away from conventional steel production played a crucial role in the reduction of jobs, as companies diversified into different sectors in order to maintain economic sustainability.

Furthermore, the deindustrialisation in the Ruhr region was expedited by the swift implementation of mechanisation, as industries adopted

automation technologies to enhance productivity and decrease dependence on human labour. This paradigmatic change not only optimised production processes but also resulted in a decline in conventional industrial employment (Hudson, 1990), especially in coal mining and steel production for Duisburg.

In both states, it was anticipated that employment in labour-intensive sectors would decline due to economic shocks and technological progress. In Teesside, there was an early attempt with the modernisation plans planned in the 60s, and in Duisburg, there was the plan of transition to the service sector. While both plans had the initial objectives of increasing employment, diversifying the economy, and improving the quality of employment, which were not met, job losses, especially in heavy industries, outpaced expectations, leading to rising unemployment.

4.3.4. Economic reinvention

According to Bachtler and Begg (2017: p.748), regional economic policy in the UK aims to increase national economic efficiency, while in continental Europe, the goal of economic efficiency is accompanied by a commitment to social equity. The period after 2008 has been a paradoxical period for the UK in this respect. On the one hand, the post-2008 economic crisis and associated austerity measures have exposed and contributed to sharp regional differences in Britain. The effects of the crisis and austerity measures have underlined the regional inequalities between London/South East and the former industrial areas and rural areas in the North/Central Regions (MacKinnon, 2017: p.141). Since the crisis, austerity policies to reduce social security and public expenditure have had a disproportionate impact, resulting in the loss of significantly more resources in the latter type of regions (Beatty and Fothergill, 2016). On the other hand, since 2010, with the devolution agenda, initiatives have been taken in the UK in relation to massive inequality and the north-south divide. For example, the Northern Powerhouse is one of the initiatives in the UK introduced by then-Chancellor

of the Exchequer George Osborne in 2014, aimed at promoting economic development, investment, and growth, transport links, and devolution of powers to cities in the northern regions of the country. The idea is "launched in response to widening regional inequality in the UK" (MacKinnon, 2021) to create a more balanced and dynamic economy by focusing on the economic potential of cities and regions in the North. Another important initiative was Levelling Up, which Tomaney and Pike (2020) described as the new UK government mantra that describes its ambitions for addressing longstanding local and regional inequalities.

Figure 12, Figure 13 and Figure 14 shows that the disparity between the regions continues to be to the detriment of Tees Valley. Figure 12 shows the change in GDP in the UK, North-East and Tees Valley from 1980 to 2018. This shows that in the 1980s, GDP per capita in the UK was 7700€ compared to 7200€ in Teesside. Over the years, there has been a divergence, and today, as shown in Figure 12, Teesside's GDP per capita is 3/4 of that of the UK (the UK=36439.72€ and Tees Valley=26808.7€).

Figure 12: GDP per capita change in the UK, North-East and Tees Valley between 1980 and 2018
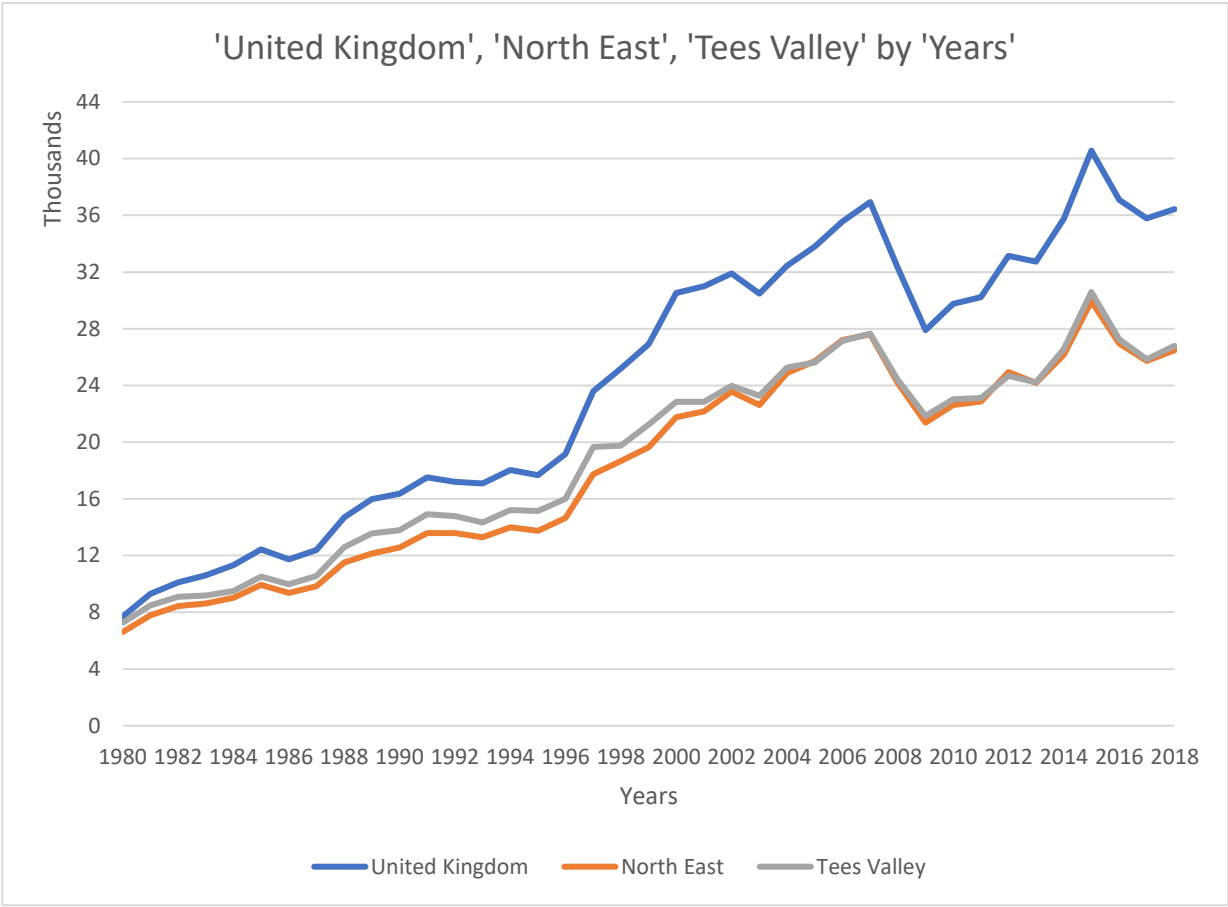
Source: ARDECO database

Figure 13: GDP per capita in 2018 in the UK, North-East and Tees Valley
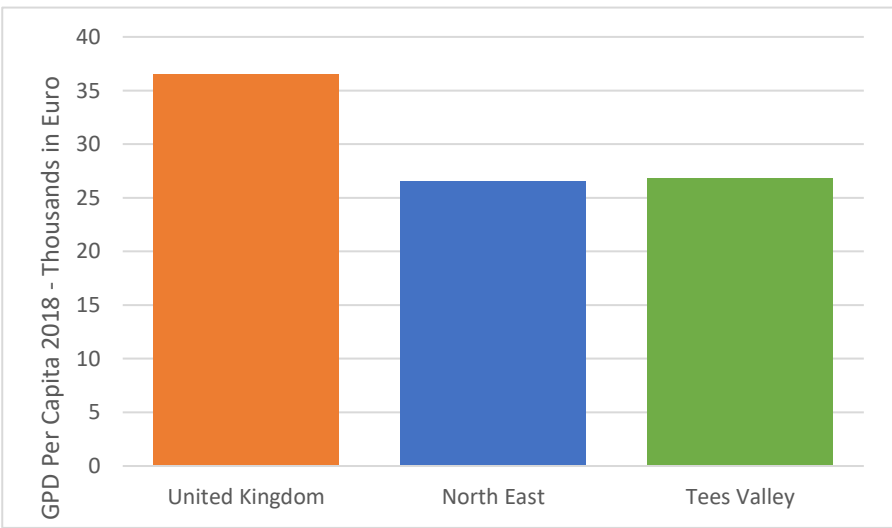
Source: ARDECO database

Although we cannot trace the historical course of unemployment data since the deindustrialisation due to the unavailability of data, in 2018 data, as in Figure 13, the unemployment rates of the regions that make up the Tees Valley are all higher than the UK. In particular South Teesside, Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees, which includes Stockton, Middlesbrough, and Bellingham, where industrial production is more focused, the unemployment rate is almost double that of the UK. Lastly, Tees Valley has had very little increase in its population when compared to the UK, as it is shown in Figure 15.

Figure 14: The unemployment rates of Tees Valley constituencies
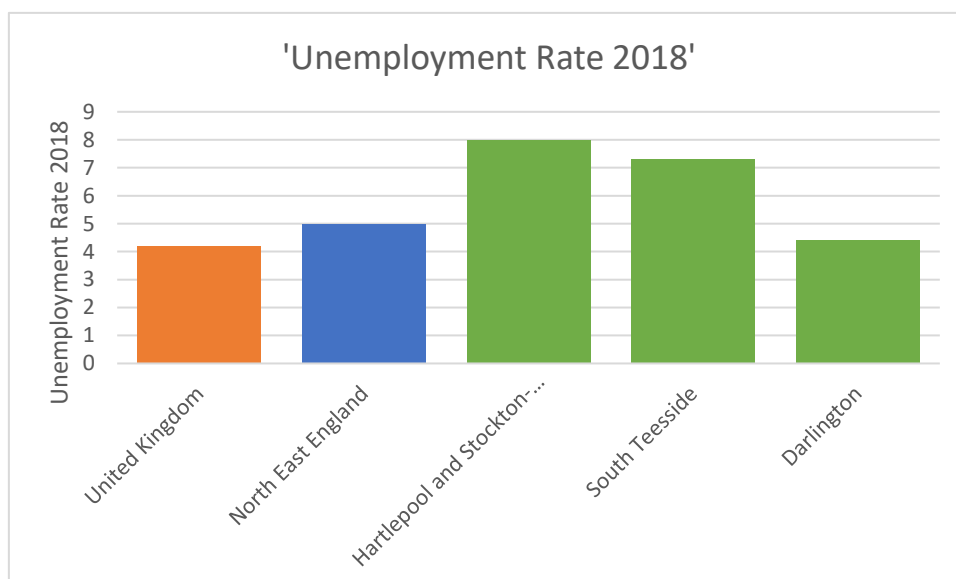
Note: According to the OECD statistical regions, Tees Valley consists of 3 TL3 regions. A single unemployment rate for Tees Valley cannot be calculated because the data required for the unemployment calculation are not available separately.

Source: OECD statistics

Figure 15: Population Change in the UK, North-East and Tees Valley between 1980-2018

Population Change Between 1980-2018

Region	Value
Tees Valley	1.60,
North East	0.48
United Kingdom	15.23

(Horizontal axis: 0.00, 2.00, 4.00, 6.00, 8.00, 10.00, 12.00, 14.00, 16.00)
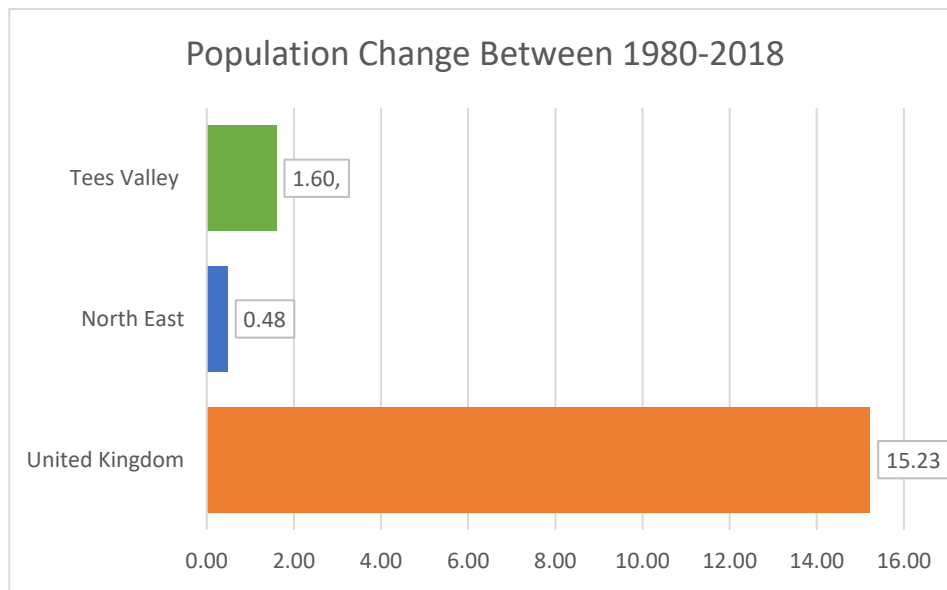
Source: ARDECO database

In 2016, as mentioned in the institutions chapter, TVCA was established and decided to have a mayor. According to Giovannini (2021: p.475), the government endorsed these mayors as prominent individuals who anticipated bolstering the credibility, responsibility, and authority of governance while promoting local economic development. In connection with TVCA, projects are being developed for the opening of Teesside International Airport (previously Durham Tees Valley Airport), the Freeport entrance and the former industrial production areas. It is related to the history of the region and the positioning of new production areas, even if it lacks heritage preservation. This attachment to the past is still evident in the fact that the future is still based on Houchen's promises to bring back the steelwork and reuse the old steelwork site (TeessideLive, 2021).

Figure 16: Ben Houchen - Steel Industry

Source: X (Formerly Twitter), 6 January 2020
https://twitter.com/BenHouchen/status/1214178863791714305

Freeport is also planned to generate a new value by lifting of trade restrictions after Brexit. Minister for Levelling Up Neil O'Brien said: "Freeports will help to generate prosperity and spread opportunity by driving trade and innovation as we level up in every corner of the United Kingdom" (Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, 2021). Also, Houchen gave importance to the freeport, as he claims Teesside is planning to build the future on the green industry with the help of the freeport (Houchen. 2022).

Finally, while the nationalisation of the airport is claimed to serve economic development (Financial Times, 2019), the conservative Mayor's move, which contradicts party tradition, has also been the subject of much debate. According to Cumbers and Paul (2020), nationalisation, which had previously emerged as a mechanism of central government in conjunction with local government and labour, was used in the TVCA era to capture a frustrated sense of a left-behind place by Conservative party mayoral

candidate Houchen in contradiction with his own political tradition. This discussion will be the subject of subsequent chapters.

In the post-2008 economic decisions, regional governance, austerity and regional inequality policies have been decisive in Teesside. On the other hand, in Duisburg, categorised as a structurally weak region by the German Economic Institute (Hüther et al., 2019), local economic policy is defined by policies that use funds to address the region's problems, especially unemployment, and to increase its competitiveness (Dahlbeck and Gärtner, 2021: p.67). As an important institution, since 2009, the Ruhr Regional Association (Regionalverband Ruhr) has been responsible for statutory regional planning and is also the owner of a regional development agency which cooperates with the municipalities in many fields such as tourism and industrial heritage, mobility, environmental and regional planning, waste management and regional development. Moreover, in 2020, the public elected the Ruhr Parliament directly for the first time in order to make decisions regarding the work of the Ruhr Regional Association. In terms of industrial production, in 2007, the German government decided to end national subsidies for coal (Taylor et al., 2021: p.40), and in December 2018, the last hard coal mine in the Ruhr area was closed. However, steel production continues in Duisburg as one of the largest ThyssenKrupp plants, with 26,822 employees, on September 2023 (ThyssenKrupp, 2024).

Despite the positive developments, the statistical indicators of the region show that Duisburg is becoming more and more separated from NRW and Germany since deindustrialisation. What is striking in Figure 17 is that the GDP per capita, which was higher than the average of NRW and Germany in the 1980s, reached a similar level in the 1990s and is now below both. Figure 18, which sheds light on the numbers in 2018, shows the difference further in 1980, with the difference in GDP per capita almost three-quarters in favour of Duisburg (Germany=7795.6€ and Duisburg=12049.23€). In 2018, Germany's GDP per capita was 40593.62€, 10 per cent more than in Duisburg (36439.69€).

Figure 17: GDP per capita change in Germany, Nordrhein-Westfalen and Duisburg between 1980 to 2018
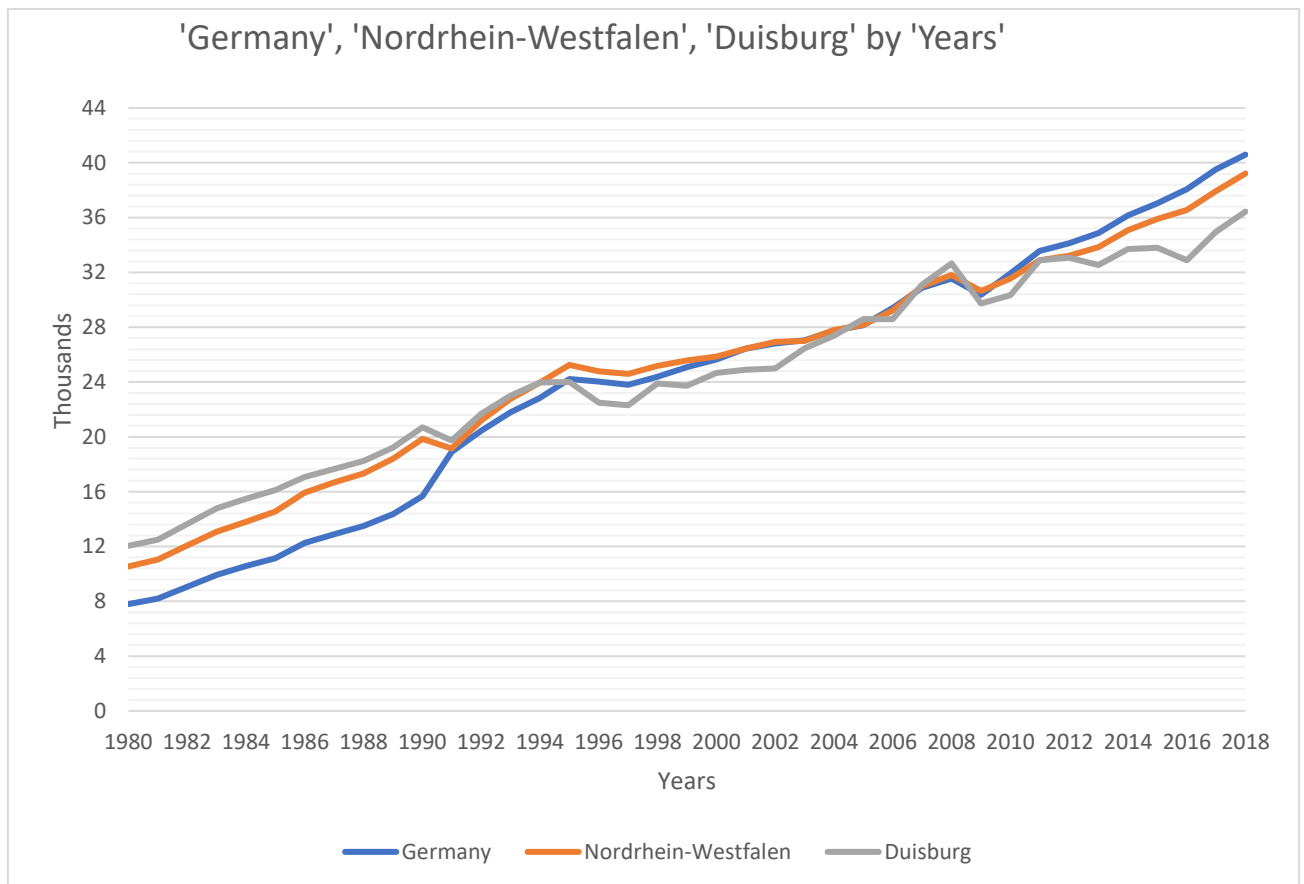
Source: ARDECO database

Figure 18: GDP per capita in 2018 in Germany, Nordrhein-Westfalen and Duisburg
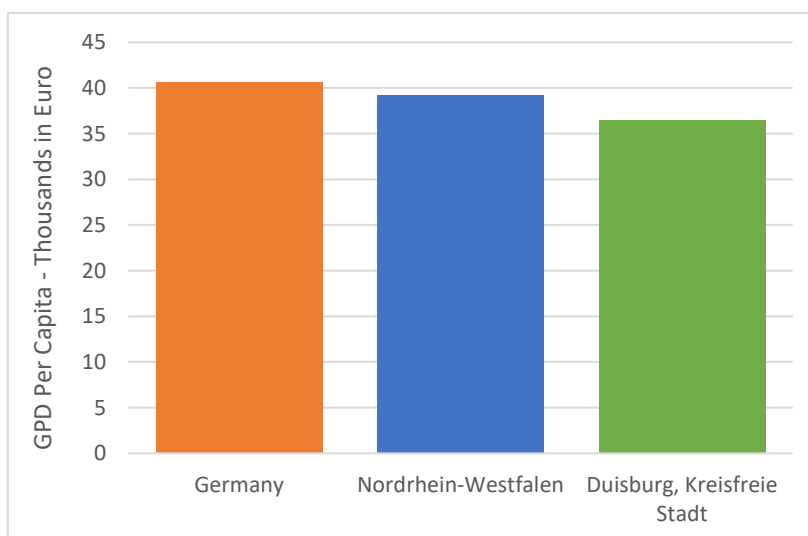
Source: ARDECO database

Unemployment and population growth are even more dramatic in Duisburg. Figure 19 shows that the unemployment rate in Duisburg is almost four times higher than in Germany and four times higher than in NRW.

Figure 19: The unemployment rates of Tees Valley constituencies
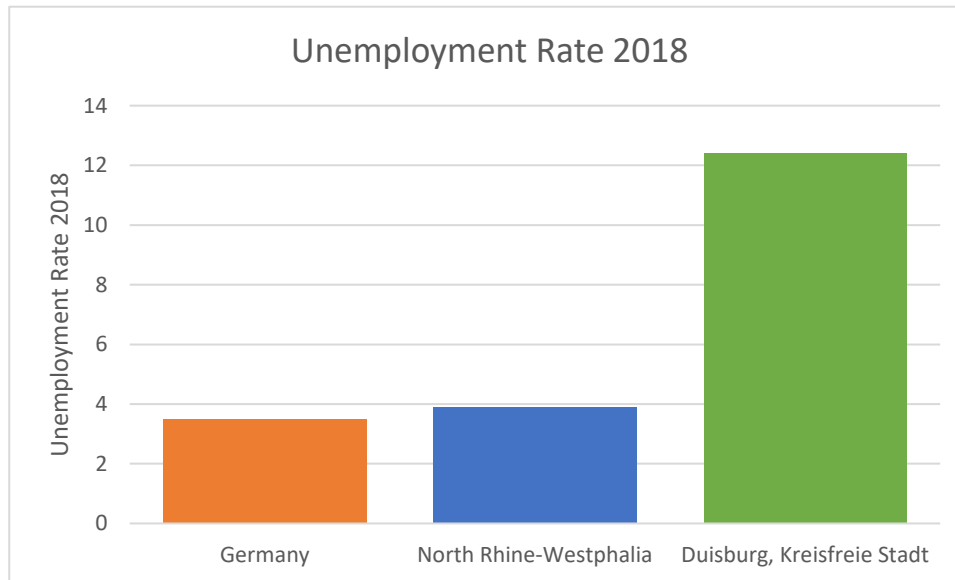
Source: OECD statistics

In contrast to NRW and Germany, the population growth rate between 1980 and 2018 is negative, as shown in Figure 20. And what is important with this figure is that one of the main reasons for this is brain drain (Lim and Limbach, 2023: p.1738). The region is still far from being attractive for young people and entrepreneurs (Taylor et al., 2021: p.44).

Figure 20: Population Change in the UK, North-East and Tees Valley between 1980-2018
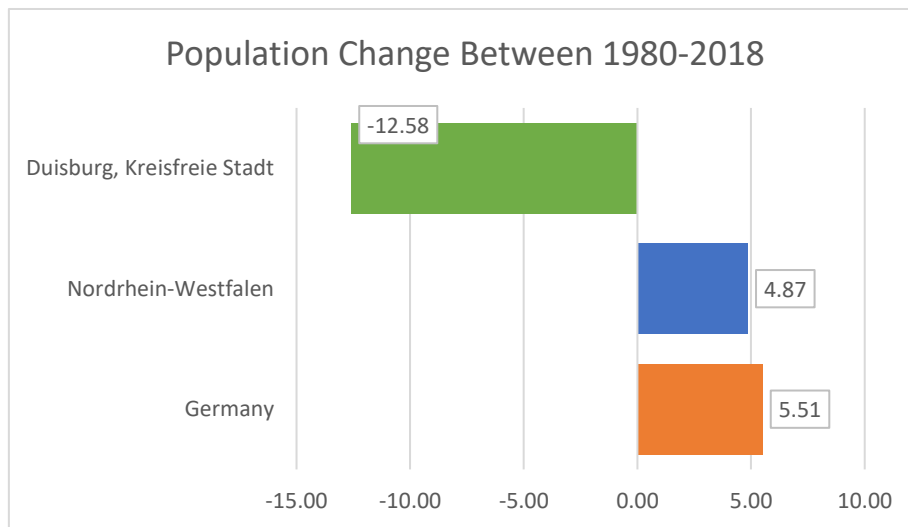
Source: ARDECO database

Over the past two decades, Duisburg has witnessed a significant increase in employment in port-related industries, more than two and a half times (Frick and Prenzel, 2023: p.28). Additionally, the city has been praised for its innovative initiatives in urban regeneration, which have successfully converted derelict brownfields into lively environments suitable for modern living and work (Frick and Prenzel, 2023: p.28). In addition, as the largest inland port in Europe, its important place in the developing Belt and Road project has led to increased links and economic relations with China (Lim and Limbach, 2023) and contributed to the region's emergence as a logistics hub. Erich Staake, CEO of Duisport, supports this with figures showing that employment at the port has increased from 19,000 in 1998 to 50,000 in 2018 (The Guardian, 2018).

4.4. Politics and policy

In addition to the cultural and identity impact of economic relations, they have also had the power to shape or influence politics. We will examine here the policy responses to the disadvantages that the cases have experienced

and continue to experience as former industrial areas and the role of political parties in influencing them and vice versa.

4.4.1. Policy Responses

The course of deindustrialisation has been shaped by ideologies, institutional arrangements and policies adopted by central and local governments. By the late 1970s, it became evident that the goals of increasing employment opportunities in the Teesside region, promoting economic diversification, and enhancing the quality of jobs were essential (Evenhuis, 2018: p.34). During this period, there were many new initiatives and institutions; our aim is not to classify all of them but rather to set out the objectives intended with them. National governments and local authorities initiated new economic development policies focused on supporting indigenous development through entrepreneurship and local business growth. These measures included financial assistance to small firms, counselling services, and initiatives to combat unemployment through training programs and support for worker cooperatives (Evenhuis, 2018: p.43). Teesside Polytechnic became Teesside University in 1992, and Durham University established a campus in Stockton in 1992 to support these initiatives. Another significant one is the establishment of the Teesside Development Corporation, operating from 1987 until 1998 as part of a more market-oriented and business-led reorganisation of economic development governance from the 1980s. The objective is to optimise the utilisation of land and buildings, promote the growth of both existing and new industries and commerce, establish an appealing environment, and guarantee the availability of housing and social amenities to incentivise individuals to reside and work in the region (Evenhuis, 2018: p.35).

The shift in economic development policies and priorities in the Tees Valley was under the Labour government, which came to power in 1997. One of the significant measures was the establishment of Regional Development Agencies in 1999. The creation of Regional Development Agencies and

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Regional Assemblies by the Labour government aimed at devolving powers to regions, coordinating and collaborating with local authorities for regional challenges, and promoting and facilitating economic development within the region by attracting investment and job creation (Evenhuis, 2018: p.36). In local governance, after the abolition of Cleveland County in 1996, local authorities continued collaboration through the Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit to address economic development issues. The formation of the Tees Valley Partnership in 1999 and its transformation into Tees Valley Unlimited in 2007 reflects the ongoing efforts to coordinate economic development initiatives, emphasising themes such as sustainable jobs, attractive places, and confident communities in the Tees Valley Vision (Evenhuis, 2018: p.36). The Tees Valley Vision also included generic policies for business and enterprise support, upgrading the built environment, and enhancing people's skills base (Evenhuis, 2018: p.45). The Labour government also introduced initiatives in vocational training and skill development after 1998, such as the New Deal workfare program and the establishment of the Learning and Skills Council in 2001.

However, these initiatives were ineffective in addressing the problems arising from deindustrialisation. One reason for that is the initiatives appear more oriented toward addressing symptoms rather than addressing underlying economic issues (Evenhuis, 2018: p.44). In addition, the human capital necessary for the success of entrepreneurship was not available in the region. Moreover, ineffective policy responses in the 1980s and 1990s were likely due to a lack of coordination and attention to local requirements (Evenhuis, 2018: p.49) due to the government's approach that ignores regional inequalities with a focus on efficiency over equity as part of marked oriented and business-led system. Another aim of policies was diversifying the economy, but as Foord et al. (1987) argued, regional policy has concentrated attention and resources on steel and chemicals and has failed significantly to diversify the local economy, leaving the region dependent on a group of industries that have experienced decline.

One of the major problems in the regeneration of Teesside, which arose in connection with this last argument, was the dependence on large companies, which were often foreign-owned and recreating the problem of external control. According to Warren (2018: p.227), local and regional institutions are trying to find new 'big employers' instead of seeking diversification and less dependency on 'big employers'. As stated, in response to rising unemployment and the 'big firm' problem, the small firm enterprise culture was sought to be promoted. In this context, there was an increase in state-funded programmes in the 1980s, however, Beynon et al. (1994: p.108) indicated that such new firms were largely involved in a narrow range of 'one-man' service sector activities and had a very limited employment impact, thus was a failure to economic regeneration and the new industrial strategy. Another problem created by this situation is described by Chapman et al. (2007: p.6) as 'cultural inertia'. This means that local people take responsibility for solving local economic problems on large private and public sector organisations rather than seeking their own solutions, leading to low levels of entrepreneurship. Thus, a self-renewing spiral was formed.

In Duisburg, features of policies for deindustrialisation aimed to support and stabilise the demand for domestic coal and support unemployed people due to closures by using early retirements, subsidies and tax benefits. For example, Gesetz zur Förderung der Rationalisierung im Steinkohlebergbau (German law to support the rationalisation in hard coal mining) in 1963 aimed to support rationalisation in hard coal mining, introducing subsidies to stabilise the demand for domestic coal (Dahlbeck and Gärtner, 2021: p.55). The First Electricity Conversion Law in 1965 supported the use of hard coal in power plants and granted tax benefits to power stations using domestic hard coal instead of oil (Dahlbeck and Gärtner, 2021: p.55). Apart from this, there were also policies to address using domestic coal in steel production and power generation. In this regard, they operationalised Kokskohlenbeihilfe (Coking coal subsidy) between 1967 and 1998, which guaranteed the use of domestic coal in steel production by covering the price difference between domestic and foreign coal (Kreuzer, 2023: p.16).

Another one is Kohlepfennig between 1975 and 1995, also known as the 'coal penny'; this policy secured the use of domestic coal in power generation by placing a national tax on consumers to compensate for the higher price of domestic coal (Kreuzer, 2023: p.16). These show us in Germany, the approach is more statist and interventionist.

In addition, reforms and policies have been developed by NRW for the regeneration of the region, including modernisation, industrial regeneration, infrastructure development, reactivation of brownfields and large sums of money for innovation and technological development. In this regard, with funding of DM 17 billion, the Entwicklungsprogramm Ruhr (EPR) (Ruhr Development Programme) aims to socially compatible reduction of the workforce in hard coal mining, to modernise mining companies, to attract new industrial companies and to expand infrastructure to increase mobility, quality of life and human resources in the region (Dahlbeck and Gärtner, 2021: p.56; Kreuzer, 2023: p.17). Another important initiative was Zukunftsinitiative Montanregion (ZIM) – (Coal and Steel Region Future Initiative) in 1987, which aimed to address the crisis in the coal and steel industry and involved funding from the federal government, state, municipalities, and the European Community. The objectives included support for innovation and technology, future-oriented qualification and job creation measures, expansion of infrastructure, and environmental measures (Dahlbeck and Gärtner, 2021: p.60).

A new initiative that stood out in Duisburg and enabled it to differentiate itself from Teesside was the educational initiative. Until the beginning of the sixties, there was not a single university in the Ruhr area. The successful expansion of the university and research landscape began in the mid-1960s, contributing to the Ruhr area becoming one of Germany's and Europe's regions with the highest density of universities and research institutes (Dahlbeck and Gärtner, 2021: p.70).

In the 90s and at the beginning of the 2000s, Germany, together with the EU initiatives, was granting new grants in the coal sector and encouraging

companies to look for alternative energy sources; in addition, initiatives continued to minimise the impact of continued high unemployment. In 2003, the 'Agenda 2010' was initiated by the federal government, which comprised welfare and labour market reforms. The objectives of these reforms were to enhance flexibility in the labour market, reduce regulations, and tackle economic difficulties. Significant provisions were implemented to facilitate the hiring and firing processes of small businesses, modify regulations pertaining to part-time and temporary labour, and launch the contentious 'Hartz IV' social benefit initiative, which offered a bare minimum wage and incentivised unemployed individuals to actively pursue employment opportunities (Spermann, 2015).

Although the Ruhr and Duisburg present a relatively positive picture, they were not immune to the disadvantages of deindustrialisation. They still lag behind the national average in many areas, such as unemployment and GDP (see Figure 18 and Figure 19). Moreover, despite the establishment of major universities since the 1960s, the Ruhr does not catch up with national averages or other metropolitan regions in the key dimensions of the knowledge economy (Hassink and Kiese, 2021: p.144). Despite these characteristics, Duisburg has also succeeded in making a large-scale transition to the service sectors, particularly logistics, education and health care (Kreuzer, 2023).

The problem of the 'big firm' is also pronounced in Duisburg with arguments that it delays structural change and because the focus on big firms slows down the development of small companies and start-ups (Dahlbeck and Gärtner, 2019: p.46). Another problem created by this issue in the Ruhr region was that large companies owned most of the land in the region, and local authorities had difficulty in offering land to new companies unless they released the land (Dahlbeck and Gärtner, 2021: p.57). In terms of the state-company relationship, on the one hand, prioritised strategies on capitalist production disempowered the workers in Teesside and led the state to develop dependence on these large companies. On the other hand, under the German system, companies were run according to the principles of

private enterprise, but they were also dependent on state support through subsidies or protective legislation that safeguarded the interests of industry.

Teesside and Duisburg both underwent top-down approaches in addressing geographic inequalities, yet their strategies diverged significantly. Duisburg employed massive subsidies to bolster the coal industry and implemented robust social support systems for miners and other sectoral redundancies. The introduction of a cooperative model in Duisburg played a pivotal role in making structural changes socially acceptable. Conversely, Tees Valley witnessed a different scenario, where social acceptance and geographical inequalities were ignored. The presence of the big firm problem in various institutional settings governed by distinct policies implies that these two systems are differentiated from capitalism, as Peck and Theodore (2007) argue.

On the one hand, the German government implemented policies to support and restructure industries, investing in research and development and focusing on maintaining competitiveness. Moreover, in Duisburg, when the effects of crises are felt, the companies know that they have to downsize economically, but they give social concessions in relation to the unions; the unions cooperate and calm the labour force, but they work for measures to mitigate the consequences socially. Both actors also expected the state to provide some of the necessary financial resources. They had developed an interdependent system.

On the other hand, the UK government, under Thatcher's leadership, pursued market-oriented reforms, privatisation, and a reduced role of the state in the economy. This led to a more rapid and sometimes turbulent process of deindustrialisation. Another characteristic in Teesside since the early 1980s is the situation that the state has left the initiative and growth to entrepreneurship by people and the private sector, where the private sector expects the state to provide skilled people, whereas the public expects the state or large companies to provide the initiatives and employment, namely each actor 'passing the buck' to the others.

4.4.2. Policies on Industrial Heritage

The disappearance of the industry that had shaped and shaped the existence, economic activity, political preferences and social life of the regions raised the question of what would happen to the identity that had developed with it and what would happen to the large structures it had left-behind.

According to Warren (2018: p.167), the paternalistic employer-employee relationship, the development of a community's identity through industrial production, has a wider meaning in that the creation of new economic space will also mean a redefinition of the region's identity. In other words, there is more than an attachment to place, but an attachment to industry. This can be seen in the closure of the Redcar Blast Furnace in 2015, an industry that has been subjected to demise since the 1980s and which has undergone many changes and job losses but has nonetheless witnessed large-scale public meetings, rallies and demonstrations.

In Teesside, the jobs created by the iron, steel, chemical and other industries are perceived as lifelong jobs, so people here are emotionally and economically attached to the workplace and emerge as locals on the local-cosmopolitan divide. As Beynon et al. (1994: p.5) point out, people with this local identity do not only have an economic relationship with their place of work but also a network of friends, relatives and acquaintances, a place where they learn about life and acquire a cultural frame of reference from which to interpret the social world around them. Thus, these places have become places that touch all aspects of their lives and help shape who they are through where they are.

Plans for the future of the region recognised this importance and also it was also seen as an opportunity to increase the attractiveness of the region. For example, the Heseltine report (2016) cites the region's industrial past as something that could have a positive impact on its future. Moreover,

Giovannini (2021) positioned combined authority mayors as promoters of identity, belonging, and civic pride as well as local interests.

In this scope, the Teesworks Heritage Task Force was established by Mayor Houchen in 2020 and is co-chaired by Redcar MP Jacob Young and Kate Willard OBE. To protect the heritage of Teesside Steel, with the help of a £2.6 million grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Tees Transporter Bridge was renovated, and visitor facilities, heritage trails and educational resources were built to share the area's industrial past (Warwick, 2017). In addition, in Middlehaven, the regenerated area around the Bridge and the site of Bolckow Vaughan's first ironworks were named Transporter Park. As part of a project with Teesside Archives, the Combine Authority has also collected stories and memories of former workers on site to enhance its collections as part of wider heritage work. Nevertheless, there are signs that there is a hesitation in the efforts to preserve the industrial heritage of the region and that capitalist production is prioritised. Dorman Long Tower was demolished after being given Grade II listed status by English Heritage, which works to protect England's heritage (BBC, 2021). About the demolition, the Mayor said: "I would like to send a message to those that think trying to stop these developments is the right thing to do - our heritage does not lie in a rotting coal bunker, our heritage lies in the people that built this great region" which seem to ignore place attachment. A similar event happened in the demolition of Redcar Blast Furnace, there was a campaign to keep it as a 'source of local pride' (The Guardian, 2022). However, Houchen (TeessideLive, 2021) said, "he would rather spend taxpayers' money on bringing jobs and investment to the area than spending it on turning the blast furnace into a monument". Although the developments are contradictory, the industrial heritage seems to be less visible. It can also be argued that the incentives for local identity, belonging and civic pride attributed to the Mayor in the new devolved system have not developed, at least in Tees Valley. Lastly, the Teeswork Heritage Taskforce report in January 2021 recommended the Blast Furnace should be salvaged to create one or more Blast Furnace memorials or displays on the Teesworks site and/or at other locations, but there has not been any update since then.

In Germany, the regeneration of the region was the conversion of former industrial buildings into cultural, artistic, recreational or leisure facilities that were perceived as important. The biggest initiative in this regard is the International Building Fair (IBA) Emscher Park, which covers Duisburg and some other cities in the Ruhr and took place between 1989 and 1999. IBA was targeting the impact dimensions of ecology and regional identity. It involved the creation of industrial landmarks and aimed at improving the quality of life in the northern Ruhr area through initiatives like the Emscher conversion and the renaturalised 'Neues Emschertal' (new Emscher Valley) (Dahlbeck and Gärtner, 2021: p.61). The reconstruction of the Emscher Landscape Park continues to this day. These buildings play a role in preserving the identity of the region as a recognised industrial and cultural heritage and generate added value through cultural tourism (Dahlbeck and Gärtner, 2019: p.42). Thus, in the Ruhr, heritage has become a branding and marketing strategy for the Ruhr region through a programme and the consensus of local authorities, industrialists and trade unionists (Berger and Golombek, 2019: p.204). Furthermore, in North Rhine-Westphalia, IBA launched subsequent structural programmes and cultural projects, the 'REGIONALE' and the European Cultural Capital 'RUHR.2010' (Internationale Bauausstellungen, 2024).

Germany accepted industrial transformation at an early stage and made the preservation of regional identity a goal, in the words of the project, with the objective of future-proofing a traditional industrial region. In addition, at the end of the 1980s, the demolition or sale of these industrial buildings and areas to foreigners was also on the agenda, but the reactions from the public and the idea of not disturbing the silhouette of the buildings that defined the image of the city prevailed, and the city has reached its current position (Landschaftpark, 2024). In Teesside, it took until the 2020s for the issue to come to the fore, although other factors, such as the corporate ownership of some sites and iconic buildings, played a role, and but still when local decision-makers had the chance, decisions to protect heritage were again driven by economic considerations. Apart from the demolition of iconic buildings, there has been little attempt at heritage conservation. The

implication is that decisions made in Teesside continue to be company-based rather than socially acceptable.

4.4.3. Political Domination by Existing Parties

The last point of this chapter analyses the position of political parties at the intersection of economy, identity, culture and policies in the cases, which constitutes an important point for this thesis. Duisburg and Teesside have long been known as strongholds of social democratic parties. The dominance of the social democratic parties in these regions has been parallel to the presence of a large working class. The economic downturn with the deindustrialisation continued the dominance of these parties, as the expectations of the working class were formed alongside the political identity. However, like the economic evolution of the regions, the social democratic parties have been in transition since the 90s, and their dominance in these regions seems to be in danger.

Teesside's political landscape underwent significant transformations, historically, the region was led by ironmasters until the 1940s. According to Beynon et al. (1994: p.183), "in a very real sense, the politics of Teesside were deeply imbued with a political culture that accepted the needs of private capital and the inevitability of waged labour". The post-World War II era marked a shift towards Labour politics, but it wasn't until the second half of the 1900s that Teesside truly emerged as a Labour Party stronghold. This transition was characterised by a consensus and cross-class agreement in the 1960s, reflecting a moderate social democracy that distinguished Teesside from the broader North-eastern political landscape (Beynon et al., 1994: p.184). Furthermore, the implementation of the neoliberal model in the UK after the 1970s exacerbated gross inequalities and favoured the South over the North, as described by MacKinnon (2017) and strengthened Teesside's position. However, the Labour Party's domination has been increasingly contested in the last decade.

Figure 21: Vote share of Labour and Conservative parties in Tees Valley between 1979-2019

Vote Shares Over Time
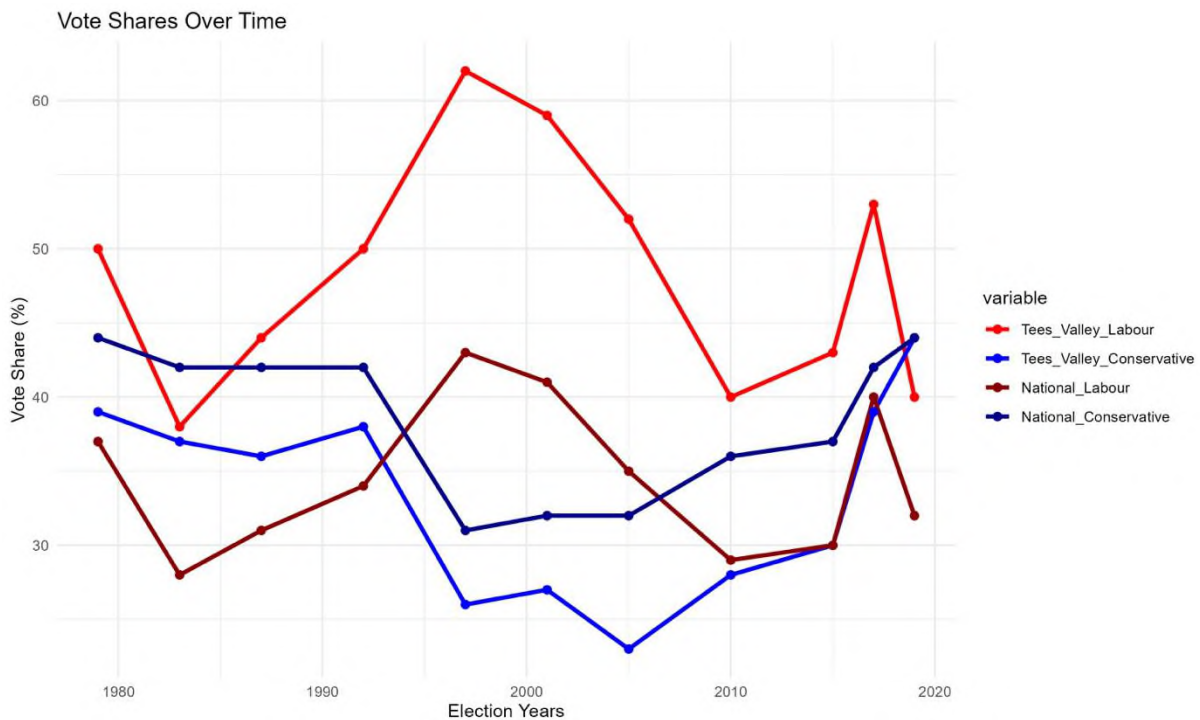
Figure 21 illustrates the dynamic trends in vote shares for the Labour and Conservative parties and provides insights into the evolving political landscape in Tees Valley from 1979 to 2019. In Tees Valley, the blue line depicts the fluctuating vote share of the Labour Party, while the red line represents the variations in the Conservative Party's vote share. Notably, the Labour Party initially held a higher vote share in the region. The Labour Party's dominance in Teesside is always noticeable, even if its vote share sometimes declines. Moreover, Labour's share is always higher in Teesside than its national rates. However, in 2019, for the first time since 1979, Conservatives managed to take the lead in Tees Valley. In addition, it is the first time Conservative's share in Teesside had caught up with its national rate. Concurrently, the national vote shares for both parties are illustrated by the green and purple lines for Labour and Conservative, respectively. In 8 out of 11 elections reviewed, the conservative party has beaten Labour nationally and has emerged as the more dominant party in the last four

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decades, but it is notable that they achieved this for the first time in Teesside in 2019. Apart from these, in Teesside, the Liberal Party polled close to but still below the national vote. UKIP received higher than average votes in Teesside in 2010, 2015 and 2017, with a 17 per cent vote in 2015 signalling the region's desire for anti-establishment (Cutts et al., 2019), as evidenced by the high Leave vote in Brexit (Jennings and Stoker, 2019). Moreover, these votes were the footsteps of the first Conservative Mayor in 2017 and for the change that will be evident in the region in 2019, as seen in Figure 21.

The Ruhr Area's and Duisburg's political history is tied to the decline of the coal and steel industries, a decline that significantly impacted the region's political landscape, as highlighted by Dinter (2019). Amidst the coal crisis and job losses in 1964, the SPD, along with other parties in the NRW parliament (CDU and FDP), advocated for federal government intervention to restrict coal-competing fuels (Nonn, 2009, cited in Dahlbeck and Gärtner, 2021: p.73). This stance persisted through the ongoing coal crisis, driven by the SPD's conviction that allowing unfettered structural change would endanger social peace, considering the significant labour intensity in the coal and steel industry. In this climate, from 1965 to 2002, the Social Democratic Party (SPD) held a stable stronghold in the Ruhr, consistently securing voting shares beyond 50 percent in Bundestag elections—an electoral dominance that persists today with results at least ten percentage points higher than the rest of Germany. The SPD strategically seized a political opportunity to fortify its identity in the region by embracing and promoting the industrial heritage (Berger and Golombek, 2019: p.203). As the representative of the working class in industrial regions, the SPD's historical role in advocating for labour interests and navigating the challenges posed by industrial decline underscores its enduring significance in Ruhr's socio-political landscape. Therefore, the Ruhr and Duisburg earned its reputation as a stronghold of SPD. However, the SPD votes were subject to decline in the last four decades; they faced a pivotal moment in 1999, marked by a perceived 'arrogance of power,' a term denoting the pitfalls of prolonged political consensus leading to nepotism and exploitation (Goch,

2001: p.35). This decline opened doors for alternative political movements, including the rise of the Alternative for Germany (AfD), with dissatisfied SPD voters contributing to its growth (Dinter, 2019).

Figure 22: Vote Share of SDP and CDU/CSU between 1980-2021
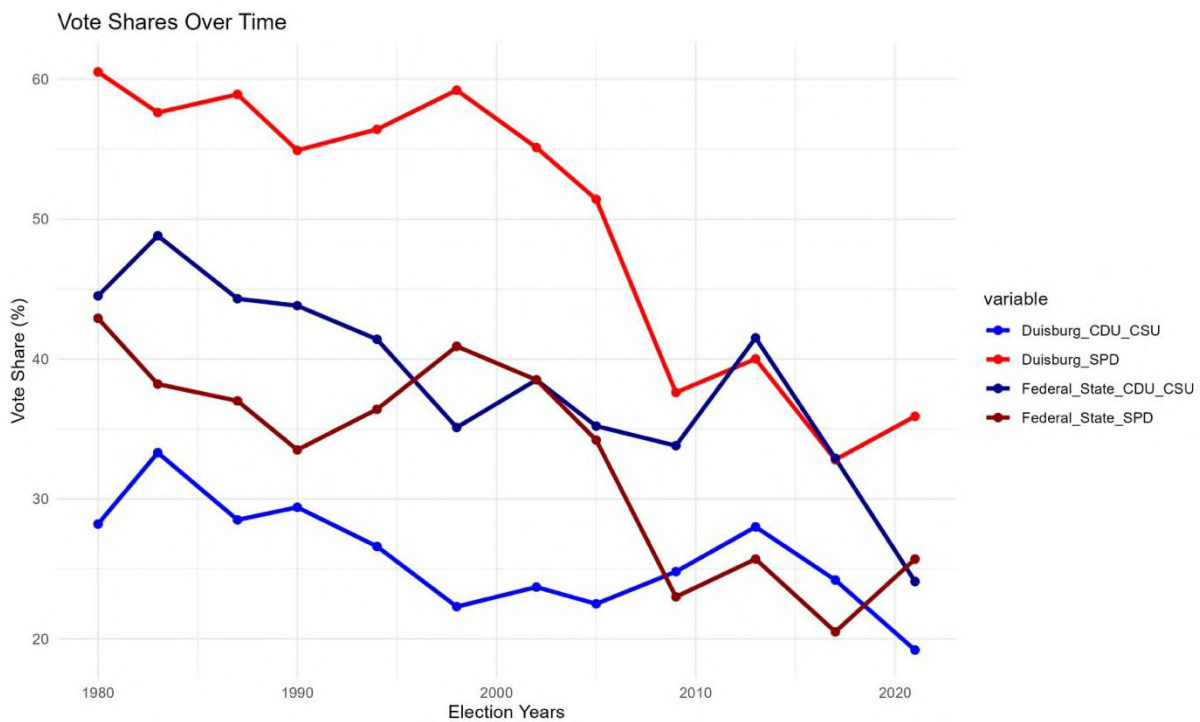
Note: Vote shares are according to the second vote.

Source: http://electionresources.org/de/ by Manuel Álvarez-Rivera / Die Bundeswahlleiterin

https://www.bundeswahlleiterin.de/bundeswahlleiter.html

We can observe vote shares over time for political parties in Duisburg and the federal state in Figure 22, focusing on the Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU) and the Social Democratic Party (SPD). The x-axis represents election years spanning from 1980 to 2021, while the y-axis illustrates the percentage of vote shares. The blue line represents the vote share of the CDU/CSU in Duisburg, while the red line depicts the vote share of the SPD in Duisburg. The first thing that stands out is that in Duisburg, the SPD consistently held a dominant position, with higher vote shares compared to the CDU/CSU. A second point to note is that the vote share of the two main parties has been declining over the

years in Duisburg and at the federal level. However, the gap between the two parties in Duisburg has been narrowing over the years, indicating that the SPD has suffered a steeper decline than the main parties. In the two-party dominated system in the UK, a loss for one party in Teesside usually meant a gain for the other. In Germany, however, parties other than the Social Democrats and the Conservatives have a chance of emerging as major actors, which is why governments are usually coalition governments. In Duisburg, although the SPD's share of the vote has fallen, it is still at 30 percent, whereas in Duisburg, it has fallen from 60 percent, and its loss has not meant a gain for the CDU, which has fallen from around 30 percent to around 20 percent. Voters dissatisfied with the centre parties, especially the SPD, turned to alternatives such as Die Linke, the Greens and the far-right AfD, which has emerged as a significant force in the Ruhr and Duisburg.

4.5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the economic, social, and cultural aspects of Teesside and Duisburg have been profoundly shaped by the historical path of heavy industry. The intended modernisation and diversification initiatives in Teesside since the 1960s have encountered ongoing difficulties, ultimately leading to the failure of the envisioned economic trajectory. The UK's transition towards deindustrialisation since the late 1970s has had a greater impact on regions such as Teesside (Beatty and Fothergill, 2016), resulting in a feeling of neglect and anti-establishment sentiments among the local population (Warren, 2018: p.94). The way in which regional economic development has either addressed or dealt with the problems experienced has shown instability in the UK and in the Tees Valley (Sadler, 1990). This was largely influenced by the political behaviour of central governments and their relationship with local authorities. Evenhuis (2018; p.49) explains it as "'Churning' is the best way to describe this dominant pattern: a recurrent restructuring, refitting, dismantling and creation of arrangements." In addition, the lack of local resources and power of local governments in the

face of relatively centralised policies has contributed to this outcome. Moreover, Teesside's struggle for connectivity, cooperation, and control over resources has left the region vulnerable to external forces and decisions made in other places (Evenhuis, 2018: p.52).

In contrast, Germany's approach to regional development, characterised by equal living conditions between regions and cooperative industrial relations, stands in stark contrast to the confrontational labour relations witnessed in the UK, especially during the Thatcher era. The German emphasis on social partnership and worker representation has contributed to a more collaborative approach during economic restructuring. Moreover, according to Carrascal-Incera et al. (2020)'s study, Germany's approach to promoting regional development does not mean compromising its overall national performance when compared to the UK and other OECD and EU countries. So, greater policy stability and continuity created a difference in dealing with deindustrialisation and regional development.

Looking at the two cases, we see that in Duisburg, there is the role of the state and structural reforms that have influenced the present alongside the natural economic course of the coal and steel industries, whereas in Tees Valley, these efforts have been insufficient, have not influenced the outcome and the present of the region is defined more by the negative consequences of deindustrialisation compared to Duisburg. But still, Duisburg is statistically falling behind in NRW and the national level. This brings us to three conclusions. The first is that capitalism in Germany and the UK is differentiated by policies and governance but interconnected in terms of creating negative results for old industrial regions. However, it does not mean policy does not matter because, as a second result, the impact of deindustrialisation goes beyond economic consequences, fostering a sense of nostalgia for a perceived 'better yesterday' and influencing political perceptions (Telford and Lloyd, 2020). Despite the relatively stable idealised past, the uncertain future has a clear negative impact on the expectations of the region and its people. The third conclusion is the political positions internalised by the former industrial regions that are going through this

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process today and living in worse conditions than before. Although the SPD in Germany has pursued a policy of preserving these sectors or abandoning them with moderate means and social peace, it has not developed friction with other parties over this, while in the UK, the Thatcher government's attitude of accelerating the loss of these sectors has created hostility towards the Conservative party in old industrial regions.

CHAPTER 5: ECONOMIC AND SOCIO-POLITICAL DRIVERS OF RIGHT-WING POPULISM IN ENGLAND AND GERMANY

5.1. Introduction

Until this chapter, we scrutinised the literature on the regional dimension of populism and showed the methodology of how we are going to examine the variegation of populism in comparison to England and Germany. This chapter forms our first analysis and examines and compares the drivers of populist parties' vote share in England and Germany with quantitative analysis. In this context, this chapter is going to answer the following questions: What are the drivers of the rise of right-wing populist parties in England and Germany? The main purpose of this analysis is to identify which long-term or election year variables, as described in the literature on left-behind places, are key factors driving support for right-wing populist parties in Germany and England. In this paper, we provide the first assessment of the drivers behind the votes in the context of left-behind places for parties opposed to European integration in Germany and the UK, using geographically sensitive and close to electoral districts NUTS3 level data.

In this analysis, we will examine the relationship between the votes of the populist parties of these countries and the drivers revealed in the concept of left-behindness and the geography of discontent studies. In this way, we will have the opportunity to compare the countries while seeing the country-specific relations between the variables and the votes. Moreover, the results revealed here will pave the way for qualitative analysis, which will allow us to deepen cause-effect relationships (Yin, 2018).

Through quantitative analysis, we will be able to examine the economic and cultural reasons mentioned in the literature for Germany and the UK. However, it is not possible to expect this examination to be fully fulfilled

because the data available at the NUTS3 level, as mentioned in the methodology chapter (section 3.6.2. in the methodology chapter), where inequalities are observed at the highest level, is very scarce due to its late submission and small statistical structure. As critical realism suggests (Bhaskar, 1989), social phenomena are the product of a multiplicity of structures, but these structures may be hierarchically ordered in terms of their explanatory significance. As argued in the literature (sections 2.3.3 and 2.3.4 in the literature review chapter), we move beyond the dichotomy of culture versus economic explanatory significance and argue that the populist vote is the result of a complex synthesis of multiple determinants. These determinants are interconnected and interdependent, as we argue in the literature (sections 2.3.3 and 2.3.4 in the literature review chapter) while emphasising the importance of temporal and geographical context and environment. In this context, this chapter contributes comparatively to the debate on populism and left-behind places in England and Germany. Thus, one of the main arguments is the need for country-specific and comparative studies in understanding and addressing populist voting patterns. Moreover, it contributes to the debate on the causes of populism and the impact of long-term declines in regional dimensions on populist voting.

This chapter is designed as follows. After this introduction section, we are going to look at explanations of data and design. The sources of data, their measurements and descriptive analysis are going to be explained in this section. The third section shows the results of regression analysis. In this section, after the combined model, we are going to see how the determiners of populism variegated between countries by processing England and Germany separately. The fourth discussion section shows the similarities and differences between the arguments in the literature and our results, in addition to showing the emerging relationship between theoretical interest and populist votes. The last section presents the conclusion.

5.2. Data, Design and Models

I In order to see the correlation between the economic, political and social features of NUTS3 regions and populist votes, we first identify our variables, our geographical unit and then we are going to determine the model and quantitative statistical method to analyse them. These features have been determined according to the sources of populism mentioned in the literature (sections 2.3.1 and 2.3.2 in the literature review) and, in particular, according to the different dimensions and measures used to define left-behind places (section 2.4.2. in the literature review). The limiting role in this determination has been played by the availability of data in the NUTS3 regional unit. The reason for selecting NUTS3 as the geographical unit is explained in Section 3.8.1, with a total of 534 NUTS3 region - 133 from England and 401 from Germany - subjected to analysis.

5.2.1. Variables

For this analysis, we use characteristics of the left-behind places and geographical discontent literature, which can be found in the literature chapter in detail, to determine independent variables that are used to explain the dependent variable, the populist votes. Our data come from different sources. The elements used to explain populist events in the literature and the variables that emerged after finding their geographical equivalents that we want are as in Table 9. Political data come from the government's official sources. Other economic and socio-demographic data come from mostly European-based statistical regional data collection organisations, namely the Annual Regional Database of the European Commission's Directorate General for Regional and Urban Policy (ARDECO), the statistical office of the European Union (Eurostat) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). All the sources for specific variables can also be seen in Table 9.

Table 9: Variables

	Variable Name	Definition	Source
Dependent variable	Right-wing populist votes	% in general elections	Der Bundeswahlleiter/House of Common Library
Independent variable	Average annual growth	% in average annual growth	ARDECO
Independent variable	Total employment change	Compound % change in total employment	ARDECO
Independent variable	Industrial employment change	Compound % change in industrial employment	ARDECO
Independent variable	Unemployment rate	% unemployment	OECD
Independent variable	Population change	Compound % change in total population	ARDECO
Independent variable	Population 65 and over	% age 65+ years old	Eurostat
Independent variable	Population density	Persons per square kilometre	Eurostat
Independent variable	Education	% tertiary educational attainment, age group 25-64	Eurostat
Independent variable	Turnout	% of people attending in the elections	Der Bundeswahlleiter/House of Common Library
Independent variable	GDP per capita	Natural logarithm of regional GDP per capita	

Source: Author's Own

As we are trying to answer the determining forces behind the populist backlash, the votes of the populist parties in the general elections constitute our dependent variable. Populism can manifest itself in different ways; as protest, or as the tactics adopted by a politician or as the acceptance of populist policies by a party can be counted among these different ways. On the one hand, maintaining consistency in quantitative comparisons will be difficult when highlighting individuals and taking populism as a tactic and protest. On the other hand, the classification of parties is easier, and the parties are also easier to identify by the roles they play in local politics and general elections. Therefore, we consider populism at the party level. The votes received by the parties also provide robust data in terms of quantitative analysis. In addition, by mobilising the masses and creating a potential to challenge the established order, populist movements at the party level can present more striking examples. At this point, the problem of the definition of a populist party comes forward. A party can be considered while a new party is established or an old party adopts populist policies. In the literature, anti-elite, anti-establishment stance with an 'us versus them' discourse (Guiso et al., 2017; Kessel, 2015; Hauwaert and Kessel, 2018) and anti-immigration, nativism approach (Goodwin, 2011; Rodríguez-Pose, 2020; Cox, 2018) stand out as the common denominator as the characteristics of these parties. In this context, certain studies have been carried out to determine the populist parties in Europe (Kessel, 2015; Inglehart and Norris, 2016; Rooduijn, 2019; TIMBRO, 2022). Also, in order to ensure consistency when analysing the reasons for the populist backlash between the two countries, we consider the right-wing and Eurosceptic ones of these populist parties. So, the dependent variables represent the share of valid votes for right-wing populist parties. These parties are UKIP (United Kingdom Independence Party) (TIMBRO, 2022; Kessel, 2015; Rooduijn, 2019) for England and AfD (Alternative für Deutschland/ Alternative for Germany) (TIMBRO, 2022; Inglehart and Norris; 2016; Rooduijn, 2019) and NPD (Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands/ National Democratic Party of Germany) (TIMBRO, 2022; Kessel, 2015; Inglehart and Norris; 2016). Even though we include NPD as a right-wing populist party in the

analysis, their vote share is only 0.4; thus, their effect on the analysis is very limited. In this context, AfD is the main party and main interest in the Germany case.

We are using the 2015 General Election for England; the importance of this election is that it is a period when the effects of the 2008 crisis are felt more by people with the austerity programs, and it is the election that took place before the referendum of the exit from the EU which UKIP's raison d'être and lastly the 2010 General Election was too near to the 2008 crash and its effects were less apparent. For Germany, we are using the results of the 2017 General Elections. Even though AfD participated in the 2013 General Election and won 4.7% of the votes, which is just missing the 5% barrier to enter the Bundestag, it was less than a year after their establishment. Additionally, according to Kessel (2015: p.144), they were not an actual populist party in 2013. Also, according to Rooduijn et al. (2024)'s populist index, AfD was established over Euroscepticism and classified as far-right after 2015 after the resignation of the moderate wing. So, they turned to populism afterwards, and their politics were more settled to analyse in 2017. This situation and the resemblance between UKIP and AfD can be traced to the European Parliament. Accordingly, UKIP was a member of the Europe of Freedom and Democracy (EFD) Group, a political group of Eurosceptic parties in the 7th European Parliament in 2009. Lega from Italy, the Danish People's Party from Denmark, Finns Party from Finland were also members of this group. When the AfD entered the EU parliament in 2014, it controversially entered the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) Group. However, in 2016, they were asked to leave the group due to their extreme right-wing tendencies (Teffer, 2016). After that, AfD took part in the Identity and Democracy (ID) Group in 2019, where Eurosceptic parties took part along with Lega, Danish People's Party, Freedom Party of Austria, Finns Party and Le Pen's National Rally and lastly UKIP, which deputies left after formal Brexit date, 31 January 2020.

We can see the election results below in Figure 23 for Germany and Figure 24 for England. In the electoral system in Germany, they elect their

members of parliament with two votes. The first vote is for a direct candidate, who is required to receive a plurality vote in their electoral district. The second vote is used to elect a party list in each state as established by its respective party groups. We used the second vote in our research, because the second vote is more party-oriented than the first vote, and the 5 percent that ensures the representation of the parties in the parliament comes from the second vote proportion. Votes for Germany vary between 37.4 and 5 percent. The places with the highest rates are Sächsische Schweiz-Osterzgebirge (37.4%), Görlitz (34.4%) and Meissen (34.4%) in East Germany. The lowests are in the north-west regions of Münster, Kreisfreie Stadt (5.0%) and Grafschaft Bentheim (5.4%). Voting rates in England vary between 29.2 and 3.1 percent. The places with the highest percentage of votes are Thurrock (29.2%), Medway (25.3%) and Barking&Dagenham and Havering (25.0%) in the Southeast. The lowest places are Lambeth (3.1%), Wandsworth (3.5%) and Camden & City of London (3.9%) within London.

After we explained the dependent variable, right-wing populist votes, we are moving to the independent variables. Brief descriptions and sources of the variables are also shown in Table 9. The average annual growth variable represents the average annual growth rate of a NUTS3 region. This is calculated by averaging the GDP per capita change from 1980 to the election years. In the context chapter (sections 3.3.1. and 3.3.2.), we mentioned different decline processes for regions, but the reason why 1980 was taken as the beginning is that it was the beginning of the period of peak deindustrialisation and also the temporal availability of the data to be compared also points us towards 1980. The change calculations start from 1991, after the German reunification for the East German regions; Thuringen, Sachsen, Sachsen-Anhalt, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Berlin and Brandenburg because of data availability problems before 1991. Total employment change is calculated as the compound rate of change of total employment numbers in NUTS3 regions from 1980 until the election years. Furthermore to avoid repetition we remove industrial employment value

from total employment. The industrial employment change variable also shows the compound rate of change between 1980 and the election years.

The explanation sequence here will be slightly different from Table 9; this is because we have two types of independent variables other than concept, which is a classification title for the order. The classification here is according to the long-term changes and values belonging to the election year. This distinction arises from the argument that the effect of prolonged and relative decline on populism in the literature (Rodríguez-Pose, 2020; Gordon, 2018; Iammarino et al., 2017; McCann, 2019) which we mentioned in detail in the literature review chapter. However, the fact that NUTS3 is the most sensitive and small statistical geographic level creates some data existence limitations. In this sense, there has been a problem with data presence at the NUTS3 level for some variables that we can handle for a long-time change. Because of this limitation, it was not possible to follow the change in the unemployment rate and the change in the population 65 and over ratio within the total population at the NUTS3 level.

So, the next variable is the population change, which shows the compound rate of change in the population of NUT3 regions. The next variables are the data for the election years. The GDP per capita variable represents the natural logarithms of Gross Domestic Product per capita, which is a measure of the economic output per person for each region. The unemployment rate variable represents the percentage of people who are unemployed and actively seeking employment in the election years, 2015 for England and 2017 for Germany. Population 65 and over variable shows the proportion of people aged 65 and over in the population. Population density variable is the number of inhabitants per square kilometre. The education variable is calculated according to the rate of tertiary educational attainment in the age group 25 and 64. This variable is not available for the NUTS3 level, thus we used the NUTS2 regional values, we gave the NUTS3 regions the values of the NUTS2 regions they belong to. The only exception to the NUTS3 level data is the Education variable, which is given great importance in the literature (Goodwin, 2011; Colantone and Stanig, 2016; Rodrik, 2018a;

Beecham et al., 2020). The last independent variable is turnout, which is a measure of voter participation in a political process and shows the percentage of eligible voters who actually vote in an election.

Another variable often discussed in the literature is immigration. However, data scarcity and the confusion of definitions around immigration and populism studies make it not a suitable variable for this comparison. For example, Becker et al. (2017), in their study where they find a relationship between immigration and Brexit, mean immigrants from EU member states, while Dominics et al. (2020) mean people born outside the EU in their study where they find a relationship with immigration and high populist votes in Europe and the UK. This polarised picture often stems from different measurements and methods. Halla et al. (2017) consider the share of immigrants as the number of residents without citizenship relative to all residents in their study, where they find that immigrants' entry into the community has a significant impact on the FPÖ (Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs / Freedom Party of Austria) vote rate. Moreover, to make our point, Dijkstra et al. (2020) use the difference between the numbers of people moving to the region and out of the region between 2000 and 2016 as migration, and they find the recent increase in migration level positively related to votes for strongly opposed anti-European parties. Furthermore, we give up using Theil's T Statistics (UTIP, 2022), which is used to measure inter-regional inequality, because of the multicollinearity issue with the GDP per capita variable.

Figure 23: Right-Wing Populist Parties Vote Share in Germany 2017 General Election
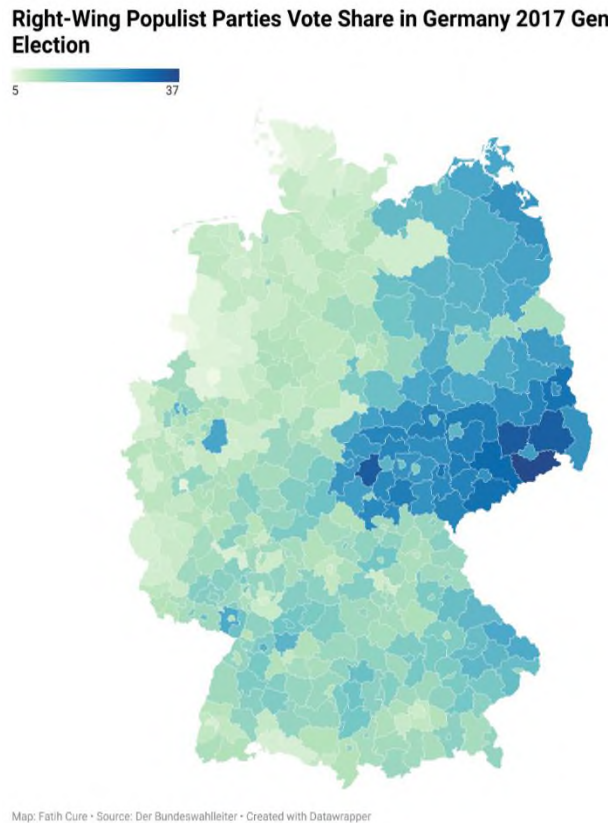
Source: Author's own map according to Der Bundeswahlleiter data

Figure 24: Right-Wing Populist Parties Vote Share in the UK General Election
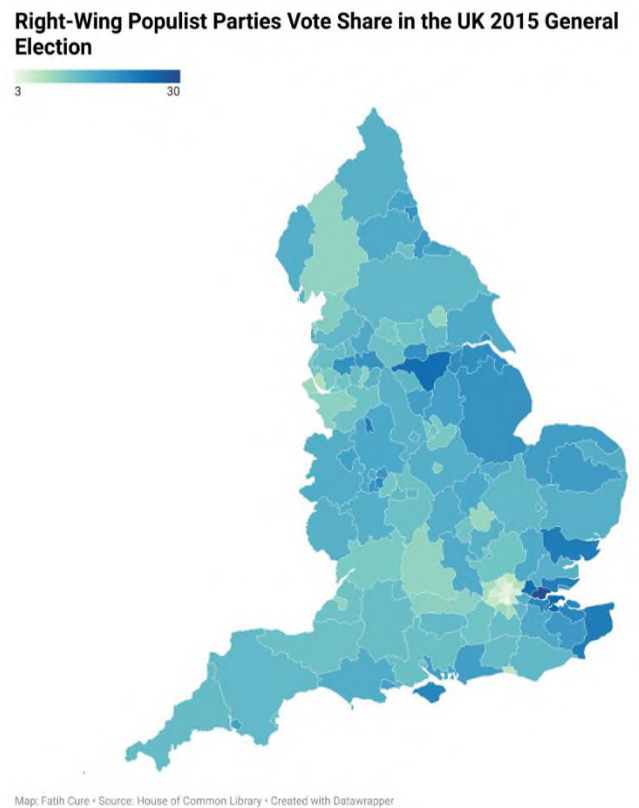
Source: Author's own map according to the House of Common Library

Before proceeding to regression analysis, we examine the descriptive statistics of our key variables in Table 10, which includes the mean, standard deviation, and total number of regions (N), along with minimum and maximum values. These figures provide insights into the data's distribution but do not indicate relationships between dependent and independent variables. Starting with the Vote variable, the average vote percentage is slightly higher in England (14.2%) compared to Germany (13.9%), with a combined mean of 13.9%. Interestingly, Germany displays a wider range in vote share, from 5.0% to 37.4%, indicating greater variation in populist support across its regions than in England, where vote percentages range from 3.1% to 29.2%.

For Average Annual Growth, England shows a significantly higher mean (5.2%) compared to Germany's 1.6%, with a combined mean of 2.5%. England also has a greater spread, with values ranging from 1.1% to 8.7%, while Germany's growth rates are more clustered, spanning from -0.6% to 5.9%. Notably, all three regions with negative average annual growth—Weimar, Halle (Saale), and Märkisch-Oderland—are in Germany, while Blackpool has the lowest growth rate in England at 1.1%. Total Employment Change is relatively similar between the two countries, with a mean of 1.3% in England and 0.6% in Germany, yielding a combined mean of 1.0%. However, Germany has a wider range, from -1.2% to 3.7%, while England's values are slightly more concentrated, ranging from -0.4% to 4.3%. Looking at Industrial Employment Change, England's mean stands at -2.1%, significantly lower than Germany's -0.6%, indicating more pronounced declines in industrial employment in England. In both countries, no region experienced positive growth in industrial employment. The range in England is from -5.9% to 1.5%, while in Germany, it extends from -5.8% to 2.9%.

Table 10: Descriptive Statistics

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

	Combined					England					Germany				
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Min	Max
Vote	13.9%	0.05469686	534	3.1%	37.4%	14.2%	0.0487264	133	3.1%	29.2%	13.9%	0.05657375	401	5.0%	37.4%
Average annual growth	2.5%	0.01799724	534	-0.6%	8.7%	5.2%	0.0132402	133	1.1%	8.7%	1.6%	0.00782912	401	-0.6%	5.9%
Total employment change	1.0%	0.00739655	534	-1.2%	4.3%	1.3%	0.0069582	133	-0.4%	4.3%	0.9%	0.00737326	401	-1.2%	3.7%
Industrial employment change	-1.0%	0.01473777	534	-5.9%	2.9%	-2.1%	0.0139376	133	-5.9%	1.3%	-0.6%	0.01322541	401	-5.8%	2.9%
Population change	0.2%	0.00425378	534	-1.0%	1.8%	0.5%	0.0035055	133	-0.3%	1.8%	0.1%	0.00415279	401	-1.0%	1.1%
GDP per capita	37839.246	30065.5226	534	15230.882	527510.8	43708.53	53337.16	133	21240.55	527510.76	35892.58	15825.29	401	15230.88	162083.29
Unemployment rate	4.3%	0.01868941	534	1.1%	11.2%	5.4%	0.0205648	133	1.5%	11.2%	3.9%	0.01649523	401	1.1%	9.2%
Population 65 and over	20.8%	0.03660612	534	5.9%	30.7%	17.6%	0.0437658	133	5.9%	27.6%	21.9%	0.02637875	401	15.6%	30.7%
Population density	971.90	1761.10	534	36.50	14664.00	2266.42	2953.19	133	56.10	14664.00	542.54	716.01	401	36.50	4710.20
Education	30.71	8.34	534	20.60	69.50	40.98	8.74	133	32.00	69.50	27.30	4.55	401	20.60	40.50
Turnout	73.4%	0.05761934	534	54.1%	84.4%	66.2%	0.0468744	133	54.1%	73.7%	75.8%	0.03706477	401	64.1%	84.4%

Source: Author's Own

In terms of Population Change, England has a mean of 0.5%, which is higher than Germany's 0.1%. England's range, from -0.3% to 1.8%, is broader than Germany's, which spans from -1.0% to 1.1%, suggesting that regional shifts in population are more pronounced in England. The GDP per Capita variable reflects static values for the general election years—2015 for England and 2017 for Germany. England's mean GDP per capita is substantially higher at 43,708.53 compared to Germany's 35,892.58. Additionally, England shows greater dispersion, with values ranging from 21,240.55 to 52,751.76, whereas Germany's values are more concentrated, ranging from 15,238.88 to 52,751.76.

Unemployment Rate is higher in England, with a mean of 5.4% compared to Germany's 3.9%, and a combined mean of 4.3%. England also shows more variability, with unemployment rates ranging from 1.5% to 11.2%, while Germany's range is narrower, from 1.1% to 9.2%. The proportion of Population 65 and Over is higher in Germany, with a mean of 21.9%, compared to 17.6% in England. Germany's range is also narrower, from 15.6% to 29.7%, whereas England's spans from 5.9% to 27.6%, indicating a more varied age profile in England compared to Germany's older population structure.

Population Density is markedly higher in England, with a mean of 2,266.42 people per square kilometer, compared to 542.54 in Germany. England's range extends from 56.10 to 14,664.00, showing substantial variability across its regions, from rural areas to highly urbanized centers. Germany's population density is more uniform, ranging from 36.50 to 4,710.20, suggesting fewer extreme differences between urban and rural areas. For Education, representing tertiary educational attainment in the 25-64 age group, England's mean is significantly higher at 40.98 compared to Germany's 27.30. In England, the range spans from 32.00 to 69.50, while in Germany it is from 20.60 to 40.50, suggesting both a higher level and wider spread of educational attainment in England. Finally, Turnout is higher in Germany, with a mean of 75.8% compared to 66.2% in England. Germany's turnout rates are more consistent, ranging from 64.1% to

84.4%, whereas England's wider range of 54.1% to 73.7% suggests greater regional disparities in electoral participation.

Overall, England generally has higher mean values across most variables, such as average annual growth, employment changes, GDP per capita, population density, and education, while Germany's mean values are higher for Population 65 and over and turnout. The larger variation across regions in England highlights more pronounced regional differences compared to Germany, particularly in terms of economic and demographic characteristics.

5.2.2. Models

When we consider our research question, which is trying to find the relationship between a single dependent variable and multiple independent variables, multiple linear regression is a suitable method for the research. In this way, we can use multiple linear regression to identify which independent variables have the strongest effect on the dependent variable. Also, it can be used to estimate the strength and direction of the relationships between the independent and dependent variables. Linear regression has certain assumptions that data must satisfy in order to produce a good model (Duke, 2024; STHDA, 2024). Relevant assumptions, diagnostics, plots and results can be found in Appendix D.

In line with our chapter objectives, regression analysis allows us to determine whether there is a relationship between independent and dependent variables, while controlling for the effects of other variables. By examining the strength and direction of the relationship, it provides insight into how changes in a variable affect populist voting. Thus, it will serve to test the relationships presented in the literature. And then the correlation results from regression analysis can be used to explore causality through theoretical approaches and qualitative analyses.

The regression analysis is modelled on long-term changes and values belonging to the election years. This distinction arises from the argument that the effect of prolonged and relative decline on populism in the literature (Rodríguez-Pose, 2020; Gordon, 2018; Iammarino et al., 2017; McCann, 2019). However, the fact that NUTS3 is the most sensitive and small statistical geographic level creates some data existence limitations. In this sense, there has been a problem with data presence at the NUTS3 level for some variables that we can handle for a long-time change. Because of this limitation, it was not possible to follow the change in the unemployment rate and the change in the population 65 and over ratio within the total population back to 1980 at the NUTS3 level. Therefore, on the one hand, Average annual growth, Total employment change, Industrial employment change and Population change reflect long-term changes in NUTS3 regions since 1980, except for East German regions, Thuringen, Sachsen, Sachsen-Anhalt, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Berlin, Brandenburg since 1991. On the other hand, GDP per capita, Unemployment Rate, Population 65 and over, Population density, Education and Turnout variables project features about regions belongs to election years.

The multiple linear regression will be made in 3 different models within the scope of, as mentioned in the literature review, the left-behind regions with the process starting with deindustrialisation; the endangered regions in terms of their current economic, demographic and social characteristics; and regions that remain on the disadvantageous side of regional inequality and show a populist reaction. These models, as can be seen below, 1 - deal with long-term economic decline, 2 - demographic variables are added in addition to long-term economic variables, and 3 – variables belonging to election years are added to the equation in addition to long-term changes. Lastly, v_c represents country-specific effects, and ε is the error term. Country-fixed effects are used to control for unobserved characteristics that are specific to each country and that may be affecting our dependent variable. By including country-fixed effects in our model, we are estimating separate intercepts for each country; in this way, we are reducing bias in our estimates and improving the precision of results, and we are covering

unobserved country-specific factors that are affecting our dependent variable.

$$Y_{vote} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_{Averageannualgroth} + \beta_2 X_{Totalemploymentchange}$$
$$+ \beta_3 X_{Industrialemploymentchange} + v_c + \epsilon$$

$$Y_{vote} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_{Averageannualgroth} + \beta_2 X_{Totalemploymentchange}$$
$$+ \beta_3 X_{Totalemploymentchange} + \beta_4 X_{Populationchange} + v_c + \epsilon$$

$$Y_{vote} = \beta_0 + All\ variables + v_c + \epsilon$$

5.3. Regression Analysis: Long-Term-Decline, Left-Behindness

In this section, to assess which of the factors identified in the characteristics of left-behindness and geographical discontent literature as prospective drivers of populism are associated with right-wing populist party votes, we estimate our model via multiple linear regression. Regressions are going to be applied for the three models mentioned, first for all data and then for England and Germany separately, and then Germany with Eastern Germany as a dummy and lastly Western Germany alone.. So, first of all, we want to see the effects of economic, demographic decline and left-behindness for all data. The purpose of the regression for all data is to see what a more generalisable result looks like and to see which variables affect the right-wing populist vote when these countries are taken together. The regression results will allow us to compare these countries and show how the research question we are looking for an answer variegated according to spatial effects. Also, we are aiming to see whether a generalising viewpoint, formed by analyses involving all European countries, can mask national effects.

5.3.1. Combined

The combined regression models investigate the factors influencing populist voting patterns across regions in England and Germany with country-fixed

effect that controls for unobserved characteristics specific to each country, allowing the analysis to focus on variations within each country rather than differences between countries. Table 11 shows the results of multiple linear regression analysis, with three different models being tested. Each model tests a different set of independent variables to see how they are related to the outcome variable of 'right-wing populist parties in England and Germany'. The first model (Model 1) tests the relationship between long-term economic decline and the rise of right-wing populist parties and includes the following independent variables: Average annual growth, Total employment change, and Industrial employment change. The dependent variable (Vote) reports the results for the 2015 General Election for England and the 2017 General Election for Germany. Before continuing the interpretation, four observations were excluded from the regression because they appeared to be outliers.

In Model 1, the analysis focuses on Average Annual Growth, Total Employment Change, and Industrial Employment Change. Among these variables, Total Employment Change has the largest and most significant effect on populist voting, with a coefficient of -4.62 (significant at $p<0.001 p<0.001$). This result implies that a 1% increase in total employment change corresponds to a 4.62% decrease in the populist vote share. This substantial effect size suggests that regions experiencing stagnation or decline in employment are more prone to support populist parties, highlighting employment as a critical factor in driving regional discontent. Industrial Employment Change is also significant, with a coefficient of 0.06 (significant at $p<0.01 p<0.01$), indicating a modest positive association with populist support. Although smaller in magnitude than total employment, this positive effect suggests that slight increases in industrial employment may correlate with a minor increase in populist voting, possibly due to strong regional identities tied to industrial sectors. Average Annual Growth does not show a statistically significant effect in this model, suggesting that general economic growth alone does not capture the specific economic grievances linked to populist sentiment.

Table 11: Drivers of right-wing populist votes in NUTS3 regions in England and Germany Combined

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Average annual growth	0.20	0.19	0.32
	(0.27)	(0.27)	(0.26)
Total employment change	-4.62***	-4.24***	-3.12***
	(0.30)	(0.38)	(0.39)
Industrial employment change	0.06**	0.06***	0.04*
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Population change		-1.06	-1.09
		(0.66)	(0.69)
Unemployment rate			0.40**
			(0.12)
Population 65 and over			0.13
			(0.07)
Population density			-0.00***
			(0.00)
Education			0.00***
			(0.00)
Turnout			-0.35***
			(0.06)
GDP per capita			-0.01
			(0.01)
R^2	0.23	0.24	0.37
Adj. R^2	0.22	0.23	0.36
Num. obs.	529	529	529

***$p < 0.001$; **$p < 0.01$; *$p < 0.05$

In Model 2, Population Change is added to the predictors from Model 1. The inclusion of this variable slightly reduces the coefficient for Total Employment Change to -4.24, though it remains highly significant ($p<0.001p<0.001$). This consistency underscores the robustness of the relationship between employment declines and populist support. Industrial Employment Change also remains significant and positive, with a coefficient

of 0.06. Population Change, however, does not exhibit a statistically significant effect in this model, indicating that shifts in population size alone are not a major driver of populist sentiment in the combined model.

In Model 3, a broader set of demographic and socio-economic controls are added, including Unemployment Rate, Population 65 and Over, Population Density, Education, Turnout, and GDP per Capita. Total Employment Change remains a significant predictor, though the coefficient decreases to -3.12, reflecting the influence of the additional controls. This result continues to suggest that regions with lower employment growth are more inclined to support populist parties, though the magnitude of this effect is moderated when other socio-economic factors are considered.

Industrial Employment Change remains statistically significant, with a reduced coefficient of 0.04, implying that while industrial employment change contributes to populist voting, its effect is relatively modest when other variables are included. Unemployment Rate is significant with a positive coefficient of 0.40, indicating that regions with higher unemployment tend to exhibit higher levels of populist support. This finding aligns with the view that economic distress, specifically in the form of joblessness, is a strong driver of regional discontent.

Education emerges with a small but statistically significant positive coefficient in Model 3. While its effect is minimal, this positive association suggests that regions with slightly higher education levels are associated with a minor increase in populist support. This result may reflect complexities in the relationship between education and populism, potentially indicating that even among educated populations, populist sentiment can resonate due to factors such as economic insecurity or distrust in mainstream institutions. However, the magnitude of this effect is limited, indicating that education plays a less central role in shaping populist voting compared to employment-related factors.

Among the other variables added in Model 3, Population Density and Turnout are significant, with negative coefficients. The small but significant

negative effect of Population Density suggests that urban regions tend to support populist parties less than rural or suburban areas, possibly due to differing socio-economic structures and political priorities. Turnout shows a larger negative effect, with a coefficient of -0.35, indicating that lower voter engagement is associated with increased populist support. This pattern suggests that regions with disengaged electorates may be more susceptible to populist appeals, likely due to disillusionment with mainstream politics.

In summary, the combined model analysis highlights Total Employment Change as a critical predictor of populist voting, with regions experiencing employment stagnation or decline showing significantly higher populist support. Industrial Employment Change, while positive and significant, has a smaller effect, suggesting that industrial job growth is only modestly associated with populist sentiment. Other significant factors in the full model, such as Unemployment Rate, Population Density, Education, and Turnout, further underscore the roles of economic hardship, rural or suburban settings, and political disengagement in shaping regional support for populism. These findings emphasize the importance of addressing regional economic inequalities and fostering political engagement as strategies to counteract populist sentiment.

5.3.2. England

After the combined model, we hope to see how the causes of populism variegated between countries by processing England and Germany separately. This model presents notable differences in both the significance and direction of some variables compared to the combined analysis. Table 12 includes the regression analysis conducted to explain the 2015 vote rates of Eurosceptic right-wing populist parties as a dependent variable in 130 NUTS3 regions in England. Three regions are detected as outliers. Before continuing with analysis, Table 12 differently, from Table 11, has intercepts and does not have country-fixed effects to partially account for static differences between the two countries.

Table 12: Drivers of right-wing populist votes in NUTS3 regions in England

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
(Intercept)	0.18^{***}	0.21^{***}	0.34^{**}
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.12)
Average annual growth	-0.72^{*}	-0.87^{**}	-0.27
	(0.30)	(0.27)	(0.23)
Total employment change	0.43	1.92^{**}	0.57
	(0.56)	(0.58)	(0.45)
Industrial employment change	0.65^{*}	0.91^{***}	-0.16
	(0.28)	(0.26)	(0.25)
Population change		-6.31^{***}	0.67
		(1.16)	(1.15)
Unemployment rate			0.23
			(0.19)
Population 65 and over			0.27^{**}
			(0.10)
Population density			-0.00^{**}
			(0.00)
Education			-0.00^{*}
			(0.00)
Turnout			-0.24^{**}
			(0.09)
GDP per capita			-0.00
			(0.01)
R^2	0.08	0.25	0.64
Adj. R^2	0.05	0.23	0.61
Num. obs.	130	130	130

$^{***}p < 0.001$; $^{**}p < 0.01$; $^{*}p < 0.05$

In Model 1, the results show that Average Annual Growth has a significant negative relationship with populist voting, with a coefficient of -0.72 (significant at $p<0.05p<0.05$). This suggests that regions with higher economic growth experience a reduction in populist support, underscoring the role of economic prosperity in mitigating populist sentiment. Industrial Employment Change is positively associated with populist voting, with a coefficient of 0.65 (significant at $p<0.05p<0.05$), indicating that even modest increases in industrial employment are linked to higher populist

support. This positive relationship could reflect a unique dynamic within industrial regions in England, where industrial employment resonates strongly with regional identity, making populist rhetoric more appealing.

In Model 2, adding Population Change leads to an increase in the model's explanatory power, with the R2 rising to 0.25. Population Change has a large negative coefficient of -6.31 (significant at p<0.001p<0.001), suggesting that areas experiencing population decline show significantly higher levels of populist support. This finding indicates that depopulation may amplify feelings of abandonment and discontent, fostering a favourable environment for populist movements. Additionally, Total Employment Change becomes significant in this model, with a positive coefficient of 1.92 (significant at p<0.01p<0.01), implying that employment growth is associated with increased populist support, a departure from the negative relationship observed in the combined model. The significance and direction of Average Annual Growth and Industrial Employment Change remain consistent with Model 1, indicating the robustness of these relationships within the English context.

In Model 3, a broader set of socio-economic variables is included, resulting in a substantial increase in the model's explanatory power (R2=0.64). Total Employment Change and Industrial Employment Change both lose their statistical significance in this model, indicating that their effects are moderated by the additional controls. Unemployment Rate does not reach statistical significance, but Population 65 and Over is significant with a positive coefficient of 0.27 (significant at p<0.01p<0.01). This suggests that regions with a higher proportion of elderly residents are more likely to support populist parties, possibly due to concerns over economic security, social services, and generational shifts in political priorities.

Among the other newly included variables, Population Density, Turnout, and Education emerge as significant predictors. Population Density has a small but significant negative coefficient (-0.00, p<0.01p<0.01), indicating that more densely populated, urban areas are less inclined toward populist

support. Turnout is also negatively associated with populist voting, with a coefficient of -0.24 (significant at $p<0.01$$p<0.01$), suggesting that lower electoral engagement correlates with higher populist support. This may reflect political disillusionment in certain regions, where lower turnout reflects disengagement from traditional political processes. Education has a small negative effect (-0.00, significant at $p<0.05$$p<0.05$), suggesting that regions with higher education levels tend to show slightly less support for populist parties, perhaps due to the association of higher education with more liberal or progressive political views.

Comparing the England-specific results with the combined model reveals several differences in direction, significance, and explanatory power. The R^2 values in the England model are notably lower in Models 1 and 2 (0.08 and 0.25) compared to the combined model, but Model 3 reaches 0.64, indicating a strong fit when additional variables are included. Election year variables have a higher impact on the explanation of populist votes in England. In the England model, Total Employment Change switches from a consistently negative relationship in the combined model to a positive (and significant) relationship in Model 2, though it loses significance in Model 3. Industrial Employment Change also differs, showing a significant positive effect in Models 1 and 2 in the England model, while it was only modestly positive in the combined model. Population Change has a substantial negative effect in Model 2 for England, while it was insignificant in the combined model, indicating that demographic shifts may have unique implications in the English context.

5.3.3. Germany

After analysing England's regression results, Table 13 shows the result of the regression, which assesses the drivers of the dependent variable of Eurosceptic right-wing populist parties in Germany. In this way, we are going to be able to compare these countries and shed light on whether there is variegation in terms of drivers of right-wing populism. There are three

outliers in the model, so the observed NUTS3 regions number decreased from 401 to 398.

Table 13: Drivers of right-wing populist votes in NUTS3 regions in Germany

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
(Intercept)	0.15^{***}	0.15^{***}	0.28^{**}
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.10)
Average annual growth	1.59^{***}	1.77^{***}	1.49^{***}
	(0.32)	(0.32)	(0.31)
Total employment change	-4.24^{***}	-4.97^{***}	-3.97^{***}
	(0.30)	(0.41)	(0.43)
Industrial employment change	-0.86^{***}	-1.15^{***}	-1.29^{***}
	(0.19)	(0.22)	(0.23)
Population change		2.13^{**}	1.82^{*}
		(0.81)	(0.82)
Unemployment rate			0.18
			(0.13)
Population 65 and over			0.04
			(0.07)
Population density			-0.00^{***}
			(0.00)
Education			0.00^{***}
			(0.00)
Turnout			-0.34^{***}
			(0.07)
GDP per capita			0.00
			(0.01)
R^2	0.39	0.40	0.49
Adj. R^2	0.38	0.39	0.48
Num. obs.	398	398	398

$^{***}p < 0.001$; $^{**}p < 0.01$; $^{*}p < 0.05$

In Model 1, Average Annual Growth has a positive and significant effect on populist voting, with a coefficient of 1.59 (significant at $p<0.001p<0.001$). This suggests that regions with higher economic growth in Germany tend to experience an increase in populist support, which may reflect a context-specific response to growth that intensifies regional disparities or perceptions of inequality. Total Employment Change is also highly significant, with a coefficient of -4.24 (significant at $p<0.001p<0.001$), indicating that regions experiencing declines in total employment are more likely to support populist parties, underscoring the importance of employment in explaining discontent. Interestingly, Industrial Employment Change has a significant negative effect, with a coefficient of -0.86 (significant at $p<0.001p<0.001$), suggesting that increases in industrial employment are associated with lower levels of populist support. This might indicate that industrial stability or growth mitigates populist appeal in German regions, potentially due to the economic security it provides.

In Model 2, Population Change is added to the predictors from Model 1, slightly improving the model's explanatory power ($R2=0.40$). Population Change shows a positive coefficient of 2.13 (significant at $p<0.01$), indicating that regions experiencing population growth also see increased support for populist parties. This could reflect concerns around population changes that are perceived as altering regional identity or social composition. The significance and direction of Average Annual Growth, Total Employment Change, and Industrial Employment Change remain consistent with Model 1, confirming their importance in the German context.

In Model 3, additional socio-economic and demographic controls, including Unemployment Rate, Population 65 and Over, Population Density, Education, Turnout, and GDP per Capita, are introduced, leading to a notable increase in the model's explanatory power ($R2=0.49$). Total Employment Change retains its significant negative effect, though the magnitude slightly decreases to -3.97, reinforcing the idea that employment decline is a strong predictor of populist support. Industrial Employment Change also maintains a significant negative coefficient of -1.29, indicating

that industrial job growth continues to reduce populist sentiment when controlling for other factors.

Among the newly included variables, Population Density, Education, and Turnout emerge as significant predictors. Population Density has a small negative coefficient (-0.00, significant at $p<0.001$), indicating that more densely populated areas tend to support populist parties less, consistent with findings that populism is often stronger in rural or less densely populated areas. Education has a positive and significant coefficient (0.00, significant at $p<0.001$), suggesting that higher education levels are associated with a slight increase in populist support, a finding that contrasts with the expectation of higher education with lower populist voting. Turnout shows a substantial negative effect, with a coefficient of -0.34 (significant at $p<0.001$), indicating that lower voter engagement correlates with higher populist support, aligning with the idea that disengaged populations may be more susceptible to populist appeals.

Comparing the Germany model with the England and combined models reveals important differences in the factors driving populist voting patterns. The $R2$ values are generally similar across these models, with Germany achieving values of 0.39 in Model 1, 0.40 in Model 2, and 0.49 in Model 3. This suggests that the selected variables account for a substantial proportion of the variance in populist support in Germany, though the England model achieved a higher explanatory power in Model 3, with an $R2$ of 0.64. This difference indicates that socio-economic and demographic factors play a somewhat more defined role in explaining populist support in England compared to Germany. And, long-term independent variables are the strongest in terms of the explanatory power of populist votes in Germany compared to the Combined and England models.

One notable difference is in the direction and significance of Average Annual Growth. In the Germany model, Average Annual Growth has a positive and significant relationship with populist support across all models, indicating that regions with higher economic growth tend to show more support for

populist parties. This contrasts with the England model, where Average Annual Growth had a negative relationship, suggesting that economic growth in England is associated with reduced populist support. This divergence implies that economic growth may exacerbate regional disparities or perceived inequalities in Germany, whereas it has a more stabilizing effect in England.

Total Employment Change shows a consistently negative and significant relationship with populist support in both the Germany and combined models, suggesting that employment declines are a strong predictor of populist sentiment in these contexts. However, in the England model, this relationship turned positive in Model 2, indicating that regions with increasing employment also showed higher populist support. This suggests that employment dynamics may influence political behaviour differently in each country, potentially due to differing labour market structures or regional economic policies.

Another significant difference lies in Industrial Employment Change. In Germany, Industrial Employment Change has a negative relationship with populist support, meaning that regions with increases in industrial employment are less likely to support populist parties. This relationship contrasts with the England model, where Industrial Employment Change showed a positive effect, suggesting that industrial regions in England may have unique social or cultural connections to populist movements. This difference could reflect distinct historical and economic roles of industry in each country's political landscape.

Finally, the demographic predictors also show variations across the models. In the Germany model, Education is positively associated with populist support, whereas in the England model, it showed a small negative effect. Additionally, Population 65 and Over was significant in the England model but not in the Germany model, suggesting that an aging population may have a stronger influence on populist sentiment in England. Turnout, however, has a consistent negative effect across models, indicating that

regions with lower voter engagement tend to show higher levels of populist support in both countries.

5.3.4. Germany with Eastern Germany as a Dummy Variable

This Germany model incorporates an East Germany dummy variable to account for unique socio-economic and historical differences between East and West German regions. Including this dummy allows us to assess whether socio-economic factors driving populist support differ systematically across these areas, potentially due to distinct economic legacies and social dynamics that have persisted since reunification. This approach enables us to observe if these regional distinctions influence the relationship between populist support and variables such as employment, economic growth, and demographics.

As can be seen in Table 14, in the first model, where Average Annual Growth, Total Employment Change, and Industrial Employment Change are the main predictors, some differences emerge compared to previous Germany models. Average Annual Growth remains positive and significant, with a coefficient of 1.08 ($p < 0.001$), indicating that regions experiencing economic growth are more likely to support populist parties. This effect is slightly moderated compared to the original Germany model, suggesting that the East Germany dummy absorbs some of the regional variation in how growth relates to populism. Total Employment Change is also significant and negative, with a coefficient of -1.29 ($p < 0.001$), though its effect size is smaller than in the previous model. This result implies that while employment declines remain a strong predictor of populist support, distinguishing between East and West Germany reduces the overall impact of employment. Industrial Employment Change remains non-significant, with a minimal negative effect, suggesting that industrial employment context may vary enough between East and West to make this variable less predictive when accounting for regional distinctions.

Table 14: Regression of Germany with Eastern Germany as a Dummy

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
(Intercept)	0.11***	0.11***	0.24**
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.07)
Average annual growth	1.08***	1.05***	0.80**
	(0.23)	(0.24)	(0.24)
Total employment change	-1.29***	-1.15**	-0.78*
	(0.27)	(0.37)	(0.38)
Industrial employment change	-0.02	0.03	-0.16
	(0.15)	(0.17)	(0.19)
Dummy variable	0.10***	0.10***	0.10***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Population change		-0.34	-0.62
		(0.62)	(0.64)
Unemployment rate			-0.37***
			(0.11)
Population 65 and over			-0.00
			(0.06)
Population density			-0.00**
			(0.00)
Education			0.00***
			(0.00)
Turnout			-0.20***
			(0.05)
GDP per capita			-0.00
			(0.01)
R^2	0.67	0.67	0.71
Adj. R^2	0.66	0.66	0.70
Num. obs.	398	398	398

***$p < 0.001$; **$p < 0.01$; *$p < 0.05$

With the addition of Population Change in Model 2, we see consistency in significance across variables. The Dummy variable (indicating East German

regions) remains positive and significant (0.10, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that East German regions are more likely to exhibit populist support. Population Change, however, is not significant, indicating that demographic changes in population growth may not independently contribute to the explanation of populist support in both East and West Germany. This addition minimally impacts the significance and magnitude of other variables, suggesting Population Change does not alter the core relationships observed in Model 1.

In the Model 3, which includes the full set of socio-economic controls, the model's explanatory power increases, with R^2 reaching 0.71, up from 0.66 in the previous model. This increase highlights that the socio-economic and demographic factors included in the model interact differently in East and West Germany, making the regional distinction essential for a comprehensive understanding of populist support.

In this model, Total Employment Change maintains a negative effect, though its magnitude decreases further to -0.78 ($p < 0.05$), indicating that employment decline remains a predictor of populist support, albeit with a reduced effect compared to earlier models without the East-West distinction. Industrial Employment Change remains negative but non-significant, reinforcing that industrial employment does not have a uniform effect on populist support when controlling for East Germany.

Several other variables demonstrate stronger or more distinct effects in this model. Unemployment Rate emerges as significant with a negative coefficient of -0.37 ($p < 0.001$), suggesting that regions with higher unemployment rates are less supportive of populism, which may reflect economic hardships influencing populist voting patterns differently between East and West Germany. Education also becomes significant, with a positive coefficient, suggesting that higher education levels correlate with increased populist support. Additionally, Population Density has a significant negative effect, indicating that more densely populated regions, possibly in the West, are less inclined toward populist support.

5.3.5. Germany model with western Germany regions

This regression analysis focuses on West Germany alone, excluding East German regions. In the dataset, East German regions only appear post-1990 following reunification. As they have shorter time-series, by examining West Germany separately, we aim to understand the drivers of populist support without the potential effects of East German-specific factors, if that changes our results. This allows us to identify the socio-economic factors influencing populism in West Germany independently and provides a clearer comparison to the other German models, including the full Germany model and the Germany model with an East Germany dummy variable.

In Table 15 Model 1, Average Annual Growth is unexpectedly significant and positively associated with populist support, with a coefficient of 0.93 ($p<0.001p<0.001$). This result suggests that regions experiencing higher economic growth in West Germany tend to see an increase in populist support, similar to the full Germany model, where economic growth also correlated positively with populism. Total Employment Change shows a negative and significant effect (-0.72, $p<0.01p<0.01$), indicating that areas with employment declines are more likely to support populist parties. This effect is slightly weaker than in the full Germany model but consistent in direction, highlighting the role of employment dynamics in shaping populist sentiment in West Germany. Industrial Employment Change is not significant in this model, suggesting that changes in industrial employment alone do not strongly impact populist voting patterns in West Germany.

In Model 2, the addition of Population Change does not significantly alter the results. Average Annual Growth remains positive and significant (coefficient of 0.99, $p<0.001p<0.001$), and Total Employment Change becomes slightly more negative and significant (-1.01, $p<0.01p<0.01$). This suggests that employment declines have a more pronounced effect on populist support when controlling for population changes, underscoring the importance of employment stability in West German regions. However, Population Change itself is not significant, indicating that demographic shifts

alone do not have a substantial direct impact on populist voting in West Germany.

Table 15: Drivers of right-wing populist votes in NUTS3 regions in Western Germany

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
(Intercept)	0.11***	0.11***	0.34***
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.07)
Average annual growth	0.93***	0.99***	0.68**
	(0.22)	(0.23)	(0.21)
Total employment change	-0.72**	-1.01**	-0.64
	(0.27)	(0.35)	(0.34)
Industrial employment change	-0.00	-0.15	-0.09
	(0.14)	(0.18)	(0.20)
Population change		0.86	0.65
		(0.65)	(0.66)
Unemployment rate			-0.36***
			(0.10)
Population 65 and over			-0.01
			(0.05)
Population density			-0.00
			(0.00)
Education			0.00***
			(0.00)
Turnout			-0.31***
			(0.05)
GDP per capita			-0.00
			(0.01)
R^2	0.07	0.08	0.26
Adj. R^2	0.06	0.07	0.24
Num. obs.	321	321	321

$^{***}p < 0.001$; $^{**}p < 0.01$; $^{*}p < 0.05$

In Model 3, additional socio-economic and demographic variables are included, raising the R2 to 0.26, which is lower than the R2 values observed in the full Germany model (0.49) and the Germany model with the East Germany dummy (0.71). This lower explanatory power suggests that the added controls do not capture as much variation in populist support in West Germany alone as they do when East Germany is included. Average Annual Growth remains positive and significant, though its effect weakens (0.68, p<0.01). Total Employment Change also remains negative but loses significance, indicating that its influence diminishes when controlling for additional factors.

Among the election-year variables, Unemployment Rate, Education, and Turnout emerge as significant predictors. Unemployment Rate has a negative coefficient (-0.36, <0.001), suggesting that areas with higher unemployment rates exhibit lower levels of populist support. This finding is somewhat counterintuitive but could reflect localized dynamics where unemployment correlates with lower political engagement. Education shows a very small positive effect (0.00, <0.001), indicating that higher education levels are marginally associated with increased populist support, although the effect size is minimal. Turnout has a negative and significant coefficient (-0.31, p<0.001), consistent with the other models, indicating that regions with lower voter turnout are more likely to support populist parties.

When comparing the West Germany model with the full Germany model and the Germany model with an East Germany dummy, several differences emerge which can be traced in Figure 25 along with other regressions. The R2 values are notably lower in the West Germany model, reaching only 0.26 in Model 3, compared to 0.49 in the full Germany model and 0.71 in the model with the East Germany dummy. This suggests that East German regions contribute significantly to the explanatory power of the models, indicating that East-West socio-economic disparities are relevant to understanding populist support in Germany as a whole.

Figure 25: Heatmap of Significant Variables
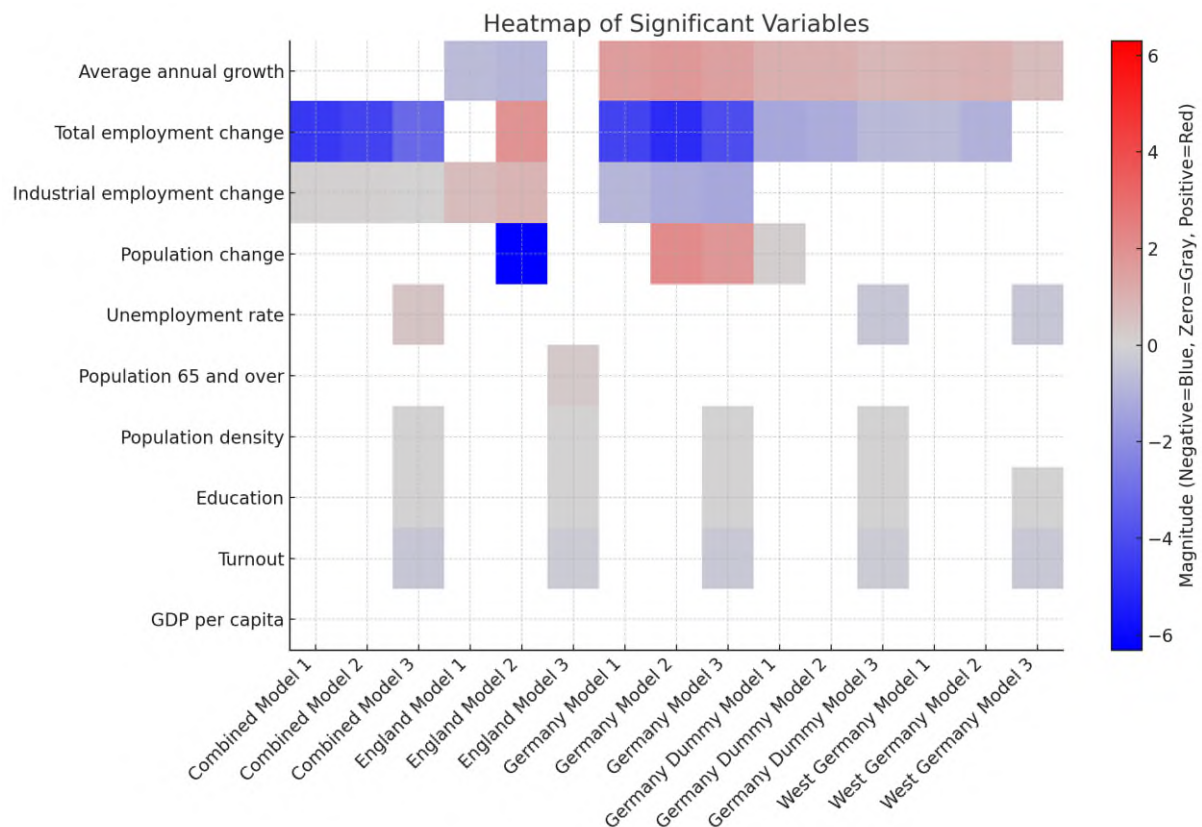
Note: The heatmap provides a visual representation of significant variables across various models, focusing on the direction and magnitude of each variable's effect. In this visualization, colour coding indicates the direction of each effect: blue cells represent variables with negative coefficients, showing a negative relationship between the variable and the outcome in that model, while red cells represent variables with positive coefficients, indicating a positive relationship. Light gray is used for values of zero, making these easily distinguishable from both positive and negative magnitudes.

The intensity of each shade reflects the magnitude of the effect. Darker shades of blue or red correspond to higher absolute values, representing stronger effects, while lighter shades within blue or red indicate smaller magnitudes, signifying weaker relationships. Only significant variables (p < 0.05) are displayed, with non-significant values omitted from the visualization, making it easy to identify which variables have meaningful positive or negative impacts in each model and to understand the strength of these relationships.

In terms of variable effects, Average Annual Growth maintains a positive relationship with populist support across all models, but its effect is weaker in the West Germany model. This might indicate that economic growth has a more substantial or distinct role in East Germany, where growth dynamics

could carry additional socio-political implications post-unification. Total Employment Change shows a consistently negative effect across all models, but it is weaker and less significant in the West Germany model, suggesting that employment changes have a more pronounced impact on populist support in the context of East-West combined analysis.

In contrast, Unemployment Rate is significant and negative only in the West Germany model, whereas it was insignificant in the other German models. This may reflect specific regional labour market dynamics in West Germany, where unemployment might correlate with lower political participation and thus lower populist support. Additionally, while Education and Turnout were significant in the other models, their effects in West Germany are smaller, suggesting that these socio-demographic factors may interact differently with political sentiment in this regional context.

5.4. Result and Discussion

Overall, the striking feature is that GDP per capita is not significant for both countries in our models. In terms of Model 3s, Average annual growth is significant for Germany, and it is not statistically significant in England. Tertiary educational attainment is significant in both countries, but the direction of the relationship is negative in England and Germany with dummy regression, and positive in Germany and Western Germany regressions. So, the regions which have a higher percentage of tertiary educational attainment in their population display lower populist vote rates in England and vice versa for Germany. Long-term decline determinatives for Germany play an immense role in explaining right-wing populist votes for Germany. In our analysis for NUTS3 regions, for England, data from the election period are more statistically significant. Turnout and Population density are also significant for both countries and negatively correlated with right-wing vote rates. Lastly, Population 65 and over is only significant in England which indicates regions with a larger share of elderly residents tend to show greater support for populist parties.

The most significant finding is that voting patterns are largely explained by the national setting and conditions. Although studies involving all European countries are useful for making general inferences, they conceal the individual characteristics of countries. The empirical analysis of right-wing populist votes in England and Germany has shown some similarities and differences in the narrative with the drivers of the geography of discontent. And sometimes, these similarities and differences vary between our case countries. Goodwin and Heath (2016) and Rodríguez-Pose (2018) suggest that areas that had experienced economic decline and a decline in manufacturing and other traditional industries were more likely to vote to leave the EU which fuelled the discontent. Our results support this argument for England and Germany in terms of Total employment change because regions with employment decline are associated with higher anti-EU votes.

For Germany, regions with relatively lower increases in total employment and lower changes in industrial employment are more likely to support right-wing populist parties, specifically the AfD. This result contrasts with Rodríguez-Pose's (2018, p. 749) assertion that industrial employment change is positively correlated with populist votes, as our findings indicate a negative or insignificant relationship in Germany. For England, Although Model 1 for economic decline has some level of explanatory power, when we add the election year values, they lose their position for England's 2015 general election right-wing votes. the relationship between industrial employment change and populist votes also appears complex, though there is a weak positive association in some models. This suggests that employment changes, especially in industrial sectors, may have a nuanced impact on populist support depending on the national context.

Regarding population change, our results do not show a positive correlation between population decline and anti-EU voting, a finding in line with Dijkstra et al. (2020, p. 749) but differing from Rodríguez-Pose et al. (2021), who found a link between population decline and support for Donald Trump in the U.S. Only in Germany's full model, demographic rise rather than decline seems more indicative of higher right-wing support. This suggests that, in

this context, population growth rather than decline might be linked to regional shifts in political behaviour toward populism.

Unemployment rates show differing impacts across the two countries. For Germany with dummy and West Germany models, high unemployment aligns with increased anti-EU votes, consistent with findings from Algan et al. (2017), Koeppen et al. (2020, p. 236), and Essletzbichler et al. (2018, p. 88), who emphasize unemployment as a driver of populist voting in Europe. However, in England and Germany's full model, our models do not find a statistically significant relationship between unemployment and populist support, indicating that this factor might not play the same role across different national contexts. This variation suggests that while economic insecurity drives populist voting in some settings, it does not have universal applicability.

In the literature, at the individual level, lower income is associated with anti-European voters (Goodwin and Heath, 2016; Ford and Goodwin, 2017; Rodrik, 2018a). In the geographical analysis, on the one hand, GDP per capita is associated with populist votes, for example, Bell and Machin (2016) find that local authorities show that regions with relatively low average wages are significantly more likely to vote to Leave in Brexit. On the other hand, Dominics et al. (2021: p.10) show that for the EU, GDP per capita have no significant impact. Dijkstra et al. (2020: p.751) too concluded with the same result. On GDP per capita, our findings align with those of Dominics et al. (2021, p. 10) and Dijkstra et al. (2020, p. 751), who found no significant impact of GDP per capita on populist votes in the European Union. Both for England and Germany, our models indicate that GDP per capita is not a significant predictor of right-wing populist support, suggesting that economic prosperity or deprivation at a broad regional level may not directly correlate with populist voting.

Age demographics emerge as significant in our analysis. For England, a higher proportion of elderly residents is weakly associated with increased populist votes, echoing findings from Essletzbichler et al. (2018), Goodwin

and Heath (2016), and Hobolt (2016) that older age groups tend to support populist movements. In Germany, however, our results do not show a strong link between an elderly population and populist voting, paralleling Dijkstra et al. (2020, p. 750), who found that the presence of elderly populations does not necessarily translate into higher populist votes.

Our analysis indicates that population density is negatively correlated with right-wing populist voting in both England and Germany except for only Western Germany model, suggesting that lower-density (more rural) areas are more likely to support populist parties. This finding aligns with Rodden's (2016) observations and contrasts with Dijkstra et al. (2020, p. 748), who found density to be a catalyst for anti-system votes in specific contexts. Here, it appears that in both countries, lower-density areas reflect a stronger sense of disconnection from the political mainstream, leading to increased populist support.

Education levels also play a differing role across the two countries. In England, lower education levels are correlated with higher support for right-wing populist parties, consistent with studies by Dijkstra et al. (2020, p. 748) and Dominics et al. (2020, p. 8), who observed a strong relationship between lower educational attainment and anti-EU voting. Additionally, Goodwin and Heath (2016), in parallel with our result, point out that low levels of education and political disengagement were also associated with a higher likelihood of voting to leave the EU. In Germany, however, higher levels of tertiary education are unexpectedly correlated with right-wing populist support, deviating from the usual narrative that higher education suppresses populist leanings. This finding suggests that in Germany, higher-educated regions may still experience conditions or sentiments that foster populist support, pointing to complex socio-political dynamics within educated segments of society.

Mudde (2007) argues that the crisis of representation is a result of the disconnection between the traditional political elite and the general population, caused by the increasing gap between the needs and concerns

of the people and the policies and priorities of the elite. He argues that this disconnection has led to a loss of trust in the traditional political system and a rise in support for populist radical right parties that claim to represent the will of the people. Individuals who feel that their vote will not make a difference or that the political system is not responsive to their needs are less likely to participate in elections. Turnout is negatively correlated with populist voting in both countries, consistent with Dominics et al. (2020), who found lower turnout associated with anti-EU votes in the European Union. This suggests that political disengagement, manifested through lower voter turnout, may be a common driver of right-wing populist support across different contexts.

Overall, our findings highlight the importance of considering both geographical and socio-economic factors in understanding the drivers of right-wing populism. While there are similarities in the factors driving populist support in England and Germany, significant differences indicate that populism is shaped by unique national contexts. As Rodríguez-Pose (2018, p. 19) argues, the feeling of being "left behind" manifests in distinct ways across different places. Our results suggest that while economic and employment decline, lower population density, and political disengagement contribute to populist support in both countries, these factors interact with local conditions, producing a variegated landscape of populist support.

This analysis underscores the need for country-specific studies and warns against overgeneralizing findings across contexts. Effective strategies to address populist discontent should consider the unique socio-economic and political conditions of each region and country rather than relying on a one-size-fits-all approach. Only by recognizing these nuanced dynamics can policymakers effectively respond to the diverse factors fuelling the populist backlash.

5.5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter examined the regional drivers behind right-wing populist voting patterns in England and Germany, integrating economic, social, and demographic factors through a comparative quantitative analysis. Our research focused on the following question: What factors drive right-wing populist support in these countries, particularly within regions that experience varying degrees of socio-economic left-behindness?

The analysis revealed several key findings. Notably, while GDP per capita showed limited significance in explaining populist support, other variables, such as employment changes, educational attainment, and age demographics, held more nuanced roles across the two countries. In Germany, long-term employment decline emerged as a significant factor, particularly where industrial jobs diminished. By contrast, in England, election-year variables like population change and turnout gained prominence, highlighting different socio-political dimensions in each context. These results underscore the need for a regionally attuned approach, as variables may vary in significance and directionality based on national context and local socio-economic conditions.

Overall, our findings emphasize that populist support is shaped by both common and context-specific factors. While there are parallel trends in economic and demographic drivers across England and Germany, the differences stress the necessity of tailored, context-sensitive approaches to address populist sentiments. Generalized explanations may overlook the complexity of these dynamics and risk misinterpreting the unique challenges faced by different regions.

This chapter contributes to the growing body of literature on populism and left-behind places, underscoring the intricate interplay of economic, social, and regional dimensions that shape right-wing populist support. As populism continues to influence political landscapes globally, future research should delve into the unique and shared elements of populist sentiment across varied regional and national contexts.

CHAPTER 6: REGIONAL EXPRESSIONS OF POPULISM IN TEES VALLEY AND DUISBURG

6.1. Introduction

Figure 26: Nigel Farage - Social Media

Source: X (Formerly Twitter), 6 April 2016,
https://twitter.com/Nigel_Farage/status/717672818423566337

The rise of populist parties in Europe is not only a response to economic, cultural or political crises but also a result of the successful mobilisation of populist right and left parties themselves (Mudde, 2007). The complex state of European politics, alongside many reasons we mentioned in earlier chapters, emerges as a manifestation of the effective mobilisation strategies employed by populist movements. The pervasive influence of populist discourse and its symbiotic relationship with mass media, both printed and

social, take centre stage in shaping public perceptions and knowledge. In the creation of this mobilisation, populist discourse plays a significant role. Therefore, as a mobilisation tool, the media has been widely recognised as a significant supply-side factor in explaining the success of populism (Mazzoleni 2008).

Discourses influence, shape and enable social reality. People acquire knowledge from the discursive contexts into which they are born and to which they are exposed throughout their lives. Thus, the mass media, and with recently increasing influence, social media, play a central role in the creation of knowledge and shape people's perceptions. As we mentioned in the literature chapter, how anger and revenge desire of left-behind people and place direct them to vote for anti-establishment movements (Ford and Goodwin, 2017; Rodríguez-Pose, 2018), also according to Wodak and KhosraviNik (2013: p.xviii), "populist extremist discourses seem to fill the gap created by the public's disenchantment with (mainstream) politics."

The media communication used in the recent successes of the populist parties stands out. The discourse's content is the most crucial component of a political style (Jager and Walgrave, 2007: p. 323). According to Schmidt (2020: p.2365), those who use the populist style attract more media attention because of their unique communication styles. Ellinas (2009) even attribute the success of (far-right) populist parties to the excessive exposure they receive in the media despite the lack of a strong organisation. The role of media and discourse appears to play an important role in understanding and explaining populism and its regional expression. In order to fulfil this role, in addition to examining its sociohistorical context, we must also consider the situated communicative context (Ekström et al., 2018) in which it is produced discursively.

In this context, this chapter answers the second question of the research: How is populist discourse produced and transformed into regional expression in media and politics, and how does this vary between cases? In this way, we are planning to reveal and criticise how different spatial

contexts, namely two cases and variegation of populism, are produced and expressed at the regional level. Also, this analysis is going to provide us ground for a comparison of the results of drivers of populism from the previous quantitative chapter and elements instrumentalised by regional media and politicians. Furthermore, it is going to contribute a basis for interview analysis with an understanding of local populist elements, which will be further examined in the later chapter.

The structure of the chapter is as follows: After this introduction, we are going to present a newspaper analysis that compares Teesside and Duisburg. The aim of this comparison, as described in detail in the methodology chapter, is to reveal the populist elements used in the 2017 elections in Germany and the UK by compiling and analysing the news articles in the LexisNexis database that contain the names of the candidates for the mayor's office and to reveal the variegation between Duisburg and Tees Valley in terms of usage of populist elements. The third section shows the result of the analysis of the speeches of elected mayors of both cases in 2017, namely Ben Houchen for Tees Valley and Sören Link for Duisburg. This section argues that the analysis of Ben Houchen's statements as insurgent shows that he uses populist language and rhetoric in his speeches, emphasising themes such as national sovereignty and decentralisation, and positioning himself as a champion of the ordinary citizen against centralised authority. Sören Link, on the other hand, is less populist than the incumbent, but in line with the current German agenda, he is also committed to anti-immigration rhetoric with a focus on East-European migrants. Moreover, the last section draws a conclusion.

6.2 Newspaper Analysis

We use the LexisNexis database in order to access newspapers with search criteria of candidates' names and time intervals. The analysis focuses on the first Tees Valley Combined Authority (TCVA) mayoral election period (01/03/2017-01/07/2017) and the Duisburg mayoral election period

(01/08/2017 – 01/12/2017) as time and mayoral candidates as keyword searches for articles. These periods are chosen for their relevance to populism, especially considering the aftermath of the Brexit referendum and the rise of the AfD in Germany. The study aims to explore the impact of populist discourse on local politics, particularly in relation to themes of populism, left-behindness, and their variegated expressions.

Table 16: Tees Valley Mayoral Election 2017

Party	Candidate	1st round		2nd round		
		Total	Of round	Transfers	Total	Of round
Conservative	Ben Houchen	40,278	39.50%	8,300	48,578	51.10%
Labour/Co-op	Sue Jeffrey	39,797	39.00%	6,603	46,400	48.90%
Liberal Democrats	Chris Foote Wood	12,550	12.30%			
UKIP	John Tennant	9,475	9.30%			

Source: Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (
https://www.stockton.gov.uk/article/3781/Tees-Valley-Combined-Authority-Mayoral-Election-results-2017) The turnout was 21.31%.

There is a dilemma in identifying articles; on the one hand, creating a corpus in which all the texts are relevant but not getting all the relevant texts from the database; on the other hand, creating a corpus which does contain all available relevant texts but also includes irrelevant texts. In the former case, some aspects may be underrepresented and missed, and in the latter case, the results may be skewed (Gabrielatos, 2007: p.6). Therefore, in

order to be precise in our results, the identified keywords are the names of the candidates: for Teesside (see Table 16), Conservative candidate Ben Houchen, Labour candidate Sue Jeffrey, Liberal Democrats candidate Chris Foote Wood and UKIP candidate John Tennant. Identified keywords for Duisburg are as presented in Table 17: Sören Link, Gerhard Meyer, Erkan Kocalar, Thomas Wolter, Melanie Händelkes and Yasar Durmus. It is worth noting that there was no AfD candidate in this mayoral election despite AfD's success in the general election, which was held on the same day.

In order to ensure clarity, populism is not defined by party such as conservative, liberal, Christian democrat, or social democrat, but as a distinct method or style of doing politics and political communication which can relate to different ideologies used by very different parties (Pelinka, 2013: p.9; Wodak, 2013: p.27; Jager and Walgrave, 2007). These method particular rhetorical elements are, based on Mudde's (2004; 2007) definition, people-centrism and anti-elitism, which claim to put ordinary people and their will at the centre, establish an adversarial relationship between 'the people' and 'the elite' and take a selective stand against identities and/or the establishment. Therefore, the scope of our discourse analysis does not follow the definition of populist parties but rather the style of political communication.

Table 17: Duisburg Mayoral Election 2017

Party	Candidate	1st round	
		Total	Of round
Social Democratic Party of Germany	Sören Link	127,793	56.88%
Christian Democratic Union of Germany,	Gerhard Meyer	57,815	25.75%

ALLIANCE 90/THE GREENS, Young Duisburg, Bourgeois Liberals			
THE LEFT	Erkan Kocalar	13,306	5.92%
Free Democratic Party	Thomas Wolter	12,776	5.69%
National Democratic Party of Germany	Melanie Händelkes	7,519	3.35%
Independent	Yasar Durmus	5,478	2.44%

6.2.1. What the newspapers are talking about

In order to keep the articles in the context of discussions, we have removed some articles like the memoriam, reviews, sport, nostalgia, letters or quizzes sections. After classification, for the TVCA selection, the database presented a total of 268 articles from 36 different sources as results. The majority of these articles come from local news outlets, with a small number from national publications. Of these, 227 articles came from local newspapers around Teesside, of which 196 came from Teesside-based The Northern Echo and Evening Gazette. The database for Duisburg offers 203 articles after categorisation. The majority of these articles, 180 of them, come from the Rheinische Post, a local newspaper based in North Rhine-Westphalia. The rest come from local newspapers in neighbouring cities, regions, and national newspapers.

(The Northern Echo, 27 May 2022

Teesside Gazette, 23 November 2017

Rheinische Post, 02 September 2019)

To get a demonstration of the texts and word frequency, we produce a word cloud (see Figure 28 for Teesside and Figure 29 for Duisburg), which is a special type of text visualisation in which the most frequently occurring terms are highlighted by occupying a larger portion of the representation (McNaught and Lam, 2016). The orange-coloured words in the centre of the figure show the words that are most frequently found in the texts, while the words towards the periphery indicate a frequency that takes up less space. The first thing that strikes the eye is the frequency of the word for Teesside in Figure 28, 'labour', in line with the area being seen as the heart of the Labour Party. In addition, the words 'conservative' and 'tory' are among the frequently used words due to the influence of the first Conservative mayor of the region who won the election. The name of the mayor, 'houchen', is also high in frequency and much higher than the Labour candidate 'jeffrey'. The last two striking features that we can draw from this for Teesside is that 'airport', which has been at the centre of the debate during the election period, is among the highly frequently used words, and the word 'teessiders' is among the highly used words and mentioned more frequently than any

specific constituencies in terms of the identity of the region. More notable in Duisburg are the words those which cannot seen in the word cloud than those which can be seen. Similar to Teesside, place name and election year are among the most used words. Among politicians, only Sören Link stands out, and other names are not found among the frequently used words. Apart from that, there are no party names in particular. This points to an election in Duisburg that concentrated around Sören Link.

Figure 28: Word Cloud for Teesside Articles

Source: Author's own

Figure 29: Word Cloud for Duisburg Articles

Source: Author's own

In terms of how we classify articles as populist, there are two main elements that form populism: people-centrism and anti-elitism (Mudde, 2007). Firstly, we constructed a people-centrism index. Based on Rooduijn's (2014: p.732) study, people-centrism was measured by the following question: 'Do the articles refer to the people?' Here, the mention of the people as a homogeneous group, 'we' vs 'they' or 'us' vs 'them' dualities and references are taken into account. The anti-elitism index identifies the people against the established elites. Anti-elitism was measured by the question: 'Do the subjects of the article criticise elites?' Rooduijn's (2014: p.732). From Jager and Walgrave (2007), terms referring to people-centrism can be divided into two types: those that refer to the population as an undividable unity, mostly based on one category like the voter, the consumer, the people and those that do not. Where people centrism intersects with anti-elitism, populist discourse defends popular sovereignty against the elitist government and positions populists against the established political order acting against the interests of the people.

On Tees Valley, in this comprehensive analysis of 268 articles (see Table 18), a nuanced portrait emerges concerning the prevalence of candidates and populist themes. Although Jeffrey had been put as a possible winner before the election, articles mentioning Houchen have become more common (see Figure 31) with the effect of the election result. Notably, a substantial 72.4% of the articles reference Houchen, demonstrating a significant focus on the mayor.

Table 18: Descriptive statistics about articles and populist element usage

Total articles	268
Ben Houchen	72.4%
Sue Jeffrey	47.0%
Chris Foote Wood	31.3%

John Tennant	26.1%
Populist articles	24.6%
People-centrism	68.2%
Anti-Elitism	30.3%
Anti-immigration	7.6%
Ben Houchen in populist articles	28.8%
Sue Jeffrey in populist articles	13.6%
Chris Foote Wood in populist articles	12.1%
John Tennant in populist articles	9.1%

Source: Author's own

Figure 30: Number of articles about TVCA candidates
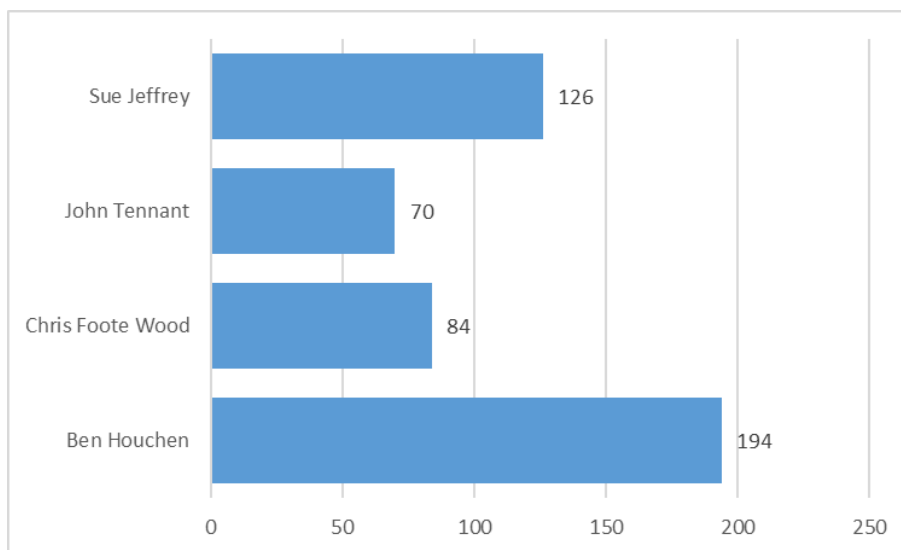
Source: Author's own

Another important candidate Jeffrey mentioned in 47.0% of the articles. One of the reasons for Houchen's high rate is that in the two months after the election, his name was mentioned a lot because of his unexpected success in the election. Before the election, newspapers mentioned the perception of people was like "You could put a red rosette on a stone and it'd be elected on Teesside" (Gazettelive, 2017a). As Figure 31 shows, before election articles contain Jeffrey is higher. Wood is mentioned in 31.3% of the articles, and John is mentioned in 26.1%, each indicating important degrees of prominence in the newspapers. One of the reasons why Tennant and Wood's names have been well publicised despite two high-profile candidates is that some newspapers have used articles as reminders of the candidates in their election coverage. For example, they say at the end of an article about the election: "The mayoral candidates are: Sue Jeffrey (Labour), Ben Houchen (Conservative), Chris Foote Wood (Lib Dems), John Tennant (Ukip)."

Figure 31: Percentage distribution of articles about leading candidates before and after the TVCA election
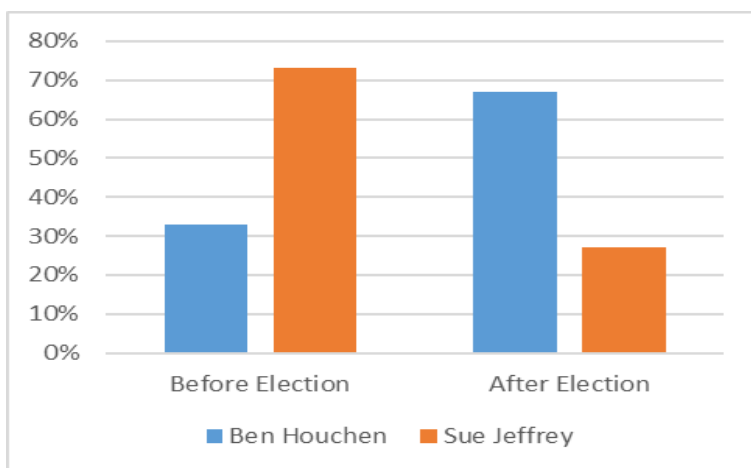
Source: Author's own

Additionally, there are 66 articles which contain populist elements. The analysis within the populist framework presents distinct concentrations, with 28.8% centred around Houchen, which indicates populist elements and that Houchen's name intersects more in the articles, as presented in Figure 32. He is followed by Jeffrey 13.6%, Wood 12.1%, and Tennant 9.1%,

respectively. Here, it is necessary to mention a feature that skews the data for Wood and Tennant. The fact that Wood and Tenant are mentioned as candidates in the news increases the number of news items in which their names are mentioned, while on the other hand, since the analysis is done sentence by sentence and the discussion is usually focused on other candidates, Wood and Tenant are less likely to be portrayed in a populist context. Overall, Figure 32 reveals that after Brexit, the Conservative candidate can be associated with more populist discourse in regional politics.

Figure 32: Populist article distribution for TVCA candidates
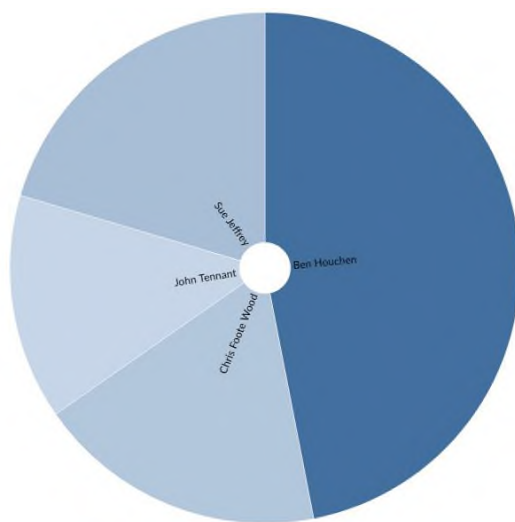
Source: Author's own

When we look at the data for Duisburg in Table 19, we see a high concentration on Sören Link; 91% of the articles mention him (see Figure 33). A representation in line with expectations in a region that is seen as a stronghold of the SPD. Other candidates, however, receive very little coverage in the articles. Although the CDU was the winner in the simultaneous election in the NRW region, CDU candidate Meyer failed to make a significant presence in Duisburg, with 19%. The following candidates received even less coverage: Thomas Wolter at 6%; Erkan Kocalar, two-term deputy mayor, at 4%; Yasar Durmus at 3%; and finally, the NDP candidate Melanie Händelkes, who is labelled as a far-right extremist, at 1 per cent. Articles for the Teesside case stand out as being

more inclusive in terms of covering different candidates. Even in Teesside, we see that the newspapers pay more attention to the promotion of the candidates, whereas in Duisburg, this is not the case. I think there are two reasons for this; on the one hand, TVCA was at the centre of more discussion after Brexit, as the area had one of the biggest Leave voters and was electing a mayor for the first time. On the other hand, Duisburg was relatively stable and more focused on the general elections at the same time, which is also reflected in the word cloud in Figure 29, which solely focused on Link. The second reason was that the election in Duisburg was less competitive, and the SPD candidate was almost certain to be elected. Despite being at the centre of debates, the turnout in the TVCA election was 21%, and in Duisburg, it was 62%. Although this may seem paradoxical, we can see that it was the simultaneous general elections that increased the turnout in Duisburg because the turnout in the 2012 mayoral election, which was also won by Link, was 32%.

Table 19: Descriptive statistics about articles and populist element usage

Total	203
Sören Link	91%
Gerhard Meyer	19%
Thomas Wolter	6%
Erkan Kocalar	4%
Yasar Durmus	3%
Melanie Händelkes	1%
Populist articles	4%

Anti-immigration	67%
People-centrism	33%
Anti-Elitism	0%
Populist Articles in Sören Link Context	44%
Populist Articles in Gerhard Meyer Context	11%
Populist Articles in Erkan Kocalar Context	0%
Populist Articles in Thomas Wolter Context	0%
Populist Articles in Yasar Durmus Context	0%
Populist Articles in Melanie Händelkes Context	0%

Source: Author's own

Figure 33: Number of articles about Duisburg candidates
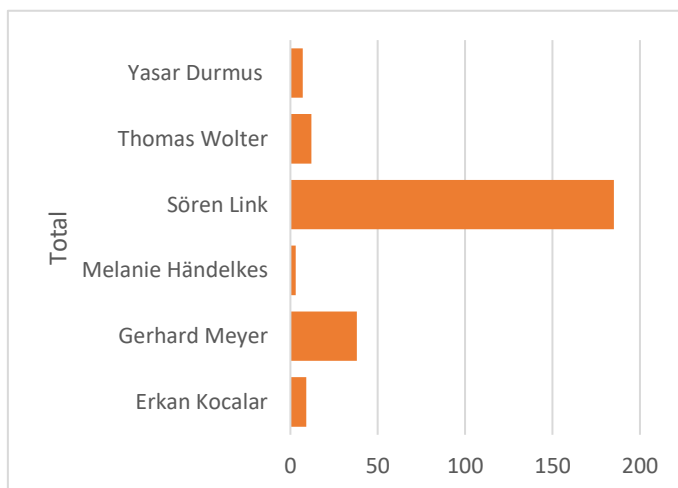
Source: Author's own

What is more surprising about the Duisburg case is that only 9 out of 203 articles use populist discourse. The low representation of candidates other

than SPD candidate Link and the relatively low representation of CDU candidate Meyer also seem to affect the populist context in which they appear. Kocalar, Wolter, Durmus and even NPD candidate Händelkes are not mentioned in the populist context in any of the analysed articles. 44% of articles with populist elements intersect with Link, while 11% are used in the context of Meyer (see Figure 34).

Figure 34: Populist article distribution for Duisburg candidates
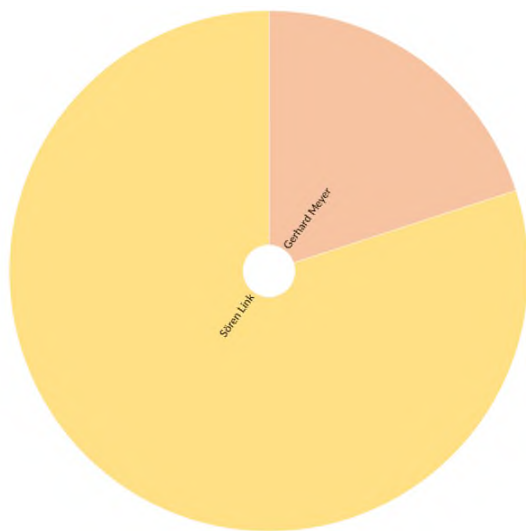
Source: Author's own

6.2.2. Usage of populist elements

In Teesside, the election term was heavily influenced by the Brexit result a year earlier, which is the Leave-dominated result in the area in contact with the traditional voting behaviour, which is in line with the Labour party, and lastly by the election of a combined authority mayor for the first time. The disadvantaged nature of the area and the expectation for its development have been emphasised by the Brexit result, and it is expected that the rhetoric and promises of the new mayoral candidates will be based on this. Intriguingly, populist elements are detected in 24.6% of the articles, which means that more than one out of every four articles contains populist statements. Highlighting the paramount dimension, a substantial 68.2% of

the analysed articles featuring populist elements prominently emphasise people-centrism (as you can see in Figure 35), which mentions the people as a homogenous group or that creates social separation with the implication of 'us' versus 'them', underscoring the central role of this theme in populist discourse in Teesside. People-centrism can be seen in statements such as "British jobs for British workers" (Evening Gazette, 2017a), which reflect 'British' as 'we' and unspecified foreigners as 'they' while it can also be used in a more regional way, addressing investments in public services, such as "this should be for the people of Teesside too, not just the people of Northern Ireland." (Evening Gazette, 2017b) which constructs regional identity as 'us' and other elements where resources go as 'them'. In some cases, we observe the usage of people-centrism with anti-elitism. One of the examples where people-centrism intersects with anti-elitism is in 'take back control' statements, which are both anti-EU sense (The Northern Echo, 2017a) and devolution sense (Evening Gazette, 2017d). Another example could be seen in this statement: "The events of the past year and the outcome of the June UK national election confirm that the UK will be able to exercise its sovereignty in leaving the EU" (The Northern Echo, 2017b), which puts EU as 'other' against the UK.

People-centrist approaches often seek to reconcile the general population's interests and needs with pragmatic policies that benefit society as a whole. The predominance of people-centrism in Teesside, with its focus on local identity and regional underdevelopment, is one of the most striking features of this part of the analysis, and it has an important place in uniting the population in the face of left-behindness by the central government. When we consider this with the long-standing decline, feeling of left-behindness, and still being under the effect of the Brexit discussion, this result is not surprising. Where we see this combination clearly is in the following statement by Simon Clarke (GazetteLive, 2017b), who stood as the Conservative candidate in the Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland MP election during the municipal election period and elected in June 2017: "That is the narrative I am keen to champion in this place: a successful north-east and a successful Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland as part

of a successful UK after Brexit. We need to challenge the tired narrative of decline and betrayal, which at its worst has proved self-fulfilling and has held Teesside back." The two main areas of contention were the delivery of Brexit and the Conservative candidate's promise to nationalise the airport, which is likely to close for the sake of regional development. The Labour candidate's approach to the airport issue, saying it was a "reckless headline" that would cost every taxpayer in the Tees Valley (The Northern Echo, 2017e), was perhaps the most significant event affecting the outcome of the election.

Figure 35: Weights of populist elements for Teesside
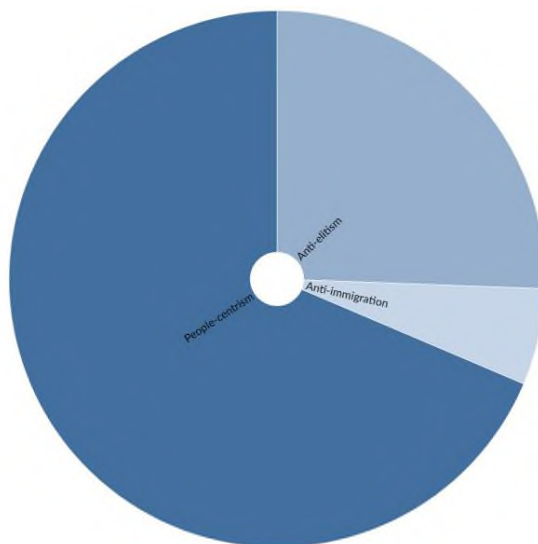
Source: Author's own

As mentioned in the Duisburg case, there are only 9 out of 203 articles that contain populist elements. That makes up 4% of all articles, so the populist elements were less prevalent in the German case. That is considerably lower than the 24% in Teesside. 67% of this populist discourse consists of anti-migrant discourse, while only 3 articles are characterised by people-centrism, as shown in Figure 36. In addition to the mayoral election, the general election and the referendum on whether or not a shopping mall should be built were held simultaneously; this is called the super election Sunday in Duisburg. Sören Link was seeking re-election while concurrently advocating for the establishment of one of Europe's largest outlet centres.

This proposed centre, situated on the former freight yard, carries emotional weight as it occupies the site where the tragic Love Parade disaster, which claimed the lives of 21 individuals and at least 510 injured in a stampede during the Love Parade electronic music festival in 2010. Supporters of the shopping centre emphasised the jobs it would bring, while opponents criticised the shopping centre's plan to undermine economic activity in the city centre. Therefore, the local politics in the elections focused on the outlet centre referendum. The only reference to people-centric terms from a candidate is by Meyer; this is also the only instance where Meyer appears in a populist context article. This was his claim that he would represent the people of Duisburg against the current mayor (Rheinische Post, 2017a). Another example is in the AfD context, which says, "The AfD tackled the issues that others, out of political correctness, didn't want to address. That's not the way to deal with problems that concern people" (BILD, 2017). This statement exhibits a people-centric approach within a populist discourse by emphasising the AfD's purported willingness to address issues which prioritise the concerns of the people that other political entities avoid due to political correctness. Whereas in Teesside, people-centrism is highly prevalent, in Duisburg, it is the other way around. It is interesting that the AfD received almost 14% of the vote in Duisburg in the general elections and became a third party in the city on the same day and that there were so few populists, and especially people-centrism references. This may be primarily due to the fact that the municipal election was overshadowed by the general election; the AfD did not field a candidate in the local elections, and I could not find any evidence that they supported any other candidate. The far-right NPD candidate received very little coverage in the articles, which may be explained by the low profile of the candidate or may have been deliberately aimed at preventing the spread of their rhetoric or; last but not least, we can see that, unlike in Teesside, people-centrism is not the main focus in Duisburg, as we do not find examples of it in the other candidates. In addition, some examples of what might be considered people-centrism in the context of spending public resources on foreigners

may have been considered in an anti-immigration context because that rhetoric was more dominant.

Figure 36: Weights of populist elements for Duisburg
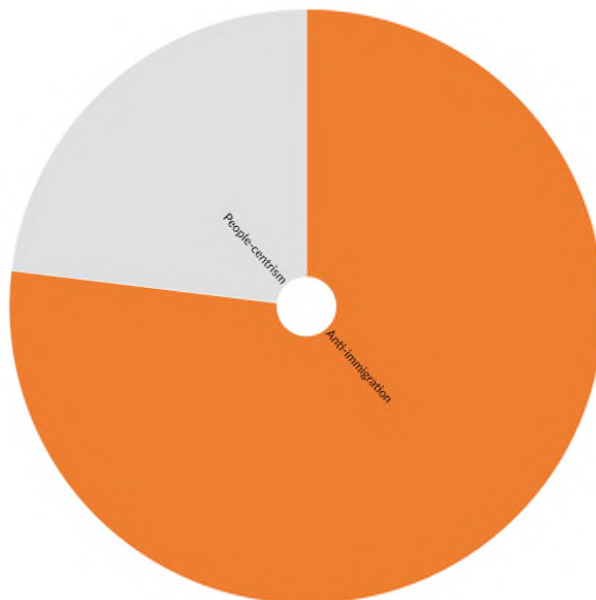
Source: Author's own

Within this populist subset, 30.3% of populist articles incorporate anti-elitist rhetoric, and it appears to be another significant component even though it is less than half the proportion of people-centrism. Anti-elitist discourse generally is directed against the political, economic or, to a lesser extent, the media or academia. In Teesside, anti-elitist discourses are mostly concentrated on political elites. Politicians are mostly criticised as elites who "look after themselves" (The Northern Echo, 2017c), and they deliberately mislead people (Evening Gazette, 2017e). In the anti-elitist rhetoric, the enemy created against the people is the European Union under the continuing effect of Brexit, London or central government as the 'Westminster bubble which was ignoring Teessiders' (Evening Gazette, 2017f) or parties declared enemies by other parties. An interesting point is that none of the news covered has developed a discourse directly directed at economic elites. Very few of the articles also contain a discourse against the media, which is included in the cultural elite class. Populist anti-media discourse, which can be seen in this statement: "If you are saying things

that upset very powerful companies [addressing media companies], then something tells me you are saying the right things." (The Northern Echo, 2017d) contains an attack on the media, specifically the idea that the media is aligned with powerful companies and not in the interest of the common people. Populist movements often present themselves as an alternative to the mainstream media, which is seen as part of the elite or establishment. They claim that traditional media outlets are not trustworthy and that they, the populists, are the only ones who truly represent the interests of 'the people'. For example, a volunteer in the campaign says the national front pages are "all lies", people can make their own decisions by looking at the facts (Evening Gazette, 2017g). This kind of discourse is a way of creating a sense of enemy against 'us', where the media is on the opposite side of the common people. In the case of Duisburg, however, there is no evidence of this in the articles. The reason for this is, firstly, the perception that the SPD, which has been the first party in the region for many years, is close to the people, so it prevented anti-political elite rhetoric locally. In addition, we know that the AfD's early enemies were the euro and the European Union, and it is also possible that these debates did not make it into the local news. For these reasons, the fact that the main candidate is part of the establishment from the SPD, and the challenger, the CDU candidate, was part of the establishment with the coalition of SPD and CDU in federal government and power in NRW, and that the AfD has no mayoral candidate, resulted that examples of this type of discourse are not found here. The fact that the NPD candidate was also the least mentioned candidate in the articles also contributed to the lack of anti-elitist rhetoric. The alignment of major candidates with established political entities could diminish the perceived need for populist anti-elite rhetoric, as there may be less perceived distance between the political figures and the local population. Another reason for less anti-elite rhetoric is that in Germany, the emphasis is on cooperation rather than on the conflict between the economic elite and the people. The political tradition of Germany prioritises collaboration between the economic elite and the general people over conflict. The influence of this cultural orientation on political discourse may result in a

diminished prevalence of anti-elite rhetoric when contrasted with environments that prioritise confrontation.

Finally, in Teesside, the smallest part, 7.6%, deploys anti-immigrant rhetoric, overall illustrating the diverse range of populist themes present in the corpus. Given that the municipal elections were held in the aftermath of Brexit, when the anti-immigrant debate was intense, it is a low rate. This suggests that the region at least does not have such an issue; this is due to the region's low level of immigration. There is no recent information on immigration in Tees Valley, but as published, the proportion of voter registrations from outside the UK is 1.7. Furthermore, the white ethnicity rate is 94.8 per cent in Tees Valley compared to 85.9 per cent nationally (ONS, 2016). Another interesting fact is that when we look at the anti-immigrant statements, they all find a place in the articles in the context of UKIP and Tennant, also given as an example (Evening Gazette, 2017a), the phrase "British homes for British people" pits one group of people against others implies that housing and jobs should be prioritised for 'British'. There was also xenophobic rhetoric from a UKIP councillor in Hartlepool describing Islam as a violent political ideology, not a religion, and saying there was no place for them in UKIP (The Northern Echo, 2017f). There has also been some criticism of this line within UKIP, but it does not change the fact that anti-migrant rhetoric is also less prevalent in Teesside and is situated within the UKIP context. In Duisburg, on the other hand, anti-immigrant rhetoric forms the main element among the populist elements, with 67%. According to the information on the Council of Europe's website (2023), 15.20% of Duisburg's population consists of non-nationals. The first and second generations constitute 32.30% of the city's population. Furthermore, 2 out of 6 mayoral candidates are of Turkish origin. However, the debate on migrants in the city focuses more on the last members of the EU from Eastern European countries than on the labour migration of the 60s or migration from other parts of the world, namely Africa, the Middle East or Ukraine. In one example, Mayor Link says "that he would take in twice as many Syrians if he were allowed to give up a few Eastern Europeans in return" because he claims they broke the rules (Rheinische Post, 2017b).

The same kind of discourse is also seen from the people interviewed by newspapers, as "They [people who live in Neumühl district of Duisburg] voted for the AfD - in protest. The older one says the sense of security has decreased. Pickpockets, grandchildren tricks, too lenient sentences for criminals, too many refugees - these are his reasons for this protest vote" (Rheinische Post, 2017c). Yet, while we find interpretations about increasing AfD vote because of their anti-immigrant stance, we do not find any criticism of national or local establishments over immigration in articles. On the other hand, the CDU and SPD representatives expressed surprise, regret, and condemnation at the AfD's vote rate, thus showing that the AfD, described as far-right, is being marginalised more than the establishment is being attacked in Duisburg in 2017, in contrast to Teesside.

6.2.3. Left-Behind rhetoric in newspapers

2017 is a year in which the left-behind concept did not become very popular, especially in Germany. However, we can find the related nuances to touch the concept. Even in Germany, it comes to the fore as much as the populist context in analysed articles. Some expressions in the article share a common sentiment of being left-behind, which, as we observed and analysed, has become fertile ground for populist movements. For example, Meyer (BILD Ruhrgebiet, 2017a) expresses a loss of pride in his city, which he attributes to being left-behind by the delayed or incomplete implementation of key projects, for which he blames Mayor Link. In another example, Mayor Link (BILD Ruhrgebiet, 2017b) blames the federal government for leaving Duisburg alone against the immigration wave. Furthermore, the Mayors of Gelsenkirchen (Rheinische Post, 2017d) and Düsseldorf (BILD, 2017) detect a shift in the political and social fabric of their city, with a significant portion of the population feeling disconnected and apprehensive about the changing reality while feeling abandoned, gravitate towards political extremism. They urge democratic parties to address the concerns of the people as its possibility to destabilise the

German party system and social cohesion, citing the rise of populism as a warning. Marxloh, a district of Duisburg with one of the highest rates of migrants and AfD votes, is given as an example in the context of the connection between left-behind and populism. Around 64 percent of Marxloh's population has an immigrant background (DW, 2017) The perspective of Annemarie Keller (Aachener Zeitung, 2017) from Marxloh, a district struggling with decline and labelled a 'no-go area', shows the importance of the context. Marxloh's historical transition from prosperity to decline, marked by industrial economic shifts and changing demographics, exemplifies the complex interplay between social upheaval, economic challenges, and the rise of populist sentiments. This may also explain why anti-immigrant rhetoric is more dominant in the Duisburg case. These examples portray a picture of regions struggling with the reflection of being left-behind. Even though they may not use the same term, they are still expressing the same idea and creating fertile ground for the emergence of populist movements in response to the economic decline and perceived neglect by traditional political structures.

In Teesside, left-behind is also used to define the region and communities that live in Teesside. Brexit and the deal with the EU, which was in discussion back then at the centre of the left-behind concept, and the general election, which happened one month after the TVCA mayor election, increased the usage of the concept as part of the political promise of MP candidates. Conservative MP Simon Clarke saw Brexit as an opportunity and "pledging to be a voice for communities within it that have felt isolated and left-behind" (GazetteLive, 2017c); on the other side, Middlesbrough councillor Tracy Harvey (The Northern Echo, 2017g) who selected by the Labour party to replace Tom Blenkinsop in the general election, blame government to left-behind people as making them 'feeling very neglected'. From these, we understand that the left-behind concept in Teesside centres around the idea of being ignored by the establishment or government. For Conservatives in the region, the blame was laid at the door of the Labour Party rather than the Conservatives; for the Labour, the blame was on Conservatives who have been in government over this period. However, at the end, the region's

stance on Brexit, electing a Conservative candidate as the first mayor of the combined authority, against the political traditions of the region, and giving some constituencies to Conservatives after many years are all attributed to being left-behind.

6.3. Analysis of Mayors' Statements

The second part of the analysis brings examples from the text analyses of the published speeches, articles and interviews of Ben Houchen and Sören Link. The main reason for the selection of the mayors' speeches here is that populism is considered a political communication style of political actors that refers to the people (Jagers and Walgrave, 2007; p.322), and they have successfully won the elections. This means, among other things, that their rhetoric was more successful. These selections also add an interesting dimension by analysing the statements of a mayor who tried to get into office as an insurgent and a mayor who tried to stay in office as an incumbent. The focus here is not on examining a particular publication but on the examination of the politician's own words, speeches, or writings in order to the regional expression of populism and variegation between cases. The previous analysis examined regional discourse as a way of understanding the articulation of populism at the regional level, presenting the proportions of populist elements in newspapers and the correlation of populist elements together with different regional political actors.

The second part of this chapter, which analyses regional discourse as a way of understanding populism at the regional level, examines the rhetoric of mayors. To do this, we will analyse the topics in terms of language and rhetoric, emphasised themes and use of evidence and logical arguments. In this way, we will look at how the rhetoric used by the mayors relates to populist rhetoric and how the elements they emphasise relate to the elements used in the newspapers. In addition, we will finally analyse whether the ridiculing of expert opinion and the rejection of statistical evidence as part of populist rhetoric (Buti and Pichelmann, 2017: p3) is

present in the mayors' speeches. Ben Houchen has been portrayed as a reflection of populism after the 2016 Brexit vote and as a transition of left-behind and pro-Labour areas to the Conservatives, with the perception that he has taken on the task of being 'the man of the people' against the powers who left the region behind. Sören Link, on the other hand, is more a part of the establishment than against it, but he is nevertheless part of the political narrative that the region is being abandoned by the federal government through his politics on the migrants. This suggests that populism is not exclusive to any particular ideological camp and can be adapted or expressed within established political structures. The wider point is that populism is a versatile political style that can be employed by politicians across the ideological spectrum.

6.3.1. Language and Rhetoric

In this section, we will examine language and rhetoric as the first component used by Houchen and Link in their speeches. Specifically, we will be looking at how they try to connect with their audience and the messages they convey. One populist tactic that has been identified in the literature review is the use of the 'us versus them' dichotomy, and Houchen's speeches provide several examples of this. For instance, he frequently refers to the decision-making centre as "London," "the Westminster bubble," or "the London Westminster bubble," positioning himself and his listeners as outsiders to this group. Houchen also distinguishes between "we as a regional identity" and London, the Westminster bubble, and Whitehall (Houchen, 2018e). In one speech, he argued that the Government's Shared Prosperity Fund should go to those who need it most rather than being retained by "Whitehall's coffers" (Houchen, 2018e). This suggests that he sees London and its political establishment as disconnected from the concerns of local communities. Houchen advocates for taking back control not only from Brussels but also from Downing Street to "our streets" (Houchen, 2018d). This message of decentralisation and empowerment ties

in with his overall populist appeal, as it positions him as a champion of the ordinary citizen against centralised authority.

We see general consistency and a professional and careful approach in Link's language and statements in his interviews between 2013 and 2023. Link, who acts in harmony with the government on economic, infrastructural and educational issues, away from controversy and unnecessary promises, exhibits a different approach, especially when it comes to migrants from south-eastern Europe. A year after he took office in 2012, Link (2013) accused Roma and Bulgarians of committing crimes by openly revealing their identities, of setting up garbage mountains and of allowing children to steal, and in 2023, he (2023a) accused the same groups, of setting up smuggling gangs, of exploiting child benefits with false documents and of carelessly dumping rubbish on pavements and streets. In Link's rhetoric (2017a), we see the 'us versus them' dichotomy to a lesser extent, but he criticises the federal government as 'others' and positions himself as "we as a city", especially with regard to making policies about the integration and accommodation of migrants from South-Eastern Europe, "especially federal and state authorities, are too quick to take the easy way out and do not act as consistently as I would like…we are very often left alone to deal with the plight of the people, including the social conflicts that exist". It appears that while Houchen's populist stance is broader than Link's with championing himself against the Labour Party, Whitehall or the EU and presenting himself as the saviour of the region from long-standing decline and negligence, Link's language and rhetoric focus on Bulgarian and Romanian immigrants.

On the one hand, another aspect of Houchen's rhetoric that we will be analysing is his anti-elitist discourse. For example, he has stated that "they are not the party of the people" (Houchen, 2018b), implying that Labour is a centralised, bureaucratic controller and a party that ignores the north-east and they are not acting in the best interests of the general public. But this is one of the good examples of why populist rhetoric is a communication style of political actors that refer to the people because Labour has not been in power for 13 years; they have been in power for 13 years out of 43 years

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since the 80s when the industrial transformation and the demise of the region began under Conservative government (Telford, 2022; p.198). But the region's strong Labour tradition is being put at the centre of political strategy by structuring and targeting it as an establishment. This anti-elitist stance is further emphasised when he pits "we as a national identity" against Brussels, claiming that the UK can do a better job of running its own affairs without interference from unelected officials (Houchen, 2018c). On the other hand, Link's approach to the anti-elite discourse again involves immigration and integration. Stating that integration cannot be managed by "the wealthy intellectuals", Link (2018) interprets the intellectual works on this subject as elitist and labels them as disconnected from the common people but as those who make decisions about them. He (2018) goes on to argue that the consequences of migration are particularly recognised by "the less privileged classes", defending the voices of ordinary citizens against what is perceived as the indifference of the elite as an anti-elitist discourse. This suggests that while Houchen presents an anti-elitist rhetoric as a defender of national and regional identity against the enemy he has created on relevant occasions, Link uses this language in the context of the theoretical views, which are lacking in practice, being far from the people. This leads us that according to Mudde and Kaltwasser's definition of the material dimension of populism (2013: p.158), Houchen is on the side of material inclusion, with Houchen groups specifically targeted to receive more state resources, while Link is on the side of material exclusion, with the idea that a certain group of migrants are to be excluded from access to state resources.

6.3.2. Emphasised Themes

The second component is emphasised themes. These themes are not totally different from language and rhetoric; the difference is that themes could split under a populist element, anti-elitism, for instance, or they could carry features of different populist language and rhetoric features. They may

include themes like national sovereignty, national identity, economic inequality, immigration and social change. In the context of Brexit, national sovereignty was a key theme, with the Leave campaign using the slogan 'take back control' to argue that Britain needed to reassert its independence. This theme of national sovereignty was also present in the discourse of Ben Houchen, the mayor of the Tees Valley Combined Authority, who characterised Brexit as a 'take back control' instruction from the people to the government and politicians (2018c; 2018d). For Houchen, 'take back control' and giving rights back to the people discourses implies devolution for TVCA. Devolution, according to Houchen, and having a mayor ensures that people who feel too remote from centralised, London-centric government do not feel too far away from the decisions that affect them. Moreover, devolution is the ability to make decisions locally that you think are right for your local area (Houchen, 2021b). That sentence - "we must take back control from Brussels to Westminster, but also from Downing Street to our streets." - summarises it in Houchen's words (2018d).

Another theme that has been present in the discourse of Houchen and in the populist features of Brexit is regional identity. Houchen has emphasised a renewed pride in the Tees Valley region and has argued that the money generated in the area should stay there rather than being sent back to London, "I don't want to see the money we generate here on Teesside disappearing back to London. If you invest here and pay taxes here, the money should stay in Teesside." (2018f). This emphasis on regional identity can also be seen as an expression of anti-political elite sentiment, as Houchen has criticised previous Labour governments for neglecting the area in his own words: "we had a Labour government come in with, you know, the world's booming, Cool Britannia. I was in Teesside, and we didn't see any of that… (Labour) had the power in this region for decades…they are the wrong party, they are not the party of the people" (2018b) and contributing to its economic underdevelopment and inequality (2018a).

The theme of lagging behind and economic inequality, which is often used together with the 'us versus them' rhetoric, have also been prominent in

the discourse of Houchen, who has argued that the Tees Valley region has been left-behind and excluded from economic development in London and the south (2018a, 2018b). This theme of economic inequality is often accompanied by the use of the left-behind concept, which suggests that certain groups or areas have been unfairly excluded from economic and social progress. In the context of Houchen's discourse, this theme is often linked with criticism of previous Labour governments, although the role of conservative policies after 2010, and particularly the pre-Brexit Cameron period, is not mentioned. This method, which is used to criticise Labour governments, turns into a statement that the region does not receive real investments from "both colours" (Houchen, 2021c) in connection with the themes of regional identity and 'pride in place' against the central government.

Immigration is another theme that has been present in the populist features of Brexit and in Houchen's discourse. The Leave campaign argued that immigration was a key issue in the EU referendum, citing concerns about national security and the burden on business as reasons for Brexit. Similarly, Houchen (2018c) mentioned immigration as a factor in the Leave vote and argued that a controlled and managed immigration system is necessary for the future of the country. However, we do not encounter the issue of immigration in the regional context.

The statements of Link seem to highlight several populist themes, emphasising concerns around immigration, social unrest, and the perceived deficiencies of state and federal governments. Link articulates apprehension regarding the municipality being left to confront the complexities presented by immigration on its own. There is a focus on a specific group of people coming from south-eastern Europe. Speeches also touch on issues related to social benefits, integration, and the impact of immigration on the city's resources, including financial costs.

Among the populist elements in Link's statements, immigration is the most prominent. When he speaks about migrants in general, he emphasises

Duisburg's experience of living together, its experience of integration and its ability to do so (2017a). He mentions his contentment about the region's close ties with its Turkish-origin citizens (2017b) and, more recently, about hosting Ukrainian asylum seekers (2023c). However, Link (2003)'s handling of the issue changes when it comes to migrants from Romania and Bulgaria. Link is reminded of a phrase he used in his interviews: "I would like to have twice as many Syrians if I could give up a few Eastern Europeans in return" (2017a)." In this sentence, although he apologises for being wrong in his choice of words, he states that he insists on his core claim (2017a) and that he has received a lot of support for this sentence. For example, he says, "for years now, we have been observing massive decay in the districts and neighbourhoods on the streets where immigrants from south-eastern Europe are concentrated" (2023a); some other examples in the previous section support this stance. In response to criticism of this approach as "right-wing rhetoric" by the Berlin SPD (2018), he says that "as a social democrat... don't brush off every criticism as "right-wing ideas". However, he was vague about how his approach differed from the AfD, which he criticised, saying "the AFD has no solutions to offer. Instead it relies on divisive elements, divisive slogans, which leads us nowhere" (2017a). While Houchen uses a wider range of populist language in the themes emphasised, we observe a focus on immigration by Link. The fact that he, despite his party and despite his criticism of the AfD, is politically oriented around this discourse can be seen as a way of masking the recent economic decline in the region and the subsequent discussions on social and political transformation with migration. Thus, he is trying to connect with changes in local public opinion and stay in power. Because the region's strong social democratic and integrationist tradition, together with the recent revelations about immigrant ghettoisation and increasing crime rates, have created a debate in this area that is unique to Duisburg.

6.3.3. Use of Evidence and Reasoning

Populist politicians often rely on emotional appeals and the selective use of evidence rather than reasoning in order to support their claims. This approach is known as anti-intellectualism, and it is often associated with populism (Wodak, 2013). This attitude has gained importance with the rise of 'alternative facts' and the term 'fake news' popularised by the Trump administration in the US, reflecting a growing mistrust of experts and established institutions in society. This attitude was reflected in the UK by Michael Gove's sentence (Portes, 2017): "I think the people of this country have had enough of experts" during the Brexit campaign.

One example of this can be seen in the 100 days in office message of Mayor Houchen (Houchen, 2017b). In this message, Houchen states that "the idea you can only get on in life by going to university is nonsense" and that "no more soft courses to fudge the figures" will be allowed. While these statements may be meant to support apprenticeship programs, they are also compatible with populism's targeting of higher education (Douglass, 2021) as Norris (Morgan, 2016) set populism as "a direct threat to the university culture". The anti-elitist stance of populists enables them to position themselves as the champions of the people, asserting that they represent the authentic voice of the population. This positioning involves a rejection of experts, with the belief that the general public possesses an intuitive understanding of right and wrong. Thus, the emphasis on common sense over specialised knowledge is a key element of populist ideology. Additionally, the formal tone of the article is disrupted by these more personal and emotionally charged statements. The use of the phrase "to fudge the figures" also suggests a lack of transparency and a reliance on emotional appeals rather than logical arguments. Moreover, he has criticised the media for its portrayal of the region and its use of stereotypes, stating that "the national media... don't understand the region" and "will use the silhouette of the steel works" (Houchen, 2021a). He has also dismissed the media as being unworthy of attention, stating that "last week's newspaper is this week's chip paper" (Houchen, 2021c). As such, social media is used

for populist communication as it means direct communication with the public.

Houchen (2018b) has also blamed the European Union for the loss of thousands of manufacturing jobs in the UK and has claimed that Brexit will create thousands of new manufacturing jobs with the statement, "We're going to see the creation of genuinely thousands and thousands of manufacturing jobs in this country that went overseas purely because we were members of the European Union, the single market." However, while the claim itself contains the emotional appeals example, the employment by industry data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) does not support this claim. As Figure 37 shows, the number of manufacturing jobs in the UK has steadily declined since 1997, with only a small increase between 2012 and 2016, followed by fluctuations and a decrease from 2019 to the present. This does not align with Houchen's promise of creating thousands of new manufacturing jobs. In Figure 37, while the blue line represents All in Employment, the orange line represents Manufacturing jobs. Contrary to what was promised, it cannot be said that the jobs to be created in manufacturing have been observed so far.

Figure 37: Employment by industry for Tees Valley
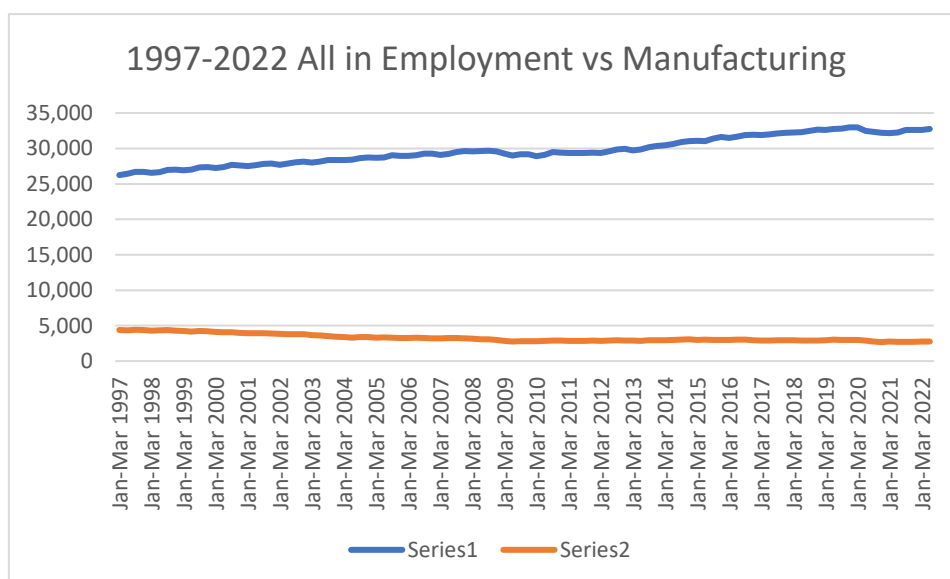
Source: ONS 2022 Employment by Industry Dataset

Despite self-identifying as a free-market conservative (2018b) and not a "large state high tax conservative" (2021b), Houchen has taken a protective stance on the Teesside International Airport, stating that it "should be run by the people, for the people" (Houchen, 2018d) which also resonates with the idea that the will of the people should be the driving force behind his actions. The airport was originally owned by five local authorities, all run by the Labour Party, but it was later sold to a private company that sought to shut it down and turn it into a housing estate. More on the high tax, on the one hand, Houchen (2021b) accepts there needs to be a big investment in infrastructure and transportation for the connectedness of the region to the broader North-East and all over the UK and also in relation to Global Britain. On the other hand, the mayor says he is against tax increases, and these do not require more borrowing to pay for them, "what it does require is smarter spending and smarter profile from the government on what it does see priorities with Levelling Up". Houchen's use of these contradictory arguments was not only an example of rhetorical arguments, but it also appeared to the emergence of a form of populism called 'Houchenism' (Ball, 2021), which is described as "do-it-if-it-works" (Hutton, 2021).

Houchen (2021a; 2021b; 2021c) used an argument from Milton Friedman, which he applied to support his stance in three different interviews in 2021. He emphasises that "according to Milton Friedman, there is no difference between the public and private sector they are all run by people, the difference is the mechanism of death of a program or a project or a business that is owned by the private sector, the private sector that is profit driven that ultimately means if it's not efficient not profitable, therefore it will die, but there is an end to it in the public sector in effect you get subsidised programs that forever get subsidised. I try and take that view that actually my organisation is run by people those people could be in the private sector just as effectively and doing just as well as they are in the combined authority." Even while Friedman's ideas are generally opposed to the idea of public intervention, he did recognise that there may be certain circumstances where such intervention could be necessary. The constant repetition of the same quote by Houchen, even when the person quoted is

qualified, could be using the fallacy of argumentum ad verecundiam, which is also known as the 'appeal to authority.' Therefore, this use is not an example of academic validation and the use of logical arguments but rather the use of limited evidence in the interest of gaining support. Furthermore, contrary to the free market conservative stance of Houchen (2021a), he has expressed support for the government's 'levelling up' policy and even TVCA labelled as the poster child for 'levelling up', which involves intervention and redistribution at a certain level as it involves the government taking action to address economic issues and promote growth in specific regions. The policy also has redistributive elements, as it involves the government directing resources and funding to disadvantaged areas in order to support economic development.

In contrast to Houchen, we find more professionalism in Link's statements, as we have already noted. This is due to his non-mainstream approach, his good connection with the political establishment and the political history of the region, unlike Houchen, and the fact that he is running in a low-competitive election. The only area where he deviates from this stance is his criticism of a certain group of immigrants by separating them from other immigrants. In his criticism of migrants from South-Eastern Europe, he does not present a logical argument other than to cite problems in the regions where they live. There is no reason to single out this group as a special group in the increase in social benefit spending or in the request for help for migrants from other federal and state authorities. The interpretation of these groups as being particularly opposed to integration and prone to crime stands out as a right-wing populist argument. The marginalisation of different groups with the same allegations is common in different places.

6.4. Conclusion

In this chapter, we have analysed populism as a style of politics by examining the content of the discourse as the most important element of political style (Jagers and Walgrave, 2007: p.322) through articles and

speeches of political actors. This chapter highlights the variegated nature of populism in different regions, particularly evident in two areas with similar historical industrial backgrounds but distinct protest tones, as revealed by newspaper analyses. Populism can be a tool used by politicians to connect with disaffected voters, regardless of their party affiliation or traditional ideological stance. In Duisburg, there is a less people-centric atmosphere, characterised by a strong anti-immigration sentiment without an explicit anti-elite discourse. On the other hand, Teesside exhibits a more people-centric approach, coupled with an anti-elite narrative and, interestingly, rare instances of anti-immigrant rhetoric. Despite these differences, both regions share a common thread in their belief that economic decline contributes to a sense of neglect, providing fertile ground for populist movements. We also see that in both regions, the perceived injustice is inflated; in Teesside, it is based on the disadvantage of the region against London or Brussels, while in Duisburg, it is based on the integration problems and the social benefits abuse of a certain group of immigrants.

The examination unveils trends of populism in the regions of Teesside and Duisburg. The result is that regional populist discourse is produced more around people centrism in Teesside. As evidenced by the presence of populist statements in over 24% of articles, populist elements are more prevalent in Teesside. With 68.2% of populist elements devoted to people-centrism, this ideology emphasises a unified 'us' versus 'them' narrative. Candidate rhetoric is influenced by the Brexit-influenced election dynamics in Teesside, which amplifies concerns regarding regional left-behindness. Moreover, the news with anti-elite discourse focuses on the political elite, which targets Brussels at the national dimension in relation to the continuation of the Brexit discussion and targets Westminster, the central government at the regional level. On the other hand, Duisburg demonstrates a comparatively reduced incidence of populism, as merely 4% of articles incorporate populist components. A majority (67%) of the discourse is anti-immigrant, whereas people-centrism is less prevalent. In Duisburg, however, the populist discourse is more centred on anti-immigration against the Eastern Europeans who came to Germany with the

latest EU members. In Duisburg, however, we do not see criticism from the central government or establishment, as happens in Teesside.

The left-behind narrative was notable in analysed articles. In Germany, expressions of feeling left-behind were evident but not always using this language or terminology, creating fertile ground for populist movements. Moreover, there were warnings of a shift in the political and social fabric, emphasising the potential destabilisation of the German party system and social cohesion. In Teesside, the left-behind concept defined the region, prominently surfacing in the context of Brexit discussions. The election of a Conservative candidate as the first mayor of the combined authority, contrary to political traditions, and shifts in constituencies to Conservatives were attributed to the pervasive sense of being left-behind. Therefore, we observe that left-behindness played a crucial role in shaping political discourse, influencing the rise of populism, political shifts, and local election dynamics in both Germany and Teesside. It served as a lens through which communities expressed concerns about economic decline, neglect by traditional political structures, and the changing socio-political landscape.

In examining the language and rhetoric, emphasised themes and use of evidence and logical arguments employed by Houchen and Link in their speeches, distinct patterns emerge, shedding light on their populist strategies. Overall, the analysis of Ben Houchen's speeches provides insight into the ways in which he uses language and rhetoric to connect with his audience and promote his populist message with a selective diagnosis of the problem and its causes. These themes of national sovereignty, regional identity, economic inequality, and immigration are central to the populist discourse surrounding Brexit and the speeches of Ben Houchen. They are often used to create a sense of 'us versus them,' with populist leaders and campaigns positioning themselves as the representatives of the 'people' against a perceived elite or establishment. While the 'us versus them' dichotomy is present to a lesser extent in Link's rhetoric, he criticises the federal government as 'others,' positioning himself as representing the city's interests, especially in policies regarding the integration and

accommodation of migrants. His themes gathered around immigration, social unrest, and the perceived deficiencies of state and federal governments. Unlike Houchen's broad populist stance against various entities, Link's language and rhetoric centre around the specific issue of immigration. These points throughout the chapter reveal that mainstream politicians are also using populist political communication in order to maximise votes or stay in power. Moreover, it reveals that there is a distinct difference between populist styles and rhetoric in opposition and in government. While Houchen, in trying to get into office, attacks Labour, which he has built as the local establishment and blames all the problems on them that can translate into votes, on the other hand, Link, while protecting the establishment to stay in office, focuses on a single issue, a specific group of migrants, and blames them for the problems.

CHAPTER 7: REGIONAL PERCEPTIONS OF LEFT-BEHINDNESS AND POPULISM

7.1. Introduction

This chapter answers our third research question: How is the relationship between left-behindness and populism perceived by regional actors and experts? Regarding research methods, the study acquired primary data through a series of semi-structured interviews conducted in both the UK and Germany. Understanding regional actors' perspectives on left-behindness and populism is crucial because their insights reflect the lived realities and specific contexts within these regions. According to Bartlett and Vavrus (2016), the comparative case study approach emphasizes the significance of capturing local context and actors' perspectives to reveal the "complexly connected" and context-sensitive nature of social phenomena. Engaging regional actors allows us to understand how local conditions, historical developments, and socio-economic structures shape perceptions of populism and left-behindness. This approach supports aim of to grasp the perception of left-behindness and the idea that regional actors, through their unique experiences and positions, provide valuable insights into how broader political and economic issues manifest locally, which is essential for a nuanced, context-specific understanding of these phenomena.

The following structure aims to answer the research question by analysing interview answers, the similarities as part of a comparative case study and the differences between the common themes that emerge. These are informed by both a deductive, top-down guide from the key concepts central to the study and an inductive, bottom-up emergence of themes from the empirical research. You can see the codes in the Table 20 below. Overall, this chapter reveals that regional inequalities and the perception of being left-behind are complex issues influenced by historical narratives, economic

transformations, and political dynamics, with variegated populism emerging in Teesside and Duisburg, emphasising the need for nuanced, region-specific approaches to address these challenges effectively.

Table 20: Codes for interview analysis

Topic	Sub-Topics
History	Industrial history / deindustrialisation / economic history / political history
Left-behindness	Definition / Do you think your region or left-behind or not / Regional inequality
State & Governance	Regional identities / Role of state / Local governance and leadership
Populism	What is populism / Roots of populism / Its economic and cultural dimension
Policies	Political satisfaction / Social democracy / Future policy implications which address the left-behindness and populism

After the introduction, the second section is an exploration of the historical context, encompassing an examination of the industrial history and regional identities and an analysis of how these factors have influenced the perception of left-behindness and regional inequality. Transitioning onto section three, the focus shifts towards the contemporary political situation. In this analysis, an examination is conducted on the factors contributing to political transformations, with particular emphasis on the influence of economic perceptions. This section encompasses several crucial elements, namely the state's role, the circumstances faced by regions that have been

neglected or marginalised, and the impact exerted by local administration and leadership. In the following section four, attention is brought to the phenomenon of populism. In this section, the aim is to provide an understanding of how populism is perceived between and within regions by experts, also explore the factors contributing to regional variations in voting patterns and examine populist elements in interviews. The comprehensive analysis of populism and its regional manifestations contributes to the overall aim of this chapter and broader research. Next, section five covers the answers that focus on future policy implications, wherein an examination of prospective policies designed to tackle regional disparities and the obstacles presented by populism is undertaken. The emphasis on a proactive perspective highlights the significance of identifying and implementing efficient resolutions to these intricate matters. In the concluding part, the chapter discusses and summarises by integrating the outcomes of the analysis.

7.2. Left-behindness

What interviewees understand from the notion of left-behind, how they define it, and whether they think their regions are left-behind or not keep fundamental positions in my research and in our conversations. Interviews provide a nuanced viewpoint on the existence and dimensions of left-behind phenomena in England and Germany. They offer insightful information about how people think about and feel about being left-behind and they highlight the causes of this feeling.

7.2.1. Industrial History

All interviewees have had strong opinions on how industrial decline has shaped both case studies. For Teesside, some interviewees from different backgrounds highlighted the importance of how industrial production affected the establishment of the region as: "Middlesbrough exists because

it used to be iron ore in the Cleveland Hills and coal in the Durham coalfield. And you bring the two together, and you make iron and steel without either of those, which is the geographical fundamental for the town to exist in the first place it's got" (Academic, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023). The story is not as stark as Teesside, but for Duisburg, it also stresses how rural it was before coal mining and steel production.

The 1960s is the first time that comes to mind in terms of economic change and decline in Duisburg, which is linked to the perception that "Duisburg was one of the richest cities in all of Germany before deindustrialisation" (Politician, Duisburg, author's interview, 2023) with its steel production. However, we see that this industrial transformation and decline, parallel to that in the UK, does not have a political manifestation. Despite these difficulties, the social democrats managed to get through this turbulent time while preserving some measure of stability and social cohesiveness (Civil Servant, Duisburg, author's interview, 2023). Also, this stage is not just seen as total destruction but also labelled as an attempt to fund innovation and education while establishing the universities in the region in the 1960s, transforming the area from a coal-mining region to a centre of technological and economic advancement (Academic, Duisburg, author's interview, 2023). Strong welfare traditions help to ease the transition from established industries to new ones; substantial financial resources were allotted to the Ruhr region over a number of decades (Researcher, Duisburg, author's interview, 2023).

The Tees Valley has "a complex economic history marked by deindustrialisation and the decline of traditional heavy industries" (Business Representative, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023). For instance, "the decline of industries such as ICI and British steel in the 1980s and 1990s significantly impacted the local workforce and contributed to a sense of disenchantment in the area" (Business Representative, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023). The stress of richness also comes to the fore in Teesside interviews like: "for a significant portion of the 20th century, Tees Valley enjoyed relative prosperity, primarily due to the steelworks offering full

employment and the chemical works providing both high employment and high-value jobs." (Civil Servant, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023) But in the words of another interviewee (Business Representative, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023), "In the 1980s onwards and we lost something like 40,000 jobs in a couple of square miles. That's how much of a decline it was over 10 or 20 years. So, what that meant was people were unemployed or underemployed for their skill level". As several individuals have pointed out, "this decline in traditional industries has not been effectively replaced with new job opportunities" (Academic, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023). Some various socio-economic issues, including unemployment, health concerns, crime, poverty, and addiction, are seen as a result of these processes (Business Representative, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023).

Germany's approach to industrial change was less drastic, with gradual employment change and state support, compared to the UK's, with liberalisation from the late 1970s that accelerated deindustrialisation under Margaret Thatcher. This difference is also emphasised in interviews in Germany (Academic, Duisburg, author's interview, 2023), where gradual change, together with state subsidies, has led to a more moderate response from the population on the disadvantaged side of economic and industrial change. On the other hand, in England, in terms of political life, people need to constantly assess whether the parties in office are caring about them or not.

7.2.2. Perceived Left-behindness

After the industrial heritage and how it affected regions' perceptions, Tees Valley interviews reveal key identifiers of left-behindness as geographical remoteness, short-term work, child poverty, persistent health challenges, lack of investment, and brain drain. Furthermore, "one common frustration expressed by residents is the perceived lack of job creation policies and strategies to address the economic challenges stemming from

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deindustrialisation" (Business Representative, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023). In Teesside's interviews, it was surprising to see that interviewees do not feel the need to think much when explaining the characteristics and history of being left-behind. Various interviewees emphasise that this sentiment has persisted for a long time. One interviewee (Politician, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023) mentions the perception of certain regions being neglected, and another highlights (Media, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023) "the Northeast has always and has a good right to feel that it's been largely ignored by central government". Being ignored by central governments is one side of this feeling, while the other side is being ignored by focusing on big cities. An interview with a Labour politician (Politician, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023) puts it this way: "There's a sense of perhaps Labour looked too much at the cities, so looked at Newcastle, Sunderland." Furthermore, some mentions the disparity in resource allocation, with funds often centralised in larger cities like Newcastle, leaving residents of peripheral areas feeling overlooked. It also reflects the idea that the focus on the metropolis has left post-industrial towns feeling left-behind. Even the few interviewees (Business Representative, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023) who claim that political negligence is not intentional also accept the existence of wrong policies, for example: "I don't think there was an intent to abandon, but there was a blindness to actually what to do." Thus, intentional or not, there is a consensus that the region is overlooked.

At this point, I find it appropriate to quote a civil servant who has been involved in high civil servant (Civil Servant, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023) positions in the development of regional policies for many years, reveals that in the 90s, their focus was on connecting neglected areas to cities, but "we realised this alone wouldn't solve issues. During the late Major administration and early Blair's leadership, we targeted left-behind places, aiming to improve their unique circumstances. However, under New Labour, the focus shifted overly towards cities as opportunities rather than problems. They advocated for this shift, but it seems they swung too far in that direction until the Johnson era, prioritising cities and neglecting the

need to revitalise neglected areas independently. In his own words, "we overly prioritised cities, believing that the solution lay solely in connecting every place to hubs like Manchester and Liverpool". From someone who has experienced the process first-hand, the swings and disconnects between regional policies are clear, as is the political acknowledgement of the shift to the view of cities as the locomotive of development and the ignoring of the peripheral regions.

Contrary to Tees Valley, in Duisburg, there were more discussions over whether Duisburg was left-behind or not. Some interviews (Researcher, Duisburg, author's interview, 2023; Civil Servant, Duisburg, author's interview, 2023) underscore the difficulty in defining the phrase. Issues considered in defining left-behindness on the German side: population decline, outmigration, residents in these communities frequently think their problems go unnoticed by politicians and feel invisible to them and structural change and industrial decline.

One reason for that is the concept is more commonly used in the UK, both in academic discussions and political debates. Other noteworthy controversy is the tendency not to accept the concept for Duisburg even after I reminded them of the statistical deterioration over the years. One interviewee (Researcher, Duisburg, author's interview, 2023) noted that "Ruhr Areas is a lagging area in Germany standard but not in EU standard. It is not politically or economically felt left-behind, particularly in comparison to East Germany". However, these arguments also accept difficulties in the Ruhr Area in adapting to economic restructuring. This shows that relative comparisons have an impact on how far left-behind someone feels they are. The difference in perception of left-behindness between Teesside and Duisburg shows that a lack of support and attention from the government might contribute to sentiments of being left-behind. One element that fieldwork and some interviewees point out is that in the Ruhr area, the interconnectedness of the cities reduces the feeling that people are being ignored. Duisburg's individual left-behindness is mitigated by the short distances to amenities, jobs and services in other cities. Some

interviewees also suggest that Germany's social safety net and redistributive policies may help to lessen some of these concerns that we mentioned in defining left-behindness. Apart from this, also connected with local governance, another opinion put forward is: "Local governments' initiatives to draw in new businesses and enhance their city's reputation are examples of efforts to overcome the sensation of being left-behind" (Researcher, Duisburg, author's interview, 2023). This shows that long-term policies of the state, irrespective of which party is in government or consensus of different governments and involving governance units closer to the local people, help prevent the formation of a feeling of left-behindness.

7.3. State and Governance

After discussing left-behindness, its perception and its connection to the industrial background of the two regions in the interviews, this subsection delves into regional identities and the roles of the state and local governments that emerged as prominent themes in the interviews.

7.3.1. Regional identities

Interviews provide insightful information about the identity, background, and socio-economic traits of the Teesside and Duisburg. Both regions have common regional identities with their social democratic tradition and industrial history. The Ruhr is particularly characterised by the multicultural structure that emerged as a result of the labour migration in the 50s and 60s. Many interviews in Germany emphasised Duisburg as part of the Ruhr area and emphasised that the Ruhr area could be used instead of Duisburg for regional identity. One interviewee (Researcher, Duisburg, author's interview, 2023) in the German case explains it as follows: "People often overlook city borders in their daily lives, seamlessly transitioning between cities like Dortmund, Essen, and Bochum without much thought. Many

residents of Herne (a city in the Ruhr area) work in these neighbouring cities, with short commutes that make city boundaries seem insignificant in their job-seeking decisions." At this point, the Tees Valley case interviews raised the question of whether there was a common identity in the Tees Valley Combined Authority because the combined authority was established in 2016, and one interview (Civil Servant, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023) underlined there was no common ground for identity "Hartlepool feels a bit more Durham like than as a Darlington feels a bit more Durham like bits of Red Car, Cleveland feels a bit more like North Yorkshire", however, the establishment of the combined authority is based on more of an economic construct. We even saw it in the Twitter bio of the Redcar Cleveland MP (see the X profile below) that he identifies himself as a Teessider and Yorkshireman. In the meantime, Tees Valley seems to be becoming a more recognised geographical entity. It was stressed by one participant that "if you look at the way that Ben Houchen sort of frames it, he often says at Teesside, Hartlepool and Darlington, so we'll go around saying, oh, I support people from Teesside, Hartlepool, Darlington because people from Darlington and people from Hartlepool didn't identify with Teesside at all to start with. I think that actually what's happened now is that as the combined authority has had time to bed in, people are identifying more as Teessiders" (Researcher, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023). In the interview, dialectic is stressed as a common ground for identity: "For instance, there is a dialect which runs, probably from the mouth of the Tees through to Darlington. If you were an external visitor, you would likely recognise this as a distinctive marker of a Teessider" (Academic, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023).

Figure 38: Jacob Young MP Twitter Bio

Source: Twitter bio of the Redcar & Cleveland MP Jacob Young – Accessed on: 13/09/2023. https://twitter.com/JacobYoungMP)

Occupational identity is the most prominent characteristic of Tees Valley's common identity, similar to the Ruhr area but not as much as commuting is also a common practice between Teesside constituencies. In some interviews (Politician, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023; Business Representative, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023), the main idea revolves around the economic challenges faced by Teesside during the 1980s and 1990s was that the region had become overly reliant on single-industry employers, with Teesside, in particular, resembling a 'company town' where people expected to work for a single employer from a young age. These employers often adopted paternalistic practices, providing not only jobs but also infrastructure for socialising and cultural activities, potentially stifling entrepreneurship. There was a conceptual shift during this period towards replacing heavy industrial environments with investments in small and medium enterprises (SMEs), startups, and specialised industrial hubs. However, questions arose about who would manage and operate these entrepreneurial sites, challenging the transition

from traditional, single-industry reliance to a more diverse and entrepreneurial economic landscape. This led to a change in occupational identity.

Moreover, common industrial history came to the fore in the demolition of two important buildings, Dorman Long Tower and Redcar Blast Furnace. And it's clear that the interviewees are divided. While their demolition was, as one interviewee (Academic, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023) stated: "when the blast furnace was demolished, there was a great sense of like grief freely because you know that was, for people, like a key marker of their identity" many others saw it as the creation of a blank canvas for the future like in the following quotes: "There are huge industrial pride and people want to see that recognised. But people are also very practical and forward-looking, and they want jobs. The most important thing is they want job" (Politician, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023). Another quote says: "there is a part of me that believes you can both do well and honour the area's history. It's an essential part of the heritage here. I would have preferred to see a small historic structure preserved within that vast green site. However, I also understand the political pressure to move forward and leave behind past decisions. Finding the right balance is challenging" (Researcher, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023). These quotes and overall interviews give a sense that Teesside is characterised by an identity conflict between past and future that is still unresolved. On the other hand, Duisburg seems to be moving forward in a way that is at peace with its past in terms of the future. The continued significance of industrial production in the city, along with the conversion of former industrial areas into cultural centres through the Internationale Bauausstellung Emscher Park (IBA Emscher Park) or the International Architecture Exhibition Emscher Park program, has prevented Duisburg from experiencing this conflict.

Another recurring topic is pride in the area's industrial past, especially among people connected to large sectors like steel and chemicals. This pride acts as a unifying force for both cases, providing a sense of identity and regional allegiances, "There's immense pride on Teesside because, 200

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years ago, this area barely existed - it was essentially just a fishing village. Its entire identity has been shaped by the discovery of iron in the hills, the subsequent growth of steelworks, and the industrial pride that emerged" (Politician, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023). Another side of local pride is its connection to voting behaviours. Political preferences are significantly influenced by regional pride. One interviewee in the German case stated: "Ruhr area have regional pride, they have the disappointment of social democrats, but their pride prevents them to vote AfD" (Civil Servant, Duisburg, author's interview, 2023); this shows that support for right-wing populist groups like the AfD may be constrained by a strong feeling of identification and loyalty to the Ruhr region. Social democratic history and identity are other similarities between regions. A local politician in Teesside is explaining this situation with the following reflection gathered during their campaign trips: "we're always labour. My dad would turn in his grave. My grandad would turn his grave. There's like a historical family voting trait" (Politician, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023). A similar statement was made in an interview in Germany: "Many people, at least in my scope, decided they told me: It's like, yeah, they're voting for SPD because, well, their father voted for them, their grandfather voted for them. So it was kind of like a tradition of voting there" (Researcher, Duisburg, author's interview, 2023). For the people, the industrial past has been transformed into strong social collective relations, which are also reflected itself in voting patterns and transformed into part of pride. Moreover, this leads to criticism against the parties that traditionally have the votes, in the sense that incumbent voting patterns are taken for granted by the parties supported, while they keep collecting the votes and do not produce policies directed towards these people. The fact that this criticism came from a Labour politician shows the importance of this criticism. It was reported in interviews that this politician and a business representative were astonished that the Labour MP for the region was not aware of the closure of a factory related to mining in Teesside. It is argued that this has led to a perception among voters that the party to which they have an emotional connection does not care about them. An interviewee from Teesside (Media, Tees Valley, author's interview,

2023) reports the following observation: "Labour appeared to be growing more professional and disassociated from its historic working-class roots." On the Duisburg, one interviewee (Politician, Duisburg, author's interview, 2023) says: "I have a feeling they got ashamed of their own constituency. They didn't. It seems that they don't want to have to do anything with the working populace anymore. They, I don't know. They seem to be more concerned with some fringe groups than with the main constituency here. And I think this is stupid." The social democratic parties' recent urban-centric, economically centrist policies also around progressive liberal values have also contributed to the perception that the same voters are being taken for granted by the party.

There is a widespread view that the mining and steel sectors have historically been a source of regional pride, but in both cases, the defining character of these sectors is losing its relevance, noting the change in the character of the labour force in this demographic as a result of changing voting patterns and a break with traditional social democratic loyalties.

The discussions of immigration and ethnic diversity in West Germany are also covered in the interviews. It is observed that as a result of large-scale immigration in the 1960s and early 1970s, West Germany now has a greater ethnic diversity. Since West Germans are more accustomed to diversity, they may have a different reaction to immigration than East Germans, "people in West Germany, they're much more familiar with, like people in from diverse ethnic backgrounds. So our impression is they don't feel threatened by like, international ethnic diversity at all. And this is different in East Germany" (Researcher, Duisburg, author's interview, 2023). This view is emphasised in comparison with East Germany and is also more widespread among academic groups. And common examples are based on guest workers who arrived in the 60s. One Turkish interviewee (Trade Union, Duisburg, author's interview, 2023) said that while Turks used to be closer to the SPD because of their approach towards them, today, this approach has expanded, and they can also find a place in the more conservative CDU. However, there are criticisms of the integration of the new wave of migrants

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and their reliance on state benefits. A German politician (Politician, Duisburg, author's interview, 2023) argued that policies are needed to end the expectation of state-subsidised living for this group, while a Turkish interviewee (Politician, Duisburg, author's interview, 2023) noted that even among Turks this could lead to AfD sympathies. It should be noted, however, that the Turkish opposition to the AfD has a broader consensus.

These observations highlight the complex interrelationships between local identity and political preferences. Regional pride, driven by historical and demographic variables, seems to have a big impact on how people vote and view the Ruhr region and Teesside.

7.3.2. Role of State

The presence of statements in the interviews from both cases frequently highlighting how central governance and the role of the state are perceived underscores the significance of these themes in understanding left-behindness and populism. We also observed that determining the role of the state often intersects with how regional inequality is perceived.

For England, one interviewee (Civil Servant, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023) mentioned how he remembers hearing from a teacher that London was like the 'great vampire' suckling the life from the northwest of England: "when I was at school, built in the 1960s. One of our teachers gave a talk about London as the as the great vampire sucking, sucking the life out of the north". This regional inequality perception is not just against central government but even within a region, one interviewee (Politician, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023) from Teesside said: "big cities like Newcastle and Sunderland have occasionally received an excessive amount of political attention, leaving post-industrial areas feeling unappreciated". It is understood that there is a widespread feeling that Teesside is getting less attention than firstly London and then neighbouring large cities such as Newcastle. This feeling intensified after 2008 with austerity policies that

reduced the visibility of the state by cutting local government revenues and the focus on agglomeration and city-regions as a route to recovery.

During interviews, one important discussion occurred; some raised concerns about whether the objective is to improve regional living standards based on each region's distinct starting point and available resources or to equalise living standards across all regions, particularly when contrasting Northeast to London and the Southeast. Although Levelling Up White Paper (HM Government, 2022) does not clearly articulate the aim of achieving equality in living standards among all regions, it does underscore the necessity to tackle geographical disparities and enhance the quality of life in economically left-behind areas. Nevertheless, in terms of the role of the state and the resources to be utilised, the answer to the above question remains vague (Martin et al., 2022b: p.795). One interviewee (Academic, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023) also stated: "The notion that these policies will greatly lessen regional economic inequality is said to be unproven… and 'levelling up', in practice, outside of all the White Paper rhetoric, which is just a lot of talk. It's not going to do anything". Related to this, one of the criticisms from the UK context has been of the economic instruments used in the 'levelling up' agenda. Some local politicians (Politician, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023) display scepticism regarding the distribution of monies by 'levelling up' because, as they claimed, the local community doesn't perceive the benefits of these funds, the central government decide which areas receive funding for projects, and they view this as a manipulative political tactic where local MPs can claim credit for securing these funds, likening it to 'pork barrel politics.'. Another comment (Researcher, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023) demonstrates the lack of confidence in the ability of competitive bidding systems to accomplish desired policy goals, and competitive funding models have produced winners and losers, adversely harming disadvantaged places and impeding effective redistribution. These problems should not be seen in the sense that only economic and political efforts are insufficient, but they had a broader impact; for example, an interviewee (Business Representative, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023) work in education states the situation

in his field as follows: "I feel quite disheartened with a lot of policies that have happened, for example, I won't go into big detail, but six years ago they reformed apprenticeships. The result of that reform is that apprenticeship numbers in the North of England have halved. And in the South of England, they've grown. That's a direct levelling down policy, people don't know that it's been a disaster for the North".

Efforts to change this situation are often judged in conjunction with political attitudes, resulting in mixed interpretations of whether there have been some visible changes, no change at all, the fruits of present efforts will be reaped in the future, or whether these efforts, like the previous ones, are just for show. Nevertheless, about the future, some interviewees (Researcher, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023, Politician, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023, Business Representative, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023) see green technologies and energy initiatives, together with freeport, as a potential means of revitalising the regional economy and creating long-term, sustainable business opportunities, however, it is essential to manage such initiatives effectively to ensure they result in lasting economic benefits.

On the other hand, in Germany, regional inequality perception has another story and is heavily affected by the unification. According to the respondents (Academic, Duisburg, author's interview, 2023), the historical narrative in Eastern Germany has given people a sense that they are 'second-class' citizens. Voting behaviour and perceptions of regional inequality have been influenced by this emotion. Furthermore, one area that almost every interviewee commented on is equal living conditions (Gleichwertige Lebensverhältnisse) in Germany, which is granted by the German constitution, "a stronger safety net has been created for the nation's residents as a result of its social orientation and long-lasting policies". Equal living conditions refer to the objective of ensuring a comparable quality of life in various regions. This includes addressing disparities in living conditions, infrastructure, and economic opportunities between urban and rural areas. The German government intends to accomplish this by investing

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in infrastructure, education, and economic development in disadvantaged regions, thereby fostering regional balance and social cohesion. The goal is to prevent significant inequalities and create a more equitable distribution of resources and opportunities, thereby fostering national development that is sustainable. In fact, although there are also criticisms about how this concept explains the regionally equivalent living conditions (Ragnitz and Thum, 2019), in the eyes of the interviewees, in Germany, it stands out as a positive aspect of the state.

In terms of how social policy and redistribution affect regional inequality, interviews revealed how redistribution strategies in Germany and the UK are different. The social security system in Germany provides support to persons impacted by economic downturns, such as reductions in the steel sector. While the UK has implemented strategies to scale back on universal credit and lessen dependency on social security, this may have an impact on political opinions and populism. Also, in contrast to Germany, welfare policy in the UK seems to be less geographically sensitive as we cannot find effective national policies like equal living conditions. Policies such as levelling up are criticised for being nothing more than ambiguous empty rhetoric (Newman, 2021; Margin et al., 2020b; Telford, 2023; Forth, 2023).

In both nations, devolution in the UK and a decentralised federal system in Germany have been a key component of efforts to address regional inequality. Decentralising decision-making is essential to ensure effective and responsive governance, according to an English interviewee (Civil Servant, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023). Devolution agreements in the UK seek to give local authorities more control over decision-making and accountability, which should presumably allow for more individualised policies. However, in interviews, it appears: "Germany...allows for customised economic plans at the regional level, reflecting local requirements and conditions" (Researcher, Duisburg, author's interview, 2023). In contrast, as some interviewees underlined, decisions in England for local development are made at the national level. Therefore, in addition to how the state is perceived and how the state positioned itself in terms of

creating regional inequalities or using the redistribution centralised structure of the UK and federal system of Germany stands out as a key point of difference.

7.3.3. Local governance, leadership and politics

In addition to the role of the state and the policies of the national government affecting the locality, a topic that has come to the fore is one of the main points of our thesis is the regional dimension of state, regional policies and local governments, especially the difference of governance systems of Duisburg and Tees Valley. In these cases, there is a considerable difference in terms of the importance attached to this issue. In 12 of the Tees Valley interviews, interviewees raised this issue, whereas in Germany, only two interviewees did. In the UK, the debate centres particularly around the newly created combined authority and its mayor. And on both issues, positive and negative thoughts are intertwined.

First of all, combined authorities in general and for Teesside took an important role; "the combined authority has been really ambitious in and getting more powers and continually negotiating as kind of better deal for its residents, and so I think some of the most exciting areas of policy are happening in combined authorities" (Researcher, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023). There are positive aspects of combined authority highlighted; promoting collaboration and enhancing inter-local connections, emphasising the importance of bringing decision-making closer to the local level for better outcomes. Furthermore, advanced ideas are put forward for a more effective local government. The first of these is the generally accepted idea that the historical problems of devolution and that building strong local institutions requires consistency and a long-term approach. These ideas are put in words as "combined authorities are immature institutions, and they are going for a process of maturation" (Researcher, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023). Additionally, the importance of enhanced accountability measures and providing local leaders with tools,

funding, and fiscal devolution for success is emphasised. In other words, the improvements are accepted in the interviews, but it is also stated that combined authorities cannot adequately handle the complexities of regional imbalances and levelling up (Civil Servant, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023). For this, the necessity of the multifaceted character of municipal government issues is underlined. Lastly, reports from Private Eye (2023), the Yorkshire Post (Jones, 2023) and the Financial Times (Williams, 2023) have raised questions about local development corporations, the use of public money and ownership of the port, and the secretary of the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities has ordered an investigation into allegations of corruption about the Teesworks project, which includes the country's largest free port.

The mayor has garnered both praise and disapproval for his political strategies and efficacy. There are mixed comments over him like "he's a political animal, he is Mr. He's blue. So, the Labour were going for him because it was successful, and things were happening" (Business Representative, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023) or "I think he's more a populist almost than he is a conservative" (Politician, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023). However, he distinguishes himself as a populist figure who is charismatic, young, energetic, adeptly appeals to the aspirations and regional sentiments of the populace, as highlighted by interviewees (Politician, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023; Media, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023; Civil Servant, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023; Researcher, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023). The perception of Houchen as a champion for Teesside, positioning himself as an internal force "someone to stand up for Teesside" (Civil Servant, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023) advocating for the region's welfare, and "taking control of the airport made people kind of see him as an interventionist" (Business Representative, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023) were emphasised by an interviewee. Another interviewee (Researcher, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023) presents a balanced viewpoint, highlighting that although Houchen presents himself as transcending political affiliations as part of his populist discourse, which uses slogans as part of his political tactics, he also

espouses conservative ideologies and has a history of engaging in collaborations between the public and private sectors. The combination of his populist rhetoric and his affiliation with the Conservative government, as noted by interviewers, has facilitated the mobilisation of enthusiasm and potential inside the region. Another interviewee (Researcher, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023) further attributes Houchen's success to his youthful and active demeanour, emphasising his strong recognition and credibility among the united authorities. On the other hand, another interviewee (Researcher, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023) offers a critical perspective by highlighting Houchen's inclination to perceive all outcomes as triumphs, a characteristic commonly linked with populist leadership. The interviewee (Academic, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023) further emphasises Houchen's stance against the Labour elite, so emphasising the political conflicts that surrounded his leadership.

For comparison, in Duisburg, the mayor's job is seen as a link to the federal and national government, while in Teesside, mayors have more important tasks, or people impose these tasks on them, in the words of a politician: "The role of local leadership and governance is crucial in driving regional development. Local leaders, particularly mayors, are seen as pivotal figures in attracting investment and businesses to the region. Their ability to advocate for the Tees Valley can influence the decisions of central government and international investors" (Politician, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023). One comment (Researcher, Duisburg, author's interview, 2023) highlights the benefits of decentralisation in Germany: while the federal government may be perceived as aloof, decentralisation allows for a greater engagement with local concerns and opportunities. Municipalities in Germany have some financial autonomy, which allows them to define their political goals with considerable independence. This shows that decentralisation in Germany is intended to empower local governments to solve local issues successfully.

7.4. Populism

7.4.1. What is populism

The question of what populism is, how it is understood by interviewers with different perceptions, and how it resembles and differs between the cases are important aspects of the study. Firstly, in the Duisburg case, there is a broad spectrum of definitions of populism. In Germany, populism is distinguished by its ability to propose seemingly simple solutions to complicated problems. "Populism use every kind of instrument and invent threats," one respondent observed (Academic, Duisburg, author's interview, 2023). Some interviews highlighted populism, which simplifies complex issues and assigns blame to individuals or groups, ignoring complex structures and having easy answers for difficult questions (Civil Servant, Duisburg, author's interview, 2023). In connection with that, one interviewee expands this idea with populism, which is described as a short-term approach that is based on responding to popular sentiments and catering to what people currently feel or think (Academic, Duisburg, author's interview, 2023). In connection to this, one interviewee sees populism as a danger to political discourse, as it relies on prejudices and alternative facts (Researcher, Duisburg, author's interview, 2023). The diverse perceptions of populism in the Duisburg case reveal a multifaceted understanding, with some emphasising its tendency to offer simplistic solutions to complex problems, while others underscore its short-term focus on immediate public sentiments, alluding to its potential threat to constructive political discourse through the propagation of prejudices and alternative facts. Throughout Teesside interviews, we have the chance to explore the similarities and differences between Germany and the UK. Similar to Germany, as emerged from interviews in the UK, the concept of populism encompasses a political ideology that aims to simplify complex issues and appeals to emotional concerns.

The selection of certain individuals and groups as scapegoats is also among the characteristics of populism in interviews. They find solace in populist narratives that blame certain groups, such as immigration, for societal problems (Civil Servant, Duisburg, author's interview, 2023). Populism, which one interviewee (Academic, Duisburg, author's interview, 2023) associates with the use of various instruments and invention of threat, is argued as tends to define an enemy within the weakest members of society by another (Researcher, Duisburg, author's interview, 2023). This view is clearly meant to refer to minority groups and migrants, whereas in a scenario where the enemy is the elites, the description of the most powerless section of society cannot be made. In interviews, populism is linked to concerns about immigration and the perceived impact of immigrants on the job market and state benefits (Trade Union, Duisburg, author's interview, 2023). There is a difference here, which can be explained by the fact that Duisburg has more outmigration than the Tees Valley. Whereas in Duisburg, the government's immigration policy and the integration of immigrants into society is sometimes mentioned as a scapegoat, in Teesside, we see Whitehall and its politicians more often as enemies. One interviewee (Researcher, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023) highlighted the inclination of populism to attract attention through emotional topics, disregarding the potential outcomes. This trait is evident in its amalgamation of conventional beliefs, populist goals, and anti-immigrant attitudes. According to a local politician (Politician, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023), populist discourse frequently employs a dichotomous framework of 'us versus them' and offers pledges of widely supported initiatives. The interviews also analysed populism's use of slogans lacking substantial policy roots while also advising against overstating its impact in relation to Brexit and anti-elite feelings.

Sometimes, it is not the enemy that is the main focus, or not the created enemy alone, but also the idea of not being represented. In relation to simplifying the topics mentioned above, populism appeals to people who are dissatisfied with traditional political parties. For example, in Teesside, one politician (Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023) cites Brexit as a crucial

issue, "many people see it as a chance to try something new after feeling let down by traditional parties". Some candidates were successful because they made promises of economic growth and government support, which demonstrates populist tendencies to position themselves as the protectors of the interests of the people. The interviews emphasise the growing importance of online presence in politics, the human dimension in populist movements, and how populism leverages emotional topics and dichotomous frameworks while positioning itself as a protector of the people's interests, particularly in the context of Brexit and anti-establishment sentiment. Another interviewee (Academic, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023) highlights the dissatisfaction with regional councils and Labour party that, despite discussing the problems associated with industrial loss, seemed impotent to bring about significant change. The feeling of being ignored in these neglected communities was exacerbated by this resentment. Labour Party's position comes up frequently in the interviews. According to another interviewee, there has been a trend away from Labour even during the New Labour era, which was frequently viewed as neoliberal, in these historical voting patterns. People started to feel that conventional parties were not significantly bettering their economic circumstances, which sparked a desire for change. We also see, as mentioned throughout this section in the context of perceptions of populism, the reflection and impact of recent events. One interviewee (Researcher, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023) argues that, particularly in light of Brexit, cultural conservatism contributed to the vote patterns in these regions. He contends, however, that these cultural aspects are related to economic issues. The change in political allegiance was motivated by the impression of neglect and being economically behind. Furthermore, the impact of the past and recent events on people's need for change is even more pronounced in the UK. An interviewee (Civil Servant, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023) emphasises the significance of voter resentment and irritation, particularly during downturns, with incumbent leaders and governments: "When voters believed that the current leaders were not effectively meeting their

demands, they frequently looked for alternatives, and I think UKIP became an acceptable voice of an acceptable face of protest".

One interviewee in Duisburg put the same topic this way: "Populism is linked to negative feelings of discontent and a lack of openness towards international migration" (Researcher, Duisburg, author's interview, 2023). Another interviewee acknowledges this idea as populism arises from a feeling of not being represented by established parties and also adds that dissatisfaction with the political system expands the feeling (Researcher, Duisburg, author's interview, 2023). Another interviewee (Trade Union, Duisburg, author's interview, 2023) put it as "The system has enriched the rich while impoverishing the poor." A local politician (Politician, Duisburg, author's interview, 2023) emphasised the intricate and diverse characteristics of populism, establishing a correlation between populism and economic downturns as well as societal apprehensions, particularly those pertaining to immigration-related safety concerns. He expresses dissatisfaction with conventional parties, notably the Social Democratic Party (SPD), which has a history of assisting the working class. However, he feels that these parties have turned their attention away from the working class, leaving many people feeling neglected. His remarks reflect a perception that conventional parties have become disconnected from the interests of the public, which is consistent with the concept of populism. His claim that parties should prioritise the concerns of the majority of people is consistent with the populist concept of advocating the interests of ordinary citizens. A Duisburg academic interviewee (Researcher, Duisburg, author's interview, 2023), examining this issue and the rise of the AfD vote in the Ruhr, emphasises that the idea of being left-behind as a critical issue can be expressed in various ways. This sense of abandonment opens the door for parties like the AfD to capitalise on anti-establishment sentiments and position themselves as strong and capable of addressing these issues. Feeling of left-behind emerges in Teesside interviews too. The interview conducted with an ex-civil servant (Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023) emphasised the role of populism as a reaction to the growing need for simplistic resolutions in an ever more complex global landscape. He offers

a nuanced perspective on how the demise of established sectors and the perception that political parties were ignoring these regions contributed to the emergence of populism. He emphasises how, while making important contributions while in power, the Labour Party was unable to adequately communicate its successes, allowing the Tories to portray it as acting inactive. Additionally, these left-behind areas suffered from the austerity measures implemented after 2010, which exacerbated the feeling of abandonment. The distance between Westminster and the rest of the nation is discussed by the interviewee (Business Representative, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023). In populism, this feeling of distance from the political elite in the capital is a recurrent subject. People believe that persons in positions of authority do not adequately comprehend or handle their issues. According to him, populism can be characterised as a relatively radical approach. Conversely, another interviewee (Politician, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023) indicated that an ideal manifestation of populism could potentially integrate aspects of technocracy alongside populism. She highlights how social media shapes populist narratives and simplifies complicated situations into binary options, like Brexit. The simplicity with which such distilled messages can be disseminated on websites like Facebook has contributed to the growth of populism.

Parties are working to harness these feelings of underrepresentation and being left-behind. According to an interviewee (Researcher, Duisburg, author's interview, 2023), Die Linke places its emphasis on the augmentation of social benefits, whilst AfD prioritises concerns related to the euro crisis, migration, and anti-establishment feeling. Other interviewees (Civil Servant, Duisburg, author's interview, 2023) have also noted the presence of neoliberal and anti-welfare inclinations within the Alternative for Germany (AfD) party. But Die Linke's development is limited by internal party problems. For the AfD, there seems to be a dilemma. On the one hand, the AfD's anti-welfare and anti-migration stance is emphasised, on the other hand, the social democratic and immigrant-friendly nature of the Ruhr region is emphasised. My conclusion from the interviews I have done is that there are two reasons for this. Firstly, the

interviewers underestimate the AfD's presence here, comparing it to the higher vote shares in East Germany. Secondly, they explain the local success of the AfD by dissatisfaction with the SPD and do not see it as a general tendency towards AfD. I tried to get an interview that would bring more clarity on this issue, but I did not get a positive result. This person was a member of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) for twenty-six years and held various positions and in 2016 he switched to the AfD and in 2019 he was elected to the European parliament from the AfD.

Furthermore, economic inequities play a crucial role in fuelling populism, particularly in East Germany and places where deindustrialisation and the proliferation of lower-wage jobs have left many people feeling left-behind (Civil Servant, Duisburg, author's interview, 2023). Individuals who feel economically vulnerable may support populist parties in order to defend their standing and blame others for their situation (Researcher, Duisburg, author's interview, 2023). Populism, as revealed through interviews, is characterised by the selection of scapegoats and appeals to dissatisfied individuals who seek solace in narratives that blame specific groups, often minority and migrant populations, for societal issues, while also encompassing concerns about representation and discontent with the established political system.

Lastly, despite the increase of populist votes in Germany, one interviewee commented, "the populism in Germany is not as strong or as ridiculous" (Researcher, Duisburg, author's interview, 2023). Nonetheless, many interviewees on both cases acknowledge that populism has an impact on political discourse as well as the agendas of established parties to attract more votes.

In conclusion, these observations collectively emphasise the efficacy of populist politics, underscoring the significance of concentrating on specific issues and employing effective communication strategies. Populism is distinguished by politicians who actively engage with popular grievances and employ concise yet emotionally compelling slogans to establish a

connection with the general population. The emergence of populism in the UK's deteriorating industrial districts is a complex issue. It entails the complicated interaction of economic considerations, annoyance with the ruling political parties, a sense of distancing from the political elite, the influence of social media, and the simplification of topics. Although each person offers a different viewpoint, these elements work together to change the political climate and fuel the emergence of populist movements in certain areas.

Populism, in the context of perceived definition, in Germany shares several common and variegated characteristics with its counterpart in England. One salient characteristic is the existence of an anti-establishment mood as local manifestation of a wider international trend, when populist politicians strategically present themselves as individuals outside of the established political elites, so challenging their authority. Furthermore, it is evident that in both nations, there exists a phenomenon whereby populist politicians employ a strategy of oversimplification in order to tackle intricate problems by presenting uncomplicated remedies that resonate with the wider public. Emotion assumes a prominent position in both contexts, as populist movements in Germany, akin to those in England, strategically leverage emotive matters encompassing immigration, economic disparity, and identity. Frequently, this gives rise to the development of a dichotomous mindset, wherein the 'elite' or 'establishment' is depicted as being in conflict with the 'common people.' However, there is a fundamental difference between the two cases: in Germany, the accusations against migrants are more common, whereas in the UK, the accusations against political elites are more common. Furthermore, it is worth noting that nationalism plays a significant role in both countries, as populism prioritises national concerns over collaborative efforts on a global scale. In parallel with their English counterparts, populist politicians in Germany may exhibit a tendency to prioritise the use of compelling rhetoric and slogans, potentially at the expense of the formulation of thorough policy recommendations. This is where one of the main differences between the two cases emerges, namely that the role of the media in the use of slogans is more prominently

emphasised in the interviews in the UK, whereas in Germany it is rather muted.

7.4.2. Why people voted differently

When we discuss the reasons for the political backlash, which took place in Teesside with the first-time election of Conservative MPs in some constituencies, and Brexit since 2010, and in the Ruhr region with the halving of social democratic votes in the last two decades and AfD receiving the highest shares of votes in West Germany, cultural, economic and political reasons emerge. One of the most striking results among these is that cultural issues, especially xenophobia, do not appear in the interviews as much as stated in the literature. Secondly, the economic decline and the perception of the role of the state mentioned above are intertwined. Economic concerns, the loss of industrial employment, and the impression that politicians are out of touch are common topics in the English and German interviews.

Cultural reasons:

Although the question of whether cultural or economic factors are at the root of populism, discussed in previous chapters, is not a major factor in the interviews, references to cultural reasons are generally weak. Several interviewees highlighted that populist movements strategically use cultural problems to maintain support and sow discord. In all but one of these mentions, immigration is not really mentioned as a threat, but in the context of "fear of immigrants taking away jobs or benefiting too much from state money" (Academic, Duisburg, author's interview, 2023). In one of the interviews (Politician, Duisburg, author's interview, 2023) in Germany, it is mentioned about worries over immigration and the alleged challenges of integrating immigrants, especially those from new members of EU, into German society. Another interesting aspect of this is that the interviewee belongs to a family that settled there during the labour recruitment in the

50-60s. In the UK and Germany, research (Hilje, 2018) has shown that this xenophobia is not intrinsic, but a misalignment to the problems of everyday life. According to this argument, people in structurally weak regions, where there is frequently a significant presence of right-wing populist electors, feel abandoned by politics. There is a disconnect between the issues that are prioritised at the national level, such as migration and the challenges that these individuals encounter on a daily basis, such as unsafe working conditions and the decline of social infrastructure. The perception of mainstream politics' neglect contributes to the devaluation of others, particularly immigrants, by creating a sense of disadvantage. However, the fundamental cause is not xenophobia per se but rather frustration with the perceived misalignment of political priorities and the actual concerns of the local population. The proposed solution entails addressing these tangible obstacles through local efforts, investments, and a renewed emphasis on internal solidarity and equal opportunity.

When it comes to local effort and solidarity, another cultural explanation comes into play: generational change. A British politician puts it this way: "There's a wider thing now around politics that people are less tribal. Those communities have broken down because people work down in different workplaces. There's less trade unionism, there's less sort of homogeneity, and you know, they don't all sort of drink in the same places, and people are more sort of work in different nuclear sort of workplaces now or in the private sector. So those sorts of traditional social ties have gone. Politics is now a bit more transactional. So, people are a bit more savvy and it's like 'what's in it for me? So, if I vote for you, what do I get for this?' rather than some sort of collective identity" (Civil Servant, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023). We have observed how the social democratic identity of the regions was transformed with employment tradition, which went from large employment factories to smaller workplaces. In addition to that we observe that in a changing social landscape marked by the breakdown of traditional community bonds and increased diversity in workplaces, the shift towards individualistic and transactional political attitudes is seen as a

cultural driver for populism, where voters prioritise personal gain over collective identity.

Political reasons:

There are noteworthy transformations and challenges in the political landscapes of both England and Germany, particularly in the connection between traditional working-class voters and mainstream political parties. There is a perception in both cases that political parties have become alienated from their traditional heartlands. This is shown in England by the idea that "Labour took places such as Teesside for granted" (Politician, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023), resulting in a possible disconnection. There is a similar sense in Germany that "the SPD no longer represents its core manufacturing trade union roots" (Politician, Duisburg, author's interview, 2023). Despite developments in deindustrialisation occurring at different times in the two countries, the ideas that social democrats were moving away from the working class and closer to neoliberal policies developed in similar periods in the late 90s and early 2000s in both countries, Labour under Blair government, SPD under Gerhard Schroeder government. Traditional parties' strength has waned in both Teesside and the Ruhr region over time. Teesside shifted away from Labour to Conservatives, while the Ruhr region shifted from the SPD to the Christian Democrats. As previously stated, economic collapse and political transition in Teesside have resulted in a drop in support for Labour. Similarly, in Germany's Ruhr region, a historical stronghold of the Social Democratic Party (SPD), economic hardships and sociological shifts have weakened the attractiveness of traditional SPD ideas. Both regions have seen the demise of organised working-class communities as well as a shift away from conventional party allegiance, as many interviews stated.

The reflection of these comments for Teesside is shown in the loss of the Redcar constituencies in 2010, which is sometimes seen as the first sign of the discontent and change, as stated by a Labour politician regarding the closure of factories in the region: "its Labour MP wasn't standing up for its

industry, wasn't defending the steelworks, which was so iconic, so we lost the seat to the Liberal Democrats in 2010" (Politician, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023). A comment on how the populist results of the left-behind feeling emerged in England puts the process as follows: "What you saw in the 2000s and subsequently was the private sector leaving these towns and then post 2010, it was followed by the public sector leaving the towns as well. And I think you know the combination of the public sector following the private sector out of places really created the, you know, the conditions for Brexit and for the collapse of the Red Wall" (Civil Servant, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023). It seems that the loss of public services after private sectors and further, austerity policies implemented after 2010 had a significant impact on intensified feelings of being left-behind. Thus, this had a significant political influence, increasing support for alternative parties.

The importance of austerity was stressed in another interview (Researcher, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023) as follow: "With austerity measures in the early 2010s, and the gutting of the state, central government cuts placed immense pressure on local governments, compelling them to make cuts. Consequently, the quality of public services declined, eroding the connection between people and the state. By 2016, a widespread sense of frustration had taken hold, with people feeling that politics had left them behind, rendering their voices insignificant. Above all, they desired to show the government that it couldn't simply do as it pleased and, as a result, give then-Prime Minister David Cameron a political 'bloody nose.'" The erosion of traditional industrial ties in Teesside, exacerbated by the neglect of public services amid austerity measures post-2010, fuelled a sense of being left-behind, culminating in political discontent and a shift towards alternative movements, leading to Brexit or Conservative mayor in TVCA.

One of the key causes of the interviews is contributing to this transition is the Labour Party's apparent incapacity, under leaders such as Jeremy Corbyn, to give a compelling vision and take credit for past actions, particularly during the Blair and Brown era. "This failure to adequately

explain their accomplishments created a political vacuum that may be exploited" (Civil Servant, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023). In addition to this failure, another disadvantage for Labour was "there's a big criticism that Labour perhaps took areas for granted because they assume that people in Teesside, in the Northeast, would always vote Labour. And so, we could concentrate on the South because the only way we get into government is if we want the South as well as the North. And so, I think there was perhaps a sense of disconnection" (Politician, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023). Finally, in some interviews, we come across the idea that the Labour Party's technocratic and professional approach has reduced its ties with the working class. Labour's weakening relationship with the working class in Britain led to the Conservative Party advancing in traditional Labour heartlands and even winning some seats after 50-60 years (Cutts et al., 2020: p.8). It is also emphasised that the campaign of the Labour candidate in the combined authority election in Teesside in 2017 also failed for the same reason.

There are two developments taking place in these regions: firstly, the decline of the labour classes attached to the old large industries and factories, with the decline of industrial production. The second is that the new generation has different identities that can no longer be labelled as working class. In this transition, we can attribute the continuation of the social democratic vote to the children who inherit the voting behaviour of their parents, as we mentioned in the region's political identity. Secondly, we can expect a natural appeal of the new generation to the labour parties, which already appeal to the middle class, which is more centred around liberal values. However, when we analyse the break with the social democratic parties as a reaction of the masses who may have been exposed to these two aspects separately or together, the problem reaches a more striking point.

In any case, one of the views put forward about the changes taking place in Germany is, in parallel with the developments in Teesside, "the people who consider themselves as being working people and so more looking

towards Social Democratic principles that they also disappeared, also society changed and adjusted. So that, let's say the product of a Social Democratic policy, is also becoming less attractive for the people who are now living in the region" (Researcher, Duisburg, author's interview, 2023). A comment that the erosion of social democratic elements is not only party-specific comes from a local AfD politician (Politician, Duisburg, author's interview, 2023): "the trade unions did not voice. In the past few years, there are not concerns about employment, but only about green transition. I mean, they should take care of their employees and not about climate change." Same interviewee noted: "In the past, as they told me when you started working, 'hey, go the to the SPD if you want something they help you' and they really did help the people. But somehow, they I think they got feeling they got ashamed of their own constituency. It seems that they don't want to have to do anything with the working populace anymore. They, I don't know they take, they seem to be more concerned with some fringe groups." There is a perception that traditional working-class support for Social Democratic principles is waning, possibly due to a shift in focus from labour politics, leading to a sense of abandonment among the working population.

Despite all the criticism, the belief in the SPD still appears in the German interviews. It can be said that it was put forward in different interviews as follows: "they (SPD) are taking care of people", "There is not convergence to neoliberal policies, there are still strong representation of labour class" (Civil Servant, Duisburg, author's interview, 2023), "Germany is a long-lasting example of socially oriented country. And thus, it's really hard to get abandoned because, the system just functions like this. People just grow up and live with an idea that even if they won't have a job, you know the state will not let's say leave them behind the board" (Researcher, Duisburg, author's interview, 2023). Despite facing criticism, SPD maintains support as it is perceived as a caretaker of the people, and truthful.

We understand from here that the perception of the connection loss of the Labour Party with Teesside and a sense of helplessness have given the

electorate a sense of neglect, and this feeling drove the 2019 election, emphasising the need for change and hope. As one politician (Politician, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023) on the Conservative side of the shift commented in 2019, "the election was a demand for change and more possibilities." He observes that local MPs are perceived as complacent, and voters are looking for something new. In Germany, there is a relatively more moderate transition. In fact, the SPD's loss of votes in the last 20 years and the AfD's success in the Ruhr in West Germany indicate that the situation is on a knife edge here too. The perception that the mainstream parties have moved away from reality, mentioned in some interviews, and the idea that the problems in the Ruhr region are not being solved but rather are accumulating indicate that the risk is likely to increase. However, the fact that the votes went to another mainstream party like the CDU, to an 'acceptable' party like Green, the idea that the social role of the state would prevent extremism, and the general anti-fascism in West Germany and the fact that multiculturalism in the Ruhr was established to a point cause more positive comments to be made.

7.5. Future Expectations About Regional Inequalities and Populism

This section includes the interviewees' answers on possible policies for the future of the region and for solving the problems that have led to populism. These questions elicit suggestions from experts with local experience on how to address the region's problems, with an implicit implication of dimensions and where they see the left-behindness in terms of where they actually need to be fixed or improved. Several participants emphasised the necessity of adopting a comprehensive approach to tackle the obstacles and capitalise on the opportunities seen by Teesside. One interviewee (Civil Servant, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023) emphasised the significance of fiscal transfers to local units and a reorganisation of local government as crucial measures to eradicate dependency in peripheral regions, as he puts that "If you want to address the issue left-behind places, you need a local

government structure that makes sense. Our current fragmented structure doesn't make sense. You need a local government which has capacity and capability of actually taking difficult decisions". The concept of decentralisation has been identified as a viable long-term approach for implementing the 'levelling up' policy, as it entails the transfer of decision-making authority to regional entities and taking bodies closer to the regions, as suggested by some interviewees from different backgrounds (Civil Servant, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023; Civil Servant, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023). According to a local politician (Politician, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023), it was considered crucial to effectively bolster local government and formulate a clearly delineated industrial plan, with a specific emphasis on environmentally sustainable activities. Interviewees (Media, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023) also emphasised the importance of investment stability and robust local support in order to foster economic progress. The concept of free ports has been deliberated as a strategy to foster innovation and mitigate regional inequalities. However, there are critical about freeports because "the community located outside the free port zone appears to have a less clear logic model and as a result, what we might be generating on free ports may not necessarily lead to the creation of good jobs", as suggested by an interviewee (Researcher, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023). The shortcomings of the past and what needs to be corrected in the future are highlighted as deficiencies that need to be addressed in the past and what needs to be corrected in the future, namely increasing the economic power that reaches the local economy and the consistent continuation of policies aimed at regional development.

According to a business representative (Business Representative, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023), it was considered crucial to provide incentives for businesses to employ the younger generation and facilitate the initiation of their professional journeys. Additionally, another interviewee (Researcher, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023) emphasised the importance of tackling infrastructure obstacles, such as enhancing transit networks and internet connectivity. A local politician examined the

potential of transitioning to new industries as a strategy to enhance the economic outlook of the North. The importance of education and preparedness for the workforce was acknowledged, with a particular focus on the cultivation of skills and their alignment with developing industries by some interviewees on business side. In addition to that, she also emphasised the importance of rewarding employers to actively participate in education and skills training, as this was identified as a crucial step in bridging the gap between education and employment. Moreover, the significance of collaborations between education and business sectors, with a specific focus on green technology, was emphasised, alongside the crucial role of political cohesion (Academic, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023). We see that the creation of the necessary and capable workforce for future development and the prominent role of education are emphasised here.

According to an interviewee (Academic, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023), promoting economic growth can be facilitated by enhancing local institutions and making sustained strategic investments. By expanding this, a local politician (Politician, Tees Valley, author's interview, 2023) has recognised that the allocation of resources towards startups and the green economy plays a pivotal role in the generation of employment opportunities. In addition, the need to revitalise town centres and take proactive measures was emphasised by the same politician. In a nutshell, the interviews emphasise various facets of the region's challenges and prospects. Fiscal transfers, local government reform, industrial initiatives, green investments, infrastructure upgrades, education, and motivating companies to support skills training and job prospects are among them. These issues all contribute to talks on revitalising and moulding Teesside's future.

On the Duisburg side, as several interviewees noted, the transition towards green sectors and renewable energy presents an opportunity to revitalise deindustrialised areas (Trade Union, Duisburg, author's interview, 2023; Researcher, Duisburg, author's interview, 2023). Teesside, which seeks to diversify its economy and embrace renewable technology, can learn from Duisburg's experiences in this area. It appears, infrastructure development

is an indispensable requirement in both regions. Teesside is comparable to Duisburg, where port development has led to the emergence of a logistics and transport centre. Utilising these opportunities necessitates infrastructure investments designed to stimulate economic growth. Government assistance for vital industries is a common concern. According to an interviewee (Trade Union, Duisburg, author's interview, 2023), in Duisburg, steel industry support is essential for retaining employment and tax revenue. Teesside, which is similarly dependent on industries such as steel, acknowledges the importance of government support for their long-term viability.

One proposal that stands out from the others is that in the face of the exploitation of the welfare system, it emphasises the need to employ people who want to work and contribute to society rather than relying entirely on state assistance.

Education was mentioned in almost every interview that talked about future politics, especially in terms of being open to all and providing human resources for future investments. This viewpoint is consistent with Teesside's shared objective of addressing sentiments of being left-behind and regional disparities. Encouragement of self-sufficiency and employment incentives emerge as an appropriate strategy for both regions. One of the most notable differences between the two regions is the issue of increasing the authority and resources given to local governments was raised in only an interview in Duisburg while it was highly emphasised in Teesside, German interviewee (Researcher, Duisburg, author's interview, 2023) suggested giving some resources and tasks to civic groups would increase trust and democracy among stakeholders.

Interviews with local experts and stakeholders in Duisburg, Germany, and Teesside, UK, revealed numerous major policy implications. These consequences concentrate around correcting economic decline, promoting job development, and revitalising deindustrialised regions. While the contexts are distinct, there are notable commonalities that might help shape

good policy recommendations in both domains. Finally, the policy implications gleaned from interviews in Duisburg, Germany, provide useful insights for Teesside, UK. Despite the differences in context, the overall themes of increasing employment, moving to green industries, investing in infrastructure, supporting vital businesses, and streamlining governance are relevant to the challenges and possibilities that both areas face. It will be critical to tailor these insights to the distinct socio-economic and political situations of Duisburg and Teesside in order to formulate effective and region-specific policy suggestions.

7.6. Conclusion and Results

In conclusion, in addressing the question of 'how is the relationship between left-behindness and populism perceived by regional actors and experts?' both Teesside and Germany have seen substantial changes in their political environments, with diminishing support for traditional parties, the growth of alternative parties, and shifting societal dynamics. Economic downturn, the eroding of traditional working-class identities, a lack of prospects, a sense of abandonment and historical events have all influenced these political developments.

When the perspectives of many interviewees are examined, it becomes evident that a variety of factors, particularly the collapse of industrial regions in the UK, contributed to the formation of populist feelings and the shifting political environment. How regions perceive regional inequalities and where they put politicians, states, or immigrants shape regional variegated populism. Regional inequality is a complicated issue in both Germany and the UK, with different social policies, devolution methods, and approaches to redistribution. While Germany places a strong emphasis on equal living circumstances and uses targeted programmes, the UK has difficulty with the objectives of 'levelling up'. Furthermore, while new mayoral system and levelling up policies offer hope for revitalising the area, there is still scepticism among residents about their impact. In order to

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create successful strategies to alleviate regional inequalities in both countries, it is imperative to comprehend these differences. Observations from England and German experience demonstrate a widespread realisation that managing economic transformation is a long-term project and requires significant resources. Moreover, while England's historical imbalances between the North and the South continue to affect discussions on regional disparities, Germany's historical narratives regarding east-west disparities have shaped attitudes. It left Tees Valley in the heart of feeling left-behind but Duisburg has a relatively better condition since they compare themselves to Eastern Germany.

In addition to the impact of the long-term industrial decline, the more recent 2008 crisis and the immigration waves, how these are transferred to politics, where the limits of discontent are transferred, emerges as an important issue. Populism in Germany simplifies difficult topics by making migrants scapegoats for societal problems. Economic imbalances and a sense of vulnerability, particularly in East Germany and old industrial regions, also contribute to populist support. While populism in Germany is not as radical as in other countries, it impacts political rhetoric and party goals, making it an important factor in contemporary German politics. A common thread emerges from the interviews done in England regarding the perception and comprehension of populism among various groups. These interviews give information on populism's perception as a political strategy that simplifies difficult topics, appeals to emotional concerns, and frequently involves anti-elite emotions.

When the two cases are analysed, it appears that the feeling of being left-behind transcends borders and is a shared concern while articulated in different ways in both England and Germany as well as variegated characteristics. Acknowledging the complexity of this issue and adopting region-specific approaches is essential to address the challenges faced by these regions effectively.

In addition, there are significant differences between the two cases in the perception of left-behindness and the variegations of populism. The first is the interconnectedness of the wider Ruhr, an important difference from the Tees Valley. The interconnectedness in the Ruhr counteracts the effects of the economic and social decline in Duisburg because people have access to economic and social options without even realising that they are changing cities. Opposite that, Tees Valley is more disconnected. This, combined with the political focus on the big cities, increases the perceived left-behindness. Moreover, in contrast to Germany's welfare state approach, there is a major difference between the two cases, given the austerity and restructuring of welfare benefits in the UK. Last but not least, long-standing political attitudes have resulted in the public perception that politicians of both sides have kind of let them down on the one hand in the UK and social democrats care for us on the other hand in Germany, although the perception is subject to change.

In conclusion, in addition to quantitative analysis and the use of populist elements in newspapers, the interviews provide us with a chance to hear from local actors about the perception of populism and the perception of left-behindness, which is an important note underlined in literature and our theory, in order to generate comprehensive, time- and place-dependent information and to draw on the experiences of different cases to develop and shed light on the concept of variegated populism and to produce future policies.

CHAPTER 8: REGIONALLY VARIEGATED POPULISM, RESULTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

8.1. Introduction

After COVID-19, there was a tendency to expect a decline in populist movements, especially with the electoral failure of some populist figures and parties like Trump's loss, but it turned out to be a naive idea. Populism, far or moderate, left or right, keeps increasing its vote share; around one-third of Europeans vote for populist, far-right or far-left parties (Rooduijn et al., 2024). In the US, Trump stands out as a Republican presidential candidate once again for the 2024 election with a chance of winning according to polls (The Economist, 2024); after a slight decrease of AfD votes in Germany in the 2021 General Elections, pools show AfD as the second party in Germany now (Statista, 2024). So, populism is alive and well, and its debates are still relevant if not more.

Essentially, in the literature, we identified that populism is dominated by the economy versus culture debate, and the regional dimension is important but case study and regional populism types still under researched. In this context, we have identified an integrated approach to the analysis of populism and regional dimension; in addition to the statistical characteristics of left-behind, the effects of emotion and perception should be included in the function as gaps in the literature. In order to address this gap, the overall aim of the research is to show the relationship between the left-behind feeling of old industrial regions with rising regional disparities and rising populist movements and to understand and explain the emergence of different forms of populism and their causes by examining how populism is variegated and expressed across different geographies. In this context, we put out three research questions, and this study employed

mixed methods and utilised multiple data sources to comprehensively address the research questions:

1)Based on the characteristic features of left-behind regions, what determines right-wing populist votes in Germany and England?

2) How is populist discourse produced and transformed into regional expression in media and politics, and how does this vary between cases?

3)How is the relationship between left-behindness and populism perceived by regional actors and experts?

After this introduction, the second section presents the main findings, contributions, and conclusions of research questions and what they say to the literature. The third section shows the contribution of the thesis as theoretical advancements by conceptualising regional variegated populism, which recognises the diverse and nuanced ways in which populist movements or sentiments manifest and evolve within different geographical regions. The last section reflects limitations and the future direction of work.

8.2. Key Findings

This section presents the main findings, answers and contributions of research questions. In the structure of the thesis, we answered the research questions by using appropriate methods. Here, we answer the research questions in the light of the data obtained from each method.

8.2.1 The Drivers of Right-Wing Populism in England and Germany

This section answers the drivers of populism through statistical analysis of the 2015 general elections in the UK and 2017 general elections in Germany, discourse analysis of the 2017 mayoral elections in Tees Valley and Duisburg, and interviews with local professionals.

The regional dimension provides an important perspective to explain discontent, overall, the research finds multiple and variegated drivers of

regional populism. The first determinant of populist votes in regions of Germany and England is economic decline. In England, despite the overarching trend of negative industrial employment change rates across all NUTS3 regions, a nuanced relationship emerges regarding the rise of right-wing populist parties when paired with total employment change. This nuanced relationship is within the context of declining industrial employment across regions; those areas with relatively lesser declines in industrial employment and with a decline in total employment may witness a greater increase in right-wing populist party support. Meanwhile, in Germany, similar to England, regions with negative shifts in total employment but a relatively lesser decline in industrial employment demonstrate increased backing for right-wing populist parties. This result contradicts Dijkstra et al.'s (2020) study of European Union countries; according to it, "places with employment decline are, by contrast, less likely to vote for anti-European parties". On the other hand, it is consistent with Rodríguez-Pose et al. (2021)'s study on the 2016 Trump Election.

In our work, the decline in total employment played a pivotal role in initiating the deterioration of social and economic conditions, particularly in affected communities across both countries. This decline exacerbated existing inequalities between depressed rural areas and small cities/towns, contrasted with thriving metropolitan areas. The global financial crisis of 2008 further intensified these divisions, with communities already experiencing economic decline enduring deeper and more prolonged downturns compared to metropolitan counterparts (Broz et al., 2021). These trends, observed across the United States and Europe, underscore the significance of long-term economic and social decline in driving support for right-wing populist parties, particularly in regions facing economic hardship and social dislocation. These, overall, support the identified gap about how the geographical approach increases the explanatory power of populism analysis.

The results show that the anti-European vote is associated with long-term economic decline. In parallel to the literature, places that have seen better

times, often based on past industrial power, are turning to parties to populist parties which are opposed to European integration (Essletzbichler et al., 2018; Dijkstra et al., 2020; Rodríguez-Pose et al., 2021). This means that the pattern of economic and industrial decline is valid for England and Germany in relation to populist votes. Moreover, interestingly, average annual growth is positively correlated with right-wing votes in Germany. However, this is due to the rapid growth of the regions in eastern Germany after the unification of Germany and the concentration of populist votes there. However, the fact that the developing regions vote for populist parties does not undermine our argument because the regions of eastern Germany are still worse off than the western German regions on many criteria (Gramlich, 2019), and inequalities affect these populist votes (Weisskircher, 2020).

The second factor that emerged from the analysis is demographic effects. In terms of the explanatory power of economic and social variables, economic decline is a stronger explanatory factor in Germany. In England, the explanatory power of socio-cultural variables seems to be as effective as the economic decline. Higher levels of unemployment, a larger proportion of the population aged 65 and over, and lower levels of education are associated with higher support for right-wing populist parties. Conversely, regions with higher population density and voter turnout tend to have lower support for such parties. These are compatible with populist voters' literature for England and UKIP (Ford and Goodwin, 2014). In Germany, the explanatory power of social variables is not as significant as in England. Regions with lower turnout and lower population density are more likely to vote for populist parties. However, the variable regarding educational level varies between the two nations, with higher levels of education associated with greater support for right-wing populism in Germany, contrasting to England. This is striking because some international studies (Goodwin, 2011) and AfD-focused studies (Decker, 2016; Berning, 2017) have argued that AfD voters correlate with lower education levels. But there are contradicting studies, too; for example, Goerres et al. (2018) and Hansen and Olsen (2019) did not find any statistically significant relation.

Another interesting result is the positive correlation between population change and populist votes for both countries. This is interesting because regions with population decline are expected to vote for populist parties because outmigration is one of the characteristics of left-behind places, which imply population decline should be correlated with populism. However, in the literature on quantitative studies, we do not see much inclusion of population change in models. In an analysis of Europe, Dijkstra et al. (2020: p.749) find that parallel to our result, "places with population decline are less likely to vote for anti-European parties." In an analysis of the US for Trump's rise alone, we see that population decline is correlated with populism (Rodríguez-Pose et al., 2021).

The third driver is media influence and political rhetoric. Media coverage and political rhetoric play a significant role in shaping populist discourse and influencing voter preferences. In Teesside, heightened populist coverage, particularly driven by the Brexit debate and the emergence of a Conservative mayor as an insurgent, contributes to increased populist sentiments. In contrast, in Duisburg, where populist elements receive less coverage, the effect of the current mayor being incumbent results in a more stable political climate and less pronounced populist sentiments.

Populist discourse is shaped and transformed into regional expression through a multifaceted interplay of media portrayal, political rhetoric, and socio-political context. The differences in the usage of populist elements between cases reflect the variegation inherent in regional dynamics, influenced by historical, economic, and political factors. The discourse analysis reveals differences in the focus of populist rhetoric between Tees Valley and Duisburg. According to the analysis, people centrism and anti-elitism drive the populist discourse in Teesside. It portrays the region as 'us', sometimes against the EU, sometimes against central governments and local governments of the past, through discourses of regional underdevelopment and political underrepresentation. In Duisburg, the anti-immigration discourse is more prominent as a populist driver.

The fourth and last driver behind the populist voting is the perception of neglect. In the Tees Valley, a prevailing sentiment of neglect and decline resonates throughout the interviews. Residents express a sense of abandonment, citing a lack of investment, persistent health challenges, brain drain and geographical remoteness as key identifiers of left-behindness. The decline in public services, exacerbated by austerity measures, intensifies feelings of being overlooked. This neglect is juxtaposed against better-off neighbour cities and more prosperous southern regions, exacerbating the perception of disparity. Conversely, in Duisburg, the narrative of decline is tempered by the presence of state subsidies and a gradual adaptation to economic and industrial changes.

To answer the drivers of populism, our analysis determines four main findings: economic and industrial decline, demographics, media and discourse, and perception of neglect. As we pointed out shortcomings and limited explanatory power of the individual dimension in the literature review, we contributed to the literature through the spatial dimension with a focus on sub-national units. Also, we encounter contradictory results in the quantitative results of our analysis and literature, so broadened analysis of drivers revealed that the increase in populist votes is often fuelled by populist rhetoric and perceptions of injustice, in addition to economic decline and inequalities.

8.2.2. Regional Expressions of Populism

In the study of populism, it was quite common to distinguish between Latin America and Europe (Binev, 2023) and within Europe with Southern European countries being the most affected by the 2008 crisis (Fernández-García and Valencia-Sáiz, 2023: p.215; Palailogos and Pelagidis, 2017), and Northern and Western European countries showing populist reactions due to migration waves and between the left and the right (Zulianello, 2020). However, with the success of right-wing populist parties in southern European countries, static interpretations of the former distinction were

subjected to change (Halikiopoulou and Vlandas, 2022). As with the shortcomings of static evaluation, research with only a national focus often leaves the regional or subnational dimension as a missing part. The specific economic trajectories of subnational regions, their relative disadvantages compared to other regions and their regional identities and place attachments give rise to differentiated populist approaches and discourses that differ from the national level at the regional level.

Our second key finding, based on how populist discourse is produced and transformed into regional expression in media and politics is that Teesside has more populist coverage than Duisburg due to the impact of the Brexit debate and the emergence of the Conservative mayor as an insurgent. The populist discourse in Teesside has a strong focus on people-centrism. Through discourses of regional underdevelopment and political underrepresentation, it presents the region as 'us', sometimes against the EU, sometimes against central governments and local governments of the past. At this point, we also find anti-elitist discourse against these political actors. In contrast, Duisburg features a more prominent anti-immigration discourse. Moreover, although the local elections in Duisburg took place on the same day as the general elections, the fact that the populist elements received less coverage can be interpreted as a conscious by newspapers when we observe much news on concern over AfD's rise.

Another striking result is that in both regions, feelings of abandonment and tendencies towards populist movements have increased due to prolonged economic decline and austerity. In Duisburg, this decline was linked to migrants, while in Tees Valley, it was mostly linked to political elites, as we saw in the newspaper analysis. The conclusion from here is that the literature on left-behind places and our quantitative analysis show that far-right populist votes are associated with social inequalities as well as long-term economic and industrial decline. However, quantitative analysis, political rhetoric and the role of the media suggest, as we have argued before, that there are differences between real causes, perceived causes

and politically instrumentalised causes. And this variegation is determined by national politics as well as regional historical and conjunctural contexts.

Regarding the perception of neglect and perceived causes, the interview analysis revealed that the relative perceptions of the regions have been influential in the development of their expression of populism on the basis of left-behindness. In Tees Valley, feelings of neglect intensified, particularly when compared to better-off neighbouring cities and more prosperous southern regions of the UK. In Duisburg, however, there is a notable difference in the perception of neglect, with residents comparing themselves more favourably with East Germany and the EU regions. The interconnectedness of the cities and the existence of a social safety net alleviate feelings of isolation and neglect.

On the discourse of mayors, Houchen's speeches are characterised by populist rhetoric that emphasises themes of national sovereignty, regional identity, economic inequality, and immigration. He constructs a narrative of 'us versus them,' positioning himself as the champion of the people against perceived elites such as the Labour Party, Whitehall, and the EU. Houchen utilises broad strokes to paint a picture of himself as the saviour of the region, fighting against long-standing neglect and decline. By rejecting expertise and appealing to the intuitive sense of the public, he fosters a sense of empowerment among his supporters.

On the other hand, Mayor Link's discourse is more focused, centring primarily on the issue of immigration, particularly the integration and accommodation of Roma and Bulgarian migrants from southeastern Europe. While aligning himself with the national government, Link portrays these specific groups as disruptive to social life, positioning the city in a dichotomy of 'us' versus 'them'. His language and rhetoric reflect a theoretical stance that may lack practical application, as it seems distant from the everyday concerns of the people.

In comparing the two, Houchen's populist stance is broader and more encompassing, targeting various entities such as political opponents and

bureaucratic institutions. In contrast, Link's discourse revolves around a singular issue, reflecting the unique context of Duisburg's social democratic tradition and recent debates surrounding immigration and integration. In both regions, relative comparisons play a significant role in shaping perceptions of left-behindness and populism. A lack of government support and attention exacerbates sentiments of being left-behind, while social safety nets and redistributive policies offer potential avenues for alleviating these concerns.

The first point to present here is that populism transcends ideological boundaries, which is evident in how politicians across the spectrum employ populist rhetoric to resonate with constituents. While Houchen employs a broad populist stance targeting multiple entities to garner support and challenge the establishment, Link's discourse focuses on a singular issue, reflecting Duisburg's unique socio-political context. The second point is that media coverage plays a pivotal role in shaping populist discourse, with varying emphases across regions. Teesside's media highlights populist elements more prominently, influenced by the Brexit debate and the emergence of a Conservative mayor challenging the establishment. In Duisburg, media focus centres more on the incumbent mayor, Sören Link, potentially downplaying populist elements in favour of other political dynamics, such as concern over AfD's rise.

The third point shows how the usage of populist elements reflects the regional variegation of populism between cases. According to it, even mainstream politicians utilise populist communication strategies to maximise votes or maintain power, showcasing distinct differences between populist styles in opposition versus in government or between being insurgent versus incumbent. In Teesside, anti-establishment sentiments are manifested in both local and general elections, reflecting a break from the traditional Labour heartland identity. This shift is attributed to dissatisfaction with long-standing political actors and a desire for change. Conversely, Duisburg's local elections lack visible anti-establishment voting, potentially due to the absence of prominent far-right candidates and

entrenched loyalty to the social democrat tradition, bolstered by the continuity between local and federal governments.

Overall, as an answer, populist discourse is shaped and transformed into regional expression through a multifaceted interplay of media portrayal, political rhetoric, and socio-political context. The differences in the usage of populist elements between cases reflect the variegation inherent in regional dynamics, influenced by historical, economic, and political factors. The fact that the two regions are influenced by national politics and local conditions shows how regional nuances determine the manifestation and transformation of populist discourse in media and politics. Therefore, it concludes that populism can take on distinct forms, priorities, and levels of intensity depending on the specific historical, cultural, socioeconomic, and political context of each region.

8.2.3. Perception of left-behindness and populism

Our third question asks about the regional perception of left-behindness and populism and their relationship. In the literature, we stated how feelings and perceptions are important as well as objective disadvantages to channel left-behind regions to the geography of discontent (Rodríguez-Pose, 2020; Hannemann et al., 2023).

The third key finding is that as we have seen in the regional expression of populism, the main populist perception in the Tees Valley was directed by the media at political elites in an 'us' versus 'you' conflict. In relation to this, left-behindness was associated with former governments, parties that took for granted and the EU. In Duisburg, on the other hand, the populist perception was directed at migrants, whereas the perception of being left-behind was associated with migrants' access to state benefits.

Interviews with regional professionals offer similar results. On the one hand, in Tees Valley, populism is perceived as slogans simplifying complex issues and appealing to emotional concerns. It often manifests through the

scapegoating of Whitehall and its politicians. Populist sentiments resonate with those dissatisfied with traditional political parties, as they offer simplistic solutions and challenge the established political order. Interviewees express a pervasive sentiment of neglect and decline, marked by a lack of investment, persistent health challenges, brain drain, and geographical remoteness. The decline in public services, exacerbated by austerity measures, intensifies feelings of being overlooked, especially when compared to more prosperous neighbouring cities and southern regions, as also stated in the regional expression of populism.

On the other hand, in Duisburg, interviewees stated that populist sentiments rely on simplistic solutions, prejudice, and alternative facts. In Duisburg, immigrants are often scapegoated, particularly concerning their perceived impact on the job market and state benefits. However, xenophobia is not seen as the root cause but rather as frustration stemming from differences in political priorities and concerns. On the understanding of left-behindness, while some interviewees reject the label of being left-behind, indicators such as population decline and structural changes underscore the challenges faced by the community. However, the presence of state subsidies and a gradual adaptation to economic and industrial changes temper the narrative of decline. Residents compare themselves more favourably to Eastern German and EU regions, which mitigates feelings of isolation and neglect.

Comparatively, both regions highlight the role of relative comparisons in shaping perceptions of left-behindness and populism. A lack of government support and attention exacerbates sentiments of being left-behind, while social safety nets and redistributive policies offer potential avenues for alleviating these concerns. Furthermore, long-term policies regardless of the governing party and the involvement of local government impede the development of a sense of being left-behind. Despite the different settings in the two regions, industrial background, social democratic identity and civic pride are intertwined. The adoption of urban-centric, economically centrist policies by social democratic parties, emphasising progressive

liberal values, has inadvertently reinforced the perception among voters that their concerns are being overlooked by the party, leading to feelings of being taken for granted. This disconnect between conventional parties and the interests of the public has fostered negative sentiments of discontent, thereby fuelling the rise of populism as an alternative political narrative. In the us versus them narrative, in Duisburg, immigration is portrayed as an enemy; yet, the interviews do not consider xenophobia as the primary cause but rather as a result of irritation arising from divergent political agendas and concerns among the general public. Finally, while in the literature the generation gap was expressed in terms of young people's tendency to more liberal values, the interviews pointed to the loss of collective identity in the generational change as a result of economic transformation and the prioritisation of individual interests by voters.

As a result, regional settings are changing perceptions, and the feeling of left-behindness does not only come from economic and statistical data. Regions' relative situation compared to other regions they compare themselves to; their connection to neighbouring cities and the rest of the country; and finally, the feeling that the governments are aware of regional problems affects this perception. Moreover, being left-behind directly affects populism because the interviews establish a direct link between the reduction of the populist tendency and the removal of feelings of abandonment and the removal of the identifiers of left-behindness. The main point here is the importance of understanding regional populism, which is variegated between regions together with the local and interconnected roots. Thus, there is geographical differentiation of the expression and causes of variegations of populism. Table 21 shows the comparison on commonalities and differences.

Table 21: Comparison of Findings between Tees Valley and Duisburg

Key Findings	Tees Valley (England)	Duisburg (Germany)

Determinants of Populism	Economic decline as a primary driver. Regions with declining employment but stable industrial jobs show increased right-wing populist support.	Economic decline moderated by state subsidies and gradual transition. Populist support is less pronounced due to robust social safety nets.
Socio-Cultural Drivers	Unemployment, aging population, and lower education correlate with populism; higher density and voter turnout reduce populist appeal.	Lower turnout and density linked to populism. Education level differs: higher education correlates with more right-wing populism, contrasting with England.
Main Populist Themes	Anti-elite and anti-EU sentiments, with local and national political elites portrayed as disconnected from local needs.	Strong anti-immigration rhetoric, with populist narratives often targeting migrant access to state resources as a cause of local issues.
Media Influence on Populism	Media coverage emphasizes populist themes, especially after Brexit, highlighting anti-	Media focus is less on populism; instead, it highlights concerns around the AfD's rise and shifts in immigration policy.

	establishment and anti-EU narratives.	
Scapegoats of Populism	Political elites and the EU are blamed for neglect and regional decline.	Migrants are often scapegoated for issues in social benefits and perceived local economic challenges.
Political Strategies in Populism	Material Inclusion: Houchen's populist stance emphasizes the inclusion of locals in state resource allocations, targeting various entities to garner support.	Material Exclusion: Link's populist stance focuses on restricting migrant groups from state resources, catering to Duisburg's social concerns.
Perception of Neglect and Identity	Strong sense of abandonment and decline, exacerbated by austerity, lack of investment, and comparison with prosperous regions like London.	State subsidies and positive comparisons with East Germany and the EU reduce perceived neglect, aided by interconnected regional policies.
State Role and Redistribution Policies	National policies seen as spatially blind; austerity has reduced local government funding and worsened inequalities.	Policies are geographically sensitive, with explicit goals for regional equality (e.g., 'equal

		living conditions' principle).
Approach to Industrial Heritage	Initiatives like the Teesworks Heritage Task Force aim to preserve heritage, but economic priorities sometimes overshadow conservation (e.g., demolition of iconic structures).	Major industrial landmarks preserved through initiatives like IBA Emscher Park, with former industrial sites repurposed for tourism and culture.
Industrial Transformation Programs	Industrial restructuring is rapid, with few support mechanisms, resulting in intensified regional discontent and populist sentiment.	Gradual restructuring through state-backed programs mitigates negative impacts, helping stabilize the region amid industrial transition.
National vs. Local Populism Dynamics	Populist sentiments are widespread across both local and general elections, particularly with Houchen's anti-establishment stance in a former Labour stronghold.	Local elections lack visible anti-establishment voting due to SPD loyalty and continuity; populism directed at immigration and integration issues.

Economic Restructuring and Welfare	Austerity policies have reduced social support systems, leading to heightened political dissatisfaction.	Strong social welfare policies cushion those impacted by economic decline, reducing the impact of populist sentiments.
Regional Variegation of Populism	Economic and social decline combined with perceived neglect create fertile ground for populist narratives emphasizing local sovereignty and 'us vs. them' themes.	Regional attachment to social democratic tradition, coupled with gradual economic adaptation, tempers the extremity of populist narratives.

8.3. Conceptual and Theoretical Contributions

While the above three sections present the results of the research questions and their contribution to the literature, our work has also resulted in theoretical and conceptual advances that can contribute to the wider literature.

8.3.1. Variegated Populism

Research questions and analysis clearly support one of the main arguments that the emergence and growth of populism is not primarily driven by traditional class divisions or individual disparities but rather by the left-behind, declining regions (Rodríguez-Pose, 2020; Dijkstra et al., 2020; MacKinnon et al., 2021). Another main contribution is the importance of the region emerged as an important explanatory force in understanding and analysing populism. Thirdly, geographical differentiation in populist

manifestation and causes points out the need to fill the gap and counter the dominance of work at the national level.

Through key findings which mentioned above and in the former subsection, another contribution of this research is the concept of variegated populism by emphasizing interconnectedness and interdependence among different manifestations of populism across diverse territorial contexts. Rather than categorizing populisms discretely, the study underscores their adaptive nature and dynamic relationships, shaped by historical, socio-economic, and cultural factors. It recognizes that populist movements exhibit diverse forms and ideologies contingent upon local conditions, challenging static classifications. The research highlights contextual specificity in how populist discourses and strategies evolve in response to regional grievances, perceptions, political dynamics, and media influences, exemplified in the contrasting cases of Teesside and Duisburg. Overall, it underscores the complexity inherent within populism, urging a nuanced understanding that moves beyond simplistic typologies to capture its multifaceted manifestations and interactions within contemporary socio-political landscapes.

Populism is seen as a strategic approach to politics and communication that can be adopted by various ideologies and political formations. In this context, populist rhetoric may not share a common characteristic other than the assertion that governance should be in line with the collective interests and aspirations of the people. The discourses and policies it use may vary in different times and places. This implies that the study of populism needs to be conjunctural. However, this is not enough; the study of populism needs to be space-dependent as well as time-context-dependent, which reflects an evolutionary, dynamic process rather than a static one. Changing the ideological stance of the National Front example above also shows how a time-dependent and context-dependent perspective is necessary to capture the dynamic nature. We can give the same kind of example while underlining space-dependent knowledge. In the 80s, Thatcher's policy was labelled as populist (Jessop, 1984) and named Thatcherism with neo-

liberalism and neo-conservativism (Hall and Jaques, 1983; Heffernan, 2001). However, from the same party as Thatcher, after 2017, with the effect of regional settings, 'Houchenism' appeared in Tees Valley with interventionism and green industrial strategies (Ball, 2021; Hutton, 2021) which inspired by Johnsonian Conservatism that bigger phenomena in Conservative Party in national level which identified with pro-interventionist messages and national independence (Heppell, 2020).

Right-wing populism, left-wing populism, and economic and cultural reasons debates promote the idea of the existence of different populisms while obscuring the interconnectedness that these reasons and the movements that emerge from them are mutually influencing processes and conjunctural interdependencies. What we are arguing here is that the drivers of these interconnected and interdependent processes are globalisation, neoliberalisation and the inequality and economic decline for some people and regions, which are mostly classified under mostly economic (Acemoglu, 2020; Rodrik, 2018a) and sometimes cultural reasons (Cox, 2018).

Thus, without diminishing the role of different explanations but challenging simplistic binaries, we have demonstrated that populism is interconnected and interdependent, which is inspired by Peck (2023b; Peck and Theodore, 2007)'s idea of variegated capitalism, which critiques the varieties of capitalism approach which categorises national political economies into two ideal type and tends to treat each form as isolated and independent. In the light of this critique, we approach populism by acknowledging the articulated nature of populism in different ideologies and actors, recognising the complexity and nuance inherent within populist politics and accepting reasons that have multiple dimensions as being real, perceived and mediated by politicians, which are sometimes difficult to distinguish.

8.3.2. Distinctions in variegations of populism

The analysis of regional populism extends beyond traditional left-right dichotomies, which render static interpretations inadequate, and expands it, acknowledging its adaptable nature and its dependence on conjunctural and space-time factors. Furthermore, populist politics are not confined to new or existing populist movements but are observable within mainstream and incumbent political actors, thereby our approach deepening the dimensions of analysis. Within this framework, we offer a new conceptualisation of the populist spectrum that the characterisation of regional populism along the axes of narrow-broad and weak-strong allows for a nuanced understanding of its manifestations.

When considering the narrow-broad dimension, I regard narrow populism, as exemplified by single-issue movements, focusing on specific grievances, while broad populism encompasses a wider array of economic, social, and popular arguments. On the other dimension, a thin ideology primarily cantered on anti-elite and people-centric appeals and has minimal substance in terms of its own political agenda to present, whereas thicker populism offers a comprehensive program sometimes settle with a host ideologies and often exhibiting authoritarian tendencies and emphasising positions such as anti-immigration or anti-globalisation (Mudde, 2007; Neuner and Wratil, 2022; Schroeder, 2020).

A comparative analysis of regional leaders further elucidates these dimensions. According to our analysis, Mayor Houchen embodies broad populism, incorporating intellectual opposition, anti-elite rhetoric, and anti-European sentiments. He is moderately strong in terms of the weak-strong axis because, on the one hand, his practices are on the edges of conservatism as it is labelled as Houchenism (Hutton, 2021) but distant from extremism like nativism and anti-liberalism. Conversely, the mayor of Duisburg represents narrow, weak populism, targeting a specific group of immigrants with populist elements but displaying reluctance to generate political strategies in response.

Figure 39: New Conceptualisation of Populist Spectrum
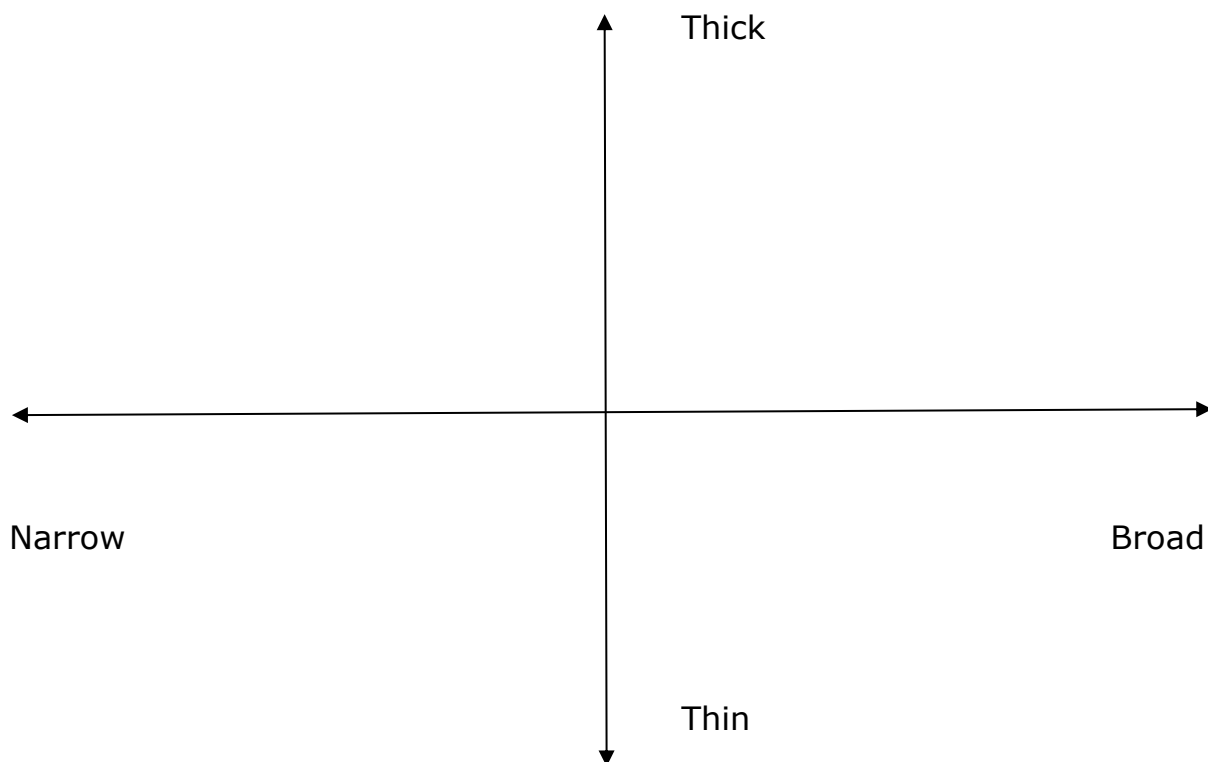
This highlights the interplay between incumbent status and regional dynamics, showcasing the importance of regional variegation in understanding populist phenomena. Examining mainstream party politics underscores the significance of regional analysis and regional variegation. Instances such as Houchen's adoption of insurgent tactics regionally within a national incumbent party context exemplify the divergent strategies employed regionally which would be covered in a national scale analysis. Thus, regional variegation is pivotal in that it challenges simplistic narratives and reveals nuances such as multi-dimensional composition.

In analysing case studies, Duisburg and Tees Valley, distinct regional populism emerges, shaped by unique historical narratives, economic shifts, and political dynamics. While Duisburg exhibits anti-immigration populism, Tees Valley alternates between anti-EU, anti-central government, and anti-establishment narratives, reflecting regional grievances and aspirations. These examples illustrate the regional variegation of populism and its diverse expressions. However, beneath this variegation lies interconnected

long-term decline, evidenced by regional inequalities and perceptions of being left-behind. Regression, discourse analysis, and interviews shed light on the complexity of these issues, which are influenced by historical legacies, economic trajectory, and political factors. Thus, regional populism is not isolated but interconnected within broader socioeconomic contexts, emphasising the need for a nuanced understanding of its variegated expressions and underlying dynamics.

8.3.3 Determinants of regional variegation

We found three conditions that regionally establish the variegated populism and help to uncover underlying structures, mechanisms and causal relations. These are the trajectory of development, regional identities, and political representations. This study has provided important insights into how these settings have been set up mechanisms in the cases we have analysed.

Economic and historical evolutions of regions have shown the importance of economic trajectory. In both cases, industrialisation had been the reason for existence. Primarily, small villages became industrial hearts for their countries and places for full employment, good wages and stability. However, since the 1970s and 80s, economic structure has changed; industrial production moved overseas, and these places started to identify with unemployment, outmigration and pessimism.

So, this transition means deindustrialisation for old industrial regions and our cases, which are characterised by prolonged economic decline, social polarisation, feelings of marginalisation and loss of identity (Rodríguez-Pose, 2018; Pike, 2022; MacKinnon et al., 2021). Expanding on the importance of deindustrialisation in regard to case selection and in regard to the contextual background of cases, it is crucial to recognise its role as a trigger event, as defined by Hannemann et al. (2023). Deindustrialisation represents a significant occurrence that initiates a process of discontent

within a region, marking the beginning of a phased development of societal dissatisfaction. In regions affected by deindustrialisation, such as those in the UK and Germany, the closure of factories and decline of traditional industries serve as trigger events, leading to individual dissatisfaction (phase 2) (Hannemann et al., 2023: p.4) as livelihoods are disrupted and communities face economic uncertainty. This individual discontent can then escalate into collective embitterment (phase 3) (Hannemann et al., 2023: p.4) as the effects of deindustrialisation deepen, generating a sense of neglect and abandonment among affected populations. Furthermore, the failure of governance structures to adequately address the challenges brought about by deindustrialisation exacerbates this collective discontent. As expectations for economic revitalisation and support remain unmet, feelings of marginalisation and disillusionment intensify, fuelling the emergence of populist sentiments (phase 4) (Hannemann et al., 2023: p.4).

In both the Tees Valley in the UK and Duisburg in Germany, deindustrialisation has been leading to long-term economic decline and a pervasive sense of being left-behind. This economic downturn, coupled with collective embitterment and a feeling of being ignored by political elites, has created fertile ground for the rise of populist movements and the phenomenon of populist voting.

The second condition is a regional identity, which is heavily affected by economic structure and political attachment. The impact of deindustrialisation is not only the economic downturn for the emergence of left-behindness and populist influence. Another impact is on the identity of the regions. In addition to economic ramifications, deindustrialisation profoundly impacts the identity of affected communities, shaping their collective consciousness and cultural landscape. As noted by Linkon (2013), deindustrialisation has supplanted industry as the defining characteristic of community identity for American deindustrialised cities. This observation holds true not only for American deindustrialised cities but also resonates with regions like Teesside and Duisburg.

In Teesside, the visual landscape reflects the narrative of deindustrialisation, epitomised by Thatcher's 'walk in the wilderness' during the late 1980s. This era marked the decline of heavy industries, which had long been the backbone of the region's economy, leading to the disappearance of iconic industrial structures and the emergence of vacant brownfield sites. Recent transformations, characterised by the demolition of these iconic buildings and the development of new ventures, evoke conflicting sentiments. On the one hand, the erasure of proud industrial heritage engenders a sense of loss and nostalgia, while on the other hand, it heralds the prospect of building a positive future.

Figure 40: Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in Thornaby

Source: Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher seen here at what remains of the Head Wrightson works in Thornaby, Middlesbrough 12th September 1987, (image: https://www.gazettelive.co.uk/news/nostalgia/things-change-much-after-maggie-12847721)

Figure 41: Demolition of Redcar Blast Furnace

Source: Demolition of the Redcar Blast Furnace Stoves in 2022, (image: https://x.com/BenHouchen/status/1638563351276969987?s=20)

Similarly, Duisburg's identity is linked with its industrial past, which is evident in initiatives such as the Emscher Park and industrial museums. These former industrial areas have been repurposed as parks and cultural sites, preserving them as integral components of the region's identity.

Figure 42: A Former Coal Mine Complex in Essen/Ruhr Region

Source: Zeche Zollverein is a former coal mine complex in the Essen/Ruhr region. In 2001, Zeche Zollverein was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in recognition of its outstanding universal value as a cultural and industrial monument (image: Author's own)

Figure 43: A Historic Harbour Crane Located in Duisburg

Source: RWSG Hafenkran is a historic harbour crane located in Duisburg, Germany. Today, the RWSG Hafenkran stands as a reminder of Duisburg's industrial past and the importance of its inland port in facilitating trade and commerce in the region. (Image: Author's own from inside of Kultur- und Stadthistorisches Museum Duisburg)

Indeed, former industrial areas serve as both reminders of past failures and symbols of resilience and transformation, as potent symbols of struggle and adaptation. Yet, they also embody shifting paradigms, accommodating new

visions and aspirations for the future. For Teesside, this entails envisioning a transition towards industries aligned with net-zero. In contrast, Duisburg embraces its heritage through the transformation of former industrial zones into cultural areas and changes its economy with green energy and logistics, with the advantage of being the biggest inland port in Europe.

Deindustrialisation plays a multifaceted role in shaping the economy, culture, identity, and political landscape of regions like Teesside and Duisburg. Beyond its economic impact, deindustrialisation profoundly influences the collective consciousness and cultural landscape, redefining community identities around the narrative of industrial decline. Moreover, the struggle of governance structures to address the challenges posed by deindustrialisation exacerbates feelings of marginalisation and disillusionment, fuelling the emergence of populist sentiments and influencing political dynamics in these regions.

We discussed deindustrialisation as one of the most significant events in recent times that determines economic, social, and cultural phenomena in our cases' context. We elaborated on its significant impacts on economic decline and regional identity throughout the thesis and above. Another crucial aspect developed in relation to the industrial production and deindustrialisation histories of regions is their association with labour classes, robust labour organisations, and being the heartland for social democratic parties. Thus, the third condition appears as political representation.

The global shocks such as the oil crisis and steel crisis in the 70s have presented new challenges for Labour parties, particularly in regions where they historically held dominance. In Teesside, for instance, the Labour Party's stronghold has been notable, with consistently higher vote shares compared to national rates, reflecting a strong connection between the party and the working-class populace. On eight of the eleven elections analysed in the contextual chapter, the Conservative Party has defeated Labour nationally and emerged as the more dominant party during the last

four decades, but they only managed to get more votes in Teesside in 2019. Thus, the 2019 Conservative victory marked a possible shift, stamped the decline in Labour's influence. This decline is further underscored by the higher Leave vote In Brexit in 2016 and the rise of UKIP in 2010, 2015, and 2017, indicating a growing anti-establishment sentiment in the region.

Similarly, in the Ruhr and Duisburg in Germany, the Social Democratic Party (SPD) has long been entrenched as the dominant political force. However, over the past four decades, the SPD has witnessed a steady decline in support. In Duisburg, the SPD's share of the vote dropped from 60 percent to around 30 percent. However, at the same time, CDU has lost its vote share too. So, voters turned to alternative parties such as the Greens and populist parties like Die Linke and AfD.

One of the reasons that led to this decline was the convergence of mainstream parties to neoliberal policies, especially after the 90s (Berman and Kundnani, 2021; Lynch, 2017). This created a gap in economic left policies. Apart from this, the social democratic parties take the Labour votes for granted due to this long-term relationship and turned to other votes. This increased the sense of neglect among voters. So, industrial decline, a decline of representation power of social democrat parties with policy changes and taking for granted labour votes ended up first time MPs in Tees Valley after 50-60 years, and the first Conservative Mayor of TVCA who is using state interventions contrasted with his party and 'take back control' discourse. In Germany, the Ruhr area and Duisburg became among the places with the highest vote share of AfD in Western Germany, with the SPD mayor in Duisburg, used anti-immigration discourse over Southern-European migrants, which is in contrast with his party's stance.

Some argue that social democratic parties have lost voters mainly to Green and mainstream right parties, and they risk further aggravating these developments if they take up left-nationalist strategies, that is, if they pivot right on the cultural dimension (Abou-Chadi et al., 2021: p.3). These claims have shortcomings, first because they look at the national scale and

overlook the regional level. Second, it neglects populist attitudes in mainstream parties. Tees Valley example shows the Labour Party lost its voters to the Conservatives but with populist claims over 'taking back control' and providing a future for the region. In Duisburg, it shows AfD is not doing badly than the Greens (AfD %7 higher than Greens in 2017 and %2 lower in 2021); when we add the left-populist party Die Linke in the formula, populists overtake alternative parties. Additionally, the suggestion that social democrats may exacerbate these trends by adopting left-nationalist strategies ignores the long-standing stance of left parties towards liberal urban voters, which has not stopped rising populism. In contrast, it is argued that people have a strong need for identity and community. This is especially true in the old industrial regions, and this is the left has failed to offer a positive version of patriotism as an alternative to the narrow, intolerant, and xenophobic nationalism espoused by the populist right (Guimon, 2023).

There are differences between the two regions that are worthy of further examination to understand social democratic traditions. First, the Ruhr workers' organisation was stronger (Berger, 2013), whereas, in Teesside, there were factors that undermined the strength of labour movements, such as the paternalistic labour-large firms' relationship (Beynon et al., 1994). Second, while in Germany, the state acted as a mediator between labour and capital, in the UK, it was more pro-capital (Albert, 1993; Hall and Sockice, 2001). The third is the strong two-party system, and first past the post-election system in the UK and the absence of alternative left-wing politics, whereas in Germany, there are multiple party systems and alternative left-wing initiatives. Lastly, According to Bachtler and Begg (2017: p.748), regional economic strategy in the UK seeks to improve national economic efficiency, whereas in continental Europe, the goal of economic efficiency is supported with a commitment to social equality.

In conclusion, this section has shed light on the multifaceted and conjunctural dynamics shaping the economic, social, and political landscapes of Teesside and Duisburg, particularly in the context of

deindustrialisation and its aftermath. By examining the trajectories of development, regional identities, and political representations, we have discerned the intricate interplay of factors influencing the rise of populism and the transformation of political landscapes. Deindustrialisation emerges as a pivotal trigger event, leading to long-term economic decline, social polarisation, and a profound reconfiguration of community identities. Moreover, the struggle of governance structures to address the challenges posed by deindustrialisation exacerbates feelings of marginalisation and disillusionment, fostering fertile ground for the emergence of populist sentiments. The decline of traditional political forces, such as social democratic parties, underscores the shifting political dynamics and the quest for alternative visions, representations and regional variegation of populism.

8.4. Reflections and future direction of work

Upon reflection there are a number of other directions this thesis could have taken to generate novel insight regarding the geographical dimensions and variegated populism. Methodologically, although we followed a strategy according to Seawright and Gerring (2008) in case selection, the criteria we used in data collection and case selection related to the research topic resulted in a case selection bias (Collier, 1995) in which right-populist and old-industrialised regions were over-represented among populist and left-behind regions. However, we have already stated in our theoretical GPE approach that we do not claim to generalisation because of the time, space and context-dependent knowledge and the rarity of the occurrence of consistent regularities in closed systems under the presence of open systems in the social world (Sayer, 1999).

Nevertheless, the study of different types of cases would allow a more comprehensive examination of the relationship between populism and left-behind regions and would be a way of extending the current research. In this context, a case study with a different regional identity might have led

to different interpretations of how having a social democratic identity might affect geographical discontent. We have argued in the thesis that social democratic regions may be in discontent as social democratic parties converge to central and neoliberal policies and voters taken for granted and not listened to, but on the other hand, we have also seen that social democratic governments and the benefits provided by the welfare state, especially in Germany, may have a suppressive effect on the discontent. Different cases may be instructive as to whether regions with different political characteristics may generate different responses to discontent.

We have also mentioned economic trajectory, regional identity and political representation as conditions, but it is possible that ethnic diversity and ethnic politics in countries such as Belgium and Spain, which we have eliminated in the case selection section, may constitute another condition. It is possible that the cases to be selected from these countries will provide explanations in this regard.

Another dimension of comparison could be related to the character of the governance of the countries we compared. The following questions that arose during our research could provide future research for the thesis: the question of whether having a greater voice at the local and regional levels through more devolved powers and resources meant less discontent and populism and is over-centralisation and lack of decentralisation a cause of populism. These questions may also serve to broaden the larger debate on decentralisation and regional development by including the crisis of populism.

In the quantitative analysis, first of all we see studies looking at multi-states conceal national differences. Because of that, national or comparative analysis first prevents over-generalising, and second helps to explain specific conditions of that country. The second issue for the quantitative analyses is that unavailable or not publicly available data at the NUTS3 level prevented us from including more variables in the model. In this context, one way to advance work in this area would be to include some other

important variables which are shown in populism. An important variable which should be included in the statistical model is migration. Another is perceptions and emotions in the criteria for lagging-behind, especially in quantitative analyses of relative inequality relative to neighbouring cities and metropolitan areas. Moreover, the measurement of populism is highly dependent on the share of votes received by populist parties or candidates, and taking into account populist tendencies within mainstream parties is an important area for understanding variegation.

Literature put out how social media is important for politicians to spread their messages and for voters to get organised (Spiekermann, 2020; Hameleers and Schmuck, 2017). There are serious gaps in the regional analysis of social media. Thus, social media analysis could broaden the understanding and explanation of regional populism and could give us a chance to compare it with the analysis of newspapers and mayor speeches. Although the difficulty of collecting data from social media on a regional basis and the necessity to learn new programmes has limited my work, it may provide an important point for future progress.

Another limitation of the study is the problem of time and resources in national and overseas fieldwork and the language barrier. Doing more interviews and using other qualitative methods like focus groups could enhance the understanding of regional settings, variegation and perceptions. In addition, I conducted interviews with professionals; however, conducting interviews with ordinary people as future work would be complimentary to our analysis.

This thesis has developed a comprehensive and multi-dimensional conceptualisation of populism based on thin-thick ideology and the usage of populist discourse in policy-making. This conceptualisation could be used in national evaluation and comparison of populism. Furthermore, a variegated populism perspective can be applied to find the interconnectedness of different populism from Asia to Europe and the US and more and to find different national and regional settings for those

populisms. This local understanding can also help place-based tailoring of policy responses for understanding regional populism and also for creating a new economic development path if there is a connection with the left-behindness of the region or creating a new political approach to the feeling of lack of representation. Partly related to that, another important question related to policy-making arose in our study: whether the aim of regional policies is to improve regional living standards based on the different starting points and available resources of each region or to equalise living standards across all regions.

APPENDIX

Appendix A

Sample structure of interview questions

· Can you introduce yourself?

· What is your role and responsibilities in your organization?

· How would you describe the political and economic situation in the area and how it changed since deindustrialization?

· What do you understand by left-behindness and could we apply some aspects of it to Duisburg/Tees Valley?

· How deindustrialization shaped the regions economically, politically, and socially?

· Are there special policies address the interregional qualities?

· How do you think decentralized/centralized structure of local governance helps to improve equality?

· What do you understand by populism, and do you think social democrat identity of the region is subject to change?

· How would you describe the rise of populism in the Germany/England, and how is it manifesting at the local level and what factors do you think contribute to its emergence?

· Have populist parties/policies changed the language of politics, is there new polarisations in politics and if there is, how mainstream parties respond to this rhetoric?

· How might local government and regional actors work together to address the root causes of populism, such as economic inequality and social dislocation?

Consent Form for Interviewees

Economic and Political Transition and Rising Populist Movements in Left-Behind Places in Germany and the UK

Thank you for your interest in taking part in this research. Please complete this form after you have read the Information Sheet and/or listened to an explanation about the research study. You will be given a copy of this Consent Form.

Please tick initial box to confirm consent	
1. I confirm that I have read the information sheet dated 03 May 2023 for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and I have had any questions answered satisfactorily.	
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason. I understand that if I decide to withdraw, any data that I have provided up to that point will be omitted.	
3. I consent to the processing of my personal information for the purposes of this research study, as described in the information sheet dated 01 March 2023.	
4. I consent to my research data being stored and used by others for future research. It can be anonymized on request.	

5.	I understand that my research data may be published as a report or academic paper.	
6.	I consent to being audio recorded and understand that the recordings will be stored anonymously on password-protected software and used for research purposes only. I understand that being recorded is optional and therefore not necessary for my participation in this research.	
7.	I agree to take part in this research project.	

Participant

Name of participant   *Signature*   *Date*

Researcher

Name of researcher   *Signature*   *Date*

	Tees Valley/UK	Duisburg/Germany
1	Andrew Fulton / 5 July 2023 +An independent consultant within the mining industry. General Manager of Cleveland Potash Limited, ICL Boulby at the time of interview. President of the Mining Association of the UK. Ex-member of the Local Enterprise Partnership of Tees Valley Combined Authority.	Alan Imamura / 28 July 2023 + The leader of the AFD Group in the City Council of Duisburg.
2	Anna Turley / 24 March 2023 + Former Labour & Co-Operative Member of Parliament for Redcar between 2015 and 2019. The chair of the Northeast Child Poverty Commission.	Peter Dannenberg / 13 June 2023 + Head of the Chair of Anthropogeography - Urban and Regional Development at the University of Cologne.
3	Gavin Foster / 27 February 2023 + Regional Editor Newsquest North. Group Editor the Northern Echo for Newsquest	Kristin Limbach / 06 July 2023 + Researcher at EIFER - European Institute for Energy Research
4	Jack Shaw / 07 July 2023 +A Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for Public Policy	Omer Kara / 07 June 2023 + Trade union youth representative at ThyssenKrupp AG

	Research. Researcher at Bennett Institute at Cambridge University.	
5	Jane Reynolds MBE / 3 April 2023 + Business Development Manager at Northstar Ventures. Chair of Tees Valley Business Club. Worked at Deloitte. Member of Tees Valley Combine Authority Local Enterprise Partnership.	Susann Schafer / 20 July 2023 +Research assistant at the Chair of Economic Geography at the Friedrich-Schiller-University Jena. Her research focuses on the interface between migration and regional development, which she works on from a practical-theoretical perspective.
6	John Walton / 14 March 2023 +Supervisor of Teesside at Northumbrian Water LTD.	Anna Butzin / 12 May 2023 + Project coordinator in the research department of Innovation, Space and Culture at the Institute for Work and Technology.
7	Luke Myer / 24 July 2023 +Research fellow for Northeast at the Institute for Public Policy Research. Councillor in Redcar and Cleveland.	Antonia Milbert / 19 June 2023 + Adviser for Federal Institute for Research on Building Urban Affairs and Spatial Development
8	MP Paul Howell / 30 March 2023 +Conservative Member of Parliament for Sedgefield. The joint chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for left-behind neighbourhoods.	Franz Flögel / 31 May 2023 + researcher at the Institute for Work And Technology in the research department 'Spatial Capital'.

9	Natasha Vall / 20 March 2023	Karsten Zimmermann / 31 May 2023
	+The Dean in the School of Social Sciences, Humanities and Law at Teesside University. Professor of Urban and Cultural History.	+ Member of the scientific advisory board of the Leibniz Institute for Spatial Social Research (IRS) in Erkner. Professor of European Planning Cultures at the Faculty of Spatial Planning, Technical University of Dortmund.
10	Nicholas Gray / 24 March 2023	Matthias Diermeier / 22 May 2023
	+Researcher at Teesside University.	+ Head of Cooperation Cluster Democracy, Society, Market Economy at the Institute of German Economy.
11	Robert Cook / 3 March 2023	Mehmet Kaya / 8 June 2023
	+ Councillor, Council leader of Stockton Council. Former cabinet member for regeneration and transport within the Council.	+Member of Aktif Yurttaş Hareketi Derneği (ABI - Political Party) which address the immigrants.
12	Tom Smyth / 23 March 2023	Kean Fan Liam / 06 July 2023
	+ Deputy Head of the Cities and Local Growth Unit that covers Yorkshire in the Northeast. Member of Tees Valley Combine Authority Local Enterprise Partnership. Government representative that set up to support of SSI UK workers after liquidation in	+Senior Lecturer in Economic Geography at Centre for Urban and Regional Development Studies (CURDS), Newcastle University.

	2015. Play part at the Tees Valley devolution deal.	
13	Zoe Lewis / 15 August 2023 +Principal chief executive Of Middlesbrough college.	Rainer Danielzsyk / 20 May 2023 + Secretary General and Head of the Office and (2017-2020) Member of the Presidium of the ARL - Academy for Spatial Research and Regional Planning, Leibniz Forum for Spatial Sciences, and (2020-2024) Academy for Spatial Development in the Leibniz Association, Hanover. Ex-member and chair of the Advisory Board for Spatial Planning of the Federal Ministry of Transport. Member of various committees of the Ministry of Economic Affairs of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia (AK regional development organizations, jury of the ERDF Regio-Call).
14	Ryan Swift / 19 July 2023 +Research fellow at the Institute for Public Policy Research.	Sabine Weck / 23 August 2023 +Researcher at the Research Institute for Government Regional Development Planning.
15	Lewis Evans / 21 April 2023 + Policy and Economy Advisor (Net Zero and Energy) at the North of Tyne Combined	Peter Ache / 23 August 2023 +Researcher at Radboud University.

	Authority. Senior Consultant at Urban Foresight. Economic Advisor at Northumberland County Council. Strategic Programme Officer and Policy Officer at the Tees Valley Combined Authority.	
16	David Higham / 21 August 2023 +Former civil servant. Ex Deputy Regional Director Economy, Environment and Regional Issues. Worked with Michael Heseltine then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. Ex Head Department for Business, Innovation & Skills Team in the Northwest.	Serhii Svynaretski / 22 August 2023 +Researcher at Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography.

Figure 44: Combined Model 1 Diagnostics
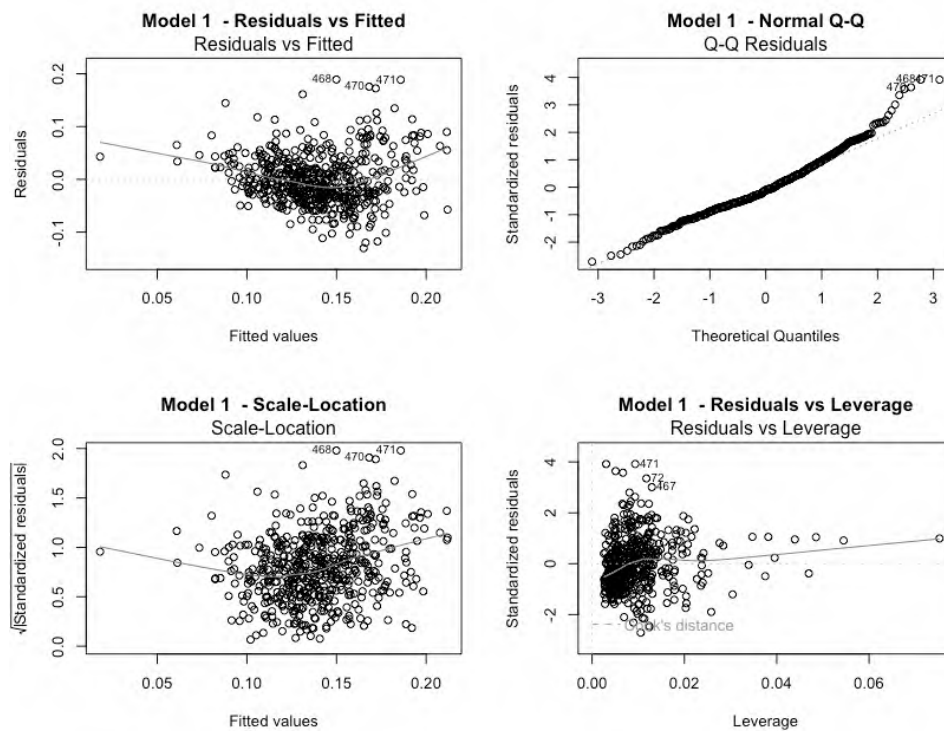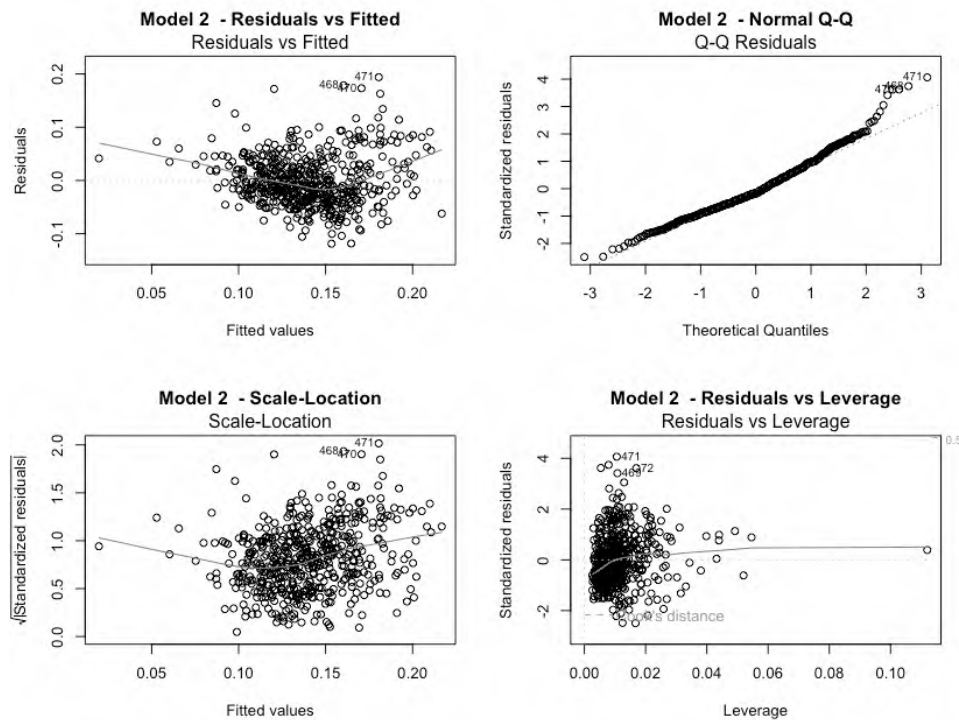

Figure 45: Combined Model 2 Diagnostics

Figure 46: Combined Model 3 Diagnostics
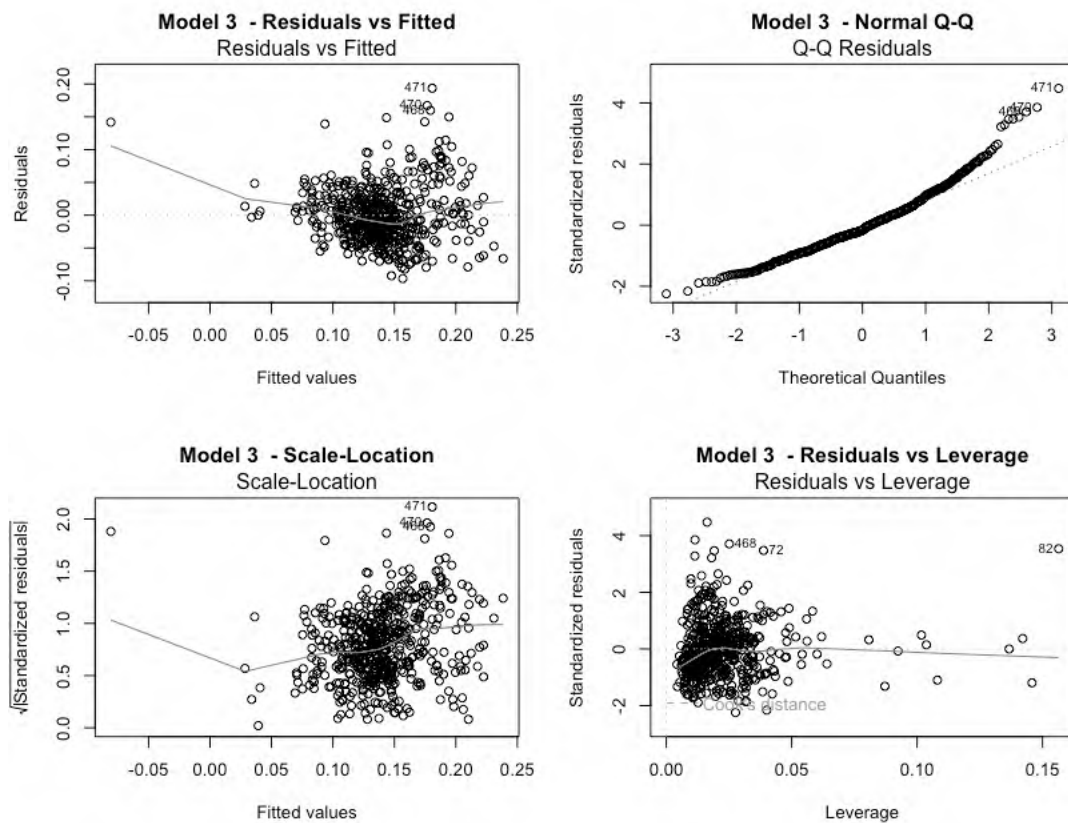
Table 22: Collinearity Statistics for Combined Data

Model 1

Predictor	VIF	Tolerance
Average annual growth	1.178	0.849
Total employment change	1.237	0.808
Industrial employment change	1.208	0.828

Model 2

Predictor	VIF	Tolerance
Average annual growth	1.250	0.800
Total employment change	1.943	0.515
Industrial employment change	1.208	0.828
Population change	1.893	0.528

Model 3

Predictor	VIF	Tolerance
Average annual growth	2.672	0.374
Total employment change	2.204	0.454
Industrial employment change	1.651	0.606
Population change	2.504	0.399
Unemployment rate	1.564	0.640
Population 65 and over	1.824	0.548
Population density	2.731	0.366
Education	3.110	0.322
Turnout	2.569	0.389
GDP per capita	1.668	0.600

Figure 47: England Model 1 Diagnostics
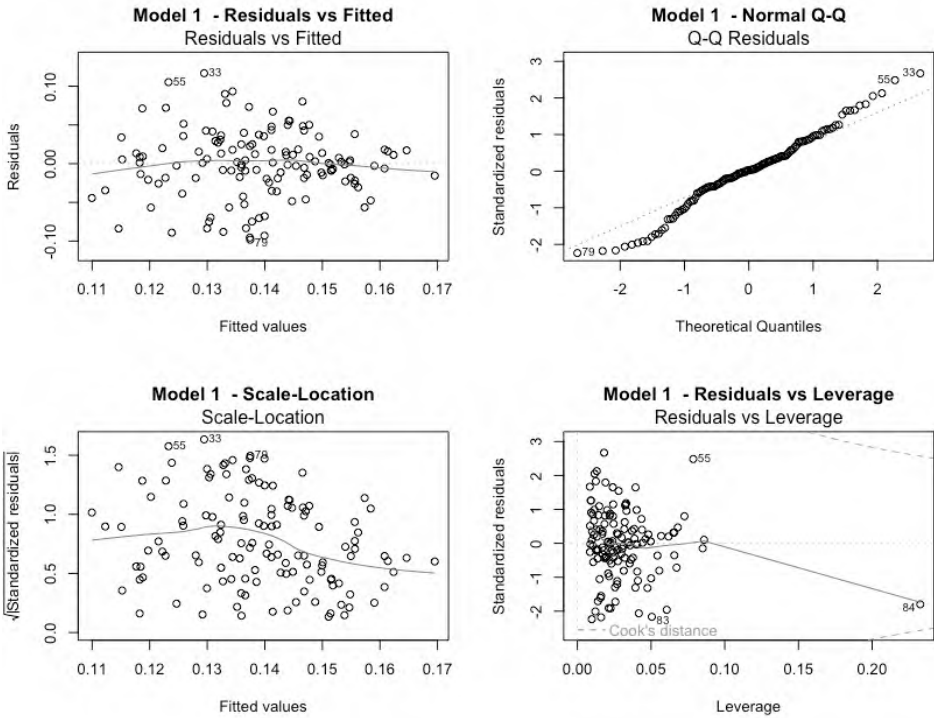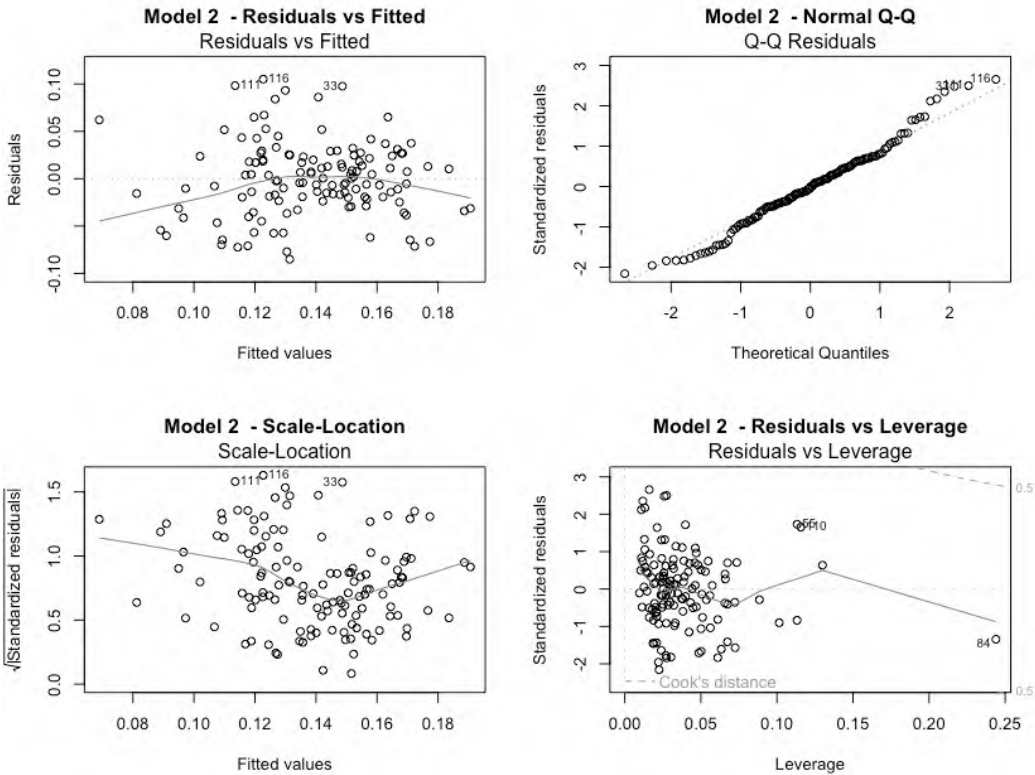

Figure 48: England Model 2 Diagnostics
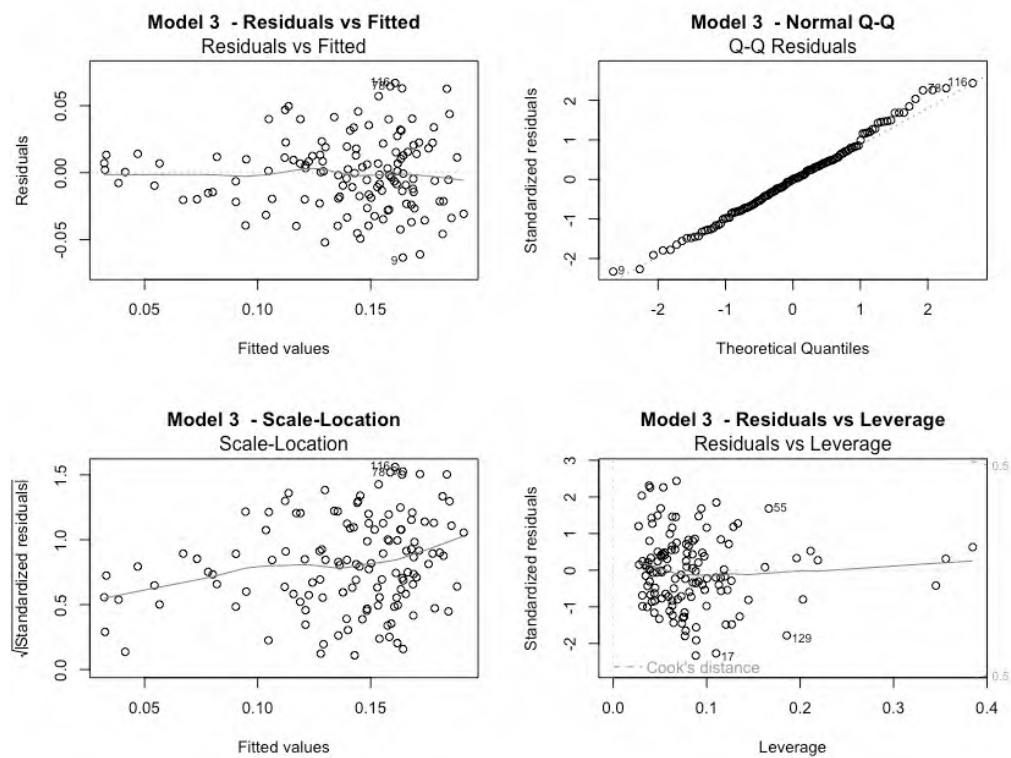

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Figure 49: England Model 3 Diagnostics

Table 23: Collinearity Statistics for England Data

Model 1

Predictor	VIF	Tolerance
Average annual growth	1.039	0.962
Total employment change	1.025	0.976
Industrial employment change	1.031	0.970

Model 2

Predictor	VIF	Tolerance
Average annual growth	1.051	0.951
Total employment change	1.324	0.755
Industrial employment change	1.066	0.938
Population change	1.344	0.744

Model 3

Predictor	VIF	Tolerance
Average annual growth	1.466	0.682
Total employment change	1.572	0.636
Industrial employment change	1.915	0.522
Population change	2.600	0.385
Unemployment rate	2.400	0.417
Population 65 and over	3.041	0.329
Population density	4.772	0.210
Education	3.790	0.264
Turnout	2.799	0.357
GDP per capita	2.674	0.374

Figure 50: Germany Model 1 Diagnostics
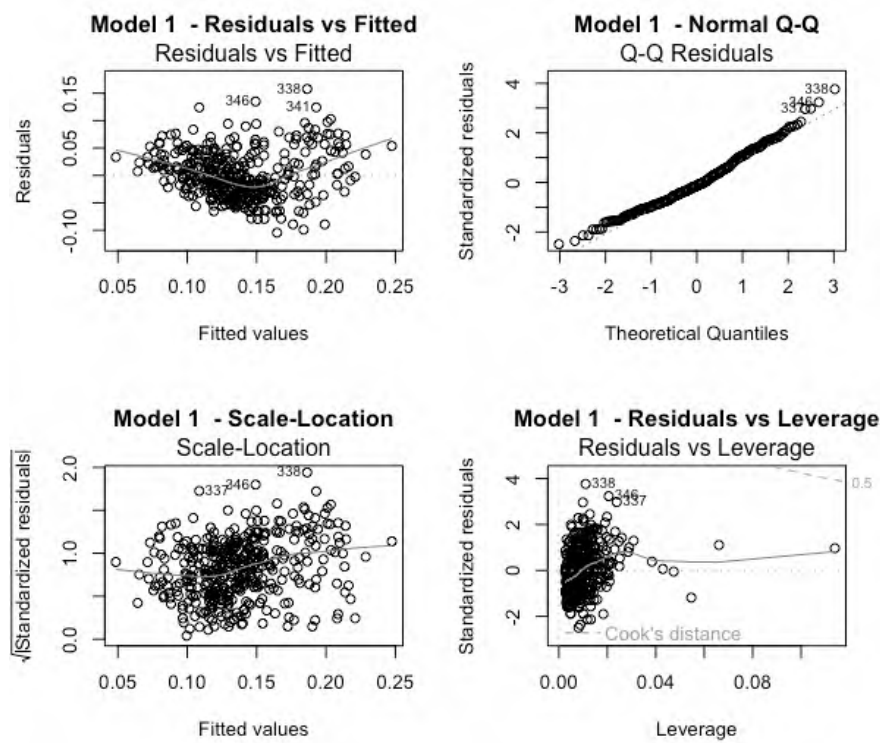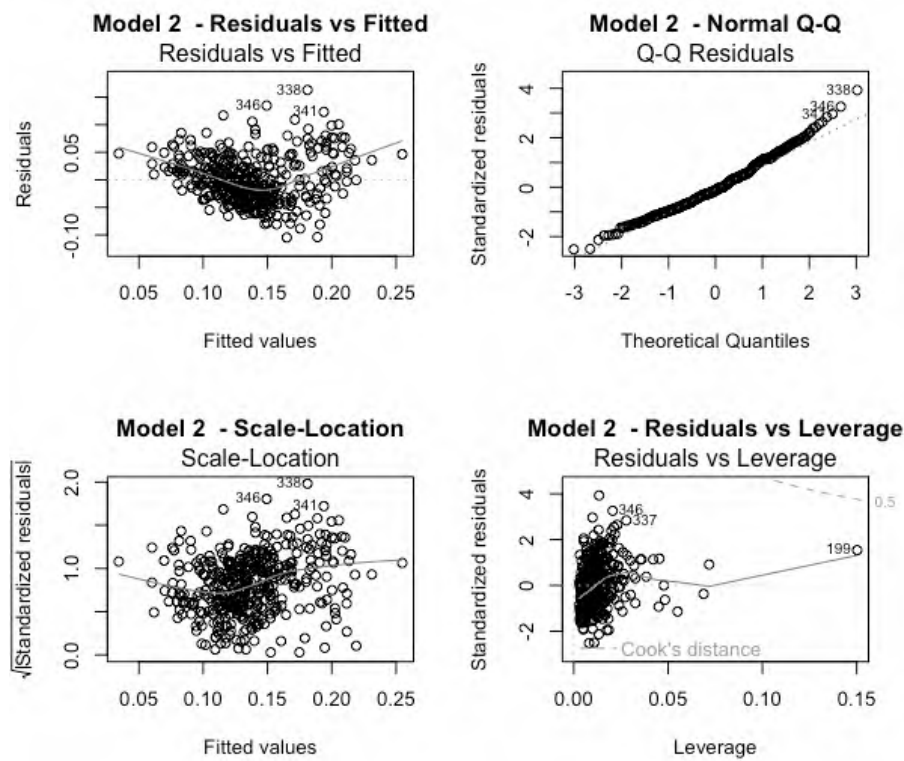

Figure 51: Germany Model 2 Diagnostics
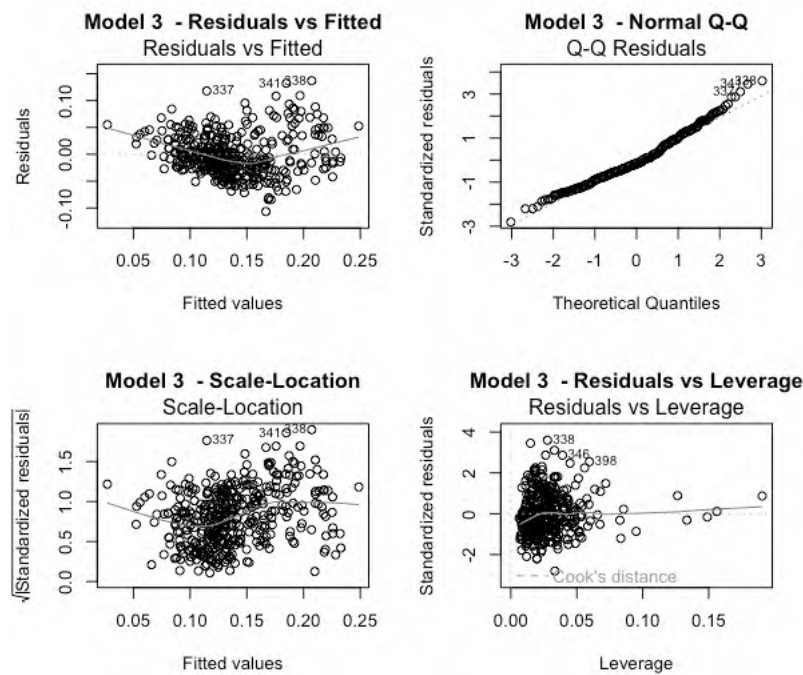

322

Figure 52: Germany Model 3 Diagnostics

Table 24: Collinearity Statistics for Germany Data

Model 1		
Predictor	**VIF**	**Tolerance**
Average annual growth	1.375	0.727
Total employment change	1.087	0.920
Industrial employment change	1.395	0.717

Model 2		
Predictor	**VIF**	**Tolerance**
Average annual growth	1.448	0.691
Total employment change	2.060	0.485
Industrial employment change	1.883	0.531
Population change	2.574	0.388

Model 3		
Predictor	**VIF**	**Tolerance**
Average annual growth	1.582	0.632
Total employment change	2.695	0.371
Industrial employment change	2.566	0.390
Population change	3.061	0.327
Unemployment rate	1.261	0.793
Population 65 and over	1.009	0.991
Population density	2.133	0.469
Education	1.290	0.775
Turnout	1.652	0.605
GDP per capita	1.985	0.504

Figure 53: Germany with Eastern Germany Dummy Model 1 Diagnostics
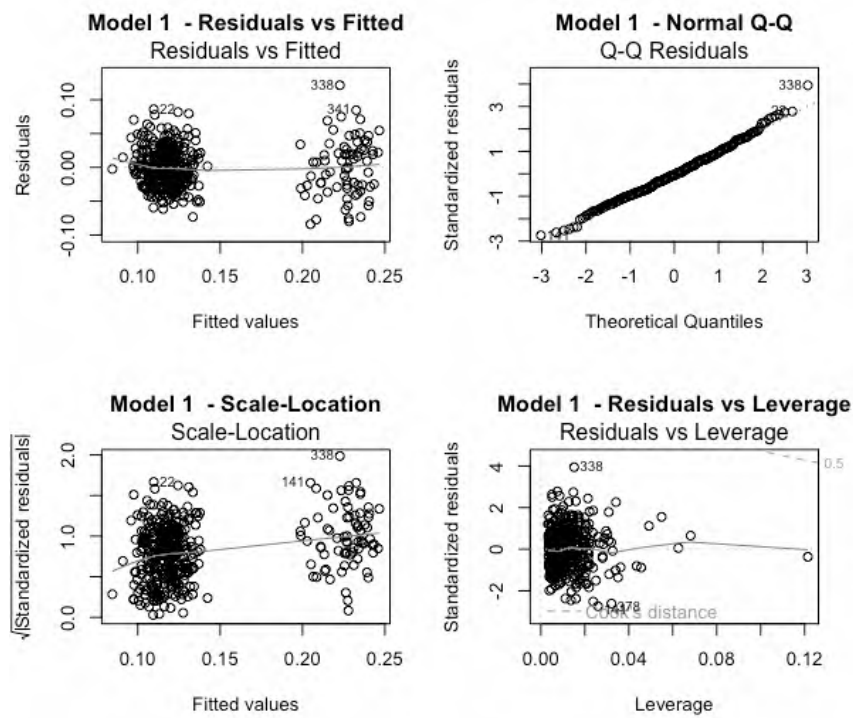

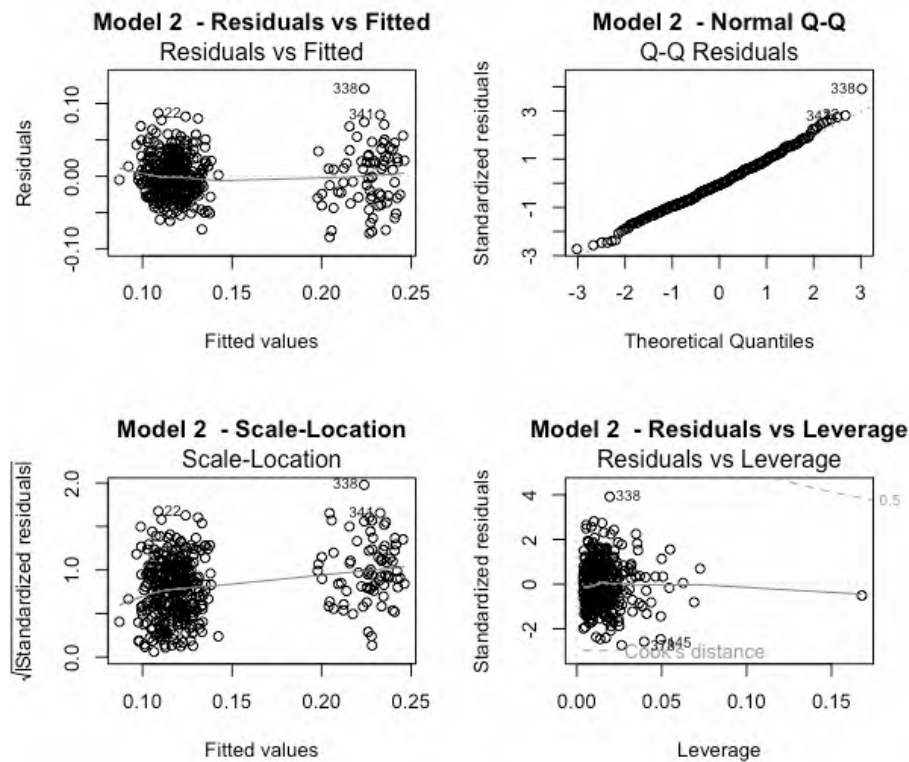*Figure 54: Germany with Eastern Germany Dummy Model 2 Diagnostics*

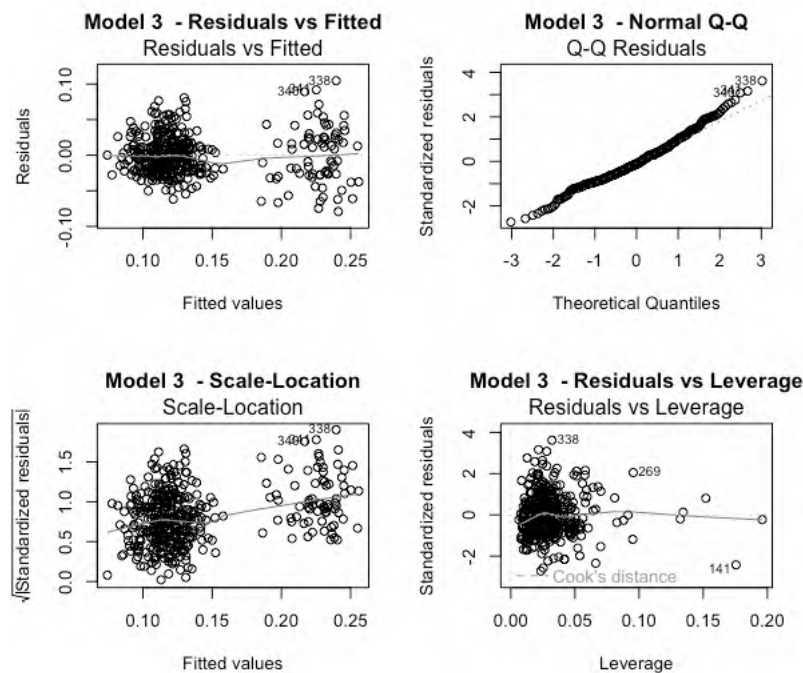*Figure 55: Germany with Eastern Germany Dummy Model 3 Diagnostics*

Table 25: Collinearity Statistics for Germany with Eastern Germany Dummy Data

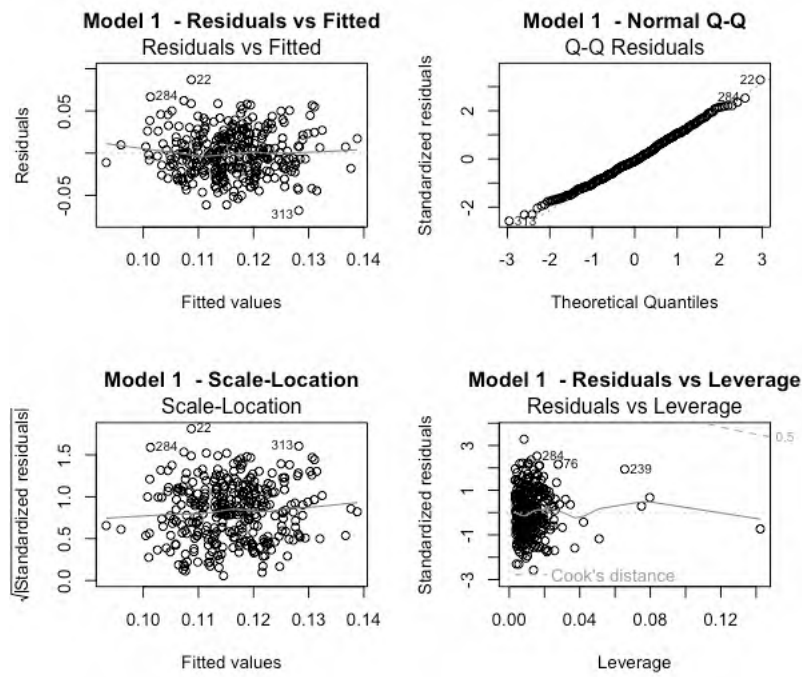| Model 1		
Predictor	**VIF**	**Tolerance**
Average annual growth	1.395	0.717
Total employment change	1.670	0.599
Industrial employment change	1.547	0.646
Dummy variable	1.804	0.554
Model 2		
Predictor	**VIF**	**Tolerance**
Average annual growth	1.490	0.671
Total employment change	3.079	0.325
Industrial employment change	2.196	0.455
Population change	2.709	0.369
Dummy variable	1.899	0.527
Model 3		
Predictor	**VIF**	**Tolerance**
Average annual growth	1.631	0.613
Total employment change	3.591	0.278
Industrial employment change	2.928	0.342
Population change	3.227	0.310
Unemployment rate	1.393	0.718
Population 65 and over	1.011	0.989
Population density	2.206	0.453
Education	1.319	0.758
Turnout	1.698	0.589
GDP per capita	1.989	0.503
Dummy variable	2.299	0.435

Figure 56: Western Germany Model 1 Diagnostics

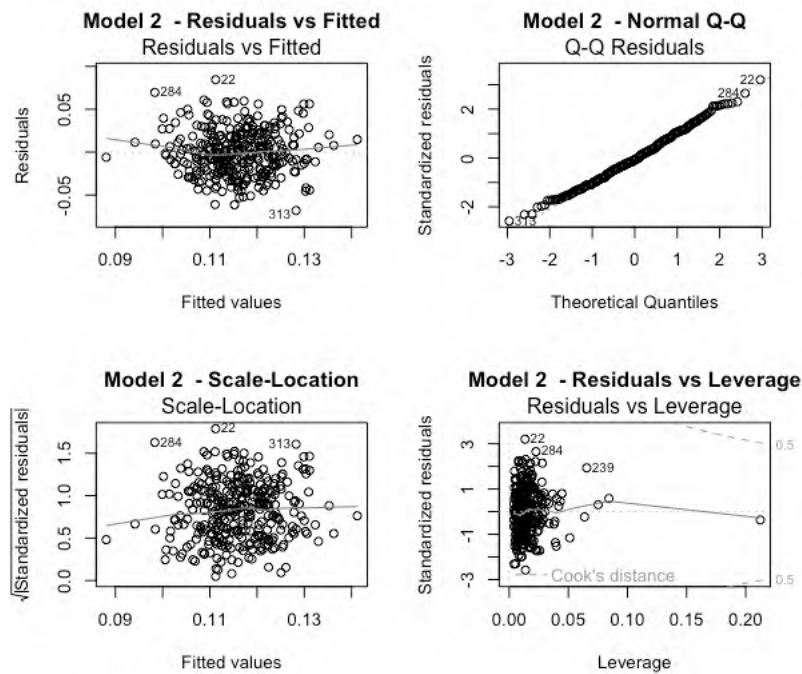Figure 57: Western Germany Model 2 Diagnostics
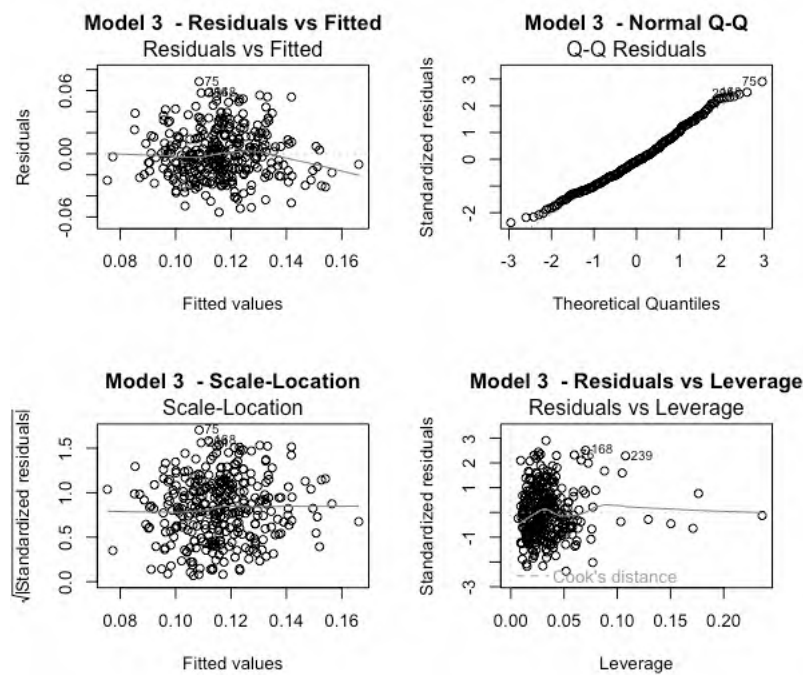
Figure 58: Western Germany Model 3 Diagnostics

Table 26: Collinearity Statistics for Western Germany Data

Model 1

Predictor	VIF	Tolerance
Average annual growth	1.350	0.741
Total employment change	1.055	0.947
Industrial employment change	1.288	0.776

Model 2

Predictor	VIF	Tolerance
Average annual growth	1.393	0.718
Total employment change	1.757	0.569
Industrial employment change	2.086	0.479
Population change	2.404	0.416

Model 3

Predictor	VIF	Tolerance
Average annual growth	1.535	0.651
Total employment change	2.107	0.475
Industrial employment change	3.227	0.310
Population change	3.062	0.327
Unemployment rate	1.156	0.865
Population 65 and over	1.010	0.991
Population density	2.468	0.405
Education	1.367	0.731
Turnout	1.326	0.754
GDP per capita	1.961	0.510

- Residuals vs Fitted plot shows the residuals (errors) on the y-axis and the fitted values (predicted values) on the x-axis. A random scatter of points around the horizontal axis indicates that the linearity assumption is met (Montgomery et al., 2021; Field, 2013; Intermediate R, 2021; STHDA, 2024).

- The normal Q-Q plot compares the distribution of the residuals to a normal distribution. Points lying approximately along the reference line indicate that the residuals are independent and normally distributed (Field, 2013; Intermediate R, 2021; STHDA, 2024).

- The scale-location plot shows the square root of the standardized residuals on the y-axis and the fitted values on the x-axis. A horizontal line with randomly scattered points indicates homoscedasticity (Montgomery et al., 2021; Intermediate R, 2021; Field, 2013; STHDA, 2024).

- Residuals vs Leverage Plot identifies potential influential points or outliers using leverage and Cook's distance. Points outside the Cook's distance lines (typically dotted) may have a large influence on the model and need to be examined.

- Collinearity table presents the tolerance and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values for each independent variable. Tolerance values above 0.2 and any of the VIFs exceeds 5 or 10, indicate no significant multicollinearity (Montgomery et al., 2021: p.304; Field, 2013; Intermediate R, 2021; STHDA, 2024).

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