

# Bridging the Divide Between Structural and Actor-Oriented Explanations of Populism: A Research Agenda for the Study of Populist Euroscepticism Through a Territorial Perspective

Political Studies Review

2025, Vol. 23(2) 622–634

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DOI: 10.1177/14789299241296796

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## Abstract

This article explores the intersection of structural and actor-oriented explanations of populism through a territorial perspective, focusing on populist Euroscepticism. It builds on findings from the ‘Local Mobilisation Against the EU. Territorial Dimensions of Populist Euroscepticism’ (EULOC) project, which examined local drivers and manifestations of populism and Euroscepticism across Europe. The article highlights the importance of analysing both the supply and demand sides of populist Euroscepticism, emphasising the role of geographic inequalities, local socio-economic trajectories and collective identities. By integrating national, regional and local case studies, the article aims to bridge the divide between structural and actor-oriented approaches, offering a more comprehensive understanding of populist Euroscepticism. This approach seeks to prevent reductionist arguments and contributes to broader discussions on political participation, representation and the dynamics of populist movements in Europe. The article underscores the need for nuanced, multi-layered research that considers the unique socio-political dynamics of different regions and the impact of local contexts on the development of Eurosceptic sentiments.

## Keywords

populism, Euroscepticism, territorial dimension, local mobilisation

Accepted: 7 October 2024

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This special issue is an outcome of the ‘Local Mobilisation Against the EU. Territorial Dimensions of Populist Euroscepticism’ (EULOC) project (2022–2023), which was organised under the auspices of CIVICA – an alliance of leading European higher education institutions in the social sciences and led by the LSE (London) and SNSPA (Bucharest). The project examined existing research on the local drivers and manifestations of populism and Euroscepticism. The contributions ranged from studies on parties, movements, local government and social networks, through the examination of Eurosceptic narratives and the study of alternative media production and consumption, to analyses of local economic and cultural drivers of demand for populism. The project’s main analytical contributions are as follows:

1. Realisation that populist discourses and attitudes often underpin Euroscepticism and that this phenomenon can be better understood by using the theoretical and methodological tools developed to analyse populism;
2. Analysis of the interplay between the supply and demand side of populist Euroscepticism across different case studies;
3. Joint examination of the political dynamics and socio-economic trajectories of specific places to better understand populist Euroscepticism is needed;
4. Cross-national comparison of populist Euroscepticism should be complemented by national, regional and local case studies, in order to better control for context, trajectories and sequences of events.

This Special Issue comprises six articles analysing insights from national cases and three articles examining theoretical and methodological approaches (including this introductory article). This body of work argues that research in populist Euroscepticism should focus on the places that are ‘left behind’ and the type of collective identities and actions that germinate there and that this can help us bridge the divide between the structural versus actor-oriented explanations of populism. Furthermore, it is suggested that examining territorial articulations of populist Euroscepticism in a comparative manner can prevent us from formulating reductionist arguments along regional or national lines. By so doing, this Special Issue contributes, not only to the study of populism, but to broader discussions regarding political participation, notably through its focus on different actors that drive populist Euroscepticism, such as ‘regressive’ social movements (Della Porta, 2017) and ‘uncivil’ society (Kopecky and Mudde, 2003), and to democratic theory, notably through its focus on questions of representation (or the lack thereof) within democratic systems (Roberts, 2019). Traditionally, research studying the causes of Euroscepticism adopted a macro perspective and focused on country-level case studies or cross-country comparisons. Aware of the asymmetric incidence of this phenomenon and the increasing divisions regarding EU integration (Hooghe and Marks, 2018), several authors have recently begun to investigate the geographic dimension of Euroscepticism (e.g. Dijkstra et al., 2020; Ejrnæs et al., 2024; McCann, 2020). Yet, those studies have an eminently quantitative angle and do not fully engage with in-depth analyses of sub-national case studies or take into consideration the specificities of the local or regional ideational and institutional contexts. This article and the Special Issue argue for the need to develop a research agenda that directly addresses geographic inequalities and incorporates a different comparative perspective by paying attention to more micro, regional and local socio-political dynamics. We argue this new angle is topical from both a conceptual and policy perspective.

## **Euroscepticism is Fuelled By Populist Reinterpretations of Geographical Inequalities and Crises**

Euroscepticism has become a political identity channelling the social grievances – rooted at a local, regional or national level – against European institutions and elites. First, this set of contributions establishes the link between populism and Euroscepticism. In the first article of the issue, Jose Javier Olivas Osuna (2023) argues in his contribution to the Special Issue that populist leaders exploit pre-existing frustrations and crises to undermine trust in elites and institutions, tailoring their blame attribution to local contexts (Moffitt, 2015; Olivas Osuna and Rama, 2021). He highlights the common populist tactics used by Eurosceptic parties, such as simplifying political problems, morally delegitimising opponents and appealing to a notion of threatened popular sovereignty by Brussels and mainstream parties (Laclau, 2005). Thus, Euroscepticism has become a moral political identity predicated on the opposition of the people versus the elite, following the scripts of a populist logic of articulation. Olivas Osuna posits that theories and measurement tools from the populism literature are therefore crucial for understanding the emergence of Eurosceptic movements and their resonance with citizens' attitudes and grievances, offering a nuanced epistemic framework for analysing how populist messages are crafted to provoke specific beliefs and behaviours across different geographic areas in Europe.

His article emphasises the need to investigate both the supply side (political communications and strategies) and the demand side (citizens' attitudes and their socio-economic contexts) of Euroscepticism. Olivas Osuna critiques the traditional focus on the electoral performance of Eurosceptic parties and their policy impacts, advocating for a deeper exploration of the discursive and ideational dimensions of Euroscepticism. He recommends the use of analytical techniques scholars in the field of populism have employed to measure and compare political discourses and communications (Bernhard and Kriesi, 2019; Meijers and Zaslove, 2021; Rooduijn and Pauwels, 2011) as well as citizens attitudes and beliefs (Akkerman et al., 2014; Elchardus and Spruyt, 2016; Schulz et al., 2018). Olivas Osuna illustrates how Eurosceptic identities are constructed through the creation of antagonisms and political frontiers, using vague and adaptable symbols to unify diverse grievances against both real and perceived threats (Laclau, 2005; Olivas Osuna, 2024). This analytical approach underscores the importance of micro-level analysis in capturing the regional and local variations in Eurosceptic sentiment, which are shaped by specific socio-economic trajectories, geographic inequalities and collective interpretations (Gartzou-Katsouyanni et al., 2022; Vasilopoulou and Talving, 2024).

In that regard, this issue contributes to the wider literature on the subject, which identifies social grievances caused by globalisation, digital transformation and neoliberal economic dislocation as foundations of populism (Colantone and Stanig, 2018). They are the preconditions that are being capitalised on by political forces appealing to the idea of a homogeneous people taken advantage of by an out-of-touch, often foreign, elite and threatening their national identity (Curtice, 2016). The Eurosceptic identity, activated by certain political discourses, channels outrage based on perceived injustices – rooted at a local, regional or national level – against European institutions and elites. The European Union has historically been seen as a particularly good example of how socio-economic conditions contribute to the 'making' of populism. Governance failures with respect to the eurozone, the sovereign debt crisis and migration fuelled many grievances across the EU (Algan et al., 2017), they are however only one part of the economic underpinning of populism.

The geography of the winners and losers from EU integration is another example of the role socio-economic conditions play in the overall economy of populism because it catalyses economic change that is unbalanced spatially (Rodriguez-Pose and Crescenzi, 2008; Rodrik, 2018). Right-wing populist parties appeal to people in communities that have fallen behind in material terms (Schraff and Pontusson, 2024). The material-structural considerations are most certainly not the whole picture, as first noted by Mudde (2010), nor do they necessarily come first. Ideational factors, such as cultural values, national identity and collective interpretations of crises and threats, are key to explaining any political behaviour, including populism and Euroscepticism (Caiani and Graziano, 2021; Moffitt, 2015). Populist discourses are aimed at presenting people's way of life as though in grave danger (Wodak, 2015) and at instrumentalising geographical inequalities to instil a sense of nostalgic deprivation to fuel distrust of institutions and mobilise anti-European sentiment (Gartzou-Katsouyanni et al., 2022; Gest et al., 2019).

The cumbersomeness of the European construction lends itself particularly well to that kind of framing. To the public, the EU is often seen as being governed by an unelected bureaucratic elite. This elite then provides a platform that allows for the attribution of responsibility for the actual or perceived malaise. Correspondingly, the process of radicalisation along symbolic lines – with respect to language, religion, culture, ethnicity or citizenship – has been proven to be a compelling perspective on the rise of populism in Europe (Inglehart and Norris, 2016). The analytical distinction between economic versus symbolic explanations of populism, however, is increasingly seen as somewhat of a false dichotomy (Gidron and Hall, 2017; Olivas Osuna et al., 2021), when we take into account the diversity of economic trajectories and symbolic politics in peripheral countries (Rodrik, 2018). This is particularly true for the EU, where we have seen Eurosceptic populism flourish in a variety of places and the economic argument of the 'revenge of the places that don't matter' not to apply consistently across the continent (Vasilopoulou and Talving, 2024).

Contrary to what economic explanations might suggest, it is not the countries hardest hit by the financial crisis and the EU's failure to provide relief – the southern European periphery – that exhibit the most Eurosceptic tendencies (Dijkstra et al., 2020; Vasilopoulou and Talving, 2024). Rather we see these tendencies in core countries, such as Germany – a case analysed by Johannes Kiess (2023) for this Special Issue. His article presents a detailed examination of far-right mobilisation in East Germany. Kiess highlights how local networks in Saxony intensify during crises, such as migration surges and the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to unique dynamics distinct from other German regions. He argues that regional and local identity formations and perceptions of inequalities play critical roles in understanding these movements. The article posits that the transformation of the public sphere, characterised by globalisation, commodification and digitalisation, has facilitated the mobilisation of far-right groups through platforms like Telegram, where regional issues are discussed in localised groups, leading to a fragmentation of the public sphere and reinforcement of populist discourses.

Kiess further explores the implications of these localised far-right mobilisations for the study of Euroscepticism, emphasising the need for comparative analysis across regions. The article notes that regional movements often position themselves against the centralisation and egalitarianism of European integration, using regional narratives of being 'left behind' to fuel their agendas. This approach reveals the localised nature of Eurosceptic sentiment and its dependence on regional political, social and economic dynamics. Kiess advocates for a micro-level analysis of digital radicalisation, where far-right mobilisations leverage the hybridisation and decentralisation of organisations to adapt global

narratives to local contexts. Advanced methodologies like network analysis and natural language processing used to monitor and understand the dynamics within these groups, can provide the tools for analysing the far-right's use of digital media to foster Eurosceptic and anti-democratic sentiments. Kriess' work resonates with other studies that have highlighted far-right parties' efforts to re-articulate the dichotomy 'the people' versus 'the elite' through communications and performances that take advantage of the crisis and dominant interpretative frames (e.g. Lamour and Carls, 2022; Mazzoleni and Ruzza, 2018; Olivas Osuna and Rama, 2021; Volk, 2020).

## **Comparing the Interplay Between the Supply and Demand-Side of Populism Across Cases**

Insights from the cases discussed in the Special Issue suggest that we need to study the demand behind populist Euroscepticism to better understand this phenomenon, that is understanding citizens' beliefs and attitudes, as well as how political actors instil and take advantage of such Manichean worldview to advance their agenda. Central-Eastern Europe has been a playground for populist mobilisation despite different economic trajectories, logics of nationalism and perceptions of the European project (Benczes and Szabó, 2023; Orenstein and Bugarič, 2022). Among the most striking insights from the Special Issue are the differences among seemingly similar national cases with respect to the conditions in which populist Euroscepticism plays out. Contributors to this Special Issue point out that it was frequently ethnonationalism, nativist and anti-EU discourses that were key components of the respective electoral successes that responded to a diverse array of social and cultural grievances (cf. the articles on Poland and Romania). In some instances the governing elite had entrenched Euroscepticism as the foundation of their populist discourse in order to maintain power and address social demands. Populist Euroscepticism then can be traced not just with respect to individual sentiments and elite discourses but has functioned as a structuring force in society with respect to collective identity formation (Gifford, 2020; Van Klingeren et al., 2013).

This is evidenced by a case study contribution on Romania. Claudiu Crăciun and Andrei Țăranu's (2023) article in this Special Issue offers an insightful analysis of the rise of the Alliance for the Union of Romanians (AUR) during the 2020 Romanian parliamentary elections. The authors attribute AUR's unexpected success to the combination of a low voter turnout amid the pandemic crisis and strategic mobilisation by nationalist and conservative networks. They emphasise the role of the 2018 constitutional referendum, which sought to ban same-sex marriages, in consolidating a conservative base that AUR later capitalised on. While the referendum certainly demonstrated that there is a demand for nationalist and conservative populist rhetoric, AUR's performance highlights the sequenced interplay between the demand and supply side of populism. The 2018 constitutional referendum was a top-down mobilisation from conservative and nationalist groups while the pandemic crisis produced widespread social discontent that was effectively channelled by AUR in their parliamentary bid. The social discontent was directed against masks and vaccination, correlatives of hardline conservative worldviews, but also had a significant socio-economic dimension, against the effects of pandemic restrictions. The positioning highlights the populist strategy to capture and structure socio-economic grievances within the conflictual framing of people versus elites. In the case of AUR, the pandemic response was framed as though a national, European and global elite attempted to coerce, weaken and even destroy Europe's smaller nations. The article, therefore, links

the supply and the demand-side of populism, arguing that AUR's effective use of social media, combined with support from Orthodox priests and grassroots nationalist groups, allowed the party to reach a significant portion of the electorate dissatisfied with mainstream parties and pandemic restrictions. Their study also highlights the geographical patterns of AUR's support, noting its strong performance in regions like Bucovina and Moldova, which have historically exhibited conservative and nationalist tendencies. The authors explore how AUR's ideological pillars – family, homeland, faith and freedom – resonated with voters in these areas. In addition, the article discusses the role of the Romanian diaspora in bolstering AUR's electoral success, attributing this to the party's emotional appeal to Romanians living abroad and their disillusionment with existing political options back home. By examining the interplay of territorial factors, socio-political dynamics and AUR's strategic messaging, Crăciun and Țăranu provide an understanding of the emergence and consolidation of nationalist-conservative movements in Romania.

Poland is a curious case of a country where elite populist Euroscepticism has been used to build a collective identity among specific voter groups amid popular Euro-enthusiasm. While Poland remains the EU's most pro-European society, for the Law and Justice (PiS) party, which was in office from 2015 to 2023, populist Euroscepticism is first and foremost an electoral strategy, writes Natasza Styczyńska (2023) for this Special Issue. Styczyńska highlights the paradox of the PiS-led coalition, which employed Eurosceptic and populist rhetoric despite the general pro-European sentiment among Poles. The article explores how this government, elected by a population that feels European and trusts EU institutions more than national ones, used identity politics and anti-elitist discourse to appeal to voters. This phenomenon underscores the complex relationship between populism, Euroscepticism and national identity in Poland, where historical and cultural factors play a significant role in shaping political attitudes. The study delves into the specifics of Polish populist Euroscepticism, noting that while mainstream parties generally support EU membership, they often express criticism of the EU's political integration and institutional frameworks. This Euroscepticism is particularly evident on the right side of the political spectrum, where parties like PiS use populist rhetoric to emphasise a dichotomy between the 'pure people' and the 'corrupt elite' in Brussels (Csehi and Zgut, 2021; Styczyńska and Meijer, 2023). Styczyńska employs qualitative content analysis of party manifestos, speeches and parliamentary debates to illustrate how populist discourse in Poland merges with Euroscepticism. The research shows that this blend of populism and Euroscepticism is tailored to the national context, reflecting Poland's historical sensitivity to external dominance and its internal socio-cultural cleavages.

In that vein, Ildiko Otova's (2024) article in this Special Issue offers an in-depth examination of Euroscepticism in Bulgaria, contextualising it within the nation's historical and geographical ties to Russia. Otova argues that Bulgarian Euroscepticism cannot be fully understood without considering the country's long-standing cultural, economic and political connections to Russia. This analysis situates Bulgarian Euroscepticism along the Europe-Russia axis, highlighting how historical-geographical overlays and geopolitical factors shape national political attitudes. The article traces the evolution of Euroscepticism in Bulgaria from the post-communist period to the present day. Initially, there was a broad consensus on EU accession among Bulgarian political parties, but this consensus began to fracture with Bulgaria's actual EU membership. Otova examines the rise of pro-Russian, Eurosceptic parties like Ataka and Revival, noting their effective use of nationalist rhetoric and anti-EU sentiment. Otova's work shows that populist Euroscepticism should be analysed to consider the impact of external influences.

## **Joint Examination of the Political Dynamics and Socio-economic Trajectories of Specific Places to Better Understand Populist Euroscepticism is Needed**

The issue's contributions evidence the need for a joint examination of the political dynamics and socio-economic trajectories of specific places in order to better understand populist Euroscepticism. These contributions highlight that a great deal of political diversity at the local and regional level is not reflected in the national analyses and hence reinforces the need to focus on the place as object of analysis. Dunin-Wąsowicz and Gartzou-Katsouyanni (2023) show in their contribution to this Special Issue how the local level of analysis can help us understand the interactions between the economic and cultural factors that underpin populist voting preferences. Their article explores the spatially uneven effects of structural transformations like globalisation and technological change, arguing that 'place' is a crucial unit of analysis in understanding populist Euroscepticism. They challenge the traditional left-right economic and cosmopolitan-traditionalist cultural dimensions, positing that economic and cultural factors reinforce each other. The concept of place, encompassing geographical, material and identity-related factors, helps explain how individuals' experiences and responses to broader socio-economic phenomena vary by location (Allen, 2009; Massey, 1993).

By examining sub-national variations, the article posits, one is better equipped to shed light on how local socio-economic trajectories and identity factors interact to fuel demand for populist narratives, particularly in left-behind areas in Western Europe, regions in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) undergoing democratic transition and Southern European localities affected by the Eurozone crisis. The article further outlines the inadequacies of existing theories in explaining the rise of populist Euroscepticism in CEE, emphasising the need for localised approaches due to the region's unique structural transformations. Despite significant economic growth in CEE over the past decades, the unevenly distributed benefits of this growth have led to material inequalities and identity-related grievances that drive populist sentiments. The authors argue that understanding populist Euroscepticism requires analysing the interplay of economic and cultural factors at the local level, considering both quantifiable socio-economic conditions and the existential anxieties of communities.

Examination of specific localities for the dynamics of populist mobilisation has led to findings emphasising its emotive dimension, something that Cramer (2016) has coined as the 'politics of resentment'. This is very much in line with other findings on the significance of collective consciousness, the genuine human need for such identities to be developed and cherished, and the way in which they can be capitalised on politically (Fukuyama, 2018). The overall argument put forward in this Special Issue is that the focus on the place bridges some of the methodological approaches discussed above. The social-economic condition of those who are 'left behind' is no longer quantified only on an individual level, one needs to look at the places that are 'left behind' and the type of collective identities that germinate there (McCann, 2020). Socio-economic 'geographies of discontent' (Dijkstra et al., 2020; Fitzgerald, 2018; Rodríguez-Pose and Crescenzi, 2008) play an important role in shaping authoritarian views and populist voting patterns across Europe. But also grassroots mobilisation is a result of both social and territorial disparities and the deterioration of places that have had it better in the past, 'places that don't matter' argues Rodríguez-Pose (2018).

However, the attention paid to the structural concerns on the economic level needs to be paired with scrutiny of social dynamics – most notably population change, especially due to outward migration (Essletzbichler et al., 2018; Martin et al., 2018). It is not just the crumbling of the physical infrastructure and labour opportunities that matters, but also the breakdown of the social fabric. It is the relative deprivation (Schraff and Pontusson, 2024) vis-à-vis a perceived happier time – more economically and socially stable – be that under Ceaușescu or Honecker. Some have argued that this is related to places that used to be richer, that ‘places that don’t matter’ rebel because of their lost affluence (Rodríguez-Pose, 2018). In a recent study of populist radical right attitudes and support in France, Germany, Great Britain and the Netherlands, the authors conclude that the feelings of local decline mediate the impact of ‘objective’ contextual features (Arzheimer et al., 2024: 23). With respect to macroeconomic indicators, personal wealth and perceptions of one’s socio-economic status, this argument does not hold up scrutiny in Central-Eastern Europe (CEE) on a national level. The articles in this Special Issue show that what is more significant is the perceptions of the past’s stability, and unpredictability faced with an increasingly uncertain future, seen from the vantage point of specific places. We thus reiterate the call for more research on relative and absolute decline in local wealth and how it impacts political discontent (Ejrnæs et al., 2024: 1486).

### **Cross-National Comparisons of Populist Euroscepticism Should Be Complemented By National, Regional and Local Case Studies to Better Control for Context, Trajectories and Sequences of Events**

The studies gathered in this Special Issue warrant future research. More nuanced research taking into account the unique socio-economic and cultural factors that affect Eurosceptic sentiments, in particular in left-behind areas, is needed. Currently, such research is carried out in a rather isolated manner. While methodological pluralism offers unique benefits, such as in-depth knowledge through approaches specifically designed to provide local insights (notably through ethnographic methods), it also results in epistemological fragmentation and complicates cross-regional and, even more so, cross-national comparison. Longitudinal research is necessary to understand the development of populist Euroscepticism over time. By tracking changes in political ideology, socio-economic status and local identity over different periods, researchers can identify patterns and causal relationships. The effect of regional disparities could further benefit from focusing on communities rather than regions. This could provide more in-depth knowledge of community-specific grievances and predominant cleavages in the region. Social media plays a key role in the dissemination of populist discourses and the mobilisation of networks (cf. Kiess’ contribution to this special issue). More research is needed to fully understand how social media enables populist discourses to advance global narratives while targeting local communities and problems. Finally, prescriptive research is needed the moment the descriptive and analytical groundwork is laid.

We argue that cross-national comparisons of populist Euroscepticism should be complemented by national, regional and local case studies to provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. This multi-layered approach allows researchers to control for contextual variations, trajectories and sequences of events that are often overlooked in broader analyses. National case studies can offer detailed insights into how specific

countries' histories, political systems and economic conditions influence the rise and development of Eurosceptic sentiments. By examining individual nations, researchers can identify unique national factors, such as political culture, historical grievances and economic vulnerabilities, that contribute to the appeal of populist Euroscepticism (Vasilopoulou, 2013). This level of analysis helps in understanding how national policies and political dynamics shape and are shaped by Eurosceptic movements.

Regional case studies are, however, crucial for understanding intra-national differences. Even within a single country, regions can have vastly different socio-economic conditions, cultural identities and political landscapes. For example, regions that are either in economic decline or lagging-behind economically often experience higher levels of Euroscepticism due to perceived neglect and unequal resource distribution (Rodríguez-Pose, 2018). By focusing on regional variations, we can uncover how regional identities and economic disparities influence populist sentiments and movements. Accordingly, in this Special Issue, Dunin-Wąsowicz and Gartzou-Katsouyanni (2023) contend that examining left-behind regions in Western Europe through the concept of place has significantly enhanced our understanding of the dynamics of the second dimension of politics and the emergence of populist Euroscepticism in these areas. They also highlight the shortcomings of current theories in accounting for populist Euroscepticism in CEE, emphasising the need for further research on the geographical aspects of the unique structural changes CEE has experienced in recent decades and how these transformations are connected to political developments. They call for a research agenda aimed at deepening our comprehension of the political consequences of local socio-economic developments in Western European areas left behind, Central and Eastern European regions grappling with post-transition challenges, and Southern European locations affected by the Eurozone crisis, among others. In addition, local case studies provide an even finer-grained analysis. They allow for an in-depth exploration of community-specific factors that drive Euroscepticism. Local studies can reveal how community identity, local grievances and grassroots mobilisation efforts contribute to the broader populist Eurosceptic discourse. Ethnographic methods, participant observations and local interviews can provide rich, qualitative data that highlight the lived experiences and perspectives of individuals within these communities (Kalb and Halmai, 2022 [2011]). This level of detail is essential for understanding the micro-dynamics of populist movements and how they resonate with local populations.

Moreover, integrating national, regional and local case studies with cross-national comparisons enables researchers to identify patterns and divergences in Eurosceptic movements across different contexts. This approach facilitates a more nuanced understanding of how global trends intersect with local realities. For example, while fears of economic globalisation and immigration might be common themes in Eurosceptic rhetoric across countries, the specific manifestations and triggers of these themes can vary widely depending on local contexts (Inglehart and Norris, 2016). Finally, combining these different levels of analysis helps to map the trajectories and sequences of events that led to the rise of populist Euroscepticism. By tracing the development of these movements from local grievances to regional mobilisation and national political impact, researchers can better understand the processes and critical junctures that shape the evolution of Euroscepticism. This comprehensive approach also allows for the identification of potential tipping points and the impact of specific events or policies on the growth or decline of populist movements.

The focus on the local and regional level should not however ignore the EU level. A comprehensive territorial perspective on Eurosceptic populism should explore not only local, regional and national aggregations but also transnational ones and specific EU-wide articulations. One example is the farmer's contention, articulated at all levels – local, regional, national and European. Running for months and peaking during the 2024 EP electoral campaign, the protests targeted specifically the EU-level policies – CAP and the EU's Green Deal, and the import facilities for Ukrainian agricultural products, amplified by far-right parties and movements (Matthews, 2024). Other promising research avenues could be actor-based, focused on party organisations in the European Parliament or the Committee of the Regions, or process-based, for example exploring the use of European Citizens Initiatives or EU consultation processes to express community-based populist and Eurosceptic grievances.

### Declaration of conflicting interests


The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

### Funding

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: Local Mobilisation Against the EU. Territorial Dimensions of Populist Euroscepticism (EULOC) project was supported by CIVICA. The contribution of Claudiu Crăciun for this article was supported by a grant of the Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digitization, CNCS/CCCDI-UEFISCDI, project number PN-III-P3-3.6-H2020-2020-0190, within PNCDI III. The contribution of José Javier Olivás Osuna for this article was supported by a grant of the Spanish State Research Agency, project number PID2020-113182RA-I00.

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