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Public Health Measures Enacted by the Norwegian Political Leadership to Protect the Elderly in Response to the SARS-CoV-2 Pandemic Crisis

ABSTRACT: *The SARS-CoV-2 pandemic crisis is ongoing, and the elderly are still affected by the virus, sometimes with fatal consequences. The political leaders are, inter alia, focussed on protecting citizens, including this vulnerable group. This article aims to describe the response of the Norwegian political leadership, with a focus on the public health measures enacted to protect the elderly during the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic crisis in the years 2020 and 2021. This study has a descriptive qualitative research design using thematic-content analysis as a methodology to evaluate data collected from official documents, national statistics and public health documents from Norway. Statistics show that the elderly mortality rate per 100,000 person-weeks during the first wave of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic was 2.69 in Norway; during the second wave of the pandemic, it was 1.43. The public health measures the Norwegian political leadership instigated were more effective in containing the crisis when compared to other European countries, and this paper investigates the reasons. The results of our study provide public health policy decision-makers with insights into analytical material showing the usefulness of different measures enacted by the Norwegian government. The Norwegian government's responses to the crisis, such as the public health measures, restrictions, social consequences for vulnerable groups such as the elderly, as well as cross-government and cross-community cooperation, will need further in-depth analysis.*

KEYWORDS: elderly, mortality rates, Norway, SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, political response, public health measures

RECEIVED 16 August 2022; **ACCEPTED** 22 January 2023.

INTRODUCTION

SARS-CoV-2, the causative agent of the COVID-19 pandemic, carries a disproportionate risk of infection, disease, morbidity and higher mortality rates in the elderly because of the direct risks caused by their increased vulnerability when considering their latent or indirect risks from sociocultural and demographic factors (Khan et al., 2020; D'Cruz & Banerjee, 2020). Public health measures (such as mask covering, social distancing, vaccination, the duration of quarantine and lockdown, the approach to and frequency for testing, hospital and long-term care visitor policies) and concrete interventions are necessary for reducing fatal consequences for all citizens, including the elderly. Williamson et al. (2021) state that the elderly are clearly among the groups most at risk of serious illness and death from COVID-19. The pandemic and responses to it limit the extent to which the elderly's voices are heard and restrict the considerable contributions they can make to our global response and recovery.

During the pandemic, it was very important to disseminate the information about public health measures in a comprehensible manner to the entire public. As an example, when Norway enforced a lockdown, 5.4 million text message alerts were sent to its citizens and to 300,000 foreign visitors to inform them about lockdown restrictions (NIPH, 2020); these messages were written in all the local and minority languages. Additionally, all the relevant information about health measures was published online in 44 languages, along with short animated films and picture posters, by the Norwegian Institute of Public Health. The country continued to maintain the lockdown, and every Friday, political leaders, standing a significant distance apart and wearing face masks, held open

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conferences in professional, clear and calm voices and shared the importance of compliance with the public health measures. In this way, the political leadership of Norway was an example of ‘good practice’ for their citizens. The SARS-CoV-2 pandemic has brought structural and social issues to light, including the erosion of public trust in government and expert advice, which was compounded by a wave of mis- and disinformation (OECD, 2022). As a result of a pandemic’s dynamic nature, complete transparency concerning the potential risks was – and still is – necessary to ensure a clear definition of, and the quality of, the resulting societal and political response (Nicola, 2020). Additionally, Aasland and Braut (2022) stressed that the collaboration and the method and delivery of communication are crucial factors in handling crises such as the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic.

Haslam et al. (2021) focussed on how political leaders mobilise the population and disseminate public health measures. They used the identity leadership approach to explain how leaders can represent and advance the shared interests of group members and create and embed a sense of shared social identity among them. Several researchers emphasised that the states with female governors who issued early stay-at-home orders had fewer SARS-CoV-2-related deaths than those with male governors who issued the same orders. Subsequent qualitative analyses revealed that female governors cultivated more empathy and confidence through their SARS-CoV-2-related briefings than male governors; for example, the female governors forged deeper connections with their constituents by exhibiting empathy and showing compassion in expressions of concern and care for citizens’ welfare (Sergent & Stajkovic, 2020; Aldrich & Lotito, 2020; Bruce et al. 2022). The principal executive authorities at the national level in Norway during the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic crisis were the Ministry of Health and Care Services (national responsibility for health preparedness; declares a health crisis, thus activating roles of other authorities), the Directorate of Health (coordinates mitigation efforts and implements infection control measures) and the Institute of Public Health (monitors the pandemic situation and supervises and advises state and local authorities on infection control). Many of the political leaders in important positions were female – Prime Minister Erna Solberg and the head of the Norwegian Institute of Public Health Camilla Stoltenberg, together with the Divisional Director of Public Health and Prevention by Norwegian Directorate of Health Linda Granlund. Each leader had an important role and responsibility to convey health measures to citizens. As Boin et al. (2013) explained, the leader’s success in crisis situations depends to a great extent on exercising good judgment; further, Sturm et al. (2017, p. 350) stressed that having sound judgment is an important aspect of effective leadership. Norway’s Directorate of Health was given responsibility for coordinating the health-sector response which started on 31st January 2020, and it kept this role into 2021. When the pandemic crisis turned into a full-blown crisis in March 2020, the Directorate temporarily had extraordinarily extensive decision-making responsibilities due to emergency procedures in the Infection Control Act. Out of convenience, 12th March lockdown decisions were formally enacted by the Directorate, even though the Prime Minister, other government ministers and the Ministry of Health were actively involved in the decision-making process (Askim & Bergström, 2022).

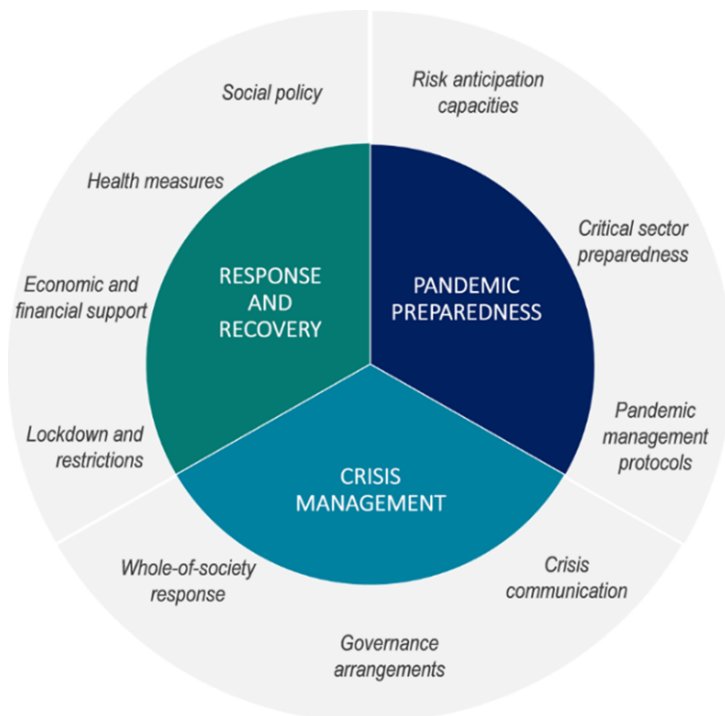
The present article aims to describe the response of the Norwegian political leadership with a focus on the public health measures enacted to protect the elderly during the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic crisis during 2020 and 2021. The following research question was investigated: *How did the Norwegian political leadership respond to the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic crisis in protecting the elderly?* This research study chose a conceptual framework to contribute to the construction of a theoretical body for the analysis of the character of the political leadership response and the instruments and measures that were used in crisis management.

THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

For a description of Norwegian policy responses, researchers in this study were inspired by and used one part of the Framework for Evaluating COVID-19 Responses according to the OECD Recommendation of the Council on the Governance of Critical Risks (2014). There are three main policy responses that correspond to the major phases of the risk management cycle: (i) pandemic preparedness, (ii) crisis management and (iii) response and recovery (Figure 1.).

Before declaring SARS-CoV-2 a pandemic, many countries were assessed via the Global Health Security Index (GHSI) for their preparedness for pandemics (Bell & Nuzzo, 2021). According to a WHO report (2020), the United States of America (US) and the United Kingdom (UK) were identified as the most prepared countries in terms of *pandemic preparedness*. Prior assessments of countries such as Norway (16th on the GHS Index) are inconsistent with the actual performance during this pandemic. *Crisis management* is the next major phase in the framework for evaluating; this involves the policies and actions that governments deployed to deal with the crisis once it materialised. Crisis management entails responding appropriately, at the right time and in a coordinated manner across the government. Crisis management also requires clear communication with the public and transparency in decision-

Fig. 1: Framework for evaluating COVID-19 responses according to OECD (2022)



Source: OECD (2022). *First lessons from government evaluations of COVID-19 responses: A synthesis*, p. 5.

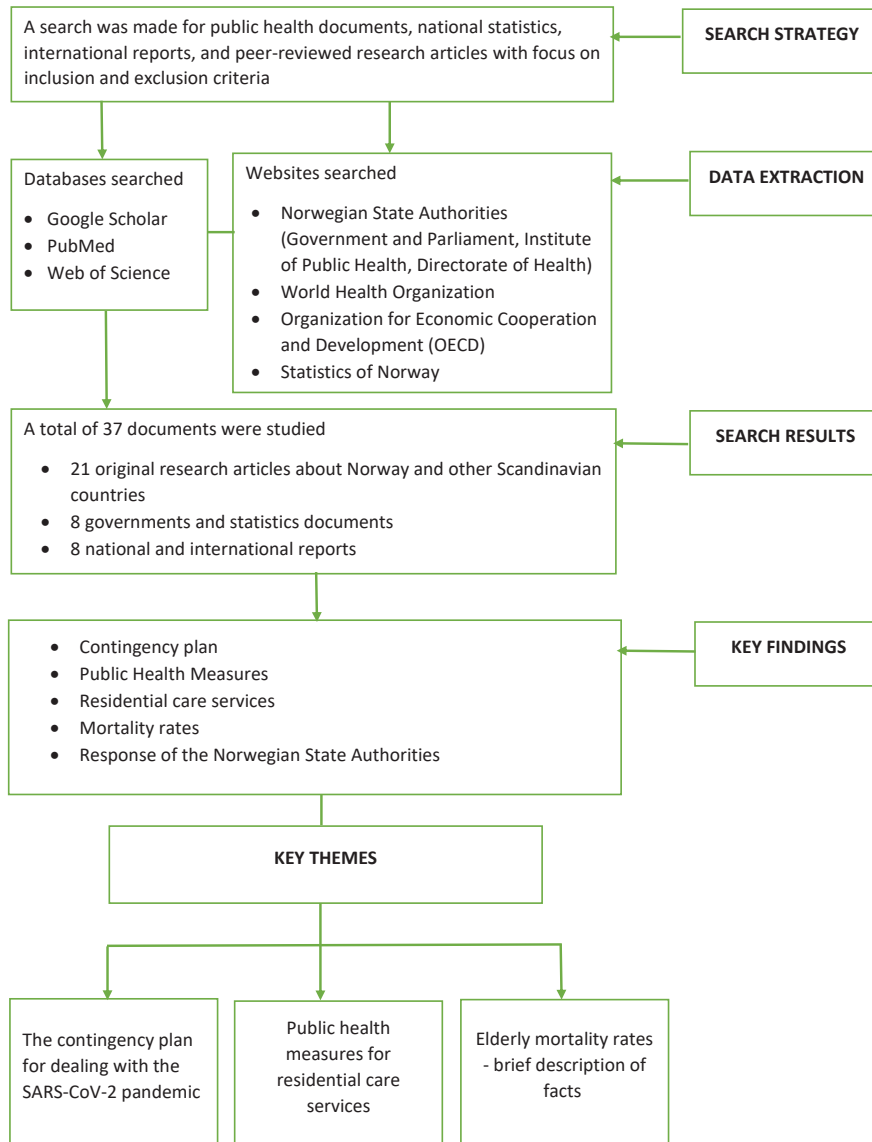
making, particularly as large-scale crises can critically impact people's trust in government (OECD, 2022). Finally, *response and recovery* policies are aimed at mitigating the impacts of the pandemic and economic crisis on citizens and businesses, additionally supporting economic recovery and reducing welfare losses. These policies include lockdowns and restrictions, e.g., general measures taken in order to limit the spread of the virus, economic and financial support to households, businesses and markets to lessen the impact of the economic downturn, health measures aimed at protecting and treating the population, and social policies aimed at protecting the most vulnerable populations (OECD, 2022). As an example of the differences in health measures instigated to protect citizens during the pandemic crisis, it is useful to point out the mixed messages that arose regarding face coverings; while many countries urged people to use coverings or respirators, the Norwegian Institute of Public Health (NIPH, 2020) did not recommend doing so. This split messaging led to uncertainty and sparked fears regarding which precautions should be implemented.

METHODS

This study characterises as a descriptive qualitative research design with the aim of communicating and producing organised information concerning the subject investigated. The methods employed here involved bibliographic survey, analysis of public health policy documents, national statistics, international reports and documents from government agencies in Norway. Public health policy documents are defined in this research as written online documents that contain strategies and priorities, define goals and objectives, and are issued by the part of the public administration responsible for the protection of public health against the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, with a focus on the elderly population. Although several public health documents are aimed at the general population, these health measures were also analysed because they included the elderly population.

According to Bowen (2009), document analysis is a systematic research technique which uses both printed and electronic materials as the source, analysing them in-depth to extract information and indications relative to the study objective. It is important to note that document analysis is a process involving skimming (superficial examination), reading (thorough examination), and

Fig. 2: Description of the search strategy, data extraction and search results



Source: Authors.

interpretation of the content to provide answers to research questions. The data obtained (e.g., excerpts, quotations or passages) were organised into major themes through thematic analysis to develop empirical knowledge (Green & Thorogood, 2018). Data gathering and analysis were conceptually driven and based on the framework illustrated in Figure 2.

Data collection

Taking into consideration that the main aim is to describe how the responses of the Norwegian political leadership to the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic crisis contributed to the protection of the elderly, the authors chose to analyse the health measures that were implemented to avoid increasing mortality rates in the populations discussed. This way, the focus was specifically on Norwegian State Authorities, including the Norwegian government and Norwegian Parliament websites, and publicly available documents focussing

on the pandemic period. Furthermore, information from the Norwegian Institute of Public Health and Norwegian Directorate of Health and Social Affairs was examined. The international reports published by the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2020) and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2021–2022) were analysed as a parameter. This type of analysis provided validity to the data obtained.

Other key websites were additionally searched, including the various government agencies in Norway's regional health authorities, as well as online databases, Google Scholar, PubMed, and Web of Science. Only current articles and reports that were available in their entirety were selected for review. In total, 44 documents were initially identified, of which seven were excluded from the further review – four documents were listed as rescinded and three documents were only summaries of original guidelines. The remaining 37 articles, reports, sets of statistical information and public policy documents were then reviewed regarding their recommendations and consideration of the health of the elderly population. Data were collected from March 2022 to June 2022. All the information concerning the methodology is summarised in Figure 2, which describes the search strategy, data extraction and search results. A structured review of Norwegian government documents was carried out relating to the statistics and measures appertaining to the elderly during the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, specifically identifying within each document:

- Any specific measures to protect elderly citizens
- Any programmes and policies mentioned which reduce mortality rates in the elderly
- The response of the Norwegian State Authorities
- Any overviews of the national mortality statistics of the elderly

The search documents relating to these topics were noted and selected. Search records with document identification were kept, and relevant information was electronically saved, printed, allocated an identification code and sequentially organised into files.

To conduct the search, the following key search terms were used:

- 'healthcare services', 'residential care home', 'institutional care', 'nursing home*', 'health care services', 'nursing facilities', 'health services', 'social care', 'social services' and 'formal care'
- 'age*', 'older', 'elder*', 'old people', 'geriatric' and 'senior'
- Covid-19' 'coronavirus', '2019-ncov', 'SARS-CoV-2', 'cov-19', 'pandemic', '2019 novel coronavirus', 'coronavirus disease' and 'measure*'
- 'government policy', 'public policy', 'government legislation', 'national statistic*', 'public health', 'policy docum*' and 'Norway'

The inclusion criteria were that all the documents yielded had to be the full text (not a summary) and available online between 2020 and 2022. The exclusion criteria were books, chapters, conferences, poster abstracts and any material published before 2020.

Data analysis

We developed a structured data-abstraction instrument to enable us to perform a systematic content analysis of public policy documents. Firstly, all the documents were read completely to familiarise ourselves with the data. Secondly, instrument classification categories representing the different items and subitems that characterise policy format and content were derived inductively through repeated readings of the documents. The formulation and representation of the classification categories were discussed regularly at team meetings. Thirdly, using the data-abstraction instrument, the data analysis was continued to ensure the rigidity and consistency of the coding process; the entire process followed the guidance and requirements set out in Neuendorf's (2017) code book. To enhance the internal validity of the data analysis undertaken, we used the cross-coder assessment method during the coding phase of the content analysis. Cross-coder assessment refers to using more than one coder to code the same content independently before establishing inter-coder reliability for the adoption of the coded units of analysis (Neuendorf, 2017). Three researchers independently coded the presence or absence of each category in a random sample of 16 governmental and statistics documents; one researcher had a social-scientific background (MT), another researcher had a psychological one (VNF), the third had a medical background (MMN) and the fourth had a nursing science education (AS). Categories with coding difficulties between the three researchers were simplified and redefined, and the 16 government agencies' documents were re-coded. The theme and codes examples are as follows:

Theme 1. *Contingency Plan*

Norwegian primary healthcare system

Power distribution on various levels

The government's goals when dealing with the pandemic crisis

Assessment of disease burden and risk

The final data-abstraction instrument contained the following main topics: contingency plan, public health measures for the elderly, institutional care services for the elderly, mortality rates concerning the elderly population and the response of the Norwegian State Authorities.

To increase the objectivity and reliability of the assessment, three researchers independently coded all the documents using the data-abstraction instrument. The three coders initially agreed on 87%, 89% and 91% of the codings for the research objective, thereby establishing an acceptable level of inter-coder reliability. For coding in which discrepancies arose, discussions were held until a consensus was reached and all coding was approved. In cases in which the three researchers could not agree on coding the documents, or had difficulties in interpreting data, a fourth researcher (AS) was invited to review these documents. Coding disagreements were discussed and resolved until a consensus was reached.

ETHICS

All data analysed in this report are publicly available; therefore, no ethical approval was required.

RESULTS

This section presents the contingency plan for dealing with the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. Furthermore, the represented public health measures for residential care services and brief descriptions of the facts about mortality rates in the country concerning the elderly population are reported. It is important to highlight that the structure of the health system is directly connected with the Norwegian public health response to the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, since the unified public health system contributes to the better emplacement of public health policies in an equitable way. This phenomenon is clearly demonstrated by the epidemiological data concerning the mortality rates of the elderly population.

The contingency plan for dealing with the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic

The Norwegian health system is a decentralised universal health system with a free-of-choice provider financed by taxes, with a predominantly public production of services covering the population in Norway. Physicians are publicly salaried employees. The state is responsible for the provision of specialised care through four regional health authorities, which further control the provision of specialised health services by 27 health enterprises (Martinussen, 2022). The municipal level organises and finances primary healthcare services according to local demand. The central government has overall managerial and financial responsibility for the hospital sector.

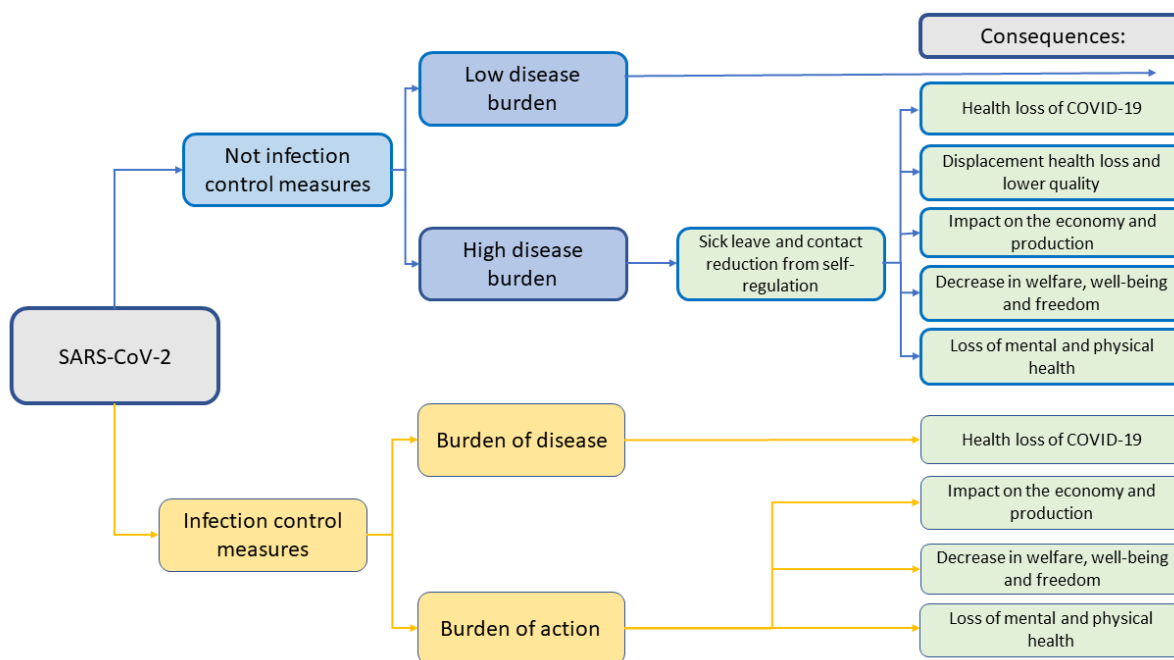
The power distribution of these organisations is divided into two levels: a central one and a local and regional one. The central level, or centralised system level, is composed of a government body, represented by the Ministry of Health and Care. This level directs the Norwegian healthcare services through comprehensive legislation, annual budgetary allocations and various governmental institutions such as the Norwegian Directorate of Health and the Norwegian Institute of Public Health. The regional and local level (or the decentralised system level) is represented by the regional and local authorities in the municipalities across the country. This level has the responsibility for primary care in terms of nursing facilities, residential care homes, home care, ambulatory care and general practitioners. In addition, the regional level takes control over the implementation of the national health policies, including the setup, planning, organisation, governance and coordination of all subordinated local health trusts (hospitals) in their region. This

way, all the levels are interconnected and work in an interdependent way, and all have the freedom to emplace more specific measures considering the epidemiological, sociocultural and special needs of each region (Øyri & Wiig, 2022).

From the central level perspective, the government's goals for dealing with the pandemic were to safeguard life and health while keeping society open and allowing the economy to function as normally as possible. Moreover, the government and the public health agencies focussed on maintaining the population's immunity, keeping the disease burden low, protecting vulnerable groups and prioritising children and young people. These measures were to prepare society in case the situation deteriorated, and in order to maintain this level of preparedness, the government and public health agencies only utilised information and data that are knowledge-based and open in a targeted and coordinated manner. In addition to these internal actions, one of the priority goals going forward is that Norway should further cooperate with global efforts to mitigate the consequences of the pandemic (HOD, 2022). The Norwegian government has also prepared itself for any future pandemic waves until 2023. The government is prepared to decide on the precise steps to be taken based on an overall assessment at the necessary time and when the development of a situation indicates a need for national measures. Decisions must take into consideration the positive and negative societal effects of the pandemic's development in addition to infection control measures, including health, economic and welfare consequences. As far as possible, affected parties will be given the opportunity to comment on the measures. The assessments behind the decisions are to be published. The plan includes a course of action in the case of a serious new virus variant, which would necessitate prioritising the reduction of infection numbers. In the case of a less serious virus variant, health considerations may indicate extensive infection control measures, while other societal considerations could indicate that very burdensome infection control measures need not be implemented.

According to the documents analysed when assessing measures, the duration of any course of action needs to be considered. The Ministry of Health and Care Services has produced a flow chart for mapping the effects of two alternative strategies in the face of a SARS-CoV-2 pandemic – one strategy using infection control measures to control or kill the infection and the other letting the infection spread through the population. If the costs of infection control measures are greater than the gain, the avoided loss of health by fewer people would deem it economically unprofitable to introduce measures. The most important benefits of introducing the measures are first and foremost the costs avoided, including the societal cost. The flow chart is presented in Figure 3.

Fig. 3: Map effects of the two alternative Norwegian strategies when facing a SARS-CoV-2 pandemic



Source: The Norwegian Directorate of Health (2022, pp. 15–16).

Assessment of disease burden constitutes a baseline in the assessment of risk as a starting point as to whether measures should be implemented. At this point, the local and regional levels have more freedom to access the data and implement measures recommended by the central level, based on epidemiological criteria. For the assessment of disease burden, there is a need for an overview of the national and local situation, as the assessment must include treatment capacity in both the specialist health service and the municipalities. The capacity of the municipalities can be overwhelmed before the capacity of the specialist health service. Municipalities are responsible for primary care and public health, including general practitioners (GPs), immunisation centres, and long-term care and social services. The vulnerable population evaluated in this article – elderly people – live in their own homes or in nursing facilities and residential care homes throughout the various municipalities. Prevention measures for these citizens, according to the ‘Strategy and Contingency Plan for Handling the COVID-19 Pandemic’ (HOD, 2021), use the following specific management indicators as a basis for assessing risk and the need, if necessary, to implement measures:

- The number of new hospital admissions and number of concurrently admitted patients (total occupancy)
- The occupancy rate in intensive care units
- The age distribution of the inpatients
- The processing capacity in the municipalities (HOD, 2021, p. 19)

The assessment of risk must also be seen in connection with other burdens on the services, such as influenza and other respiratory infections. It must be based on a comprehensive assessment of the total burden on the health service at that time and the development of the epidemic.

Public health measures for residential care services

The Norwegian Directorate of Health, along with the Norwegian Institute of Public Health, was responsible for publishing guidelines for residential care services during the pandemic. The first SARS-CoV-2-related guidelines for nursing homes were published on 29th February 2020. The advice was to treat infected residents on-site to avoid hospitalisations, as far as possible. A ban on nursing home visits applied from 12th March to 27th May 2020. Additionally, some nursing homes instituted bans on their staff working in multiple sites to reduce the risk of contagion. In February 2021, restrictions on nursing home visits were relaxed since most nursing home residents had been fully vaccinated. While exact figures are not available, an estimated half of all SARS-CoV-2-related deaths in 2020 were in nursing homes. Overall, 3% of all nursing home residents were infected in 2020 and 1% died (NIPH, 2021).

Another document was released on 3rd April 2020 in the form of a video with advice on dealing with SARS-CoV-2 in long-term care (LTC) facilities. Relevant information we extracted from the content analysis showed that care services were notified that special efforts were being taken to ensure sufficient access to personal protective equipment (PPE) in the municipalities, including the LTC facilities. This was ensured through the national distribution of PPE among the hospitals and municipalities, which was based on the reported stock (Saunes et al., 2022). In Norway, the municipalities are responsible for providing reasonable, high-quality primary healthcare, LTC and social services to everyone in need. All health and care institutions are required to have an infection control programme that gives written guidelines for general infection control measures and for the examination, treatment and care of patients (Kirkevold et al. 2020). In each residential care home, there must also be a system for monitoring infections at institutions and guidelines for detecting and restricting outbreaks of infection. The system must be designed to ensure that infections can be quickly discovered and identified, and it must be clear who has the medical and organisational responsibility for the infection control measures.

According to Ursin et al. (2020), the elderly and those with compromised immune systems or with long-term conditions were particularly affected by the regulations. Norway’s Infection Control Act authorises the government to make binding decisions and implement quarantine, travel bans and other tough measures in the case of a health crisis, and many such restrictions were implemented. However, for many of the families of these groups, the fact that they were unable to visit, or finding that those they loved died alone, was a significant source of anxiety and further grief. To address this issue and relieve social stress, the government announced on 27th May 2020 that visits by family members to residential facilities would be allowed (Ursin et al., 2020).

Elderly mortality rates – a brief description of the facts

According to the Norwegian Institute of Public Health's daily report (2022), SARS-CoV-2-associated deaths were defined as deaths where SARS-CoV-2 is indicated as an underlying or contributing cause of death (NIPH, 2022). Data concerning deaths were extracted on 5th July 2022. Whereas only deaths with a positive sample were previously included in the Message System for Infectious Diseases (MSIS in Norwegian), deaths without a positive test are now also included in MSIS. For each death in the Cause of Death Register, only one underlying cause of death is selected. The National Institute of Public Health follows rules formulated by the WHO for selecting this underlying cause of death. It is not possible to say that the underlying cause of death is the most important factor leading to the actual death without being able to say how much any other maladies may have contributed. If multiple causes of death are applied to the death notification, the disease or diseases that are not registered as the underlying cause of death will be registered as contributing causes of death. Whether SARS-CoV-2 becomes the underlying or contributing cause of death depends on where the doctor applies the diagnosis codes on the death notice. This decision is up to the individual medical doctor.

Until 31st December 2020, there were 31,981 nursing home patients in Norway (SSB, 2021). In 2020, the average age of a deceased person was 81 years old; the median age was 84 years and 241 (52%) were men. One hundred and seventy (37%) deaths in hospitals, 270 (59%) in other health institutions and 10 (2%) in the person's own home were reported to the National Institute of Public Health. The place of death is not stated for 11 (2%) deaths (FHI, 2020). On 15th June 2020, the Norwegian Institute of Public Health's daily report on COVID-19 presented an overview of SARS-CoV-2-related deaths according to the place of death (Saunes et al., 2022). Of the 242 registered COVID deaths up to that date, 93 deaths (38%) occurred in hospitals, 143 deaths (59%) in other healthcare institutions (including LTC) and 1 death occurred at a patient's home. Danielsen et al. (2022) confirmed that in the first year of the pandemic, 0.69% of all nursing home residents became infected by SARS-CoV-2 and 1.3% of all deaths in nursing homes were related to COVID-19.

DISCUSSION

The public health professionals and their mutual collaboration with political leaders play an important role in policy development and provide knowledge of health systems, including making recommendations when change is warranted and developing plans to address various societal situations in connection with public health protection. During a pandemic crisis, trust contributes to adherence to health guidelines, such as social distancing and wearing face masks, additionally reducing the spread of misinformation, fostering support for and adherence to the lockdown-encouraged vaccination, and facilitating a greater sense of community (Sibley et al., 2020; Cairney & Wellstead, 2021; Lalot et al., 2022). The main aim of each country's political leadership during the outbreak of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic was to bring the pandemic under control as effectively as possible with as little as possible impact on its citizens.

Public health measures for residential care services, the level of restrictions in long-term care and the composition of personnel, professional training and personal protective equipment in different countries at the start of the pandemic all varied; this is also true of the times at which the restrictions were eased and their duration. Norway's relative success in handling the pandemic during the first year has been attributed to factors such as rapidly implemented containment measures, geographical location, low population density, high levels of trust in government and generous social welfare arrangements (OECD, 2021). Healthcare personnel are mentioned as crucial participants in the containment of the virus. Their willingness to follow and put into effect the necessary measures is crucial to encouraging individuals to implement and adopt the necessary restrictions. In Norway, researchers confirmed that having a permanent, stable staff who do not work in other locations is perhaps the most important improvement that can be made to control infection, and this could reduce mortality (Kirkevold et al. 2020).

Gautun (2022) continues that Norway and Denmark had a slower spread of infection and fewer deaths in elderly care in relation to COVID-19 than other European countries. Both these countries implemented a national lockdown quickly, which may have had some bearing on these results. This early lockdown was critical at the start of the pandemic when residential care services in many countries, such as nursing homes, lacked infection control equipment and test equipment. Askim & Bergström (2022) drew attention to the fact that Norway's response was more influenced by gerontology-related science compared to Sweden's response, which was more influenced from a public health perspective. The central government response in Norway included swifter and more

decisive moves to restrict outsider access to elderly care institutions and a far higher presence of doctors and trained nurses in elderly care (Kvinnslund et al. 2021, p. 345).

In Norway, the mortality rates in the first and second waves of the pandemic were among the lowest in the world. The first wave of SARS-CoV-2 cases was curbed through a national lockdown introduced in mid-March 2020, and Norway was one of the first countries to start gradually reopening society in April, with no new rise in cases observed until late summer. The second wave saw less restrictive containment measures, although a rise in cases in March 2021 demanded national restrictions. In contrast to most EU countries, death rates were lower through the second wave than through the first. The SARS-CoV-2 death rates in 2020 were nearly nine times lower than the EU average, and no excess mortality was observed (OECD, 2021). By investigating the national statistics and the government communication of pandemic measures to its citizens, and especially to the nursing homes and residential care services, the analysis shows that the initial use of regulatory instruments was sufficient in the first wave. Despite the lack of preparedness in some aspects, Norway has arguably performed well in handling the pandemic quickly and effectively compared to other countries. One explanation is that the government succeeded in making the objective of crisis management ‘United We Stand’, and therefore had a successful collaboration in decision-making with health experts (Christensen & Lægheid, 2020). The Norwegian public, as is the case in other Scandinavian countries, expresses a high degree of confidence in the government, and this confidence was largely maintained during the pandemic (Christensen & Lægheid, 2020; Petrov et al. 2020; Laage-Thomsen & Frandsen, 2022). The Norwegian government actively appealed to its population to launch a collective action in the fight against the pandemic, and today we can, based on data analysis, conclude that the Norwegian government succeeded in its aim.

Saunes et al. (2022) emphasised that extensive reliance on giving recommendations, rather than forcing through legislation, led to fewer formal restrictions in the first phase of the pandemic in Nordic countries compared with much of the EU/EEA. In general, restrictions on internal mobility were very limited in time and area. Bans on visits to nursing homes and hospitals were only enforced strongly for a few months. Additionally, many political leaders supported the restrictions, regardless of their political standing, which helped the heads of the government remain steadfast. According to Christensen & Lægheid (2020), in March 2020, Norway invoked the National Preparedness Act, which accredited the government with the power to establish countrywide decisions on various restrictions. According to Aasland & Braut (2022), the Norwegian role of county governor has specified responsibilities during an emergency situation, including being the chairperson of the County Emergency Council (CEC). The main factor in the successful coordination of the public health response is the governors’ ability to support the municipalities and the local communities, balancing the need for independence against the need for state control. Karlsen et al. (2022) highlighted that municipal public health coordinators (PHCs) are an important ‘tool’ for providing local intersectoral public health work. The founders of the social services facilities are the municipalities, and thus, the ability of the governors to coordinate work on measures against the spreading of the pandemic had a direct impact on the protection of those placed in these facilities. Norway’s leadership communicated the importance of responsibility, nationhood, patriotism and the sense of valuing communication in the community (Christensen & Lægheid, 2020). Communication should cultivate a sense of belonging; in the case of Norway, talking about the love of their country and nationalism inspired many individuals to respond positively to the government’s requirements.

There are several limitations and strengths to this study that should be noted. The results strengthen knowledge transfer by relating the results and experiences of a country which had low death rates as a result of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. Our methodology is feasible and can be reliably replicated in future updated reviews, or similar comparative research in EU countries could be carried out. Norway, a European country, managed to competently take care of and protect vulnerable groups, including the elderly, and thus this country has become a good example of how to manage a pandemic or other crises. Several limitations should be considered when interpreting these results. Due to the ongoing nature of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, our data collection was deliberately restricted to public health websites and national statistics reports. The list of policy documents identified for this analysis is not exhaustive, and more recent documents might have been published during the submission process of this article. Other public health or government documents might also not have been identified during the research stage. A wider range of documents (e.g., research articles or annual reports) may provide additional insight as to the range of consequences of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. A further limitation of this study is that we relied on the cause of death from the registries for COVID-19-associated mortality, which is dependent on the registration of COVID-19 among those who died.

CONCLUSIONS

The public health measures enacted by the Norwegian political leadership to protect the elderly in response to the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic crisis necessitated collaboration with public health professionals when they focussed on reducing the elderly mortality rates through contingency plans for dealing with the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. This collaboration contributed to the success in containing the crisis as it unfolded and was beneficial in drawing up the recovery policy aimed at mitigating the impacts of the pandemic situation. The results of the authorities' actions provide decision-makers from public health policy with insights to draw upon for political discussion to further improve on the Norwegian government's responses to crises. Further research is required to examine the experiences of the leaders of residential care services in connection with how they reflected on measures impacting the social and healthcare services and mortality rates of the elderly during the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic; such research could be performed through in-depth interviews. Furthermore, the Norwegian policy responses, such as public health measures, restrictions, the social consequences for vulnerable groups such as the elderly, and cross-government and cross-community cooperation, will all need further analysis.

Despite posing new challenges, Norwegian leadership has deployed significant efforts to respond to the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic crisis. The impact of their public health measures in protecting the elderly during the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic crisis can be a good practice example for other countries. The collaboration of the political leaders, mutual communication and the level of citizens' trust in political leaders are fundamental preconditions for successfully preventing the spread of a contagion during a pandemic or potential pandemic. The findings of this study contribute to a better understanding of the connection between the political responses and public health measures, as well as a way to disseminate information and the impact of implemented public health measures provided by residential care services towards the elderly.

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A Platform for Collaboration: The Views of Civil Society Organisations on a Local Compact

ABSTRACT: *A considerable degree of collaboration between civil society organisations (CSOs) and governmental organisations (GOs) occurs in various collaborative areas, such as collaborative platforms, that aim to increase mutual understanding and reach shared solutions to complex social challenges. However, little is known regarding how CSOs relate to and discuss the starting conditions for participating in collaborative platforms. By highlighting the perspectives of CSOs supporting refugees, this article shows that the starting conditions affect whether CSOs decide to participate. Nevertheless, the starting conditions are also essential for their general understanding of the platform's aim and purpose, thus affecting more than the initial decision to participate or not. A primary barrier to their participation is the political agenda behind the platform and what role CSOs think they should have in society. Consequently, the inclusive 'whole society approach' that collaborative platforms intend to create might be out of reach before starting the collaboration.*

KEYWORDS: CSO, relations, collaborative governance, partnership, refugees

RECEIVED 24 May 2022; **ACCEPTED** 11 November 2022.

INTRODUCTION

Collaboration between civil society organisations (CSOs) and governmental organisations (GOs) is crucial for solving future and present complex social challenges, for example, climate change, increasing migration, trafficking and corruption (Blatt & Schlauffer, 2021; Gash, 2016; Smith, 2012). However, collaboration and interaction between CSOs and GOs are often complicated and problematic (Smith, 2012; Waardenburg, 2020), not least in countries where welfare issues generally and historically have been handled exclusively by GOs (Nemec et al., 2019; Johansson, 2011). A wildly conflicting area is supporting refugees since CSOs and GOs often differ in views on the appropriate actions (Gustafsson & Johansson, 2018).

In recent decades, CSOs have become increasingly active in providing welfare services through various partnerships and contracts (Eikenberry & Kluver, 2004; Johansson & Johansson, 2012). The shift, often mentioned as a move from government to governance, is evidenced by the increased establishment of codes of conduct, so-called compacts, and other non-binding governance tools between GOs and CSOs to regulate their collaborative relationship (Morison, 2000; Reuter et al., 2012). Compacts, also described as partnerships (Brock, 2020; Davies, 2007) or a type of collaborative governance (Laforest & Orsini, 2005), are non-legally binding agreements based on central mutually developed values and collaboration principles (Reuter et al., 2012; Zimmeck, 2010). Specifically, they are a combination of 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' actions (Butcher et al., 2012), which aim to serve as the foundation for effective and stable relations. Although compacts have been criticised for not contributing to better relations (Morison, 2000), saying more about 'the game' than 'the rules of the game' (Johansson et al., 2011), they have been implemented in several Western countries (Reuter et al., 2012).

Compact implementations are one of many governing tools (Brock, 2020; Morison, 2000; Reuter et al., 2012) that aim to regulate, shape and increase equality and mutual decision making, that is, collaborative governance, between CSOs and GOs. This collaboration can be organised in various ways, for example, through various platforms, a collaborative governance that facilitates, enables and regulates multiple collaborative relationships (Ansell & Gash, 2018). However, effective collaborative governance is difficult to accomplish as it rests on the voluntary participation of CSOs and is dependent upon various aspects, such as system context, institutional design, leadership, starting conditions and the collaboration process itself (Gash, 2016; Ansell & Miura, 2020; Ansell & Gash, 2007, 2018; Emerson et al., 2011; Purdy, 2012).

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Previous research has established that CSOs have various views on compacts (Johansson, 2011), making it critical to understand the incentives that CSOs have to engage in collaborative governance (Ansell & Gash, 2007, p. 552), that is, starting conditions. Still, the primary attention in previous research concerning compacts has mainly focused on how compacts have been translated to different contexts and levels (Butcher et al., 2012; Casey et al., 2010; Johansson & Johansson, 2012) and can be understood as policy documents (Acheson, 2010; Butcher et al., 2012; Coule & Bennett, 2018), as well as how political leadership or key individuals affect the ways that compacts are used (Alcock, 2016; Craig et al., 2005). Although the abovementioned topics are important, the perspectives of the CSOs have yet to be explored.

The primary aim of this article is to understand the views of CSOs on a local compact, especially how CSOs relate to the starting conditions. Therefore, two research questions will be asked: *From the perspective of CSOs, what are the strengths and weaknesses of collaborative platforms? How do starting conditions affect CSOs' incentives to participate in collaborative platforms?*

Empirically, the local compact *Malmöandan* (MA, English translation: 'the Malmö Spirit') will be used as an example of a collaborative platform. MA, initiated in the city of Malmö, Sweden, in 2018, aims to 'simplify and intensify collaboration to increase the condition of the people of Malmö to well-being, health and a meaningful life' (Malmöandan, 2017, p. 2, author's translation). This type of structured collaboration between CSOs and a local government organisation (LGO) has not previously existed in Malmö. As participation in MA is voluntary, some CSOs decided to participate, while others did not. Independent of their participation, some had positive opinions of MA as a platform, whereas others were more sceptical (cf., Johansson, 2011). The contribution of this article is that it exclusively focuses on the views of CSOs, both members and non-members. Therefore, the article will contribute to our theoretical and empirical understanding of compacts as a governing tool.

In Sweden, the relationship between GOs and CSOs is often positive, with CSOs actively participating in policy evaluation and decision making at the governmental level (Reuter, 2012). In contrast to Anglo-Saxon countries, only a small portion of Swedish CSOs have traditionally worked with welfare service provision (Reuter et al., 2012). Historically, there has been a social contract between Sweden's state and civil society. Extremely simplified, while the state has managed welfare-related issues, civil society has given a voice to the needs of vulnerable groups, arranged leisure activities, and fostered democratic values (Wijkström, 2000, 2007; von Essen, 2019). Yet, since 2010, there has been a shift to more contract-dependent relations between the state and CSOs in Sweden, such as MA, even if there is a long way to go before it is possible to talk about a 'contract state' (Reuter et al., 2012).

This article describes a Swedish case, mainly resting on Ansell and Gash's (2007, 2018; Ansell & Miura, 2020) theories of collaborative governance and collaborative platforms, as well as MA as a collaborative platform. After presenting the method, including the motivations for the empirical focus of MA, selection of respondents and description of the analytical approach, the results and analysis are provided. Finally, the implications of the main findings and further research directions are described.

COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE AND PLATFORMS

Collaborative governance has been conceptualised in many ways (Batory & Svensson, 2019). Whereas some emphasise formal and informal collaboration between various stakeholders (Emerson et al., 2011), others argue that collaborative governance consists exclusively of formal collaborations between a GO and CSOs (Ansell & Gash, 2007). Herein, Ansell and Gash's (2007; 2018) definition of collaborative governance is used: (i) the collaboration initiative has to originate from a GO; (ii) it should include participation from non-governmental organisations (here mentioned as CSOs); (iii) the platform has to be formally organised; (iv) participants meet regularly; (v) CSOs have to be directly active in the decision-making process that aims to make decisions by consensus; (vi) the focus is on public policy or public management. Even if compact(s) can be viewed as guidelines for collaboration between CSOs and LGOs, this article's empirical case, MA, has been formally organised and is more of a collaborative platform than a guideline. In other words, MA is 'a governance platform [...] strategically deploys its architecture to leverage, catalyse, and harness distributed social action for the purpose of achieving certain governance objectives' (Ansell & Miura, 2020, p. 264).

The model begins with several essential starting conditions that affect the collaboration. Ansell and Gash (2007) highlight three critical aspects as starting conditions for collaboration: *power and resource imbalances, history of conflicts among participants and incentives to participate*. Others (Emerson et al., 2011) have presented similar, overlapping conditions. When Ansell and Gash (2007) presented the three aspects, they were initially only viewed as starting conditions. However, after empirically studying how CSOs discussed collaborative platforms, Ansell and colleagues found that the starting conditions influenced their initial decision to participate and the entire process (Ansell & Miura, 2020).

Power and resource imbalances

The first condition relates to *power and resource imbalances* between actors, negatively affecting collaboration. Still, even if collaborative governance aims to be inclusive, previous research shows that CSOs are underrepresented in platforms and collaborations not exclusively designed to include them (Carboni et al., 2017). Overcoming imbalances will require a 'positive strategy of empowerment and representation of weaker or disadvantaged stakeholders' (Ansell & Gash, 2007, pp. 551–552). Otherwise, minority CSOs might feel forgotten or excluded (Craig et al., 2005).

An essential arena for power in collaborative governance concerns the content, that is, what issues are addressed and pursued (Purdy, 2012). For example, Norfeldt (2012) argues that GOs adjust the contents of compacts to fit the present political agenda. Therefore, GOs can limit funding to activities they do not politically support. Consequently, the content depends on the political leadership currently in power (for other contexts, see Alcock, 2016).

Resource imbalance has been discussed in relation to time, as participation often is time-consuming (Ansell & Gash, 2007; Craig et al., 2005; Johansson, 2011; Klockmo & Bostedt, 2015). In Sweden, smaller CSOs without employed staff generally find it challenging to participate in compact meetings during the daytime due to work conflicts (Johansson, 2011; see also Craig et al., 2005 for an international context). Even if representatives can participate during the daytime, their travel costs are not covered (Klockmo & Bostedt, 2015). As most small CSOs do not have the budget to cover these costs, it indirectly forces representatives from smaller CSOs to use private money or refrain from participating. Consequently, collaborative governance risks becoming a matter for a small group of large CSOs or umbrella organisations (Johansson, 2011), reproducing already strong voices (Fyfe, 2005; Laforest & Orsini, 2005; Nordfeldt, 2012). If imbalances in power and resources are high, important actors are limited from participating in a meaningful way (Ansell & Gash, 2007), and the collaborative platform risks becoming irrelevant.

History of (political) conflicts

The incentives for participation are also affected by the potential *history of conflicts* between involved actors, which is closely related to trust among stakeholders (Ansell & Gash, 2007). The feeling of us versus them might limit the incentives for initiating collaboration. If conflicts are high, stakeholders are highly interdependent, and a deadlock needs to be solved; nevertheless, researchers in resource management have shown that previous conflicts are not a barrier to collaborative governance (Futrell, 2003; Weber, 2003). In other words, low levels of trust and previous conflicts might be overcome if the positive aspects of solving the problem are high. Still, the positive aspects might be difficult to grasp when the goals and potential gains from participating are unclear, like in many compact collaborations (Brock, 2020; Morison, 2000; Zimmeck, 2010). Instead, if a CSO has politically and ideologically solid opinions, they might be less likely to participate in collaboration platforms with a GO (Jönsson & Scaramuzzino, 2016). Consequently, the political environment might create conflict and a barrier to participation (Craig et al., 2005) as compacts rest on political–ideological values. On the other hand, some CSOs will always stand on the side (Morison, 2000).

Incentives for participation

Even if participation in platforms such as compacts is voluntary (Ansell & Miura, 2020; Ansell & Gash, 2007, 2018; Emerson et al., 2011; Morison, 2000; Reuter et al., 2012), the incentives for participating depend on many factors. The expectations CSOs have on potential effects or gains (Ansell & Miura, 2020) and whether the collaboration is workable and worthwhile (Gash, 2016) need to be determined. If the goals are overly broad or open-ended, which is typical of collaborative platforms (Ansell & Gash, 2018), it might be difficult for CSOs to know what they have to gain (Ansell & Gash, 2007) and how (Morison, 2000; Zimmeck, 2010). If CSOs have an alternative venue that they think is better suited for their goals, incentives might be reduced (Ansell & Gash, 2007).

The incentive might also depend on how CSOs understand their potential to affect the platform's content. Some CSOs interpret collaborative governance through compacts as a governing tool rather than collaborative governance (Klockmo & Bostedt, 2015), making it harder to involve CSOs as they resist the idea of being governed. When negotiating for a national compact in Sweden, some CSOs argued that the compact's framework was already fixed by the government, making it difficult to affect the final agreement. Others argued that pre-framing was vital for the negotiation and discussion (Johansson, 2011).

To conclude, collaborative platforms and collaborative governance can solve complex societal situations (Gash, 2016), but many obstacles must be addressed to succeed. Still, few studies offer evidence that collaborative governance works well to avoid top-down approaches to governance (Gash, 2016).

MA AS A COLLABORATIVE PLATFORM

In 2010, a commission was assigned by the city of Malmö to investigate and find solutions to Malmö's long history of social and economic inequalities (Stigendal & Östergren, 2013). The commission argued that broad changes were needed to be effective over time and to contribute to healthy and sustainable development (Stigendal & Östergren, 2013, pp. 3, 9). One of the recommendations was to 'create a new form of cooperation between the private and public sectors and civil society based on alliances of knowledge that can contribute to change the relationship between economic growth and welfare' (Stigendal & Östergren, 2013, goal 3.1.3, author's translation). The recommendation can be understood as part of an overall societal trend to strengthen the bonds between civil society and public authorities. It can be viewed as a starting point for MA that, after negotiations, was approved by the local government and CSO representatives in Malmö in 2017.

MA is a collaborative platform where actors meet, discuss problems in general terms, and establish areas of priority based on perceived mutual needs (Malmöandan, 2017, 2020). Like collaborative platforms, MA works as an umbrella concept facilitating a space for establishing collaboration between various partners (Ansell & Gash, 2018). MA has been active since 2017 and is financially supported by the LGO to ensure that MA is a stable platform over time (Ansell & Gash, 2018). In 2021, the collaborative plan of MA was renegotiated for a second term.

In line with the literature on collaborative platforms (Ansell & Miura, 2020; Ansell & Gash, 2018; Emerson et al., 2011), MA has dedicated competencies, institutions and resources to facilitate the creation of collaborative projects and networks. MA's institutional design consists of a steering group of political leaders in Malmö, representatives from CSOs, and a full-time employee coordinator. Meetings (apart from seminar series and similar events) are dialogue meetings that occur at least twice a year. These are open to all who believe their organisation could benefit from increased dialogue between different sectors. They consist of organised 'idea workshops' based on mutual creativity, aiming to develop ideas that might lead to future partnerships (Malmöandan, n.d.).

MA does not include any specific agreements. However, interaction around specific areas could lead to a civil society public partnership (CSPP) between an LGO and a CSO. The CSPP is an agreement in which an LGO finances an activity that CSOs perform. In theory, the establishment of MA should allow CSOs to establish a CSPP in specific matters, independent of whether a CSO is a partner of MA or not. By understanding MA as a collaborative platform, it is possible to pay attention to how 'present' conditions for participation encourage collaboration (Ansell & Gash, 2018).

METHODOLOGY AND SELECTED CSOS

This article focuses on how CSOs in Malmö relate to the collaborative platform MA, which was initiated to increase collaboration between the LGO in Malmö and CSOs. MA as a collaborative platform is an interesting case. Importantly, MA is well known to the respondents, has been active for several years, and its collaborative guidelines were recently renegotiated. Malmö is also known for its vibrant civil society and activist scene (Hansen, 2019). The analysis is based on two types of empirical data: interviews and referral documents. The referral documents are the result of a consultative procedure whereby the LGO consulted governmental bodies and CSOs on a specific matter. Here, the referral documents concern the renegotiation of MA's collaborative plan in 2020. Additionally, all available documents published by MA concerning its structure and collaboration plan were used to obtain an overall understanding of MA.

The interviews are part of more extensive empirical material highlighting the collaboration between CSOs supporting refugees and the LGO in Malmö. The interviews of discussions concerning MA were selected for this article. Some of the CSOs included are members of MA, whereas others are not. Supporting refugees is generally a field without consensus (Campomori & Ambrosini, 2020; Gustafsson & Johansson, 2018), and various actors have different views on what should be done and how. Moreover, CSOs are often guided by ideological and moral values (Åberg, 2015), making political and ideological opinions essential for navigating the individual organisation, including membership in platforms.

Interviews

In total, six interviews with representatives from CSOs supporting refugees in Malmö are included (Table 1). Some CSOs started to support refugees during the increased influx of refugees in 2015–2016 and began actively supporting refugees. Others have supported refugees for a more extended period, often with the primary aim of helping vulnerable groups, including refugees (Karlsson & Vamstad, 2020).

The included CSOs can be viewed primarily as two distinct groups of organisations. Some CSOs work on *human and social rights* (HSR), meaning that they regularly assist with different requirements, such as food and shelter, language training, legal advice and job coaching, and are involved in refugee rights issues. Another group of CSOs work to *educate, help and enable* (EHE) other CSOs that support refugees. The work of EHE CSOs includes support for starting new programs for or by refugees or providing other CSOs with methods to welcome refugees in their already-established activities. Two CSOs (CSO 1 and 6) exclusively work with refugee/immigrant communities. The others organise support and activities for multiple groups in society.

Of the six CSOs, three were identified from a book (Sjöberg, 2018) describing the experiences of various CSOs from the acute situation in 2015–2016; two were traced through a network organisation for CSOs supporting immigrants and refugees in Malmö; and one was identified using snowball sampling (Bryman, 2016).

The CSOs were approached by e-mail and informed about the research aim. After showing interest in participating, they received information about ethical considerations and informed consent. Ethical aspects were raised again at the interviews, partly to guarantee that the respondents had read the information and to offer the opportunity to raise questions or concerns. All respondents provided verbal and written consent to participate. Following ethical standards, the identities of the respondents and the CSOs remain confidential in this article to protect their integrity and efforts.

Tab. 1: CSOs included in the interviews

CSO identification number	Organizational focus ^a	Member of Malmöandan?	Number of respondents
l1	EHE	Yes	1
l2	HSR	Yes	1
l3	HSR	No	3
l4	HSR	No	1
l5	EHE	No (previously, Yes)	1
l6	HSR	No	1

^a EHE = Educate, help and enable; HSR = Human and social rights

The interviews with top managers or operative managers were conducted at two different times. The first round, in 2019, was conducted in Malmö. The second round of interviews in 2020 was conducted via video calls owing to the Covid-19 pandemic. The interviews were semi-structured with five broad and general thematic approaches (related to the primary research project): the organisation's structure and activities, relations and interactions with other CSOs and LGOs (including MA), flows of information and knowledge, roles and changes since the increased influx of refugees in 2015. The interviews lasted 53–95 minutes and were recorded and transcribed. All interviews were conducted before the renegotiation process for MA. Consequently, there was no discussion of the new collaboration plan.

Referral documents

Before the new collaboration plan for MA was accepted at the beginning of 2021, the proposed plan was sent to CSOs and the local state administrators for a referral round. As the interviews were conducted before the renegotiation in 2021, the submitted referral documents were included to complement the interviews and to capture the views of the CSOs on the new plan. The referral documents are included in the Swedish accessibility principle (a law giving individuals, including media and researchers, the right to

access information about governmental work). All submitted referral documents were downloaded from Malmö's online citizen portal (Table 2). In total, five large and well-established CSOs in Malmö submitted documents, including two individual organisations and three umbrella organisations. All umbrella organisations support and/or include CSOs that care for refugees.

Tab. 2: CSOs included in the referral documents

CSO identification number	Member of Malmöandan?	Organisation type	Supports new collaboration plan?	Number of pages
R1	Yes	Individual	Yes	1
R2	Yes	Individual	Yes	2
R3	Yes	Umbrella	No	4
R4	Yes	Umbrella	Yes	3
R5	Yes	Umbrella	Yes	2

The CSOs that submitted referral documents are active partners in MA and suggested what they think needs to be rewritten, removed or renegotiated. One CSO wrote indirectly that it does not stand behind the new plan in its present shape.

Analytical approach

Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was used and, initially, only included interviews. After reading the transcripts and interview notes, all texts related to MA were selected. Two broad themes, views on MA and starting conditions, were identified based on the theoretical point of departure. Second, the interviews were recoded to identify wrongly coded or uncoded parts. Third, the two themes were separately coded into identified sub-themes. The views of MA were organised according to various opinions of MA. The starting conditions were organised based on theoretical starting conditions. However, history does not strictly predict past conflicts; rather, the views of CSOs need to be understood as a way for them to anticipate the potential future(s) with MA. Also, there was no sub-theme related to incentives to participate, as suggested by Ansell and Gash (2007). Instead, the incentives in all sub-themes are discussed throughout this article.

Finally, the referral documents were added to the empirical data and analysed based on the identified themes. In these documents, the CSOs exhibited a more positive attitude towards MA, possibly because they are active partners and are not anonymous in the referral documents. Still, potential problems noted in the interviews were identified in the referral documents. Thus, they supported the analysis, confirmed the interview findings and provided this study with a more comprehensive range of CSO voices.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

As a collaborative platform and tool, MA creates intense feelings among responding CSOs, both positive and sceptical. This scepticism might be related to the fact that the city of Malmö is traditionally regarded as belonging to a social–democratic civil society regime, with fewer contracts and commissions for CSOs than the national average (Arvidson et al., 2018), thus making this type of arrangement an ‘odd bird’.

This section draws attention to several aspects related to how CSO respondents discuss the starting conditions with MA, the positive and more problematic objectives of MA, power and resource imbalances and history. Incentives and lack of incentives to participate are presented throughout all parts of the result and analysis section.

CSOs views of MA

In every referral document, MA is described as ‘positive’ (R1) and an ‘arena for collaboration [...] that should be further developed’ (R2). Supporting refugees is a subject surrounded by different political views and opinions concerning who should be able to apply for asylum, what support refugees should receive from the official reception system and what the role of CSOs should be. Therefore, close relations between active CSOs and the LGO are crucial (cf., Gustafsson & Johansson, 2018).

Some respondents argued that the LGO in Malmö has a history of not collaborating with civil society and that MA might be a way to ‘overcome their fear of collaboration with civil society’ (I3). Even if this specific CSO representative was highly critical of the LGO and MA, the collaborative platform might contribute to a better relationship even if the CSO did not participate in MA.

Another positive aspect raised was that MA might be one of the few venues in which participation is not forced into a specific shape, but instead, collaboration may take different forms:

‘We [society] try to fit everything into a system, and that is not sustainable over time [...] When we take all the commitment and try to squeeze it into a pipe, well, it dies. Malmöandan may be an example of when we do not do that’ (I1).

Thus, from the perspective of CSOs, MA can increase collaboration and include various types of collaboration. In theory, participating in collaborative platforms should be beneficial for CSOs because it would benefit relations with the LGO and other CSOs (Ansell & Gash, 2007, 2018; Emerson et al., 2011; Gash, 2016), resulting in equal power distribution and horizontal relations (Ansell & Miura, 2020). Participating in compacts allows CSOs to affect change from within (Johansson, 2011) and be a part of the ‘official’ arena. Changing from within might be essential for CSOs, since ‘the political climate is becoming harsher, with some CSOs subjected to threats directed at their organisation and activities’ (I1, I6). Participation could be a way for CSOs to raise their voices, affect the political agenda and collaborate to solve complex problems. Furthermore, participation could show the LGO that the CSO is a legitimate partner for collaboration and agree to the game’s rules. As a result, some CSOs participate despite raising critical concerns regarding MA.

The central problem and scepticism raised are that it is difficult for CSOs to understand what they have to gain from participating (cf., Ansell & Gash, 2007, 2018). In this empirical case, the vagueness was related to the formulations in the plan that are the foundation of the collaborative platform and how actual outcomes are (not) presented.

‘It [Malmöandan] is just a bunch of words; it does not mean anything in reality [...] We have not seen any results from it yet’ (I2).

Even if the CSOs generally were less sceptical in their referral documents compared to interviewed CSOs, they were highly doubtful concerning the content and results.

‘I cannot find any communication about what MA has done, in what type of collaboration. But of course, if nothing concrete has been done, it is not possible to present any type of results’ (R1).

‘The suggested collaboration plan is very inexplicit [...] MA must be easy to understand and must contribute with value and content’ (R3).

‘There is a huge need to communicate what type of collaboration Malmöandan has already resulted in’ (R4).

Compacts as governing tools are often criticised and described as a ‘handsome face with not much behind it’ (Zimmeck, 2010, p. 131). When potential gains and results are clear, CSOs are more likely to find collaborative platforms valuable and spend time, energy and resources to participate (Ansell & Gash, 2018). Still, according to the empirical data, only CSOs that are active partners raised concerns about the results of MA. Non-participating CSOs did not consider the possible effects produced by MA. Instead, they decided not to participate based on other values.

Power and resource asymmetry

The vague formulations do not only concern what the collaborative platforms achieve but they also make it difficult for participants to see how they can influence the content, that is, how power is distributed. Put differently, they make CSOs question for whom and by whom the collaborative platform is constructed.

‘It is not clear how CSOs can participate and affect the content of Malmöandan [...] without relevance for and connection between CSOs, there is a risk that MA will be irrelevant and useless’ (R2).

Collaborative governance must be driven by demand (Gash, 2016). The respondents mainly argued that there is a lack of communication regarding possibilities to influence. There is a risk that CSOs interpret the platform as a top-down project (cf., Klockmo & Bostedt, 2015) without horizontal collaborative dimensions, which are essential for collaborative governance (Ansell & Gash, 2018; Ansell & Miura, 2020). According to Ansell and Gash’s (2007) model for collaborative governance, the vague content should affect the incentives for participation (see also Klockmo & Bostedt, 2015, for an empirical example in Sweden). Still, for CSOs participating, the unclear power distribution was insufficient to terminate their participation. For CSOs that are non-members of MA, their decision to participate was instead based on financial and personal resource asymmetry.

Representatives from the LGO often participate in collaborative governance as part of their job. For CSOs, conditions are often different (Craig et al., 2005; Johansson, 2011; Klockmo & Bostedt, 2015; Purdy, 2012). Many CSOs struggle to cover basic costs; therefore, participating in collaborative platforms is challenging, especially for smaller CSOs struggling financially. If a CSO’s future is unclear, entering new platforms is not prioritised.

‘Well, it [MA] started when we struggled financially, and our future was uncertain. And it is hard to find a kind of spirit [as in the English translation of MA, “The Malmö Spirit”] when you do not know what is happening. Sometimes, it is just hard to enter [a collaborative platform] with enthusiasm, and [...] you just do not have the energy to add something else’ (I4).

Even if participation in MA can be beneficial in the long run due to increased collaboration and project funding, most CSOs have to participate in their spare time, which CSO representatives criticise.

‘In the proposal, there is nothing about resources [...] CSOs want to contribute to achieving the goals and visions but often lack the resources to do so. There must be guidelines concerning financial support. Without guidelines and an understanding of this, the collaboration plan is nothing more than a document with limited possibilities for implementation’ (R5).

Understanding collaborative platforms’ power and resource imbalances is essential (Ansell & Gash, 2007; Purdy, 2012). When CSOs lack the necessary means to participate in a meaningful way and perceive an unwillingness from the LGO to work actively to include them, CSOs might risk becoming underrepresented (Carboni et al., 2017). In this empirical case, limited time and resources made it challenging for CSOs to participate. Therefore, unequal access to participation might result in already strong voices reproduction (Morison, 2000). Consequently, there is a risk that ‘less heard voices’ will be lost in setting the agenda and discussing how to solve complex societal challenges.

History as a tool to anticipate the potential future(s) with MA

A history of conflicts might limit CSOs’ incentives to actively participate in collaborative platforms (Ansell & Gash, 2007). Discussions concerning previous conflicts were not evident in this specific material or discussed as limiting incentives. Instead, how CSOs relate to previous collaboration experiences with the LGO and their understanding of MA were important. The problematisation of participating relates to two intertwined dimensions: (i) political values to distinguish themselves from a specific political agenda and (ii) ideological values and ideas of how society should be organised.

Political agenda

MA is a collaborative platform that aims to support negotiation and discussion for future collaboration. Thus, in theory, collaboration platforms and collaborative governance should facilitate equality of power and horizontal relations (Ansell & Gash, 2007, 2018; Purdy, 2012). However, several CSOs interpreted MA as a way for the LGO to control and govern their actions. Other CSOs reflect on how they might be governed by participating in MA:

‘If they [LGO] promote a policy you disagree with, and you must adjust your activities, you might not be able to do what you want to do.... [And] you must do what someone else thinks is needed’ (I3).

Even if MA does not govern CSOs to act in a specific way, this was the fear of CSOs. When asking if collaboration, including funding, would restrict them as an organisation from supporting refugees, the answer seemed obvious:

‘Yes, most definitely [...] [F]or us, it is much easier to go outside the box and follow the needs of the target group, and we would not be able to do that [...] [W]e want to be able to do what we want to, and our work frequently entails activism’ (I6).

Because MA aims to create LGO–CSO collaboration, legitimisation and exhibiting a willingness to participate by the rules are not considered necessary; therefore, participation is unnecessary (cf., Morison, 2000). As the CSOs in this study aimed to help and support refugees, how they discussed MA addressed the worries of being governed, the potential effects MA will have and the values and ideological dimensions behind the platform.

For example, several respondents were critical of how the municipality supported refugees during the refugee situation in 2015/2016 and argued that the LGO was not doing enough, that is, they opposed their politics. In this context, being governed by political actors with the ‘wrong’ political agenda is unwelcome, and it creates a feeling of ‘us’ versus ‘them’ (cf., Nordfeldt, 2012). Others pointed out that since Sweden Democrats, a right-wing party in Malmö that seeks to ‘pause’ immigration and establish ‘return centres’ for all residents not born in Sweden, signed the document, there is clear evidence that the document only consists of beautiful words with little meaning (cf., Morison, 2000; Zimmeck, 2010). For CSOs working exclusively with refugees, this is of great importance as political leaders are a part of the steering group. To summarise, the ideological and political values that MA is based on are essential to understand the relations of CSOs to MA. The CSOs feared that active participation could limit their ability to work as they wished.

Anticipated future(s) – organisation of society

Another essential aspect of the viewpoint of CSOs to MA is related to how CSOs think society should be organised and what relationship CSOs in Malmö should have with the LGO. Some CSOs believed that MA had replaced previous ways to initiate partnership discussions. When discussing different types of collaboration between Malmö and CSOs and whether MA had replaced many of the previously established relations, one CSO representative said:

‘Yes, at least, it seems like it. When I asked for a meeting regarding a CSPP [with the LGO], I got the answer “MA [already] exists”. So, what you can say is that, at least in Malmö, it is like that’ (I2).

By comparing the past ways of initiating collaborations with their understanding of the present with MA, the CSOs were critical of how MA, against its aims, seemed to limit the possibility of CSOs forming a CSPP. The respondents’ statements could be understood from two perspectives. One understanding is that MA has replaced CSPPs, that is, limited the possibilities of CSOs to collaborate with the LGO. Another interpretation is that MA, as a collaborative platform serves as a gatekeeper for the LGO and that all types of new collaborations should pass through MA. Consequently, if CSOs do not participate in MA, they have no opportunity to form a CSPP. Either way, the incentives for CSOs to participate might have increased.

Nevertheless, the incentives are not based on voluntary participation (cf., Ansell & Gash, 2007, 2018). Rather, participating is indirectly forced as it might be the only way to form a CSPP. The combined narratives of the CSOs indicate that they understand the collaborative platform as a top-down project, attempting to govern the actions of CSOs and organise society by LGO political ideology.

In the interviews, members and non-members discussed how they anticipate the future, what challenges there are, and how they think complex societal challenges should be solved. Generally, they recognised that social problems are increasing. CSOs meet more individuals in acute need of support struggling with homelessness, drug use and mental instability. In the opinion of CSOs, this has to do with GOs at national, regional and local levels withdrawing from the market and LGOs trying to shift their responsibility to CSOs. When the market (here CSOs) takes greater responsibility for vulnerable groups, collaborative platforms like MA fit well as a governing tool. Therefore, the traditional role of CSOs in Sweden as the voice for vulnerable groups rather than a service provider is challenged (Wijkström, 2000, 2007; von Essen, 2019). The question raised is what role voluntary actions should have in a society and if it is reasonable for an LGO to hand over greater responsibility to CSOs. As one respondent argues, ‘there is a risk that MA bites its tail if voluntary action becomes a kind of must’ (I2).

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION: INCENTIVES FOR (NON)PARTICIPATION

This article aimed to analyse how CSOs relate to collaborative platforms and collaborative governance (Ansell & Gash, 2007, 2018) using the local compact MA as an empirical example. In line with the theoretical framework (Ansell & Gash, 2007, 2018; Ansell & Miura, 2020; Gash, 2016; Purdy, 2012), power and resource imbalances significantly contribute to the (lack of) incentives to participate. Still, in the empirical data, problems concerning power imbalances were raised by active participants. Even if most participating CSOs were critical about the possibility of participating on equal conditions and collaborative platforms had low barriers for exiting (Gash, 2016), power imbalances were not reason enough for terminating participation. For non-participating CSOs, on the other hand, resource imbalances were one of the main reasons not to participate (Johansson, 2011). They recognised that participating would mean taking time from something that they find more acute and vital, such as working in the field and supporting refugees. The analysis shows that the respondents found the framework for MA weak and unclear, and they struggled to see how and why participation would benefit them.

Problematically, the respondents identified no benefits of participating. However, some of the participating CSOs argued that participation in MA increased their chances of getting a CSPP and that MA gave them access to a network. Still, these aspects were not apparent for non-participating CSOs. Therefore, it might be difficult to foster better relations, initiate collaboration and solve complex societal challenges if CSOs do not understand what they have to gain by participating. To add to the complexity of collaborative platforms, some CSOs will continue to stand on the side (Morison, 2000) and find it undesirable to form partnerships and coalitions with a GO or LGO. Consequently, a ‘whole society approach’ is out of reach already from the start.

Compacts are implemented in a specific political ideology (Craig et al., 2005; Fyfe, 2005; Morison, 2000). This fact is of great importance for CSOs as they position themselves in relation to MA, and political ideology often creates a ‘barrier’ to participation (cf., Craig et al., 2005). The strong emphasis on political values and ideology of the collaborative platform from respondents is an essential contribution to the theoretical development of the starting conditions for collaborative governance. This is the first time a framework for collaborative governance has been adopted to understand how CSOs relate to compacts. The theoretical approach made it possible to see how vital the starting conditions are for CSOs when they decide on potential participation. However, as mentioned by Ansell and Miura (2020), the starting conditions need to be understood as an ongoing aspect that affects the incentives for participating, understanding and criticism of CSOs throughout the entire process. The results also highlighted how the starting conditions were closely related to the institutional design. For example, several of the respondents’ views on MA as a collaborative platform, ways of communicating and criticism about the political ideology and values of MA were closely connected to the platform design (cf., Ansell & Gash, 2007). Moreover, thoughts (and concerns) related to the anticipated future, both at a societal level and with MA, were essential in making their decision not to participate.

Still, the results of this article need to be understood against the contextual background of Sweden, traditionally described as an advanced welfare state. However, the relationship between CSOs and the state is undergoing change from being based on voluntary to more contractual arrangements. Thus, the Swedish case is interesting for both Swedish and international readers as it provides an

example of how collaborative partnerships can be understood, from the perspective of CSOs outside the Anglo-Saxon sphere. While it is a limited context, the study also contributes to the theoretical understanding of how collaborative governance can be understood from the perspective of CSOs. Second, selecting CSOs that support refugees, with a compact as an example of a collaborative platform, might make the results difficult to generalise, especially as the external context creates opportunities and constraints that influence collaborative governance (Emerson et al., 2011).

The choice to include only CSOs that, in various ways, support refugees can be seen as a methodological limitation. The sample of CSOs is relatively narrow as it only consists of a limited group of CSOs and only includes a fraction of CSOs in Malmö. In addition, many CSOs supporting refugees are critical in their basic attitude towards the LGO, as they consider the LGO's work on issues and support for refugees insufficient. On the other hand, the question of support for refugees is highly relevant concerning the expected increased number of refugees around the world as a consequence, owing to climate change, instability and conflict. Therefore, it is these critical voices that need to be raised in order to understand why some CSOs do not choose to participate and what criticism is there towards these types of collaborations. Thereby, this article also contributes significantly to our understanding of how CSOs in Sweden relate to this type of collaborative governance.

Finally, the findings presented herein show a need for more comprehensive research on the perspectives of CSOs on local collaborative governance. Collaborative platforms can contribute to the broader use of collaborative governance (Ansell & Miura, 2020). Nevertheless, suppose research, focusing on other contexts with a traditional strong welfare state, finds limited interest in participation from CSOs. In that case, the following questions remain: Why are compacts and other agreements regarded as essential policy tools in some cities and regions? Who benefits from compacts in this specific context, and in what ways can collaboration become more fruitful for all participants and potential participants?

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study forms part of the research project 'Resilience in Sweden: Governance, Social Networks and Learning (RISE)' funded by the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency

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Democracy building and the link between public trust and corruption perception: Comparative analysis before and after the Armenian Velvet Revolution in 2018

ABSTRACT: *Eastern European post-communist countries inherited pervasive corruption after the breakup of the USSR. Public trust was the crucial factor in tackling corruption and democracy building in these countries. This article takes Armenia as a case to study the antecedents and evolution of trust in Eastern European post-communist countries that went through a government coup in the 21st century. By comparing the corruption situation in Armenia before and after the Velvet Revolution 2018, we scrutinise how trust was and is critical to combating corruption and democracy building. We argue that in transition governments, one can distinguish two sources of creating public trust. The first wave generates when the government is newly established, and people trust the leader and his persona. Arguably, in this stage, the level of trust generated is based on expectations. The second wave of trust comes with the government's actual performance, measured partly based on corruption perception.*

KEYWORDS: Corruption, Public trust, Democracy building, Revolution, Armenia

RECEIVED 20 July 2022; **ACCEPTED** 30 January 2023.

INTRODUCTION

Corruption was a pandemic problem in the USSR (Kramer 1977; Willerton 1992). This corruption included bribery, special treatment for party leaders and members, the inefficiency of governing institutions, patronage and other forms of self-dealing. Research studies suggest that the political corruption was a contributing cause to the eventual breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991 (Leitner and Meissner 2018; Liebert, Condrey, and Goncharov 2013). It did that by undermining the performance of the economy and the legitimacy of the regime.

However, this political corruption did not disappear with the breakup of the USSR. Instead, as its former republics secured independence, the political corruption from the Soviet era and institutions carried over into all the new states (Dudwick 1997; Schultz 2008; Holmes 2013; Leitner and Meissner 2018). These states faced common problems such as building their own political institutions, including independent judicial systems, establishing free and fair election systems, strengthening civil society and engaging in public administration reform (Diamond 1999; Dowley and Silver 2002; Howard 2003; Liebert, Condrey, and Goncharov 2013; Luo 2005). These countries also faced common problem of trust and legitimacy. In part because of the entrenched corruption, the regimes had to gain initial support from their people, convincing them that the governments were serving the people and not self-dealing, as was often the criticism during the communist era.

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Critical to the battle to address corruption or its perception was the issue of trust. As Robert Putnam (1993; 2000) argued, the creation of trust and its related concept of social capital are essential building blocks in the construction of democracies. Trust, for Putnam, is essential among citizens to facilitate the relationships necessary to work together economically and in civil society with such skills paralleling or reinforcing those necessary in politics. His focus for trust, though, was among citizens or among members of a political community. There is also a different type of trust, i.e., public perception regarding political or governmental institutions. Many factors can influence this trust, including their performance in delivering on policy promises or addressing the needs of its members (Gilbreath and Balasanyan. 2017). Trust is also arguably connected to perceptions of corruption and the fairness of governmental institutions. Yet, in seeking to understand how trust is related to politics and corruption, we scrutinise one of many emerging questions, such as does trust in government change as perceptions of corruption evolve? Additionally, we study whether the quality of trust towards the government changes after a government coup and in which way.

This article looks at what are the antecedents and evolution of trust in Armenia during the transition up to 2019 and before the 2020 renewed conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh with Azerbaijan. Armenia is an emerging economy that became independent along with 15 other countries after the collapse of the USSR. The state had a deep transformation of ruling elites after the breakdown of the Soviet Union, which led to a slow process of establishing democratic institutions and managing the links of oligarchs in politics. Specifically, using Armenia as an initial case study and as part of a larger project on the role of trust and institutional change in post-communist states, it looks at how the building of trust was and is critical to combating corruption and democracy building. Moreover, Armenia was among the post-communist countries to go through a revolution in 2018 to replace the governing elites because of the lack of trust due to the high corruption level in the country. This paper seeks to elucidate how various colour revolutions in the post-communist world have been a product of and impacted trust and corruption perception. Specifically, this article focuses on Armenia and its Velvet Revolution in 2018. The article seeks to comprehend how institutional trust is generated after a critical juncture and how it ramifies in society.

What this article hopes to accomplish is an analysis of the relationship between trust and perceptions of corruption, and how both may be related to democracy building. To do that, the article describes the perception of corruption in Armenia before and after the 2018 Velvet Revolution. We specifically limit the time frame of the analysis to 2020, 2 years after the revolution. We do so for two reasons.

First, the 2020 war with Azerbaijan and the 2020 pandemic and now the war in Ukraine and migration of Russian nationals to Armenia were major disruptions to the Armenian political system and regime. Examination of any survey research or data that includes dates after 2020 will not be able to untangle the impact these events had on trust and corruption perception related to Velvet Revolution in Armenia. Thus, we isolate or narrow our frame of post-coup trust analysis to be able to assess, although short term, the impact of the coup. Second, there is a limited survey research looking at changing public attitudes in Armenia since the 2018 coup. The studies that do exist provide limited analysis regarding attitudes towards the coup and how it affects trust. In effect, examination of trust beyond 2020 is limited by the inability to untangle other major disruptions to the regime and simply by a paucity of data.

The larger thesis this article seeks to advance is that the road to democracy requires the development of trust in political institutions, and the latter is connected to perceptions of corruption.

POLITICAL CORRUPTION AND THE TRANSITION TO POST-COMMUNIST STATES

The road of post-communist states to stable democracies has been rocky. Collectively, all former Soviet or communist states faced challenges in rooting out political corruption, with varying levels of intentionality and success, while attempting to transition to democracy (Rose-Ackerman 1999; Steve and Rousso 2003; Worth 2015; Schultz and Harutyunyan 2016). In the case of the three Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, they were more successful in combating corruption and establishing democracy (Holmes and Krastev 2020). Whereas other newly independent states such as Armenia, Georgia and Ukraine have had less success and have continued to endure higher levels of corruption or its perception (Dudwick 1997; Danielyan 2001; Stefes 2008; Gallina 2010; Kuzio 2015; Leitner and Meissner 2018).

In these latter three countries, often referred to by colours, revolutions have been undertaken to root out political corruption and initiate democratic reforms (Mitchell 2012).

Post-independence, Georgia's president was Eduard Shevardnadze who had served as the Minister of Foreign Affairs in the USSR from 1985 until its breakup in 1991. His tenure as president mostly meant that the politics of Georgia after 1991 continued the path of Soviet-style control that had been in place. However, in 2003, a pro-western movement called the Rose Revolution took place across the country with protests that challenged the parliamentary election results. Eduard Shevardnadze was forced out of office after protests that occurred when he tried to convene the disputed new parliament. This led to the eventual election in 2004 of Mikheil Saakashvili as president, who then in 2004 had to deal with a mini-Rose Revolution in Batumi and Adjara.

This second Rose Revolution challenged the nearly dictatorial power of Aslan Abashidze, who served as the head of the Adjara region. Then in 2019–2020, street protests in the capital took place and were launched after Sergei Gavrilov, a Communist Party member of the Russian Duma, sat in a chair reserved by protocol for the Head of Parliament. He delivered a speech in Russian praising Russian–Georgian relations, even though he had voted in favour of the independence of Abkhazia, a region that is part of Georgia but not recognised by Russia.

In 2004, Ukraine had its “Orange Revolution” to protest significant fraud in its presidential elections. It resulted in a new election that selected Viktor Yushchenko who pledged to address political reform in that country. But then, in 2014, the Euromaidan Revolution erupted over the failure of President Viktor Yanukovich to sign an agreement with the European Union that would have moved Ukraine in closer alignment with it. Among the concerns was the perception that Yanukovich was too closely aligned with Russia and was also politically corrupt (Hale and Orttung 2016). Finally, in 2019 on a campaign promise to address persistent corruption, Volodymyr Zelensky was elected president.

Post-independent Armenia, too, has had several revolutions or mass political protests. Levon Ter-Petrosyan was the first president of post-Soviet Armenia who was forced to step down in 1998 after allegations of fraud and corruption. He was replaced by Robert Kocharyan, who in his first two elections too faced claims of fraud. In 2008, there were mass protests in Armenia, challenging the results of a disputed presidential election between Kocharyan and Ter-Petrosyan. Supporters of the unsuccessful Ter-Petrosyan alleged electoral fraud, resulting in widespread demonstrations in Yerevan and across the nation. On 1 March, Kocharyan, with the approval of the Armenian parliament, declared a 20-day state of emergency. He banned future demonstrations and censored the media from broadcasting any political news except that issued by official state press releases. Domestic and international criticism of the bans were significant.

Then in 2018, there were anti-government protests in Armenia from April to May 2018, which have been called the Velvet Revolution. They were led in part by Nikol Pashinyan, who was the head of the Civil Contract party. They were in response to President Serzh Sargsyan's effective repudiation of his pledge not to return to office as prime minister after his term as president ended. At one point, Pashinyan was arrested and held in solitary confinement overnight. Protests ensued. Eventually, the National Assembly elected Pashinyan Prime Minister after Sargsyan was forced out of the race. His government was fortified when in December 2018, the “My step” bloc led by Pashinyan entered the parliament with 88% of electoral voices (Grigoryan, 2018).

After eliminating the old governing elites, in 2019, the new established government's main tasks became strengthening the democracy in the country and developing a balanced diplomatic relationship with the EU, Russia and neighbouring countries. Nevertheless, the following year turned out more challenging for Pashinyan's government. In Spring 2020, the lockdown was introduced all over the country and the corona pandemic adversely impacted the implementation of economic and political reforms. Yet, the worse for the Pashinyan's government happened on 27 October when Azerbaijani military forces backed with support from Turkey and recruited fighters from Syria attacked the disputed territory of Artsakh (Nagorno Karabakh) inhabited with Armenians (McKernan, 2020). After the disadvantageous ceasefire for Armenia, anger was followed by protests against the prime minister (*BBC News*, 2020). The protests continued into the beginning of 2021, accusing Pashinyan of betrayal.

The political demonstrations or so-called revolutions in Armenia, Georgia and Ukraine share several commonalities. All shared concerns and perceptions among voters that there was to a different extent political or electoral corruption or fraud (Gilbreath & Balasanyan 2017; Iskandaryan 2014; Dominioni 2017; Kovalov 2014). There were fears of democratic backsliding and a demand for reforms. Agitation over the degree of alignment with the West or Russia also seemed critical. All three countries having a territorial proximity with Russia were challenged in their efforts for economic and military independence. These three countries had historically “disputed” territories. But the demand to address political corruption clearly was a dominant theme (Baev, 2018; Galstyan, 2018; Gricius, 2019). There was also among these three countries a problem when it came to trust.

After the Soviet Union's collapse, the level of institutional trust in three transition economies decreased, yet there was increasing interpersonal trust (Habibov & Afandi 2015). Personal ties became more reliable and made it quicker or easier to get things done.

In these countries where interpersonal trust was high and institutional trust was low, the corruption perception level was high (Tonoyan, 2005; Transparency International, Corruption Perception Index 2003). Although all three countries were facing challenges in building democratic political institutions, Armenia had additional economic and historical challenges with its two neighbours. Closed borders with Turkey and Azerbaijan were blocking the economic development of Armenia. After the collapse of the Union, Azerbaijan became governed by Aliyev's family clan, and Aliyev was nominated as a person of the year in 2012 in organised crime and corruption (OCCRP, 2012). However, Turkey's dictatorship under Erdogan's government left little hope for the Armenian government to establish cooperative relationships with neighbours and become less economically dependent on Russia.

TRUST AND DEMOCRACY

The notion of trust has been extensively researched among social scientists during recent decades. According to political scientists, trust is a slowly established habit among people at the interface or overlapping of both commercial and civic activities (Putnam 1993; Fukuyama 1995). Psychological research defines it closer to morality and in contrast to unethical behaviour (Rotter 1980). Economist Albert Hirschman suggests that trust is "a moral good that grows with use and decays with disuse" (Hirschman 1984). Trust, in terms of how Putnam employs the concept, is mostly about trust among members of a community, and it is tied to market transactions or behaviour that takes place in civil society. But trust is also connected to attitudes towards government (Almond and Verba 1963). If individuals trust their government, then they are more likely to support it, its laws or its institutions because of a perception or belief that it is serving them or their needs. Trust is thus connected to regime legitimacy and eventually to democracy (Almond and Verba 1963; Mischler and Rose 1997; Zmerli and Newton. 2008).

Scholars use trust to study its association with corruption level or its perception in a country (Bouckaert and van de Walle 2003; Warren 2004; Wroe, Allen, and Birch 2012). Empirical research displays trust to be both a cause and consequence of perceptions of corruption. Generalised trust creates reciprocity and nurtures social relations (Fukuyama, 2005). High levels of personalised trust can have adverse effects on the corruption level. In countries where generalised trust is higher, the perception of corruption is lower and vice versa. Arguably, countries with higher perceived corruption level among individuals have lower institutional trust level (Anderson & Tverdova 2003; Tonoyan 2005; Chang & Chu, 2006). Generalised or institutional trust has been historically low in post-communist Eastern and Central European countries (Paxton, 1999; Wallace & Latcheva, 2006). In the Armenian society, where family and kin comprise one of the essential parts of life, people heavily rely on these ties in everyday transactions. Thus, in Armenia, because of high levels of particularised trust, non-market corruption was more common, and illicit activities were mainly committed through created networks (Scott, 1972; Jar-Der Luo 2005; Tan, Yang, and Veliyath 2009). However, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, economic recession and the half-established public institutions, one did not see a high level of political trust. Thus, the high level of the perception of corruption persisted for decades in the country after the breakdown of the Soviet Union.

Two main theories tend to explain what impacts the trust level in public institutions. Cultural theories of trust argue that trust in public institutions originates outside the political sphere (Jackman & Miller, 1996; Foley & Edwards, 1999). They argue that political and economic performance is not strongly related to political trust. The former changes very slowly in time and hence has a low impact on the latter. They claim that trust towards governmental institutions is instead an outcome of prevailing social norms and culture in a country.

Hetherington (1998), advocating for the institutional theory of trust, argues that the performance of political institutions is decisive in establishing a trust level. Governments performing more satisfactorily can generate higher trust. At first glance, one would assume that improving socio-economic conditions would be the only key to increasing the trust in government in emerging economies. However, after the Velvet Revolution in Armenia when Pashinyan started to lead the government, he possessed a very high level of trust (in the first survey that we cite in this article, 91% had a favourable opinion about Nikol Pashinyan as a politician and person). However, at this point, he had not introduced significant socio-economic improvements in the country yet.

Thus, in transition governments, one can distinguish two sources of creating public trust. The first wave generates when the government is newly established, and people trust the leader and his persona. We suggest that in this stage, the level of trust generated is based on the expectations. If individuals expect reforms to be successful, then initial trust will go up. The second wave of trust comes later, according to the government's actual performance, as measured in part based on perceptions of corruption. Here, if the government performs up to expectations, then trust goes up; if it fails expectations, then trust goes down.

METHODOLOGY

What we aim to test is the relationship between trust and perceptions of corruption. Specifically, as suggested above, we argue that there is a two-stage model or hypotheses being proposed. The first stage is where post-regime change trust in government goes up based on expectations of positive reform. If these expectations are met, then initial trust rises. The second stage looks at the actual performance of the government in office. If the government lives up to expectations, then trust increases; if it fails, then trust goes down. However, with the second wave of trust, a critical barometer of trust is corruption perception. By that, if the public believes the government to be corrupt or operating in a corrupt fashion, then trust goes down. Conversely, if the public perceives the government to be addressing corruption, then trust goes up. As noted above, building institutional trust is one of the several components critical to post-communist regime change to democracy. This article tests the second stage of trust and how it is related to perceptions by the Armenian people in terms of how well the government is addressing the corruption.

For the purposes of this article, we follow the definition of corruption provided by Transparency International (*Transparency International*). They define it as “abuse of entrusted power for private gain.” Their definition includes acts such as:

- Public servants demanding or taking money or favours in exchange for services
- Politicians misusing public money or granting public jobs or contracts to their sponsors, friends and families
- Corporations bribing officials to get lucrative deals

In constructing their yearly global ranking of corruption, they have constructed a corruption perception index survey which is derived from many sources that seek to ascertain how corrupt a population perceives its government. Since it is impossible to directly detect all forms of corruption in society and even to classify whether a specific act constitutes corruption, this article accepts the fundamental premise that it is a perception of corruption that is critical to the sense of trust.

Using this definition of corruption, we link surveys that measure trust in various institutions in the Armenian government to perceptions of corruption by the Armenian people. The article uses a “before and after” methodology, seeking to determine how the 2018 Revolution was a product of changing perceptions of corruption and trust and, subsequently, how it changed both. Unfortunately, the scantiness of longitudinal survey data during the time of this research limits the possibility of deep statistical analysis in this paper.

TRUST AND POLITICAL REFORM IN ARMENIA

Armenia continues to have relatively high levels of corruption or its perception after decades of the collapse of the Soviet Union. According to Transparency International, in 2002, Armenia’s highest rank was 78, among 133 countries. The comparative stage ranking dropped to its lowest of 129 in 2011 when Serzh Sargsyan was the president and mass protests were occurring in Yerevan for political reform in the country. After introducing the new methodology by Transparency International in 2012, Armenia scored on average 35 from 2012 to 2018. According to Transparency International 0 means highly perceived corruption level in the country, and 100 indicates free from corruption. After the Velvet Revolution in 2018, Armenia’s corruption perception index in 2018 was 42, demonstrating a notable seven-point improvement compared with the previous year (*Transparency International*, 2020). This improvement continued in 2019, scoring another seven-point improvement on the corruption perception index.

Contrary, in 2016, according to Global Corruption Barometer, the highest number of representatives involved in corruption were those in governmental institutions (45%), the president and his staff (44%) and tax officials (43%) (*Transparency International*, 2016).

After the revolution, the Center for Insights in Survey Research conducted three consecutive surveys among the Armenian residents comprising 1,200 respondents each. The survey covered all the regions in Armenia and Yerevan. The first wave was conducted from 23 July to 15 August 2018, the second from 9 to 29 October 2018 and the third from 6 to 31 May 2019. Interestingly, the first survey is called “High Expectations for Pashinyan’s Government,” the second “Expectations for Political and Economic Reform” and the last one “Public Expectations.” As one can note from the titles, the expectations went down during that time.

One explanation is that one after another, the high-ranked officials prosecuted for corruption were let free. Onerous and inefficient legal proceedings became more like vendetta performed by Pashinyan for personal offences when he was in opposition. (Later, we will discuss that those futile prosecutions could negatively impact the trust in courts and the judiciary system.) The second explanation for diminishing expectations might lie in unmet socio-economic conditions. Indeed, in the first survey, respondents listed unemployment/jobs (21%⁴), Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) conflict (10%) and socio-economic problems (9%) as the main problems Armenia was facing then. In the successive surveys, social and economic conditions remained primary. Namely, in the second survey, socio-economic problems (12%) were in the second position after unemployment/jobs (14%) and before the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (7%). In the last survey, the poverty/financial condition of people (8%) was in the top three main problems after unemployment/jobs (15%) and socio-economic problems (9%). Apparently, the survey respondents did not believe the new government was meeting the socio-economic and fiscal expectations of the population.

Finally, juxtaposing the results with the 2016 Global corruption barometer post-revolution survey, residents found as favourable the work of the prime minister's office (82%, 85% and 72%) and the president's office (72%, 78% and 81%). In terms of openness and transparency in all three surveys, the prime minister and the president's office were placed on the highest two ranks. Arguably Pashinyan's promise during the mass demonstrations to tackle corruption as a primary hindrance for the country's development and prosecuting high-level politicians for corrupt dealings shortly after becoming the prime minister inspired trust in his persona and office. Plausibly, young people appointed by Pashinyan in high-rank positions triggered trust in his administration and the fight against corruption. On the one hand, newly assigned statesmen were inexperienced in politics; on the other hand, they did not have a track record for corruption (Hauser, Simonyan, and Werner 2020).

The surveys mentioned above and data are non-inclusive, depicting the efforts of the Armenian government in addressing the corruption challenges and strengthening the democracy in the country. However, these are surveys and indicators represented by independent international organisations spanning the whole country. In addition, the analysed surveys had at least two or three waves, making them comparable and increasing their statistical power.

Before the Velvet Revolution, corruption has been a considerable hindrance to the Armenian business environment too. While ranking the Top Business Environment Obstacle for firms, 5.4% of firms chose corruption. Many firms, 28.3%, chose tax rates followed by tax administration, which was selected by 23.6% of the firms as an obstacle (*The World Bank*).

According to the Worldwide Governance Indicators' Control of Corruption Index, Armenia scores below 0, indicating low-level control of petty and grand corruption (Table 1). The index estimates range from approximately -2.5 (weak) to 2.5 (strong) governance performance. In 2018 which was the year of the Velvet Revolution, we noticed a notable improvement in the index, which is still below zero.

In three surveys conducted by the Center for Insights in Survey Research, the most popular response to the question "Why do you think the change in government is positive?" the answer was "decreased corruption," respectively 32%, 37% and 27%. Further, the first two highest responses, "the biggest failures of the previous government were corruption and robbery."⁵ This implies that corruption was one of the pivotal factors bringing people out to march in favour of a revolution (Lanskoy & Suthers 2019; Feldman & Alibasic 2018).

Increased trust in institutions along with anti-corruption reforms and strengthening the democracy of the public institutions decreased the corruption perception in the country. Thus, in the beginning, Pashinyan's government was very consistent in introducing policy reform fighting corruption, which he announced as one of the priorities as a new government leader. According to the public opinion polls, the two highest corruption reforms conducted by Pashinyan included National Security Service Disclosure (36%, 32% and 24%) and detention of oligarch leaders (23%, 19% and 19%) (*International Republican Institute*, 2022).

Fines and prosecution of corrupt politicians comprised an essential part of the newly formed government. Criminal cases were opened for abuses of power, financial losses and embezzlement on highly ranked politicians, such as retired army general Manvel Grigoryan (June 2018), third president Serzh Sargsyan (December 2019), former mayor of Yerevan Yervand Zakharyan (September 2019), former head of the State Revenue Committee and former Minister of Finance Gagik Khachatryan (August 2019), and finally the second President Robert Kocharyan who would later become his primary opponent in the snap parliamentary elections to be held on 20 June 2021, which was set after losing the Artsakh war against Azerbaijan and Turkey (Sargsyan, 2020).

⁴ First mentioned responses are depicted.

⁵ Missing for the third year.

Tab. 1: Worldwide Governance Indicators Control of Corruption in Armenia

Year	Armenia	Year	Armenia
1996	-0.473051	2007	-0.742384
1997	-	2008	-0.708098
1998	-0.861185	2009	-0.619758
1999	-	2010	-0.696304
2000	-0.759535	2011	-0.656885
2001	-	2012	-0.587787
2002	-0.746524	2013	-0.531947
2003	-0.570029	2014	-0.523999
2004	-0.610483	2015	-0.533811
2005	-0.674141	2016	-0.571971
2006	-0.670823	2017	-0.5601
		2018	-0.3491

Source: *Worldwide Governance Indicators*.

To increase trust in his government among the people and with foreign investors, Pashinyan introduced democratic changes to the public institutions acknowledged by the international community. According to the Economist's Democracy Index, Armenia scored 4.11 in 2017, 4.79 in 2018 and 5.54 in 2019; 4.0 is a threshold between authoritarian and hybrid regimes. Similarly, 6.0 is a threshold between a hybrid regime and flawed democracy (*Economist Intelligence*, 2020). According to Freedom House, Armenia's democracy score in 2018 was 2.57 and increased to 2.93 in 2019 and 3.00 in 2020 (*Freedom House*, 2019). Armenia's increasing score indicates the shift from a hybrid regime to strengthening democratic institutions in the country.

In May 2019, the Ministry of Justice of Armenia introduced the unified electronic platform for whistleblowing on corruption crimes. The platform was meant to create awareness among citizens to eradicate corruption and provided an opportunity to report a crime. Citizens can whistle blow in the www.azdararir.am platform anonymously, and the ministry of Justice of Armenia guarantees their protection. The name of the platform is a translation of the imperative form of the verb “to whistle-blow” (in Armenian ազդարարի) which also forms the noun whistleblower (in Armenian ազդարար).

Hence, the anti-corruption measures resulting in higher trust in the newly formed government could have influenced the corruption perception of individuals. Consequently, the development of institutional trust and decreased perceived corruption were cornerstones in strengthening the democracy of the public institutions. Thus, after coming to the government, Pashinyan leveraged institutional and legal anti-corruption mechanisms for yielding lower corruption levels in the country.

Trust in Armenian Institutions

Perceptions of corruption remain relatively high in Armenia, although they did fall after the 2018 revolution from 35 to 49, recording the best improvement worldwide in 2 years, as noted above. This suggests possibly that the revolution did change perceptions. Yet another way to map this out is to look at how trust in specific Armenian institutions have changed over time. Caucasus Barometer performs frequent surveys of the people in the three Caucasus states, asking, among other questions, about trust in various institutions. Figures 1–5 provide a time series evolution of popular senses of trust towards the courts, the executive government, parliament, the president and political parties.

In general, trust in the courts decreased slightly, while trust in the parties and parliament decreased significantly. Nevertheless, conversely, trust in the president and executive offices increased. There is a clear breaking point in the diagrams between before and after the Velvet Revolution. Two waves of trust fluctuation are evident in 2013 and 2018. First, in 2013, Serzh Sargsyan won in a fraudulent election (Grigorian, 2015). It produced extreme distrust towards the authorities (*Transparency International*, 2013).

Fig. 1: Trust towards Armenia courts

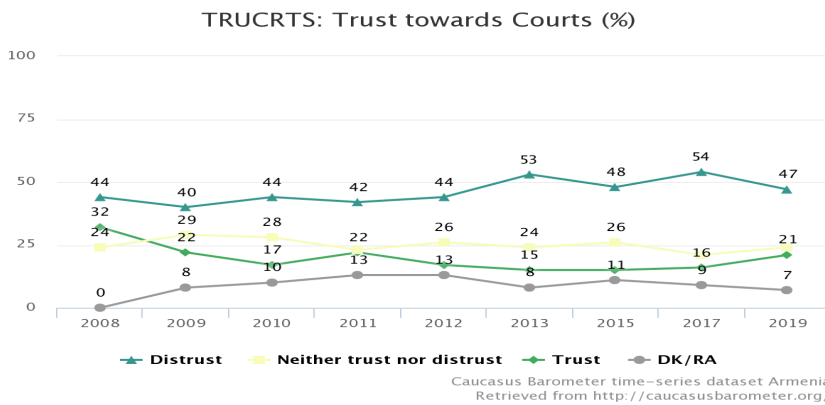


Fig. 2: Trust towards executive government

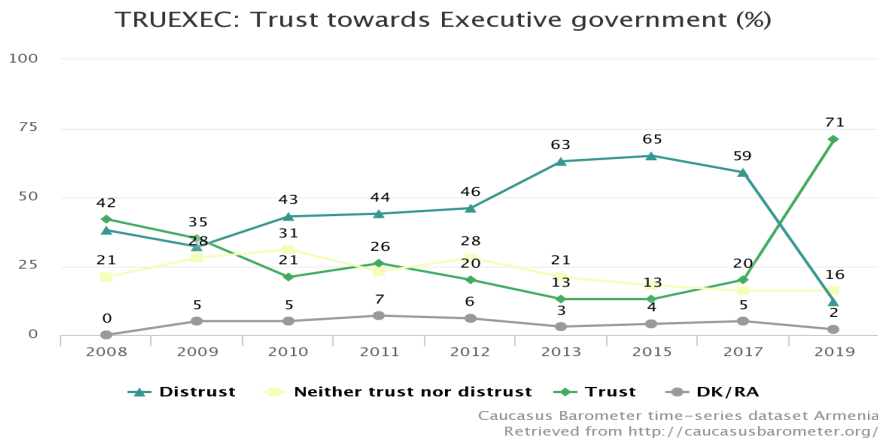


Fig. 3: Trust towards president

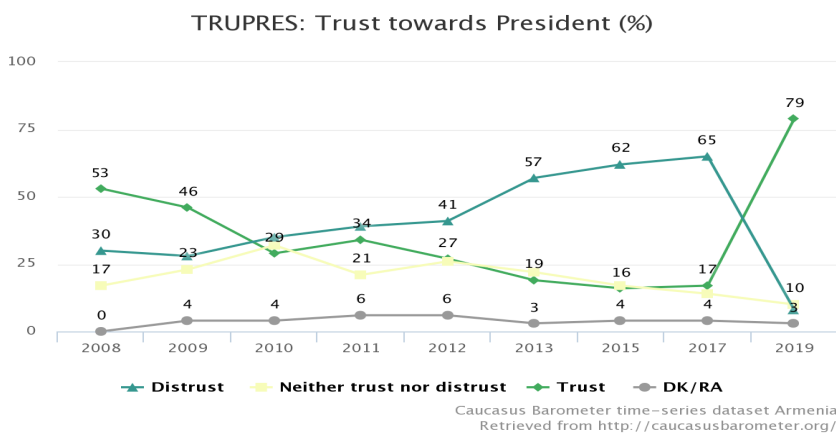


Fig. 4: Trust towards parliament

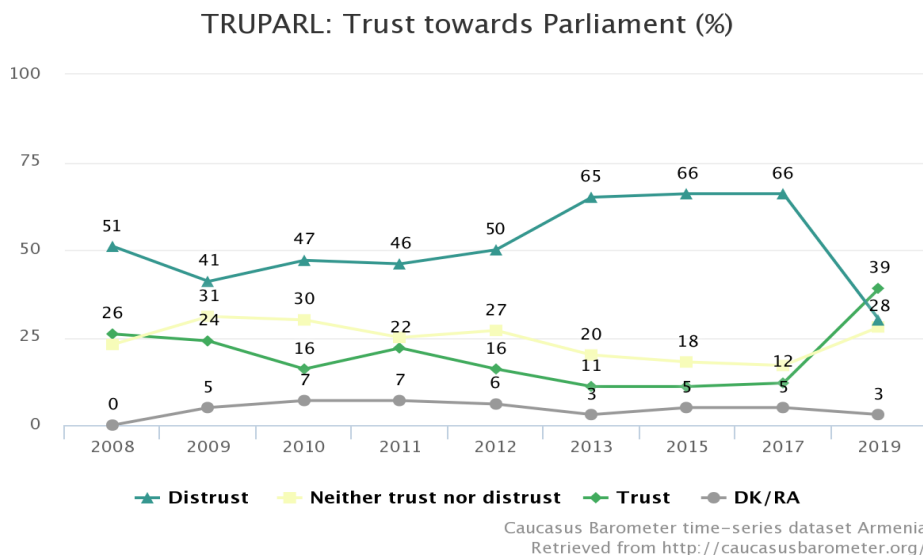
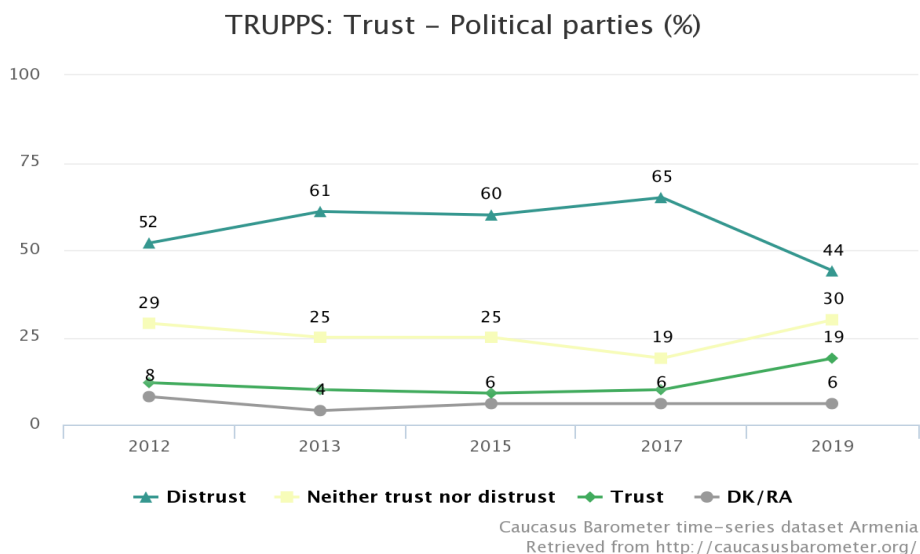


Fig. 5: Trust in political parties



Diminishing trust in public institutions led to an increased likelihood of protest actions (Jolobe, 2017). This contributed to more declining public trust in Sargsyan’s government. Subsequently, his aspirations to become prime minister in 2018 prepared a “fertile soil” for mass demonstrations in the country. Thus, the second alteration of the curves commenced following the Velvet Revolution in 2018. Active participation in the revolution and high expectations of citizens may be the reason for increased trust in public institutions.

If we combine these trust measures with Transparency International rankings for corruption perception, the results can be plotted in the next chart. There are only nine dates or data lines between 2008 and 2019 to perform statistically meaningful tests. However, if the hypothesis of this article is correct, then there ought to be some inverse relationship between trust in political institutions and perceptions of corruption. This chart graphically demonstrates that. It also shows that after the 2018 Revolution, trust in many of

Fig. 6: Trust and perceptions of corruption in Armenia: 2008–2019



the Armenian political institutions went up. It did so because of the perception among Armenians that the government was seeking to tackle the corruption problems, as it promised it would. If the 2018 Revolution was about anything, then it was a protest against corruption, and the new government took steps to honour its promise to address it.

Beyond graphic analysis, we performed a simple correlation analysis that looked at the relationship between trust in the courts, parliament, political parties, the executive department and the president, respectively, and perception of corruption (Figure 6). What we found were correlations of -0.10 (courts), 0.835 (parliament), 0.267 (political parties), -0.535 (executive branch) and -0.465 (president). While the paucity of datapoints might make more robust conclusions impossible, the correlations do largely capture some relationships between trust in government and perceptions of corruption. Specifically, we find that in comparing trust in various institutions and tying it to perceptions of corruption after the 2018 Revolution, there were noticeable changes. Specifically, a decline in perception of corruption had a medium or definite relationship with increased trust in the executive departments and the president. This is not a surprise given the central role that the presidency and the executive branch had in the coup and the ouster of one president with another.

CONCLUSIONS

What this research sought to do was to examine first the factors influencing corruption perception among Armenians and how it changed over time, especially after the 2018 Revolution. We found that trust has gradually increased over time, especially after the 2018 Revolution, when perceptions of corruption decreased.

This research undertook a “before and after” approach. By that, to understand the factors that influenced corruption perceptions in Armenia, this article looks at events in this country from the end of the 2000s, when Serzh Sargsyan became the third president of Armenia, till the end of 2019, before the pandemic penetrated the globe. In 1998, the first wave of the post-Soviet Union independence transition happened. At that time, the war with Azerbaijan was finished, and the government could dedicate its efforts to economic and foreign policy reconstructions. Next, Kocharyan came to the power with differing views from Ter Petrosyan on the critical issues including resolution of the Artsakh conflict, Armeno-Turkish relations and tax collection (Astourian, 2000). Yet during Serzh Sargsyan’s government, the issue of corruption aggravated to an unbearable extent for ordinary citizens, bringing them out to street protest.

It was during Sargsyan’s tenure that among 42 European and Central Asian countries, Armenia ended among the seven countries facing the worst corruption issues (Pring 2016, p 29). During Sargsyan’s presidency, election fraud in Armenia flourished (Policy Forum Armenia 2013, p9). According to the Armenian Corruption Household Survey (2010), 39% of Armenians considered corruption as a fact of life. In the same survey, 69.7% of Armenians in response to the question “What is the primary reason that people justify their participation in corruption?” mentioned that there is no other way to get things done.

As discussed above, corruption perception changed rapidly among the Armenians just after the 2018 Velvet Revolution. Pashinyan's anti-corruption policy continued his pledge to curb corruption by replacing monopoly with competition and punishing government employees for demanding bribes from the business. This change in corruption perception and an increase in trust is consistent with our thesis regarding how the two are connected, especially for second-stage trust. However, we did not find similar changes in the relationship between perceptions of corruption and trust in other institutions. This lack of a relationship may be due to the central role of the presidency in the 2018 Revolution. It also might speak to how nuanced public perceptions of trust and corruption are and how institutionally specific they are.

We limited the research by the end of 2019 because the later developments in the country need separate attention, including the Coronavirus hit and handling in 2020 and the war with Azerbaijan backed up with Turkey's military forces in fall 2020. At the same time, this article leaves a lot of unanswered questions. Is Armenia unique in its experiences, or is it characteristic of other post-communist states in terms of how perceptions of corruption and trust are related, especially after the initial post-Soviet style of government regime change? Future research will situate Armenia's efforts to address corruption by comparing it with Georgia and Ukraine. It will also seek to understand changing perceptions of corruption by looking at them before and after the respective revolutions in these three countries. This research will ask the following questions: How did the revolutions lead to changes in elections, regime structures or political alignment among political parties? How did the revolutions lead to changes in international relations? What were the unique factors in each country that prompted revolutions, which have subsequently defined the capacity of the different regimes to change? How successful have the three countries been in abating real corruption or its appearance? What role did constitutional and legal changes have in addressing perceptions of corruption? These are questions that still need to be answered.

At this stage of the research, the article has shown a pattern of how trust and perceptions of corruption are connected and how specific events might trigger or connect the two. Specifically, it provides insights into how the various colour revolutions may be a product of trust and perception and how the two change afterwards. For policymakers, the finding suggests that shortly after the revolution, the perceived corruption level will decrease, and the populous might be ready to undertake crucial combats against fighting corruption at this stage. Similarly, for local and international anti-corruption organisations, it is an optimal time to introduce robust anti-corruption measures that might have a long-term effect and last longer even when the first wave of euphoria after the revolution is behind. Finally, it might suggest that trust and perceptions need to be untangled better and the focus needs to be on specific governmental institutions and not simply regime-wide.

Armenia provides an initial case study for a broader research design that seeks to understand the empirical connections between perceptions of corruption, trust and democracy building. After Armenia, Ukraine and Georgia are case studies contrasting to states such as Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, which have completed the path from the Soviet era to stable western European-style democracies. Future research is needed to look at how the interrelationship between corruption perceptions and trust across states played out and what that means for a theory of democratic transitions and stability.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The article was initiated when Aram Simonyan was a Fulbright fellow at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and it was accepted for publication when he was a KAAD scholar in Germany. Furthermore, the article benefited from helpful suggestions and comments on earlier versions by participants of the international interdisciplinary conference at ISEC National Academy of Sciences of Armenia in 2021 and the ASN World Convention at the University of Columbia in 2022, Editor in Chief Professor Juraj Nemec, and anonymous reviewers.

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Elena Cossu¹

Clustering and Analysing Relevant Policy Dimensions of Populist, Left-Wing, Centrist, and Right-Wing Parties across Europe

ABSTRACT: *This paper is a configurational analysis that creates a new theoretical elaboration of populist parties in Europe in terms of policy choices. The forms of populism that we can see in contemporary Europe are new, relevant and do not have a theoretical representation in the literature. This paper also provides a clearer understanding of the characteristics of populist and anti-establishment parties in Europe, which can provide valuable insights into likely responses to reformed policy environments. To do so, the paper analyses policy positions connected to the populist literature for 242 parties in Europe in 2014 and 2019 using the Chapell Hill Expert Survey and the PopuList Survey data. Groups of parties with similarly held positions in 2014 and 2019 are identified using cluster analysis to investigate whether differences in positions are defined predominately according to a national, east–west, right–left faction or other criteria. The result highlights that rather than across a classical right–left divide connotation, Europe can be divided into four clusters: right-wing populists, a moderate pro-Europe left, a pro-Europe pro-liberalism centre and an intersectional left based on identity politics. Overall, the moderate left and the centrist liberalism centre are the most common parties across Europe, and the other two factions seem to be born as a reaction to these two. However, the other two factions are growing over the years, especially the populist right-wing in Central and Eastern Europe. This brings to light serious policy implications for the future of the European Union and for considering populism simply as a discursive matter.*

KEYWORDS: policy positions, policies, populism, Europe

RECEIVED 24 November 2021; **ACCEPTED** 31 January 2023.

INTRODUCTION

In today's Europe, we are witnessing an emergence of new forms of governments characterised by populist rhetoric (Kyle & Gultchin, 2018). These new forms do use populist rhetoric in a traditional sense, yet they differ significantly from what we can see in the literature in terms of populist policy preferences and the effects that these can have on an economy. These new forms in fact distance themselves significantly from the concept of economic populism, which has been used to focus on the Latin American context (Dornbusch and Edwards 1989). Since then, the literature mainly focused on rhetoric, and it puts aside the idea of studying populism in terms of policies. The lack of development of this strand of literature for more than 30 years is because of three main reasons: because the concept of economic populism did not apply to the new and right-wing emerging forms of populism, because social sciences abandoned structuralism as a way of thinking and because the study of populism started to focus more on discourse-analytic approaches (Rovira Kaltwasser, Taggart, Ochoa Espejo, & Ostiguy, 2017). These three elements together redefined the study of populism in broader terms and put on the sideline the study of populism in terms of policies.

Nonetheless, the study of populism in terms of policy choices is starting to gain new momentum, especially in terms of measuring and contextualising their consequences (Funke et al., 2020; Guriev & Papaioannou, 2020). Many realised that the new forms of governments characterised by populist rhetoric do have similar patterns and similar outcomes, despite these being very different from the Latin American context and between each other. On the one hand, there is now a consensus that the forms of populism connected to Latin America have theoretical models that do not apply anymore. On the other hand, however, the forms of populism that we are seeing now cannot be connected to any specific theoretical model. This is especially important for Europe, where we have

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the emergence of new political models connected to populism that do not lead to economic disaster nor are connected to extreme redistribution (Benczes, 2018). Some major examples of this phenomenon are, for example, Hungary or Poland (Toplišek, 2020). These new forms currently need a new theoretical elaboration in terms of policy choices not only because of their novelty but also because they are becoming more and more relevant.

Consequently, this theoretical elaboration is the major contribution of this paper. This paper aims at giving a deductive and theoretical contribution in conceptualising populism in Europe in terms of policies and its consequences. This data-driven deductive contribution is now possible thanks to the relatively recent emergence of harmonised data availability across Europe and because of the rise of new techniques in political science (Cunningham, 2021). Overall, today's extensive data make it possible to perform a configurational analysis that makes a taxonomy possible. This work uses the two most recent rounds of Chapell Hill Expert Survey (CHES) and the PopuList to perform a comprehensive analysis in terms of policy preferences. We use cluster analysis as a technique to give quantitative and deductive insight on this new configurational model. This, in turn, makes it possible to have a new theoretical elaboration possible where we elaborate on the interaction between populist rhetoric and policy choices in Europe. This new theoretical elaboration based on data is as well the research gap that this work aims to fill.

This paper finds out that populist parties consistently position themselves as economically centrist and identity extremists. At the beginning of the analysis and according to the descriptive statistics, we find that populist parties seem to be a fourth distinct pole compared to centrist, right-wing and left-wing parties. This happens no matter the geographical position of the party, and no matter whether the party defines itself as right-wing or left-wing populist. Based on this result, we perform a cluster analysis on all parties to see whether the data show four clusters that overlap with the four clusters we used to identify parties: right-wing parties, centrist parties, left-wing parties and populist parties. We also split the clusters into four to see as well whether parties in Europe are divided into four geographical clusters linked to specific historical paths: Western Europe, Southern Europe, Northern Europe and Central and Eastern Europe.

Cluster analysis is a machine learning technique that tries to find cluster of similar observations across a dataset. The first cluster analysis in the paper tries to see whether we have a specific populist cluster next to the expected clusters of right-wing parties, centrist parties and left-wing parties. The second cluster analysis tries to see what happens if we cluster parties as Western Europe, Southern Europe, Northern Europe and Central and Eastern Europe: would one of these geographical clusters be particularly linked to populist parties? The idea would be to see if there is a correlation between populist parties and geographical position like for the Latin American case. The null hypothesis behind these two cluster analyses is that the policy preferences are homogeneous and non-statistically different among all parties including populist ones. The alternative hypothesis is that policy preferences do create four distinct, heterogenous, and statistically significant groups among which populist parties represent one. Both hypotheses are the reason why we create four clusters: because we have four expected political clusters in the first case, and because we have four expected geographical divisions in the second. We also repeat the analysis for 2014 and 2019 to see if the results are consistent.

This paper finds that the four clusters represent a mixture of both these expectations. The first cluster, mainly located in Central and Eastern Europe and composed by populist parties, specifically focuses on extreme right-wing identity politics positions and centrist economic positions. The second cluster is located across Western, Northern and Southern Europe, and it portrays a left and moderate centre concerned with the role of the European Union. The third cluster, the liberal centre, is the one more in line with European and liberal values and it is represented all over Europe. The last one, almost uncannily representing identity politics and the intersectional left, is present mainly in Western and Southern Europe.

Overall, this paper looks at how parties divide into the European political space. The main goal for doing so is creating a new configurational model of populism in terms of policy preferences for Europe, as the one created for Latin America does not apply (Dornbusch & Edwards, 1989; Funke et al., 2020). To do so, it analyses the fundamental differences between populists and other sides of the political spectrum. A secondary but equally important objective is to further analyse the relation between politics and policy in populist and non-populist parties in Europe (Kyle & Gultchin, 2018; Toplišek, 2019). Quantitatively analysing policy preferences is useful to understand the link between politics and policymaking. Politics, the use of power to maintain control on a certain territory, and policy, the system of rules to achieve a certain outcome, are strongly interrelated. Policy preferences are in this context an intermediary element between the two. The policy preferences expressed by a party are an integral part of its politics as they serve to get votes and attention. These policy preferences have, in turn, a concrete effect on a country's policymaking (Dahl, 1961). Once a party is in power, we expect to implement at least part of the policy preferences expressed before.

Of course, the relation between a country's politics and the policy preferences of its parties is not always straightforward (Matheson, 2016). The policy preferences of a party can be circumstantial and even drastically change when a party is in power. In

many instances, politics and policy preferences do not translate into the desired policymaking because of institutional or societal constraints (Kumlin & Stadelmann-Steffen, 2014; Pierson, 1996; Wlezien & Soroka, 2016). For example, in Europe, we know that Central and Eastern Europe tends to have a cronyist approach to policymaking despite strong anti-elite policy preferences (Martin, 2017; Stadelmann-Steffen & Eder, 2021). In this sense, we can say that politics translates into policies via the expressed policy preferences only in specific policy environments without institutional, cultural or political constraints.

Consequently, we do not imply a cause–effect relation between politics, policy preferences and politics. Nonetheless, it is still important to understand policy preferences as they are a strong link between politics and policy (Cooper & Williamson, 1994; Tharanga, 2018). In this case, policy preferences aim at informing how policies could diverge between different parts of Europe, especially if they are fundamentally different as analysed in the cluster analysis. The four clusters identified at the end of this paper, which partially but not fully represent the division between populist, right-wing, left-wing and centrist parties, give an insight on how politics and very likely policies will further diverge in Europe. There is a fundamental policy preference difference among European parties that is given by different ideological stances rather than geographical location that might foster even more divergent policies in the future.

To analyse policy preferences, the paper uses Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES) data for 2014 and 2019 for all parties of countries members of the EU mixed with the PopuList database. The paper also uses Gorton (Gorton, Douarin, Davidova, & Latruffe, 2008) as an empirical basis and Dornbusch and Edwards (Dornbusch & Edwards, 1990) as a theoretical one, even if we try to apply them to a different setting and we depart from both of them. The paper concludes that despite the most common definitions of populism (Abromeit, 2017; Mudde, 2004), we should not confuse populism with its host ideologies and how the two mix in terms of policy preferences. We see, in fact, that the parties’ political spectrum in contemporary Europe goes beyond a left–right divide or a populist–non-populist divide. The politics and policy positioning of such parties represent a combination both of libertarian–authoritarian, left–right, populist–nonpopulist and geographical historical paths.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The research question of this paper is about understanding which policy configuration do political parties characterised by populist rhetoric have across Europe, in order to define populism in terms of recurrent policy choices in this context. This paper looks at whether these differences are significant across North, South, Western and Central and Eastern Europe, given the concentration of these parties in some specific areas as shown in Table 2. The following paragraph will briefly elaborate on the importance of looking at the policy preference of parties, the relation between policy preferences and populism and some of the significant differences we can find inside Europe.

Parties’ positions have long been thought of as important determinants of electoral outcomes (Castanheira, Crutzen, & Sahuguet, 2010). However, defining parties’ policy positions is far from being a simple task. As shown in the literature, left and right are often defined as an “empty vessel” that changes according to time and situation (Huber & Inglehart, 2016). This is especially relevant for today’s Europe, where we can see new cleavages emerging in a strictly interrelated way (Hooghe & Marks, 2017; Welzel & Inglehart, 2016). This said, it is still possible to define a left–right divide based on an economic and cultural dimension (Giebler, Meyer, & Wagner, 2021). On these terms, we can put left-wing and right-wing on the opposite sides of a continuum. On one side, we have little or no redistribution and individual freedom for the right, while on the other, we have more or complete redistribution and collective norms for the left. The centre would position in the middle of this divide. This is as well the scale used in the CHES data, which, however, measures other positions such as identity politics and positions towards the European Union to make the mapping more complex and accurate. This is useful for the first part of our analysis, yet with its cluster analysis, this paper shows how new cleavages in Europe go beyond a simple left–right continuum.

The division of policy positioning in terms of economic and cultural dimensions is nonetheless useful for understanding the previous works on populist parties in terms of policy positions. Populism in terms of policy choices has previously been defined on a traditionally leftist side of the spectrum in the Latin American context (Conniff, 1982; Dornbusch & Edwards, 1990; Kaufman & Stallings, 1991). However, already in that positioning, it started showing a variety of other elements from authoritarianism to neoliberalism. Today, many continue to see populism in relation to its leftist grievances (Mouffe, 2019). Others see populism across the globe more in terms of nativism or economic shocks (Art, 2020; Rodrik, 2017). This led to today’s main definition of populism as a discursive style (Hawkins, Carlin, Littvay, & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2019a) or as a “thin-centered ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ versus ‘the corrupt elite’, and which argues

that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people” (Mudde 2004; p. 543). All these elements are equally important in defining the European space and leave the open question of which one is more predominant or how these elements exactly configure themselves. This is especially important because the previous theoretical definition of this kind has been exhausted. We map policy positioning of parties with a cluster analysis to create a new definition and to give a new direction to this strand of the literature.

There already have been attempts of mapping parties. One main example deals with the far right (Golder, 2016). For what concern mapping parties and populism, the main work on the topic in the literature is the “demand–supply study of populism” paper by Inglehart and Norris (Inglehart & Norris, 2016). In this work, the authors map the reasons that make people vote for populist parties in order to change that through policymaking. A work more similar to this one is by Meyer and Wagner (Meyer & Wagner, 2020). However, it differs from this one as it focuses on how party positions influence perceived left–right positions. Another one, by Hawkins and Castanho Silva in the book *The Ideational Approach to Populism* (Hawkins, Carlin, Littvay, & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2019b), relies as well on a mixture of validated experts but focuses on measuring populism from a rhetorical point of view.

Last, we have the works “Measuring Populist Discourse: The Global Populism Database” (Hawkins et al., 2021), “Measuring Populism in Political Parties: Appraisal of a New Approach” (Meijers & Zaslove, 2021) and “Measuring Populism Worldwide” (Norris, 2020). The first differs as it mainly focuses on discourse. However, the second work focuses more on conceptualising populism in a precise and multi-dimensional way rather than comparing existing data to see if we can find enough differences to consider it a different faction. The last one focuses more on conceptualising populism as well, and it has a global perspective instead of a European one. Overall, there are also numerous studies that try to map the drivers of populism using well-qualitative approaches (Akkerman, Mudde, & Zaslove, 2014; Castanho Silva, 2017; Hawkins, Riding, & Mudde, 2012; Schulz et al., 2018; Wuttke, Schimpf, & Schoen, 2020).

METHODOLOGY

This paper emerges out of a wider study on the political divergence between Western and Central and Eastern Europe and seeks more particularly to provide a clearer understanding of the characteristics of populist and anti-establishment parties in Europe, which can provide valuable insights into likely responses to reformed policy environments. CHES data allow for the comparison across 32 EEA Member states. The analysis is divided into three parts based on other relevant works using similar methodology (Gorton et al., 2008).

First, we conduct an exploratory analysis to see common patterns in policy preferences. We divide the data in two ways: a geographical one and “left versus right” one. The geographical one divides between Southern Europe (Portugal, Italy, Greece, Spain, Cyprus, Malta), Western Europe (United Kingdom, France, Belgium, Holland, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Ireland, Luxembourg), Northern Europe (Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland, Iceland) and Central and Eastern Europe (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia). We exclude Turkey from all the classifications because it is outside the European Union. We also exclude Iceland because it is present only in the 2019 dataset. This division is created according to standard divisions of Europe in terms of economic performance and cultural background (Browning, 2020; Sushytska, 2010). The “left versus right” division uses the CHES variable LRGEN, and it is in line with the literature on the left and the right being divided on economic and cultural perspective (Giebler et al., 2021).

Second, descriptive statistics are presented for the whole sample regarding the distribution of the experts’ responses for the Likert scales. Mean scores for the 25 variables are presented with significant differences identified using ANOVA and presenting the F-tests scores and the significance levels. Third, group of parties with similarly held positions in terms of ideological stance are identified using cluster analysis. This is to investigate whether differences in parties’ positions can be discerned according to a right–left–centrist–populist criterion. Since we used 25 variables to describe the parties and in the descriptive part of the study, first we checked the correlations between the indexes. We find that there are multiple indexes which are highly correlated. To deal with the effect of highly correlated variables on the cluster creation, we chose to perform a factor analysis first. In the study, principal components presenting eigenvalue greater than 1.0 were chosen with factor loadings being greater or equal than 0.5 on the least factor. The cluster analysis was performed using the k-means algorithm (Likas, Vlassis, & J. Verbeek, 2003). The factors defined by the factor analysis were used as the basis of the clustering. Instead of choosing the number of clusters based on prior analysis, we chose to have four clusters to compare if there are differences or not in grouping the parties based on to potentially match the left–right–centre–populist classification discussed above. More information on the analysis, including source data and R code, is available online and on GitHub.

DATA

Policy positions in the CHES data are measured through secondary survey work conducted during 2014 and 2019. The database maps the policy positions of all parties across Europe by summarising the opinion of 337 experts on each topic for each party. Using these, many experts minimise the individual experts' biases, and it gives an overall objective measurement for each position. The survey measures the opinions on a 7-point or 10-point Likert scale. These scales drew on previous attempts to capture policy positions and were designed to fit within a cross-national framework. The selected questions provide insights into parties' opinions regarding: (a) positions towards the European Union, (b) positions towards democracy, (c) positions towards libertarian versus traditional issues, and (d) ideological stance. In addition to the ideological side of the party provided by CHES, we merge data from the PopuList database (Rooduijn et al., 2020). In this database, the parties are classified as populist from 106 experts, and populism is defined as a thin ideology (Mudde 2004).

We use the CHES data from 2019 to have the most recent data available on Europe. We compare it to the 2014 round to have an idea of the consistency of type of parties over Europe in the recent available timeframe. We do not use the 2017 edition of the data as it is based on a smaller number of countries. The CHES data categorise the faction of parties (or ideological stance, as called in the database itself) through a variable called LRGEN. This paper segments the parties in the following way: we classify parties as right with a value between 10 and 6, as centre if the value is between 6 and 4 and as left if it is between 4 and 0.

When we talk about populist parties, we talk about all parties classified as populist by Rooduijn et al. (2020) regardless of being right-wing, left-wing or centre. In Tables 1 and 2, we can see how there are 264 parties in total and 47 classified as populist for the year 2014. Overall, 17% of the parties in the database are populist. For 2019, we have 264 and 57 populists (21% of the total). For what concerns the geographical divide, we can see more right-wing parties in Central and Eastern Europe, probably for their preference for an anti-leftist and therefore anti-communist rhetoric. We also see more left-wing parties in Western Europe, as an answer to liberalism and globalisation. Surprisingly, there is an almost equal distribution of parties by side in Northern and Southern Europe.

Tab. 1: Division between centre, right, left and populist parties in 2014 and 2019

	2014				2019			
	Left	Centre	Right	Populist	Left	Centre	Right	Populist
Left	80	0	0	8	85	0	0	9
Centre	0	54	0	8	0	60	0	11
Right	0	0	87	31	0	0	75	37

Tab. 2: Number of parties per political side in Europe in 2014 and 2019

	2014				2019			
	Western Europe	Central and Eastern Europe	Northern Europe	Southern Europe	Western Europe	Central and Eastern Europe	Northern Europe	Southern Europe
Left	31	21	12	14	30	21	14	15
Centre	16	18	7	13	17	29	5	8
Right	22	36	12	15	17	28	11	14
Populist	16	19	4	8	15	25	5	10

EXPLORATORY ANALYSIS AND DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

The distribution of responses for each Likert scale item for a selected question and the mean scores for each political side is shown in Figures 1–4 and in the supplementary files. Figures 1–4 specifically show the redistribution across the policy dimension improving public services versus reducing taxes for ideological factions and geographical division, both in 2014 and 2019. The figure reveals that left-wing, right-wing, centrist and populist have elements in common specific to the ideological side. However, despite the literature, there are no apparent common patterns that characterise Central and Eastern, Western, Southern and Northern Europe. More significantly, populist parties seem to be centrist in term of economic stance but more extremist than the right-wing for what concerns identity issues.

The mean scores for each Likert scale by ideological side for 2014 and 2019 are reported in the supplementary files. To check for significant differences between political sides, ANOVA was performed, and F-test scores and significance levels are reported for a comparison (a) between different political sides and (b) between Central and Eastern, Western, Southern and Northern Europe. Significant differences are uncovered between political sides on nearly all the variables for what concerns the political side and in line with Figures 1–4. Overall, populist parties position themselves on the far-right spectrum for many issues, both in 2014 and 2019. It is especially interesting considering that in these tables, all populist parties are considered together no matter if self-identified as right-wing, left-wing or centre. We find this pattern for the following elements: anti-elite salience, position towards ethnic minorities, position towards the European budget and position towards European integration. Coherently, populist parties are also the only faction to consider that European integration is of no importance (EU salience). In the second categories of extreme values, populist parties position themselves in even more right-wing positions than the right-wing parties themselves. This happens for the following variables: civil liberties versus law and order, EU dissent (only for 2019), social and cultural values, social and cultural value salience, immigration policy, multi-culturalism, nationalism and social lifestyle.

The second category of values for populist parties confirms the hypothesis coherent with the literature that the average values should be centrist, as populist parties are just parties using a specific rhetoric. Such values are corrupt salience, deregulation, economic intervention, EU cohesion, EU foreign and security policy, EU internal market, EU position, ideological stance, ideological stance salience, ideological position of the party, redistribution, decentralisation to regions, religious principle, spending versus collecting taxes, and urban–rural divide. Of course, some of these results are surprising as well. According to the rhetoric they are supposed to apply, we are intrigued to find that populist parties are centrist for what concerns corrupt salience and urban–rural divide. The rhetoric of populist is supposed to defend the “real people” against “the corrupt elite.” If we also consider most populist parties in Europe right-wing as suggested by all the other values, it is also surprising to see populist parties to be on average centrist for what concerns the defence of religious principles in 2014. This result for the economic variable is indeed coherent. Last, we find more significant variables in the division between ideological factions but no clear disparity between Western, Central and Eastern, Northern and Southern Europe. While political sides are interesting to report, it is important to investigate whether political sides are the most important factors in distinguishing groups of parties with similarly held positions. This is investigated in the next subsection, through the application of factor and cluster analysis.

CLUSTER ANALYSIS

Two tests were applied to assess the validity of the factor analysis. The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (Kaiser, 1970) is 0.89, indicating that the data matrix has a very good correlation to justify the application of factor analysis. Bartlett’s test of sphericity is large and statistically significant at the 1% level, and therefore, the hypothesis that the correlation matrix is the identity matrix can be rejected. These measures indicate that the set is appropriate for factor analysis.

A five-factor solution is adopted, choosing the factors that present an absolute eigenvalue greater than 0.5 (Table 3). This solution explains 81% of the variance in the data set, which is more than satisfactory, according to Hair et al. (1998). The first factor is associated with identity values, as it relates to the position towards immigration, ethnic minorities, lifestyle, civil liberties and security. The second factor relates to economics, as the main loadings are statements concerning taxes, deregulation, redistribution and state intervention. The third factor is associated with positions towards the European Union, as it concerns all the statement concerning the EU and whether decentralise power outside the nation state. The fourth factor concerns anti-elite rhetoric and corruption. The

Fig. 1: Distribution across the policy dimension of “immigration policy” and “improving public services versus reducing taxes” for ideological factions in 2014

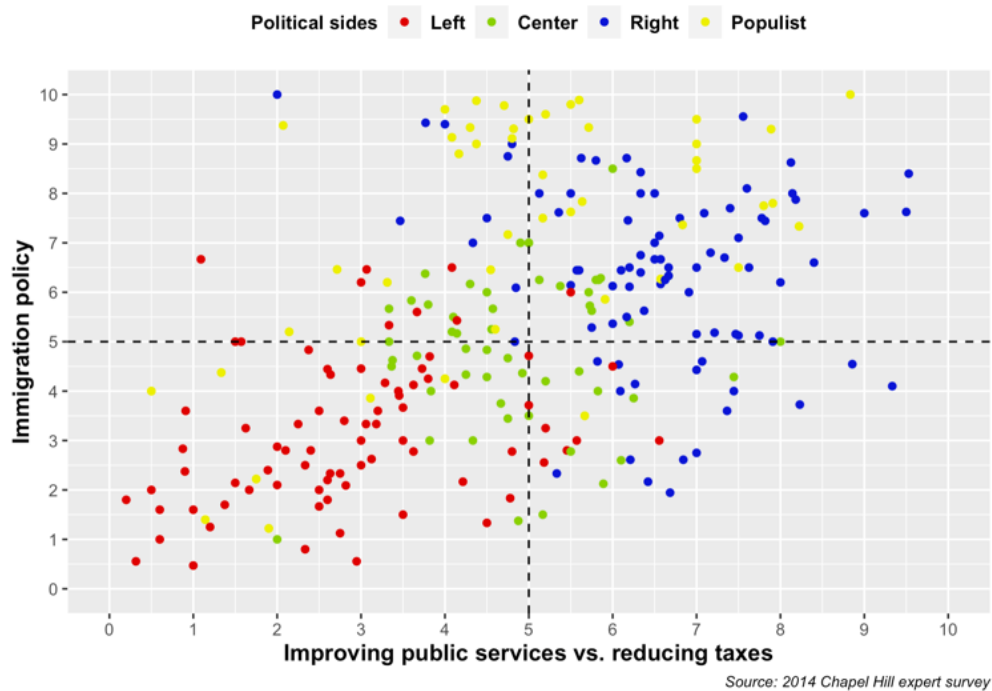


Fig. 2: Distribution across the policy dimension of “immigration policy” and “improving public services versus reducing taxes” for ideological factions in 2019

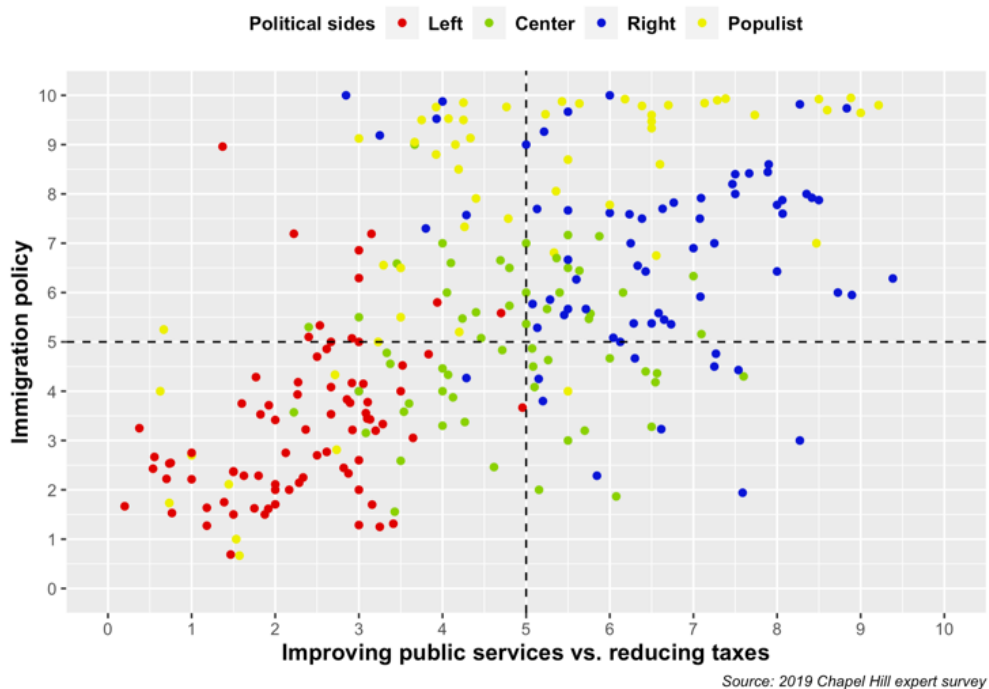


Fig. 3: Distribution across the policy dimension of “immigration policy” and “improving public services versus reducing taxes” for geographical division in 2014

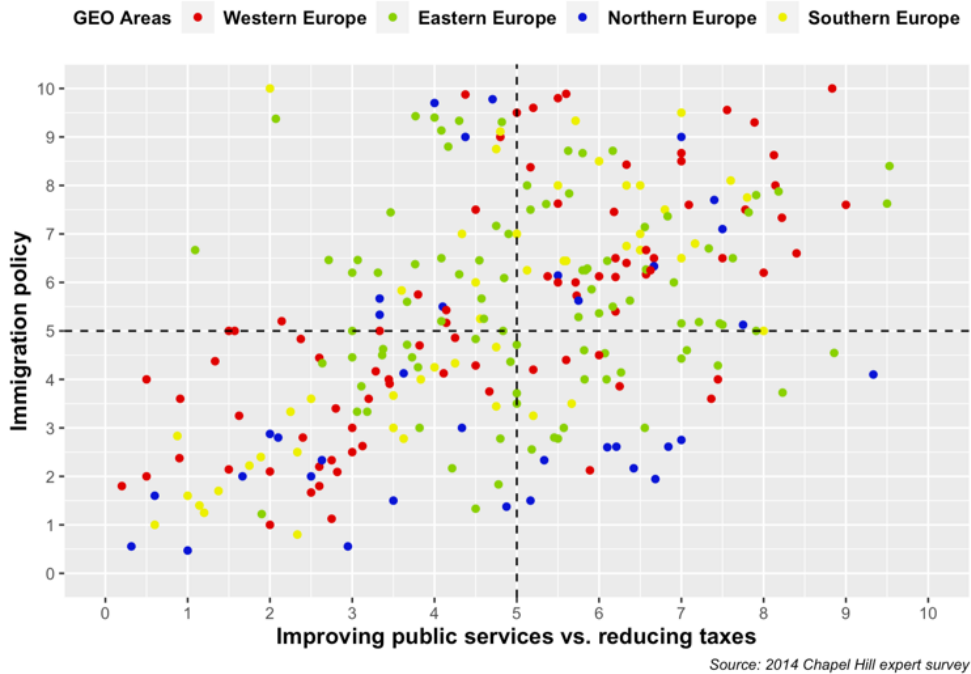
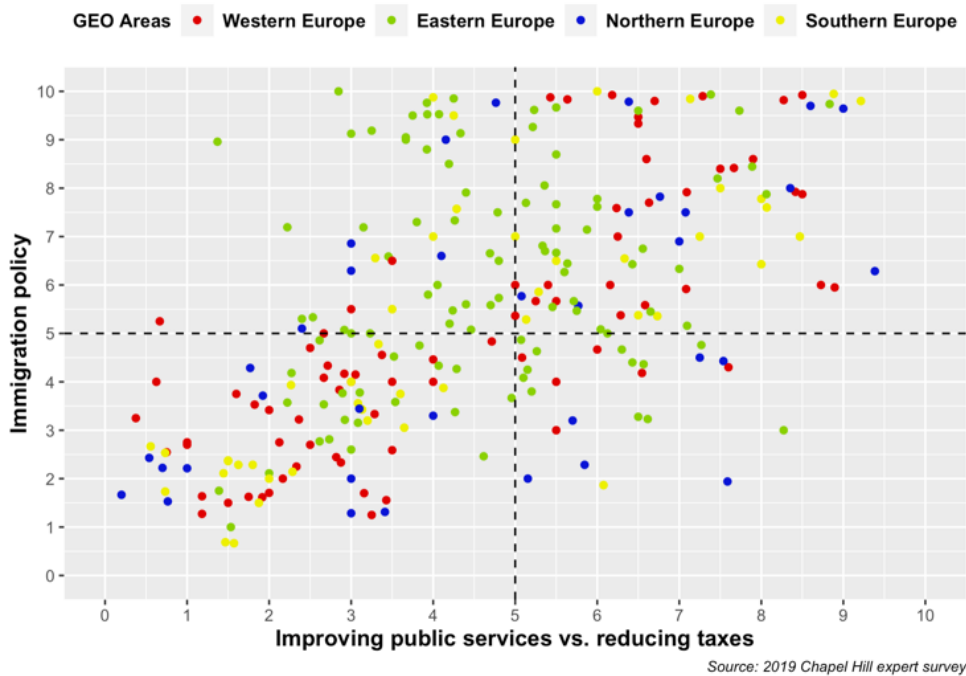


Fig. 4: Distribution across the policy dimension of “immigration policy” and “improving public services versus reducing taxes” for geographical division in 2019.



last factor concerns more a traditional ideological divide as it focuses on dissent, libertarian versus traditional values and stance of economic issues in the party's ideology.

These factors form the basis of the cluster analysis. Using the criteria outlined in the methodology section, a four-cluster solution was obtained. The supplementary files present the clusters presenting the mean values for each of the variables included in the factor analysis. It also displays the results for the analysis of variance (ANOVA), conducted to check the statistical significance of differences between clusters. There are significant differences in the comparison between clusters and ideological side, as shown in the supplementary files.

We use political sides and geography to understand the clusters (Table 4). These variables were not use for the cluster analysis itself. These include for each party the geographical division between Northern, Western, Southern and Central and Eastern Europe; and the ideological side divided between right-wing, left-wing, centrist and populist. Most parties initially classified as left are in clusters 2 and 4; in clusters 2 and 3, we can find the centre and the right parties, and in cluster 1, we find the populist parties. Even if the distribution across different geographical sides seems homogeneous, most of the parties that align with clusters 1 and 3 are in Central and Eastern Europe. The derived clusters are first described based on the variables included in the analysis. The description is then refined based on the structural and demographic variables presented in the previous paragraph together with intentions, which improves the profiling and validation of each cluster.

CLUSTER 1: "THE CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN POPULISTS"

This cluster is second to smallest, yet it comprises 18% of all parties in Europe. Of these parties, the predominant majority is in Central and Eastern Europe, and it identifies as populist. This cluster is especially interesting because it is the most extremist for what concerns most evaluated variables: all the variables concerning Europe, identity values and decentralisation. The only variables on which this cluster is not extremist are the ones related to economic issues. In other words, this cluster is focused on rejecting the identity value politics and the European Integration project. It refuses any sort of economic extremism and as well any sort of identity politics and cooperation. As a cluster mainly located in Central and Eastern Europe, we can see the Fidesz party in Hungary and the PiS party in Poland as two representative examples. The cluster gives quantitative proof to the often cited assumption that populism in Central and Eastern Europe is economically conservative yet focused on an inflammatory rhetoric against liberal values (Benczes, 2018). It proves that populist parties can be mainly identified in terms of economic conservatism and extremist identity politics in Europe.

CLUSTER 2: "THE LEFT AND MODERATE CENTRE"

This cluster mainly identifies as left-wing. The vast majority of its parties are in Western Europe, yet it is the most present one in Northern Europe and its presence is relevant as well in Central and Eastern Europe and Southern Europe. It is the most numerous clusters in terms of total parties being almost 40% of the total. This cluster can be called conservative because even if it identifies with the left, it is the most moderate in almost all the positions considered. However, this cluster is the one debating the most about the role of European Integration and the one debating the least for what concern anti-establishment versus anti-elite rhetoric and reducing political corruption. It represents a moderate and inclusionary form of politics concerned with migration, which can be considered in line with the overall politics in Northern Europe. For this reason, we can hypothesise that in the contemporary landscape, this is the cluster against which the other ones formed, even if for different reasons: cluster 1 for what concerns identity politics and the European project, cluster 3 for what concern economic issues and cluster 4 for what concerns both economic issues and identity politics.

Tab. 3: Factor loadings (rotated component matrix)

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5
Position on social lifestyle (e.g. homosexuality) (9)	0.911	0.158	-0.224	0.100	-0.061
Position of the party in terms of their views on democratic freedoms and rights (2)	0.907	0.187	-0.267	0.004	-0.037
Position towards nationalism (8)	0.876	0.188	-0.364	0.000	-0.041
Position on civil liberties vs. law and order (8)	0.845	0.308	-0.319	-0.052	-0.043
Position on integration of immigrants and asylum seekers (multi-culturalism vs. assimilation) (3)	0.830	0.358	-0.321	0.047	0.000
Position on immigration policy (6)	0.829	0.362	-0.308	0.056	0.003
Position on urban vs. rural interests (8)	0.799	-0.032	-0.047	-0.167	-0.075
Position towards ethnic minorities (9)	0.749	0.366	-0.385	0.028	-0.057
Position on improving public services vs. reducing taxes (9)	0.317	0.908	0.001	-0.031	-0.013
Position on redistribution of wealth from the rich to the poor (8)	0.263	0.933	0.066	-0.019	-0.031
Position of the party in terms of its ideological stance on economic issues (9)	0.258	0.939	0.084	0.025	-0.054
Salience of anti-establishment and anti-elite rhetoric (5)	0.256	-0.234	-0.701	0.447	-0.110
Position on political decentralisation to regions/localities (9)	0.228	0.105	-0.394	-0.053	0.092
Position on deregulation (6)	0.172	0.954	0.133	-0.004	-0.013
Degree of dissent on European integration in 2014 (10)	0.136	-0.070	-0.077	-0.096	0.693
Position on state intervention in the economy (9)	0.126	0.954	0.117	0.009	-0.041
Relative salience of libertarian/traditional issues in the party's public (8)	0.113	0.061	-0.190	0.358	-0.526
Salience of reducing political corruption (5)	0.054	-0.142	0.036	0.890	-0.005
Position of the party leadership on EU cohesion or regional policy(e.g. the structural funds) (7)	-0.027	-0.208	0.850	0.217	0.131
Relative salience of European integration in the party's public stance (3)	-0.251	0.307	0.208	0.573	-0.171
Position of the party leadership on the internal market (i.e. free movement of goods, services, capital and labour) (7)	-0.262	0.363	0.810	-0.044	0.123
Position of the party leadership on EU authority over member states' economic and budgetary policies (7)	-0.287	0.225	0.864	0.058	-0.018
Relative salience of economic issues in the party's public stance	-0.319	0.028	0.136	0.171	0.746
Overall orientation of the party leadership towards European integration (10)	-0.392	0.143	0.869	-0.035	0.078
Position of the party leadership on EU foreign and security policy (7)	-0.397	0.136	0.818	0.049	0.012

Tab. 4: Distribution of clusters by political side and regions

	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Cluster 3	Cluster 4
Left	1	43	6	21
Centre	2	27	21	1
Right	10	23	34	0
Populist	31	3	9	10
Western Europe	13	34	8	11
Central and Eastern Europe	21	34	44	4
Northern Europe	4	17	2	3
Southern Europe	6	11	16	14

CLUSTER 3: “THE PRO EUROPE AND PRO LIBERALISM CENTRE”

This cluster is the most present cluster in Southern Europe, but its presence is relevant as well in Central and Eastern Europe. In a traditional ideological divide, it would identify as centrist: in favour of the European integration, liberalism and neutral for what concerns identity issues. Cluster 3 is polarised against cluster 4 for what concerns economic issues and against cluster 1 for what concerns European integration. It is a traditionally centrist and libertarian cluster, yet it looks like an extreme one if compared to clusters 1 and 4. It represents the politics of European integration in a nutshell.

CLUSTER 4: “THE IDENTITY POLITICS AND INTERSECTIONAL LEFT”

This cluster can easily be identified with the left, and it is mainly located in Western and Southern Europe. Even if it is the smallest cluster, it still represents 15% of all parties in Europe. It is extremist and in favour of the state rather than the free market in all the economic issues, with possibly a profound resentment towards liberalism. The strong importance of economic and identity issues in the parties’ stance makes us hypothesise it as a group potentially in line with intersectional politics: identity, race, gender and class are all part of the same problem that needs active redistribution and attention from the community. It is in line with the more redistributive and leftist stances of Southern Europe, and in general with the rise of left focused primarily on how identity issues impact society.

CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, we showed that the number of populist parties is rising (Table 1), and that these parties’ positions consistently differ from all other parties in terms of policy positions. These positions also fundamentally differ in terms of evolved left–right divide rather than geographical position. We showed how these differences are significant for most CHES variables across a left–right divide using ANOVA and presenting the F-tests scores and the significance levels in the supplementary files.

With this analysis we empirically proved that the definition of economic populism does not apply to Europe. Even more interestingly, we proved that there is a definition of populism in terms of policy choices that can be applied to Europe. We can see that the European parties position themselves on an axis that comprehend economic positions on one side and identity politics, European Union, libertarian–authoritarian positions and anti-elite rhetoric and corruption on the other side. This says a lot about today’s contemporary political space and as well about populist parties. In these terms, populist parties are a rejection with the problems created by the European Union, identity values and decentralisation. Similar views have already been expressed in other works (Lütz & Kranke, 2014). These views are specifically in line with the concerns Central and Eastern Europe. This region is in fact the one that benefitted the least from the European Union in terms of economic convergence (Györfy, 2021). This made it possible to trigger the widespread use of an “us versus them” rhetoric against the European Union and social lifestyle such as homosexuality. Looking at it in this perspective, it is particularly worrying the fact that the number of parties of this kind is increasing throughout the years and the related underlying problems are remaining substantially the same. The same process applies for the cluster identified in Southern Europe, even if it goes in a more traditional leftist direction. In policy terms, the solution would be to look at the underlying problems.

In this paper, by showing that there are four statistically different clusters in terms of political rather than geographical side, we show how politics much more than geographical position might influence policymaking. Being these four clusters statistically different from one another, they could very likely transform in different sets of policies in case they will not be contained by any other external factor. For example, the parties that identified with cluster 1 would seem more likely to implement policies that impede the democratic process. In terms of relation between politics and policy, these distinct four clusters also inform us of two things. First, that these different clusters are counterposing Central and Eastern Europe and the rest of Europe that despite their difference not being given by geography. Second, this juxtaposition might create further divergence between Central and Eastern Europe and the rest of Europe that if these different groups of policy preferences translated into different policymaking in these two sides of the continent. The cluster mainly located in Central and Eastern Europe has in fact extremist point of views for what concerns economics, immigration, ethnic minorities, lifestyle, civil liberties and security. This might also prove to be critical for the future of the European Union itself.

We also suggest two other elements: that these four clusters seem to represent a more state of party politics in Europe rather than simple left–right division, and that the two more extreme clusters might be born as an opposition to the two centrist ones, which are more widespread across the continent. While in Western Europe we have the rise of both, we see the rise of right-wing populist in Central and Eastern Europe and the rise of an extreme intersectional left in Southern Europe due to local circumstances and events. This matches with the rise of parties like Podemos, Syriza and the Five Star Movement in Southern Europe and PiS and Fidesz in Poland and Hungary respectively. These examples should not be considered as isolated cases but rather as a potential articulation of a new way of identifying across the political spectrum. However, the overall rise in the number of right-wing and anti-European parties has serious future policy implications for the integrity of the European project. Of course, this problem remains particularly complex one to manage in the European Union where it is already hard to coordinate all the member states and the relative national interests. Further research is therefore needed in looking at the relation between the newly identified populist cluster and their related underlying problems.

APPENDIX

Legend for the variables:

- (1) 0 = extreme left, 10 = extreme right
- (2) 0 = libertarian/post-materialist, 10 = traditional/authoritarian
- (3) 0 = no importance, 10 = great importance
- (4) 0 = no importance, 10 = great importance
- (5) 0 = not important at all, 10 = extremely important
- (6) 0 = strongly opposes, 10 = strongly supports
- (7) 0 = strongly opposes, 7 = strongly supports
- (8) 0 = strongly supports issue on the left, 10 = strongly supports issue on the right
- (9) 0 = strongly supports, 10 = strongly opposes
- (10) 0 = strongly united on the topic, 10 = strongly divided

FUNDING

This work was supported by the European's Union Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement no. 765224.

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Reforming the Public Sector in Eastern European and Former Soviet Union Countries: A Systematic Literature Review

ABSTRACT: *This article applies a systematic literature-based approach to select, analyze, and categorize publications appearing on public sector management (PSM) reforms in Eastern European (EE) and former Soviet Union (FSU) countries. Findings of the literature review reveal the complexity of reformation in the region and point to the multilayered character of the reform processes, including design of the reform content, implementation, and evaluation of achieved results. The analysis, also shows that the reforms' results are uneven and somewhat controversial. This article contributes by systematizing literature on transforming PSM in EE and FSU countries; analyzing the trajectories of the dominant reforms and finding overlooked topics; providing avenues for future research; and by contextually covering twenty-eight countries that experienced economic transition and significant societal transformations.*

KEYWORDS: public sector, reforms, systematic literature review, Eastern Europe, former Soviet Union

RECEIVED 6 August 2022; **ACCEPTED** 5 January 2023.

INTRODUCTION

Probably one of the most significant events of the 20th century, which brought changes in public management practices around Central Eastern Europe (CEE) and Western Asian regions, was the demise of socialism. This caused substantive changes to economic, political, and social landscapes (Gill, 1992) through reorientation toward free markets. Countries with similar traditions of public administration experienced substantial economic transformations and faced several dilemmas regarding the reconstruction of their public sector practices: “rebuilding on ruins” or “rebuilding with the ruins” (Stark, 1996, p. 995), following revolutionary or evolutionary changes (Feldmann, 2018). This was a difficult choice for the newly established states, which were unfamiliar with market rules and capitalism (Hogan, 1991).

The dynamics of the reforms were influenced by external—often interconnected—pressures, such as the effects of the financial crisis (Peters, 2011; Foster & Magdoff, 2009), diffusion of practices by international financial institutions (Neu, Silva, & Ocampo Gomez, 2008), and isomorphic mimicry (Krause, 2013). Such exogenous pressures promoted the implementation of similar packages of public sector reforms (Drechsler, 2005), focused on implementing business-like rules in the public sector, with the aim of maximizing public organizations’ efficiency and effectiveness regarding service delivery (Klijn, 2012). Nevertheless, “each country makes its own translation or adaptation” (Ferlie, Lynn Jr, & Pollitt, 2005, p. 721) of reform packages. This depends on local factors, such as historical background (Christensen, Lie, & Lægveid, 2008), commitment of ideologically driven political leaders (Abrams & Fish, 2015), unstable political context (Mele & Ongaro, 2014), local culture, status of public servants (Shpak, Podolchak, Karkovska, & Sroka, 2019; Kotrusová & Výborná, 2016), economic and/or political elites, and level of democracy.

After the dissolution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), in the early 1990s, several reforms took place in Eastern European (EE) and former Soviet Union (FSU) countries, reflecting public sector transformations in response to substantial economic, societal, and political change events. While the dissolution caused economic turbulence in some FSU countries, growth patterns marked the EE countries, until a series of crises hit the region in 1997–1998 (Roaf, Atoyán, Joshi, Krogulski, & IMF Staff Team, 2014). The downturn of national economies made governments optimize public sector spending, which might have served as a new impetus toward public sector reforms. The new millennium brought a boost of economic activity and stable growth until the

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global financial crisis of 2008–2009, which caused a substantial drop in output, showed a greater negative impact than in any other region of the world (Roaf et al., 2014). Facing fiscal imbalances, some governments had to alter their policies under austerity (Jógiste, Peda, & Grossi, 2012), which further affected the level of democracy in some of the countries (Pavlović, 2019). Simultaneously, a strong aspiration for European Union (EU) integration influenced public sector reforms in countries eager to join the Union, as those governments were required to harmonize their national legislation with the EU's.

Despite these outstanding transformations spreading across the region, over the years, the academic discussion of adopting new policies and practices in the public sector was mostly focused on Western countries (e.g., Weiss, 2017; Anessi-Pessina & Steccolini, 2005; Christensen, Lie, & Lægrend, 2008). Even more surprisingly, the body of research on countries facing the demise of planned economy and introduction of public sector management (PSM) reforms in CEE still remains fragmented (Dan & Pollitt, 2015). At the same time, those studies, which actually do focus on PSM reform/(s) in transitional context, provide intriguing findings of one or couple country cases, yet giving little chance to grasp the macropicture of changes occurring within the whole region. This article is a genuine opportunity to contribute to the debate by tracing reforms' trajectories in this region. Following developments since the 1990s in the public sector of CEE and FSU allows us to capture major transformations during the 25 years of the transition to market economy. Learning from the past brings valuable knowledge to both academics and practitioners in explaining social, economic, and/or institutional patterns observed at the present time among the countries-in-focus, to trace the range of reforms as well as to foresee what might be the future trends of PSM in the region. To achieve this, we frame our analysis within a generic policy process framework (De Boer et al., 2016) and demonstrate how the focus of the reforms (inspired by Pollitt & Bouckaert's (2017) classification) has been changing.

This article aims to explore the dynamically changing public sector in the context of EE and FSU countries, to provide an in-depth understanding of trajectories of PSM reforms, which appeared unsystematically as the countries started introducing novel public sector practices, for example, performance measurement and management, new accounting and reporting principles, civil service reforms, privatization, and other initiatives (Savas, 1992; Mikesell and Mullins, 2001; Guess, 2007; Verheijen and Dobrolyubova, 2007), in the region after the quarter of century since the collapse of the USSR. Through a systematic literature review (SLR) approach, we answer the following research questions:

RQ1: *What was the main focus of the research on PSM reforms in EE and FSU countries?*

RQ2: *Which PSM reforms and how they were developing in EE and FSU countries after the start of transition to the market economy?*

In this way, this article seeks to contribute to the public administration research by identifying the exhaustiveness of the literature, analyzing it based on the policy process framework and mapping research gaps to encourage further scientific development (Schooler, 2014; Torraco, 2016).

This article is structured as follows. The next section discusses the methodological approach used to review the literature. Then, the analysis of SLR findings is presented and followed by a discussion of the changing trajectories of the PSM reforms in EE and FSU countries, outlining the complexity and layering of reforms in the region. This article ends with concluding remarks, suggestions of further research, limitations, and implications.

RESEARCH PROTOCOL

This article applied a systematic review of the literature, which ensures replicability of results, minimizes a potential bias during the review process, and thus increases the credibility of the SLR (Tranfield, Denyer, & Smart, 2003). Ensuring replicability and transparency of research is crucial (Mattei, Grossi, & Guthrie, 2021); thus, the research approach follows the "PRISMA Flow Diagram" (Moher, Liberati, Tetzlaff, & Altman, 2009), which is widely adopted when conducting public sector research (e.g., Polzer, Adhikari, Nguyen, & Gårseth-Nesbakk, 2021).

Review Boundaries

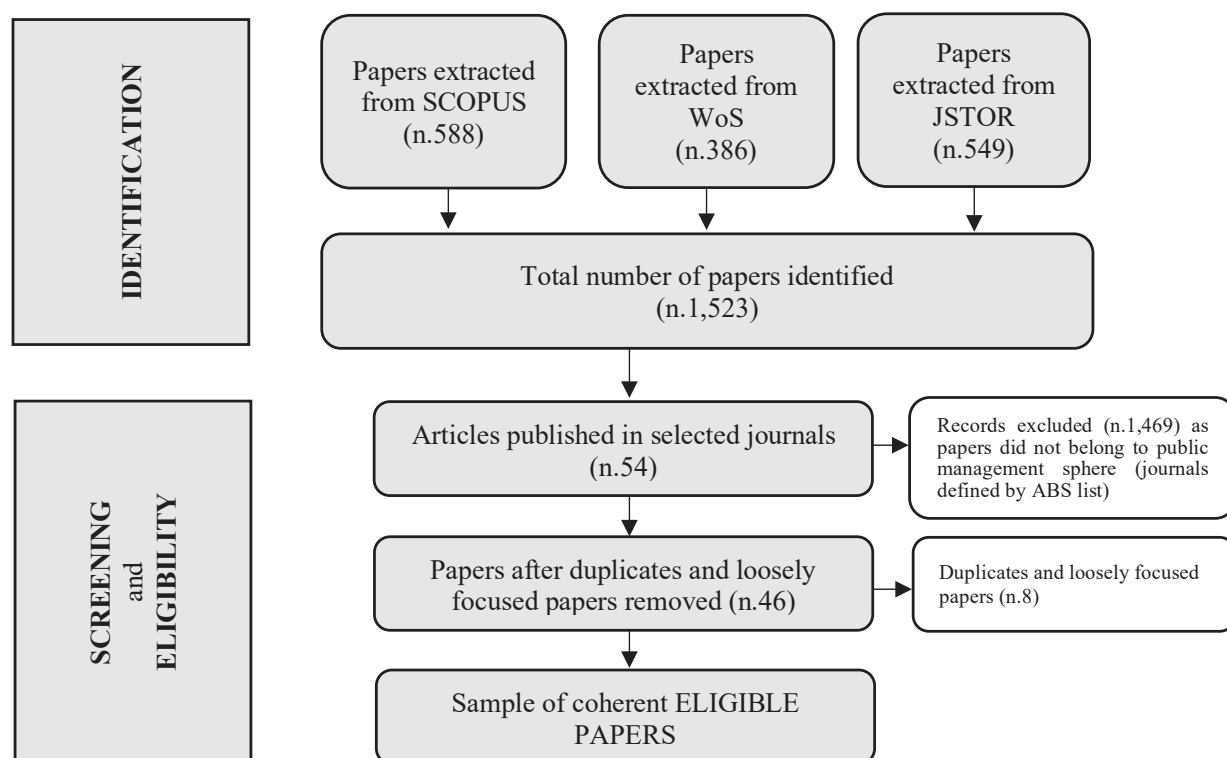
To provide an overview of PSM reforms in EE and FSU countries experiencing the transition from socialism to capitalism, first, a classification framed around politicoeconomic systems is used, as this allows for a more comprehensive overview of the changing

PSM practices in the region. In the past, the sample of selected countries belonged to the Eastern Bloc, comprising the USSR and satellite states, built on the principles of planned economy. Importantly, in the following analytical sections, the distinction between EE and FSU countries is made, based on the contrasting speed of economic recovery during the first years of transition, the ease of state building and internal political influences on the process of reform (IMF, 2000). Second, the time span of 1991–2017 has been chosen, to provide a snapshot of developments of PSM reforms in EE and FSU countries during the quarter of the century after the dissolution of the USSR. The final boundary was limiting the papers written in English only (Mauro, Cinquini, & Grossi, 2017).

The Review Processes

We started with the identification of keywords. Given the broad focus of this SLR, the following keywords were used in the search: *reform*, *public sector*, and the name of one of 28 EE and FSU countries. The expression “public sector” rather than “public sector management” was used as a keyword because it yields a wider search result. To provide a holistic overview of the existing body of literature, the search was framed by Scopus, Web of Science (WoS), and JSTOR databases, which, as the major databases (Paoloni, Mattei, Dello Strogolo, & Celli, 2020), have often been used in previous literature reviews on similar topics (e.g., Mauro, Cinquini, & Grossi, 2017). The process of finding eligible papers is summarized in Figure 1.

Fig. 1: Search, identification, and selection of records for review (adopted from Moher, Liberati, Tetzlaff, & Altman, 2009)



To identify the studies (step 1) we conducted search rounds in each of three selected web-search engines, 28 search queries were framed. During searches, Boolean logic was applied to frame the search by combining selected keywords (e.g., “reform” AND “public sector” AND “the name of one of 28 EE and FSU countries”) for each search round. For Scopus and WoS databases, the queries were made by limiting the search to abstracts, keywords, and titles. In JSTOR, the query was limited to “articles, full-text, and 33 journals.”

A total of 1,523 papers was obtained from these searches.

In the next step (screening), each paper was manually assessed. First, we limited the papers based on the publication source. This review included papers published in international peer-reviewed journals ranked in the ABS (2015) Academic Journal Guide. This Guide was used to filter journals and include those in the sphere of public management (the subject area “Public Sector and Health Care”) to provide a universal overview of reform directions; therefore, other journals were excluded. Thus, 33 academic journals (Appendix 1) were used to limit papers (from 1,523 until 54).

In the end, the eligibility check was performed. Titles and abstracts of 54 papers were read. In some cases, a general search of keywords was applied within the paper, to ensure the relevance of the paper’s content. At this stage, duplicates and loosely focused papers (8 articles) were removed. This resulted in a sample of 46 coherent eligible papers used for the analysis.

The Framework for Analysis

The main dimensions for the framework selected for this study are extrapolated from previous literature reviews (van Helden & Uddin, 2016; Anessi-Pessina, Barbera, Rota, Sicilia, & Steccolini, 2016; Paoloni et al., 2020; Broadbent & Guthrie, 2008) focusing on the analysis of different public sector areas and in various contextual settings; these were slightly transformed, due to the features of the current dataset. As a result, the following dimensions were used to analyze papers on PSM reforms (Table 1):

Tab. 1: Framework for descriptive analysis of eligible papers

Dimension	Elements
1 Types of paper	a. Research paper b. Viewpoint c. Conceptual paper d. Literature review e. General review
2 Research methods	a. Empirical qualitative research 1) Exploratory 2) Explanatory 3) Descriptive b. Empirical quantitative research 1) Exploratory 2) Explanatory 3) Descriptive c. Mixed methods d. Papers with inexplicitly defined methodology
3 Theories and scientific paradigms	a. Single paradigm 1) Positivistic tradition (economic theory and other objectivist and functionalist theories) 2) Interpretive tradition (institutional or neo-institutional, stakeholder, behavioristic approach, or others) b. Several paradigms c. No explicit reference to the theory
4 Geographical location	a. Single country b. Multiple countries 1) Two countries 2) Three or more countries
5 Focus of reform(s)	a. Financial management b. Human resource management c. Organization d. Performance measurement and management e. Transparency and open government f. Mixed reforms

- 1) *Types of paper*. For this SLR, the basis for classification was adjusted to Emerald Publishing's (2020) article classification.
- 2) *Research methods*: To differentiate the papers according to “types of conclusions the researcher aims to draw” (Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2007, p. 44). In addition to dividing the papers into *empirical qualitative* and *quantitative*, *mixed methods*, and papers with *inexplicitly defined methodology*, papers with quantitative or qualitative methodology were divided into exploratory (what?), descriptive (how?), and explanatory (why?) classifications (Flick, 2014).
- 3) *Theories and scientific paradigms*: To analyze the papers on PSM reforms in EE and FSU countries according to the theoretical framework(s) used. Furthermore, within a group of publications with a single paradigm, a distinction was made between papers that followed either a positivistic or an interpretive tradition.
- 4) *Geographical location*: Maps reform trajectories within the region by analyzing eligible papers according to their research sites.
- 5) *Focus of reforms*: To distinguish between various topics of PSM reforms in EE and FSU countries, Pollitt and Bouckaert's (2017) classification was taken as a starting point. Considering the complexity of PSM reforms in the context of EE and FSU the group “mixed reforms” was added.

FINDINGS

In this section, we answer RQ1 by analyzing the selected papers according to the framework (Table 1) to map dominating methodologies, theoretical underpinnings, geographical, and reforms' focus when doing research on PSM developments in the region.

Type of Papers

The analysis showed that two-thirds of the selected articles were research papers (see Table 2). Those categorized as research papers included records with a well-defined theoretical framework or reference to particular scientific paradigms, as well as studies that emphasized a more researched context and could either apply a theoretical approach or be context driven.

Tab. 2: Categorization of papers according to their type

	Number of papers	Percentage of total
Research paper	30	66%
Viewpoint	2	4%
Conceptual paper	—	—
Literature review	1	2%
General review	13	28%
Total	46	100%

Approaches used by research papers to investigate the directions of PSM reforms in EE and FSU countries varied significantly: for instance, qualitative evaluation of New Public Management (NPM) effects on public administration reform (Vakulchuk, 2016); mapping of (de)agencification, along with analysis of the impact of the change of events on this process (Nakrošis & Budraitis, 2012); or democratization reform's components (i.e., structural decentralization and institutional democratization) in the training of civil servants (Witesman & Wise, 2009).

Other papers consisted of general reviews, viewpoints, and a literature review. Placing the context of the study at the fore, general reviews (28% of publications) investigated developments in the public sector with the introduction of new techniques, for example social health insurance in Bulgaria (Atanasova et al., 2011), or provided normative recommendations for the overhaul of public administration (Rice, 1992). Although less represented, two viewpoints and a literature review depicted developments of PSM reforms in EE and FSU countries, providing more evidence of the reforms' trajectories. For instance, Dan & Pollitt (2015) analyzed publications on NPM reforms in CEE to support the NPM reforms' impact across the region, even though the success of

these reforms varied. Watson (2000) shared the Bulgarian experience in establishing local participatory practices, and Vladetic (2013) analyzed the new legislature designed to reform Serbian communal services.

Research Methods

Most of the papers (46%) were qualitative, as indicated in Table 3, and used interviews and/or secondary data analysis as the main tools for data collection. The majority of qualitative papers were descriptive and exploratory in studying PSM reforms, which means that, in most cases, they did not refer to any theory. The purpose of these papers was, for example, to describe how civil service structures in a particular country were constructed (Condrey, Purvis, & Slava, 2001) and what factors hindered the human resource management (HRM)-based reforms (Common, 2011), or to illustrate a case of creating nonprofit organizations in line with health sector reform (Brinkerhoff, 2002).

Tab. 3: Categorization of papers according to research method

	Number of papers	Percentage of total
Qualitative	21	46%
Exploratory	9	—
Descriptive	9	—
Explanatory	3	—
Quantitative	7	15%
Exploratory	—	—
Descriptive	5	—
Explanatory	2	—
Mixed	4	9%
Not explicitly stated	14	30%
Total	46	100%

There were fewer quantitative papers (15%): primarily descriptive, with several explanatory and no exploratory studies. Lastly, slightly less than one-third of publications had no explicitly stated methodology.

Theories and Scientific Paradigms

Most of the selected papers (76%) did not use any explicit theoretical approach or, in some cases, provided a fairly pragmatic form of theorization (Table 4). A rather low level of theorization in publications on PSM reforms was also observed in previous literature reviews (e.g., Broadbent & Guthrie, 2008; Goddard, 2010; Jacobs, 2012). The explanation is possibly embedded in the research topic itself, since most of the authors chose to describe the public management reform experience by revealing the new context. Identifying a scientific paradigm in those papers that studied the reform process was challenging, as the scholars provided extensive literature overviews on a topic with normative conclusions and little theoretical contribution. Such an approach might be a relevant conclusion for NPM ideas, which cannot be identified as an established paradigm (Gruening, 2001). However, it was often used by researchers as a way of theorizing.

Tab. 4: Categorization of papers according to theories and scientific paradigms

	Number of papers	Percentage of total
Single	11	24%
Positivist tradition	8	—
Interpretive tradition	3	—
Multiple	—	—
No explicit theory	35	76%
Total	46	100%

Around 24% of the papers were based on a single scientific paradigm, while publications with multiple paradigms did not appear in the search. Interestingly, papers including a positivist paradigm were prevalent. Using a range of theories, these papers studied public sector developments by adopting the following approaches: political economy (Rinnert, 2015), new institutional economics (Raudla, 2013), market orientation in the public sector (Kowalik, 2011), fiscal decentralization (Guess, 2007) and initiatives for conducting public sector reform (Witesman & Wise, 2012). Surprisingly, few papers used interpretive paradigms; those that employed public choice theory (Nemec, Merickova, & Vitek, 2005), new institutional theory (Schnell, 2015), and theory on policy implementation (O'Toole, 1994).

Geographical Location

The majority of papers (63%) studied reforms in the context of a single country, while 37% studied multiple countries (Table 5). Ukraine and Kazakhstan, with four papers each, were the most studied single countries, while three papers were published on Polish reform experiences.

Almost a quarter of the papers studied three or more countries. Primarily, EE countries captured more research attention. Researchers referred to them as groups of countries, that is, Central and Eastern Europe (Dan & Pollitt, 2015), European countries (Tambor, Pavlova, Golinowska, Sowada, & Groot, 2013), Eastern Europe (Rice, 1992), or the Baltic countries (Jacobs, 2004), or as particularly selected countries, for example, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, and Slovakia. However, several papers with an exclusive focus on FSU countries were also identified (Footman, Roberts, Mills, Richardson, & McKee, 2013; Mikesell & Mullins, 2001).

Tab. 5: Categorization of papers according to geographical location

	Number of papers	Percentage of total
Single country	29	63%
Multiple countries	17	37%
2 countries	6	—
3 or more countries	11	—
Total	46	100%

The overall picture of the geographic focus seems to favor EU neighboring countries in Central Europe, quick reformers—the Baltic countries (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania)—as well as powerful nations with great potential for natural resource extraction in the Eurasian region (Russia and Kazakhstan). Smaller countries in Southern Europe, some of which also belong to the Balkans (Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia), in Central Europe (Belarus, Moldova), and in Central Asia (Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan) received less research attention. This might be due to lack of or unavailable data in some of these countries or an unstable political situation that prevented researchers from studying the context more closely (e.g., ethnic conflicts in former Yugoslavia). For more detailed information on the geography of public sector reforms, see Appendix 2.

Focus of Reform(s)

The final categorization focuses on PSM reforms (Table 6), reflecting the content of contributions. Organizational scope of reforms covered issues of organizational restructuring, such as specialization, coordination, scale, and (de)centralization (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017).

The topics discussed within “organization” were as follows: why problems might occur when introducing contracting out (Nemec et al., 2005), change of agency relationship in primary healthcare after the implementation of financial responsibility delegation (Kowalska, 2007), and transformation of road administrations from complex public organizations into lean networks during the road sector restructuring process (Robinson, 2006). Specific attention here was given to privatization features in EE and FSU countries (Savas, 1992; O’Toole, 1994).

Tab. 6: Categorization of papers according to the focus of reform(s)

	Number of papers	Percentage of total
Financial management	6	13%
Human resource management	7	15%
Organization	12	26%
Performance measurement and management	5	11%
Transparency and open government	4	9%
Mix	12	26%
Total	46	100%

Papers investigating transformations associated with public sector employees focused directly on civil service reform (Condrey et al., 2001; Neshkova & Kostadinova, 2012) or HRM reform (Common, 2011) or emphasized either the role of public administrators, their behavior, and readiness to implement reforms (Witesman & Wise, 2012) or the importance of “realignments of the mind sets and skill requisites” of civil servants (Saner & Yiu, 1966, p. 61).

Articles with a focus on performance measurement used the context of EE or FSU countries to argue for the introduction of performance measurement systems and to exemplify governments’ experiences after their implementation. Publications related to financial management studied such topics as social health insurance reform (Atanasova et al., 2011), public procurement procedures (Yakovlev, Tkachenko, Demidova, & Balaeva, 2015), or public sector budgeting reform (Mikesell & Mullins, 2001). Several papers on transparency and open government included democratization reform (Witesman & Wise, 2009), citizen participation (Watson, 2000), and the introduction of anticorruption policies (Schnell, 2015).

The last category included papers on mixed reforms. Publications referred to different aspects of PSM reform, for example, a literature review by Dan & Pollitt (2015). However, most studies described several reform components, with one of them dominating slightly.

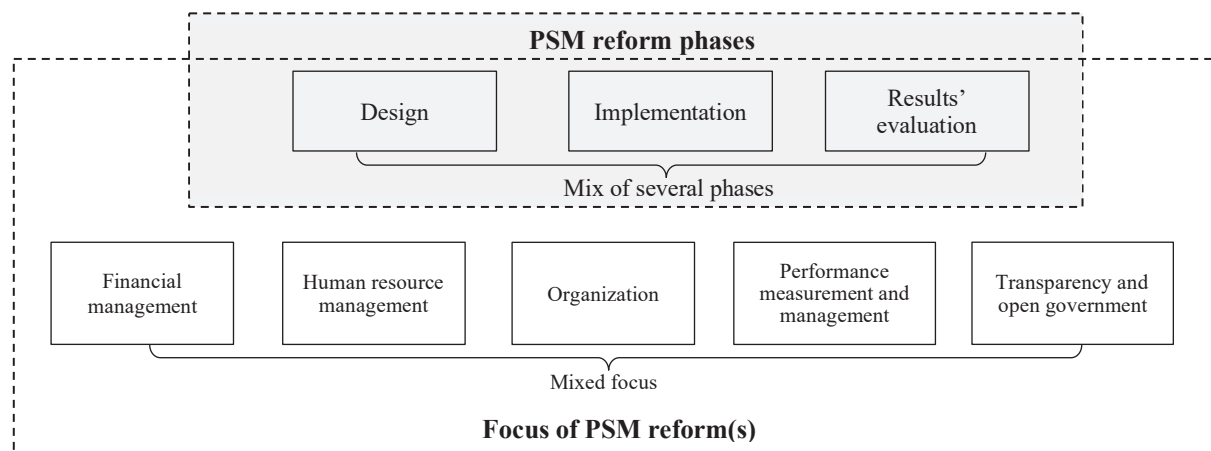
DISCUSSION

While understanding the focus of reforms provides interesting evidence on practices, which the governments selected for rebuilding the public sector, the need to study the dynamics of their development is essential to reflect on the complexity of the directed action of change in EE and FSU (A’gh, 2001). Therefore, to trace the trajectories of PSM reforms, we elicit the focus of reforms and structure them based on a specific phase of their occurrence. We follow a processual approach and build the framework for reforms’ analysis depending on a particular reform phase (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017; De Boer et al., 2016) as visualized in Figure 2.

A reform initiative starts with *defining a problem to be solved*, then continues with *preparation and design*, policy formulation and decision, proceeds with *implementation*, and concludes with *evaluation and feedback* (De Boer et al., 2016). The content of reforms emerges from both political agenda-setting (Cobb, Ross, & Ross, 1976) and signals coming from the society (Kingdon, 1984), and aims to identify discrepancies in public sector practices and ways of solving them. Depending on the driving forces, the second phase—implementation—is carried out in a top-down, bottom-up, or in more complex ways shaped by endogenous and/or

exogenous factors. During implementation, reforms may take divergent paths from those initially planned, as unexpected challenges arise or because decision makers select other solutions than the default. The final phase focuses on achieved results, including evaluation of effects upon completion of PSM reforms through different criteria (Yeh, 2010; DeGroff & Cargo, 2009; Dunn, 2004). This final phase is crucial to understand the actual results of PSM reforms and helps to draw conclusions regarding their success.

Fig. 2: The framework for analysis of the PSM reforms trajectories in EE and FSU



Further discussion outlines these three phases of PSM reforms in the region and additionally reflects on multiple reform phases reflecting the layering and complexity of the transformations during the first years of transition.

Designing the Content of Reforms

Initially, the content of public sector changes in EE and FSU countries was primarily concerned with organizational issues and HRM, highlighting the importance of artful navigation of public service to successfully implement PSM reforms. As previous studies concluded (e.g., McGuinness & Cronin, 2016; Rho, Jung, & Nam, 2020), a change might be negatively perceived by public servants, since it often clashes with established values in an organization (Andrews, 2011). As a result, this potentially leads to resistance to change, thus compromising the reform result; therefore, starting with redesigning FSU and EE public organizations and public service delivery was crucial (Saner & Yiu, 1996). Besides a precise focus on changing the skills of public servants, the need for HRM reform was motivated by the optimization of the number of public sector employees, to reduce costs. At the same time, the studies highlighted challenges occurring when designing HRM reform to achieve devolution of personnel responsibility, due to the rather low maturation level of personnel and civil service systems in EE and FSU countries (Condrey et al., 2001).

At the same time, when moving to market-based practices, it was essential to focus not only on employees but also on changing organizational structures, rules, and routines. The lack of adequate rules in CEE and FSU for public service delivery systems could have served as a breeding ground for corruptive practices (Nemec et al., 2005). The experience of postsocialist EE and FSU countries starting reforms aimed to redesign organizational practices through the privatization of state-owned enterprises to address such problems in the public sector as: inconsistency in ownership of state property, appropriateness of methods of evaluation, the process of buying and selling state property (Savas, 1992), and, in some countries, chaotic division of public and private resources (Jakobson, 2001). Furthermore, studies focusing specifically on designing public services' provision highlighted the multilevel character of PSM reforms. The decentralization of services was launched to increase the efficiency and reduce the costs of public services, while making them more responsive to citizen needs locally (Mayne & Vigoda-Gadot, 2018). Meanwhile, reforms focused on eliminating "obsolete" agencies, redesigning basic government systems (i.e., the public finance), as well as reforms of civil service systems, were conducted at the central

government level, to transform the role of government (Rice, 1992). Therefore, after identifying specific shortcomings in the public sector, each country tailored the content of PSM reforms to address the limitations, given the peculiarities of their local context. For example, several countries selected the following tools under the reform of the public financial system: transition to accrual and cost-center accounting; improvement of public procurement legislation; training and retraining of experts in public finances; overhaul of public sector control/auditing procedures; revision of budget processes and procedures (Mikesell & Mullins, 2001).

Implementation of Reforms

The implementation of PSM reforms has been not only interlinked with HRM and organizational aspects but also placed greater attention on transparency and open government issues. Most of the papers that focused on implementation discussed the effects of various contexts (O'Toole, 1994) and exogenous and endogenous factors (Nakrošis & Budraitis, 2012) on the reforms. The endogenous factors affecting implementation were the influential interests of hospital management and staff during the restructuring of hospital care (e.g., Fidler, Haslinger, Hofmarcher, Jesse, & Palu, 2007) or political empowerment while implementing new practices related to increased transparency in the public sector (Schnell, 2015). The importance of exogenous factors was evident from tracing the role of consultants during public sector reform implementation (e.g., Condrey, 1998). As one of the studies showed, with the help of American experts, citizens became more engaged in the process during the development of the municipality's strategic plan (Watson, 2000), thus increasing local democracy and government openness. Other cases of consultants' contribution to the implementation of reforms related to the co-creation of new public sector practices (e.g., related to performance-based budgeting) together with the state authorities (Raudla, 2013).

Evaluation of Achieved Results

Being defined as “deliberate attempts to change the structure, processes, and/or cultures of public sector organizations with the objective of getting them (in some sense) to run better” (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017, p. 2), the results of many PSM reforms in the region marked an “elusiveness of change” (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2003, p. 19) and ambiguous effects (Vakulchuk, 2016). Constraints for PSM reforms in achieving fundamental objectives (e.g., economic liberalization) in EE and FSU countries were caused by insufficient capacity for modernization and influential cultural legacies of the past (Neshkova & Kostadinova, 2012). Moreover, the necessary actions, such as countrywide legal adjustments, anticorruption measures and context variables, were not always in place to secure the success of reforms (Rinnert, 2015). Moreover, gaps in public managers' training restricted implementation of major systemic changes in the public sector (Kowalik, 2011). Another important focus of PSM reforms was performance management and measurement, to evaluate public sector practices. Measurement of public sector performance, especially of socially important activities, has been in its infancy in several countries, as the case of community assessments of the satisfaction with healthcare systems showed (Footman et al., 2013). Thus, PSM improvements are hard to assess and often left in the shade (Klun, 2004).

While many studies suggested that reforms caused unintended effects and disappointing results (Hood & Dixon, 2016), in some EE and FSU countries the results of PSM reforms brought positive changes and improvements (Bouckaert, Nakrošis, & Nemec, 2011) regarding NPM tools (Dan & Pollitt, 2015). For example, reforms focused on public procurement led to flexible regulations that resulted in a decline in bid competition but improved contract execution (Yakovlev et al., 2015). Results of reforms in Bulgarian public healthcare showed that, although apparently, the expectations from this reform were met, doubts remain about the achieved overall social benefit, which is due to inefficiencies in the organization of the public health system and a lack of financial resources for healthcare in the country (Atanasova et al., 2011).

Mix of Several Phases

Given the complexity and overwhelming transformations that EE and FSU countries faced in reforming public sector practices (Tilcsik, 2010; Babajanian, 2008), the layering of several phases of different reforms was observed. It became clear that incorporating the practices originating from Western countries cannot always ensure the same result in EE and FSU countries (Nemec & Kolisnichenko, 2006), due to economic, governance, and cultural differences within the region (Tambor et al., 2013).

To achieve successful reform results, several barriers should be overcome on the implementation phase. Specifically for FSU and EE countries to enjoy successful PSM reform (Jacobs, 2004), it is important to implement: (1) strategic planning and policy improvement; (2) financial and budgetary management stability; and (3) motivated, qualified, and honest staff. In addition, a key role in the reforms' success was attributed to the promotion of reforms through citizen participation (Knox, 2008), e-governance (Bhuiyan & Amagoh, 2011), and an optimal balance between responsibilities and administrative capacities (Guess, 2007).

PSM reforms implementation in these countries rely heavily on matching needs in the national context, the level of engagement of international institutions, and specific PSM practices to be implemented (i.e., their scope, content, and sequence); otherwise, the results of the reforms can be easily reversed and are difficult to sustain (Mussari & Cepiku, 2007). This trend resulted in a shift of the reform agenda in the region toward decentralization, clarification of responsibilities, pluralization in providing services, developing the provision of social services, and increased accessibility and efficiency for citizens. When facing the difficulty of finding sufficient resources to provide basic public sector services, for example, healthcare (Brinkerhoff, 2002), the governments tried to enhance structural processes, which could guarantee coordinated, continuous, and high-quality services for citizens (Kowalska, 2007). The case of the healthcare reform showed a change of legal form from a public body to a for-profit unit (Sagan & Sobczak, 2014), aiming to improve the financial performance of hospitals in particular and the healthcare sector in general. However, the evaluation of the reform results demonstrated that a simple change of the legal form does not ensure the achievement of intended goals (Sagan & Sobczak, 2014).

Performance management and measurement reforms were challenging for EE and FSU. On one hand, the introduction of performance measurement and management tools created problems in the “new democracies” transitory factors, compromising the outcome of the reform (Nõmm & Randma-Liiv, 2012). On the other hand, several countries showed that successful reforms of public management systems can occur if certain conditions are met, for example sufficient political support and level of maturity of performance management systems (Verheijen & Dobrolyubova, 2007). Moreover, the comparative analysis of different countries showed that reform results are not always similar under the same conditions (see the case of centralization of services in Estonia and Georgia (Puolokainen, 2017)), but implemented solutions can work by fitting to the national contextual specifics.

To summarize, applying the processual approach allowed interesting patterns of reform trajectories to be observed in EE and FSU countries. The main focus was on changing HRM practices and organizational structures, which first materialized in civil service reforms, privatization, and the changing structure of public entities. The debate on HRM reforms dominated, probably because the transition from socialism to market-led democracy required instant paramount changes in people's mindsets, later affecting how they would guide the changes in public sector practices. Facing several issues, such as lack of transparency and control, as well as corruption, reforms with a focus on open government, financial management, and performance measurement followed after addressing the drawbacks of reforms launched at the beginning of the transition of EE and FSU countries to a market-based economy.

CONCLUDING REMARKS AND THE WAY FORWARD

The SLR highlights the necessity for theoretical and contextual considerations when studying PSM reforms in FSU and EE countries. Over the decades, theoretical contribution has been recognized as one of the most demanding research objectives, since it must not only explain and describe patterns but also explore phenomena (Whetten, 1989). However, the results of this SLR indicated that, when studying PSM reforms in EE and FSU countries, an imbalance between theoretical and normative research existed, in favor of the latter. Given substantial transformations in the public sector around the region, why did academia not use this opportunity of a new context as a laboratory to develop and test existing theoretical assumptions? Based on the findings of this SLR, we can state that the majority of studies on PSM reforms in EE and FSU countries observed extreme contextual complexity, which constrained cumulative theorization, resulting in the dominance of descriptive and prescriptive findings (Modell, 2009; van Helden, 2005). Especially at the beginning of the transition in FSU and EE countries, the emphasis of papers was on giving consultative advice and recommendations on how the reforms should be handled, rather than on conducting rich, in-depth theoretical studies. Furthermore, papers that applied theoretical frameworks seemed to favor a more positivistic rather than interpretive paradigm. Considering that positivistic approaches may sometimes fail to comprehend change in complex social, economic, and cultural matters (van Helden & Uddin, 2016), future research would significantly benefit from applying interpretive and constructivist approaches. For instance, recent streams of institutional theory (i.e., institutional logics, institutional entrepreneurship, and institutional work) could broaden

explanations of how individual or collective actors react to changing institutional structures. New, interesting insights may also be developed via the lens of actor–network theory (e.g., Latour, 2005). Future studies might be directed at better understanding the role played by human and nonhuman actors involved in different phases of reform or how the translation of PSM reforms has changed from one country to another. Despite the criticism for not engaging in empirical settings, which was previously emphasized (e.g., Broadbent & Guthrie, 2008), being too focused on familiar surroundings (Whetten, 1989) might be the case for studies of EE and FSU countries, which seemingly fell out of sight of Western academia, due to contextual constraints. This may be caused by a lack of understanding of local culture, limited access to the data, or language barriers. This could be overcome by establishing links with local researchers with deep knowledge of the local context.

Moreover, the results of analysis showed the dominance of studies on a particular public management reform, usually from the central government perspective within a single EE or FSU country. This resulted in a lack of comparative research on reform experiences. First, there is a need for more comparative studies between the countries of the EE and FSU groups (e.g., Puolokainen, 2017; Verheijen & Dobrolyubova, 2007) and with more developed countries (e.g., Fidler et al., 2007). From a practical point of view, this would enrich the understanding of variations in PSM reforms across Europe, enable the sharing of experience in implementing certain reform tools and provide practical recommendations on the reform alternatives. From a theoretical point of view, these studies might contribute, for example, to understanding how historical background, culture, and other contextual factors influence the implementation of PSM reforms. Next, given the predominance of the central governments' perspective in conducting reforms, studies on local responses to reforms are encouraged. Future studies should investigate such topics as regional variations in implementing particular tools of PSM reforms (e.g., performance-based budgeting, public procurement, e-governance, etc.), intergovernmental interactions during the reform process, and the level of local governments' resistance to centrally formed pressures. Finally, the analysis indicated that some countries within the scope of this review were overlooked in the research. This research gap may be filled by focusing on the impact of reforms on macro- as well as microlevels.

We also find that several other promising directions can be developed further. For example, few studies (Mikesell & Mullins, 2001; Atanasova et al., 2011; Tambor et al., 2013) focused on the financial aspects of accounting, auditing, and tax reforms, especially in the early stage of transition. Although these studies have most likely appeared more in accounting literature, more interdisciplinary research is welcomed, to explore the role that public sector accounting standards played in redesigning public finances in EE and FSU countries, the changes in taxation and auditing rules and in the roles of the institutions performing these functions. Surprisingly, limited attention was paid to reform in the educational sector: both higher education and schools on all phases of reforms. Therefore, future research would benefit from studying how educational institutions operate, for instance in the introduction of performance measurement, changes in budgeting techniques, development of businesslike models for providing educational services, or increase in quality assurance within a competitive environment.

Finally, a deeper analysis of international financial institutions interaction with national governments in EE and FSU countries during the reform process is encouraged. As it may appear from previous studies, the work of international consultants was criticized for its poor understanding of local context (e.g., Huddleston, 1999). We believe that their contribution to public sector transformations in the region is underestimated and requires closer attention. Similarly, more analysis is needed on how the reform frames relations between central and local governments and on the role of intermediate-level (i.e., regional) governments during the reform process.

IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

This article contributes by tracing dynamics of PSM reforms trajectories over more than 25 years by using a generic policy process framework (De Boer et al., 2016) to analyze how countries transformed their public administration practices. After synthesizing and critically analyzing the literature (Schooler, 2014; Torraco, 2016), we followed PSM reforms as a process, which enabled a better understanding of how reforms were designed and implemented. We found that while prominent discussion in the field (e.g., Dan & Pollitt, 2015) was mostly focused on achieved results of PSM reforms, studies on designing the content of reforms prevailed. We observed the layering of the reforms as multiple reforms initiatives were launched causing significant complexity for securing their successful implementation.

When it comes to the practical implications, the overall pattern of transformations showed that most of the reforms in the region were implemented through market-type mechanisms (e.g., Rice, 1992; Nemec & Kolisnichenko, 2006) and, in some countries, with positive results (Knox, 2008). However, growing concern among researchers (e.g., Condrey et al., 2001) raised questions about

the relevance of these mechanisms and emphasized the importance of local context when adopting NPM ideas. Consequently, the Neo-Weberian State paradigm became recognized as a worthy alternative (Dunn & Miller, 2007). The failures of NPM have been keenly discussed by academics (Randma-Liiv, 2009), who have cautiously stated that, without thorough consideration, reforms under NPM may not work in the EE and FSU context (Dan & Pollitt, 2015). As we discuss in this SLR, politicians are still experimenting with the content of the reform programs inspired by NPM. It may appear that researchers, who study public sector transformations, and politicians, who design and implement reforms in practice, live in two separate universes. Based on the findings of this SLR, establishing a dialogue between research and practice could enrich and integrate the knowledge of researchers and politicians for finding new and better reform solutions.

The limitation of this article is connected to its exclusive focus on English-language articles in selective peer-reviewed international journals. Although this was used as a review boundary, we acknowledge that numerous papers, books, and conference proceedings in national languages, produced by local researchers, were outside the scope of this review. In addition, articles on public sector reforms can be published in other journals, which were not included in the ABS list. This SLR can also be criticized for its rather broad focus on public management reform developments in the region. However, since the study aimed at mapping PSM reforms trajectories after the quarter of century since the start of constructing or reconstructing the countries' economic systems, it provided useful suggestions and gave impetus for future studies to follow different directions and further explore the complexity of PSM reforms.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to thank the editor and reviewers for their valuable suggestions, which helped in improving the manuscript. Special gratitude is expressed to Herman Aksom for his encouragement, support, and inspiration on the final stage of preparing the paper.

APPENDIX 1

The list of selected journals for the review, referred to as “Public Sector and Health Care” subject area in the ABS Academic Journal Guide (2015):

1. Administration and Society
2. Environment and Planning C Government and Policy
3. Evidence and Policy
4. Governance: An International Journal of Policy, Administration, and Institutions
5. Health Care Management Review
6. Health Policy
7. Health Services Management Research
8. Health Services Research
9. International Journal of Educational Management
10. International Journal of Health Care Quality Assurance
11. International Journal of Healthcare Technology and Management
12. International Journal of Public Administration
13. International Journal of Public Sector Management
14. International Public Management Journal
15. International Review of Administrative Sciences
16. Journal of European Public Policy
17. Journal of Health Services Research and Policy
18. Journal of Health, Organization, and Management
19. Journal of Policy Analysis and Management
20. Journal of Public Administration, Research, and Theory

21. Local Government Studies
22. Milbank Quarterly
23. Policing: An International Journal of Police Strategies and Management
24. Policy and Politics
25. Policy Studies
26. Public Administration and Development
27. Public Administration Review
28. Public Administration: An International Quarterly
29. Public Management Review
30. Public Performance and Management Review
31. Public Policy and Administration
32. Regulation and Governance
33. Social Policy and Administration

APPENDIX 2

Tab. A1: Categorization of papers according to research setting

		Number of papers
Single country	1 country	29
	Ukraine	4
	Kazakhstan	4
	Poland	3
	Russia	2
	Estonia	2
	Georgia	2
	Romania	2
	Serbia	2
	Slovenia	2
	Bulgaria	2
	Lithuania	1
	Albania	1
	Bosnia and Herzegovina	1
	Hungary	1
Multiple countries	2 countries	6
	Slovakia and Czech Republic	2
	Estonia and Georgia	1
	Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan	1
	Estonia and Austria	1
	Bulgaria and Romania	1
	3 or more countries	11
	Postsocialist countries	1
	Eastern/Central and Eastern Europe/selected European countries	3
	FSU (all ex-members/part of them)	2
	Latvia, Lithuania, Russia	1
	Latvia and the Baltic countries	1
	Ukraine, Russia, Armenia, Czech Republic	1
	Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia	1
	Croatia, Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Romania, Macedonia, Slovakia	1
Total		46

APPENDIX 3

Tab. A2: Categorization of eligible papers

#	Author(s)	Journal (year)	Focus of reform	Reform phases	Main findings
1	Condrey, S. E.	<i>International Journal of Public Sector Management</i> (1998)	Organization	Mix of several phases	Research conducted by the Center for Public Management showed that the best way to address the issues faced by Eastern European countries may be the university-based public service model. The main idea of this model is a division of functions: consultation, policy research, technical assistance, and training activities are provided by the national university, and supportive activities are conducted by outside experts. As national universities are rooted in societal culture, they can play an important role in the process of reforming the public sector.
2	Condrey, S. E., Purvis, K., Slava, S. S.	<i>Public Management Review</i> (2001)	Human resource management	Implementation	The experience of Ukraine in conducting civil service reform is not completely synchronized with NPM ideas (the degree of a devolution of personnel authority considering rather low level of Ukrainian personnel and civil service systems' maturation). It is important for Ukraine as well as other FSU countries to look selectively at western-type reforms; otherwise meaningful and substantive managerial reform may become delayed.
3	Nemec, J., Kolishnichenko, N.	<i>International Review of Administrative Sciences</i> (2006)	Financial management	Mix of several phases	The factors that contributed to failures connected with health reforms in the CEE countries: financial, i.e. start of reform during the decline of GDP per capita; healthcare "marketization" launched when potentially competitive markets in the CEE were still not well developed; reforms lacked conceptual understanding of existing problems, etc. The success of the reform depends on an effective combination of western and local expertise, as well as understanding of the specific local environment.
4	Yakovlev, A., Tkachenko, A., Demidova, O., Balaeva, O.	<i>International Journal of Public Administration</i> (2015)	Financial management	Results achieved	As the data from two Russian universities showed, a reduction in the level of competition at the auctions exists together with simultaneous improvement of the quality of contract execution (opposite effects).
5	Verheijen, T., Dobrolyubova, Y.	<i>International Review of Administrative Sciences</i> (2007)	Performance measurement and management	Mix of several phases	A combination of sufficient political support, a dedicated reform team, and a step-by-step introduction of performance management systems can bring a significant improvement in the effectiveness and efficiency of public management systems.

Continued **Tab. A2:** Categorization of eligible papers

#	Author(s)	Journal (year)	Focus of reform	Reform phases	Main findings
6	Jakobson, L.	<i>International Public Management Journal</i> (2001)	Mixed focus	Content	The problems in public sector management that Russia faces today have their roots in the past system. Administrative reform requires a set of shifts: (1) revision of written rules; (2) changes in public attitudes, which are affected by cultural and economic changes; (3) changes in institutional arrangements; and (4) changes in the functioning of the public sector (consistency of actions and written standards).
7	Puolokainen, T.	<i>International Journal of Public Sector Management</i> (2017)	Performance measurement and management	Mix of several phases	Estonia is more advanced than Georgia in applying performance indicators when managing the fire and rescue system. Despite European experience, both countries chose a centralized approach in reforming fire and rescue services.
8	Raudla, R.	<i>Governance: An International Journal of Policy, Administration, and Institutions</i> (2013)	Mixed focus	Implementation	The Estonian case showed that the contractualization of policymaking in the area of public sector reform can lead to inconsistent reform plans, hinder genuine deliberations on the content of the reform, and undermine its democratic legitimacy.
9	Jacobs, C.	<i>Public Administration and Development</i> (2004)	Mixed focus	Mix of several phases	Areas important for successful public administration reform: (1) strategic planning and policy improvement; (2) financial and budgetary management stability; (3) motivated, qualified, and honest staff. In the case of the Baltics, the reform process is at its beginning; progress has been made, though sometimes faltering.
10	Nakrošis, V., Budraitis, M.	<i>International Journal of Public Administration</i> (2012)	Organization	Implementation	The study of Lithuanian agencies in the period 1990–2010 showed that international pressures for change can be transformed by interacting state-specific factors related to the polity, politics, and policy in the process of organizational changes. Intensive organizational changes were experienced by Lithuanian agencies (i.e. establishment, reorganization, abolition of agencies).
11	Rinnert, D.	<i>Public Administration and Development</i> (2015)	Mixed focus	Results achieved	The Georgian case showed that a narrow focus on successful reform examples constrains effective countrywide implementation. Thus, legal adjustments, anticorruption measures, and context variables are necessary but insufficient conditions for successful reform, whereas political variables are crucial factors explaining within-country variance in reform outcomes.
12	Common, R.	<i>International Journal of Public Sector Management</i> (2011)	Human resource management	Implementation	In Georgia, human resource-based reforms were accepted and promoted. However, deep politicization of the administrative system constrained their implementation.

Continued **Tab. A2:** Categorization of eligible papers

#	Author(s)	Journal (year)	Focus of reform	Reform phases	Main findings
13	Kowalik, I.	<i>International Journal of Public Sector Management</i> (2011)	Organization	Results achieved	Polish local government units have a moderate (21%) level of market orientation. Factors that stimulate the development of market orientation are organization size, professional training of managers, and revenues in the medium-sized units.
14	Vakulchuk, R.	<i>International Journal of Public Administration</i> (2016)	Human resource management	Mix of several phases	Results of public administration reform in Kazakhstan are contradictory: some success was achieved in greater efficiency of public services, while weaknesses remained in spheres of public officials' training, their rotation and promotion, and implementation of e-government.
15	Bhuiyan, S. H., Amagoh, F.	<i>International Journal of Public Sector Management</i> (2011)	Transparency and open government	Mix of several phases	Efforts of the Kazakhstani government to reform the public sector (decentralization, civil service reform, e-governance, and civil society) resulted in progress in public service delivery and enhancement of good governance.
16	Amagoh, F.	<i>International Journal of Public Administration</i> (2011)	Mixed focus	Mix of several phases	A history of Kazakhstan's healthcare reform efforts showed that despite remaining problems in this sector, the government was trying to implement a comprehensive health reform highlighting the importance of long-term healthcare development.
17	Knox, C.	<i>International Review of Administrative Sciences</i> (2008)	Mixed focus	Mix of several phases	Despite a recognized argument that democratization in the sense of competitive politics promotes reforms through citizens' participation, the results of a case study on the Kazakhstani experience showed that political stability through autocratic rule has actually enabled implementation of public management reforms.
18	Brinkerhoff, D.W.	<i>Public Administration and Development</i> (2002)	Organization	Mix of several phases	Review of the collaboration between the government and NGOs during health reform in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan showed positive though preliminary results, including improved flexibility and performance of the health sector; more citizens' participation in decision making, policy formulation and implementation through NGOs; and increased openness of government.
19	Österle, A.	<i>Social Policy and Administration</i> (2010)	Mixed focus	Mix of several phases	Several obstacles to development of long-term care exist: limited infrastructure, a lack of financial resources, an immature regulatory framework, and limited involvement of the private sector in care work. The reform agenda across the region should be focused on decentralization, clarification of responsibilities, pluralization in providing services, development of the provision of social services, and increased accessibility and efficiency.

Continued **Tab. A2:** Categorization of eligible papers

#	Author(s)	Journal (year)	Focus of reform	Reform phases	Main findings
20	Nemec, J., Merickova, B., Vitek, L.	<i>Public Management Review</i> (2005)	Organization	Content	Currently, the system of delivering local public services in Slovakia and the Czech Republic lacks systematic decisions and can potentially become corruptive. The following reforms are necessary to improve the situation: accrual and cost-center accounting in the public sector, creation of public-private mix; improvement of public procurement legislation, training and retraining of public servants, and overhaul of public sector control/auditing procedures.
21	Nemec, J., Sagat, V., Vitek, L.	<i>Public Administration and Development</i> (2004)	Organization	Mix of several phases	The comparative case study of telecommunications reform in the Czech and Slovak Republics showed (1) establishment of partnerships between political institutions and monopolistic providers of telecommunication services served private interests rather than the public interest; (2) foreign state ownership of monopolistic companies allowed did not reflect real privatization; (3) state regulatory bodies were unable to control pricing processes.
22	Schnell, S.	<i>Public Administration and Development</i> (2015)	Transparency and open government	Implementation	Implementation of transparency and anticorruption policies in Romania showed that with interplay of domestic and international factors throughout the policy cycle, pressures for mimicry facilitate rather than hinder domestic policy learning.
23	Robinson, R.	<i>Public Administration and Development</i> (2006)	Organization	Mix of several phases	Implementation of the evolutionary model of road sector reform on both central and local government levels in Romania showed a well-structured process on central level, yet local governments faced some problems during this process.
24	Vladetic, S.	<i>International Journal of Public Sector Management</i> (2013)	Organization	Content	Serbian communal services sector reform prescribed establishment of the Republic Directorate for Communal Services to improve the provision of these services, but unresolved questions of responsibility, legal status, and broad authorities were considered as the main drawbacks.
25	Klun, M.	<i>International Review of Administrative Sciences</i> (2004)	Performance measurement and management	Content	Focusing on performance measurement, the study demonstrated that the tax administration paid attention to improving the areas it assesses with its own indicators (number of appeals, number of inspections, discovered irregularities, etc.) and that it neglected its internal weaknesses.
26	Saner, R., Yiu, L.	<i>International Journal of Public Sector Management</i> (1996)	Human resource management	Content	Notwithstanding some issues in the public sector, Slovenia may be considered as one of the most successful states in transition. At the same time, efforts and investments are needed to develop internal change capacities within Slovenia's administration on central level.

Continued **Tab. A2:** Categorization of eligible papers

#	Author(s)	Journal (year)	Focus of reform	Reform phases	Main findings
27	Footman, K., Roberts, B., Mills, A., Richardson, E., Mckee, M.	<i>Health Policy</i> (2013)	Performance measurement and management	Content	Population satisfaction measures may be one indicator of the success of health reforms. Satisfaction with the healthcare system is generally low across the FSU; some countries showed improvements, whereas the situation has deteriorated in others.
28	Dan, S., Pollitt, C.	<i>Public Management Review</i> (2015)	Mixed focus	Results achieved	Tracing the impact of NPM across Central and Eastern Europe, this review study demonstrated that NPM has worked. Even though reforms have not always been successful, the evidence showed that performance management, quality improvement, and the creation of agencies improved public services delivery across the region.
29	Nõmm, K., Randma-Liiv, T.	<i>Public Management Review</i> (2012)	Performance measurement and management	Mix of several phases	The Estonian case revealed that the presence of “transitional” factors (e.g., political and administrative instability, unsustainability of reforms, poor analytical skills in parliaments as well as in civil services, implementation gap, and foreign influence) may complicate the development of performance measurement in new democracies.
30	Fidler, A. H., Haslinger, R. R., Hofmarcher, M. M., Jesse, M., Palu, T.	<i>Health Policy</i> (2007)	Organization	Implementation	A decade of experience in Austria and Estonia in restructuring hospital care suggested that hospital incorporation and market incentives together with public ownership have the potential to introduce more cost-efficient and flexible management of hospitals and at the same time offer a politically acceptable solution to stakeholders.
31	Tambor, M., Pavlova, M., Golinowska, S., Sowada, C., Groot, W.	<i>Health Policy</i> (2013)	Financial management	Mix of several phases	Data from 35 European countries were used to analyze the formal–informal payment mix to outline factors associated with this mix. The authors concluded that obligatory cost sharing for healthcare services is driven from governance factors, while informal patient payments are a multicause phenomenon.
32	Atanasova, E., Pavlova, M., Velickovski, R., Nikov, B., Moutafova, E., Groot, W.	<i>Health Policy</i> (2011)	Financial management	Results achieved	Social health insurance in Bulgaria brought several improvements in the public healthcare sector; however, the overall social benefit of the reform is doubtful. The main triggers of the reform are ineffective organization of the healthcare sector and limited financial resources for healthcare.
33	Sagan, A., Sobczak, A.	<i>Health Policy</i> (2014)	Financial management	Mix of several phases	The change of the legal form of Polish public hospitals from public entity to for-profit company did not guarantee a better financial performance, unless internal changes in the hospitals’ operations were also made.

Continued **Tab. A2:** Categorization of eligible papers

#	Author(s)	Journal (year)	Focus of reform	Reform phases	Main findings
34	Kowalska, K.	<i>Health Policy</i> (2007)	Organization	Mix of several phases	The delegation of financial responsibility and risk management from the payer to Polish healthcare providers changed the nature of the agency relationship between primary care physicians and their patients.
35	Mussari, R., Cepiku, D.	<i>Public Management Review</i> (2007)	Mixed focus	Mix of several phases	The Albanian transition demonstrated how development achieved without paying attention to public administration and management (i.e., the scope, contents and sequence of reforms, and the role of international institution) might become hard to sustain.
36	Simic, S., Milicevic, M. S., Matejic, B., Marinkovic, J., Adams, O.	<i>Health Policy</i> (2010)	Mixed focus	Mix of several phases	The main goals of primary healthcare reform are to address expectations of citizens and to improve primary healthcare performance. The reform in Serbia is on the right path, yet the process demands additional time to demonstrate the real shift toward measurable improvements.
37	Savas, E. S.	<i>Public Administration Review</i> (1992)	Organization	Content	Privatization of state-owned enterprises in postsocialist countries encountered unique problems: current ownership, valuation and the process of transferring ownership. However, each country tried to advance at its own pace toward a market economy.
38	Witesman, E. M., Wise, C. R.	<i>Public Administration Review</i> (2012)	Human resource management	Mix of several phases	The article emphasizes that public administrators' perceptions of the need for reform influence the success of the reform along with political and extranational factors.
39	Mikesell, J.L., Mullins, D.R.	<i>Public Administration Review</i> (2001)	Financial management	Content	Reforms of budget systems in FSU countries have mainly improved the budget processes, procedures, and institutions. Yet, much remains to be done to transform fiscal systems with persuasive and dynamic features.
40	Witesman, E. M., Wise, C. R.	<i>Public Administration Review</i> (2009)	Transparency and open government	Content	Conceptually, democratization and decentralization reform streams are contradictory, but in Ukraine they were launched simultaneously. The ordering of these two processes may affect the nature of the developing government (equilibrated). The best option is to implement democratization first and decentralization second.
41	Guess, G. M.	<i>Public Administration Review</i> (2007)	Mixed focus	Mix of several phases	Running fiscal decentralization programs in three social service programs in Romania and Bulgaria showed that a proper assignment of authority is required to match spending responsibilities with the policy and administrative capacity to carry them out.

Continued **Tab. A2:** Categorization of eligible papers

#	Author(s)	Journal (year)	Focus of reform	Reform phases	Main findings
42	Neshkova, M. I., Kostadinova, T., Gary J., Reid, G. J.	<i>Public Administration Review</i> (2012)	Human resource management	Mix of several phases	Administrative reform in Eastern European countries performed via depolitization and professionalization creates more competent and predictable bureaucracies and thus encourages increase of foreign investments, and updated legislation on civil service increases the responsibility of civil servants.
43	Watson, D. J.	<i>Public Administration Review</i> (2000)	Transparency and open government	Implementation	Results of a “twinning” program between a Bulgarian city and an American city supported by USAID have made Bulgarian leaders committed to broaden efforts to involve citizens and groups in developing the strategic plan for the municipality, thus increasing the value of democracy on the local level of government.
44	Rice, E. M.	<i>Public Administration Review</i> (1992)	Mixed focus	Content	To transform government into a “servant” of the people, it is necessary to decentralize governmental functions, eliminate excessive agencies, redesign basic government systems, and conduct reforms of public finance and civil service.
45	Huddleston, M. H.	<i>Public Administration Review</i> (1999)	Human resource management	Implementation	The lessons learned during the consultancy practice in Bosnia and Herzegovina from the view of a foreign consultant showed that in attempting to implement a reform there is an apparent disconnect between the public administration consultant’s mission abroad and what this profession was thought to do.
46	O’Toole, L. J., Jr.	<i>Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory</i> (1994)	Organization	Implementation	In the Hungarian case neither creating the agency, restructuring its apparatus nor finetuning its policy instruments can solve the challenges of implementation (i.e., corruption; conflicting imperatives; and shift of sectors, levels, and the role of local governments).

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