CURRENT POLITICAL PHENOMENA (30481)

Setting the stage

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This course

- Download the app: **Socrative – Student**

- Enter the room: **NANNICINI**

- We'll discuss current political phenomena in a workshop setting

- Aim: informed discussion of "topical" political issues

- Method: introductory lecture + students' presentations on each issue

- Evaluation: pass/fail

- Slides, updated syllabus, and reading materials:

www.tommasonannicini.eu

What's politics?

- Answer first 4 questions on Socrative: Your view and your relationship with politics

- A view from the street (source: *OpenLearn*)

What's politics? (cont'd)

- History of a "word"
  - Greek philosophy: *politiké, zoon politikòn* (Aristotle). No distinction between "political" and "social" dimension
  - Roman tradition: **vertical** (as opposed to **horizontal**) dimension but with different words, *principatus, dominium, gubernaculum*
  - Machiavelli (1513): "The Prince"
- Meaning of a "concept"
  - Political **behavior** as opposed to ethical or economic behavior
  - Schmitt (1927): friend vs enemy (*hostis*, not *inimicus*)
  - **Context** not behavior: political system (encompassing both those who exercise and those who influence power)
  - Horizontal dimension strikes back with mass politics (and social media?). And ubiquitous politics with "growth of the state"
  - Sartori (1987): Collective decisions associated with sovereign and coercive power

Topic 1: Political polarization in the US

- President G.W. Bush and President Obama paying tribute to Senator John McCain: "We never doubted we were on the same team" [minute 13:47]

- Polarized America: unbridgeable divide between left & right, red & blue states; bipartisanship as myth of the past

- **Is it demand?** Inequality, identity politics, spatial sorting
  - ✓Mobilization beats persuasion

- **Is it supply?** Primary elections, social media
  - ✓Bring persuasion back

Topic 2: Populism in the XXI century

- Populism is a catch-all word difficult to define:
  - ✓Two homogeneous groups, the people vs the elite
  - ✓Antagonistic relationship between the two
  - ✓Manichean outlook
- "Thin" ideology: It tends to join "thick" ideologies (nationalism, socialism)
- Increasing trend of electoral support
- **Is it the economy?** Unemployment, trade, immigration
- **Is it culture?** Subjective social status, cultural identity

Electoral support for populist parties

Figure 1. Support for Populist Parties in National Elections in EU member states
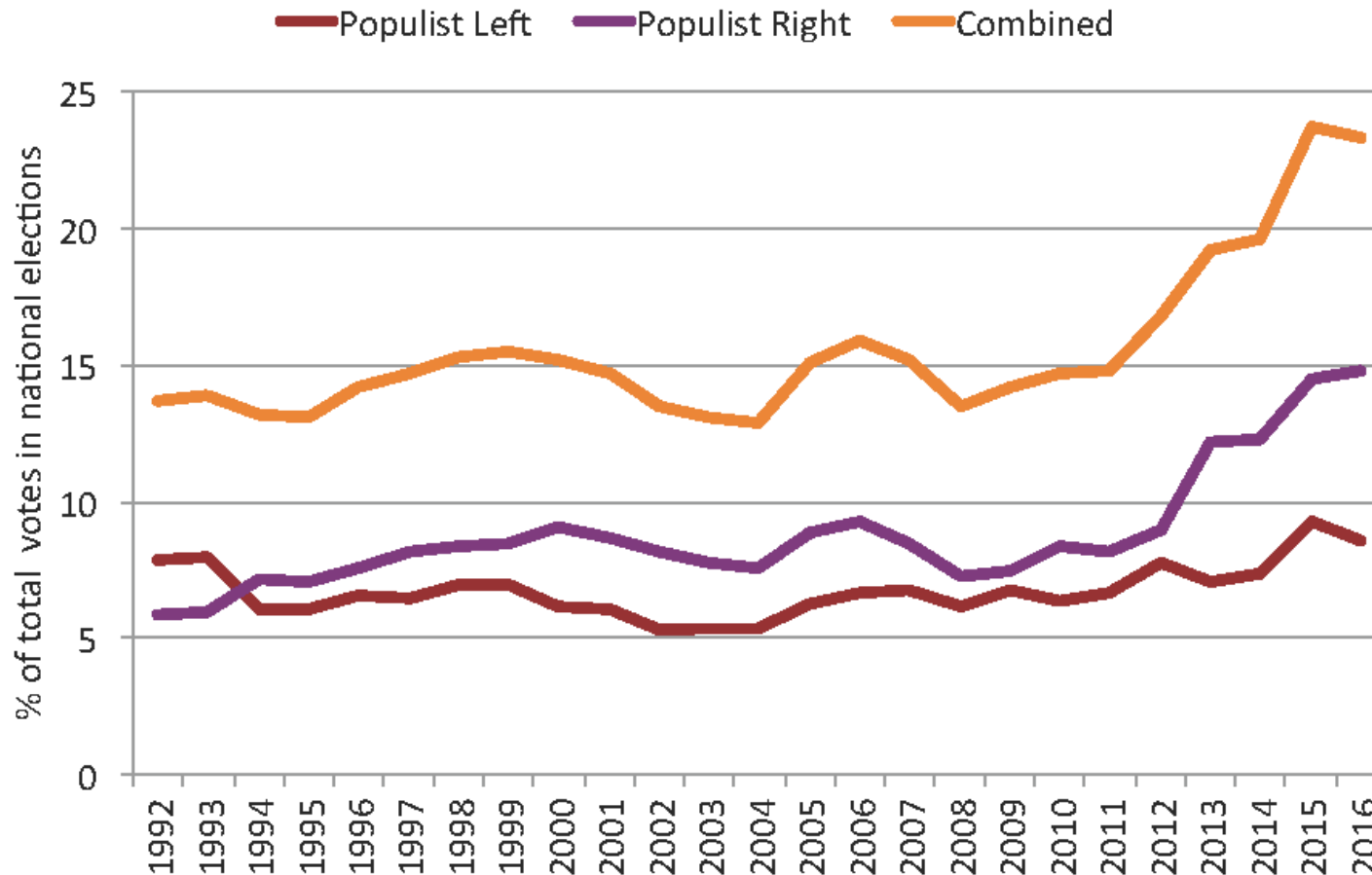
Topic 3: Declining trust in the European Union

- Declining trend of "trust" indicators with respect to European institutions

- **Is it a crisis of output legitimacy?**
  - ✓Progressive emptying of national democracies without corresponding strengthening of supranational democracy

- **Or a crisis of input legitimacy?**
  - ✓Highly centralized regulatory system devoid of democratic legitimacy

Declining trust in European institutions

Figure 5.1: Development of Trust in the European Parliament over Time
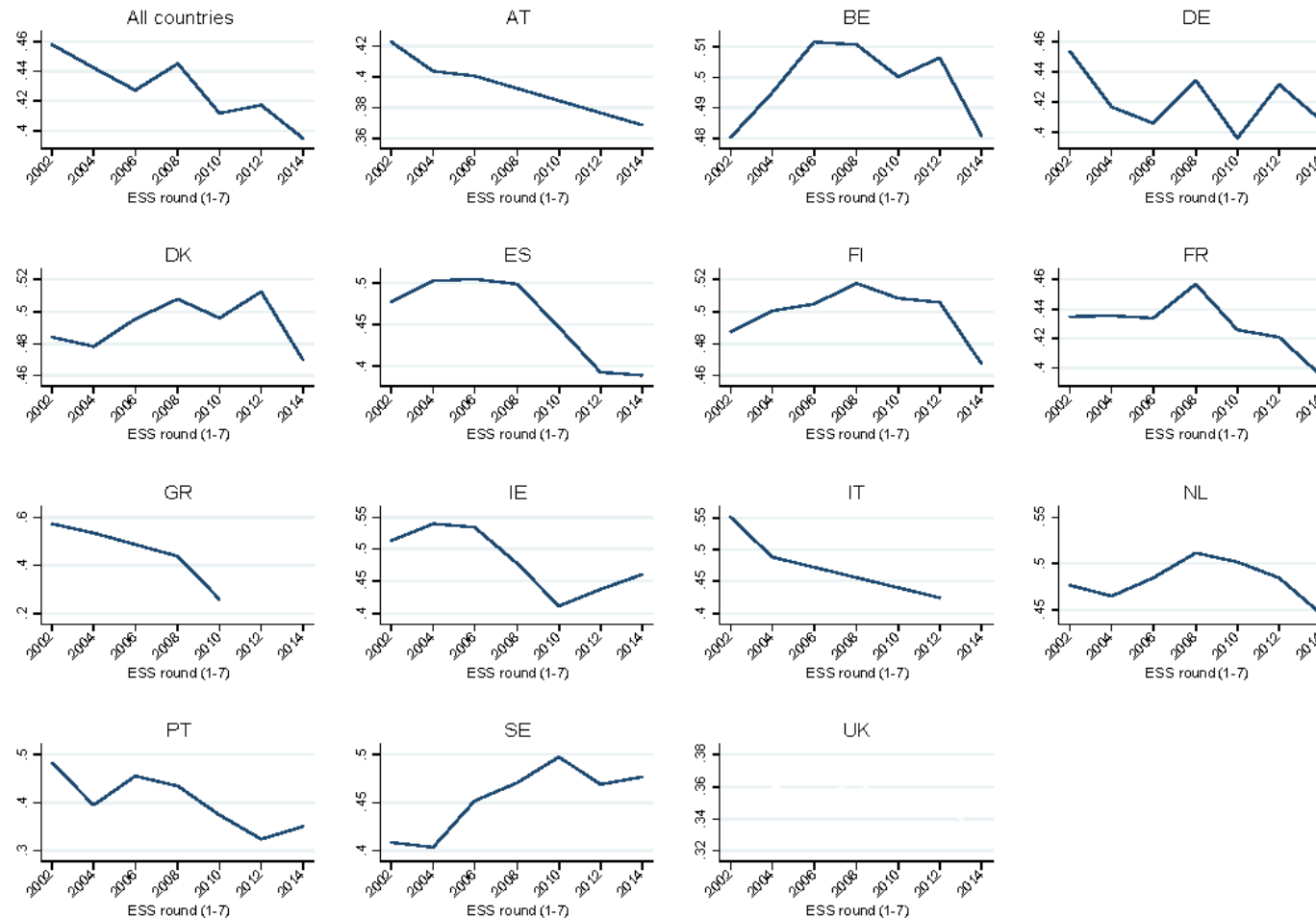
Source: Dustman et al. (2017)

Topic 4: Selecting Politicians. Direct vs representative democracy

- Politicians are "hated" everywhere, sometimes more in democracies than autocracies, and today more than ever

- What's the matter? James Madison (1788): "*The aim of every Constitution, is or ought to be, first to obtain for rulers men who possess most wisdom to discern, and most virtue to pursue, the common good of society; and in the next place, to take the most effectual precautions for keeping them virtuous*"

- **First view**: Mission impossible. Representative democracy is obsolete. Path toward dis-intermediation and e-democracy

- **Second view**: Institutional reform to improve both political selection & the incentives of our representatives

Topic 5: Going negative in political campaigns

- First negative ad: [1964 Daisy ad](#) (aired only once by Lyndon B. Johnson against Barry Goldwater)

- Since then, negative campaigning has enormously increased (maybe reaching a new peak in the 2016 US election)

- **Conventional wisdom**: Negative ads capture voters attention. Hence: It pays to go negative

- **Other view**: No, it doesn't, it's just an instinctive (and short-lived) reaction. But: zero average impact may hide heterogeneous effects