CHARLES UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

Institute of Political Studies

Department of Political Science

Master's Thesis

2023 Vojtěch Greger

CHARLES UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

Institute of Political Studies

Department of Political Science

The Polish model of the populist party: a new perspective on the populist radical right

Master's thesis

Author: Bc. Vojtěch Greger

Study programme: Political Science

Supervisor: RNDr. Jan Kofroň, PhD.

Year of the defence: 2023

Declaration

1. I hereby declare that I have compiled this thesis using only the listed literature and resources.
2. I hereby declare that my thesis has not been used to gain any other academic title.
3. I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes.

In Prague on the 3rd of May, AD 2023 Vojtěch Greger

Bibliographical entry

GREGER, Vojtěch. The Polish model of the populist party: a new perspective on the populist radical right. 74 pages. Masters's thesis (Mgr.) Charles University, Faculty of Social Sciences, Institute of Political Studies. Department of Political Science. Thesis advisor RNDr. Jan Kofroň, Ph.D.

Length of the thesis: 151 919 characters (with spaces)

Abstract

The rise of the populist radical right (PRR), a group of parties critical of the established norms of Western liberal democracy, in the 2010s, manifesting itself in events such as Brexit or the illiberal takeover of Hungary, has been a subject of considerable attention both from academics and the general public, and has been viewed with great concern. Academic studies of the PRR have often elevated the nativist elements in such parties' rhetoric while paying considerably less attention to the economic appeals thereof. However, in recent years, literature highlighting the importance of economic deprivation in fomenting support for Eurosceptic and PRR movements has begun to appear.

This thesis is predicated on this literature's argument that the electoral successes of the PRR are very often driven precisely by economic deprivation and the discontent stemming from it. To illustrate our argument, we examine the electoral support of the Polish Law and Justice (PiS) party in the 2015 and 2019 elections using ordinary least squares regression (OLS) and geographically weighted regression (GWR). Our findings show that structural economic factors, mainly the share of workers employed in the primary sector, are key predictors of PiS performance, lending further evidence to the claims of previous studies. However, the share of Roman Catholics, a primarily cultural variable, was also found to be highly significant, wherefore we conclude that support for PiS is not based solely on either cultural or economic factors.

Abstrakt

Vzestup populistické radikální pravice (PRP), skupiny stran kritických vůči zavedeným normám západní liberální demokracie, v desátých letech, který se manifestoval například událostmi jako Brexit či převzetí Maďarska neliberálními silami, se stal předmětem značného zájmu ze stran akademiků i veřejnosti, byv vnímán s velkými obavami. Akademické studie PRP často vyvyšovaly nativistické prvky přítomné v rétorice těchto stran a apelům ekonomickým věnovaly značně méně času. V posledních několika letech se však v akademické sféře začala objevovat literatura poukazující na důležitost ekonomické deprivace v umocňování podpory stran PRP.

Tato práce je založena na argumentu této literatury, že volební úspěchy PRP jsou velmi často taženy právě ekonomickou deprivací a nespokojeností, která z ní plyne. Tento argument je ilustrován analýzou volební podpory polské strany Právo a spravedlnost (PiS) ve volbách v letech 2015 a 2019 za použití regrese nejmenších čtverců (OLS) a geograficky vážené regrese (GWR). Naše výsledky ukazují, že strukturální ekonomické faktory, zejména podíl pracujících v primárním sektoru, jsou klíčovými prediktory podpory PiS. Těmito zjištěními podporujeme zjištění již existujících studií. Vysoce signifikantní

však je i především kulturní proměnná, podíl římských katolíků; proto činíme závěr, že podpora PiS není výhradně založena ani na kulturních, ani na ekonomických faktorech.

Keywords

populism, elections, Poland, OLS regression, geographically weighted regression, economic voting, primary sector

Klíčová slova

populismus, volby, Polsko, OLS regrese, geograficky vážená regrese, ekonomické hlasování, primární sektor

Název práce

Polský model populistické strany: nový pohled na populistickou radikální pravici.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, my thanks go to Dr. Jan Kofroň for his advice, insights, and assistance with the composition of this thesis, as well as his overall advice and support throughout my studies, whose value cannot be overstated.

I also wish to thank my parents and family for their continued support. This thesis is dedicated to them.

Deo gratias.

Contents

Introduction

The electoral victory of the Polish Law and Justice party (PiS) in 2015 and its subsequent moves to cement its hold over the Polish state, in a clear challenge to the tenets of liberal democracy, were a watershed moment not just in the history of modern Poland, but, to some extent, of the whole post-communist Central Europe. In this region, the way PiS conducted themselves in power echoed the earlier state capture attempts undertaken by Hungary's Fidesz party, while more broadly indicating the possible start of a turn from liberal democracy in Central Europe. A year later, the United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union and Donald J. Trump was elected President of the United States.

Naturally, these developments caused many to inquire as to how parties such as PiS or Fidesz have been able to overcome the institutional safeguards of liberal democracy and begin to undermine them, and, more broadly, what factors were at play in their successful elections. With these events often being paralleled with the others above, and the actors often being likened to the populist right wing already established in Western Europe at that time, the existing findings on the populist radical right were also applied in these cases.

In this thesis, we concern ourselves with the twofold victory of the Law and Justice party in Poland, in 2015 and 2019. Based on a growing body of literature on discontent voting, we posit that the main factors of the victory of PiS are based on its economic, rather than primarily cultural or nativist appeals. To test our assertions, we examine the effect of macroeconomic factors such as unemployment and structural unemployment, or the share of workers employed in agriculture.

While the primary means of testing our explanation is standard OLS regression, we also utilise more advanced methods of analysis, namely geographically weighted regression (GWR), which allows us to test the extent to which the effect of an explanatory variable is constant across space. Furthermore, we also assess the extent to which our variables can be used to predict PiS performance across years.

In the creation of our thesis, we have deviated somewhat from our original thesis statement. While our original argument has largely remained intact, we have expanded the range of literature used and re-structured the argumentation. In terms of methodology, the lone research question was restated and supplemented with additional ones; consequently, the research hypotheses have also changed. On the whole, we have stayed largely true to the spirit of the thesis statement, albeit with some significant alterations.

This thesis is divided into several chapters. In the first chapter, we provide a brief overview of the literature on the populist right and its electoral performance, as well as on the economic discontent voting. This is followed by an introduction to the Polish case and the

environment in which PiS arose as a party. In this chapter, we primarily wish to familiarise the reader with the historical context of the formation of PiS and the conditions in Poland which, we posit, allowed it to achieve its victories. In the third chapter, we present our research questions and hypotheses, as well as our research design. The fourth chapter summarises the findings of our analyses. We then go on to discuss the implications of our findings before summarising and concluding the thesis as a whole.

1 Literature review

When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, the countries formerly beholden to Moscow had already asserted their independence from the eastern power and replaced, by various means and with varying degrees of success, their authoritarian governments with democratically elected ones. Along with democracy, the principles of free enterprise, free trade, and international co-operation made their way into Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), whose countries quickly began to integrate themselves into existing political and economic structures within the West, such as NATO and the EU. This "third wave of democratisation" (Huntington, 1991) prompted great optimism not only regarding the spread and entrenchment of democracy, but also of the reordering of the nature of interactions among states. It was assumed that the gains made by proponents of democracy and peaceful interstate relations would be permanent and the march of liberal democracy would continue in a linear fashion. (Fukuyama, 2006)

Throughout this process, there have been notable differences in the speed and quality of this democratic (re)adjustment, a notable example being the fledgling Slovak Republic veering off course particularly early under the government of Vladimír Mečiar, who took the country down a path of backsliding from a nascent liberal democracy towards authoritarianism. (Rhodes, 2001; Tudoroiu et al., 2009) While the era of *mečiarism* thwarted Slovakia's entry into NATO together with its closest neighbours in 1999, (Rhodes, 2001) by the time the 2004 enlargement of the European Union came, Slovakia's democratic system could be a relatively stable one, not unlike the remainder of the post-communist states of Central Europe.

However, in the beginning of the second decade of the 21st century, the hitherto unassailable façade of liberal democracy began to show cracks, as political actors in CEE countries, most notably in Hungary, started to openly question the merits of liberal democracy as *the* system of governance. Viktor Orbán's Fidesz party, following its 2010 electoral landslide, drastically revamped the country's constitution, arguably to ensure its own primacy in future elections, coupled with the advancement of rhetoric critical towards liberal democracy and globalisation as the sources of the Hungarian people's woes. (Enyedi, 2020) Subsequently, many other countries in the CEE region began to manifest signs of a

decline in the quality of (liberal) democracy, which has deteriorated in most CEE countries since 2010, (V-Dem, 2023) leading academics to take interest in these developments.

The assault on liberal democracy has largely come from the political right, where a new generation of parties with a varying degree of hostility towards democracy has sprung up. Notably, their rise has paralleled a similar, albeit somewhat earlier, appearance of such parties in established Western democracies. Traditionally, academic debates on the nature, behaviour, and objectives of these parties have converged around the word "populism", which has become a topic of intense discussions in academia and, more recently, in mainstream media.

This chapter will introduce the state of knowledge regarding the phenomenon of populist parties on the Right, the so-called populist radical right, as well as the main directions the study thereof has taken and is currently taking, with regards to nomenclature and the variables setting the parties aside from the extreme right. Other important points that will be touched upon will be the traditional academic understanding of the *modus operandi* of the populist radical right and its sources of support.

1.1 Populism: angles, approaches, labels

In today's ever-evolving society, new terms are constantly being coined and stamped into the public's consciousness to describe the plethora of new cultural and technological phenomena that constantly emerge in the world. Thus, today one does not see funny pictures or jokes on the internet, but *memes*. One does not look things up, but instead *googles* them. Politics, too, is an area where new terms occasionally appear to describe new types of policies, parties, or behaviour.

Since the beginning of the last decade, it can be argued that no term has become more popularised and enjoyed more attention than "populism", connected with the establishment and rise of new types of parties challenging the established model of Western liberal democracy, as well as globalism and several other concepts hitherto thought to be generally accepted. As a result of these parties' continued successes, the term populism has been used by the media with increasing frequency, while the amount of research dedicated to the topic has also skyrocketed.

1.1.1 Approaches to the study of populism

The term populism itself is hardly a recent invention; academics have used this concept throughout the 20th century, and have long struggled to define it. Ionescu and Gellner (1970) thus lamented that while populism was undoubtedly an important issue, no one could precisely define it. In today's academia, this complaint no longer appears valid, as robust conceptual frameworks for the study of populism exist and are widely recognised.

The three most (albeit not equally) prominent approaches to the nature of populism are the political-strategic, the socio-cultural, and the ideational approach, with the last being by far the most accepted. The political-strategic approach can be summarised as focusing on the personal aspects of populism, mainly the presence of charismatic leaders at the head of highly enthusiastic crowds of supporters, (Weyland, 2017) while the socio-cultural approach elevates the manner in which populist figures behave in comparison with their political opponents, namely how the populist "mode of expression" is much less sophisticated and "down-to-earth", so to speak. (Ostiguy, 2017)

The focus of the ideational approach, as the name suggests, rather than on what populists do or how they do it, is on the ideas these movements are based upon and stand for. Thus, at the heart of the ideational approach is an attempt to uncover the ideas which form the nucleus of populism. In this vein, a study by Rooduijn has found that populist movements throughout time and across different regions are connected by a monolithic understanding of "the People", the criticising of political elites, and the proclamation of a serious crisis which the aforesaid elites are unable or unwilling to address. (Rooduijn, 2014)

The most commonly accepted definition of populism, sketched out by Mudde, largely agrees with the above conceptualisation. Mudde himself is today generally accepted as the world's chief populism scholar, who conceived of populism as an ideology based primarily on the separation of society into the People, the rightful democratic sovereign, and a corrupt malfeasant elite, abusing political power for personal gains and unwilling to properly represent the interests of the majority. Simply criticising elites is unlikely to be sufficient for a political party to attract voters, however, which is why, according to Mudde, populist movements typically seek out a "host" ideology whose views on broader political topics they adopt. Under this definition, populism is thus a "thin-centred ideology" requiring attachment to a more comprehensive ideology in order to be politically viable. (Mudde, 2004)

While this approach complements Rooduijn's findings to a great extent, its conception of populism is perhaps on a higher level of abstraction, likely owing to Mudde's desire to find common ground in the fractured field of populism research as much as possible. (Mudde, 2007)

Although academics largely agree on the usage of Mudde's definition of populism, it is plagued by an issue of resonance in broader society, where both political actors and commentators have adapted the term not to apply to the pitting of masses against elites, but to be synonymous with dishonesty, oversimplification, and appeals to voters' emotions rather than facts.

1.1.2 Labelling right-wing populist movements

Populism has become a staple both in the media and in broader political rhetoric while losing much of its meaning. It is exactly the transformation of populism into little less than a buzzword that quickly prompted academics to move away from relying solely on this term to describe the foci of their research, particularly with regards to parties and candidates on the right.

With the drastic increase in both academic and lay interest in the phenomenon of right-wing populism, many variations using a very specific set of labels have emerged as potential ways to name and describe it. Thus, we see the terms radical right, (Arzheimer, 2018) extreme right, (Golder, 2003) nativists and authoritarians, (Art, 2020) the far right, (Pirro, 2022) the populist radical right, (Mudde, 2007) and so on.

These labels are often used to describe the very same political parties, perhaps at different points in time, but nevertheless, there appears to be an underlying issue of resonance when dealing with the populist right, in that where one researcher may see fit to consider, say, the German *Nationaldemokratische Partei* (NDP) and *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD) as two members of the extreme right, another may perceive a fundamental qualitative difference between the two, labelling one as an extreme-right party and the other as a far-right one.

Perhaps the most conceptually sound basis for identifying and labelling the populist right has once again been provided by Mudde (2007), who makes two noteworthy contributions to the issue of labelling populism on the Right. Firstly, he explicitly argues that when speaking about these parties or candidates, "populism" should not be the primary label, (e.g., right-wing populism) as it is not the most significant aspect of these actors' *modus operandi*. Instead, he argues that the term employed to describe this part of the political spectrum should be "populist radical right" (hereafter also "PRR"), emphasising not the populist, but the radical-right nature of the parties and candidates that belong to it. For Mudde, the presence of a populist worldview is only one "ingredient" in the mixture that makes up populist radical right parties, along with nativism and authoritarianism (but not outright hostility to democracy, which Mudde views as a hallmark of the *extreme* right).

The understanding of the populist right as a "mixture" ties into the second noteworthy contribution, which Mudde names the "ladder of abstraction of nativist ideologies". Therein, a clear qualitative framework for identifying and distinguishing (mainly) the radical and extreme right is given. As one "ascends" the "ladder" (see Table 1.1), the underlying ideology of nationalism "picks up" new features which it subsumes in order to advance to the next "tier". Thus, Mudde understands the highest rank of the ladder, the extreme right, to be an ideology embracing all three of the features on the right—xenophobia, authoritarianism, and anti-democracy, while the radical right only consists of the former

two. In the current political milieu, this distinction seems both highly useful and applicable.

Table 1.1. Mudde's ladder of abstraction of nativist ideologies.

Ideology	Key additional features
Extreme right	
	Anti-democracy
Radical right	
	Authoritarianism
Nativism	
	Xenophobia
Nationalism	

Source: Mudde, 2007, p. 24

Somewhat interestingly, populism is not included as a rung in the ladder. The reason given by Mudde for this is that the extreme right does not typically embrace populism, but elitism. The explanation that emerges presents the PRR mostly as a subset of the radical right, which is identified by the presence of all three "ingredients" specified above.

An issue which we perceive with this understanding of the populist radical right is the firm embedding of nativism as a condition *sine qua non* for its functioning, which, by all means deliberately, leads to nativism also being viewed as a central point of the PRR's appeals to voters. Nativism, not populism, thus becomes the central defining point of the actors understood as the populist radical right. (cf. Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2012; Art, 2020; Pirro, 2022)

Generally, in recent scholarship, the term populism seems to be losing popularity, and is gradually being phased out in favour of other labels. For example, a recent alternate proposal for the labelling of the PRR comes from Pirro (2022), who argues for the complete omission of populism and elects instead to speak of the *far right*, which he promotes as an umbrella term both for what Mudde understands as the (populist) radical right, generally critical of liberal democracy but not of democracy *per se*, and the extreme right, typically hostile to the concept of democracy as a whole.

1.2 Sources of PRR support

Regardless of whether one adopts Mudde's or Pirro's nomenclature for what is here understood as the PRR, nativism emerges as a key component of the actors this nomenclature is applied to. As we have already mentioned, the primacy of nativism is stressed by other authors also, at the expense of populism and other factors. For example, Art (2020) argues

that the universal focus on populist elements of parties such as the AfD in Germany and Fidesz in Hungary, or of politicians such as former U.S. president Trump, is simply wrong: what is truly at the core of these movements, and what they all have in common, are their nativist tendencies.

It has generally become accepted that when there are populists on the Right in contemporary European politics, they are bound to be nativists. Mudde and Kaltwasser (2013), for example, distinguish between inclusionary and exclusionary populism, wherein the former is typically associated with the Left, while the latter is typical for the Right. In different terms, this understanding is mirrored in much of the prominent research on the PRR. Thus, for example, we see democratic backsliding in Central Europe attributed to "ethnopopulists" (Vachudová, 2020); Pirro (2022) also stresses the importance of nativism, while Mudde (2017) includes and excludes parties from the PRR based especially on whether they are deemed to be nativist or not. The often implicit understanding is such that nativism is the main offering of the PRR and the main "selling point" for its voters.

The question of offerings and selling points is at the heart of research into PRR support. Some researchers, after the example of von Beyme (1988) understand the puzzle of PRR electoral support as divided between a supply and demand side. It is generally understood that the supply side pertains to those variables and characteristics which are influenced by the PRR actor itself, e.g., manifesto contents or electoral strategies. The demand side, meanwhile, accounts for the plethora of variables that may predispose voters to consider supporting a PRR party or candidate.

This framework has been criticised by Arzheimer (2018) for failing to account for certain variables which may influence the success of the PRR in elections, such as the political and electoral system of a given country. For this reason, Arzheimer proposes that the factors that influence the PRR's performance be divided into three categories: micro, meso, and macro-level factors.

The variables which could be considered to belong either to the supply or demand side of PRR support are scattered across these three levels, so that social capital is placed on the same level as PRR party strength. It is not clearly explained what exactly qualifies a given variable as belonging to either of the three levels, but Arzheimer's system appears to view the micro level as the place where individuals operate. The factors here pertain mostly to voters and the ideas and views which they hold, but we also find the presence of charismatic leaders included in the category. The macro level, on the other hand, seems to correspond with society as a whole, its makeup and its trends. Interestingly, Arzheimer also considers the media (and how discourse about the PRR is framed) to belong to this level. The meso-level factors, sitting in between, relate to what happens within the societal framework, mainly the behaviour of actors who operate within it, as well as their

characteristics. The three levels can thus most simply be understood as pertaining to individuals (micro), organisations (meso), and society (macro).

Although a more advanced framework may be beneficial for a deeper understanding of the various dynamics between voters, PRR parties, and other actors within the given political system, some of Arzheimer's decisions, such as coding media as a macro-level variable, are somewhat questionable. In addition to this, this thesis primarily examines the direct relationship between voters and the PRR, for which the supply-demand dichotomy appears to be more suited.

Literature on PRR support has a long tradition in political science, during which it has changed considerably. Von Beyme (1988) primarily focuses on unemployment and xenophobia, two variables which have epitomised early research into the then-emerging PRR, as does Golder (2003). However, with time, the focus of research changed and while Mudde (2007) advanced his conceptualisation of the PRR, studies such as Oesch (2008) stressed the importance of cultural protectionism and anti-immigrant sentiment. While the studies of the 80s and 90s primarily focused on the demand side of the PRR, the studies of the 2000s and beyond instead turned to the supply side, investigating the PRR parties *per se*. (Mudde, 2017) The supply side of PRR politics, by all means well documented, is somewhat out of the scope of this thesis, which is why it is not discussed thoroughly herein.

1.2.1 Demand for the PRR: nativism or economic factors?

We see the term populist radical right used in connection with (primarily) Western European movements which emerged around the turn of the century and in many countries went on to become important political actors in the 2010s, riding on a wave of backlash against European integration, particularly as a result of the migrant crisis. In this light, it is reasonable to assume that this backlash is driven by nationalist or nativist sentiment, a position reinforced by theoretical works such as Mudde and Kaltwasser (2013), which ascribe an exclusionary approach to PRR politics. Rydgren (2018) argues that the appeals of the PRR are primarily cultural; the decrease in salience of economic topics and the rising importance of cultural ones being what allowed the PRR to break the mould.

An issue with seeking the explanation for the PRR's success in nativism is that nativist sentiment is somewhat difficult to measure directly, partly stemming from a rather loose conceptualisation thereof. A typical measurement of nativism is based on a voter's attitudes to issues such as immigration, and studies using such a measurement often find a significant connection between nativist sentiment and support for a PRR party. (Pesthy et al., 2020; Iakhnis et al., 2018) Yet such attitudes need not always be rooted in cultural views or reflective of a dislike for foreigners; rather, one can easily be opposed to immigration for

economic reasons, rather than cultural ones. (Pesthy et al., 2020)

It is difficult to dispute that arguably the greatest voting bloc for the PRR both in Western Europe and elsewhere has been the working class. Researchers such as Rydgren (2018) argue that working-class support for the PRR is unrelated to socio-economic issues, which have in recent decades lost their prominence as the sources of political debate, an assertion which, simply put, contradicts the practice of governance, embodied, *inter alia*, in the slogan of the 1992 presidential campaign of Bill Clinton: "It's the economy, stupid!"

It is hardly a contestable point that large-scale societal trends and issues are drivers of both public opinion and electoral success (or failure). Previous research, for example, has shown a considerable connection between real wage growth and incumbent U.S. presidents' popular vote shares. (Hibbs, 2000) The rise of the PRR in the 2010s coincides with the migrant crisis, which led to the establishment of organisations such as PEGIDA (Enyedi, 2020) and catapulted immigration policy to the forefront of elections. But the era of the migrant crisis also directly followed the Eurozone crisis of the early 2010s, itself one of the ripples of the Great Recession. It is not unreasonable to assume that the occurrence of these crises and the sudden rise to prominence of the PRR are entirely unconnected issues.

However, it is not *just* the state of the economy that drives voting behaviour. Voters make their decisions based on a plethora of issues affecting them in varying degrees. This can be seen quite clearly in pre-election opinion polls dealing with "the topics" of the given election. Situational issues, such as a political scandal or a health crisis such as the Covid-19 pandemic, can often become the main foci of an election in the eyes of many voters, and swing elections. The study cited above shows this with regards to high U.S. combat personnel deaths, which coincide with a lower-than-expected result for the incumbent. (Hibbs, 2000) Taking, for example, the Czech Republic, we can observe a shift in voter priorities over time, based on the changing relevance of topics: in the 2013 snap election, after a police raid on the Office of the Government, corruption was one of the most important topics for voters, while in 2017, the "main" topic of the legislative election was migration. Somewhat unsurprisingly, most voters considered the pandemic to be the pivotal issue of the election in 2021. (Pilnáček and Tabery, 2022)

The former research is very well summarised in Arzheimer (2018). Here, the variables most elaborated upon as potential reasons' for voters' opting for the PRR are weak party identification, unemployment, immigration, and crime. Discussing party identification and crime is largely irrelevant to the scope of this thesis, and thus we will not discuss them.

Traditional perceptions of the PRR's sources of support often point to a connection between PRR support and unemployment, (von Beyme, 1988; Golder, 2003) wherein it is assumed that some unemployed individuals, believing their joblessness to be influenced by growing immigration, will turn to the PRR, which typically criticises the impact of immigration

on the availability of jobs. As both Arzheimer (2018), and Sipma and Lubbers (2020) point out, however, the results of attempts to make a connection between unemployment and the PRR vote have been ambivalent at best. Sipma and Lubbers's meta-analysis of studies regarding this phenomenon showed a somewhat positive effect, although an arguably weak one, given how prominent unemployment's role in affecting PRR support is traditionally assumed to be. Arzheimer's own review suggests that in many cases, high immigration acts as a necessary condition for the unemployed to flock to the PRR, a view most notoriously advanced by Golder (2003).

As for immigration, the perceived flagship issue of the PRR, the results of studies are somewhat more unanimous in showing that higher levels of immigration generally correspond with higher levels of the PRR vote, (Arzheimer, 2018) with one significant caveat: in Western Europe. Generally, this appears to be a significant problem with much of the contemporary scholarship on support for the PRR: the generalisations made by many scholars are more often than not based almost exclusively on data gathered in Western European countries, while (especially quantitative) scholarship on the PRR in Central and Eastern Europe is surprisingly hard to come by. In Sipma and Lubbers's (2020) meta-analysis, of the 49 studies analysed, only 4 dealt expressly with Eastern Europe. Yet can one honestly claim that the populist radical right is an exclusively Western European phenomenon?

1.2.2 The deprivation explanation

So far, we have shown that traditionally, PRR research has attempted to answer the question of why voters opt for PRR parties either by turning to indicators such as unemployment or immigration, or by highlighting the importance of nativist sentiment both on the supply and the demand side. However, an emerging strain of literature primarily reacting to the aftershocks of the great political upsets of the 2010s is providing a slightly differing outlook on the issue, namely one focusing on the influence of overall economic deprivation and the discontent stemming from it on voters' electoral choices.

In this vein of thought, Dijkstra et al. (2020) inquired about the role of economic deprivation on anti-EU voting. This study, which was conducted not just for Western Europe, but for the then EU-28 as a whole, showed that poor local economic conditions played key roles in increasing the vote shares of parties opposed to European integration. In particular, the authors stress that long-term economic decline is an important driver of the PRR vote. This finding is supported by other, more localised studies, such as Artelaris (2022), which dealt with the case of Greece and the vote shares of Eurosceptic parties in the 2015 elections. In this study, a long-term rise in unemployment was found to significantly improve Eurosceptic parties' performance. Similarly, Fetzer (2019) posited that in the Brexit referendum, the Leave vote was strengthened by the impacts of the post-2010

austerity measures on low-income individuals and areas. Essletzbicher et al., (2018) meanwhile, attributed higher PRR vote shares to, among other factors, the size of the manufacturing sector in an area and the impact of the financial crisis on employment.

While this new branch of literature is primarily focused on dealing with the Eurosceptic backlash that occurred across the EU in the 2010s, there is no reason why its findings could not also be applied to explaining the broader electoral success of the PRR. After all, the PRR is generally either ambivalent or outright opposed towards European integration. Additionally, most of the studies in this field already, implicitly or explicitly, deal with the issue of populism. We will attempt to link this literature with existing literature on the PRR and further develop a more specific argument in subsection 2.3.2.

1.3 Illiberalism

In discussing democratic backsliding and the rise of PRR movements in Europe, one easily begins to wonder about the place of the term "illiberal"—commonly associated with the ruling regimes in two Central European countries, Poland and Hungary—within the greater puzzle. However, this use is not uniform, as researchers such as Pirro (2022) also use the term illiberal to describe the radical right's dubious allegiance to (liberal) democracy.

With the label of illiberalism, there is a key distinction *vis-à-vis* the names described above: while parties and politicians do not typically proclaim themselves to be populists or representatives of the populist radical right, the word "illiberal" has been co-opted by the Hungarian prime minister Orbán. While the term, originally coined by Zakaria (1997) in the phrase "illiberal democracy" was meant to be both pejorative and normatively negative, in his co-optation of the term, Orbán has sought to redefine it instead as a legitimate variant of democracy standing in opposition to the liberal democratic model imported from the West; one that his government is actively attempting to establish and entrench in Hungary. (Laruelle, 2022)

Illiberalism has generally been understood in the context of hybrid systems theory as a system of elections without constitutional liberalism (Zakaria, 1997) or as a mode of governance and policy-making at odds with the standards of liberal democracy. (Kauth and King, 2020) However, there have also been attempts to portray illiberalism ideologically. Laruelle (2022) conceptualises illiberalism as a distinct, post-modern political ideology arising from a backlash against liberalism, rooted in a traditional cultural and majoritarian understanding of society and politics in the wake of globalisation. This description certainly agrees with the ideology of the governing parties of Poland and Hungary, but it is certainly not exclusive to them.

Regardless of whether we consider illiberalism to be an ideology or a system of practices,

the question that arises is whether the illiberals of Poland and Hungary can be considered a group distinct from the PRR or whether "illiberal" is yet another term for what Mudde has called the populist radical right. Mudde himself (2017) considers neither Hungary's Fidesz nor Poland's Law and Justice to belong to the PRR, mainly due to the allegedly non-core role of nativism in their ideologies.

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to directly compare illiberalism and the populist radical right as concepts. However, as this thesis is to be concerned both with the PRR and with Poland, one of the two bastions of illiberalism in Europe, it is important for us to link the two concepts nevertheless. A somewhat less arduous task is not to compare the illiberal right and the populist radical right, but rather to use Mudde's conceptual framework for the populist radical right as a test for whether the two prominent Polish and Hungarian illiberal parties can qualify as PRR parties also.

1.3.1 The case of Fidesz

The Fidesz-KDNP party, in power since the elections of 2010, has been an actor in Hungarian politics since the democratic transformation following the collapse of the communist regime. Since the 1990s, it has reoriented itself from a mostly liberal centre-right party to one oriented more towards conservatism and nationalism. (Bozóki, 2008)

As such, it is not difficult to make a link between Fidesz and the PRR. On the issue of whether it is a nativist party, its record in government provides ample evidence. The Orbán government has been one of the most anti-immigrant state actors in the migrant crisis of the 2010s, constructing a border fence to keep migrants out of the country. At the same time, Orbán has styled himself the defender of Europe and Christian values against subversion both from within and without Europe. (Enyedi, 2020) When considering the record of this government, the label nativist may, in fact, be too *weak*. Orbán has also extended offers of citizenship, and consequently also suffrage, to descendants of Hungarians living in neighbouring countries, (Majtényi et al., 2018) and has, at the very least, flirted with Hungarian irredentist notions of a Greater Hungary encompassing the lands lost in the Treaty of Trianon after the First World War. (BBC, 2022)

With regards to authoritarianism, the record is also relatively straight. The Fidesz government is openly critical of liberal democracy and its principles, and has taken concrete steps towards replacing this system with its own model of an illiberal state. The most notable action in this direction was the drafting and approval of a new constitution in 2011, which, among other changes, implicitly weakened the role of the Constitutional Court in the legislative process and changed the country's electoral system to one arguably more favourable to Fidesz. Fidesz has, in its almost 13-year tenure, presided over perhaps the clearest example of state capture in recent years. (Art, 2020) Furthermore, with

regards to the aforementioned expansion of citizenship to descendants of Hungarians, it has created a highly loyal bloc of voters who have, in fact, very little stake in the elections, and apparently support Fidesz mainly out of a sense of "gratitude". (Majtényi et al., 2018) Overall, contemporary Hungary is by many considered to be a hybrid or competitive authoritarian regime due to the constitutional changes enacted by Fidesz. (Art, 2020)

On the final charge of populism, one may think that finding aspects of attacks on political elites in the rhetoric of a party that has held all major posts in a country for over a decade would be somewhat complicated. However, after a very intense campaign against the MSZP government prior to 2010, Fidesz has shifted its focus towards the elites in civic society, perhaps most notably towards billionaire George Soros, who has essentially become a *persona non grata* in Hungary. (Enyedi, 2020) At the same time, the Fidesz government has extended the populist battle against elites onto the European level. As mentioned previously, Orbán presents himself as a defender of all Europe, not just against immigration, but also against the dangers of liberal and globalist special interests, which are represented not only by certain elements of Hungarian civil society, but also by organisations such as the EU. (Ibid.) At the same time, one of Orbán's main political strategies to increase the legitimacy of his actions and reforms is the use of referenda, so-called national consultations, where voters are posed leading questions on whether the government ought to take a particular course of action. (Majtényi et al., 2018)

On the whole, it appears that the self-styled illiberal democratic Fidesz meets all three of Mudde's criteria for the populist radical right and can thus be classified as belonging to this group. We will discuss below certain specifics which can be observed in the conduct of Fidesz, but this determination will suffice from now.

1.3.2 The case of PiS

The tenure of the Polish *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość* (Law and Justice, hereafter "PiS") party has been somewhat shorter than that of Fidesz, but by no means less controversial. Unlike Fidesz, PiS has not publicly embraced the illiberal label, nor has it been able to enact changes as sweeping as those made in Hungary, but it has decidedly taken steps towards weakening liberal democracy in Poland. The positions and actions of PiS will be described in some detail in the following chapter; therefore, we will consider its case only briefly at this point.

PiS can certainly be considered to have, at the very least, nativist tendencies. The party very strongly promotes a Polish national identity, which is (much like in the case of Fidesz) intrinsically linked to Christianity, specifically to Roman Catholicism. A non-negligible part of the electoral support for PiS is garnered through an alliance with nationalist and xenophobic religious groups, which use their platform to promote the party's agenda among

their members. (Pytlas, 2021) Furthermore, Jarosław Kaczyński, the president of PiS and arguably the most influential politician thereof, is notorious for deeply nativist rhetoric, both at the expense of immigrants and of other nations as a whole. (Bill and Stanley, 2020) Although more nationalist than nativist, the PiS government has also inflamed historical tensions between Poland and Germany by advancing demands that Germany pay reparations to Poland for its occupation of the country during the Second World War. (DW, 2022)

Although PiS has, given the fact that it does not command a constitutional majority, been unable to enact reforms on quite the same level as Fidesz in Hungary, it has nevertheless displayed a propensity for authoritarian behaviour, namely in its attack on the independence of the country's judiciary, as well as a blatant disregard for customary legislative procedures in enacting some of its more controversial reforms. (Pytlas, 2021) Overall, PiS has been unable to change the constitution, but has instead systematically undermined it, while pursuing an agenda of executive aggrandisement.

Much like with Fidesz, the populist part of PiS's message is not limited to a simple "the People vs. the elites" framing. Rather, the party's rhetoric is much more confrontational, with PiS often labelling opponents enemies of the Polish people or questioning their "Polishness". (Bill and Stanley, 2020; Pytlas, 2021) As will be detailed below, PiS routinely advances a historical narrative of a "stolen transformation", whereby new liberal elites and former communist ones supposedly made a secret pact to share power in post-communist Poland. (Bill and Stanley, 2020)

On the whole, it can be reasonably assumed that PiS does, in fact, belong to the populist radical right, at least to some extent. We have thus shown that both of the major illiberal governments of Europe can be viewed as belonging to the "family" of PRR parties.

1.3.3 Illiberalism and the PRR

Our brief foray into the cases of Hungary and Poland has revealed that the illiberal right is, at the very least, strongly connected to the populist radical right, but that there are some notable distinctions also. Primarily, it should be noted that Fidesz and PiS (along with the Italian FdI) are the only PRR parties in the European Union which are in the position of senior partners in a governing coalition. No other PRR party has been able to make electoral gains comparable to those of Fidesz and PiS, nor enter government two consecutive times. This is arguably what sets these two cases apart from the "mainstream" of the PRR the most. However, there are also other notable substantive differences.

The most prominent of these differences seems to be the very overt co-optation of the values of Christianity, particularly Catholicism, into the programmes of both Fidesz and PiS. Although Christianity is often "name-dropped" by PRR parties as part of the European

values which are being eroded by globalisation, it often seems to play more of a token role than to actually affect the policies of those parties in a significant manner. This is hardly the case in Poland, where one of the most controversial policies of the PiS government has revolved around several attempts to restrict or ban abortion, primarily based on religious arguments. Abortion laws have not been significantly altered in Hungary, although the government has instituted some changes designed to deter abortion. However, the Fidesz government has taken a hard-line stance on curtailing the rights of homosexuals and sex education.

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to analyse the nuances of PiS and Fidesz, as well as their position, *vis-à-vis* the "PRR mainstream" or the PRR as a whole, but it is nevertheless a topic which ought to be expanded upon in the future. For our purposes, it will suffice to summarise that the social conservatism exhibited both by PiS and Fidesz is a highly specific characteristic setting these parties apart from the PRR mainstream, which is typically much more liberal (or at least less overtly conservative), but that this does not preclude them from being grouped together with the parties that make the mainstream up. The illiberal right, for the most part, can thus be understood as a subgroup of the populist radical right; an interpretation which will be used in this thesis.

The question which emerges from the comparison between the PRR and the illiberal right is simple yet very relevant: *why* is the Polish and Hungarian case different? What are the factors that shape nuances among PRR parties? The explanation cannot be found simply in geography, i.e., in claiming that illiberal parties are a CEE mutation of the PRR, a Western European phenomenon, as there are clearly deviant cases, such as the Czech *Svoboda a přímá demokracie* (Freedom and Direct Democracy, hereafter "SPD"), whose social conservatism is arguably much more lukewarm than that of either Fidesz or PiS. This, however, remains a question for another study.

2 The case of Poland

As has been already mentioned, Poland is a rare case of an EU member state where the PRR has entered government (as a senior partner, no less) and remained in it for an entire electoral term, which it is set to repeat in the 2023 Sejm elections, provided current projections do not change. (Europe Elects, 2023) Although there have been more cases of PRR parties being invited into government in recent years in Western Europe, such as the *Lega Nord* in Italy or the FPÖ in Austria, those parties' participation has ultimately been short-lived. Thus, while there is an increasing tendency for mainstream parties to "legitimise" the PRR by forming coalitions with it, and while in other countries, the PRR is becoming increasingly capable of achieving electoral victories, as was the case with the FdI in the 2022 election, Poland (along with Hungary) is still a very unique case.

In this chapter, we describe the context of the Polish case in detail. Firstly, we will briefly outline the key features of Polish geography, history, and the country's economy. Secondly, the evolution of Poland's political and party system since the country's democratic translation will be discussed. We will then move on to a discussion of PiS, its strategy and objectives, and its relevant policies, concluding with a presentation of our broader argument, stemming both from the information in the first and second chapter.

2.1 General overview

In this section, we present an overview of Poland as a whole, i.e., the historical, geographical, and economic contexts arguably necessary for the comprehension of our overarching argument with regards to PiS and the PRR. As we will showcase, many phenomena in Polish society are based on a very strict past dependency; to present them properly, we first need to properly present the conditions in which they have developed.

2.1.1 Geography of Poland

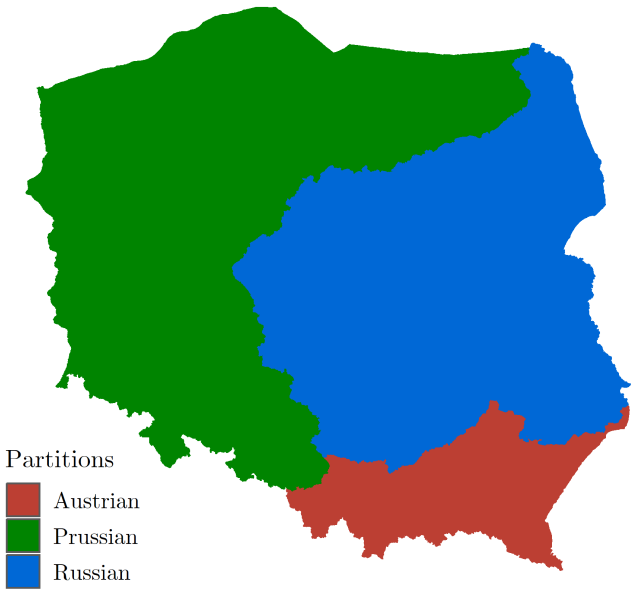
Perhaps the most pertinent to this thesis is an outline of the administrative division of Poland. The state is officially divided into 16 voivodeships (equivalent, e.g., to French regions), which correspond to the NUTS 2 division with the exception of Warsaw, which is represented separately in the NUTS 2 system, but not in the administrative division of Poland itself. Voivodeships further consist of 380 *powiats* (equivalent to, e.g., French departments), and 2489 *gminas* (municipalities). Local self-government is exercised at all of the above levels. The NUTS 3 division of Poland consists of 73 *podregions* (sub-regions), which are groups of individual powiats.

From a geographical standpoint, likely the most outstanding phenomenon in Poland is that of the historical partitions of the country and their effect on the present-day functioning of the country. In the partitions, which had occurred between 1775 and 1795, and in which

the country, after centuries of statehood, disappeared off the face of Europe, ethnic Poles found themselves ruled by Prussians, Austrians, and Russians for a period of 123 years, until Poland's re-emergence as an independent state at the end of the First World War.

Within modern-day Poland, the historical borders of the three partitions run through the country much like a fault line, setting apart the formerly Prussian and Austrian parts of the country from the territory formerly belonging to the Russian partition, although some differences also exist between the Prussian and Austrian partitions. The partitions are visualised in Map 2.1.

Map 2.1. *The partitions of Poland within contemporary Polish borders.*



Source: Author's compilation; Data: Bukowski, 2019

This fault line can easily be observed spatially across a wide range of variables, both economic and social ones. Discounting cities, particularly the capital Warsaw, located in the heartland of the former Russian partition, the east of the country is much less developed than the west. The presence of socioeconomic and political differences between parts of a country with differing historical experiences is by no means unique; indeed, a very similar phenomenon can be observed in most of Poland's neighbouring countries. What sets the Polish case apart from others is the sheer deterministic nature of this east-west split.

The past-dependency effect of the partitions can be observed not only when looking at standard economic variables such as mean monthly income, but also more unusual ones, such as the percentage of dwellings containing a toilet (significantly lower in the areas of the former Russian part), the functioning of education (Bukowski, 2019), and, perhaps most importantly for this thesis, electoral results. These show a clear gap between the more economically developed former Prussian partition and Eastern Poland, consisting of

the former partitions of Austria and Russia. While Western Poland forms the stronghold of the centrist PO, the main rival of PiS, the East (with the exception of Warsaw) is PiS country, with PiS gaining over 70 per cent of votes in some of the easternmost parts of the country. (Państwowa Komisja Wyborcza, 2019)

At the same time, it is worth noting that much of the territory classified above as the Prussian partition had, until 1945, been an integral part of Germany (and Prussia before it), not having been part of the Polish state since as early as the Middle Ages. Cities such as Wrocław or Stettin only became Polish following the post-WWII settlement, which had essentially shifted Polish borders 200 kilometres to the West, also leading to the loss of historically Polish territories and cities, such as large parts of modern-day Belarus and Ukraine.

2.1.2 Economy of Poland

Poland's economy, much like those of other post-communist states, underwent massive changes following the democratisation and liberalisation of the country from 1989 onward. While the closing decade of communist rule was marked by prolonged stagnation, similar to that experienced by the GDR and other communist countries at that time, the greatest economic shock struck the country during its transition to a market economy, being manifested primarily by steep inflation, which eventually forced the government to denominate the currency at a rate of 10 000:1 in 1995.

Despite the political instability of the 1990s, manifested in power oscillating between Left and Right, the individual governments remained largely faithful to the original Balcerowicz Plan, the scenario for economic reform proposed in 1990. By the time the latter half of the 1990s came, Poland was well on its way to becoming a state with a burgeoning market economy. (Slay, 2000)

Throughout the 2000s and 2010s, the Polish economy continued on a largely successful track of growth. In the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, Poland was the only EU country to maintain economic growth, managing to become the fastest-growing EU economy in subsequent years. (World Bank, 2018)

However, the transition to a market economy has not been without its losers. As such, the transition has mostly benefited regions in Western Poland and Warsaw to a much greater extent than those in Eastern Poland, where poverty rates remain relatively high in comparison with other parts of the country. Many workers in these regions rely on employment in agriculture, (Ibid.) which remains a much more important economic sector than in other CEE countries, making agriculture a highly salient topic and farmers an important voting bloc. Here, too, the phenomenon of partition past-dependency plays a role, as there are stark differences in the structure of the regional economies between the

three partitions, particularly between the Russian and Prussian one.

Since Poland's accession to the EU in 2004, the economic struggles of Eastern Poland and the Polish countryside have been somewhat mitigated by large amounts of financial aid from the EU. At present, Poland is the largest recipient not only of agricultural subsidies under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) of the EU, but also of funds for regional development. (Ibid.) Agriculture, and the primary sector at large, are a significant force in the Polish economy, as over 2 million workers were employed in agriculture alone in 2020. (GUS, 2021)

2.2 Polish post-communist politics and the emergence of PiS

The Polish path to democracy was preceded by a long-standing struggle between the government of the communist PZPR party and the *Solidarność* (Solidarity) workers' union, which culminated at the turn of the year 1988. Around this time, the PZPR government began round-table negotiations with representatives of Solidarity—initially intended purely to discuss the official recognition of Solidarity—which quickly cascaded into negotiations about a thorough reconstruction of the Polish state. On 2 March 1989, PZPR made concessions regarding the rules of the upcoming parliamentary elections, allowing for semi-competitive elections to the Sejm, the lower house, and fully competitive elections to the Senate. (Gwiazda, 2016)

In the June elections, the PZPR suffered a stunning defeat despite its electoral engineering, with Solidarity winning 99 of the 100 Senate seats (the only other one being won by a regime-endorsed independent). Perhaps because both domestic and foreign actors, such as the U.S., were uncertain about how the USSR would react to a full-scale attempt at democratisation, the PZPR initially managed to retain a position of some influence: as per the PZPR's agreement with Solidarity, General Wojciech Jaruzelski was elected president. However, an attempt by PZPR to hold on to the premiership was unsuccessful, and the first democratic government of Solidarity, supported by parties hitherto aligned with PZPR, was confirmed by the Sejm on 12 September. (Friedl, 2017)

The new government, led by Tadeusz Mazowiecki, sought to undertake much-needed economic reforms, which PZPR had struggled with in the latter half of the 1980s. This included the privatisation of state assets and the introduction of the market economy, a process which was to be finalised only in 1995. At the same time, hyperinflation raged in Poland, reaching 1360 per cent in early 1990, leading to massive waves of popular discontent. (Řezník, 2017) The uncertain economic situation was complemented by similar chaos in the country's politics. Jaruzelski's presidential term was shortened, paving the way for a popular election of the president at the end of 1990, which was won by the leader of Solidarity, Lech Wałęsa. In the following year, free legislative elections took place,

wherein the absence of an electoral threshold led to 29 different political subjects winning seats in the Sejm. The absence of the threshold was primarily agreed upon due to the perception that the Sejm elected in 1991 will be a constitutional convention, which should seek to represent the most voices possible. (Gwiazda, 2016) Nevertheless, the resulting fragmentation led to government instability and, ultimately, to snap elections in 1993.

Like other dissident movements in Central Europe, such as the Civic Forum in the Czech Republic, Solidarity was not capable of united political action following the defeat of the PZPR due to the diversity of opinions represented within the movement. Thus, the actors aligned with Solidarity splintered into several unstable factions and parties which struggled to maintain cohesion throughout the whole 1990s. The Left, meanwhile, was much more capable of reorganisation. The PZPR dissolved in 1990, leading to the creation of the *Sojusz Lewicy Demokraticznej* (Union of the Democratic Left, hereafter SLD), a social-democratic party coalition. (Gwiazda, 2016) The SLD consisted of many former members of the PZPR, even in its higher echelons, but nevertheless managed to establish itself as a legitimate political actor in the 1990s.

In the 1993 snap elections, the SLD won a stunning victory, made possible mainly by the intense fragmentation of the post-Solidarity parties, many of which were kept out of the Sejm by the newly instituted 5 per cent electoral threshold. The SLD government was propped up by the *Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe* (Polish People's Party, PSL), a centrist successor of one of the PZPR's satellite parties. The SLD-PSL government successfully finalised the privatisation effort, while also ratifying a comprehensive constitution replacing the transitional "Small Constitution" of 1992.

Following its debacle in the 1993 elections, the post-Solidarity Right managed to recover and attempted to create a unified front against the SLD, which took concrete shape in the *Akcja Wyborcza Solidarność* (Solidarity Electoral Action, AWS), a centre-right party coalition which defeated SLD in the 1997 elections. However, the instability of the Polish Right did not come to an end here, as AWS was unable to maintain cohesion during its reign, leading to another SLD victory four years later and marking the last attempt at consolidating the post-Solidarity forces.

The dissolution of the AWS led to perhaps the most important change in the Polish party system since the realignments of various parties immediately after 1989, namely the creation of two new post-Solidarity political subjects, the *Platforma Obywatelska* (Civic Platform, PO) and *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość* (Law and Justice, PiS). While the parties may have been new in name, they were direct descendants of the AWS and the various post-Solidarity parties and factions of the 1990s, (Gwiazda, 2016) which can be seen, *inter alia*, in their personal makeup. While PO was headed by Donald Tusk, a former member of the liberal *Unia Wolności* (Freedom Union, UW), the main personalities of PiS were the

Kaczyński brothers, Jarosław and Lech, who had previously been affiliated with Wałęsa, but later became some of the former president's staunchest critics. (Řezník, 2017)

The emergence of PiS and PO would ultimately change the Polish party system from a highly chaotic constellation of subjects to a relatively stable and institutionalised (or quasi-institutionalised) system centred around the two parties' competition. While the politics of the 1990s was marked by a struggle between a plethora of post-communist and anti-communist—or post-Solidarity—parties, this new system was to revolve around a competition between two parties embodying two differing ideologies: social-solidaristic PiS on one hand, liberal PO on the other, while the formerly successful SLD was to become ever more marginalised. (Gwiazda, 2016)

PiS and PO were "too late" to save the 2001 election for the right, so to speak, and collectively received just over 20 per cent of the vote, (Ibid.) leading to the victory of SLD and the formation of a government under Leszek Miller, which governed in a coalition with PSL. Two more parties gained representation, the post-Solidarity party *Liga Polskich Rodzin* (League of Polish Families, LPR) and the PRR party *Samoobrona Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej* (Self-Defence of the Republic of Poland, SO), which was the only party in opposition without ties to the AWS.

The time of the post-Solidarity parties came in 2005, when PiS and PO placed first and second respectively in the legislative elections, gaining over 50 per cent of all votes cast in the Sejm election. In the same year, Lech Kaczyński was elected president. Initially, PiS formed a minority government, which transformed into a majority government when a coalition was formed between PiS, LPR, and SO in 2006. However, the rule of PiS was short-lived for the time being, as the government collapsed in 2007, leading to snap elections. This time, PO came first. Together, PiS and PO gained almost three quarters of all votes cast in the Sejm election, while SLD's electoral coalition garnered a measly 13 per cent of votes.

PiS's first governing experience between 2005 and 2007 was one sometimes referred to as the "Fourth Republic", signifying a departure from the post-1989 Third Republic. PiS utilised this description to distance itself from the perceived corruption of the Third Republic, which it argued required significant reform, including further removal of post-communist influences from within the Polish state. (Ibid.) Although the Fourth Republic arguably ended with the fall of the Kaczyński government, (Řezník, 2017) some elements of the Fourth Republic approach can be seen in PiS's later policies, such as the post-2015 reform of the judiciary.

Throughout the 2007-2015 period, PO formed two coalition governments with PSL, while PiS and SLD remained in opposition. In 2010, PiS suffered a serious setback when Lech Kaczyński died in the Smolensk air disaster, while his brother Jarosław lost the subsequent

election to Bronisław Komorowski, the PO candidate. Nevertheless, the collapse of LPR and SO led to PiS firmly cementing its position as the main opposition party. In this period, Donald Tusk became the first prime minister to form two consecutive governments,[1] although his election to the position of President of the European Council meant that he did not finish his term. Nevertheless, PO managed to successfully maintain two consecutive governments from election to election, a feat that PiS is now set to repeat; this can be viewed as an important milestone in the stabilisation process of the Polish political system.

After two terms in government, however, the strength of PO began to wane. First, it suffered an unexpected defeat in the 2015 presidential election, where president Komorowski failed to secure re-election, losing to incumbent Andrzej Duda, the PiS candidate. This election was but a prelude to the subsequent legislative elections, which took place in the autumn of the same year. With 38 per cent of the vote, PiS managed not only to defeat PO, but also to obtain an absolute majority of seats in the Sejm, an unprecedented result in the modern history of Poland.

Some of the developments which followed PiS's victory in 2015 have already been outlined; many more are yet to be presented in the following section. Thus, we will only conclude by briefly describing the subsequent political events.

Despite the great controversy generated by PiS's term in power between 2015 and 2019, the party managed to defend its absolute majority in the 2019 elections, although the opposition, mainly represented by *Koalicja Obywatelska* (Civic Coalition, KO), headed by PO, managed to wrest control of the Senate away from PiS. Nevertheless, PiS cemented its position in 2020, when Andrzej Duda became the first Polish president to win re-election. Despite some turbulence in the Zjednoczona Prawica coalition, such as the departure of the *Porozumienie* (Understanding) party, leading to ZP temporarily losing its majority in the Sejm, PiS remains the dominant political force in Poland. With elections fast approaching in the autumn of 2023, it remains to be seen whether PiS will be able to retain power for a third term.

2.3 PiS

As has already been mentioned, PiS is a descendant of the post-Solidarity parties of the 1990s. The party dates its own creation to the dismissal of Lech Kaczyński from the position of Minister of Justice in 2001. (PiS, 2023) Prior to the establishment of PiS, the Kaczyński brothers, specifically Jarosław, had already founded a party, *Porozumienie Centrum* (loosely translatable as "Centrist Accord", PC), one of the post-Solidarity parties

[1] PSL's Waldemar Pawlak was also prime minister in two governments, albeit not consecutive ones. His first government, however, lasted for 33 days, failing to survive a vote of confidence, while his second government only lasted from 1993 to 1995. Even more interestingly, Pawlak's party was the governing coalition's *junior* partner in the latter case.

which later participated in the AWS coalition. The PC turned hostile towards the liberal elements on the post-Solidarity wing following the fall of the Olszewski government, one of the short-lived governments of the 1991-1993 period; (Pytlas, 2021) this was also caused by a rift between Jarosław Kaczyński and president Wałęsa, which culminated in his dismissal from the Presidential Chancellery. (Gwiazda, 2016) Afterwards, the party adopted a narrative criticising a perceived secret pact between former communists and some of the post-Solidarity actors, (Pytlas, 2021) a feature which can be found in the later rhetoric of PiS, both during the Fourth Republic period and after its victory in 2015.

At the very beginning of its existence, PiS co-operated with PO in the 2002 Warsaw mayoral election, which propelled Lech Kaczyński to victory. This was both the first and last electoral coalition between PiS and PO. (PiS, 2023) Afterwards, the goals of the parties quickly diverged, eventually growing into the rivalry that defines the Polish political system today.

PiS's electoral victory in 2005 at first spawned a minority government led by Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz. However, following Lech Kaczyński's presidential election victory at the end of the year, PiS restructured its government to include two right-wing parties, LPR and SO, with the new president's twin brother at its head. Although the ethos of the two new coalition parties differed somewhat, they (along with that of PiS) were both at odds with the liberal values that had become widespread in Poland in the preceding 15 years. Thus, the Kaczyński government was mainly an attempt to stem the already-risen tide of liberalism in Polish society, an unsuccessful one at that.

After the 2005 election, the politics of PiS went down the road of criticising the liberal tendencies within Polish politics, both economic and social ones. As an alternative, PiS, along with its coalition partners, composed a solidaristic economic platform, while its social policies were primarily based upon the enshrinement of Catholic and national values in areas such as education. (Bill and Stanley, 2020; Pytlas, 2021) Meanwhile, the Kaczyński brothers formalised their critique of the post-communist settlement, perceived to be based upon a secret pact between communist and liberal elites, into the idea of a "Fourth Republic", a clean slate for the Polish state, wherein the PiS government would finally bring about a reckoning for communists who allegedly managed to retain power, for example in the judiciary, and right the perceived injustices of the post-communist transformation. (Řezník, 2017; Pytlas, 2021)

Kaczyński's government had been far too short-lived to exact any meaningful changes within the Polish state, nor was it arguably organised enough to do so. Thus, at least on the rhetorical level, the project of establishing the Fourth Republic was tabled. However, the victory of PO in the 2007 elections did not bring about the end of PiS, but rather its entrenchment within the Polish political system as the main rival of PO and the main

opposition party, while the Left became increasingly marginalised. When PiS returned to power eight years later, it did so as a highly functional and disciplined party, one able to carefully manoeuvre between appearing as a populist party and as a mainstream one. (Pytlas, 2021)

The main consequence of the fall of the Kaczyński government, however, had been the subsequent collapse of both of PiS's coalition partners, neither of which managed to re-enter parliament thereafter, with PiS being in a very advantageous position to siphon both parties' voters. This led PiS to pivot to the right and assume an increasingly anti-establishment and, arguably, anti-system position, a move that was further exacerbated by the party promoting conspiracy theories about the Smolensk air disaster and the death of Lech Kaczyński. (Bill and Stanley, 2020; Pytlas, 2021)

The idea of the Fourth Republic, though it is no longer an official part of PiS's programme, was never fully abandoned. While the Polish party system managed to achieve relative stability in the latter half of the 2000s, (Gwiazda, 2016) Bill and Stanley note that no such thing occurred with regards to the governing ethos or philosophy of the individual parties, which maintain deep disagreement over not just the individual policies of the state, but its overall makeup. (Bill and Stanley, 2020)

During the 8 years of opposition, PiS was seemingly able to both change its trajectory and appeal to more moderate voters, and to retain support among the more radical voters, particularly former supporters of LPR. The softening of PiS's rhetoric and outward presentation was mainly achieved by a more tactical deployment of Jarosław Kaczyński, who to this day remains the chairman of PiS, but has taken a backseat approach to governing the party after his unsuccessful presidential bid in 2010. Kaczyński remains the single constant in the constellation of PiS, apparently exercising non-trivial ideological and administrative authority in the party: while premiers change, Kaczyński remains.

2.3.1 PiS in government

PiS's nearly 8-year tenure in government has been marked by sweeping changes not just in the dynamics of the Polish state, but also its relationship to the European Union and key policy areas, such as social and agricultural policy. It is prudent to distinguish between the purely political, i.e., directly pertaining to the political system, and societal reforms instituted by PiS, the latter of which are those primarily relevant to the subject of our thesis.

Especially outside of Poland, the perception of the PiS government has been defined by its long-standing row with the EU regarding judicial reforms enacted in several stages after the 2015 election, ultimately increasing the dependence of the judiciary branch on the executive. The government has also been widely criticised for its push to essentially

outlaw abortion, a topic which has generated great controversy and adversity in Poland, leading to large-scale protests. However, these aspects of PiS's governance are arguably outside of the scope and purview of this thesis, which is primarily concerned with other policies of this government.

Mainly, we are interested in the socio-economic policies of the PiS government. These can best be summed up using the slogan used by PiS itself in its 2019 electoral manifesto, "*Polski model państwa dobrobytu*" ("The Polish model of the welfare state"). During its first term in power, PiS oversaw a massive expansion of benefits afforded to Polish citizens, with specific groups having benefited significantly from this expansion.

PiS's policies have been especially beneficial for three groups in Polish society: families with children, the elderly, and the rural population, specifically farmers. The party's 2019 manifesto details most of the policies implemented by the PiS government during its first term, the most prominent of which is likely the *Rodzina 500 Plus* (Family 500 Plus, commonly referred to as 500 Plus) scheme, wherein all families receive a monthly payment of 500 PLN (approximately 3000 CZK) from the state for each child.

Perhaps more crucial, yet somewhat less notorious, have been the overtures made by PiS towards the rural population of Poland. Of those living in rural areas, farmers and agricultural workers have arguably benefited the most, as PiS has decided to attempt to halt the steady decline of the primary sector typical for contemporary developed countries. Thus, far beyond the scope of the CAP, the PiS government highly subsidises agricultural activity, providing farmers with subsidies on top of EU ones, while also instituting generous subsidy schemes for agricultural modernisation. However, PiS has also vowed to use both state and EU funds towards a revival of the countryside, including the reinstatement of closed-down public institutions such as police commissariats and post offices. (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, 2019)

However, whether the symbiotic relationship between farmers and PiS will continue is not entirely a clear matter, given that PiS has also taken steps to alienate them, namely with a proposed animal welfare reform bill, which some argued would have a negative economic impact upon farmers, leading to a series of farmers' protests and a crisis within the governing coalition, which eventually culminated in a government reshuffle and the temporary loss of PiS's absolute majority in the Sejm. (Potocka, 2020)

Somewhat interesting, especially due to its implications for PRR research, is the ambiguous relationship of PiS and immigration. While PiS has taken a hard stance on immigration rhetorically, especially with regards to refugees, (Bill and Stanley, 2020) this rhetoric does not seem to translate into the government's policy. Instead, under the reign of PiS, immigration into Poland has increased, with immigrants arriving not only from traditional locations such as Ukraine, but also African and Asian countries. (Urząd do

Spraw Cudzoziemców, 2021) This indicates that PiS's nativism is somewhat flexible when it comes to immigration.

2.3.2 What makes PiS win?

Much of the scholarship on the populist radical right highlights the nativist and authoritarian aspects of the PRR's conduct, which are often claimed to be central to the political strategies and appeals of the parties themselves. Together with the media coverage of such parties, it is not impossible for outside observers to gain the impression that parties such as PiS succeed *because* they are nativist. However, we believe that the developments of the last decade offer an alternate and, ultimately, more credible solution.

As we have shown, there is a growing canon of literature dedicated to studying the relationship between Euroscepticism (and more broadly, anti-elite sentiment) and economic deprivation. This literature consistently showcases the ability of Eurosceptic parties, which, for the most part, are also PRR parties, to harness the discontent of voters in structurally disadvantaged areas, particularly those ravaged by the last financial crisis and by the rapid restructuring of the Western economy in recent decades. (Fetzer, 2009; Essletzbichler et al., 2018)

Original approaches to studying the factors of PRR support have revolved around examinations of unemployment and immigration, finding that a positive effect of unemployment is conditional, typically on immigration levels. (Golder, 2003; Arzheimer, 2018) However, in light of the deprivation literature referenced above, we propose that studying unemployment alone may be misleading in some cases. Instead, we believe it may be prudent to examine other indicators related to employment, namely, as suggested by Essletzbicher et al. (2018), the economic structure of employment, i.e., the size of the agricultural and manufacturing (primary and secondary) sectors, and structural unemployment, a phenomenon occurring in the wake of large-scale economic transformations (typically away from the aforementioned two sectors towards the tertiary or service sector).

Looking at some of the most prominent cases of PRR success in the West in recent years, we can very easily observe that many of the strongholds of PRR parties and candidates are areas with a historically strong agrarian or industrial sector, which (in varying degrees) continues to play a role in these areas today. The UK Independence Party gained the highest amount of votes in the 2015 parliamentary election in Northern England and the Midlands, formerly highly industrialised areas; the states of the "Rust Belt", whose swing to the Republicans arguably propelled Donald Trump to the White House in 2016, likewise have historically been industrial areas. These are no simple coincidences, but, as research has shown, robust causal relationships. (Ibid.) The same can also be observed in Germany, where the lands of the former GDR, significantly more reliant on industry than

their western counterparts, have been a stronghold for the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) party. Here, too, discontent, likely plays a central role, as there is a long-standing feeling of inferiority *vis-à-vis* Western Germans among the residents of East Germany, espoused especially by voters of the AfD. (Weisskircher, 2020)

It would be wrong to assume that PRR parties themselves are not aware of this stronger support in economically disadvantaged areas, or that they are not taking steps to harness its full potential. It appears to be no coincidence that the first quoted policy of UKIP in the infamous UKIP Calypso, ahead of a criticism of allegedly unfettered illegal immigration was: "*there'll be no tax on the minimum wage.*" (Genius, 2014) We believe that PiS, too, is aware of the potential of such appeals, which is why it has geared its policies primarily towards voters in precisely those areas which have suffered from structural changes in the economy the most.

The Polish case, of course, is highly specific. For one, no other party save Hungary's Fidesz (which is, however, functioning in a system of competitive authoritarianism rather than a liberal democracy, as in other European states) has been able to achieve anything comparable to the vote shares of PiS in 2015 and 2019, as well as to form two consecutive governments. Barring that, however, there are more significant specifics in the country itself at play here. For us, the most important one is the tremendous importance of the primary sector, specifically of agriculture, for the Polish economy, essentially unparalleled in the West, needs to be taken into account. While there is also a significant manufacturing sector in Poland, agriculture appears to hold a much deeper significance: the workers employed in agriculture alone amounted to around 10 per cent of the working-age population of Poland. (GUS, 2021) This fact, and the massive economic overtures made by PiS not towards the manufacturing, but the agricultural sector, lead us to believe that discontent among farmers, not factory workers, is behind the massive success of PiS.

Of course, the party's policies have not been geared just towards agricultural workers, but more broadly towards those living in the countryside, whose causes PiS has also championed, although one might argue that the two groups are intrinsically tied. However, PiS has also made appeals to other groups, not necessarily connected to agriculture and the countryside, most notably families and pensioners. Overall, PiS has targeted those groups and areas for which the post-1989 transformation has been the least successful, unifying them into a consolidated voting bloc. The direct appeal to those parts of society, which PiS argues had been ignored by other parties, benefited PiS greatly in 2015; its ability to follow up on these appeals by lavishing farmers and families with regular payments (which have the greatest impact precisely in the less-developed, poorer areas of the country) and promises of restoring the Polish countryside ensured its return into power in 2019.

One may make the objection that nativism cannot directly be ruled out by our explanation,

as rural areas are typically also significantly more conservative than urban ones, with the implication that nativism is also more present. In this explanation, nativism and religiosity are the main drivers of the PiS vote, while economic effects, although not insignificant, are secondary in this regard: a rural voter may well be happier to vote for PiS due to its generous welfare schemes, but his primary motivation is the party's nativist programme.

We disagree with this objection based on what has been shown by PiS within the last eight years. Although the party *is* nativist, it has hardly made this the main tenet of its praxis. In fact, besides rhetoric, it is difficult to point to truly nativist policies that PiS has implemented for the sake of nativism. Secondly, if nativism and cultural issues were central to the electoral success of PiS, this would have been manifested in the topics of the election itself. But as polls conducted before the 2019 election show, this was not the case: instead, voters primarily considered *economic* topics to be the main issues of the election, along with, *inter alia*, environmental questions. Meanwhile, topics such as LGBT rights or minority policies, which are inherently cultural, ranked at the very bottom. (TVN, 2019; Rzeczpospolita, 2019)

Our argument is not that PiS has given up on cultural appeals and has primarily become a workers' party. Rather, we wish to showcase that with PiS and its pivot towards the left-behind, we see that which is at the heart of academics' understanding of populism: its thin-centredness, i.e., the ability of populism to work in symbiosis with host ideologies of many different kinds. This, which is already observable in Poland, is, we believe, symptomatic of a larger shift in PRR behaviour, where mainstreamed parties both in the CEE region and in Western Europe are shirking away from a solely nativist platform in favour of one focused on building up somewhat larger and more stable bases of voters dissatisfied with globalisation and the economic *status quo*. The right-wing populism of the 2020s will not be a populism only of natives against immigrants. In many countries, we have seen the PRR embrace anti-vaccination sentiment; in the wake of the economic shocks of the Covid-19 pandemic and the Ukraine War, protectionist and anti-market sentiment—both with varying degrees of success. PiS, we believe, is the ultimate poster child for a successful attempt at diversification, one that points to a need to re-evaluate academics' perception of the PRR and of its tactics.

Having laid out our argument in full, we can proceed to testing it. We conclude here the descriptive portion of our research. In the following chapter, we introduce the research methods employed in the testing of our explanation, whereafter we move on to the empirical portion.

3 Methodology

In this chapter, we outline the methodological framework of our thesis. Drawing on the puzzles outlined in the previous chapters, we firstly specify our research target, as well as research questions and hypotheses. This section is followed by a discussion of both our independent variables and the dependent variable, the electoral vote share of PiS. Subsequently, we describe our methods of data collection and discuss the analytical methods we have chosen to employ in this thesis.

3.1 Research target

The primary goal of this thesis is to challenge the predominant narrative in PRR scholarship, which views nativism as the most important aspect of the PRR's *modus operandi*. As we have shown in the case of PiS, nativism has arguably lost much of its importance for the ideational basis of PRR parties, which are increasingly seeking to "expand into" other policy areas.

On the case of Poland and PiS, we intend to show that the "it's the economy, stupid" adage of the 1990s holds true for the PRR today, and that PRR parties, already typically highly critical of globalisation, can potentially mobilise voters on the "losing side" of the socio-economic trends inherent to globalisation, such as the decline of agriculture and of rural areas. We wish to test our explanation on the Sejm elections of 2015 and 2019, where PiS achieved unprecedented victories and went on to form a government.

In order to narrow down the scope of our research, we pose the following research questions:

- How is the electoral performance of PiS affected by select socio-economic and demographic variables? (Q1)
- How does the explanatory power of the posited theory compare with competing explanations? (Q2)
- Are the effects of the selected variables on the electoral performance of PiS spatially homogeneous? (Q3)
- What is the predictive power of the correlates of PiS support? (Q4)

In terms of the first research question, we are primarily interested in investigating the extent to which features of a local economy and society can be used to explain the variation in the vote share of PiS. Based on previous theoretical reflection, we posit that, generally, higher levels of PiS support will correlate with worse economic conditions. Specific research hypotheses for individual independent variables are formulated below in section 3.3.

To answer the second research question, we include in our model some variables which our

theory does not perceive as key, but rather which are often upheld as important by other explanations of PRR support. If our chosen variables are able to perform better than these control variables, this will highlight the greater explanatory power of our proposed theory.

The third research question seeks to address an important issue which arises when dealing with spatial data, namely that of spatial heterogeneity, i.e., a phenomenon where relationships between variables differ across space. To investigate the possibility of spatial heterogeneity being present in the posited relationships, we employ a special data analysis method further elaborated upon in subsection 3.5.1.

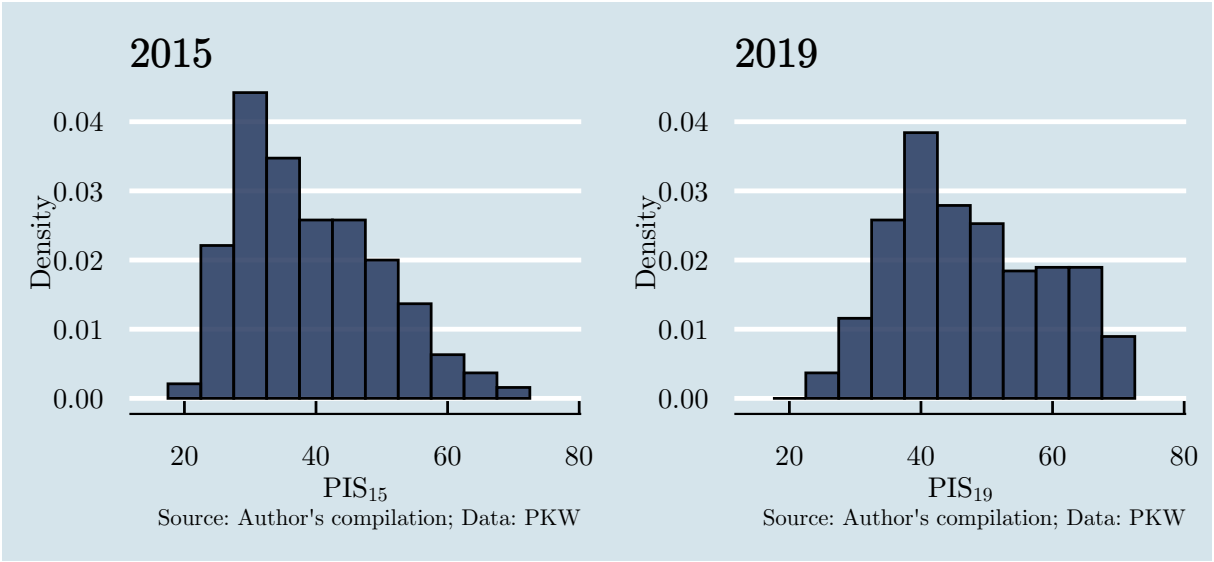
Finally, in the fourth research question, we wish to examine whether our explanatory models, created to answer the first two questions, are also capable of serving a predictive function. While this is not directly relevant to the topic of this thesis, it may serve as an additional test of our findings' reliability.

At the very onset, it is also prudent to define our unit of analysis. While the ideal dataset for our research would be one reflecting the socio-economic conditions of individuals, rather than territorial areas, such data had not been made available for both election years. We will thus work with aggregated data, whose nature is explained further in section 3.4.

3.2 Dependent variable

In our research questions, we have already zeroed in on the electoral performance of PiS as the dependent variable which we wish to investigate in this thesis. The most logical means of operationalising a party's performance is its share of votes in an election. During its two victories in the legislative elections of 2015 and 2019, PiS (along with its affiliated parties) garnered 37.58 and 43.59 per cent of all votes cast for the Sejm. (PKW, 2023)

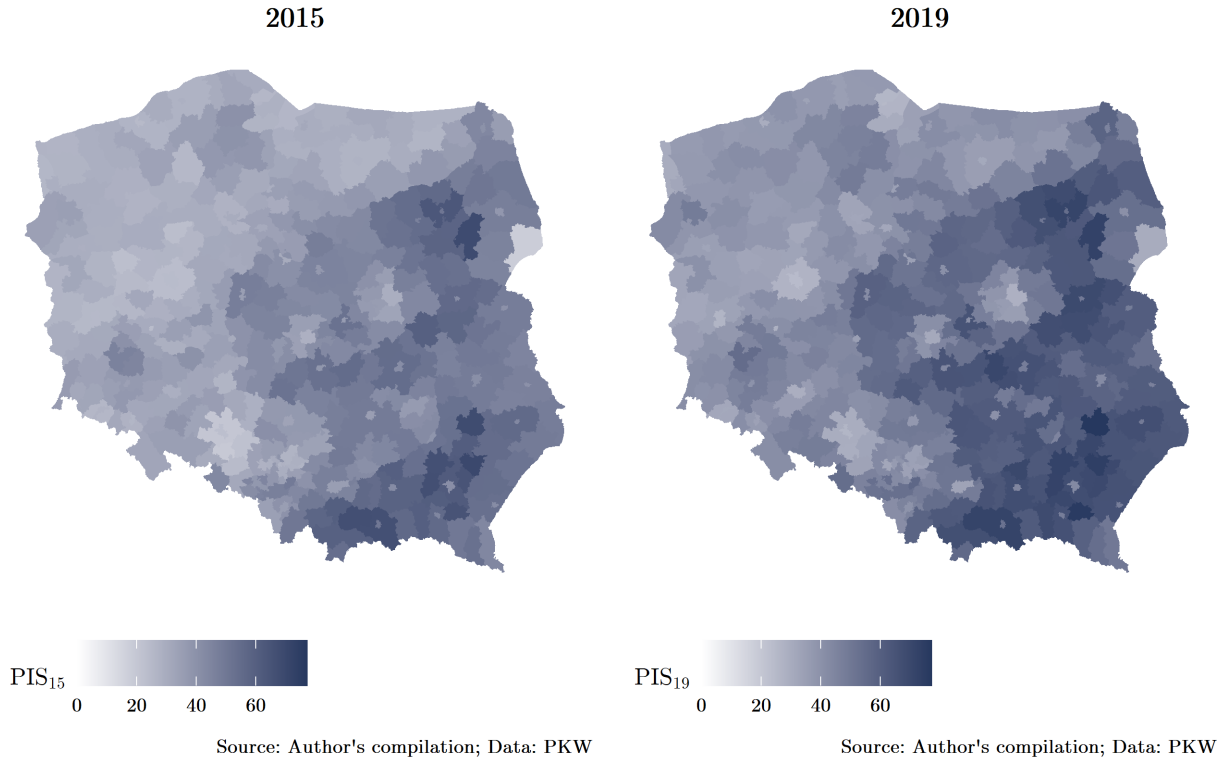
Figure 3.1. *Histogram of PIS distribution.*



The 2015 and 2019 electoral results of PiS will have to be conducted in separate models, thus using two separate dependent variables (PIS_15 and PIS_19). The distributions of the two variables are presented in Figure 3.1.

Both distributions display some degree of right-skewness. However, the presence of this skew is irrelevant for our research. The means and medians of both variables are summarised below in Table 3.2. Perhaps more important than the raw distribution of the PIS variables as shown above is their spatial distribution, which is illustrated in Map 3.1.

Map 3.1. *Spatial distribution of PIS.*



Source: Author's compilation; Data: PKW

Source: Author's compilation; Data: PKW

The deep divide between east and west mentioned in subsection 2.1.1 is immediately noticeable when looking at Map 3.1. The "bastions" of PiS fairly faithfully trace the borders of the former Russian and Austrian partitions with the Prussian one, (cf. Map 2.1) which is especially noticeable in the 2019 election results, although such a sharp divide is by no means new in Polish elections. Also significant and distinctly visible are the cities with powiat status, such as Warsaw or Łódź, where PiS fared significantly worse than in the surrounding powiats, especially in 2019.

3.3 Independent variables

In the previous chapters, we have outlined several factors believed to play a role in the electoral successes of the PRR. Furthermore, our own reflection has led to the identification of other variables which could potentially have influenced the electoral performance of PiS, most notably the local significance of the primary sector for the economy. This section introduces the independent variables included in our analysis. To begin, the variables are outlined by Table 3.1, whereafter they are discussed in more detail separately.

Table 3.1. *Overview of independent variables.*

Measurement	Name	Description
Registered unemployment	*unemp*	The percentage of the working-age population registered by the respective powiat authority as jobless, reported annually.
Mean monthly earnings	*wage*	The estimated mean of monthly earnings in PLN in a powiat.
Primary sector worker share	*agr*	The percentage of employed persons registered as working in the primary sector (agriculture, forestry, hunting etc.) in a powiat.
Structural unemployment	*struct*	The percentage of registered unemployed persons who have been unemployed for over 1 year.
Catholic share	*rel*	The percentage of the population of a powiat which self-identified as belonging to the Roman Catholic Church in the 2011 national census.
Population change	*pop_chg*	The percentual change in a powiat's population between 2002 and the respective election year.
Prussian partition dummy	*part*	Dummy control variable determining whether a powiat was part of the Prussian partition.

Unemployment, along with immigration, has often been underlined as the key driver of the PRR vote in the past, presumably due to the belief that immigration causes native workers to lose jobs to immigrants. Thus, the effect of unemployment on PRR vote shares should be positive in cases where there is significant immigration. (Arzheimer, 2018) Sadly,

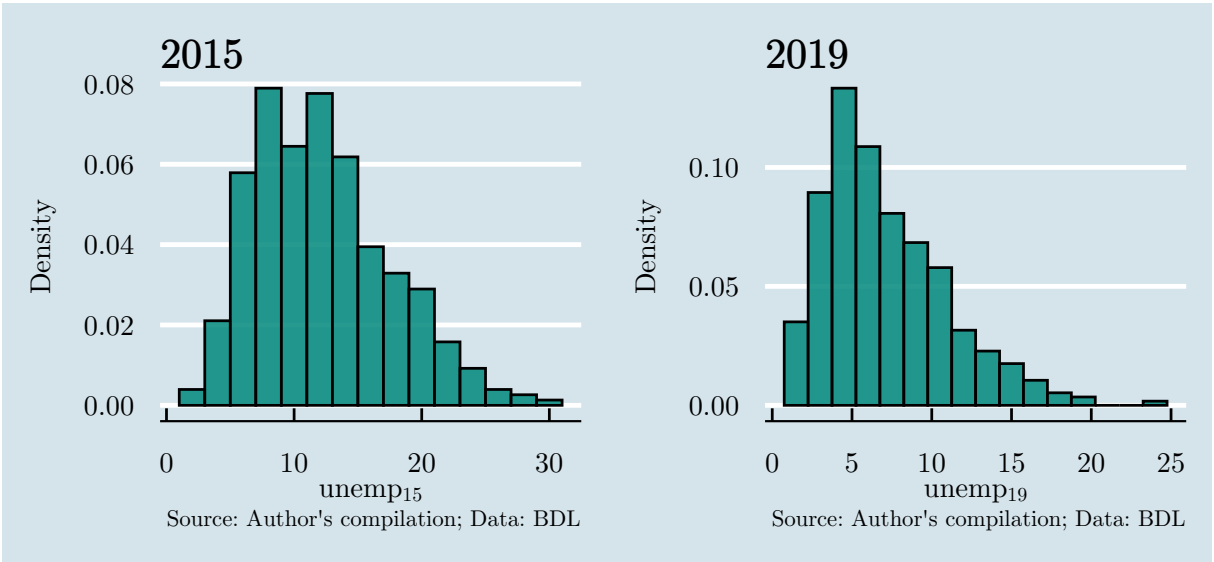
foreign immigration figures are only reported in higher statistical units, barring us from meaningfully controlling for the relationship. Thus, only unemployment *per se* will be studied.

Particularly in 2019, as a governing party, PiS may not have been able to tap into the unemployed vote in the same manner as Western European PRR parties, which typically do not participate in governments, and can thus potentially utilise discontent with the government among the unemployed. While PiS may have been able to do this in 2015, the above objection on the interaction of unemployment with immigration stands. Based on these facts, we expect:

H1: The effect of unemployment on the PiS vote share will not be significant.

However, as Figure 3.2 shows, there is a significant right-skew in the distribution of *unemp*, which could easily lead to issues in analysis. For this reason, we will transform this variable using the common logarithm for analysis purposes.

Figure 3.2. *Histogram of unemp* distribution.



While proving the link between unemployment and the PRR vote has been an endeavour fraught with ambiguity, we have posited (based on the economic deprivation voting literature) that specific forms of unemployment may be more significant for the PRR than others. Specifically, we believe that structural unemployment may be a particularly salient variable. Since data on structural unemployment is not readily available, we employ a proxy variable—long-term unemployment—instead, which is conceptualised as unemployment lasting for more than 1 year.

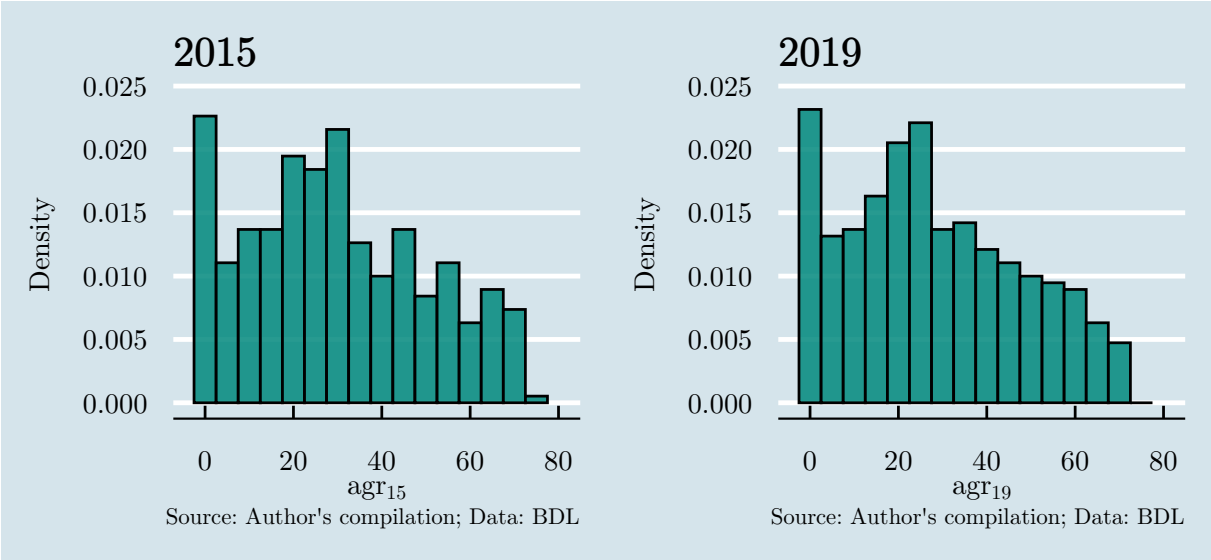
Although PiS has not specifically made changes to help those suffering from long-term unemployment, nor has long-term unemployment significantly changed between 2015 and 2019, the family benefit system instituted by PiS, in combination with the party's

identification as a champion of Poles left behind by the post-communist transformation, may well have appealed to many workers suffering from structural unemployment, a consequence of the post-communist economic transformation.

H2: Higher long-term unemployment will result in a higher PiS vote share.

The second—and arguably most important—variable in our theory is the significance of the primary sector for the given powiat. We operationalise this variable as the share of workers employed in the primary sector of the economy. While this measurement also includes persons employed in forestry and fishing, it is not unreasonable to assume that the lion's share of employment in this sector belongs to agriculture. To illustrate: as of 31st December 2019, the total number of persons employed as maritime fishermen in Poland was 2,612, (GUS, 2020) while the number of persons employed in agriculture was approximately 2,320,400. (GUS, 2021)

Figure 3.3. *Histogram of agr distribution.*



As shown by Figure 3.3, the primary sector worker share displays right-skewness; however, we do not believe this skew to be severe enough to warrant any counter-measures. The distributions of *agr* show that for a large group of powiats, the primary sector does not represent a significant part of the economy. Nevertheless, the mean of *agr* for both years is well over 25 per cent, with a slight decline between 2015 and 2019.

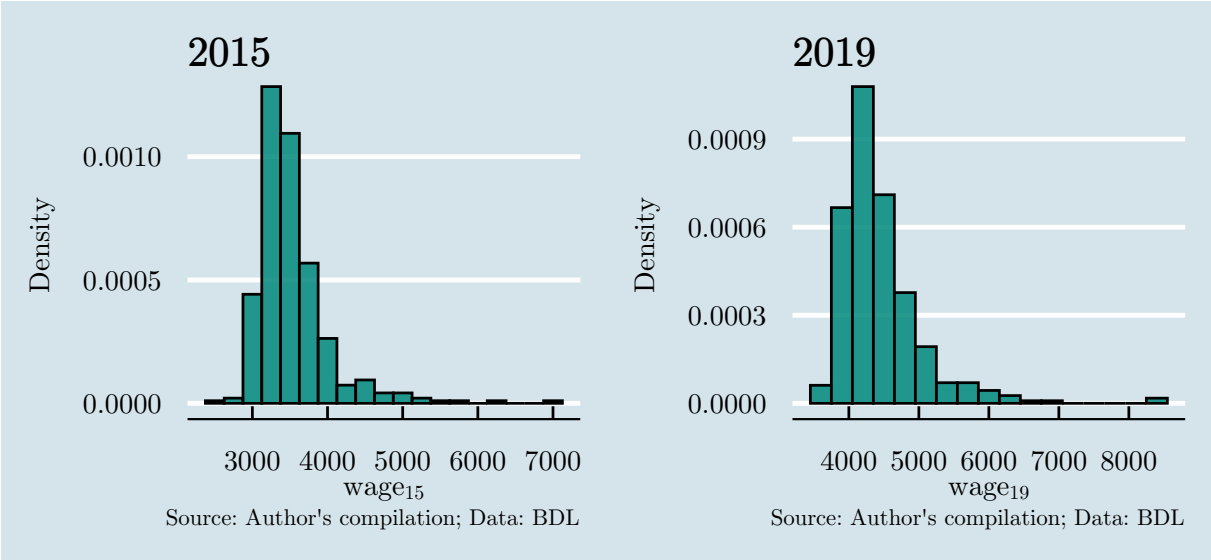
Regarding the expected effect of *agr*, we have already largely outlined our expectations in the previous chapters. PiS has made considerable overtures to agricultural workers, who arguably have had the most to gain from PiS gaining and subsequently retaining power. Furthermore, this may extend not only those directly employed in agriculture, but also families,—and possibly even larger communities—reliant on income from agriculture. Thus, we expect the relationship between *agr* and PIS to be very strong:

H3a: A higher share of primary sector workers will result in a higher PiS vote share.

H3b: The effect of the primary sector worker share will be greater in 2019 than in 2015.

A further variable in our model are mean monthly earnings. These also tie into our overall argument that PiS performs better in less well-off areas. As Figure 3.4 shows, there is a considerable right-skew in the data for both years. In 2019, there was a difference of almost 25 per cent between the second and third "richest" powiat. To address this skewed distribution, we will use a log of the data in our analysis.

Figure 3.4. *Histogram of wage distribution.*



Regarding the specific effect of wages, we expect the PiS vote share to decline with rising wages, which can generally be understood as an indicator of economic well-being in an area. As such, it can be assumed that richer areas have had a more successful economic transformation, while poorer areas fared less successfully. As with structural unemployment, we expect these areas to be the ones where the message of PiS resonates the most. Hence:

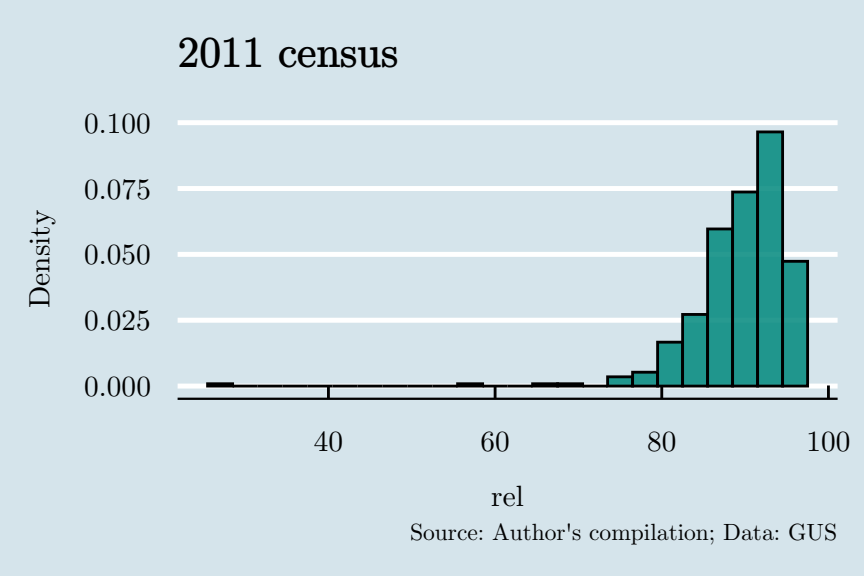
H4: Lower mean wages will result in a higher PiS vote share.

The inclusion of the *rel* variable in the model is an attempt to at least partially control for alternative explanations for the successes of PiS, particularly social and cultural ones. However, as there appears to exist neither a variable for the direct measurement of nativist sentiment in a given area nor a proxy capable of expressing it, we resort to the usage of religious affiliation, specifically affiliation with the Roman Catholic Church. While higher general religiosity is typically associated with a higher emphasis on social conservatism and traditional values, which PiS promotes, a higher percentage of Roman Catholics should be

an especially significant variable, given the affinity between both the Church and Catholic groups, and PiS (see subsection 1.3.2).

However, including *rel* in our model is plagued by three significant issues relating to the nature of the variable and what it describes. The first problem relates to the specific operationalisation of the variable; although, as Table 3.2 below shows, Poland is an extremely religiously homogeneous country (the powiat mean Catholic share being 90), there are nevertheless religious minorities present in the country, some of which are highly clustered, lowering the local share of Catholics in a few select areas. This is illustrated in Figure 3.5, which shows the distribution of *rel*.

Figure 3.5. *Histogram of the 2011 Roman Catholic share.*



As we can see, there is a significant left-skew present here. The three lowest values belong to powiats in the Podlaskie Voivodeship, each of which is home to a large Orthodox community, with Orthodox inhabitants making up over 60 per cent of all inhabitants in the Hajnówka Powiat, which is represented by the leftmost bar in Figure 3.5. This presents an interesting challenge: if we only include Catholics in the operationalisation of this variable, outliers such as the Hajnówka Powiat may negatively affect its performance in the model. On the other hand, while we could opt for a different operationalisation, such as traditional local religion, to achieve a more homogeneous distribution, we would then have to make highly arbitrary decisions on which denominations to include. Additionally, there is considerably less (if any) research on the relationship of PiS and other Christian denominations, which would ultimately decrease the theoretical value of those denominations' inclusion. For those reasons, we have decided only to use the share of Roman Catholics in our analysis.

Nevertheless, the left-skew mentioned above remains. To alleviate it, we will also resort to using a log of the data. However, in order for such a transformation to make sense, we firstly have to "invert" the skew of the data. We do this by substracting the measured

values from the number 100, thus gaining the proportion of the population who are *not* Roman Catholic. The final value is the common logarithm of this difference. For clarity, the transformation is expressed thus:

$$rel_i = log_{10}(100 - Roman\ Catholic\ Share_i)$$

The second issue relates to the age of the data being used. Statistics on religious affiliation on the powiat level are only available from national censuses, with the most recent data stemming from the 2011 census. At the time of the writing of this thesis, 12 years have passed since the 2011 national census and a more recent national census was conducted in 2021. The gap between the results of the two elections being studied is less severe, but there is nevertheless a difference of 8 years between the census and the reality of Poland at the time of the 2019 Sejm elections. Therefore, at least for the 2019 elections, the usage of the newer census data would be prudent. Unfortunately, this data is not yet available: according to the schedule of the Central Statistical Office of Poland, data on religious affiliation is not due to be published until September 2023. Thus, if we wish to include a measure of religiosity in our model, we can only use the 2011 census data, albeit with the knowledge that it may not reflect the situation during the respective elections.

The final issue concerns the information provided by the variable. While personal religious affiliation is to some extent informative, it would be preferable to use a measurement that more closely describes the importance of religion in the respondents' lives. Bearing in mind that operationalising this variable on the aggregate level cannot be done without some "losses in the translation", we believe that a measurement such as Mass participation may ultimately reflect it more effectively than religiosity. However, while Mass participation data does exist for the Roman Catholic Church, it is recorded not within state administrative units, but ecclesiastical administrative units. The data is also freely available only on the diocese level, which is much larger than the powiat level. The usage of this data would thus be either impossible, or possible only with caveats much more significant than those associated with the usage of the religiosity measure.

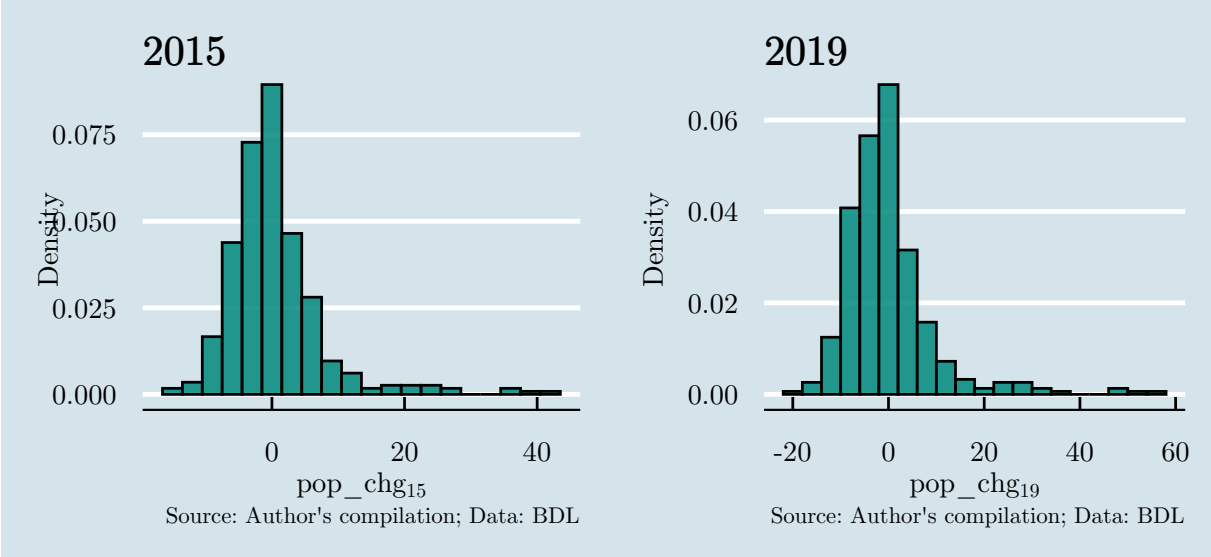
Having addressed the issues associated with the *rel* variable, we can proceed to a formulation of a hypothesis for its behaviour. As already stated, we expect higher religiosity to be associated with a higher support for socially conservative and traditional values, ultimately aiding PiS. Thus:

H5: Higher shares of Roman Catholics will result in a higher PiS vote share.

An additional independent variable is *pop_chg*, which relates to the population growth in a given area. For both the 2015 and 2019 elections, we calculate *pop_chg* as the percentual change in population since 2002. We had originally intended to use data from 1995, the

earliest year available, but this was complicated by the fact that in 2002, several new powiats were created in Poland. Thus, using 1995 data would not only have decreased our sample size, but would have required a significant investment of time into adapting the pre-2002 data for use with post-2002 data.

Figure 3.6. *Histogram of pop_chg* distribution.



We observe the presence of a right-skew in the data, caused by the presence of several outlier powiats with exceptionally high positive population changes. Here, unlike in the case of *wage*, a log transformation is impossible, without further manipulation, due to the presence of nonpositive values.

On the whole, *pop_chg* acts as a proxy for long-term prosperity in a given region. We assume that regions which experience severe (mainly economic) problems tend to suffer from depopulation in the long term, as people move away in search of opportunities elsewhere. Thus, powiats whose population has decreased since the 1990s should also be those most negatively affected by Poland's economic transformation. The hypothesis for this variable is such:

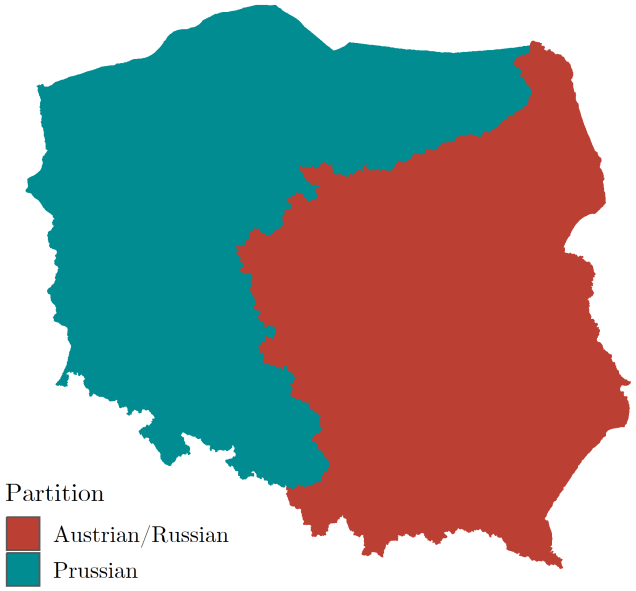
> *H6: PiS will perform better in powiats with negative population growth than in ones with positive population growth.*

The final independent variable in our model is *part*, a dummy variable for a powiat's partition status. With this variable, we wish to test the degree to which the partition past-dependency truly affects electoral results, as well as to compare its explanatory power with that of our other variables. Thus, we do not include it primarily as an explanatory variable, but a control one. While Bukowski (2019) contrasts the Russian partition with the other two, we opt for testing against the Prussian one. This is mainly due to the fact that the former Prussian partition is considered to be the most prosperous area of Poland, as well as because a significant part of this area only became part of Poland after 1945,

meaning it should also be the most different.

Using Bukowski's dataset of gminas, which includes information on the partitions they fell under, we created a binary variable for whether a gmina belonged to the Prussian partition (value of 1) or not (value of 0). We subsequently aggregated this data onto the powiat level, taking the mean of the gmina-level observations. Rounding the means to either 0 or 1 then produced the final powiat-level partition variable, *part*.

Map 3.2. Map of *part*.



Source: Author's compilation; Data: Bukowski, 2019

To control for potential anomalies, we also set up a secondary condition: in dubious cases, the allegiance of the powiat's capital would be decisive for classifying the powiat. However, of the 380 powiats, the partition means required rounding in only 7 cases; only 1 case, the Golub-Dobrzyń powiat, required the use of the capital city condition. Map 3.2 shows the powiat-level border between the Prussian partition, and the Austrian and Russian ones (cf. Map 2.1).

Having presented all of the independent variables in our model, we conclude this section with a table of summary statistics for all of the continuous variables (including the dependent variable PIS), provided in Table 3.2. Variables due to be logged are already presented as transformed.

3.4 Data collection

The primary source of data for this thesis has been the Local Data Bank (*Bank Danych Lokalnych*, BDL) of the Central Statistical Office of Poland (alternatively Statistics Poland, *Główny Urząd Statystyczny*, GUS). The BDL allows public access to statistical data

Table 3.2. *Summary statistics of continuous variables.*

Variable	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
PIS_15	380	39.13	10.6	17.76	69.87
PIS_19	380	47.76	11.76	24.11	77.19
unemp_15	380	1.05	0.2	0.38	1.49
unemp_19	380	0.78	0.25	0	1.37
agr_15	380	29.71	20.32	0.37	77.73
agr_19	380	28.26	19.71	0.34	77.72
wage_15	380	3.54	0.05	3.41	3.84
wage_19	380	3.64	0.05	3.55	3.93
struct_15	380	38	7.22	15.3	55.4
struct_19	380	36.15	8.46	10.6	56.6
pop_chg_15	380	0.46	7.3	-16.24	42.85
pop_chg_19	380	-0.11	9.58	-19.01	56.41
rel	380	0.97	0.21	0.45	1.87

collected across all the administrative divisions of Poland. Unless specified otherwise, all independent variables in our datasets have been obtained from BDL. A secondary source for our data has also been the State Electoral Commission (*Państwowa Komisja Wyborcza*, PKW), whence all electoral data was obtained.

Despite the wide range of data available in the BDL, not all variables are readily available at all levels of statistical localities. For example, while employment-related data is available on the powiat level, this is not the case on the gmina level, where some data may be available in census results, but potentially using slightly different criteria. Many interesting indicators are sadly only available on the voivodeship or podregion level, which makes them (particularly those on the voivodeship level; N =16) essentially impossible to use in our models.

Given that variables of interest to our research are available both on the powiat and gmina level, we are faced with a dilemma regarding which unit to choose for our analysis. Ultimately, we have chosen to perform the analysis on the powiat level. The reasoning for this is that while lower-level can be aggregated "upwards" relatively easily, there is no reliable way to de-aggregate higher level data, which would either bar us from using powiat-level data altogether, or force us to assign one value to each of the gminas constituting a given powiat. Ultimately, we feel that adding another layer of aggregation between our analysis and the individual will be a worthwhile trade-off.

The decision to restrict our research purely to recent parliamentary (specifically Sejm) elections in Poland, namely to the two which PiS won in 2015 and 2019 is based on our belief that they are the most relevant for answering our research questions. While it may be interesting to, say, contrast the correlates of PiS's defeats in 2007 and 2011

with those of its victories, this is not part of our research target. Furthermore, we are limiting our research purely to parliamentary election results, as we feel that the results of other elections, such as local ones, may be governed by different topics, and their results consequently driven by other factors. Finally, there is the question of the exclusion Senate elections, which in Poland happen alongside elections to the lower chamber (the Sejm). We do not include these in our analysis for two reasons: firstly, as Senate elections are conducted in single-member constituencies, a voter's perception of a candidate, rather than the party, might affect their choice; our second reason is one of convenience, as Senate constituency boundaries would, especially in cities, be difficult to reconcile with available data on our independent variables.

3.5 Data analysis

Having established both the theoretical and methodological framework of our research model, we must decide upon which analytical methods to use in order to discover the true nature of the relationship between our dependent and independent variables. In this section, we will outline the basic nature of our selected methods and briefly discuss our rationale in choosing them.

The most common method of estimating the effect of one or more predictors upon a continuous dependent variable is linear regression, a statistical method which seeks to, for a set of observed values on a set of variables, find a mathematical function which expresses this relationship. (Soukup, 2019) The generic linear regression function can be expressed with the following equation:

$$y = \beta_0 + x_1\beta_1 + x_2\beta_2 + ... + x_n\beta_n + \epsilon_i$$

Where β_i expresses the change which occurs in the value of y, provided a one-unit increase in the value of x_i also occurs. ϵ is an expression of error present in the model—variation in the dependent variable y which cannot be explained by the independent variables present in the model. This equation is the function of a line fitted to the variables in the model.

Specifically, we will be using ordinary least squares regression, which attempts to find the best-fitting line for a given model by selecting the line with the lowest possible sum of squared residuals (SSR)—differences between values of y predicted by such a line and actual values thereof. (Gerring and Christenson, 2017; Llaudet and Imai, 2022)

Having summed up the variables selected for analysis above, we can now present the regression equation representing our model:

$$PIS = \beta_0 + \beta_1 unemp + \beta_2 agr + \beta_3 wage + \beta_4 rel + \beta_5 struct + \beta_6 part$$

What remains for us to do before analysis is to check our chosen variables for multicollinearity. This is a phenomenon which occurs when independent variables in a regression model are highly correlated, creating artifacts and imprecision in the final model. As a result of multicollinearity, some independent variables may appear as statistically insignificant when all variables are included. We check for multicollinearity using the variance inflation factor:

$$VIF_i = \frac{1}{1 - R_i^2}$$

wherein R_i^2 is the coefficient of determination obtained from regressing a given independent variable against the remaining ones. Typically, a VIF_i score between 1 to 5 is considered acceptable; scores higher than 5 hint at significant multicollinearity between variables. The VIF scores for 2015 and 2019 data are as follows:

Table 3.3. *VIF values.*

	2015	2019
unemp	1.631823	2.173629
struct	1.591827	1.966634
agr	2.614513	2.845922
wage	1.588577	1.746889
rel	2.050268	2.080938
pop_chg	1.088157	1.140062
part	1.707683	1.550925

Although we observe slightly higher values on some variables, these are nevertheless both considerably lower than 5, meaning that multicollinearity should not present a significant problem in either model.

3.5.1 Geographically weighted regression

Although standard linear regression will likely be capable of explaining how exactly our chosen variables are connected with the vote share of PiS, there are nevertheless some questions which it cannot answer, particularly with regards to the spatial variation in the applicability of the relationship. In other words, linear regression, being a global statistical method, can comment on a relationship as a whole, but it cannot account for the possibility that this relationship is stronger or weaker (or wholly different) in some parts of the dataset—specifically, in our case, in some parts of the country. (Spurná, 2008)

The main issue which plagues the application of standard statistical methods in a spatial context is the phenomenon of spatial heterogeneity: a phenomenon describing a situation where a causal relationship is not stable across space, e.g., is positive in one area and negative in another. (Ibid.)

While the inability of standard OLS regression to account for local nuances could partly be alleviated by the addition of X or Y coordinates as variables into the respective linear model, a method commonly known as trend surface regression, the explanatory value of such variables (unless specifically related to the theory being tested) is non-existent.

A more elegant way to address the issue of the heterogeneity of spatial relationships is geographically weighted regression (GWR), an often-used method in spatial statistics. While primarily an exploratory, not explanatory, method, it is nevertheless quite invaluable in spatial research. GWR essentially uses a nearest-neighbours approach to data analysis, calculating N separate regressions for each data point, similarly to how local regression methods such as LOESS construct polynomials for specific parts of a relationship. Thus, the generic regression equation is rewritten as:

$$y_i = \beta_0(u_i, v_i) + \beta_1(u_i, v_i)x_{i1} + \beta_2(u_i, v_i)x_{i2} + ... + \beta_n(u_i, v_i)x_{in} + \epsilon_i$$

Where (u_i, v_i) represents the spatial coordinates of the data point i at the centre of the local regression and $\beta_n(u_i, v_i)$ is the local slope of β_n at point i. The contribution of individual data points to the regression is weighted by their distance from the original data point (again similarly to LOESS); depending on the choice of weighting function, either all observations are assigned a non-zero weight, or a non-zero weight is assigned only to observations within a specified bandwidth (distance from the original data point). (Fotheringham et. al, 2002)

The primary contribution which we expect GWR to provide to this thesis is the ability to scrutinise the influence of various variables on PIS across space. If we find that a variable's behaviour differs across space significantly, it is likely that an unaccounted-for intervening variable is influencing the relationship. (Spurná, 2008) If, on the other hand, a variable's slope does not change across space, this arguably strengthens its theoretical value.

3.5.2 Accuracy measure selection

The final component of our data analysis will be a brief test of the predictive power of the 2015 model for the 2019 election. To objectively test the accuracy of the model's predictions and compare its capabilities to other models, we will utilise three measures: mean absolute error (MAE), root mean square error (RMSE), and mean absolute percentage error

(MAPE).

The mean absolute error (MAE) is an accuracy measure calculated as the average of the sum of all observation errors. It is calculated thus:

$$MAE = \frac{\sum_i^N |y_i - \hat{y}|}{N}$$

Where y_i denotes the actual value of the i-th observation, $\hat{y}$ denotes the predicted value thereof, whose difference provides the error on a given prediction. N is the number of observations.

The main appeal of MAE stems from its ability to report the size of the error in a highly intuitive way, i.e., in the same units as the predicted and actual values. Additionally, unlike some other accuracy measures, MAE scores change linearly, further making interpretation easier. (Schneider and Xhafa, 2022)

Root mean square error (RMSE) is similar to MAE in the respect that its score is presented in the same units as the original variables. However, due to the squaring of the errors, larger errors are penalised more by RMSE than by MAE. Furthermore, with higher errors, RMSE increases in a non-linear manner. (Ibid.) It is calculated thus:

$$RMSE = \sqrt{\frac{\sum_i^N (y_i - \hat{y})^2}{N}}$$

Finally, we include the mean absolute percentage error, which expresses error as a percentage of the dependent variable y. It is calculated thus:

$$MAPE = \frac{100\%}{N} * \sum_{i-1}^{N} \left| \frac{(y_i - \hat{y})^2}{y_i} \right|$$

While MAPE carries with it some potential issues, such as a tendency to favour models which under-predict over over-predicting ones, its main appeal stems from being very easily understandable, even without knowledge of basic statistical concepts. (Makridakis, 1993). We mainly include it as a means of increasing the robustness of our model comparison.

With each of the three accuracy measures, the desired outcome is a minimisation of the accuracy score. The most successful model will thus be the one with the lowest overall accuracy measure values.

4 Results

In this chapter, we will showcase the results of our statistical analysis of the determinants of the PiS vote share and briefly comment on their implications. Firstly, we will comment on the results of the global OLS regression, and then move on to the presentation of the geographically-weighted regression results.

4.1 OLS results

As mentioned in section 3.5, OLS regression can be used to determine the nature of a relationship on the "global scale", i.e., within the framework of all observations provided to the model. Thus, the OLS regression models are the first step in determining the relationship between the vote shares of PiS and our independent variables, with the second being the GWR analysis, presented subsequently.

Tables 4.1 and 4.2 summarise regression results for both of the elections under study. With the notable exception of *pop_chg*, the effects of the independent variables do not change drastically across the two analyses; rather, for the most part, we only see changes in the strength of the individual relationships.

Firstly, let us examine the partition dummy variable, *part*. For both elections, we see a significant and negative relationship between PIS values in a powiat and that powiat's formerly belonging to Prussia. These results are, of course, fully in line with our expectations and the broader understanding of Polish socio-political reality. What is quite stunning, however, is the extent to which this past-dependency effect carries over into the present and reliably explains a significant portion of the variation in the values of PIS.

Figure 4.1. *PIS results across partitions.*

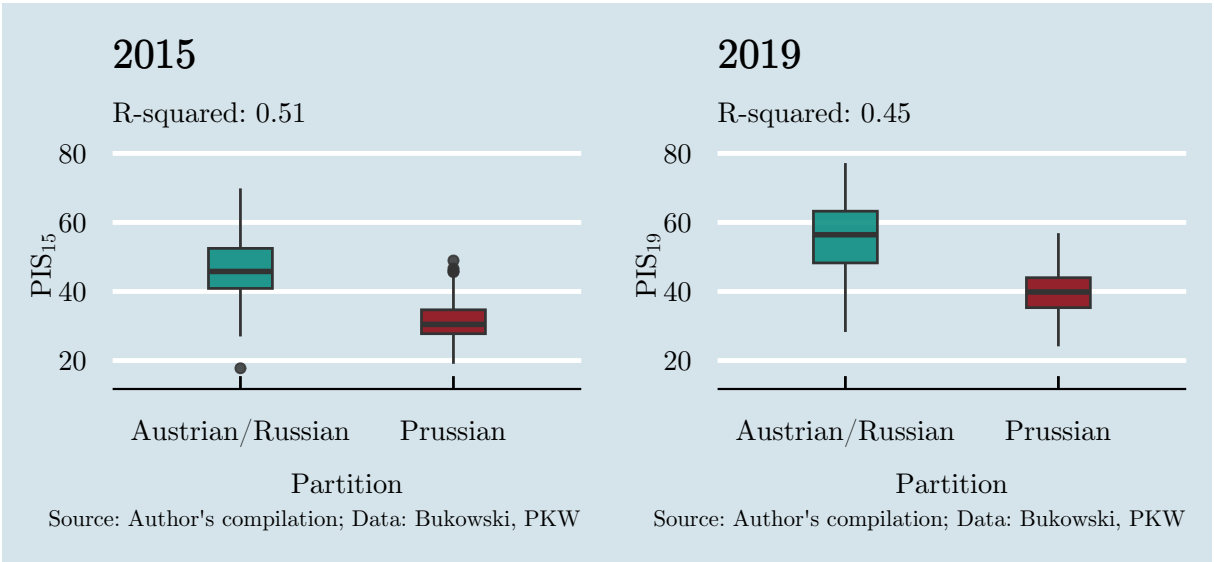


Table 4.1. *OLS regression results - 2015.*

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Constant	39.13 ***	39.13 ***	39.13 ***	39.13 ***	39.13 ***	39.13 ***	43.98 ***
	(0.54)	(0.51)	(0.50)	(0.40)	(0.40)	(0.37)	(0.53)
Unemployment log	1.78 ***	0.22	-0.81	-1.45 **	-1.36 **	-1.05 *	0.03
	(0.50)	(0.53)	(0.66)	(0.51)	(0.52)	(0.49)	(0.41)
Long-term unemployment		3.95 ***	4.31 ***	2.70 ***	2.71 ***	2.81 ***	0.76
		(0.51)	(0.58)	(0.45)	(0.45)	(0.42)	(0.40)
Monthly earnings log			-2.17 *	0.82	0.87	1.43 *	0.87
			(0.87)	(0.61)	(0.61)	(0.56)	(0.55)
Primary sector share				6.82 ***	6.83 ***	3.87 ***	1.92 ***
				(0.50)	(0.50)	(0.62)	(0.57)
Population change					0.36	-0.07	0.25
					(0.43)	(0.35)	(0.30)
Catholic share log						-4.44 ***	-3.70 ***
						(0.57)	(0.54)
Partition dummy							-9.96 ***
							(0.81)
N	380	380	380	380	380	380	380
Adj R2	0.03	0.14	0.17	0.46	0.46	0.54	0.67

All continuous predictors are mean-centered and scaled by 1 standard deviation. Standard errors are heteroskedasticity robust. *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

Table 4.2. *OLS regression results - 2019.*

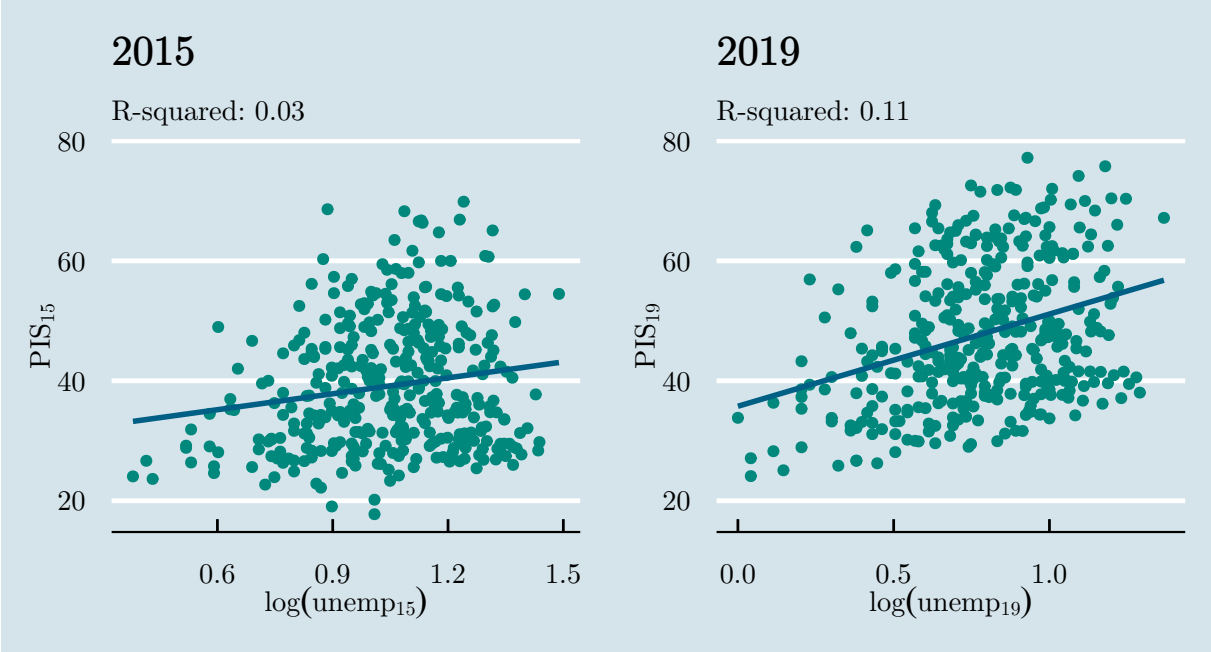
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Constant	47.76 ***	47.76 ***	47.76 ***	47.76 ***	47.76 ***	47.76 ***	51.76 ***
	(0.57)	(0.55)	(0.53)	(0.38)	(0.38)	(0.33)	(0.45)
Unemployment log	3.89 ***	1.94 **	-0.36	-0.76	-0.89	-0.65	0.38
	(0.55)	(0.67)	(0.83)	(0.56)	(0.57)	(0.49)	(0.44)
Long-term unemployment		3.37 ***	4.31 ***	1.44 **	1.48 **	1.90 ***	0.42
		(0.67)	(0.68)	(0.49)	(0.49)	(0.41)	(0.39)
Monthly earnings log			-4.03 ***	0.33	0.29	0.95	0.44
			(1.01)	(0.63)	(0.63)	(0.53)	(0.61)
Primary sector share				9.08 ***	9.05 ***	5.66 ***	4.05 ***
				(0.48)	(0.48)	(0.54)	(0.51)
Population change					-0.36	-0.96 **	-0.62 *
					(0.39)	(0.30)	(0.26)
Catholic share log						-4.97 ***	-4.27 ***
						(0.47)	(0.43)
Partition dummy							-8.21 ***
							(0.72)
N	380	380	380	380	380	380	380
Adj R2	0.11	0.16	0.25	0.61	0.61	0.70	0.78

All continuous predictors are mean-centered and scaled by 1 standard deviation. Standard errors are heteroskedasticity robust. *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

Despite the slight rise in differences between the result of PiS in the Prussian partition and the other two partitions in 2019, the explanatory power of *part* decreased. Similarly, we see a decrease in the slope of the relationship. Overall, this is a positive finding, as the decrease in the explanatory power of *part* is accompanied by an analogous increase in the explanatory power of our other variables. The weaker performance of *part* in the 2019 model implies that while in 2015, PiS was significantly more reliant on support in the eastern parts of the country, formerly occupied by Austria and Russia, it was able to marshal greater support in the western part in the following elections.

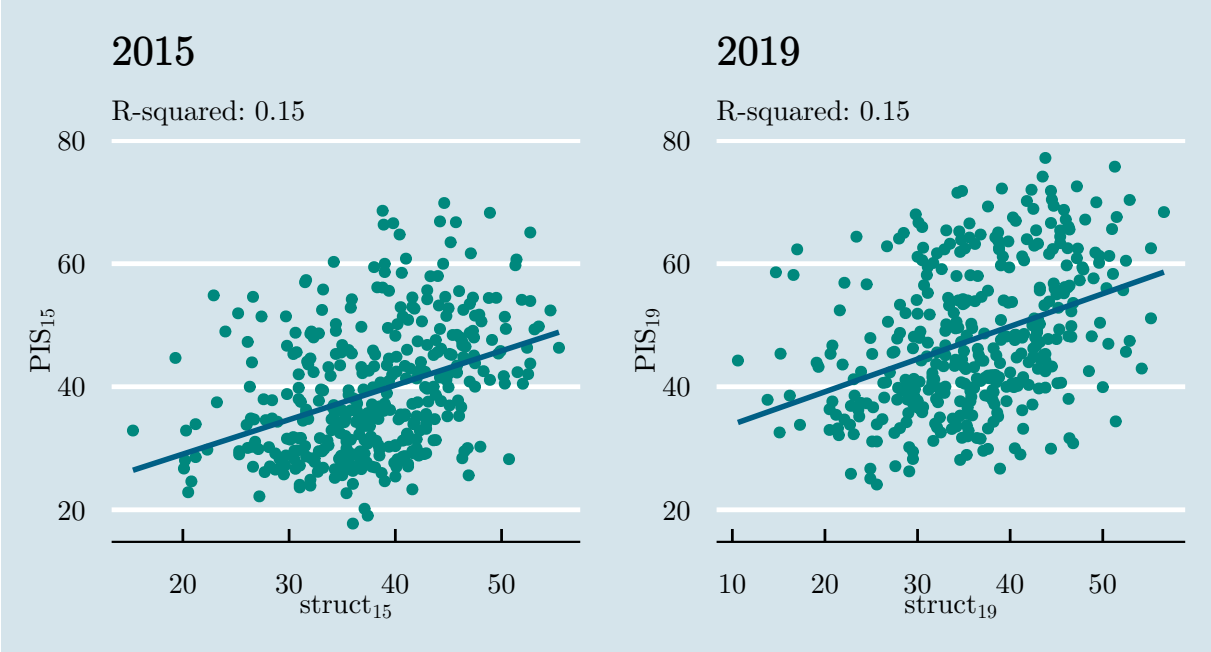
Hereafter we will present the remainder of the variables in the order in which they appear in both tables. The first variable in the model is *unemp*, which reveals itself as a somewhat problematic variable. On its own, higher unemployment correlates with higher PiS gains for both years (as shown in Figure 4.2). However, as our models become more sophisticated, the variable's slope changes to a negative one.

Figure 4.2. *PiS vote share by logged unemployment.*



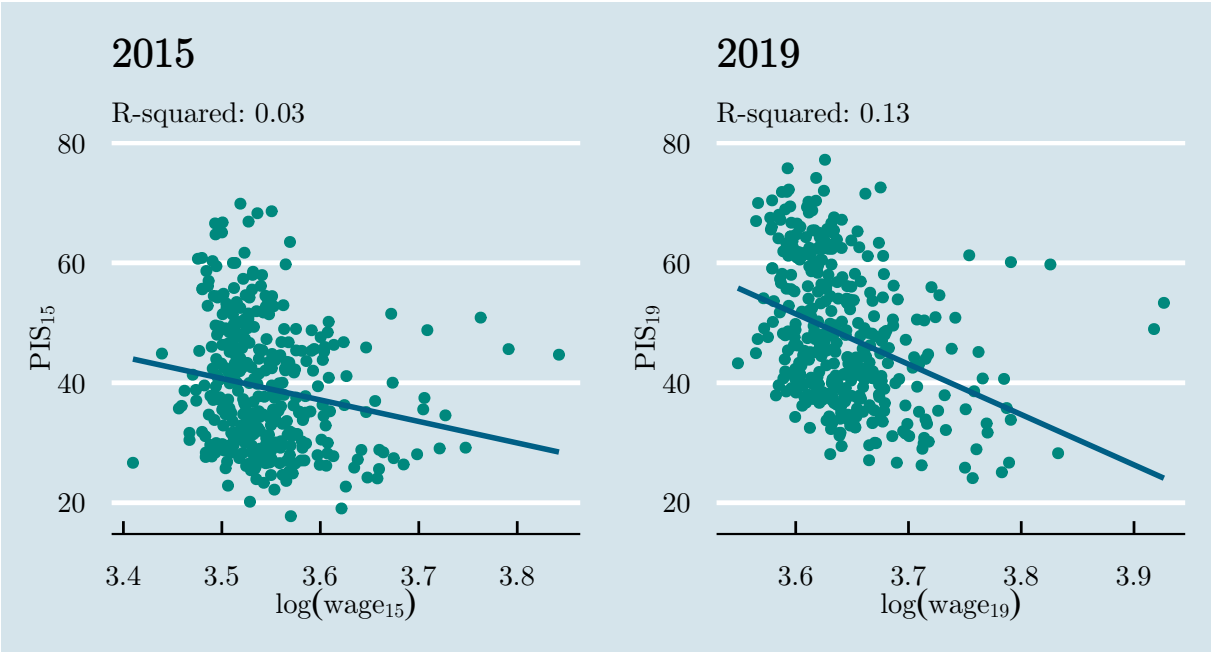
The above figure of unemployment's relationship with the dependent variable reveals severe heteroskedasticity present for both analysis years. While this is likely indicative of an unaccounted-for interaction between unemployment and another variable, our tests did not reveal any interaction between *unemp* and other independent variables in our model which would significantly increase its explanatory value. While an interaction effect significant at the $p < 0.01$ level was found between *unemp* and *part*, this effect only accounted for a minuscule part of the variation in our dependent variable, which is why it is not included here. The possibility remains that a variable we have not accounted for meaningfully interacts with *unemp*.

Figure 4.3. *PiS vote share by long-term unemployment.*



Comparing these results with *struct*, the story changes considerably. Long-term unemployment maintains its statistical significance in all models but one without changing its slope. Its explanatory power is also considerably greater than that of unemployment overall. As Figure 4.3 also shows, there is no apparent heteroskedasticity present. While long-term unemployment clearly is not the principal driver of PiS support, it does influence it in a significant manner. With these findings, we are able to reject the null hypothesis for H2.

Figure 4.4. *PiS vote share by logged mean monthly wages.*



The next variable in the model, *wage*, is somewhat dubious in its effect. Similarly to

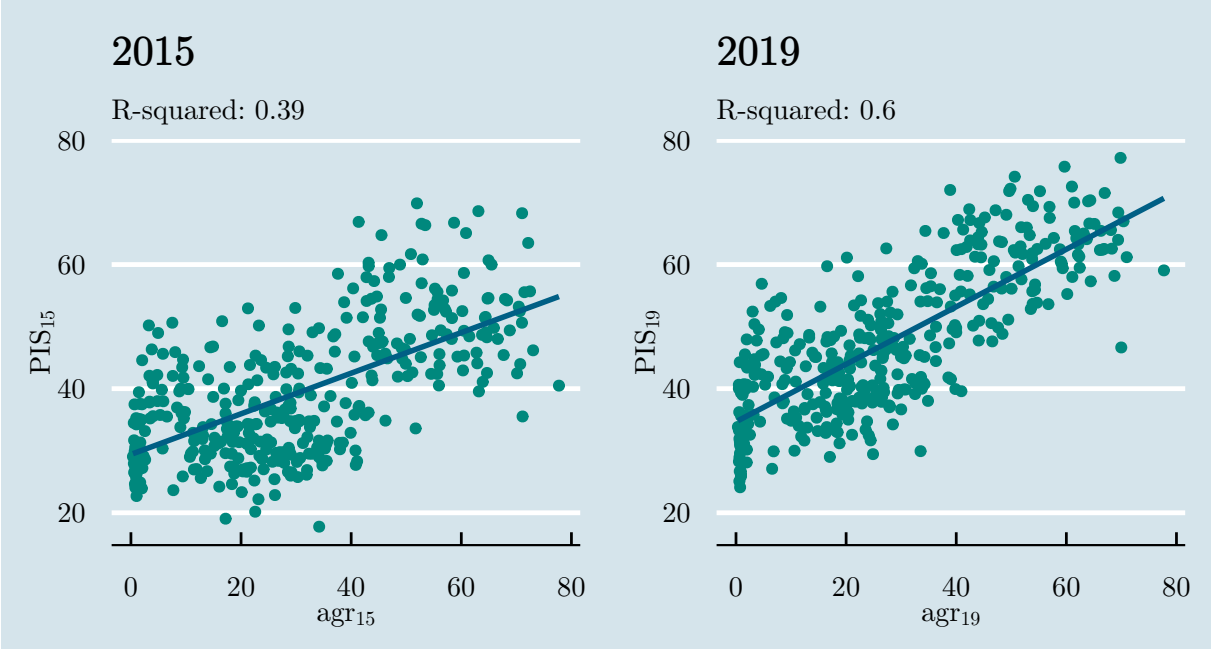
unemployment, mean monthly earnings initially appear to have some explanatory value of their own. However, subsequently introduced variables, specifically *agr*, seemingly absorb this explanatory value, leading to a result where mean monthly earnings have virtually no bearing on the PiS vote share.

In Figure 4.4 (above), we can notice that there are several outliers present in the data, particularly for 2019. While most observations are grouped together, there are several high-income powiats which deviate severely from the overall trend, i.e., the local vote shares of PiS are very high. A cursory analysis of these outliers suggests that for the most part, these are rural powiats with a high significance of mining operations, as well as manufacturing and power plants for the local economy.

Moving on to the next variable, we arrive at *agr*, which demonstrates itself as the strongest variable in terms of its explanatory power. Across all models, its effect is both strongly positive and statistically significant at the $p < 0.001$ level. While for 2015, *agr* is capable of explaining nearly 40 per cent of the variation in the dependent variable, for 2019, it explains 60 per cent, a performance unmatched by any other accounted-for variable.

While it remains to be seen whether the effect of the primary sector's significance is spatially homogeneous (a matter we investigate in the next section), we can safely reject the null hypotheses both for H3a and H3b and note that the primary sector's worker share is a highly significant factor in the level of PiS support.

Figure 4.5. *PiS vote share by primary sector worker share.*



When we examine Figure 4.5, we may notice that the relationship between *agr* and PIS, at least in 2015, appears to be slightly non-linear. We tested this possibility by regressing PIS against a square of *agr*, as well as against a lower exponent. While the R^2 value rose

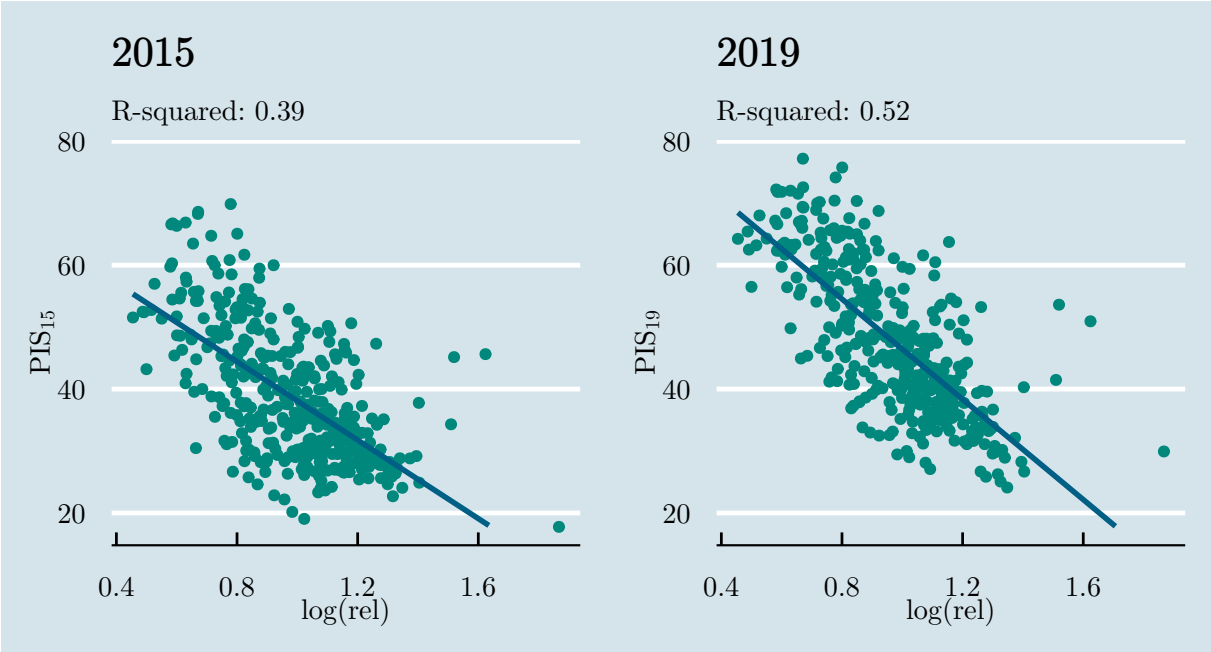
very slightly in the case of 2015, squaring the variable was detrimental to its explanatory value in 2019. Thus, we do not consider the possible non-linearity in this relationship to be a significant issue.

The *rel* variable, expressing the share of self-identified Roman Catholics, has fared somewhat worse than the primary sector worker share in terms of explanatory power, but not of slope. It has nevertheless shown itself as a key explanatory variable in our model, whose explanatory power is at least somewhat independent of that of *agr*, as evidenced by the increases in the R^2 values in both tables above when *rel* is added to the models.

In Figure 4.6, we can notice the presence of several outliers where the relationship between *rel* and PIS significantly deviates from the norm. For both years, these are the powiats alluded to in section 3.3, where a large part of the population is Eastern Orthodox. The removal of these outliers does not significantly affect the strength of *rel*. As such, their presence is simply a downside of our chosen operationalisation of religiosity.

While the explanatory power of *rel* is ultimately weaker than that of *agr*, it is nevertheless impressive, especially given the relative homogeneity of Poland in terms of religious makeup. It appears that (ignoring the aforementioned Orthodox outliers) what an outside observer might perceive as small differences in the powiats' religiosity are, in fact, differences with fairly severe implications. On the whole, we see a highly significant effect of the (non-)Catholic share on the PiS vote in a powiat. Thus, we reject the null hypothesis for H5.

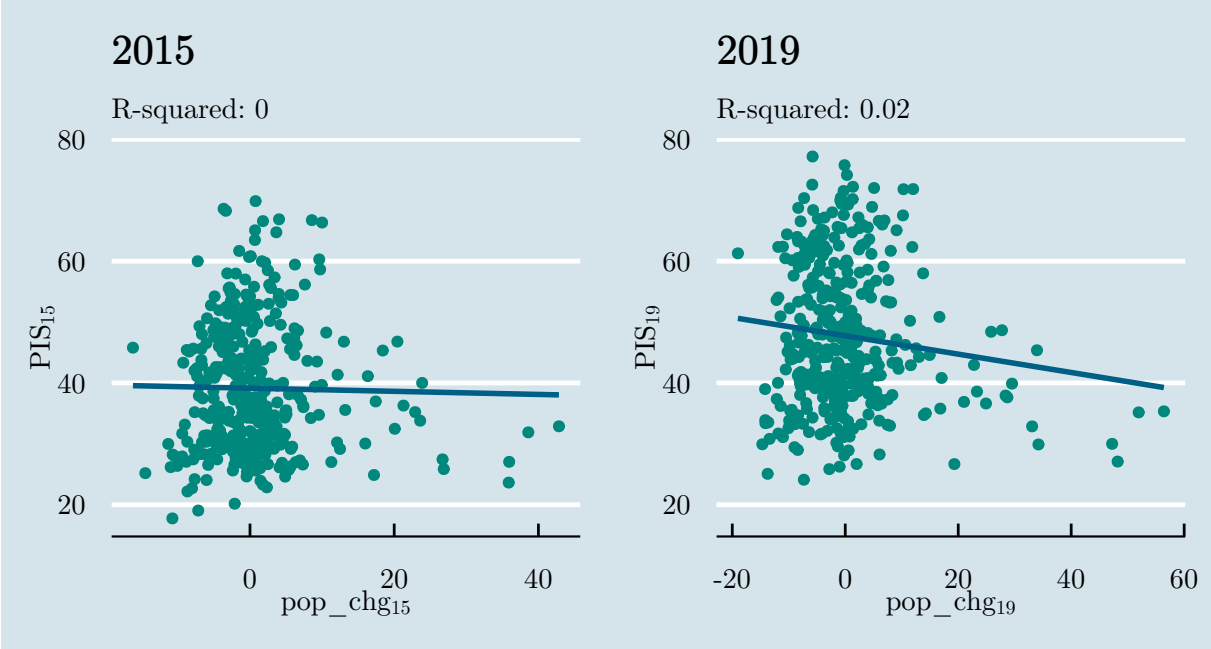
Figure 4.6. *PiS vote share by share of Roman Catholics.*



The final variable, *pop_chg*, fared only very poorly. Similarly to mean monthly earnings, it faced the issue of a relatively uneven distribution, which was not alleviated even by

the log transformation. However, in this particular case, there appears to be virtually no relationship between the independent and dependent variable, as evidenced by the R^2 values.

Figure 4.7. *PiS vote share by population growth.*



Although a negative relationship is reported in the final 2019 model (given the variable's inversion, this is to be interpreted as an increase in PiS support when population growth is higher), it is questionable whether this finding can be taken as reliable. Regardless of whether it is considered reliable or not, we cannot reject the null hypothesis for H6, which posited an increase in PiS support with lower population growth.

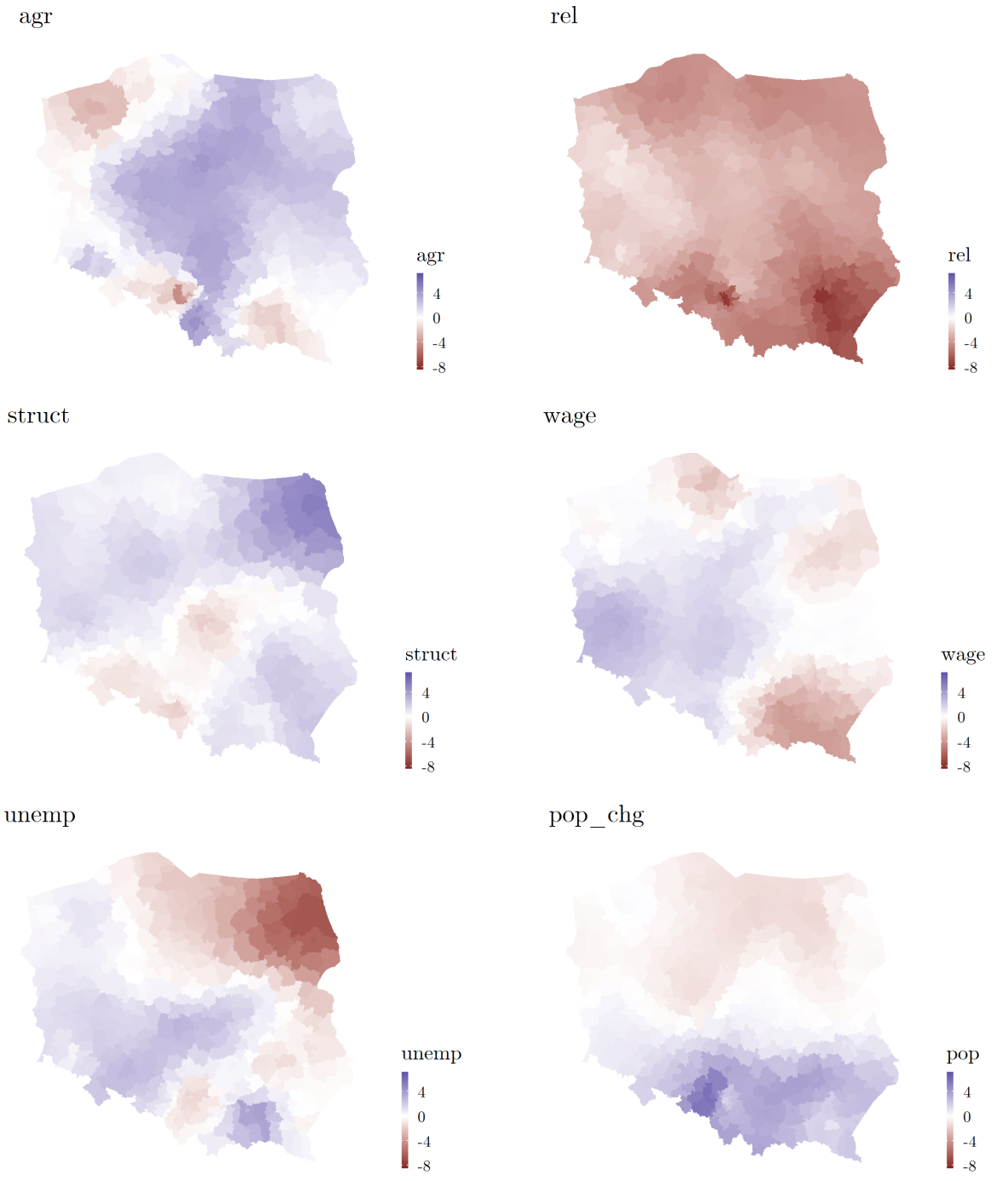
4.2 GWR results

We now move on to a test of the spatial heterogeneity of our independent variables using geographically weighted regression. The *part* control variable was excluded from this analysis, as including an inherently spatial variable in the GWR models would have been illogical. The remaining variables were left unchanged. For purposes of parity, we performed the same mean-scaling and standardisation of our data prior to analysis. The results of the geographically weighted regressions are presented in a joint table comparing their results to the OLS regressions below. The distributions of coefficients for our independent variables are visualised in Maps 4.1 and 4.2.

The distribution of coefficients for the 2015 model reveals several interesting insights. For all variables except *rel*, there is severe spatial heterogeneity present, which does not conform to our expectations, i.e., the partition borders are not visible anywhere. Instead, a different past-dependency effect partially seems to explain the spatial heterogeneity of the

agr variable: the interwar Polish-German border. While the appearance of this particular effect is not entirely shocking, it is nevertheless unexpected, as none of the variables in our model appear to vary significantly across this border, but rather across pre-WWI borders.

Map 4.1 *Spatial coefficients of independent variables - 2015 data.*



Source: Author's compilation

For 2015, while the *rel* variable did not have the highest explanatory power in the OLS model, it has shown itself to be the most consistent in the GWR analysis. There is some heterogeneity in the slope of the relationship between *rel* and PIS, but it does not appear

to conform to any known geographical patterns.

The other variables included in the model all exhibited spatial heterogeneity, which does not conform to historical borders, but neither is it completely random. For example, the *struct* variable's positive effect, observed in the OLS model, is indeed positive in most parts of the country, with the exception of the Silesian region bordering the Czech Republic and the area around the city of Łódź.

The effect of *struct* is somewhat inverted in the effect of *unemp*, wherein the Łódź Voivodeship reports a positive effect of general unemployment on the PiS vote, while in northeastern Poland, it is negative. There is a relatively high negative correlation between the variables' local coefficients, $r(380 = \text{-}0.68)$.

The remaining two variables, *wage* and *pop_chg*, both exhibit spatial heterogeneity. The patterns in the local coefficients of wage seem to further suggest that the relationship between wages and PiS support is ultimately more nuanced than we had believed. We find that while in the poorest areas, the effect of higher wages on PiS support is indeed negative, this does not hold true for the remainder of the country. With regards to population changes, the pattern manifested does not appear to hold any meaning: much like the variable itself, its explanatory value for our model seems to be very limited.

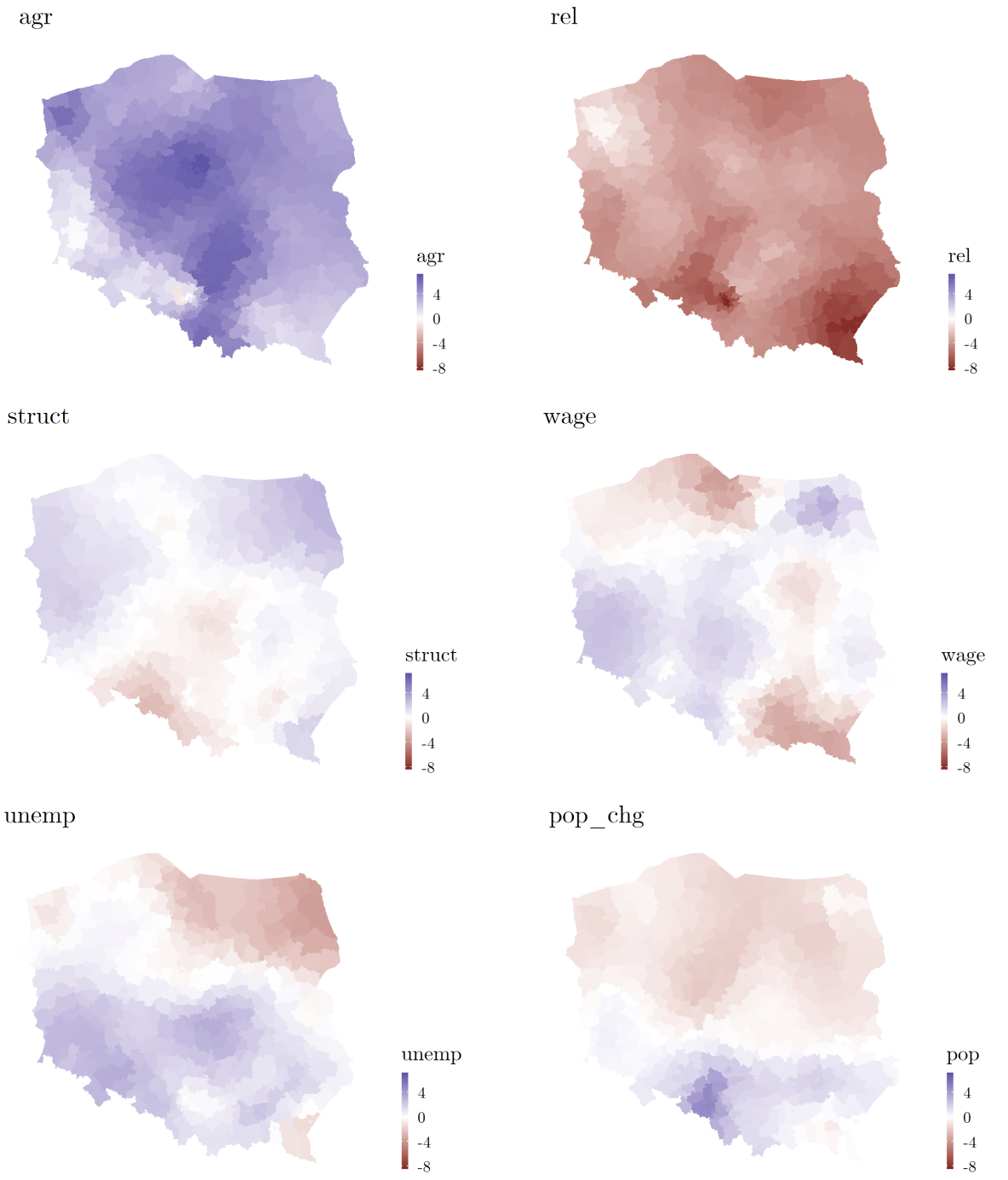
In the GWR analysis for 2019, our independent variables behave similarly as in the OLS model, in that their performance seems to be clearer and more solid compared to 2015. The main finding here is that with the exception of a small area in the Silesian region, the effect of *agr* was positive across the whole country, although there was nevertheless severe heterogeneity in its slope. Once again, the interwar border with Germany is partially visible in the results. Nevertheless, the effect of the primary sector worker share on the performance of PiS is now far more uniform than in the previous model, a strength increase also observed in the previous model.

Corresponding to its weaker performance in the 2019 OLS regression, *struct* had a less pronounced effect, which remained consistent with 2015 for the most part, although not entirely. Meanwhile, the most successful variable of the 2015 model, *rel*, maintained its primacy; while its strength was not constant, its slope nevertheless remained consistent at all regression points. Similarly to unemployment and long-term unemployment, there is negative correlation between the variables' coefficients, $r(380 = 0.55)$.

With regards to the remaining variables, no meaningful patterns appear to emerge from the analysis. There is once again some degree of the inversion of *struct*'s effect in the coefficients of *unemp*, with a negative correlation of $r(380 = \text{-}0.62)$. Other than this, however, the coefficients of *unemp* do not seem to provide any interesting insights. This is also the case for *pop_chg*, which maintains its north-south distribution. The final variable,

wage, displays negative coefficients in areas with extremes of PiS support, i.e., around Warsaw and in the southeast, but generally positive ones in the rest of the country.

Map 4.2. *Spatial coefficients of independent variables - 2019 data.*



Source: Author's compilation

4.3 Model testing

Having both conducted standard OLS regression and commented on the spatial heterogeneity of our independent variables in the previous sections, we move on to the final

component of the practical part of this thesis, namely the gauging of our model's predictive ability.

We conducted this analysis by applying the 2015 model to data for 2019 and testing it against two other models: a "naive" model, which predicts that PIS values will be identical in 2015 and 2019, and an explanatory model for 2019, whose predictions are standard fitted values obtained from OLS regression.

The naive model does not work with up-to-date data and simply asserts that no change will occur in the predicted variable (PIS). While we know that this is most certainly not the case, as the PiS vote share was, on average, 8.63 per cent higher in 2019 than in 2015, the naive model nevertheless provides the "lower" baseline for the predictive model, i.e., given that there are no drastic changes in the effects of the independent variables (which we have not observed), our predictive model should be more accurate than the naive one. The "higher" baseline is provided by the 2019 explanatory model, the accuracy of whose fitted values is likely to significantly outperform the other two models.

For this analysis, we re-included the *part* variable, but excluded the *pop_chg* variable, which was not significant in any of the 2015 models. Thus, the regression equation for the predictive model became:

$$PIS = \beta_0 + \beta_1 log_{10}(unemp) + \beta_2 struct + \beta_3 log_{10}(wage) + \beta_4 agr + \beta_5 log_{10}(rel) + \beta_6 part$$

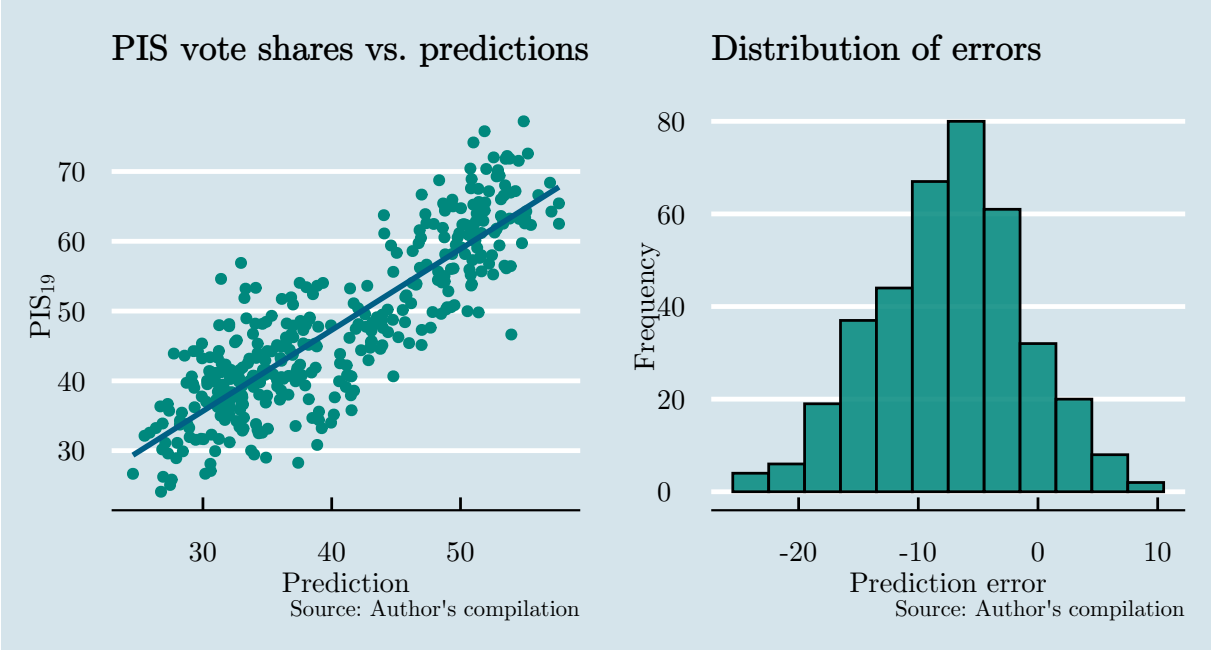
Having constructed the model for 2015, we then tasked it with predicting PIS values based on 2019 independent variable data. Using the predicted values for PIS in 2019, we calculated the MAE, RMSE, and MAPE both for this model and the other two. The accuracy statistics are summed up in Table 4.3.

As we can see, our predictive model was able to outperform the naive 2015 prediction somewhat both with regards to MAE and MAPE. However, the naive model achieved a slightly lower RMSE score, likely as a result of that metric's greater penalisation of higher errors. The predictive model fared significantly worse compared to the 2019 explanatory model; however, this is hardly a surprise given the non-trivial changes in the strength of the variables.

Figure 4.8 compares the predictions with actual values of PIS and shows the error distribution. In the error distribution, it is immediately noticeable that the predictive model had a tendency to generally undervalue the vote share of PiS in 2019, which is, once again, not unexpected. The distribution of errors for the model does not appear to contain any significant irregularities and largely follows a normal distribution. However, when looking at the scatter-plot of prediction accuracy, the existence of two "clusters" of

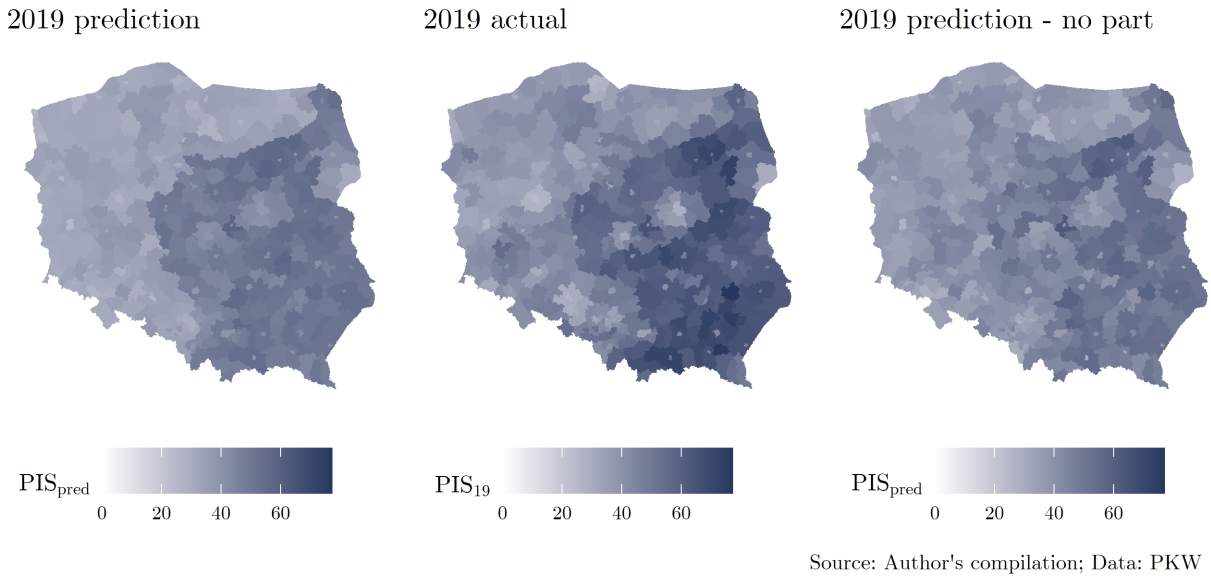
points can be faintly discerned.

Figure 4.8. *Predictive model error structure.*



The existence of these clusters becomes more apparent when the predictions are visualised spatially, as is done in Map 4.3. The map immediately makes it apparent that the undervaluing of some of the predictions is driven by the *part* variable, which predicted a 10 per cent lower PiS vote share for Prussian powiats in the 2015 OLS model. As a consequence, it appears that the results of PiS were predicted to be much lower within the Prussian partition, while predictions within the other two partitions may have been overvalued in some cases.

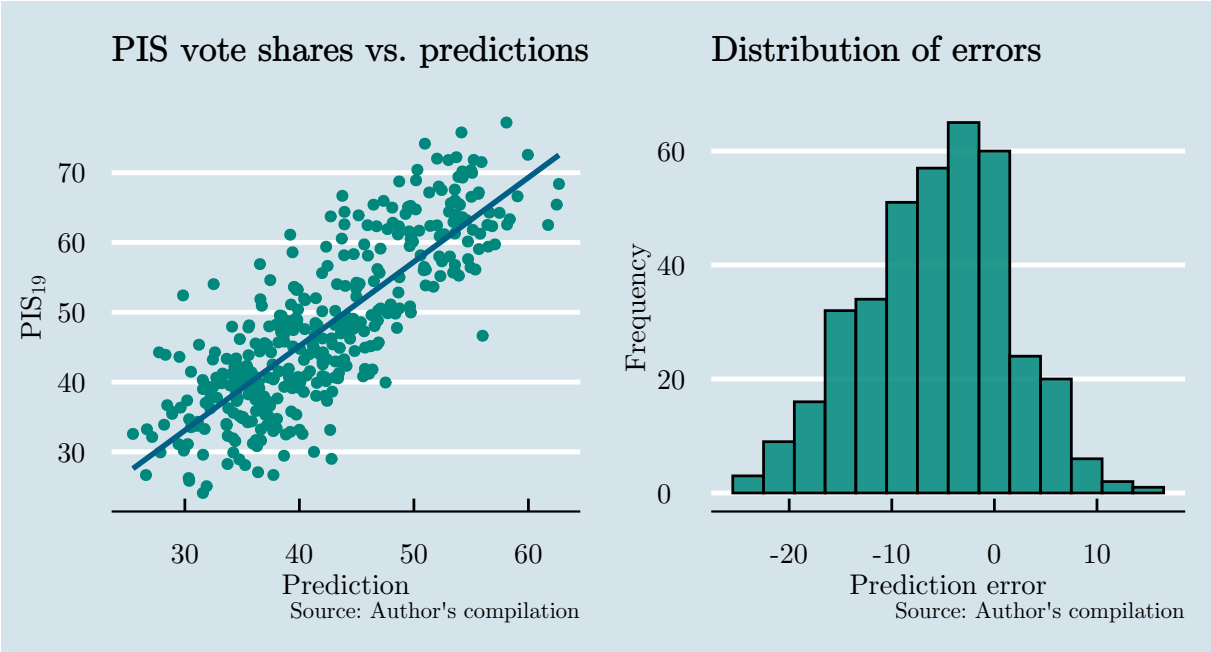
Map 4.3. *Predicted and actual PiS vote shares by powiat.*



Source: Author's compilation; Data: PKW

When *part* is removed from the models, we see an interesting reaction in the values of the accuracy measures. While the accuracy of the explanatory model decreases somewhat, our model performs better, achieving better scores both compared with the other two models and with the previous predictive model including *part*. For comparison, this model's predictions are also visualised spatially in Map 4.3, while the error structure is reported by Figure 4.9.

Figure 4.9. *Error structure of the predictive model without part.*



In this model, we see an uneven error distribution, with PiS values once again being severely underestimated; however, the centre of the distribution is much closer to 0 than in the first model. While with *part* included, 42 per cent of errors were within one standard deviation of 0, in this model, the number is 57 per cent. The scatter-plot of predictions vs. actual values likewise shows greater uniformity. Thus, we see that while *part* is an effective variable in descriptive models, its effect appears to be detrimental during prediction.

Table 4.3. *Model accuracy statistics.*

	With *part*			Without *part*		
	MAE	RMSE	MAPE	MAE	RMSE	MAPE
Naive model	8.66	9.47	0.18	8.66	9.47	0.18
Predictive model	8.01	9.57	0.16	7.11	8.98	0.14
Explanatory model	4.36	5.51	0.10	5.30	6.46	0.12

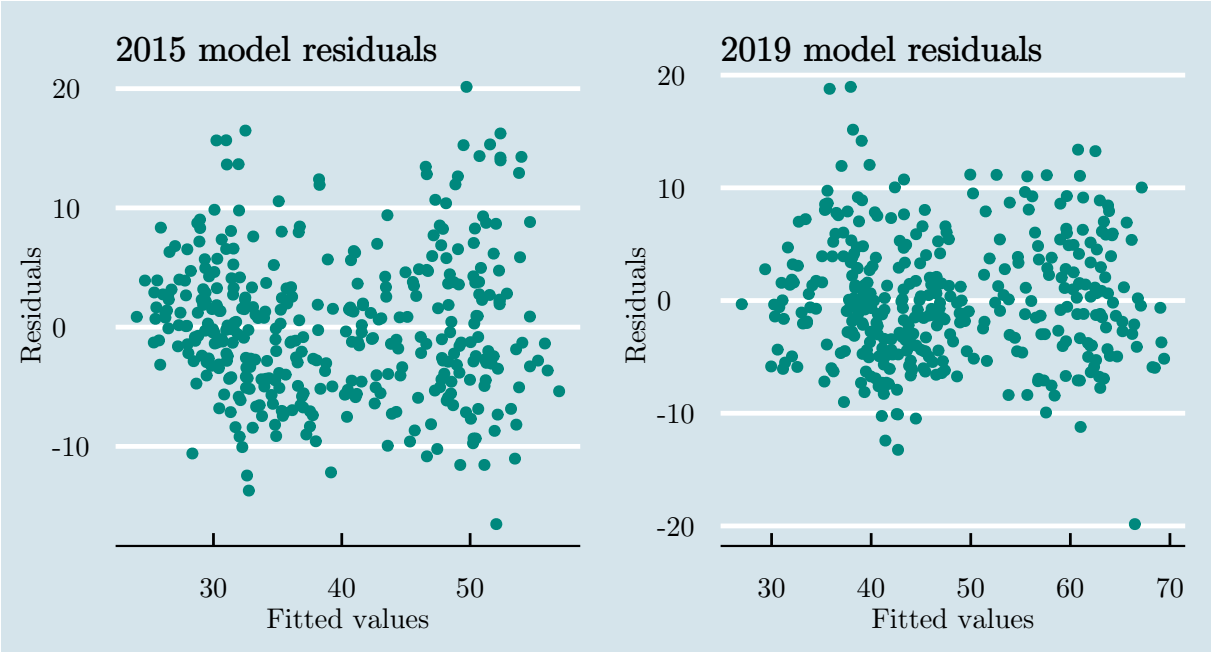
Overall, we have found that while the explanatory ability of our models is considerable, their predictive ability is somewhat less pronounced. Both of our models were (mostly) able to outperform the naive predictions. However, we see that the models are simply incapable of

accounting for changes in the strength of the variables, leading to a systematic underrating of PiS support in 2019. It is thus likely that an attempt to use the relatively robust 2019 model to predict future electoral performances of PiS would also be accompanied by a considerable degree of error.

4.4 Deviant cases

The final portion of the empirical part of this thesis deals with the residuals of our model, i.e., the differences between the fitted values provided by our OLS models and the actual PiS support in the respective powiats. We begin by visualising the residuals in Figure 4.10.

Figure 4.10. Model residuals.



As we can see from the figures, the distribution of our residuals is fairly even. While we can discern somewhat the presence of two clusters of points in the 2015 model, and to some extent also in the 2019 one, the clustering is not particularly severe for either model. The distribution of residual values is also relatively even and no other meaningful patterns are observable. The majority of residuals was lower than 6 for both years. Of the 380 cases in our sample, we can only identify a relatively small amount of apparent outliers for both models: 2 for the 2015 model, 3 for the 2019 model.

For 2015, the outliers are the Leżajsk Powiat and the Sejny Powiat, both estimated by our model to be relatively pro-PiS areas. In the former case, this was a gross understatement; in the former, an overstatement. For 2019, the Sejny Powiat remains an outlier, joined by the Polkowice Powiat (underestimated) and the Bieruń-Lędziny Powiat (overestimated).

With regards to the outliers in both models, the simple explanation for their under- or

overestimation are *agr* values relatively far from the sample mean. Given the importance of this variable for our model, it is not unsurprising that in an area where another variable may be influencing PiS support, the fitted values will be inaccurate. However, as the values of other independent variables are hardly extreme in all of the cases, we are unable to account for the variables potentially at play here. It is possible that the relationship under study may be affected by local specifics which would require a more thorough, qualitative study, an endeavour we are unable to pursue here.

The only exception to this is the Leżajsk Powiat, which had both a relatively primary sector employment share and a high Catholic share, yet the model still underestimated the result of PiS. However, in the 2015 election, this powiat had the highest PiS vote share in the country. Given the spatial heterogeneity manifested in our model (see section 4.2), it is possible that the relationship here was simply too strong to be accurately captured by our model, which was moderated by other, weaker cases.

Having presented the results of our analyses and having commented upon the relevant diagnostic tests, we conclude here the empirical portion of our thesis. We now proceed to a discussion of the implications of our findings for the study of the relevant phenomena, whereafter we conclude the thesis as a whole.

5 Discussion

The findings of this thesis contribute to the developing field of research on economic discontent voting, a highly relevant body of literature in the current Western socio-political milieu, and, more importantly, also to the literature on the populist radical right. In the first part of our thesis, we argued that in examining the populist radical right and its electoral successes, socio-economic factors, particularly those pertaining to economic deprivation, should be given greater weight, at the expense of cultural factors, namely nativism, which are typically credited for the successes of the PRR.

At the beginning of our research, we posed three research questions. Our first question inquired about the relationship between select socio-economic and cultural variables, and the vote share of PiS. In line with the findings of other works in economic discontent literature, we posited that structural economic factors will play an important role in this relationship. Based on previous studies into this phenomenon, such as Essletzbichler et al. (2018) or Dijkstra et al. (2020), as well as on the specifics of the Polish case, we identified the size of the primary sector, structural unemployment, and population growth as variables of particular interest. In addition to this, other variables connected to competing explanations were also selected for analysis. Our expectation was that worse socio-economic conditions would result in a greater vote share for PiS.

The findings of our analysis largely supported these expectations, although not all variables performed as expected and were ultimately deemed to be insignificant. This was the case with population change for instance: we expected a decrease in population to correlate with higher PiS support, but this effect did not manifest. Similarly, the relationship between wages and PiS support was also weaker than expected, although not insignificant.

In this area, the main finding in our results is a very strong relationship between the size of the primary sector in an area and the local PiS vote share, which, of the variables chosen for our models, proved to be the most powerful correlate of PiS support. This echoes and reinforces the results of Long-term unemployment, a proxy variable for structural unemployment, was also found to influence the PiS vote in a significant way. These findings are very much in line with previous research, mainly Essletzbichler et al., (2018) who found a similar strong relationship between PRR vote shares and the *secondary* (manufacturing) sector worker share. Thus, we show a clear connection between reliance on an endangered economic sector and PRR support.

However, our results also show that religiosity, specifically the local share of Roman Catholics, significantly influenced the PiS vote share. The strength of this relationship was comparable to that of the PiS vote and primary sector employment, especially in 2015. In spite of the relative religious homogeneity of Poland (the mean Catholic share being around 90 per cent), the small nuances in the religious makeup of the various powiats

were found to have a very profound effect on the electoral performance of PiS.

The corroboratory findings with regards to the economic deprivation explanation are moderated somewhat by this strong performance of religion in our models. However, this performance was largely in line with our expectations. In addition to this, we did not posit that the electoral support for PiS is exclusively based on economic deprivation factors, but rather that these factors are the most prominent sources of that support, a finding that our results very much support: for both 2015 and 2019, the explanatory value of the primary sector share and long-term unemployment was higher than that of the Roman Catholic share. We do not believe that the two explanations are necessarily mutually exclusive, and thus can conclude without issue that the PiS vote is influenced both by economic and cultural factors. We are content to underscore the fact that economic deprivation *is* a factor in the electoral performance of PiS, and a significant one.

This ties into the second research question of this thesis, which was concerned with the comparison between various explanations of PRR success. In this vein, we found our explanation, related to economic deprivation, to have the highest explanatory value, while the cultural explanation, as noted above, was also very successful. However, we also included unemployment as a variable often connected with the PRR in broader literature, representing the view that general unemployment can also cause discontent leading to greater PRR success.

In line with previous research, our results showed the effect of unemployment on the PiS vote share to be ambivalent, especially in the face of other explanatory variables. This underlines our earlier suggestion that unemployment on its own may be too broad a phenomenon to provide meaningful results. When we contrast the performance of unemployment with the performance of long-term unemployment, we see a significant difference both in the strength and significance of the variables.

Naturally, a truly meaningful comparison of explanations here is hampered by the fact that we were unable to include in our analysis a variable accounting for nativism or nativist sentiment, which is also one of the greatest limitations of our research. Unfortunately, we were unable to find a variable which, on the aggregate level, would either directly represent nativism or act as a reliable proxy for it. We cannot thus directly compare the economic deprivation and the nativism explanation; we can only state that clearly, the economic conditions of an area are hardly insignificant factors in the electoral successes of parties such as PiS. It is left up to future studies to compare the strength of these explanations directly.

The test of spatial heterogeneity, conducted using geographically weighted regression, also yielded valuable insights, which are, however, somewhat less generalisable, as their insights are primarily related to Poland.

Perhaps the most intriguing finding of the GWR analysis pertains to the spatial heterogeneity exhibited in the relationship between PiS support and the primary sector worker share, where, for the 2015 results, a negative relationship, i.e., contrary to our findings in OLS regression, was found in the western areas of Poland which had belonged to Germany prior to 1945. In OLS regression, we had accounted for a different historical border, specifically that of the Prussian, and the Austrian and Russian partitions. Independently of this, the interwar border of Poland manifested itself here. We consider this to be a finding bearing further investigation in the future.

Furthermore, we discovered that while our strongest correlate of PiS support, the primary sector share, exhibited spatial heterogeneity with changing slopes (although only to a negligible degree in 2019), the other powerful predictor, the non-Catholic share, maintained a negative slope in all powiats in both analysis years, which no other variable has done. This finding further underscores the importance of religious makeup for PiS vote shares.

In addition to this, the long-term unemployment variable also exhibited interesting spatial heterogeneity. While in most of the country, the relationship with PiS support was positive (as in the OLS models), in the Silesian region and in the Łódź area, both historically known as strongly industrial areas (Silesia also being a mining area primarily rich in coal). The fact that the effect of long-term unemployment—a proxy for structural unemployment—on the PiS vote share is negative in these strongly industrial areas is potentially very interesting, as it is contrary to the findings of studies which found greater support for the PRR both in industrial areas and in areas of high structural unemployment, such as Essletzbicher et al. (2018) or Artelaris (2022). A further study of this relationship once again appears to be a worthy subject for future research.

Conclusion

In this thesis, we examined how local conditions affected the vote share of the Polish Law and Justice party (PiS), a highly relevant topic in political science given the ongoing struggle between liberal democratic and illiberal forces in Europe and elsewhere, as well as due to the upcoming Sejm elections in Poland, where PiS will attempt to secure a third term in government.

Based on existing literature on economic discontent as a catalyst for anti-EU voting, we posited that the factors shown to influence the Eurosceptic vote are also factors that drive support for the populist radical right generally. Specifically, we chose to present our argument using the case of Polish elections in 2015 and 2019, where (along with Hungary) illiberal forces have been the most successful in establishing themselves as legitimate, mainstreamed political actors. In this case, we asserted that the less well-off regions of Poland, marked by an underdeveloped services sector, structural unemployment, and population loss, would act as bastions of PiS support. Our claims were subsequently tested using OLS regression while another method, geographically weighted regression, was used as an auxiliary means of analysis.

Our findings largely supported our initial assertions, as a strong and significant relationship was found between PiS support and the primary sector worker share, as well as long-term unemployment, for both years, hinting that the economic deprivation explanation can be applied in the case of Poland as well. However, we also found a significant effect of the local religious makeup, specifically the share of non-Catholics, on PiS support, which led us to conclude that PiS support is influenced both by economic and cultural factors.

Secondly, we used geographically weighted regression to investigate the possibility of spatial non-stationarity in our models. For all of our variables, with the exception of the share of non-Catholics, spatial heterogeneity was observed. Both in the case of primary sector employment and long-term unemployment, the patterns of heterogeneity hinted at unaccounted for local nuances potentially warranting further study.

Our research has encountered several limitations,. The main limitation was arguably caused by the usage of aggregated data; while it is unlikely that the relationship between PiS support and our key variables is wholly different at the individual level, it may be stronger or weaker than the relationship observed herein. Unfortunately, individualised data providing all of the desired information was not available for both election years.

Additionally, we were unable to account for all variables of interest in our analysis. The main issue in this regard was that not all relevant data was readily available on the appropriate levels: a considerable portion of potentially interesting data was only provided on very high levels of aggregation. Some of the data, namely on religious affiliation, was

also severely outdated, while updates are not due to be released before the submission of this thesis. (GUS, 2022)

Finally, although we have managed to explain a significant portion of the variation in PiS support, there are still gaps remaining. For one, we have not satisfactorily explained the apparent heteroscedasticity in the relationship between PiS support and unemployment. It is thus possible that we have omitted a variable which also plays an important role in influencing PiS support. However, it should be noted that for both years, our models have achieved a very high coefficient of determination.

The implications of our research, as well as its limitations, leave behind several unresolved research puzzles, which future studies may wish to concern themselves with. As mentioned above, perhaps the largest issue remaining to be resolved is a direct comparison between nativism and economic deprivations as predictors of PRR support. Based on our findings, future researchers may also wish to further examine the nuances in the relationship between structural unemployment and the PRR vote, as well as the spatial variation in certain predictors' behaviour. While progress has been made towards better understanding both PiS and PRR support, there is yet work to be done.

Summary

This thesis concerned itself with the factors that influenced the electoral results of the Polish Law and Justice (PiS) party in the country's 2015 and 2019 elections. Based on existing research on economic discontent voting, we argued that the main drivers of the success of PiS were primarily economic, in that the bulk of PiS support came mainly from areas which had not benefited from globalisation and the post-1989 structural changes. In this analysis, our broader objective was to showcase that populist radical right (PRR) parties' economic appeals should not be underestimated in favour of explanations stressing the role of cultural appeals.

Firstly, we outlined the broader literature on the populist radical right and the sources of its support. Secondly, we presented the details of the Polish case and of PiS. This exposition allowed us to present both a specific argument about the support for PiS and a generalised argument about support for the PRR. We then set out the methodological aspects of our thesis in preparation for the testing of our argument.

Our explanation was primarily tested in two ordinary least squares (OLS) regression models, where the influence of select variables on the PiS results for 2015 and 2019 was analysed. We found that structural factors, namely the primary sector worker share and long-term unemployment, had greatly influenced the electoral performance of PiS. However, the appeal of PiS was not solely economic, and the religious makeup of an area was also highly significant.

We then subjected our selected variables to a test of spatial heterogeneity using geographically weighted regression (GWR). Furthermore, we tested the ability of the 2015 OLS model to predict 2019 PiS vote shares. While the model was noticeably less accurate than a purely explanatory one, it nevertheless managed to predict PiS performance with reasonable accuracy. We concluded the empirical portion of our thesis with a short commentary on deviant cases in our models.

In the final portion of our thesis, we discussed the findings of our thesis, relating them to existing research, and pointing out their implications. In conclusion, we summarised the thesis as a whole, commented upon its limitations, and proposed avenues for further research.

Bibliography

Academic publications and journal articles:

ART, David. The Myth of Global Populism. Perspectives on Politics [online]. 2022, **20**(3), 999-1011 [cit. 2023-02-14]. ISSN 1537-5927. Retrieved from: doi:10.1017/S1537592720003552

ARZHEIMER, Kai. Explaining Electoral Support for the Radical Right. In: RYDGREN, Jens. *The Oxford Handbook of the Radical Right* [online]. Oxford University Press, 2018 [cit. 2023-02-14]. ISBN 9780190274573.

BENEŠ, Vít and Petr DRULÁK, eds. *Metodologie výzkumu politiky.* Prague: Sociologické nakladatelství, 2019. ISBN 978-80-7419-283-8.

BOZÓKI, András. Consolidation or Second Revolution? The Emergence of the New Right in Hungary. *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* [online]. 2008, **24**(2), 191-231 [cit. 2023-05-03]. ISSN 1352-3279. Retrieved from: doi:10.1080/13523270802003046

ENYEDI, Zsolt. Right-wing authoritarian innovations in Central and Eastern Europe. East European Politics [online]. 2020, **36**(3), 363-377 [cit. 2023-02-18]. ISSN 2159-9165. Retrieved from: doi:10.1080/21599165.2020.1787162

ESSLETZBICHLER, Jürgen, Franziska DISSLBACHER, and Mathias MOSER. The victims of neoliberal globalisation and the rise of the populist vote: a comparative analysis of three recent electoral decisions. *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society* [online]. 2018, **11**(1), 73-94 [cit. 2023-04-28]. ISSN 1752-1378. Retrieved from: doi:10.1093/cjres/rsx025

FETZER, Thiemo. Did Austerity Cause Brexit?. *American Economic Review* [online]. 2019, **109**(11), 3849-3886 [cit. 2023-04-27]. ISSN 0002-8282. Retrieved from: doi:10.1257/aer.20181164

FOTHERINGHAM, A. Stewart, Chris BRUNSDON, and Martin CHARLTON. *Geographically Weighted Regression: the analysis of spatially varying relationships.* Wiley, 2003. ISBN 0-471-49616-2.

FUKUYAMA, Francis. The End of History and the Last Man. New York: Free Press, 2006. ISBN 978-0743284554.

FRIEDL, Jiří. Polsko ve 20. století. In: FRIEDL, Jiří, Tomasz JUREK, Miloš ŘEZNÍK, and Martin WIHODA. Dějiny Polska. Prague: NLN, Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 2017. Dějiny států. ISBN 9788074223068.

GERRING, John and Dino CHRISTENSON. *Applied Social Science Methodology.* Oxford,

United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2017. ISBN 9781107416819.

GOLDER, Matt. Explaining Variation In The Success Of Extreme Right Parties In Western Europe. Comparative Political Studies [online]. 2003, **36**(4), 432-466 [cit. 2023-02-14]. ISSN 0010-4140. Retrieved from: doi:10.1177/0010414003251176

GWIAZDA, Anna. Democracy in Poland: Representation, participation, competition and accountability since 1989. Oxon, United Kingdom: Routledge, 2016. ISBN 978-0-415-49350-5.

HIBBS, Douglas A. Bread and Peace Voting in U.S. Presidential Elections. *Public Choice* [online]. 2000, **104**(1), 149-180 [cit. 2023-05-01]. Retrieved from: https://www.jstor.org/stable/30026466

HUNTINGTON, Samuel. Democracy's Third Wave. Journal of Democracy [online]. 1991, **2**(2), 12-34 [cit. 2023-02-14]. Retrieved from: https://www.ned.org/docs/Samuel-P-Huntington-Democracy-Third-Wave.pdf

IAKHNIS, Evgeniia, Brian RATHBUN, Jason REIFLER, and Thomas J. SCOTTO. *Populist referendum: Was 'Brexit' an expression of nativist and anti-elitist sentiment?* [online]. 2018, **5**(2) [cit. 2023-05-01]. ISSN 2053-1680. Retrieved from: doi:10.1177/2053168018773964

IONESCU, Ghita and Ernest GELLNER. Populism: Its Meaning and National Characteristics. New York. American Political Science Review [online]. 1970, **64**(3), 968-969 [cit. 2020-11-05]. ISSN 0003-0554. Retrieved from: doi:10.1017/S0003055400131880

KAUTH, Jasper Theodor and Desmond KING. Illiberalism. *European Journal of Sociology* [online]. 2020, **61**(3), 365-405 [cit. 2023-05-01]. ISSN 0003-9756. Retrieved from: doi:10.1017/S0003975620000181

LARUELLE, Marlene. Illiberalism: a conceptual introduction. *East European Politics* [online]. 2022, **38**(2), 303-327 [cit. 2023-05-02]. ISSN 2159-9165. Retrieved from: doi:10.1080/21599165.2022.2037079

LLAUDET, Ellen and Kosuke IMAI. *Data Analysis for Social Science: a friendly and practical introduction*. Princeton, United States: Princeton University Press, 2022. ISBN 9780691199436.

MAKRIDAKIS, Spyros. Accuracy measures: theoretical and practical concerns. *International Journal of Forecasting*. 1993, **9**(4), 527-529. ISSN 01692070. Retrieved from: doi:10.1016/0169-2070(93)90079-3

MUDDE, Cas. The Populist Zeitgeist. Government and Opposition [online]. 2004, **39**(4), 541-563. ISSN 0017-257X. Retrieved from: doi:10.1111/j.1477-7053.2004.00135.x

MUDDE, Cas. Constructing a conceptual framework. In: MUDDE, Cas. *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe* [online]. Cambridge University Press, 2007, 11-31 [cit. 2023-05-02]. ISBN 9780521616324. Retrieved from: doi:10.1017/CBO9780511492037.002

MUDDE, Cas and Cristóbal ROVIRA KALTWASSER. Exclusionary vs. Inclusionary Populism: Comparing Contemporary Europe and Latin America. *Government and Opposition* [online]. 2013, **48**(2), 147-174 [cit. 2023-05-02]. ISSN 0017-257X. Retrieved from: doi:10.1017/gov.2012.11

MUDDE, Cas, ed. The Populist Radical Right: A Reader. Oxon, United Kingdom: Routledge, 2017. ISBN 978-1-315-51457-1.

OESCH, Daniel. Explaining Workers' Support for Right-Wing Populist Parties in Western Europe: Evidence from Austria, Belgium, France, Norway, and Switzerland. *International Political Science Review* [online]. 2008, **29**(3), 349-373 [cit. 2023-05-03]. ISSN 0192-5121. Retrieved from: doi:10.1177/0192512107088390

OSTIGUY, Pierre. Populism: A Socio-Cultural Approach. In: KALTWASSER, Cristóbal Rovira, Paul TAGGART, Paulina Ochoa ESPEO, and Pierre OSTIGUY. The Oxford Handbook of Populism[online]. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2017 [cit. 2020-11-05]. ISBN 9780198803560. Retrieved from: https://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198803560.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780198803560-e-3

PILNÁČEK, Matouš and Pavlína TABERY. Témata voleb do PS PČR 2021 pohledem veřejnosti. Centrum pro výzkum veřejného mínění. [online] 1. června 2022 [cit. 2023-04-29]. Retrieved from: https://simar.cz/6-pilnacek-tabery-prezentace-election-topics.pdf

PIRRO, Andrea L P. Far right: The significance of an umbrella concept. Nations and Nationalism [online]. 2023, **29**(1), 101-112 [cit. 2023-02-14]. ISSN 1354-5078. Retrieved from: doi:10.1111/nana.12860

PYTLAS, Bartek. From mainstream to power: The Law and Justice party in Poland. In: Aufstand der Außenseiter [online]. 2021, December 2021, s. 401-414 [cit. 2023-02-05]. ISBN 9783845297996. Retrieved from: doi:10.5771/9783845297996-401

RHODES, Matthew. Slovakia after Mečiar: A Midterm Report. *Problems of Post-Communism* [online]. 2001, **48**(4), 3-13 [cit. 2023-05-01]. ISSN 1075-8216. Retrieved from: doi:10.1080/10758216.2001.11655938

ROODUIJN, Matthijs. The Nucleus of Populism: In Search of the Lowest Common Denominator. Government and Opposition[online]. 2014, **49**(4), 573-599 [cit. 2023-02-05]. ISSN 0017-257X. Retrieved from: doi:10.1017/gov.2013.30

RYDGREN, Jens. The Radical Right: An Introduction. In: RYDGREN, Jens. *The Oxford Handbook of the Radical Right* [online]. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018, s.

1-15 [cit. 2023-05-01]. ISBN 9780190274573. Retrieved from: doi:10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190274559.013.1

ŘEZNÍK, Miloš. Dějiny současného Polska. In: FRIEDL, Jiří, Tomasz JUREK, Miloš ŘEZNÍK, and Martin WIHODA. Dějiny Polska. Prague: NLN, Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 2017. Dějiny států. ISBN 9788074223068.

ŘEZNÍK, Miloš. Raně novověká Rzeczpospolita. In: FRIEDL, Jiří, Tomasz JUREK, Miloš ŘEZNÍK, and Martin WIHODA. Dějiny Polska. Prague: NLN, Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 2017. Dějiny států. ISBN 9788074223068.

SCHNEIDER, Patrick and Fatos XHAFA. Anomaly detection: Concepts and methods. *Anomaly Detection and Complex Event Processing over IoT Data Streams* [online]. Elsevier, 2022, 2022, 49-66 [cit. 2023-05-01]. ISBN 9780128238189. Retrieved from: doi:10.1016/B978-0-12-823818-9.00013-4

SIPMA, Take and Marcel LUBBERS. Contextual-level unemployment and support for radical-right parties: a meta-analysis. Acta Politica [online]. 2020, **55**(3), 351-387 [cit. 2023-02-16]. Retrieved from: doi:10.1057/s41269-018-0120-2

SLAY, Ben. The Polish economic transition: outcome and lessons. Communist and Post-Communist Studies [online]. 2000, **33**(1), 49-70 [cit. 2023-02-18]. Retrieved from: https://www.jstor.org/stable/48609381

SPURNÁ, Pavlína. Geographically weighted regression: method for analysing spatial nonstationarity of geographical phenomenon. Geografie - Sborník České geografické společnosti, 2008, **113**(2), 125-139 [cit. 2023-03-07]. Retrieved from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/289783333_Geograficky_vazena_regrese_Metoda_analyzy_prostorove_nestacionarity_geografickych_jevu

TUDOROIU, Theodor, Peter HORVÁTH, and Marek HRUŠOVSKÝ. Ultra-Nationalism and Geopolitical Exceptionalism in Mečiar's Slovakia. *Problems of Post-Communism* [online]. 2014, **56**(4), 3-14 [cit. 2023-05-01]. ISSN 1075-8216. Retrieved from: doi:10.2753/PPC1075-8216560401

VON BEYME, Klaus. Right-wing extremism in post-war Europe. West European Politics [online]. **11**(2) [cit. 2023-02-16]. Retrieved from: doi:10.1080/01402388808424678

WEISSKIRCHER, Manès. The Strength of Far-Right AfD in Eastern Germany: The East-West Divide and the Multiple Causes behind 'Populism'. *The Political Quarterly* [online]. 2020, **91**(3), 614-622 [cit. 2023-04-27]. ISSN 0032-3179. Retrieved from: doi:10.1111/1467-923X.12859

WEYLAND, Kurt. Populism: A Political-Strategic Approach. In: KALTWASSER, Cristóbal Rovira, Paul TAGGART, Paulina Ochoa ESPEO, and Pierre OSTIGUY (eds.).

The Oxford Handbook of Populism[online]. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2017 [cit. 2020-11-05]. ISBN 9780198803560. Retrieved from: https://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198803560.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780198803560-e-2

ZAKARIA, Fareed. The Rise of Illiberal Democracy. *Foreign Affairs* [online]. 1997, **76**(6) [cit. 2023-05-01]. ISSN 00157120. Retrieved from: doi:10.2307/20048274

Non-academic resources:

Country Partnership Framework for Poland: for the period FY 2019-2024. World Bank [online]. 2018 [cit. 2023-02-18]. Retrieved from: https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/209111528428654498/pdf/125670-REVISED-CPFPLweb.pdf

Cudzoziemcy w Polsce po 2020 r. Urząd do Spraw Cudzoziemców [online]. 28.01.2021 [cit. 2023-01-31]. Retrieved from: https://www.gov.pl/web/udsc/cudzoziemcy-w-polsce-po-2020-r

Historia partii. Prawo i Sprawiedliwość [online]. [cit. 2023-02-05]. Retrieved from: https://pis.org.pl/partia/historia-partii

MAJTÉNYI, Balázs, Alíz NAGY and Péter KÁLLAI. "Only Fidesz" – Minority Electoral Law in Hungary. *Verfassungsblog: On Matters Constitutional* [online]. Sa 31 Mrz 2018 [cit. 2023-04-29]. Retrieved from: https://verfassungsblog.de/only-fidesz-electoral-law-in-hungary/#_ftn5

Mike Read (disc jockey) - UKIP Calypso Lyrics. *Genius* [online]. Oct. 20, 2014 [cit. 2023-05-02]. Retrieved from: https://genius.com/Mike-read-disc-jockey-ukip-calypso-lyrics

Najważniejsze tematy kampanii wyborczej. Sondaż dla "Faktów" TVN i TVN24.) *TVN24* [online]. 14.8.2019 [cit. 2023-04-27]. Retrieved from: https://fakty.tvn24.pl/ogladaj-online,60/wybory-parlamentarne-2019-sondaz-jakie-sa-najwazniejsze-tematy-kampanii,961142.html

Poland. *Europe Elects* [online]. [cit. 2023-05-01]. Retrieved from: https://europeelects.eu/poland/

Poland demands €1.3 trillion in reparations from Germany. *Deutsche Welle* [online]. 10/03/2022 [cit. 2023-05-01]. Retrieved from: https://www.dw.com/en/poland-demands-13-trillion-in-wwii-reparations-from-germany/a-63322046

POTOCKA, Joanna. *"Piątka dla zwierząt" uchwalona. "Koniec koalicji. Prawdopodobnie rząd mniejszościowy"* [online]. 18.9.2020 [cit. 2023-05-01]. Retrieved from: https://www.rmf24.pl/fakty/polska/news-piatka-dla-zwierzat-uchwalona-koniec-koalicji-prawdopodobnie,nId,4737691#crp_state=1

Ramowy harmonogram udostępniania informacji wynikowych z Narodowego Spisu Ludności i Mieszkań 2021 (NSP 2021). *Główny Urząd Statystyczny* [online]. 2022 [cit. 2023-04-28]. Retrieved from: https://stat.gov.pl/spisy-powszechne/nsp-2021/harmonogram-publikacji-wynikow-nsp-2021/

Rocznik Statystyczny Gospodarki Morskiej 2020. *Główny Urząd Statystyczny* [online]. 31.12.2020 [cit. 2023-04-27]. Retrieved from: https://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/roczniki-statystyczne/roczniki-statystyczne/rocznik-statystyczny-gospodarki-morskiej-2020,11,13.html

Rocznik Statystyczny Rolnictwa 2020. *Główny Urząd Statystyczny* [online]. 26.03.2021 [cit. 2023-04-27]. Retrieved from: https://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/roczniki-statystyczne/roczniki-statystyczne/rocznik-statystyczny-rolnictwa-2020,6,14.html

Sondaż: Jakie tematy interesują Polaków przed wyborami?. *Rzeczpospolita* [online]. 18.08.2019 [cit. 2023-04-27]. Retrieved from: https://www.rp.pl/polityka/art1177771-sondaz-jakie-tematy-interesuja-polakow-przed-wyborami

Variable Graph. *V-Dem* [online]. 2022 [cit. 2023-05-01]. Retrieved from: https://v-dem.net/data_analysis/VariableGraph/

Viktor Orban 'Greater Hungary' scarf angers Romania and Ukraine. *BBC* [online]. 22 November 2022 [cit. 2023-05-03]. Retrieved from: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-63724710

Data sources:

Bank Danych Lokalnych. *Główny Urząd Statystyczny* [online]. [cit. 2023-05-01]. Retrieved from: https://bdl.stat.gov.pl/bdl/start

BUKOWSKI, Paweł. How history matters for student performance: lessons from the Partitions of Poland. Journal of Comparative Economics [online]. 2019, **47**(1), 136-175 [cit. 2023-02-17]. ISSN 01475967. Retrieved from: doi:10.1016/j.jce.2018.10.007

Dane w arkuszach. *Państwowa Komisja Wyborcza* [online]. [cit. 2023-05-01]. Retrieved from: https://sejmsenat2019.pkw.gov.pl/sejmsenat2019/pl/dane_w_arkuszach

Granice administracyjne. *GIS Support* [online]. 13.1.2023 [cit. 2023-05-02]. Retrieved from: https://gis-support.pl/baza-wiedzy-2/dane-do-pobrania/granice-administracyjne/

Wyniki XLS - wybory do Sejmu RP. *Państwowa Komisja Wyborcza* [online]. [cit. 2023-05-01]. Retrieved from: https://parlament2015.pkw.gov.pl/355_Wyniki_Sejm_XLS.html

Software used:

ALLAIRE, JJ, Jeffrey HORNER, Yihui XIE, Vicent MARTI, and Natacha PORTE. markdown: Render Markdown with the C Library 'Sundown'. 2019. URL: https://CRAN.R-project.org/package=markdown

BIVAND, Roger and Danlin YU. spgwr: Geographically Weighted Regression. URL: https://CRAN.R-project.org/package=spgwr

LONG, Jacob A. jtools: Analysis and Presentation of Social Scientific Data. URL: https://cran.r-project.org/package=jtools

PEBESMA, Edzer. Simple Features for R: Standardized Support for Spatial Vector Data. The R Journal [online]. 2018, **10**(1), 439-446. [cit. 2023-05-01] Retrieved from: https://doi.org/10.32614/RJ-2018-009

WICKHAM, Hadley. ggplot2: Elegant Graphics for Data Analysis. New York, USA: SpringerVerlag, 2016. URL: https://ggplot2.tidyverse.org

R Core Team. R: A language and environment for statistical computing. Vienna, Austria: R Foundation for Statistical Computing 2020. URL: https://www.R-project.org

List of appendices

Appendix A - Data codebook (.html)

Appendix B - Analysis dataset (.xlsx)

Appendix C - Text of the thesis including R code (.rmd)

Due to the fact that Charles University's SIS supports neither .xlsx nor .rmd file extensions, we have elected to upload all the appendices separately. They are available here. In case of any issues with the files, please contact the author via e-mail at 96000997@fsv.cuni.cz.

The powiat shapefile used for the visualisation and analysis could not be included with our data in Appendix B in a convenient manner. Its source, is, however, listed above, whence it can be easily downloaded.