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Places that don't matter or people that don't matter? A multilevel modelling approach to the analysis of the geographies of discontent

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Abstract

The possible impacts of contextual effects on political behaviour have long been studied and analysed by political scientists and geographers. We review previous relevant literature and extend it by incorporating the recent rise of populism and developments of socio-economic determinants of the political economy of discontent and the geography of happiness and well-being across the European Union. In particular, the research presented in this paper is aimed at analysing the impact of individual and contextual variables on political behaviour across European regions. Additionally, this paper examines links between subjective well-being and political preferences, while at the same time considers contextual factors at the regional level across Europe. Methodologically, we adopt a multilevel modelling approach to analyse voting behaviour and to also examine subjective happiness indicators in relation to factors of political geography. We employ data from the European Social Survey (ESS) to estimate the effects of economic and non-economic factors across Europe on the geography of subjective happiness and discontent using individual social values and cultural norms. We find that not only are individual level characteristics significant, but so too are regional characteristics.

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**KEYWORDS**

multilevel logistic regression, regional differences, voting behaviour, anti-political establishment parties, subjective well-being

JEL CLASSIFICATION

C55; R10; R23; R58

1 | INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade there has been a considerable rise of European anti-political establishment parties—both left and right. Within European countries there is significant geographical variation in the support of these parties (Bonikowski, Halikiopoulou, Kaufmann, & Rooduijn, 2019). The variation of support for these parties tends to be also large between municipalities and neighbourhoods within cities. Existing studies have pointed to a number of explanatory factors for these regional patterns, suggesting that immigration and economic developments may play a role. It has been claimed, for example, that support for actual or self-proclaimed ‘Anti-Political Establishment Parties’ (APEPs; details on how this is defined are provided in Section 2) is higher in areas with larger (or steeply increasing) numbers of immigrants or high levels of unemployment (Halla, Wagner, & Zweimüller, 2017; Inglehart & Norris, 2016). Other approaches to APEP movements point to the struggles of the “people left behind” (Ford & Goodwin, 2017) and the “losers of globalization” (Esslezbichler, Disslbacher, & Moser, 2018). Others argue that anti-political establishment movements are rooted in rural and small-town rebellion against urban elites (Rodríguez-Pose, 2018). These changes and in particular socio-economic factors, however, cannot fully explain the rise of APEPs, as several studies have pointed out (Inglehart & Norris, 2016).

In this paper we add a regional science perspective to this literature, revisiting recent very impactful regional science studies of the geographies of discontent (Dijkstra, Poelman, & Rodríguez-Pose, 2019; Los, McCann, Springford, & Thissen, 2017; McCann, 2018) and research offering an interpretation of the recent rise of populism as the “revenge of the places that do not matter” (Rodríguez-Pose, 2018). It can be argued that most of the relevant regional science studies in this field to date tend to focus on the analysis of *aggregate discontent at the regional or national level* (e.g., vote share of populist and/or so called anti-systemic parties) in relation to other aggregate measures (such as persistent regional GDP and employment growth, unemployment rate) suggesting that the regions lagging behind are associated with a collective perception and feeling of “places that do not matter” resulting from neglected territorial inequalities:

It has been thus the places that do not matter, not the “people that don’t matter”, that have reacted. In these areas it has been very often the relatively well-off, those in well-paid jobs or with pensions that heeded the call of populism. (Rodríguez-Pose, 2018, p. 201)

Our contribution with this paper is to build on this work by using a multilevel methodological framework in order to explicitly consider *both the individual and contextual (regional) level determinants of voting for APEPs*. This also includes an examination of whether there is an association between voting for anti-political establishment parties and individuals' level of happiness. To that end we argue that it is important to consider in more detail and with the use of suitable survey microdata whether voting for APEPs is driven by *places left behind* rather than an *interaction of places and people left behind*. Despite the fact that political scientists have long identified and analysed a variety of factors that may explain voting behaviour, there is a relative paucity of studies examining *both the regional and individual perspectives* that may determine voting behaviour.

Conceptually, the question remains how the variation in support for APEPs should be interpreted. Thus, it is key to understand whether this movement is driven by individual and national, regional and local context-specific



manifestations of an overarching phenomenon, more precisely defined as a sense of loss stimulated by the role of discrete emotions like fear and/or anger. This leads to the question of whether this recent political trend is entirely a result of rising levels of dissatisfaction at the individual level rather than the remnants of territorial and socio-economic grievances of the “places left behind.” Emotions are prevalent in the rhetoric of anti-political establishment politicians and among their electorate. Therefore, we argue that emotional dynamics, such as perceptions of threat and vulnerability may be critical for understanding the success of anti-political establishment movements. Given the lack of work in this area, we approach this significant gap in the literature by introducing the measurement of *subjective happiness*, to directly examine how happiness may affect individuals' propensity to vote including the role of geographical dimensions. There is scientific evidence that politicians tend to assume that subjective happiness matters more in determining how people vote (Liberini, Redoano, & Proto, 2017). Thereby, we primarily study the effect of happiness on voting behaviour defined as people's subjective appreciation and evaluation of their lives (Diener, Lucas, & Oishi, 2002; Veenhoven, 2015). Hereafter, we use the concept *subjective happiness* encompassing the related constructs of life satisfaction and quality of life. Recent studies confirmed the political significance of happiness even when controlling for age and income (Di Tella & MacCulloch, 2005; Liberini et al., 2017; Ward, 2015). Given that existing research has associated happiness as an important determinant with political engagement (i.e., voting), yet, little is known about the link between voting for APEPs and subjective happiness.

Also, of relevance here is the empirical analysis and methodological frameworks developed to study the geographical and socio-economic determinants of happiness and well-being (and by extension voting behaviour). There is a great potential to build on studies exploring the geography of happiness and well-being (Aslam & Corrado, 2012; Ballas, 2013; Morrison, 2010; Oswald & Wu, 2010). Of particular relevance is the work using a multilevel analysis framework to explore the question “Happy People or Happy Places?” (Ballas & Tranmer, 2012). Addressing this question involves first an analysis and an attempt to quantify the extent to which people with individual-level characteristics (e.g., having low income, being unemployed) are found in similar types of places (compositional effects). Second, whether certain attributes of places (e.g., quality of the natural environment, weather, amenities, social capital) cause its inhabitants to be happy or unhappy (contextual effects), and third whether, having taken these factors into account, there is any remaining unobserved heterogeneity between places with respect to happiness (Ballas & Tranmer, 2012). A similar framework can be developed and utilized in order to revisit the work of economic geographers and regional scientists briefly discussed above to address the following question:

To what extent is voting for APEPs a result of the “places that don't matter” or the “people that do not matter” or an interaction of the two?

In this paper we use a multilevel modelling framework in order to address this question. The remainder of the paper proceeds as follows: First, we discuss the concept of APEPs and relevant literature and present the conceptual framework underpinning the research presented in this paper. The next section presents the data sources, variables included in the analysis, and our empirical design. The main findings are then presented and discussed in the subsequent section. In the concluding part of the paper we reconnect the findings to relevant literature. Furthermore, we pay attention to some shortcomings of this study and discuss some possible strategies for future research.

2 | DEFINING AND ANALYSING ANTI-POLITICAL ESTABLISHMENT PARTIES AND THE GEOGRAPHY OF DISCONTENT

2.1 | Anti-political establishment parties (APEPs)

There is now a large body of literature presenting analyses of individual and regional characteristics in relation to voting behaviour (Bonikowski et al., 2019). Before considering relevant studies of the determinants of APEPs, it is useful to provide a brief overview of relevant concepts and definitions.



Many terms have been used to describe the party family that we label as anti-political establishment parties (APEPs) and that emerged from the mid-1980s and onwards, and of which the Austrian *FPÖ (Freiheitliche Partei Österreich)*, the Italian *Lega Nord* or the French *Front National* are often believed to be the prototypes. Literature on such types of parties is often concerned with classifying and differentiating them—under labels like protest, populist or extremist—from rather mainstream party ideology (Abedi, 2004; Schedler, 1996). Of particular relevance is the work of Schedler on anti-political establishment parties. These parties present themselves as challengers to political establishment (Schedler, 1996, p. 292). In particular, Schedler argues that anti-political establishment parties draw a triangular political space between a “‘general established political class’, ‘the people’ and themselves” (Schedler, 1996, pp. 293–294). The “political class” is depicted by self-proclaimed “anti-establishment” parties as being in conflict with the anti-establishment but also with “the people.” The existence of other forms of social division tend to be reduced to one encompassing and quite ancient social cleavage – that between rulers and ruled (Schedler, 1996, p. 294). To this end, they depict a “morally decadent and corrupt elite” versus the “good and genuine people.” Implicit in their message is the attempt to frame current democratic political parties as essentially undemocratic, while they on the other hand are new, never-before tested in positions of power, and thus “innocent” and “trustworthy.” Furthermore, anti-political establishment parties regard the current political situation as non-democratic and rather authoritarian. It is thus implied that they would change it, should it come to power. In this context, a party can be defined as an anti-political establishment party if it fulfils all of the following three criteria: (i) it perceives itself as a challenger to the parties that make-up the political establishment; (ii) it asserts that a fundamental divide exists between the political establishment and the people (implying that all establishment parties, whether in government or in opposition, are essentially the same (Abedi, 2004; Mudde, 2007; Schedler, 1996; Smith, 1987); and (iii) it challenges the status quo in terms of major policy issues and political system issues (Abedi, 2004; Ignazi, 1992; Schedler, 1996; Smith, 1987). Rooduijn et al. (2019) have translated these conceptual criteria into a list of qualifying parties, the PopuList. The list includes populist, far right-wing, far left-wing and eurosceptic parties (see Table A1 in the Appendix). In this paper we adopt this list to define and analyse APEPs (for more details see Section 3).

2.2 | The determinants of voting for APEPs

In addition to various newspaper articles or online sources that are covering interesting aspects of the voting patterns, there is now a growing literature across the social sciences analysing various factors that attempt to explain voting behaviour. Most of the academic literature has concentrated on the individual or the regional level, with a few exceptions focusing on both levels simultaneously. Recent examples include the work of Halikiopoulou and Vlandas (2016), Vlandas and Halikiopoulou (2016), Georgiadou, Rori, and Roumanias (2018) and Georgiadou (2019) exploring the determinants of votes for the far-right.

Concurrently, there have been many studies by economic geographers and regional scientists which have considered and analysed APEP voting mostly in territorial terms. Arguably the most prominent example is the work of Rodríguez-Pose (2018) who interprets spatial patterns in recent elections as a “revenge of the places that don’t matter”. In this context, it is argued that the successful globalization dynamism is not equally distributed across geographical areas. Some regions, mostly remote and/or economically disadvantaged ones, are “left behind” in terms of future economic prospects, that is, they suffer relatively more from poverty and economic decay than densely agglomerated regions in which global trade integration has benefitted job creation. Hence, the foundations of the populist rise are territorial rather than individual. Territorial inequality has been largely ignored and the focus was mostly on interpersonal inequality. The resulting discontent may have led many of these areas to use the ballot box as a signal to revolt (Rodríguez-Pose, 2018).

Building on this work, Dijkstra et al. (2019) provided a comprehensive overview of the anti-EU vote across all 28 member states of the European Union (EU). The authors find sets of regional determinants (local economic and industrial decline in combination with lower employment and a less educated workforce) in predicting the voting



behaviour for populist parties. A similar argument is made by other authors, who highlight the additional burden of austerity policies in the aftermath of the financial crisis in 2009, which has disproportionately affected the poorest areas (see Algan, Passari, & Guriev, 2017; Fetzer, 2019). These arguments emphasize the growing urban–rural disparities in voting behaviour, as well as the spatial variations and neighbourhood effects within areas (Burbank, 1997; Johnston & Pattie, 2014, p. 9). Furthermore, this strengthens the findings and assertions of other scholars, related to the concept of “geography of discontent,” regarding the geographical distribution of discontent in a country, which reflect regional socio-economic inequalities (Los et al., 2017; McCann, 2018) and according to which economic geography is particularly important for understanding how people vote. Likewise, these scholars find that the key regional determinants of the vote are age, education, a historical reliance on the manufacturing sector, low average income, high unemployment and/or fiscal cuts.

Formulating the concept of “geography of discontent” more broadly and in the realm of whether the effects observed at the regional level also hold at the individual level, some studies have analysed this proposition by combining both individual- and regional-level explanatory variables. For instance, Lubbers and Scheepers, (2007, 2010), find that significant drivers of voting behaviour, for mostly nationalist parties, are individual characteristics like human capital and social strata (i.e., occupation) and they matter next to economic (national and regional GDP, unemployment, inflation) and political characteristics (e.g., programmes of political parties) of regions and countries. In a related paper, Giebler and Regel (2018) use both regional and individual level data to show that the right-wing populist success is associated with regional socio-demographic contexts and disparities, individual political attitudes and opinions, and to a lesser extent individual socio-demographic characteristics. The authors are among the first to find that using both individual and regional variables adds predictive power to their model.

In addition to the socio-economic determinants highlighted in the *territorial studies*, Inglehart and Norris (2016) foreground individual indicators, or else the “cultural backlash thesis.” According to this, the support for APEPs can be explained by nostalgic reactions by once-predominant parts of the population to progressive value change and increased immigration. A number of studies have found evidence supporting this theory in the context of, for instance, the rise of populist movements. Sniderman and Hagendoorn (2008) show that anti-immigrant sentiments and holistic conceptions of national identities stir cultural conflicts and support these anti-political establishment movements. Also, of relevance here is the recent work of Dorling and Tomlinson (2019) who argue that “Empire”-nostalgia and empire-mentality were key factors affecting the result of the referendum on the UK’s membership of the European Union.

2.3 | Discontent, subjective happiness and voting behaviour

In addition to the work briefly reviewed above, this paper also builds on another strand of relevant literature within the social sciences that analyses the links between subjective well-being (SWB) with political behaviour as well as partisanship and ideology. Most studies to date tend to focus on how procedural aspects of voting and political participation in other forms, rather than election outcomes, may affect happiness (e.g., see Napier & Jost, 2008; Stutzer & Frey, 2006). On the other hand, Powdthavee, Dolan, and Metcalfe (2008) looked at the impact of subjective happiness upon voting intention in the United Kingdom (UK). More recently, Ward (2015) conducted an analysis of electoral, macro-economic and panel survey data for 15 European countries and found a positive relationship between SWB and a voting preference for governing parties, irrespective of economic indicators. Moreover, his analysis suggested that low and worsening well-being tends to be associated with shifts in voter preferences. Another example of relevant work is the work of Liberini et al. (2017) who used British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) data and identified an association between individual well-being and self-reported voting intentions over time in the UK.

Building on this work, in this paper, *happiness* is employed as a broader and more direct measure of voters’ life satisfaction/quality of life. That is, rather than treating the outcome of voting behaviour in economic terms, we interpret



subjective happiness as being associated with the individual's overall sense of life satisfaction/quality of life, both depending on economic as well as non-economic factors. We thereby aim to reflect the notion of political discontent and a sense of loss (potentially) mirroring geographical divisions. Moreover, in this paper we consider the role of individual levels of happiness as a determinant of election results, while also comparing geographical variations. Therefore, we use population microdata (i.e., individual-level data) to explore whether subjective happiness may be a potential predictor of the propensity to vote for APEPs. It is also relevant and interesting to note that by including subjective happiness in our analysis we explicitly consider a measure of discontent (unhappiness). We feel that there is great potential for happiness economists to further engage with this topic and it is perhaps surprising that there is a relative paucity of economics of happiness studies pertaining to the geography of discontent.

2.4 | Towards a multilevel modelling approach to the analysis of APEPs and the geographies of happiness and discontent

This paper also puts forward a methodological and conceptual argument to consider whether the regional voting share of APEPs may be due to “aggregation” or compositional effects rather than spatial contextual effects. In other words, there is a need to consider whether voting outcomes at the regional level may be result of high concentrations of individuals with specific individual characteristics (e.g., age, income) which would suggest a compositional effect, or whether there may be spatial contextual characteristics (e.g., high unemployment rate, crime rates and/or other factors that may be associated with a collective ‘my place does not matter’ feeling) which may be associated with increase or decrease individual propensities to vote for APEP candidates. In this context, we are also particularly interested in whether happiness can change the way individuals vote, revisiting and building on relevant analysis frameworks for the study of place and individual effects on happiness (Ballas & Tranmer, 2012).

As noted above, many of the existing studies have understood APEP voting in territorial terms. In this study we aim to directly examine how voting behaviour may be affected by individual level variables pertaining to happiness but also social attitudes and socio-economic circumstances. In other words, would a voter with particular personal (gender, age) and socio-economic characteristics (education, socio-economic status) have voted differently if he or she is happy, when controlling for contextual characteristics. In particular, we consider whether individuals' degree of happiness tends to mediate the individual voting behaviour. More specifically, we expect that individuals with similar characteristics who tend to report low levels of subjective happiness are more likely to vote for APEPs taking regional effects in a multilevel framework into account. Building on literature within quantitative social science (including Di Tella & MacCulloch, 2005; Liberini et al., 2017) there is evidence that unhappy feelings can contribute in explaining voting behaviour when controlling for other individual characteristics. Intuitively, it could be argued that feelings of anger, fear (e.g., see Rico, Guinjoan, & Anduiza, 2017) and by extension unhappiness may lead to a higher probability to vote for APEPs, but there have also been arguments suggesting that the exact opposite may be happening (The Economist, 2019).

Of particular relevance here is the work of Gallego, Buscha, Sturgis, and Oberski (2014), for instance, who find that contextual effects tend to be relatively weak, and that individual characteristics such as age, marital status, and caring responsibilities, are more important in explaining those effects in the context of political orientation. In this paper we build on this work by considering the impact of regional contextual factors such as the gross domestic product (GDP) per inhabitant in purchasing power standards (in relation to the European Union average set to equal 100) (European Commission, 2020a) and unemployment rates that tend to influence individual attitudes (European Commission, 2020b). In other words, whether the voting behaviour of individuals with similar characteristics tends to be affected by their contextual influences.

From a methodological perspective, some studies incorporated a geographical perspective in the analysis with the use of multilevel modelling regression analysis. It can be argued that multilevel models have advantages compared to individual level modelling methods (Aslam & Corrado, 2012; Ballas & Tranmer, 2012; Snijders &



Bosker, 1999), such as in adding a geographical dimension to research on regional differences in voting behaviour. Although considering the geographical dimension and incorporating contextual as well as individual level data, it is of particular relevance to study geographical differences of political participation with the use of explaining the interaction between those two (Jones, Johnston, & Pattie, 1992).

The determinants discussed above can therefore be grouped into those that constitute direct contextual effects, and those that contribute to the individual level. In order to disentangle the contextual effects from the individual effects, we therefore need a method that allows us to separate these. In essence, our goal is to estimate if individuals would have voted differently, with particular socio-economic and contextual characteristics, when explained by the levels of happiness. Our work therefore also builds on the long successful history and literature in political geography which analyses the relative importance of individual- and context-level effects (a key study in this field is the work of Jones et al., 1992).

The spatial scale at which the analysis is conducted affects the extent to which possible contextual impacts are captured (Gimpel, Dyck, & Shaw, 2004). In using spatial units at the regional level for geographical contextual variables, as we do in this paper, there is a trade-off between the availability of data, particularly for policy-related variables that are often implemented at larger spatial scales, and the likelihood of missing the driving mechanisms of the contextual effects measured.

3 | DATA AND METHODS

3.1 | Data sources

For our empirical analysis we adopt individual-level data from the European Social Survey (ESS), an academically driven cross-national survey that has been conducted biennially across Europe since 2001. Every two years, face-to-face interviews are conducted with newly selected, cross-sectional samples (ESS, 2016). The survey covers questions considering social attitudes and values, cultural dimensions and demographic trends of diverse populations in more than 30 nations. Individuals are selected by strict random probability methods at every stage. To achieve optimal comparability across countries, countries adopt the same questionnaire and follow the same procedures during all the stages of the process (ESS, 2016). To remedy any left-over biases in the data, ESS provides two types of weights: design weights and population size weights. Due to the countries' various sampling designs, some groups or regions of the population have higher probabilities of selection, which can lead to an over- or under-representation of people in certain locations or types of household. The design weight corrects for differences in the probability of selection, sampling errors and possible non-response errors, thereby making the sample more representative of a “true” random sample from each country. Similarly, the population size weight makes an adjustment to ensure that each country is represented in proportion to its population size. Both weights are applied in the analysis by creating a new variable that is the result of the multiplication of the two (European Social Survey, 2014). We focus on wave eight, the most recent wave of the survey at the time of writing this paper.

In addition to the individual level information that we derive from the ESS, we include information on the spatial context, in order to explain APEP voting across European regions. For this, we consider information at the European Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (NUTS) 2 level as this arguably best represents the socio-economic context in which people make their decisions. Unfortunately, in our analysis no NUTS 2 level information was available for Germany and the UK and we revert to the NUTS 1 level for these countries. Data at the regional level is all extracted from the online datasets provided through Eurostat. Finally, we consider the country-level, by including country dummy variables, as national institutions and the political system may also be relevant in mediating the voting decisions of people. In the analysis, individual responses are therefore treated as level-one, the NUTS 1 (for Germany and UK) and NUTS 2 regions combine into level-two (or contextual/regional level) and countries are treated as fixed effects, resulting into a two-level model.



In total, the dataset comprises data of 174 regions across 18 European countries (see Table A2, in the Appendix). The number of individual observations available is 44,603, although the final sample size for the analysis is 35,450 individuals at NUTS 1 and NUTS 2 level, due to item non-response for some of the key variables of interest.

As mentioned in section 2.1, we use the PopuList created by Rooduijn et al. (2019) to define our APEP dependent variable. The list of the parties included in the analysis are presented in Table A1 in the Appendix. We focus on all EU member states that are included in the dataset and have at least one APEP within the country. The definition of the anti-political establishment parties is not intended to be exhaustive or definitive. Of particular relevance as a shortcoming is the assessment of the classification at hand, since the definition APEP is not time independent and some parties—included in the current classification—are only partially considered as APEP but do not fulfil all dimensions of the classification. Nevertheless, it would be interesting for our methodological framework to be considered and used with alternative APEP definitions in future work.

3.2 | Methods

The modelling strategy reflects our conceptualization that APEP voting is an individual decision taken within a regional and country context. In the literature on political preferences and voting behaviour, multilevel modelling has traditionally been used in order to address such hierarchical processes, with individuals nested in neighbourhoods, districts, and regions, and sometimes in intermediate units such as households (Duch & Stevenson, 2017; Gelman, Jakulin, Grazia Pittau, & Yu-Sung, 2008; Johnston, Jones, Propper, & Burgess, 2007). Multilevel models allow for the modelling of both between-individual variation, and also between-place variation, improving inferences and interpretation of the coefficients of the model. In addition, multilevel models make it possible to account for methodological details and use predictors from different levels. For this study, the model contains two levels following the methods reviewed in subsection 2.4 and in particular that adopted in one of the first studies of subjective happiness measures with the use of the ESS (Aslam & Corrado, 2012). Given the hierarchical structure of the data and the binary nature of the dependent variable, we apply multilevel logistic modelling by considering random intercepts, assuming that the relationship between the explanatory variables and APEP voting is the same in all regions, but that there is a different intercept for each region. In addition, we have also controlled for the unobserved heterogeneity between the countries by including country fixed effects.

The measure we have chosen for our dependent variable is labelled “voted for APEP” and is proxied by the respondent’s vote-choice. In particular, in the ESS, the following question was asked of all respondents: “What party did you vote for in the last national election of [country].” The responses were then recoded into a dichotomous variable, where 1 represents vote for an APEP, and 0 represents vote for any of the other parties (see Table 1). We wanted to use a survey that asked the respondents what party they actually voted for because this is the variable with the highest validity. A disadvantage with such a question is that voters might not remember what party they voted for, or they may wish not to reveal this information and choose for what they perceive to be a more socially “acceptable” party, or they do not want to answer, which eventually results in missing values. Respondents who did not remember what party they voted for, or refused to answer have been coded as missing values and have thus been excluded from the analysis. Rooduijn et al. (2019) shows that the voting patterns from the ESS are largely in line with the actual published election results at the country level. The ESS-voting variable can thus be considered representative for the actual voting behaviour. Nevertheless, a limitation of our framework is that the ESS waves do not always coincide with the election years in the countries that are included in our analysis.

As explained before, an important explanatory variable is subjective happiness as a proxy for life satisfaction/quality of life and/or general discontent. This variable is measured on a 10-point scale with the question on “taken all things together, how happy are you?” (0) very unhappy (10) very happy. Additional explanatory variables have been measured as follows: subjective health is measured by means of several categories representing (1) “very good” as the highest level and (5) “very bad” as the lowest level. Income (net household) is measured in deciles, level of

**TABLE 1** Presents summary statistics for all the variables included in our analysis

(a) Descriptive statistics for continuous variables						
Variable:	N	Min.	Max.	Mean/ %	Means (in %) for variables by categories of: APEP (0 = voted for other party; 1 = voted for APEP)	St. dev.
Subjective happiness	35,295	0	10	7.4	7.4/7.4	1.8
Attitude towards immigrants	35,450	0	10	4.9	5.0/4.4	2.5
European unification	33,327	0	10	5.0	5.1/4.3	2.7
Income (net household)	29,113	1	10	5.2	5.2/5.3	2.7
Satisfaction economy	34,749	0	10	4.9	4.9/4.9	2.3
Level of religiosity	35,158	0	10	4.5	4.5/4.3	3.1
Age	35,328	15	100	49.6	49.1/52.2	18.5
[NUTS 2] GDP per inhabitant in PPS (in % of the EU28 average)	35,450	43	220	102.9	104.6/95.0	39.9
[NUTS 2] unemployment rates by age 15-75, all sexes in %	35,448	2.2%	28.9%	8.0	8.2/7.3	4.4

(b) Descriptive statistics for the categorical variables			
Variable	Frequency	Percent	Percent for variables by categories of: APEP (0 = voted for other party; 1 = voted for APEP)
APEP (0 = voted for other party; 1 = voted for APEP)	35,450	100	
Voted for other party	29,392	82.91	
Voted for APEP	6,058	17.09	
Gender (dummy, ref: Men)	35,447	100	
Male	16,711	47.14	81.39% /18.61%
Female	18,736	52.86	84.27% /15.73%
Level of employment (ref: Employed)	35,346	100	
Employed	18,189	51.5	81.73% /18.27%
Unemployed	11,837	33.5	81.08% /18.92%
Economically inactive	5,320	15.0	90.83% /9.17%
Highest level of education (dummy; ref: University degree)	35,450	100	
No University degree	27,503	77.6	82.77% /17.23%
University degree	7,947	22.4	83.40% /16.60%
Attitude: Income redistribution (ref: Agree strongly)	34,921	100	
Agree strongly	25,676	73.5	82.91% /17.09%
Neutral	5,168	14.8	83.18% /16.82%
Disagree strongly	4,077	11.7	81.06% /18.94%
Attitude: Political interest (ref. very interested)	35,373	100	
Interested	4,060	11.5	79.68% /20.32%
Neutral	24,631	69.6	81.49% /18.51%
Not at all interested	6,682	18.9	90.00% /10.00%

(Continues)

**TABLE 1** (Continued)

(b) Descriptive statistics for the categorical variables			
Variable	Frequency	Percent	Percent for variables by categories of: APEP (0 = voted for other party; 1 = voted for APEP)
Subjective health (ref: Very bad)	35,404	100	
Very good	7,733	21.8	84.12% /15.88%
Good	15,348	43.3	82.89% /17.11%
Fair	9,530	26.9	82.36% /17.64%
Bad	2,305	6.5	81.78% /18.22%
Very bad	488	1.4	79.51% /20.49%

education is recoded into a dummy variable, where 1 represents “holding a university degree” and 0 represents all other categories (e.g., “not completed secondary education”), and level of employment is recoded and measured by means of three categories, asking the respondent the main activity conducted in the past 7 days (1 = “employed,” 2 = “not employed,” 3 = “Economically Inactive”¹). We also considered and controlled for several attitudinal variables, such as European Unification measured on a 10-point scale with the question whether European unification is already gone too far (0) or whether unification can go further (10); satisfaction with the economy (“how satisfied are you with the present state of the economy?”) (0) “extremely dissatisfied” and (10) “extremely satisfied”; someone’s attitude toward income redistribution (the government should take measures to reduce differences in income levels where (1) means “agree strongly” and (5) means “disagree strongly”) and someone’s political interest (1 = “very interested” and 4 = “not at all interested”). These variables have been recoded, creating a reference category. Next to that, for both variables categories were merged into one: In the case of income redistribution “agree strongly” together with “agree,” “disagree” together with “strongly disagree” “neither agree nor disagree” remained as it was and is labeled “neutral.” In the case of political interest “quite interested” was merged together with “hardly interested” and is labelled “neutral.” Someone’s attitudes towards immigrants is measured by means of a scale including two variables: quality of life and cultural life. The two items are summed up and recoded so that they range from (0) “immigrants worsen/undermine country’s culture/life” to (10) “immigrants enrich country’s culture/life.” We also control for age (in years), gender and level of religiosity (measured on a 10 – points scale, ranging from (0) “not at all religious” to (10) “very religious”).

Eurostat provided data for the contextual level data: regional GDP per inhabitant in PPS (in % of the EU 28 - average) and regional unemployment rate. These variables pertain to the NUTS 2 level, except for Germany and the UK for which we include this information at the NUTS 1 level. While many different combinations are possible, of particular interest are these two interactions that proxy economic hardship.

4 | MULTILEVEL LOGISTIC REGRESSION RESULTS

4.1 | Model (1): null model

In the previous sections we have provided the theoretical and methodological arguments for employing a multilevel approach. The first step of the analysis therefore will be to empirically test whether these theoretical expectations

¹Category ‘Economically Inactive’ entails: among others ‘Housework; looking after children; Education’



can be confirmed and if a multilevel approach is genuinely required. Therefore, we perform a multilevel (two-level) null model (see Table 2) which includes a random intercept and where respondents are nested in NUTS 2 (NUTS 1 for the UK and German) regions.

A key aim of our approach is to estimate the proportion of overall variation in APEP voting that is attributable to individuals (which may be pointing to a “people that don’t matter” reasoning) and the variation that is attributable to regions (which may be consistent with a “places that do not matter” argument). The intra-class correlation coefficient (ICC) of the null model, which includes no covariates, supports the choice to employ a multilevel logistic model, as it shows that 19% of the variance in the individuals’ vote for APEPs is located at the regional level. This might be interpreted as an indication that 19% of the variance in the individual’s vote for an APEP may be related to variables associated with the “places that do not matter” (Rodríguez-Pose, 2018) argument discussed in the introductory section and section 2.

4.2 | Models (2) and (3): happiness, socio-economic and demographic variables, health and social attitudinal variables

Model 2 (Table 3) presents the results of the baseline model and it includes individual socio-economic characteristics, the happiness measures and crude controls for the regional and national context. The first thing to note is that subjective happiness is not significant—there is no association between voting on APEP and individuals’ level of subjective happiness. Despite that, it is interesting and surprising to note that the odds ratio for “Economically Inactive” (i.e., among others “Housework; looking after children; Education”) representing the variable occupational status seems to have a statistically significant negative association. Compared to those in employment, the odds for individuals with an “Economically Inactive” position to vote APEP is 0.597. Further, income has a slight and significant positive association (OR: 1.026) with APEP voting. The same applies to age, for every unit increase, the odds of voting for APEP is 1.014 higher. Whereas, according to the odds ratio of gender, women are less likely to vote for APEP than men (OR: 0.824).

In Model 3 we add social and political attitudinal variables and we see that the attitudes trump the socio-demographic characteristics in explaining APEP voting. Only age and employment status remain significantly associated with APEP voting while all the attitudinal variables appear to be relevant. Being positive and welcoming towards immigrants (experiencing immigrants as enriching to the country’s culture/life’) and being pro-European (agreeing with the statement that European Unification can go further) are associated with a smaller estimated probability of voting for APEPs. Both associations are statistically significant with an odds ratio of 0.897 and an odds ratio of 0.907 respectively. The results for the variable representing someone’s attitude toward income redistribution are also worth noting. The association is statistically significant and shows that compared to those individuals in favour of income distribution, the ones that disagree are more likely to vote for APEPs. Involvement and interest in politics

TABLE 2 Two-level null model of voting for APEP

	Two-level null model
Constant	0.1716***(0.0121)
Total N	30,639
Level-2 N	174
-2LL	-15738.058
ICC (NUTS 2)	0.1893 (0.0158)

Notes: Robust Standard errors are noted in parentheses next to the unstandardized coefficients (OR = odds ratio).

* = p < 0.1; ** = p < 0.05; *** = p < 0.01.

**TABLE 3** Two-level logistic regression analysis of voting for APEPs

	Model (2)		Model (3)	
	OR		OR	
Fixed effects				
Intercept	0.090***(0.035)		0.276***(0.110)	
Subjective happiness	0.981 (0.019)		1.007 (0.018)	
Income (net household)	1.026*(0.015)		1.012 (0.015)	
Highest level of education (dummy; ref: University degree)	0.885 (0.085)		0.935(0.085)	
Occupational status (ref: Employed)				
Unemployed	0.876 (0.081)		0.922 (0.095)	
Economically inactive	0.597***(0.085)		0.652***(0.091)	
Level of religiosity	0.988 (0.013)		0.985 (0.014)	
Subjective health (ref: Very bad)				
Very good	1.166 (0.256)		1.217 (0.301)	
Good	1.061 (0.212)		1.071 (0.240)	
Fair	0.954 (0.203)		0.931 (0.222)	
Bad	0.876 (0.212)		0.933 (0.246)	
Age	1.014***(0.003)		1.009***(0.003)	
Gender (ref: Men) (dummy)	0.824***(0.054)		0.908 (0.066)	
Attitudes towards:				
Immigrants			0.897***(0.016)	
European unification			0.907***(0.015)	
Satisfaction economy			1.008 (0.026)	
Income redistribution (ref: Agree)				
Neutral			0.998 (0.096)	
Disagree			1.237*(0.151)	
Political interest (ref. interested)				
Neutral			0.780***(0.073)	
Not at all interested			0.312***(0.043)	
Country effects (ref: GER):				
	HU	10.281***(2.801)	HU	11.726***(2.974)
	PL	5.368***(1.196)	PL	6.313***(1.490)
	UK	3.784***(0.855)	UK	4.021***(0.905)
	FI	3.446***(0.713)	FI	3.827***(0.798)
	CZ	3.143***(0.631)	CZ	2.934***(0.613)
	IT	2.602***(0.593)	IT	2.974***(0.698)
	NL	1.690**(0.382)	NL	1.729**(0.394)
	SI	1.408*(0.273)	SI	1.636**(0.322)
	AT	1.346 (0.323)	ES	1.481 (0.393)
	ES	1.078 (0.274)	SE	1.120 (0.274)
	EE	1.041 (0.202)	AT	1.083 (0.252)
	SE	1.012 (0.253)	PT	1.066 (0.341)

**TABLE 3** (Continued)

	Model (2)		Model (3)	
		OR		OR
	FR	0.0787 (0.176)	EE	0.984 (0.185)
	PT	0.756 (0.251)	FR	0.824 (0.181)
	IE	0.743 (0.241)	IE	0.795 (0.259)
	LT	0.649**(0.128)	LT	0.754 (0.151)
	BE	0.441***(0.119)	BE	0.468***(0.124)
Random effects				
NUTS 2-variance (level-2)		0.243		0.235
ICC (NUTS 2)		0.069 (0.009)		0.067 (0.009)
Log pseudolikelihood		-24010.802		-22011.31
Wald Chi-Square (df)		3.44e+06 (29)		2.74e+06 (36)
Level-2 N		174		174
Total N		28,803		26,972

Notes: Robust standard errors are noted in parentheses next to the unstandardized coefficients (OR = odds ratio). Standard errors have been clustered at the NUTS 2 level (NUTS 1 for GER and GB).

* = $p < 0.1$. ** = $p < 0.05$. *** = $p < 0.01$.

is also worth noting. Compared to individuals interested, those that have little or no interest are less likely to vote for APEPs. The results underline that it is misleading to examine APEP voting in terms of stereotypes based on socio-demographic characteristics (e.g., middle-aged men) and that voting may be better understood by considering the underlying attitudes and ideas of the voters.

Regarding the contextual variables, we include country fixed effects in both models. With Germany as the reference country, we find that individuals located in Czechia, Finland, UK, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland and Slovenia are more likely to vote APEP whereas individuals located in Belgium and Lithuania (not in model 3) are less likely to vote APEP. This suggests that after controlling for several social attitudes and characteristics at the regional level, unobserved country characteristics (e.g., socio-political norms, media discourse, political historical background) can positively (or negatively) influence the voting behaviour for APEPs. A tentative observation is that countries currently at the geo-political periphery of Europe (the UK, Hungary, Poland) tend to harbour relatively many APEP voters after taking into account the individual political beliefs and attitudes of people. Models (4) and (5) (Table 4) more explicitly address the role of the regional context in understanding voting behaviour.

4.3 | Models (4) and (5): happiness, socio-economic and demographic variables, health, social attitudinal variables and regional context

The results of Model (4) and (5), are displayed in Table 4. Both models include two regional-level variables to describe the extent to which APEP voting may be the result of either individual level discontent (“people that don’t matter”) or regional characteristics (“places that don’t matter”): regional GDP per inhabitant in PPS (in % of the EU 28 average) and an indicator of regional unemployment rate. Both variables are not significantly related to APEP-voting (Model (4)), which questions the role of the relative socio-economic position of regions in understanding APEP-voting. This idea is further strengthened by the fact that the associations with the attitudinal variables remain largely unchanged. Four out of five social attitudes remain to have a relationship with the propensity to vote for an APEP. A positive

**TABLE 4** Two-level logistic regression analysis of voting for APEPs

	Model (4)		Model (5)	
	OR		OR	
Fixed effects				
Intercept	0.414 (0.237)		0.104***(0.089)	
Subjective happiness	1.006 (0.018)		1.215**(0.119)	
Income (net household)	1.012 (0.015)		1.013 (0.015)	
Highest level of education (dummy; ref: University degree)	0.935 (0.085)		0.940 (0.085)	
Occupational status (ref: Employed)				
Unemployed	0.922 (0.095)		0.922 (0.095)	
Economically inactive	0.651***(0.091)		0.655***(0.092)	
Level of religiosity	0.985 (0.012)		0.984 (0.014)	
Subjective health (ref: Very bad)				
Very good	1.216 (0.310)		1.210 (0.300)	
Good	1.073 (0.241)		1.052 (0.238)	
Fair	0.931 (0.222)		0.919 (0.221)	
Bad	0.933 (0.247)		0.919 (0.244)	
Age	1.009***(0.003)		1.009***(0.002)	
Gender (dummy; ref: Male)	0.910 (0.066)		0.908 (0.065)	
Attitudes towards:				
Immigrants	0.897***(0.017)		0.896***(0.017)	
European unification	0.907***(0.015)		0.907***(0.015)	
Satisfaction economy	1.009 (0.026)		1.009 (0.026)	
Income redistribution (ref: Agree)				
Neutral	0.998 (0.095)		1.004 (0.096)	
Disagree	1.237*(0.151)		1.235*(0.151)	
Political interest (ref. interested)				
Neutral	0.779***(0.073)		0.785***(0.072)	
Not at all interested	0.311***(0.043)		0.311***(0.043)	
(NUTS 2) GDP per inhabitant in PPS (in % of the EU28 average)	1.004 (0.018)		1.060**(0.029)	
(NUTS 2) unemployment rate in %	0.996 (0.003)		1.006**(0.008)	
(NUTS 2) GDP per inhabitant in PPS (in % of the EU28 average) * subjective happiness			0.999 (0.001)	
(NUTS 2) unemployment rate in % * subjective happiness			0.993***(0.003)	
Country effects (ref: GER):				
	HU	9.746***(2.826)	HU	10.279***(2.909)
	PL	5.393***(1.324)	PL	5.032***(1.259)
	GB	3.740***(0.832)	FI	3.684***(0.848)
	FI	3.645***(0.825)	GB	3.679***(0.830)
	IT	2.869***(0.784)	CZ	2.686***(0.561)
	CZ	2.659***(0.552)	IT	2.622***(0.727)
	NL	1.763**(0.404)	NL	1.749**(0.404)

**TABLE 4** (Continued)

	Model (4)		Model (5)	
		OR		OR
	SI	1.468*(0.299)	SI	1.437*(0.300)
	ES	1.267 (0.464)	ES	1.291 (0.475)
	SE	1.131 (0.267)	SE	1.105 (0.263)
	AT	1.114 (0.267)	AT	1.104 (0.269)
	IE	0.914 (0.268)	IE	0
	PT	0.902 (0.304)	PT	0.901 (0.306)
	EE	0.849 (0.165)	EE	0.848 (0.166)
	FR	0.734 (0.162)	FR	0.732 (0.164)
	LT	0.646**(0.132)	LT	0.664**(0.136)
	BE	0.455***(0.119)	BE	0.452***(0.120)
Random effects				
	NUTS 2-variance (level-2)	0.225		0.227
	ICC (NUTS 2)	0.064 (0.009)		0.064 (0.009)
	Log pseudolikelihood	-22007.292		-21982.273
	Wald Chi-Square (df)	2.79e+06 (38)		2.76e+06 (40)
	Level-2 N	174		174
	Total N	26,972		26,972

Notes:

Robust Standard errors are noted in parentheses next to the unstandardized coefficients (OR = Odds Ratio). Standard Errors have been clustered at the NUTS 2 level (NUTS 1 for GER and GB).

* = $p < 0.1$; ** = $p < 0.05$; *** = $p < 0.01$.

attitude “towards immigration” reduces the odds of voting for an APEP. Those being in favour of “European Unification” and “politically interested” are less likely to vote for APEPs. Further, the variable representing “income redistribution” is negatively associated and statistically significant with voting for APEPs: individuals agreeing with income redistribution tend to be less likely to vote for APEPs compared to the other categories. Similarly, we see that the country fixed-effects also remain largely unchanged, which suggests that the relevant spatial context for voting behaviour is rather the national level than the regional socio-economic circumstances. As such, we find no clear sign of a regional effect—in addition to individual attitudes—as suggested in previous literature (Dijkstra et al., 2019; Rodríguez-Pose, 2018). That having said, the regional context can still be relevant as a mediating context for individual level variables. Model (5) explores this possibility by introducing cross-level interaction effects between “subjective happiness” and regional GDP per inhabitant in PPS and regional unemployment.

The results for the attitudinal variables and the country fixed-effects remain robust to the inclusion of the interaction terms. At the same time, the results for the interaction effects suggest an intermediary effect of regional unemployment on voting behaviour. Specifically, we see that after including the interaction effects, subjective happiness now has a direct positive and significant association with APEP voting. Happier individuals, after controlling for their political attitudes, are more likely to vote APEP. It can be argued that this might, to some extent, be consistent and relevant with recent work by Rodríguez-Pose, Lee, and Lipp (2020) arguing that the rise in vote for Trump in 2016 was higher in areas with strong social capital which at the same time experienced long-term economic and population decline. If we assume that higher levels of social capital are associated with higher levels of happiness then a similar process might also be in place in European regions, but there is a need for additional research (including relevant suitable data on social capital and long-term decline) to explore this further.



It is also relevant to note here that in many cases APEP parties that appear to be or are self-proclaimed “anti-establishment” can in fact be seen as very much part of the establishment (a good example of this in the PopuList that we use to operationalize our dependent variable is the fact that the Conservative party in the UK is considered to be APEP). Also, of relevance here is the work of Gest, Reny, and Mayer (2017) who highlighted the notion of “nostalgic deprivation”—the diversion between the status quo and the past social conditions.

It is also noteworthy that regional unemployment levels seem to mediate the positive association between happiness and APEP voting downwards. In particular, as can be seen in Figure 1, the marginal increase in happiness is associated with an increase in the probability to vote for APEPs: the higher the level of happiness, the higher the probability to vote for APEPs. Figure 1 highlights how this relationship becomes significant above a certain level of happiness. Moreover, the interaction between the individual level of happiness with the regional level of unemployment is showing that the positive relationship between happiness and the probability to vote for APEPs varies for different levels of unemployment. In particular, for lower levels of happiness, the marginal increase in happiness is associated with a larger increase in the probability to vote for APEPs in regions with higher levels of unemployment (compared to regions with lower levels of unemployment). On the contrary, for higher levels of happiness, the marginal increase in happiness is associated with a smaller increase in the probability to vote for APEPs in regions with higher levels of unemployment (compared to regions with lower levels of unemployment).

Based on that, it can be argued that in regions with higher unemployment rates, the positive association between happiness and APEP voting is less pronounced. The result is difficult to reconcile as the variable refers to the economic situation in a region and it seems to point into a different direction. The interaction with unemployment suggests a mitigating effect on the association between subjective happiness and APEP voting in economically lagging regions. A tentative interpretation can be that unemployment rates are closer to the economic reality of people and as such carry more weight in the voting decision. Indeed, we see that the direct effect of regional unemployment is as expected; regions with higher unemployment experience more so-called “anti-establishment” voting. In a context of relative economic hardship, the complacency argument may be less pronounced explaining the mitigation effect of the interaction. It is clear that this needs to be further substantiated before drawing any firm conclusions regarding this aspect.

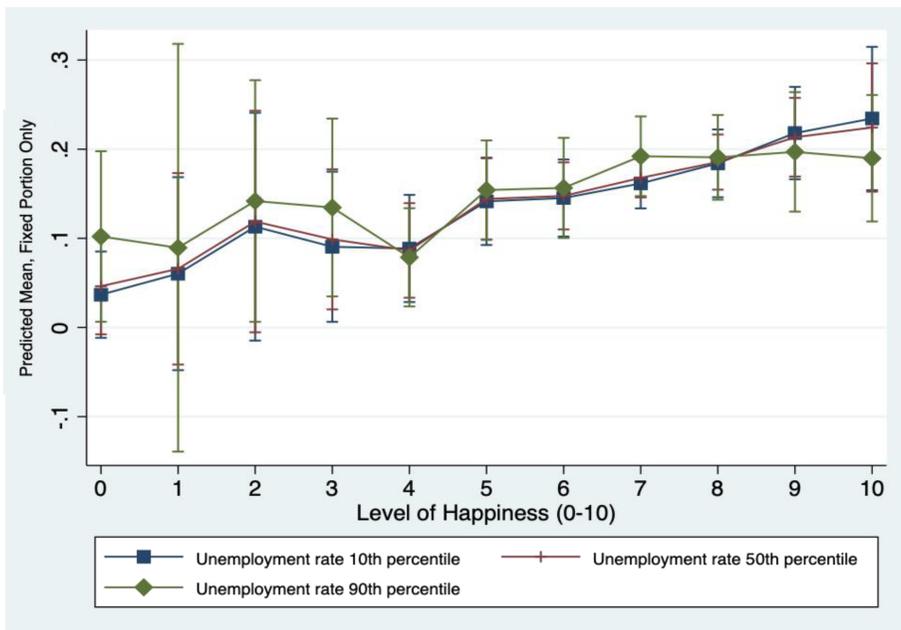


FIGURE 1 Association between happiness and voting for APEPs, given certain levels of unemployment



Overall, the models consistently underline both the importance of individual characteristics, particularly the political beliefs and attitudes that people have, and the contextual factor, particularly country-level variation, in understanding APEP voting. Regions may be important, since individuals from the same region may share common socio-economic, political and cultural characteristics, alongside individual characteristics, determining voting for APEPs. Yet, we do not find robust evidence that regional level indicators of socio-economic development explain APEP voting patterns well.

5 | CONCLUDING COMMENTS

In this paper we argued for and presented a multilevel modelling approach to the analysis of the geographies of discontent, examining the extent to which voting for APEPs is the result of “places that do not matter” or “people that do not matter.” Hereby, we engaged with key terms and debates introduced by regional scientists and economic geographers in recent years (Dijkstra et al., 2019; Los et al., 2017; McCann, 2016, 2018, 2020; Rodríguez-Pose, 2018). Our analysis took into account both personal characteristics (including income, health status, but also subjective happiness, and social and political attitudes) and the regions in which people live in selected European countries. We find that before including any individual or contextual explanatory variables there is a considerable variation (19%) of APEP voting that is attributable to regional-level characteristics. This variation drops to 6% when we consider explanatory variables at the individual level (including age, employment status, social attitudes) as well as regional-level variables in the analysis such as regional GDP per inhabitant in PPS and regional unemployment rates.

An individual's own socio-economic, political and cultural characteristics are important in determining the voting behaviour for APEPs, however, as our analysis revealed, it is only part of the picture. According to our analysis, voting for APEPs is a result of both: “places that do not matter” and “people that do not matter.” Particularly, the results of the variables representing social and political attitudes, indicate that individuals vote for APEPs because they are potentially politically and socially dissatisfied rather than generally discontent with life. Still, not only are individual-level effects significant, but so are regional factors as well as unobserved country characteristics. When explicitly accounting for regional factors, unexplained regional-level variability remains high, suggesting that the role of geography is important in explaining voting behaviour for APEPs. Overall, it still remains an open question whether broader notions of voter well-being are important determinants of predicting the propensity to vote for “anti-establishment” parties, as different to our expectation subjective happiness turned significant once regional variables were added to the model. A potential driving mechanism behind APEP voting could be group identification, specifically perceived collective threats or disadvantages that stimulate feelings of discontent or anxiety. Given these circumstances of strong group identification, individuals may report higher levels of subjective happiness, yet at the same time, feel collectively disadvantaged and vote for “anti-establishment” parties (also see Otjes, Stroebe, & Postmes, 2019).

The research we presented benefited from and built on relevant work in political sciences on the definition and analysis of populism and so called anti political establishment voting (Rooduijn et al., 2019) including the extensive analysis of voting for far-right parties (Bonikowski et al., 2019; Georgiadou, 2019; Georgiadou et al., 2018; Halikiopoulou & Vlandas, 2016; Vlandas & Halikiopoulou, 2016). In addition, we also considered the importance of subjective happiness as a key variable in the analysis (and explicitly relevant to discontent), building on previous work on voting and happiness (such as the work of Di Tella & MacCulloch, 2005; Powdthavee et al., 2008; Liberini et al., 2017), as well as multilevel analysis of voting (Johnston et al., 2007; Jones et al., 1992) and of happiness and well-being (Aslam & Corrado, 2012; Ballas & Tranmer, 2012). An important contribution of our study is the finding that subjective happiness does not in itself affect the propensity to vote for APEPs. When linked with socio-demographic, and political and cultural characteristics and mediated by the regional context, voting for APEPs is driven by both *the individual and contextual (regional) level determinants*.



It is noteworthy that although the analysis suggests that the probability to vote for APEPs can be attributed mostly to social and political attitudes, there may be considerably more interactions between individual-level attributes and regional-level variables. For instance, our analysis shows that people who are in favour of further European integration are less likely to vote for APEPs. However, it could be argued that the extent to which an individual is in favour of further integration may be to a great extent related to regional-level variables or events. For example, regions that benefit from EU social and territorial cohesion funding may have an impact on identification with Europe (e.g., Capello, 2018), although this is not always the case (e.g., see López-Bazo & Royuela, 2019; Royuela & López-Bazo, 2020). In addition, a possible interesting extension to the methodological framework presented here would be to fit “random slopes” multilevel models which are underpinned by the assumption that the relationship between voting for APEP and the explanatory variables can be different in each level. Another aspect to consider is, given the degree of volatility at the party level, to reassess the classification of APEPs (as already mentioned in subsection 3.1). For example, future research could only include parties that are in line with Rooduijn et al. (2019), yet, more specifically focus only on one particular party family and/or party ideologies, which potentially might influence empirical results.

One of the EU's key priorities is the enhancement of economic, social and territorial cohesion (Kotodziejski, 2020). In this paper we demonstrate how the inclusion of individual and regional effects are important for understanding the geographies of discontent and addressing the question to which voting for APEP is the result of “places that do not matter” or “people that do not matter.” Thus, from a policy perspective individual effects and possible interactions with territorial circumstances should be considered when developing adequate social, economic and regional policies. In particular, our research findings can inform relevant debates on whether urban, regional and national social policies should be aimed at addressing interpersonal inequalities or territorial inequalities (or both) and the extent to which previous, current and future (planned) social and territorial cohesion policies may be associated with subjective happiness and discontent. The methodological framework that we presented in this paper can be extended to consider more dimensions of individual and collective (regional and local) sources of discontent and resentment. In this context, the measurement and inclusion of subjective happiness as well as social capital and cohesiveness may be particularly insightful. To that end, additional interactions that could be considered and examined would include measures of social capital and long-term economic and demographic decline (also in the light of recent work by Rodríguez-Pose et al., 2020).

Overall, our analysis offers an empirically innovative answer to the puzzle of anti-political establishment comparing the importance of individual and place-based factors. Our findings can also open up significant avenues for future research. Additional micro-level analysis could further specify the socio-economic and demographic circumstances under which particular social groups support APEP, such as the composition of neighbourhoods and its effects in voting behaviour. Party-level analysis could elaborate on the theoretical and empirical links between socio-economic policies and specific APEP strategies.

DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this paper.

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APPENDIX

TABLE A1 The Populist^a

			Populist	Far right	Far left	Eurosceptic
Austria	Freedom Party of Austria	FPÖ	x	x		x
	Team Stronach	TS	x			x
	Alliance for the future of Austria	BZÖ	x	x		x
	Communist Party of Austria	KPÖ			x	
	List Peter Pilz	JETZT	x		x	
Belgium	Flemish interest	VB	x	x		x
	Workers' Party of Belgium	PVDA/PTB			x	x
	Libertarian, direct, democratic (Lijst Dedecker)	LDD	x			
	National Front	FN	x	x		x
	People's party	PP	x	x		x
Czech Republic	ANO	ANO	x			
	Freedom and direct democracy – Tomio Okamura	SPD	x	x		x
	Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia	KSCM			x	x
	Civic democratic party	ODS				x
	Úsvit-NK (Dawn- National Coalition)	Úsvit	x	x		x
	Svobodní (Party of Free Citizens)	Free		x		x
	Realisté (realists)	REAL		x		x
	DSSS (worker's Party of Social Justice)	DSSS		x		x
Estonia	Pro Partia (Erakon Ismaa ja res Publica lit)	ERP	x			
	Conservative People's party	EKRE	x	x		x
	Estonia Independence party (Eesti Iseseisvuspartei)	EIP		x		x
Finland	Finns party (true Finns)	Ps	x	x		x
	Left Alliance	VAS			x	x
	Workers party	STP			x	
	Independence party	IPU				x
France	National rally/front (France)	FN	x	x		x
	Lutte Ouvrière (workers struggle)	LO			x	x
	Movement for France	MPF		x		x
	New Anticapitalist party	NPA			x	x
	Independent Workers' Party	POI			x	
	Radical leftist party	PRG			x	
	Republican's and Citizen's movement	MRC			x	x

**TABLE A1** (Continued)

			Populist	Far right	Far left	Euroscptic
	Unsubmissive France (La France Insoumise)	FI, LFI			x	x
	Communist Party	PCF			x	x
	France Arise (Debout la France)	DLF		x		x
	The patriots	LP	x	x		x
	National Republican Movement	MNR	x	x		x
Germany	The left (Germany)	Linke	x		x	x
	Alternative for Germany	AFD	x	x		x
Hungary	Fidesz - Hungarian civic Alliance	FIDESZ	x	x		x
	Jobbik, the movement for a better Hungary	Jobbik	x	x		x
	Hungarian justice and life party	MIÉP	x	x		x
	Hungarian Workers' Party (Magyar Munkáspárt)	MMP			x	x
	Hungarian socialist Workers' Party	MSZP			x	
Ireland	Sinn Féin	SF	x		x	x
	Socialist party (Ireland)	SP			x	x
Italy	The people of freedom/Forza Italia (FI)	PdL (FI)	x			
	Northern league	LN	x	x		x
	CasaPound Italy	CPI		x		x
	Five star movement	M5S	x	x		x
	Left ecology freedom	SEL			x	
	Power to the people!	PaP	x		x	
	Free and equal	LeU			x	
	The people of the family	PdF		x		
	Brothers of Italy (Fratelli d'Italia)	Fdl	x	x		x
	Civil revolution	RC	x		x	
	La Destra (the right)	La Destra		x		x
	Italy to the Italians	Lal		x		x
Netherlands	Party for freedom	PVV	x	x		x
	Socialist party (Netherlands)	SP	x		x	x
	Party for the Animals	PvdD				x
	Political reform party	SGP				x
	Fortuyn list	LPF	x	x		x
	50PLUS	50PLUS				x
	Forum for democracy	FvD	x	x		x
Poland	Law and justice	PiS	x	x		x
	Kukiz '15	Kukiz '15	x	x		x
	Coalition for the Renewal of the republic - Liberty (KORWiN)	Liberty		x		x

(Continues)

**TABLE A1** (Continued)

			Populist	Far right	Far left (x) ^{orientation}	Euro sceptic
	Together party	Razem				
Portugal	Left bloc	BE	x		x	x
	Unitary democratic coalition (PEV & PCP)	CDU (PEV & PCP)			x	
	Democratic Republic party	PDR	x			x
Slovenia	United left/the left	ZdLe/L			x	x
	Slovenian democratic party (Slovenska demokratska stranka)	SDS	x	x		
	Slovenian national party	SNS	x	x		x
Spain	Podemos/we can	PODEMOS	x		x	x
	United left/united we can (Unidas Podemos)	UP			x	
	Candidatura d'Unitat popular (popular Unity candidacy)	CUP			x	x
	VOX	VOX	x	x		x
	Catalonia in common—we can/Catalunya en Comú—Podem		x		x	
	Unitarian candidacy of workers/ <i>Candidatura Unitaria de Trabajadores</i>	CUT			x	
	Basque Country unite/EH Bildu	Bildu			x	
	Galician nationalist bloc/Bloque Nacionalista Galego	BNG			x	x
Sweden	Sweden democrats	SD	x	x		x
	Left party	V			x	x
United Kingdom	United Kingdom Independence party	UKIP	x	x		
	Conservatives	Con				x
	Sinn Féin	SF	x		x	
	Plaid Cymru – The Party of Wales				x	
	British National Party/national front	BNP	x	x		x
	Democratic unionist party	DUP	x	x		x

Note:

^aonly the definitions for parties in the countries included in the analysis are listed. ^aSource: Rooduijn et al. (2019).

**TABLE A2** Country statistics

Countries	Number of regions	Observations	NUTS classification
Austria (AT)	9	2,010	NUTS 2
Belgium (BE)	11	1,766	NUTS 2
Czechia (CZ)	8	2,269	NUTS 2
Estonia (EE)	1	2,019	NUTS 2
Spain (ES)	18	1,958	NUTS 2
Finland (FI)	5	1,925	NUTS 2
France (FR)	21	2,068	NUTS 2
Germany (DE)	16	2,851	NUTS 1
United Kingdom (UK)	12	1,958	NUTS 1
Hungary (HU)	7	1,614	NUTS 2
Ireland (IE)	2	2,757	NUTS 2
Italy (IT)	20	2,626	NUTS 2
Lithuania (LT)	1	2,122	NUTS 2
Netherlands (NL)	12	1,681	NUTS 2
Poland (PL)	16	1,696	NUTS 2
Portugal (PT)	5	1,270	NUTS 2
Sweden (SE)	8	1,551	NUTS 2
Slovenia (SI)	2	1,307	NUTS 2



Resumen. Los politólogos y geógrafos llevan mucho tiempo estudiando y analizando las posibles repercusiones de los efectos contextuales en el comportamiento político. Este artículo revisa la literatura relevante existente y la amplía mediante la incorporación del aumento reciente del populismo y los cambios en los determinantes socioeconómicos de la economía política del descontento y la geografía de la felicidad y el bienestar en toda la Unión Europea. En particular, la investigación que se presenta en este artículo tiene como objeto analizar el impacto de las variables individuales y contextuales en el comportamiento político en las regiones europeas. Además, este artículo examina los vínculos entre el bienestar subjetivo y las preferencias políticas, al tiempo que considera los factores contextuales a nivel regional en toda Europa. Metodológicamente, se adoptó un enfoque de modelización multinivel para analizar el comportamiento de voto y para examinar también los indicadores de felicidad subjetiva en relación con los factores de la geografía política. Se emplearon datos de la Encuesta Social Europea (ESS) para estimar los efectos de los factores económicos y no económicos en toda Europa sobre la geografía de la felicidad y el descontento subjetivos, mediante la utilización de valores sociales individuales y normas culturales. Se encontró que no sólo las características a nivel individual son significativas, sino que también lo son las características regionales.

抄録: 文脈効果が政治的行動に及ぼす可能性のある影響は、政治学者や地理学者によって長い間研究され分析されてきた。過去の重要な文献をレビューし、最近のポピュリズムの台頭と不満の政治経済の社会経済的決定因子の出現、そしてEU全体の幸福とウェルビーイングの地理学を組み合わせて過去の研究を拡張する。特に、本稿で提示した研究は、ヨーロッパ地域全体の政治的行動に対する個人変数および文脈変数の影響を分析することを目的としている。さらに、主観的ウェルビーイングと政治的選好とのつながりを検討すると同時に、ヨーロッパ全域の地域レベルでの文脈要因を考察する。方法は、マルチレベルモデリング手法を用いて、投票行動を分析し、政治的地理学の因子と関連付けて主観的幸福指標を調べる。欧州社会調査 (European Social Survey:ESS)のデータを用いて、ヨーロッパ全体の経済的因子および非経済的因子の主観的幸福と不満の地理学に対する影響を、個人の社会的価値と文化的規範を用いて推定する。個人レベルの特性は重要であるが、地域の特性も同様に重要であることが分かる。