



The geography of political and life discontent

Organisers:

Sébastien Bourdin – EM Normandie Business School (sbourdin@em-normandie.fr)

Camilla Lenzi – Politecnico di Milano (camilla.lenzi@polimi.it)

Giovanni Perucca – Politecnico di Milano (giovanni.perucca@polimi.it)

Abstract

In the last decade, the upsurge of populist movements, typically associated with nationalist and authoritarian views, characterized the political scenario in many western countries. These parties achieved an unprecedented (and largely unexpected) electoral success, bringing them from a marginal to a central political role.

Several works showed that the electoral support for populism is generally clustered over space, and concentrated in specific areas, leading to the identification of a so-called “geography of discontent” (McCann, 2020). In their influential study, Dijkstra et al. (2020) associated the geography of (political) discontent to the individual dissatisfaction with one’s own life and, more specifically, with the opportunities provided in the community of residence. In this perspective, populist support is interpreted as the revenge of places (and people) that don’t matter.

Despite the relevance of this issue, the geography of political discontent, and its overlapping with life dissatisfaction are still not fully understood. Recent studies, for instance, pointed to a complex territorial fragmentation of populist voting, going beyond a simple rural-urban dichotomy (Bourdin and Tai, 2022). Other works showed instead that mismatches between political and life discontent may occur, suggesting a complex interplay between the perception of one’s own life and the personal political behavior (Lenzi and Perucca, 2021).

Our special session aims at contributing to the discussion on these topics. More precisely, contributions focused on the following issues are welcome:

- How did the geography of political discontent evolve in the recent years?
- To what extent are political and life discontent overlapping?
- Did populist governments reduce political discontent?

The multidisciplinary nature of the topic makes the ERSA conference an ideal forum in which to debate these issues. Economists, geographers, sociologists and political scientists are therefore invited to contribute to the special session.

References:

Bourdin, S., & Tai, J. (2022). Abstentionist voting—between disengagement and protestation in neglected areas: A spatial analysis of the Paris metropolis. *International Regional Science Review*, 45(3), 263-292.

Dijkstra, L., Poelman, H., & Rodríguez-Pose, A. (2020). The geography of EU discontent. *Regional Studies*, 54(6), 737-753.

Lenzi, C., & Perucca, G. (2021). People or places that don't matter? Individual and contextual determinants of the geography of discontent. *Economic Geography*, 97(5), 415-445.

McCann, P. (2020). Perceptions of regional inequality and the geography of discontent: Insights from the UK. *Regional Studies*, 50(2), 256-267.