



**THE FUTURE OF DEMOCRACY IN THE EUROPEAN CONTEXT**

**FOUR VICIES AND ONE VIRTUE  
STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES OF DEMOCRACY IN EUROPE**

**Author:** Victor LAPUENTE

**Brussels, February 2022**



© Institute of European Democrats, 2022

Rue Montoyer 25

1000 Brussels

Belgium

Web: [www.iedonline.eu](http://www.iedonline.eu)

**This Research Paper was elaborated on the basis of independent research. The opinions expressed here are those of the Contractor and do not represent the point of view of the Institute of European Democrats.**

With the financial support of the European Parliament





## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

All across the European continent, democracy is suffering from a combination of four problems. These are the four vices we will analyze in this article: 1) that European democracies, instead of converging, diverge in fundamental aspects, from the absolutely different levels of social trust among the citizens of distinct territories to the also extraordinary variation in the quality of institutions among those territories; 2) that the two great intermediaries in a democratic society, political parties and the media, are collapsing, leaving an atomized landscape of new political formations and "niche" information platforms; 3) that the growing individualism of our time, far from distancing us from ideological polarization, has exacerbated it; 4) that the new cultural conflict or "war" (from banning bullfighting to changing street names) has replaced the old economic discussion (for instance, on whether we need to raise or lower taxes) characteristic of democracies. And the problem is that, in cultural matters, it is more difficult to reach agreement than in economic matters.

Despite these problems or vices of democracy in Europe, there is one great virtue of democracy in Europe, one that actually derives from its apparent weakening internal division: that Europe is a true policy market.

### **Social Media summary**

European democratic societies are fracturing. Territorial divisions are emerging and, at the same time, differences, both economic and generational, have been widening within these territories.

### **Keywords**

#individualism #ideology #convergence #intermediation #war #democracy

### **Short bio**

Victor LAPUENTE is Professor of Political Science, University of Gothenburg, Sweden



## Contents

1. Introduction.....	5
2. The Virtue of Democracy in Europe: The Policy Market.....	6
3. The first vice: lack of convergence.....	6
4. The second vice: the collapse of intermediation.....	8
5. The third vice: the perverse combination of individualism and ideology.....	9
6. The fourth vice: the culture war.....	10
7. Conclusions: Europe's fractures.....	11
8. References.....	13



## 1. Introduction

There is not one Europe, but many. That is our main flaw and our main virtue. On the one hand, democracy requires relatively homogeneous demos. And the diversity of nations, but also of regions within nations, that make up the European Union prevents the articulation of a continent-wide democracy. In addition to the traditionally remarkable socio-economic differences between and within member states, there have also been divergences in the response to the Covid-19 pandemic – which, in turn, seem to be associated with pre-existing differences in institutional quality, and which may have even widened the gap even more.

The dream of the United States of Europe is further away today than it has ever been - at least since this idea was first launched after the Second World War. When someone from a superpower like the US or China wants to call Europe, the old phrase of former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger still applies: What number should I call? Europe is a weak union, which has already suffered a Brexit, was on the verge of a Grexit during the financial crisis and could suffer a Polexit with the crisis of democratic values in some Eastern countries, such as Poland or Hungary. Add to that the external threats and tensions generated on its borders by uncomfortable neighbors such as Belarus or Russia.

However, political fragmentation has historically been the engine of economic development on the continent. In the aftermath of the Middle Ages, the existence of dozens of political units, sometimes fiercely opposed to each other, allowed large-scale innovation in all the corners of the continent: inventors, entrepreneurs and creators moved from one kingdom (duchy, county, republic or city-state) to another in search of the most propitious place to realize their potential. Modern Europe rulers, anxious to foster the economic development that would finance their military adventures or, at the very least, allow them to equip themselves with a decent army to defend against aggression from their neighbors, created an attractive legal environment for the people with the talent deemed most productive at each time (e.g. cannons, shipping, textiles, etc.). As a consequence, and in parallel, Europe became a giant laboratory for experimenting with different types of government, a process that culminated in the triumph of the model of parliamentary democracy we most European countries enjoy today.

That historic success still beats in the heart of Europe. But, all across the continent, democracy is suffering from a combination of four problems. These are the four vices we will analyze in this article: 1) that European democracies, instead of converging, diverge in fundamental aspects, from the absolutely different levels of social trust among the citizens of distinct territories to the also extraordinary variation in the quality of institutions among those territories; 2) that the two great intermediaries in a democratic society, political parties and the media, are collapsing, leaving an atomized landscape of new political formations and "niche" information platforms; 3) that the growing individualism of our time, far from distancing us from ideological polarization, has exacerbated it; 4) that the new cultural conflict or "war" (from banning bullfighting to changing street names) has replaced the old economic discussion (for instance, on whether we need to raise or lower taxes) characteristic of democracies. And the problem is that, in cultural matters, it is more difficult to reach agreement than in economic matters. Despite these problems or vices of democracy in Europe, there is one great virtue of democracy in Europe, one that actually derives from its apparent weakening internal division: that Europe is a true policy market. Let us start with that.



## 2. The Virtue of Democracy in Europe: The Policy Market

The decade in which Europe has surely been most challenged - by the euro crisis in 2010, the refugee crisis in 2015 and the Covid crisis in 2020 - is the decade in which, according to a privileged observer of the continent, Andrew Moravcsik, Brussels has outsmarted Washington, Beijing, London or Moscow.<sup>1</sup> Crises often make us envious of authoritarian or, at the very least, forceful regimes. We may even admire that political leaders in Singapore, Russia or China are able to make decisions without the cumbersome negotiations, and the lengthy legislative and administrative procedures of democracies. Let alone when public policy is delegated to a supranational authority, such as the European Union. Action can take longer and, in the midst of a pandemic, that means more deaths. Thus, during the first months of the coronavirus epidemic, the lists of countries to imitate were headed by autocratic or undemocratic systems, especially in Asia. As time has passed, however, European democracies have climbed to the top of the comparative indices of pandemic resilience.

Vaccination rates, led by many European nations, is the paradigmatic example. The Commission's gamble, endorsed by Angela Merkel's Germany, on a centralized EU-wide purchase of vaccines initially spurred fears in all corners of the Union. However, in a perfect metaphor of the secret of the EU's success, the European tortoise eventually overtook the hares of other nations - some of them authoritarian and, theoretically, very fast animals. The EU is moving slowly but surely. For our democracies, with good institutional quality and relatively higher levels of economic equality, solve day-to-day problems – e.g. bottlenecks in the distribution of vaccines, lack of professionals to administer the shots, resistance of significant fractions of the population to get vaccinated – more effectively than dictatorships or than other democracies, such as the US, with strong inequalities between rich and poor.

In European democracies we still live better than anywhere else on the planet. Of the 15 countries with the best reputation for economic, social or political success, 9 are European democracies, such as Sweden (number 1), Switzerland, Norway, the Netherlands or Spain (number 12). If we do the famous thought experiment of the philosopher John Rawls' "veil of ignorance" and imagine that we are an entity without a body or intelligence, or known skills or defect, and we have to choose the place in the world where we are going to be born, we would most probably opt for a European democracy; or a European "replica" across the seas, such as Australia or Canada. But despite these results, many intellectuals and politicians – some of whom had already (and wrongly) predicted the collapse of the euro currency a decade ago – continue to undervalue our continent's democracies.

## 3. The first vice: lack of convergence

Paraphrasing the expression used by astrophysicists in Newton's time to refer to the universal laws governing the entire cosmos, Europe is not a perpetual miracle. One of the handicaps of the European Union, and one that puts pressure on the democratic health of some member states, is the often growing differences between countries and, perhaps more importantly, between regions

---

<sup>1</sup> Moravcsik, Andrew. 2020. "Why Europe Wins", Foreign Policy, September 24th.



within countries. Data from the most recent wave of the *European Quality of Government Index*<sup>2</sup>, which maps perceptions of the quality of government in 208 regions (NUTS1 and NUTS2) of the 27 EU countries by surveying 129 000 citizens, presents some signs of concern. Many people in several EU democracies feel that public institutions act in a biased way, benefiting particular (economic) interests at the expense of the common good. But the differences within a member state - between, for example, Northern and Southern Italy, Flanders and Wallonia in Belgium, or, between Spain's Basque Country and Andalusia (or, curiously, Catalonia, which, despite being a wealthy region, is the Spanish region with the lowest rated institutions) – are very significant. The evidence accumulated over the years points to a painful truth: the inhabitants of certain European territories seem to enjoy a clearly higher institutional quality than the residents of others.

What explains the consolidation of divergence, rather than the longed-for European convergence, in institutional quality? Many variables are involved, including heavy historical legacies which, unfortunately, are immovable. For example, did your region inherit a more efficiency-oriented public sector, such as the Anglo-Saxon one, or one more obsessed with legality, such as the French or Spanish? However, there are factors on which we can act.

The most prominent of these is the politicization of public administrations, a particularly serious problem in Southern Europe. In Spain, although there are important differences between some autonomous communities and others, it is still common for ruling parties to appoint a large number of managerial (and sometimes middle management) civil service posts in all kinds of public and para-public institutions with party loyalists. This must be stopped, or reversed, if Spanish administrations aim to have higher standards of governance. But not only that. Politicization has been revealed in several investigations<sup>3</sup> as a major obstacle to democratic consolidation: e.g. Spain in the first third of the 20th century, Venezuela in the late 20th century, or Afghanistan and Iraq after the US invasion, which emphasized the adoption of formal institutions of democracy (e.g. free elections) in both nations, neglecting the construction of a depoliticized and neutral administration. Or, even worse, the US authorities allowed the newly elected rulers who came to power after the fall of the Taliban and Saddam Hussein's regime to appoint their acolytes to all sorts of institutions. The result was widespread corruption and witch-hunts against opponents of the government. In other words, democracy paradoxically failed because it was prioritized over building an impartial administration. Without bureaucracy there can be no democracy.

Differences in (perceptions of) quality of governance have traditionally been seen as anecdotal, but evidence is beginning to accumulate pointing to the decisive effect these perceptions have on investment decisions, entrepreneurship and, ultimately, economic development.<sup>4</sup> But whether due to differences in institutional quality, agglomeration economies or<sup>5</sup> other historical<sup>6</sup> factors,

---

<sup>2</sup> Charron, Nicholas, Victor Lapuente, and Monika Bauhr. 2021. "Sub-national Quality of Government in EU Member States: Presenting the 2021 European Quality of Government Index and its relationship with Covid-19 indicators."

<sup>3</sup> Cornell, Agnes, and Victor Lapuente. 2014. "Meritocratic administration and democratic stability." *Democratization* 21.7: 1286-1304.

<sup>4</sup> Nistotskaya, Marina, Nicholas Charron, and Victor Lapuente. 2015. "The wealth of regions: quality of government and SMEs in 172 European regions." *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy* 33.5: 1125-1155.

<sup>5</sup> Glaeser, Edward. 2011. *Triumph of the City*. New York: Pan Macmillan

<sup>6</sup> Iammarino, S., Rodríguez-Pose, A., & Storper, M. 2019. Regional inequality in Europe: evidence, theory and policy implications. *Journal of economic geography*, 19(2), 273-298.



geography matters more than ever<sup>7</sup>. Your income, well-being, health, longevity, and even happiness depend on where you live.

Within almost all European democracies what economist Andrés Rodríguez calls “regions that do not matter” are consolidating.<sup>8</sup> Regions, such as the deindustrialized East of France, the British *Midlands* or the Italian *Mezzogiorno*, where there are vicious cycles of low social (or interpersonal) trust and institutional trust, high levels of perceived corruption and low economic development. A populist narrative, dangerous to the workings of representative democracy, is penetrating these territories. Political entrepreneurs at both ends of the ideological spectrum are triumphing with an anti-elitist and often anti-democratic message, taking advantage of the sense of comparative grievance that many citizens in these regions experience. The problem of populism is not merely numerical, despite the fact that populist options currently comprise up to a third of the European Parliament. It is also a problem of geographical distribution, of concentration in certain places where populists can gather a majority support for disruptive options.

#### 4. The second vice: the collapse of intermediation

Social and territorial fragmentation has a corollary in the fragmentation of the traditional organs of intermediation in our democracies: the parties and the media. The 21st century has brought a radical change in the systems of political representation in most European democracies. After the Second World War and for several decades, it seemed that the constellations of political parties in each country were frozen. The large centre-left (social-democratic) and centre-right (liberal-conservative) formations accounted for the vast majority of votes in almost every election. However, while in the early years of the 21st century there was much talk of a crisis of social democracy, today we see a crisis of the traditional right-wing parties.

The reality is that both traditionally large political groups are weakened today. The social democrats have gone from attracting more than 30% of the vote on average in the 1980s to just over 20% now. Indeed, social democracy now rules in many European nations, including all of the Nordic countries, as well as the Iberian peninsula. It wins elections in contexts as diverse as a crisis-ridden Portugal or an economically expanding Germany. But compared to the past, it has lost ground to other progressive options, such as the Greens and the alternative left, which, by forcing coalition governments, is making the once placid governability enjoyed by the social democrats more difficult. On the right, conservative parties retain some support, but the Christian Democrats have gone from an average of 25% of the vote in Western Europe in the 1980s to barely 15% today.<sup>9</sup> Again, the vote has shifted towards more radical formations, such as the populist or nationalist right, which is growing in most democracies, and which places obstacles and conditions - in order to support conservative governments - that are difficult for the latter to accept.

---

<sup>7</sup> Farole, Thomas, Andrés Rodríguez-Pose and Michael Storper, 2011. “Cohesion Policy in the European Union: Growth, Geography, Institutions”, *Journal of Common Market Studies* 49(5): 1089-1111.

<sup>8</sup> Rodríguez-Pose, A. 2018. The revenge of the places that don't matter (and what to do about it). *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society*, 11(1), 189-209.

<sup>9</sup> Bale, Tim, and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, 2021. eds. *Riding the Populist Wave: Europe's Mainstream Right in Crisis*. Cambridge University Press.





The cause of the dismemberment of the traditional parties has much to do with the highly questionable political management of the financial crisis.<sup>10</sup> As it became clear that the traditional parties prioritized economic responsibility over responsiveness to citizens' demands, many voters abandoned the establishment parties in favor of new options. However, the process of decline of the big parties had already begun earlier, as a consequence of structural changes both in the labor market (which, for example, has reshaped the working class) and in society (with the emergence of new cultural conflicts).

The traditional media have also entered into a deep crisis. Citizens are no longer mere receivers of information, but also senders, via social media. At first, there was much hope in the potential of social networks to promote democracy, to the extent that they were seen as “liberation technologies”.<sup>11</sup> Mark Zuckerberg, founder of *Facebook*, was named *Time magazine's* person of the year in 2010 and, after the experience of the Arab Spring, the potential of social media to give a voice to people traditionally excluded in a society seemed obvious. Social networks favor the coordination of dispersed opposition groups and encourage inclusion. However, alongside positive effects, there are also negative ones, such as the ease of spreading hate speech and fake news.<sup>12</sup> Thus, in a curious twist of fate, in 2021 *Time magazine* once again featured Mark Zuckerberg on its cover, but this time with his face partially covered by a mobile application window with the question “Delete Facebook?” and the two options: “Cancel” or “Delete”.

We do not know how the hitherto polarizing effects of social media will evolve. On the one hand, we can expect them to increase because the spirals of radicalization that occur when citizens are locked into echo chambers increasingly isolated from each other are difficult to reverse. If 38 million Americans lost personal relationships with friends and family in the wake of Trump's political cycle, it is hard to foresee many regaining them. But, on the other hand, we already experienced an epidemic of fake news and radicalization at the dawn of the modern press in the late 19th century. Tabloids distributed almost for free helped to generate states of collective hysteria, and to feed aggressive nationalisms, such as the American in the Cuban war or the French and, above all, the German in the particularly violent first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Nevertheless, journalism overcame this period, thanks to public regulation and self-regulation of the profession, leading to the golden decades of journalism during a large part of the 20th century. This return to sanity and moderation could now be repeated. Although, for the moment, we do not know how.

## 5. The third vice: the perverse combination of individualism and ideology

Ideology is like glucose. We need a certain amount for the cells of democracy to function, but too much is bad for our national health. Every political decision has an indelible ideological component. Technical analyses are necessary, but not sufficient. Politicians must always activate their ideological principles in some way or another. President Obama puts the percentage of such difficult decisions at 100% of those he had to take during his term in office: if there were an easy

---

<sup>10</sup> Ruiz-Rufino, Rubén. 2021. Financial bailouts and the decline of establishment politics, *Electoral Studies*, 70

<sup>11</sup> Tucker, J. A., Theoharis, Y., Roberts, M. E., & Barberá, P. 2017. From liberation to turmoil: Social media and democracy. *Journal of democracy*, 28(4), 46-59.

<sup>12</sup> Mitchelstein, E., Matassi, M., & Boczkowski, P. J. (2020). Minimal Effects, Maximum Panic: Social Media and Democracy in Latin America. *Social Media+ Society*, 6(4)



technical solution to a public problem, it would have been taken earlier and would not have reached his Oval Office desk. The politician's desk is never free of conflict and ideological dispute.

But, precisely because it is unavoidable, what we cannot do is to magnify the weight of ideology, viewing any aspect of reality – from the establishment of a public-private partnership between a private hospital and a national health service to the obligation of wearing facemasks during a pandemic – through ideological lenses. Moreover, as experts note, the problem does not lie in the polarization of policy positions (e.g. some politicians claiming for raising taxes and others for lowering them), but the so-called affective polarization: i.e. that you harbor feelings of rejection towards people with an ideology opposed to your own.<sup>13</sup>

For many, the current situation represents a paradox that is difficult to explain. We live in an individualistic world, in which ideologies should tend to disappear, and yet they seem stronger (and more divisive) than ever. In his famous essay “The End of Ideology”, the sociologist Daniel Bell predicted as early as 1960 the demise of ideologies as a result of the fact that, in the West at least, we citizens were becoming more individualistic, more aware of the power we had over our own destinies.<sup>14</sup> Progress has freed us from the chains that kept our ancestors tied to the plough, to the factory’s assembly line, to the place where they were born. Privileged observers of recent decades such as Ulrich Beck, Zygmunt Bauman or Anthony Giddens have expressed themselves in a similar vein. Ideologies should lose their power of traction over the minds of more and more individualistic generations of people. However, the opposite is happening: the extreme individualism of our time does not seem to cure, but to stimulate the extreme ideologization of our societies.

The reason perhaps lies in the fact that the extraordinary freedom we enjoy when it comes to accessing different media allows us to opt for the alternative that is most convenient for us.<sup>15</sup> We thus end up reading the news (in online or offline media outlets, traditional or modern, in newspaper, radio, television, podcast or digital platforms) that are most in tune with our ideology. We are naturally lazy and, therefore, faced with a wide range of different points of view on an issue (think, for example, of abortion or immigration), we take the easy way out: I adopt the opinion that “my people”, my political tribe, defends.

## 6. The fourth vice: the culture war

All this is related to another vice that haunts our democracies: the culture war. For decades, the deepest political divide in Western democracies has been economic: on the one side, the supporters of the free market (the right) and, on the other, those of state intervention (the left). It was a fracture that was sometimes bitter. In Spain there was a good deal of hard confrontation between the PSOE and the PP. The emergence of *Thatcherism* in the UK and *Reaganism* in the US, or the rise and fall of Mitterrand in France, are some famous examples of tough debates between supporters of a freer or more intervened economy, between those who want to give greater emphasis to efficiency and those who want to give more weight to equality.

---

<sup>13</sup> Miller, Luis, and Angélica Olavarría. “Para entender la polarización.” Letras libres (2020).

<sup>14</sup>Daniel, B. 1960. *The End of Ideology. On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties*, The Free.

<sup>15</sup> Lütjen, T. 2020. Paradoxical individualization: ideological polarization in the US in historical-comparative and theoretical perspective. *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 25(2), 180-196.



However, in economic matters, agreement is always feasible because money is infinitely divisible. If two people argue about an amount, they can divide it in a way that is more or less acceptable to both. Thus, in an economic confrontation between two political actors with different positions, consensus is possible. For example, a middle ground can be found between those who want to raise VAT by 10% and those who want to keep it as it is: both can agree on a 5% increase.

By contrast, the new political disputes that are proliferating in our societies, which are cultural in nature, are more difficult to resolve: what is the middle ground on issues such as banning bullfighting or removing Avenida Largo Caballero from the street map? These discussions may seem very national, or even local, but they are the common denominator of the new political debate that is taking hold not only across Europe, but also in the US, where they began to gain momentum several years ago, even before the rise of Donald Trump. These clashes between Republicans and Democrats (or within the two parties) range from issues as relatively trivial as the removal of the statue of a 17<sup>th</sup> century figure to others as dramatic as the assault on the United States Capitol on January 2021, following the non-substantiated suspicion that the presidential election Trump lost had been rigged.

Cultural discussions around the world are consolidating a new political cleavage. Political scientists refer to this cultural divide with the acronym GAL-TAN<sup>16</sup> - that is, the clash between the Green-Alternative-Liberal worldview and the Traditional-Authoritarian-Nationalist perspective. Both visions can spawn populist movements, but it is especially the latter the one taking more roots in the West, fueling the rising nationalistic radical right-wing.

This national-populism has destabilizing effects on political systems, but it also has negative consequences for social welfare. For example, a recent study indicates that populism, as measured by the presence of anti-European attitudes in the regional legislative chambers of several EU countries, is associated with higher excess mortality during the worst months of the Covid pandemic, even after controlling for the usual explanatory factors.<sup>17</sup> Populisms thus damage the fabric of democracy in a variety of ways.

## 7. Conclusions: Europe's fractures

European democratic societies are fracturing. As we have seen above, territorial divisions are emerging. But, at the same time, differences, both economic and generational, have been widening within these territories. Inequalities (in income) have been growing steadily this century. And, generationally, observers detect a growing disaffection of young people towards democracy. As political scientists Stephen Foa and Yascha Mounk<sup>18</sup> documented in a controversial paper, younger generations of both Europeans and North Americans are less satisfied with their form of government than older generations; and, surprisingly, many young seem open to non-democratic

---

<sup>16</sup> Polk, J., Rovny, J., Bakker, R., Edwards, E., Hooghe, L., Jolly, S., and Zilovic, M. 2017. Explaining the salience of anti-elitism and reducing political corruption for political parties in Europe with the 2014 Chapel Hill Expert Survey data. *Research & Politics*, 4(1)

<sup>17</sup> Charron, Nicholas, Victor Lapuente, and Andrés Rodríguez-Pose. 2021 "Uncooperative society, uncooperative politics or both? How trust, polarization and populism explain excess mortality for COVID-19 across European regions." *Quality of Government Working Paper Series*.

<sup>18</sup> Foa, Roberto Stefan, and Yascha Mounk. 2016. "The danger of deconsolidation: the democratic disconnect." *Journal of democracy* 27.3: 5-17.



alternatives. Thus, while among those Europeans or Americans born in the 1930s, 1940s or 1950s a solid majority (over 50% or even 70% ) consider it “essential” to live in a democracy, this percentage drops to 30% or 40 % for those born in the 1980s.

The positive interpretation is that, for the moment, the alternatives to democracy are very poorly defined. Not even China (let alone Russia or the Bolivarian experiences in Latin America) has been able to project a system of government that captures the imagination of young Westerners, unlike what happened at other times in history, such as in the 1930s or 1960s, where young (and frequently highly educated) folks joined totalitarian ideologies (Communist or Fascist) and subversive groups (guerrillas or paramilitary).

Europe is riven by growing fractures, both within member states (rich vs. poor, young vs. old, globally interconnected metropolis vs. declining regions) and across states, with some countries firmly committed to liberal values and others, led by Poland and Hungary, questioning them. Unfortunately, opinion surveys detect sharp divergences among Europeans in relation to cultural values fundamental to building a political community or *demos*, such as interpersonal trust. In Central and Eastern Europe, as well as in some Southern countries, levels of social trust are particularly low, while in Western and Nordic Europe, social trust is particularly high. Such diversity of preferences makes it difficult to reach the encompassing agreements necessary to build supranational institutions.

But if history teaches us anything, is that differences (economic, political or cultural) within Europe are both a burden and a facilitator for innovation and economic development. Let us hope that the growing conflicts will generate creative discussions and not destructive clashes between Europeans, as has also been the case in other centuries.



## 8. References

- Bale, Tim, and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, 2021. eds. *Riding the Populist Wave: Europe's Mainstream Right in Crisis*. Cambridge University Press.
- Charron, Nicholas, Victor Lapuente, and Andrés Rodríguez-Pose. 2021 “Uncooperative society, uncooperative politics or both? How trust, polarization and populism explain excess mortality for COVID-19 across European regions.” *Quality of Government Working Paper Series*.
- Charron, Nicholas, Victor Lapuente, and Monika Bauhr. 2021. “Sub-national Quality of Government in EU Member States: Presenting the 2021 European Quality of Government Index and its relationship with Covid-19 indicators.”
- Cornell, Agnes, and Victor Lapuente. 2014. “Meritocratic administration and democratic stability.” *Democratization* 21.7: 1286-1304.
- Daniel, B. 1960. *The End of Ideology. On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties*, The Free.
- Farole, Thomas, Andrés Rodríguez-Pose and Michael Storper, 2011. “Cohesion Policy in the European Union: Growth, Geography, Institutions”, *Journal of Common Market Studies* 49(5): 1089-1111.
- Foa, Roberto Stefan, and Yascha Mounk. 2016. “The danger of deconsolidation: the democratic disconnect.” *Journal of democracy* 27.3: 5-17.
- Glaeser, Edward. 2011. *Triumph of the City*. New York: Pan Macmillan
- Iammarino, S., Rodríguez-Pose, A., & Storper, M. 2019. Regional inequality in Europe: evidence, theory and policy implications. *Journal of economic geography*, 19(2), 273-298.
- Lütjen, T. 2020. Paradoxical individualization: ideological polarization in the US in historical-comparative and theoretical perspective. *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 25(2), 180-196.
- Miller, Luis, and Angélica Olavarría. “Para entender la polarización.” *Letras libres* (2020).
- Mitchelstein, E., Matassi, M., & Boczkowski, P. J. (2020). Minimal Effects, Maximum Panic: Social Media and Democracy in Latin America. *Social Media+ Society*, 6(4)
- Moravcsik, Andrew. 2020. “Why Europe Wins”, *Foreign Policy*, September 24th.
- Nistotskaya, Marina, Nicholas Charron, and Victor Lapuente. 2015. “The wealth of regions: quality of government and SMEs in 172 European regions.” *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy* 33.5: 1125-1155.
- Polk, J., Rovny, J., Bakker, R., Edwards, E., Hooghe, L., Jolly, S., and Zilovic, M. 2017. Explaining the salience of anti-elitism and reducing political corruption for political parties in Europe with the 2014 Chapel Hill Expert Survey data. *Research & Politics*, 4(1)
- Rodríguez-Pose, A. 2018. The revenge of the places that don't matter (and what to do about it). *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society*, 11(1), 189-209.
- Ruiz-Rufino, Rubén. 2021. Financial bailouts and the decline of establishment politics, *Electoral Studies*, 70



Tucker, J. A., Theocharis, Y., Roberts, M. E., & Barberá, P. 2017. From liberation to turmoil: Social media and democracy. *Journal of democracy*, 28(4), 46-59.