

Understanding the left-behind: Electoral support and views on redistribution

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Scientific environment

Marta Rekdal Eidheim completed this PhD project at the Department of Government, in affiliation with Digital Social Science Core Facility (DIGSSCORE), Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Bergen. During the PhD project, Eidheim has also been affiliated with the Department of Comparative Politics at the University of Bergen (2019 – 2021), and the research units Migration, Extremism and Diversity (MEME) and Territorial Democracy and Reforms (TDR), organized by the Norwegian Citizen Panel.

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Abstract

In recent years, the political science literature has increasingly given attention to so-called left-behind voter groups that are placed in disadvantageous structural positions as societies transform through processes of globalization, deindustrialization, technological change and urbanization. Notably, these groups – the working class and the rural voters — have been identified as being pivotal in the rise of the populist radical right. The literature has highlighted their conservative cultural preferences and their dissatisfaction with government as drivers of this pattern. In Norway, a rural upheaval did not lead to a rise of the populist right in the 2021 election, but rather it was the center-left that mobilized these voters. In light of what extant scholarship has put forward about left-behind voters, this is puzzling. Examining the Norwegian case, the thesis sheds new light on left-behind voters. I argue that there are contingencies that have not been sufficiently addressed so far, which should be considered when accounting for the political behavior of these voters. Firstly, the thesis brings the economic dimension back in as a central factor, and secondly, it uses the lens of group consciousness to explain how left-behind voters are mobilized in a multiparty system.

The first article of the thesis addresses the economic preferences of working class voters, and investigates the effect of clarifying that the rich will pay on their support for redistribution. The article uses the unpopular inheritance tax as a hard test case. The results show that when the tax explicitly targets the richest, the support increases substantially, and especially among those who identify as working class. More broadly, the findings underscore that it is important that policies have a clear redistributive structure in order to obtain working class support.

The second article addresses the nature of the urban-rural divide using a social identity framework. It finds that place grievances are highly asymmetric, as those who identify as rural, especially those with strong identities, harbor more resentment over place than urban identifiers do. The analysis further shows that this rural resentment was associated with voting for the Center Party in 2021. The study contributes firstly by demonstrating that voters' rural consciousness can also be mobilized in settings with more generous welfare states and multiple party options, and that parties that

are not right-wing can successfully appeal to this rural identity.

The third and final article of the thesis examines whether there is conflict or consensus on the economic dimension among rural and working class voters. Employing three empirical tests that make use of a group-based framework to explore redistribution preferences, I find that there is a potential consensus on redistribution, as both of these voter groups find rural and working people deserving of government resources, especially compared to urban groups. In addition, both support traditional economic redistribution more than spatial redistribution. Overall, the article implies that there is potential to mobilize these voters on a broad redistributive agenda across both place and class.

In summary, the thesis contributes new insights to the research on what mobilizes left-behind voter groups by identifying contingencies that have been given less emphasis in the previous literature. By developing and analyzing original survey questions and experiments from the Norwegian Citizen Panel, this study helps to explain why these voters, under certain circumstances, can turn to the center-left. It also identifies a potential consensus between left-behind voter groups on economic preferences, in contrast to the focus on cultural preferences in previous studies, further underscoring that there are possibilities for the left to garner support from these voters if they promote policies that account for both place and class redistribution. Taken together, the thesis highlights that there are more ways of mobilizing these voters than what has so far been stressed in the literature.

Samandrag

I dei seinare åra har statsvitskapen retta søkelyset mot grupper som kjem dårlegare ut i den post-industrielle samfunnsutviklinga. Desse gruppene – såkalla «left-behinds» – sakkar meir akterut enn andre når samfunnet vert endra av globalisering, avindustrialisering, teknologisk utvikling og urbanisering. Arbeidarklasseveljarar og distriktsveljarar, som heilt overordna kan seiast å høyre til denne gruppa, har fått merksemd fordi dei har vorte knytt til framveksten av høgrepopulismen. Litteraturen trekker fram konservative haldningar og politisk misnøye som viktige forklaringar på stemmemønsteret til desse veljarane. Denne avhandlinga ser på norske veljarar. Ved stortingsvalet i 2021 vart desse sosiale gruppene mobilisert av parti til sentrum-venstre i norsk politikk, noko som tyder på at det er fleire nyansar i forteljinga om dei som sakkar akterut enn det som tidlegare har kome fram i den internasjonale litteraturen. Eg argumenterer for at det er særleg to tilnærmingar som kastar nytt lys på desse veljarane. Den første dreier seg om korleis gruppeidentitetar kan mobiliserast. Den andre handlar om at vi også må undersøke økonomiske haldningar, i tillegg til dei kulturelle.

Den første artikkelen i avhandlinga tek for seg økonomiske haldningar, og undersøker kva rolle det spelar for støtta til økonomisk politikk at det er tydeleg kva for ei gruppe som må betale. Artikkelen bruker den upopulære arveavgifta for å teste dette. Resultata viser at når ein introduserer arveavgifta på ein slik måte at det er klart at dei rikaste må betale, aukar støtta til å innføre denne skatten betydeleg. Særleg gjeld dette hos dei som identifiserer seg som arbeidarklasse. Artikkelen tyder på at det å formulere økonomisk politikk som er tydeleg omfordelende er viktig for å hente støtte frå arbeidarklasseveljarar, og for knytte politisk støtte sterkare til tradisjonelle økonomiske interesser.

Den andre artikkelen tek sikte på å forstå by-land-skiljet i politikken ved å bruke gruppeidentitet som perspektiv. Vi måler kor vidt dei som identifiserer seg med byen og bygda vert mobilisert av misnøye knytt til det å bu i byen eller det å bu på bygda. Artikkelen viser at dei som identifiserer seg med bygda, og særleg dei med sterk bygdeidentitet, i mykje større grad vert mobilisert av denne type misnøye enn urbane veljarar, som ikkje kjenner på same type misnøye knytt til det å bu urbant.

Vi finn dermed at det er ein asymmetri i by-land-skiljet. Vidare viser analysen at den rurale misnøya er med på å forklare kvifor veljarar stemte på Senterpartiet i 2021. Artikkelen bidreg ved å vise at slik geografisk identitet også påverkar politisk åtferd i ein kontekst med omfattande velferdsstat og fleirpartisystem, og at rural identitet ikkje treng vere kopla til å stemme på parti til høgre i politikken.

Den tredje artikkelen fokuserer på dei økonomiske haldningane til arbeidarklasseveljarar og distriktsveljarar ved å undersøke om desse veljargruppene er i konflikt med kvarandre eller er samde i korleis staten skal fordele økonomiske ressursar. Resultata viser at begge desse veljargruppene er meir villige til å fordele offentlege ressursar til dei om bur på bygda og til arbeidsfolk, samanlikna med til byane. Resultata viser også at begge desse veljargruppene er meir positive til tradisjonell økonomisk omfordeling framfor omfordeling mellom stadar. Artikkelen tyder på at dei ikkje er i konflikt med kvarandre i fordelingsspørsmål, og at det dermed er potensial for å mobilisere desse veljarane på eit breitt omfordelingsprogram.

Til saman bidreg avhandlinga med ny innsikt til den statsvitskaplege litteraturen om dei sosiale gruppene som kjem dårlegare ut i den post-industrielle samsfunnsutviklinga. Ved å utvikle og analysere spørsmål og eksperiment i spørjeundersøkinga Norsk medborgerpanel, viser funna i avhandlinga at gruppeidentitetar er med å forme dei politiske haldningane til desse veljarane, og meir spesifikt at rurale veljarar sin gruppeidentitet ikkje alltid vert kanalisert inn i høgrepopulistisk stemmegiving. Avhandlinga peikar også på at desse veljarane støttar omfordeling mellom stadar og klasser, og dermed at der er eit potensial for hente støtte frå dei om ein tek omsyn til begge desse dimensjonane. Til saman syner avhandlinga at det er fleire måtar å mobilisere desse veljarane på enn tidlegare framheva i litteraturen.

List of articles

- 1 Marta R. Eidheim. “Aligning working class interests and preferences: The case of inheritance tax.”
- 2 Auerbach, Kiran, Marta R. Eidheim, and Anne Lise Fimreite. “Place-based resentment in an egalitarian welfare state.”
- 3 Marta R. Eidheim. “Redistribution between people and places: Conflict or consensus among rural and working-class voters?”

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1 Introduction

In the aftermath of the political events of the 2010s, including Brexit and the election of Donald Trump, more scholarly and public attention was devoted to working class, low-educated voters that live outside of urban centers — so called left-behind voters. These voters had also been pivotal in the electoral success of the populist radical right in other countries (Rodríguez-Pose 2018; Rydgren 2013). Connections between social groups and parties used to help us understand the stability of party systems and voting behavior (Lipset and Rokkan 1967). A working class voter, for example, was clearly more likely to vote for the left in the middle of the 20th century. Today, this probability is much lower in many contexts (Knutsen 2006; Gingrich and Häusermann 2015; Bengtsson et al. 2013; Evans and Tilley 2017). What explains the connection between being left-behind and political behavior in this more volatile political landscape?

This thesis contributes new knowledge about the political behavior of left-behind voters. These are voters that belong to socio-structural groups that are more likely to fall behind and lose out in societies that thrive by growth in the service and knowledge sectors (Ford and Goodwin 2014; Kriesi 2010; Rodríguez-Pose 2018). Both the working class and rural residents are described as being in less advantageous positions with these transformations. Based on this, I refer to both these groups of voters as *left-behind*. In the literature, this term is not always defined or used consistently. In this thesis, it is employed as a useful shorthand to refer to the two voter groups, the working class and rural voters. The thesis will focus on both of these voter groups, separately and in comparison, in order to understand the political outlook of the left-behind more broadly. Below I outline two paths that guide this

research — namely, looking more closely at their economic preferences, and how group consciousness influences their political behavior.

Most often, these groups have been studied separately. The extant literature has, for example, focused on the cross-pressure for working class voters. The working class can vote for the left if they follow their economic interests and prefer economic redistribution (Häusermann and Kriesi 2015; Oesch and Rennwald 2018; Rennwald 2020). Conversely, they have been mobilized by the populist radical right on the basis of their views on cultural issues, and especially attitudes towards immigration (Ivarsflaten 2005; Rydgren 2013; Oskarson and Demker 2015). Rural voters are also linked to the electoral success of the populist radical right, and voting for these parties has been presented as a protest against being left-behind in the knowledge-economy (Cramer 2016; Rodríguez-Pose 2018; Huijsmans 2022), as well as a longing for a traditional version of society with less globalization, EU-integration and diversity (Jennings and Stoker 2016; Luca et al. 2023). Their economic preferences have received less scrutiny. Are there also any commonalities between these left-behind groups with regard to the economic dimension?

Studying the United States, Cramer (2016; 2012) identifies a rural refusal of the left. She finds a *rural consciousness* that includes a perception that state intervention in the economy does not benefit rural populations. Her work suggests that this kind of group identity or group consciousness is an important part of how voters navigate politics. We know less about how this type of consciousness is channeled in multi-party systems, or to what extent it influences political support in a setting with an extensive welfare state and comparatively low inequality. What is the nature of the rural consciousness, and how is it channeled in settings other than the US?

Summing up the research goal of the thesis, I aim to contribute new knowledge about the political behavior of left-behind voters by addressing two research questions, which have so far not received sufficient attention. What characterizes left-behind voters' views on redistribution, and how is their group consciousness channeled in a multiparty setting?

The site of the study is Norway. This is a case with an extensive welfare state, and where multiple parties compete for voters' support, such as the mainstream left and the mainstream right, in addition to an agrarian party that is currently aligned with the left, and a populist right-wing party. Importantly, it is a setting where rural voters recently turned towards the center-left.

In the summer of 2021, a Norwegian national newspaper visited the industrial town of Sauda, which is located in Western Norway. They wanted to shed light on a political shift. With its cornerstone smelting plant, the town was considered to be a Labor Party stronghold. In recent years, however, its inhabitants had increasingly voted for the agrarian, Center Party. A union leader at the plant told the reporter:

I think that the Labor Party has been somewhat asleep at the wheel when it comes to rural and industrial policies. They have joined the Conservatives on parts of the centralizing policies, both locally here in Sauda and also nationally. That has not been good. Then people will search for other voting options. Also when they are members of the labor movement. (Lægland 2021)¹

This example illustrates a similar (although not identical) sense of political uproar to that observed in the US and the UK. In the latter part of the 2010s, the Norwegian public debate saw considerable rural dissatisfaction. News reports told readers and viewers about rural residents who felt that they were not important and not heard,

1. My own translation from Norwegian.

and that the national government did not listen to their demands.² Their protests covered a broad range of issues, including the closure of schools, police offices, delivery rooms and a military airbase, loss of fish processing facilities, increases in ferry prices, lack of regulation of the wolf population, and merging of counties and municipalities. The grievances they pointed to affected their everyday lives, and reflected concerns about scarcity of resources, local autonomy and not having a voice when decisions are made — or one might say, they talked about being left behind.

The protests benefited the Center Party, boosting its support in the parliamentary election from 5.5 per cent in 2013 to 13.5 per cent in 2021. In previous research I have shown that both rural voters and voters belonging to the peripheries in Norway overwhelmingly believe that central government does not adequately consider rural Norway – a belief associated with voting for the Center Party in the local election in 2019 (Eidheim and Fimreite 2020). We have since confirmed that rural voters more than urban voters in fact prioritize public service delivery that is closer and has smaller units (Auerbach et al. 2022). While dissatisfied with central political elites, they also seem to want more public services.

What sets this story apart from many other recent accounts describing left-behind rural voters is that, in this case, they contributed to electing a center-left government (Aardal and Bergh 2022). This outcome is puzzling, as existing research tells us that rural discontent is channeled through voting for the populist right (Rodríguez-Pose 2018). Examining left-behind voters in Norway may thus broaden our understanding of the left-behind voters as it can explain why they do not automatically turn to the right.

2. Examples are: Eriksen (2021), Gillesvik (2021), Lundgaard (2017), Lysvold et al. (2020), and Spence (2021).

1.1 Contribution

The main contribution of the thesis to the political science literature is that it highlights how the political behavior of left-behind voters is affected by political contingencies that the previous literature has not sufficiently taken into account. These contingencies also help to explain why these voters might turn towards the center-left, as I identify the conditions under which alternatives to the populist radical right can channel left-behind grievances. This thesis argues that we need to consider these contingencies in order to understand this potential.

One such political contingency is how economic preferences can be mobilized. Previous literature has stressed how conservative cultural preferences influence the voting decisions of the left-behind. This thesis brings in the economic dimension as a central factor in understanding the political behavior of left-behind voters. The area of focus is these voters' views on redistribution. I show that there are ways of formulating and presenting economic policies that mobilize left-behind voters. I empirically tested the possibility that the economic dimension splits the left-behind voters, in that working class voters are more in favor of traditional economic redistribution, and rural voters are mobilized to a larger extent by spatial redistribution. The results, however, suggest that both groups support redistribution across class and place. Rural voters are frustrated over resource distribution between rural and urban areas, but this is a view that is shared with working class voters. Both voter groups find working people and rural people to be more deserving of public resources, compared to urban people. These groups do not diverge on these issues, which could create possibilities for parties to attract these voter groups with a broad redistributive agenda. Moreover, focusing on the example of the inheritance tax, this thesis shows that the specific formulation

of economic policies – making clear who will pay and who will benefit – influences how closely connected support will be to group interests and ideological underpinnings. Both of these findings suggest that there are economic conflicts that can mobilize left-behind voters beyond the cultural domain of politics, and imply that there is potential for the left to garner support from these voters.

A second contingency is how group consciousness influences the political behavior of left-behind voters. Socio-structural divides can be mobilized by calling attention to social groups and activating their group consciousness. When social groups with a structural anchoring are met with political ideas, policies and parties that emphasize their identity, this group is more likely to act according to their group interest (as seen in article 1). In the run-up to the 2021 election in Norway the Center Party positioned itself as the voice of the rural and peripheral voters. The evidence in this thesis demonstrates that rural group grievances were channeled through voting for the Center Party on election day, and not the populist radical right. This study also offers evidence that group consciousness affects left-behind voters' economic perceptions. For instance, rural voters more than urban voters are polarized over whether rural or urban areas are deserving of government economic resources. Based on this main contribution, the thesis highlights that, when we investigate political cleavages connected to left-behind voters, we should take into account group consciousness and the different ways in which it is mobilized politically.

While many studies referred to in this literature investigate the US and the UK, I contribute to the research about left-behind voters in a multiparty, representative system with comprehensive welfare provision. In a multiparty system, there is room for one party to establish itself as the voice of one specific social group, such as

the rural left-behinds. In the UK and the US, the respective party systems might limit this possibility, leaving the grievances of the left-behind to be mixed with a number of other issues. The Norwegian case shows us that the political outcome of mobilizing left-behind grievances need not necessarily strengthen the populist radical right. Moreover, the thesis demonstrates that the formulation of redistributive policies also matters in a Scandinavian welfare state, which redistributes heavily between people and places that are wealthy and not so wealthy (article 1).

The thesis also contributes an extensive new collection and analysis of original survey data, including several survey experiments and measures of identity and grievances, which enable new ways of examining the political behavior of left-behind voters. One concrete contribution is how the methodology of the thesis, randomly varying the social groups targeted by policies in experiments, reveals what influences the economic preferences of left-behind voters. The approach has been to learn along the way, and to repeat studies while incrementally adding more nuance at each step, following what has been referred to as a sequential factorial design (Ivarsflaten and Sniderman 2022). The thesis also offers insights into how the measurement of social groups influences our results, in the sense that subjective measures prove to be more closely connected to group interests and grievance than more objective measures. The thesis shows that, when testing the effect of explicitly targeting the rich, those who say they belong to the working class are more clearly affected than those who are placed in the working class by means of an occupational measure. Further, place-based resentment is more clearly predicted by a subjective rural identity than by actually living in a rural area.

The articles included in the thesis represent individual contributions as well as

contributions to the overarching research aim of the thesis. These articles are presented briefly in the table below. In what follows, I will first outline the theoretical background of the thesis, which draws on old and new cleavage literature and insights into group consciousness in political science. The Norwegian context will then be described in more detail. I will also elaborate on the methodological choices that were made, drawing particular attention to the use of survey data and experiments, as well as measures of social groups. Before concluding the thesis and suggesting avenues for further research, each article will be summarized highlighting their specific contributions to the field and the thesis.

Table 1: Short summary of the thesis articles

#	Article	Short summary
1	Aligning working class interests and preferences: The case of inheritance tax	This article examines the alignment between class interests and economic preferences. It argues that this link becomes stronger for the working class when it is clarified that it is the rich who will be the target of a tax. Using the inheritance tax as a hard test, this study shows that support for reintroducing this tax in Norway increases, especially among the working class, when it is made evident that the rich will pay. The findings of the paper emphasize the importance of considering policy structure and social group belonging in tandem.
2	Place-based resentment in an egalitarian welfare state	The article investigates the nature of the rural-urban divide. It argues that place-based resentment is asymmetric because structural differences fuel group grievances among rural voters, and that it affects partisan voting. The findings show that the resentment is indeed asymmetric, especially with regard to economic resources and the selfishness of the out-group. The results also confirm that this group resentment can predict vote choice, and highlights how it is tied to voting for a party that appeals to rural voters.
3	Redistribution between people and places: Conflict or consensus among rural and working class voters?	The article examines whether there is an consensus or conflict between rural and working class voters with regard to views on redistribution. The findings point towards consensus between these voter groups. Both rural and working class voters believe that cities end up with too many resources, and both believe that working people and rural people are deserving of government resources. In addition they favor traditional redistribution more than spatial redistribution. The study therefore implies that there is a shared view between these voter groups that parties might mobilize by offering programs that focus on redistribution along the lines of both place and class.

2 From structural division to group consciousness

This thesis examines the political behavior of voters groups that are anchored in a social structure. What is to be addressed further in the presentation of the theoretical background is how having a place somewhere within a social structure materializes as political behavior, be it expressing a political preference or voting for a certain party. This section starts with the pioneering cleavage theory and addresses the “funnel of causality”, before moving on to discuss how more recent scholarly advances help us to understand the connection between identities, consciousness and the supply side in the study of socio-structural political divides.

2.1 Traditional accounts of social groups in politics

In their highly influential study, Lipset and Rokkan (1967) identified social divisions that had been decisive in shaping Western European political competition, and stated that the party systems of the 1960s largely reflected cleavage structures of the 1920s. Their work emphasized long-standing alignments between social groups and political parties. These social cleavages arose in the wake of so-called critical junctures. The first critical juncture was the national revolution, which spurred two conflicts over power and culture. The *center-periphery* conflict revolved around the resistance of the periphery against the standards and culture imposed by the central state and urban bourgeoisie, while the *state-church* conflict related to the tension concerning the influence of church vis-à-vis the state. The second critical juncture was the industrial revolution, which paved the way for two material or functional conflicts. The *urban-rural* conflict pitted farmers’ interests against those of the merchants in urban areas –

the former favoring market control, while the latter preferred liberalization. Finally, they proposed the *owner-worker* conflict, which was a cleavage that influenced party systems across Western Europe, between working class interests and employers' interests. The cleavages varied across contexts – in some systems several cleavages aligned, and in others, they were cross-cutting. In Rokkan's conceptualization, they should be viewed as part of a structure of several cleavages within the territorial population (Rokkan 1999).

The Lipset and Rokkan cleavage model has been criticized and further developed. One line of criticism draws attention to the lack of clarity in the model, due to the “relative vagueness” (Von Shoultz 2017). Some point out that it is ambiguous with regard to what explains the actions of actors in the model (Berntzen and Selle 1990). Others hold that there is confusion about the “freezing hypothesis” – did the party systems freeze in the 1920's, or was it the the cleavages that were persistent (Mair 2001)? Later developments have shown us that new parties, such as the radical right and green parties, have emerged in Western Europe, supplementing and challenging the long-lasting, traditional parties. Moreover, scholarship has advanced the rise of new fully-fledged cleavages (e.g., Hooghe and Marks 2018; Kriesi 2010; Stubager 2010). It has also been proposed that, with some adaption, the key structures identified in the traditional cleavage model prove enduring as they still capture the most relevant structural differences in the political landscape (Deegan-Krause 2007) – for example, even today, urban-rural could refer to geographic differences, while owner-worker could reflect differences in socio-economic status.

As pointed out by Aardal (1994), models in social science are meant to simplify and systematize complicated phenomena in society and politics, and should be subject

to tests and development, and serve as a basis for hypothesis-testing. This has indeed been the case for the cleavage model, which has inspired numerous studies since it was first published. Later work has addressed some of the criticism by bringing more specific criteria to the cleavage model.

In their seminal work, Bartolini and Mair (1990) stipulated a more precise definition of a cleavage. In their account, three elements are necessary for a divide to constitute a cleavage. These work together and are equally significant. Firstly, a cleavage is founded on a socio-structural divide that can be identified empirically. Secondly, there is a normative or value-based element, which means that members that hold the same position within the structure have shared interests or values that, in turn, shape a sense of a collective identity. Another way of seeing this element is that voters are able to distinguish “us” from “them” in a manner that is relevant for politics. Thirdly, there is a behavioral component, in that there is an organization that provides an outlet that enables the group to act and vote according to their shared interests or values in the political arena, such as being member of a union or voting for a political party. By having a layer that explains agency between the structural difference and political organization, the second element ensures that the cleavage theory is not social-deterministic in nature (Aardal 1994).

Another starting point for research focusing on the political behavior of social groups is what is known as the “funnel of causality”, which originates from the scholars of the Michigan school (Campbell et al. 1980). Where the cleavage theory focuses on how structures shape party systems, and in turn voting behavior, the Michigan School places the attention closer to the individual, making it more socio-psychological compared to the socio-structural cleavage model. The funnel of causality is presented

as a way to understand how both long-term and short-term factors affect voter behavior (Lewis-Beck et al. 2008). The long-term factors include socio-demographic characteristics – such as gender, class, race, and party identity (or ideology) – and are found at the wide mouth of the funnel. The short-term factors – issues, candidates and leaders, and the economy – are found at the tip of the funnel. The model implies that the short-term factors are closer in time to the voting decision than the long-term factors. It also, however, emphasizes that longer-term factors influence factors further down in the funnel, such that socio-demographics affect party identity, and further that this identity then affects (for example) the evaluation of the economy (Dassonneville 2022). Later work has thus also paid attention to these short-term factors, in explaining variations in voter behavior (e.g., Nadeau and Lewis-Beck 2001; Stubager et al. 2021).

2.2 A new cleavage and its consequences

Returning to the long-term factors, more recent scholarship has also revisited cleavage theory in order to explain modern political developments. A second dimension of politics has been widely recognized. It has been referred to as a conflict between materialism and post-materialism (Inglehart 1971), libertarian and authoritarian values (Kitschelt 1994), GAL (green/alternative/libertarian) and TAN (traditional/authoritarian/nationalist) political orientations (Hooghe and Marks 2018), integration and demarcation (Kriesi et al. 2008), and between universalism and particularism (Beramendi et al. 2015). While varying slightly between the different conceptualizations, this second dimension involves issues such as liberal versus traditional values, environmental protection, European integration and immigration – also

labeled as cultural issues. More broadly, Dalton describes this as “a cleavage between a view of a future society and a view of a past society that its supporters value” (2018, 44). Transformations including the educational expansion, economic and cultural modernization, and European integration and globalization, are proposed as critical junctures or revolutions from which these differences in interests emanate, in keeping with Rokkan and Lipset’s (1967) original theory (Bornschieer 2018; Ford and Jennings 2020; Hooghe and Marks 2018).

Structurally, the educational divide is directly linked to this dimension through how “losers” in the labor market are more vulnerable to, and threatened by, globalization and modernization (Kriesi et al. 2008). More indirectly, it can be a form of cultural capital or a socialization that affects voters’ world views, as higher education is associated with being more tolerant and open, and less in favor of social order (Achterberg and Houtman 2006; Waal, Achterberg, and Houtman 2007; Stubager 2008). Politically, this divide has an expression in Western European party systems through the political conflict between the new, culturally liberal, left parties and the authoritarian and nativist radical right (Bornschieer 2018). Economic and demographic developments could reinforce the structural and political divisions further, as graduates are concentrated in more culturally diverse cities that thrive in the globalized, knowledge economy, while low-skilled workers are clustered in declining, ageing and peripheral areas (Ford and Jennings 2020).

This new dimension can create social group cross-pressure for voters, as it tends to cut across the traditional left-right cleavage in many party systems. Cross-pressure was identified long ago in political science (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet 1948), and builds on the idea that belonging to more than one social group places conflicting

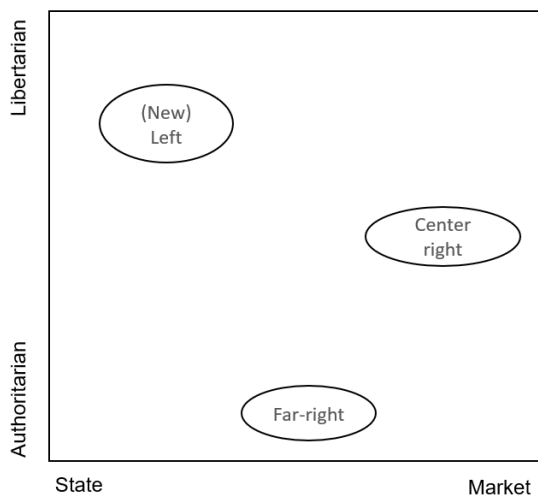


Figure 1: Tripolar space of competition. Based on Oesch and Rennwald (2018).

pressure on voters as they have to deal with cues that are opposing and contradictory (Dassonneville 2022). In the current political landscape, the cross-pressure can occur between economic preferences, represented by the horizontal axis in figure 1, and the cultural preferences, represented by the vertical axis in Figure 1, which shows the tripolar space of competition. Voters who are pro-state and authoritarian, which is where, on average, blue-collar workers belong, will need to find a party that fits in the bottom-left part. However, this option – the authoritarian-left – is often not available to voters (Hillen and Steiner 2020), although populist radical right parties are blurring their economic positions, as shown in the diagram (Rovny 2013; Harteveld 2016). If there is no such party, but there is a libertarian left and an authoritarian right, then these voters are cross-pressured between following their economic and their cultural

preferences. The cross-pressure could also be more tied to social group belonging and interpretation, with a worker identity pulling someone more towards the pro-state left, while a perception of being left-behind draws the voter more towards the authoritarian right.

2.3 Identities, consciousness and supply

In order to understand more clearly what connects voters' social characteristics to political behavior, we need to consider the elements of a cleavage in tandem, following Bornschieer et al. (2021).³ This thesis is therefore based on a theoretical background that highlights the interplay between structures, identities and supply. The three different elements of a cleavage – i.e., structure, identity and political organization (meaning party choice, in most studies) – work in parallel. Social structures can create social identities, while the supply side – political parties – can affect or awaken identities. Changes in the social structures can also influence how parties act, and which identities and accompanying group grievances are salient to voters. This description of cleavages can explain why the relevance of cleavages varies over time, or alternatively, why latent social divides become politically manifest.

Focusing first on social identities, there are variations in how the literature deals with this element of a cleavage. While Bartolini and Mair stated that shared values generate a “sense of identity” and “reflect a self-consciousness” (1990, 199), other researchers have not included this exact feature in their studies of political cleavages (e.g., Elff 2007; Goldberg 2020). While this is a common way of examining political cleavages in research and can produce valuable insights, there is ample evidence

3. See also Bornschieer (2010).

that identities have significance. Stubager (2013, 2009), for example, finds that the educational cleavage also has its own identities and consciousness tied to its political conflict. D’Hooge, Achterberg, and Reeskens (2018) show that subjective class identification is a precondition for material class to affect voting. Bornschieer et al. (2021; 2022) and Zollinger (2022) reveal that the new political divide over cultural issues is connected to in-group and out-group identities anchored in the social structure, such as being cosmopolitan, being rural or having a national identity. Bornschieer et al. (2021) therefore assert that social identity is the important link between social structures and politics. They argue that bringing social identity theory into the understanding of cleavages provides micro-level explanations for why and when social divisions matter.

Having a social identity implies that voters have “knowledge of their membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to the membership” (Tajfel 1981, 255). In other words, it is not enough to merely belong to a group, rather the concept requires a self-consciousness (Kinder and Dale-Riddle 2012). The identity can cultivate in-group bias, in that one holds favorable views of “us”, while it could also dispose a person to be more hostile towards “them”, the out-group (Tajfel and Turner 1986). According to self-categorization theory, salient group identities can lead to a shift towards adapting to group norms (Turner et al. 1987). Having a strong identity is also more likely to affect preferences and political action (Huddy 2013).

Looking more closely at the concept of group consciousness, it is not enough to share a common sense of “us” and of “our” values, but the identity is also tied to grievances over the group’s status, power or material resources, compared to the out-

group (Miller et al. 1981). Here, the link between identity and political behavior is more evident, because group-based action is motivated by a sense of illegitimate injustice between groups (Tajfel and Turner 1979). Recent scholarship suggests that this type of social identity approach is highly relevant for groups that feel left behind. Rural voters feel deprived in comparison with their urban out-group (Cramer 2016; Cramer 2012). This sense of injustice leads to rural resentment that has been shown to affect electoral behavior (Jacobs and Munis 2022; Trujillo and Crowley 2022).

With regard to the role of parties, the pioneers of the cleavage model posited that they served “as essential agencies of mobilization” (Lipset and Rokkan 1967, 4). More recent research illustrates this main point – namely, that parties can affect cleavages by what they supply voters with. They can accentuate political differences or politicize collective identities in order to attract certain groups of voters. The scholarship has emphasized that, if parties are similar on (for example) economic issues, then traditional class voting – i.e., the working class voting for the left and the middle class voting for the right – is less likely to occur (Evans and Tilley 2012a, 2012b). Moreover, it is found that the more polarized parties are on a broader range of issues, the more opposition one finds between classes (Ares 2021). Likewise, the appeals that parties make to social groups can activate the groups’ behavior (Thau 2021; Robison et al. 2021; Vivyan et al. 2020; Jacobs and Munis 2019). When parties say that they represent a social group or will work to improve conditions for a social group, such as rural dwellers or working people, that sends a signal to voters about whose interests the party prioritizes. The same logic would apply to policies, in that linking the policy consequence to a social group strengthens the relationship between group interests and policy support. This view of social groups in politics suggests

that social demographics and identities are not necessarily placed at the back of the funnel of causality; rather, the way in which parties behave can cause identities to also be part of more short-term dynamics that affect voter behavior.

2.3.1 Broader expectations

Based on this framework that highlights the interplay between structures, identities and supply, this thesis expects that a form of group consciousness in a broad sense will influence the extent to which social divides are manifest in political behavior, and more specifically that it will influence the political behavior of left-behind voters. By this, I mean that an awareness of social group belonging should connect socio-structural positions more closely to group interests and grievances. The stronger the identity, the stronger one would expect that a voter will express group grievances. Moreover, we would expect that parties can mobilize certain social groups in elections by clearly appealing to or addressing their specific group interests and grievances. In a multiparty system, there is room for one party to appeal to a specific social group. The link between social groups and policy support should also be more apparent when policies are explicit about which group will benefit or which group will pay.

The consciousness could also take the form of being aware of *who you are not*, or, to put it differently, by identifying an out-group, such as for the left-behind, not being rich or urban. This should be especially relevant for voters when the out-group is perceived to enjoy more privilege, status or resources than the voter's in-group, thereby contributing to heightened awareness and a sense of injustice. Emphasizing out-groups is therefore also expected to affect support for policies and parties among those who identify with a particular social group. The next section will take a more

in-depth look at the specific social groups being investigated in this thesis.

3 Understanding the left-behind

Below I will give an account of the literature that describes the structural basis, identities and preferences associated with the political divides that are central to this thesis. Both the working class and rural voters are proposed as social groups that have been electorally pivotal and left behind, and divides of class and place are therefore of particular interest. Moreover, focusing on the left-behind voters more broadly, I will present how I will address their economic preferences in this thesis.

3.1 The class divide

From Lipset and Rokkan's (1967) work, we know that the class cleavage between owners and employers on one side, and laborers and workers on the other side, had an outlet through the political organization of the working class. Politics was therefore partly characterized by a strong link between a person's economic interests and their political preferences. Workers, who were in a less advantageous economic position, voted for the left because they benefited from more extensive welfare policies. Political parties and unions representing workers played an important role in nurturing this link. Today, this is no longer straight-forward, as mainstream left parties have experienced a drop in support in Western multiparty systems (Benedetto, Hix, and Mastrocco 2020; Rennwald and Pontusson 2021), and the working class has become more fragmented, both in terms of composition and voting (Evans and Langsæther 2021). Moreover, the scholarship has even questioned whether the cleavage is still

relevant for politics (Clark and Lipset 1991; Clark, Lipset, and Rempel 1993).

Structural changes affect the make-up of the total electorate, and what constitutes the working class and the current middle class. Deindustrialization and service sector expansion have resulted in a reduction in the number of traditional production workers, and a rise in the number of service workers. In Rennwald's (2020) comparison of six countries in Western Europe, the share of production workers has declined from 31% in the 1970's to 16% in the 2010s. By contrast, the proportion of service workers has risen from 14% to 20% in the same period. What is therefore important to keep in mind is that the working class not only consists of male industrial workers, but also includes women and people working in (for example) retail, restaurants and health-care. Although diversified, the size of the working class has reduced in total. An estimation from Norway, counting both skilled and unskilled workers, suggests that the size of the working class was about 50% of the working population in 1980, while this figure had dropped to less than 40% in 2017 (Hansen and Ljunggren 2021). The middle class, on the other hand, has increased, with the rise in educational attainment and welfare state expansion. This class is also more heterogeneous. As highlighted by Oesch (2006) and Kitschelt and Rehm (2022), a group of professionals, who are not the highest earners but who work in fields such as education, healthcare and culture sectors constitutes a substantial part of the middle class.

Concerning the core of the class conflict, the literature broadly demonstrates that social classes hold preferences that are in line with self-interest (Brooks and Svallfors 2010; Häusermann and Kriesi 2015; Lindh and McCall 2020; Manza and Crowley 2018; Oesch and Rennwald 2018). The working class is more likely to support redistribution than the middle class. Nonetheless, some interesting nuances to this story

have been brought to light. For example, the working class places more importance on what is referred to as “social consumption” (i.e., financial transfers) than on social investment, while the opposite is true for the middle class (Häusermann et al. 2022). Also, the working class is not necessarily more in favor of all kinds of taxes. Studies from the US point to how a lack of information or the misdirection of self-interests can lead to the working class supporting tax policies that benefit the rich (Bartels 2016; Kuziemko et al. 2015).

Although many studies illustrate the continuing relevance of class (some examples are Beramendi et al. 2015; Brooks and Svallfors 2010; Elff 2007; Oesch and Rennwald 2018; Robison et al. 2021), research has shown a decline of traditional class voting – i.e., workers are now less likely to vote for parties on the left (Gingrich and Häusermann 2015; Knutsen 2006; Rennwald 2020). One possible explanation for this is a depolarization of class politics (Evans and Tilley 2012b). This supply-perspective points to the behavior of political parties. Parties are converging on typical left-right-issues, which makes the traditional cleavage blurred and the economic issues less salient (Evans and Tilley 2012a, 2017). Voters are therefore less able to use their class interests and identity as a form of guidance in political choices.

One development that points to a renewed relevance of social class in politics is that of realignment – namely, that there are new alignments between social classes and parties (Oesch and Rennwald 2018). The propensity of the traditional working class to vote for the radical right is the prime example of such a realignment, and, as mentioned earlier, the development is attributed to the salience of cultural issues, such as resistance towards immigration, and notions of political delineation (Ivarsson 2005; Oesch 2008; Rydgren 2013). The working class vote in the 21st century

is therefore characterized as fragmented, but is over-represented in social democrat and populist radical right constituencies (Evans and Langsæther 2021). A further example is how the new middle class of socio-cultural professionals is aligned with the left – not only because of cultural issues, but also because they are in favor of redistribution (Abou-Chadi and Hix 2021; Gingrich and Häusermann 2015). In total, the economic dimension now sees alliances across classes, and opposition within classes, that contribute to less clear economic alignments.

With regard to the role of social identity, this has traditionally been part of how class politics is conceptualized. In the Marxist tradition, class consciousness meant that a worker was aware of the economic interests of his or her class, and was willing to act on them (de Felipe-Redondo 2015). Along these lines, more recent research finds that those who identify with the working class are more likely to display left-wing political preferences, which shows that this type of awareness is part of mediating the relationship between structures and political preferences (D’Hooge, Achterberg, and Reeskens 2018; Stubager and Harrits 2022). Finally, evidence showing that social class appeals affect political support (as mentioned previously) gives further credence to the notion that this consciousness continues to be of importance (Thau 2021; Robison et al. 2021).

3.2 The place divide

The place divide that is most commonly addressed in the recent literature is the antagonism between voters residing in rural as opposed to urban areas. As has already been noted, Lipset and Rokkan (1967) identified this conflict in their cleavage model. The foundation was material, between the economic interests of those who produced

goods in the primary sector and those who consumed it in urban areas. The other divide related to place in their work is the cleavage between the center and the periphery, meaning the resistance from the periphery to being dominated by the center. The political conflict(s) over place described in the recent scholarship, revolve around both the material considerations, similar to the original urban-rural cleavage, and the political and cultural grievances that are akin to the center-periphery conflict (as, for example, shown by Huijsmans 2023). With regard to the current research, the conceptual disentanglement of the two divides is therefore not straightforward. Empirically, being rural and being peripheral have both been shown to predict political discontent in the same studies (Eidheim and Fimreite 2020; Dijkstra, Poelman, and Rodríguez-Pose 2020; de Lange, Brug, and Harteveld 2022; Rickardsson, Mellander, and Bjerke 2021). In a previous study, I, together with my co-author, suggested that these are two dimensions of a larger place conflict in the political landscape (Eidheim and Fimreite 2020).

The renewed attention to the place divide has been connected to structural changes by researchers. The rise of the knowledge economy, with its urbanization and deindustrialization, results in many peripheral rural areas being “left behind” as “declining hinterlands” (Ford and Jennings 2020; Rodríguez-Pose 2018). Over 80% of the population in OECD countries now live in cities, compared to 62% in 1960 (World Bank 2021b). The opposite trend applies to the rural population. Rural areas face challenges regarding not only a declining population but also an ageing population, which again could lead to difficulties in public service delivery (OECD 2018). In terms of economic activity, in the knowledge economy, cities are more likely, although with variation, to thrive (Dijkstra, Garcilazo, and McCann 2013). They attract a younger

and highly educated labor force to work in service and knowledge-intensive industries. Capital cities in particular are described as areas of growth and innovation, in addition to having central educational, cultural and political institutions (Eurostat 2022a). Rural areas, on the other hand, are perceived as places with fewer occupational opportunities and economic prospects (Rodríguez-Pose 2018). Although there are, of course, challenges in cities, such as rising inequality, and not all rural areas are lagging behind economically, these large structural trends could place rural areas in an overall disadvantaged position vis-à-vis cities in the minds of voters.

The political consequences of the structural divide are described as having several layers in an emerging strand of the literature. First, rural and peripheral residents harbor more discontent with politics, in the form of less democratic satisfaction and political trust (Lago 2022; McKay, Jennings, and Stoker 2021; McKay 2019; Mitsch, Lee, and Ralph Morrow 2021). What is more, studies also show that rural voters are more likely to hold culturally conservative attitudes, such as being less in favor of immigration and EU-integration, in addition to adhering to traditional values (de Dominicis, Dijkstra, and Pontarollo 2022; Jennings and Stoker 2017; Luca et al. 2023; Maxwell 2019). Studies have pointed out that cities have become especially cosmopolitan (Huijsmans et al. 2021), and these outlooks seem to be translated into electoral behavior. Across several contexts, rural voters have contributed to a populist backlash (Gimpel et al. 2020; Rickardsson 2021; Rodríguez-Pose 2018). In contrast, city dwellers are more likely to support the (new) left (Bolet 2023; Bornschieer et al. 2021).

To what extent these political divides are a result of the social composition – i.e., that urbanites are younger and have higher levels of educational attainment – has been the subject of scholarly attention. Based on investigations using panel

data, Maxwell (2019) asserts that, at least when it comes to immigration attitudes, the differences are largely compositional. Other researchers stress that there is a persistent urban-rural effect after controlling for other factors, which means that place has a separate independent effect, alongside other socio-demographic characteristics (e.g., de Dominicis, Dijkstra, and Pontarollo 2022; Huijsmans et al. 2021; Gimpel et al. 2020).

Scholarship emphasizing place-based identities suggests that place concerns more than the composition of residents and structural differences between areas. In this burgeoning research place attachment – a social identity – is key in politicizing the structural divide (Cramer 2016; Diamond 2021; Huijsmans 2022; Jacobs and Munis 2022; Jacobs and Munis 2019; Lyons and Utych 2021; Trujillo 2021). Place can serve as a significant heuristic through which the political world is interpreted. A leading contribution is Cramer’s (2012; 2016) concept of a rural consciousness. She highlights how rural voters (in Wisconsin) identify with an in-group that feels deprived of resources, respect and political power compared to people in urban centers. This consciousness therefore echoes, in one sense, the essence of the center-periphery cleavage with a resistance towards the dominance of the center as a core.

Using a social identity framework, this nascent literature has also found that place-based concerns and resentment influence rural voters more than urban voters (Munis 2022; Jacobs and Munis 2019; Jacobs and Munis 2022). In a previous study, I, together with co-authors, showed that rural voters were much more likely to prefer that their children should grow up in a rural type of area, while urban voters were more likely to say that this does not matter, implying that there is an asymmetry in place attachments (Auerbach et al. 2022). It seems to be more important to the

group that is in a minority and that has something that it wants to defend and is afraid of losing. Further, this research has also shown that place resentment explains populist attitudes in the Netherlands (Huijsmans 2022) and voting in US elections (Jacobs and Munis 2022; Trujillo and Crowley 2022).

3.3 Focusing on the economic preferences of the left-behind

In this thesis, the working class and the rural voters are viewed as two different groups that could fall under the “left-behind”-umbrella. Ford and Goodwin, for example, refer to the left-behind as follows “a class of voters who we describe as the ‘left behind’; older, working-class, white voters who lack the educational qualifications, incomes and skills that are needed to adapt and thrive amid a modern post-industrial economy” (2014, 278). Others use the term as a way to describe places, and the perspective these type of circumstances create for voters:

The areas left behind, those having witnessed long periods of decline, migration and brain drain, those that have seen better times and remember them with nostalgia, those that have been repeatedly told that the future lays elsewhere, have used the ballot box as their weapon (Rodríguez-Pose 2018, 200).

In a general sense, we can therefore describe left-behind voters as the working class and rural voters who find themselves on the losing side of the transformative processes of modernization and globalization (Kriesi 2010; Bornschieer et al. 2021). What characterizes the political outlook of left-behind voters in the literature is that it is relational. It refers to a conception of these voters’ situations, either compared to the past or compared to voters or areas that are at an advantage in the post-industrial societies.

With regard to their political preferences, the scholarship makes a distinction between material and symbolic concerns. Economic and structural disparities have been put forward as an explanation of the political divide over place. Research has indeed found that political discontent, for example, was associated with lower income, inequalities and a high proportion of routine jobs in one's own local area (Huijsmans 2023; McKay, Jennings, and Stoker 2021; McKay 2019). Similarly, voting for the populist radical right is more widespread in areas with structural decline, and a loss of opportunities and public services (Bolet 2021; Cremaschi et al. 2022; Dijkstra, Poelman, and Rodríguez-Pose 2020; Rodríguez-Pose, Terrero-Dávila, and Lee 2023). Regarding economic preferences, Pinggera (2023) finds that social policy support is higher in declining areas in Switzerland.

In the social identity framework, on the other hand, Cramer (2012; 2016) argues that the rural voters of America vote against their economic interests because they filter their view of politics through the lens of their rural identity, which engenders a belief that government policies will not benefit them. Trujillo (2021) asserts that the rural identity is tied to symbolic status concerns, rather than economic hardship on the individual level. Trujillo and Crowley (2022), for example, find that symbolic concerns tied to the rural consciousness predict vote choice in the US, while material concerns tied to the rural consciousness do not predict vote choice in the expected direction. Indeed, other studies have also pointed out the social outlook of voters, in terms of loss of subjective status, as an explanation for the populist backlash (Gidron and Hall 2017; Hochschild 2018; Kurer and Van Staalduin 2022).

The class conflict clearly has a material foundation, and, as previously noted, class preferences concerning the economic issues often follow a pattern according to self-

interest. Research has also found that economic risk and economic prospects predicts support for redistribution (Häusermann et al. 2022; Rehm 2009). However, studies have also shown how class differences in attitudes towards income inequality can not fully be accounted for by self-interest (Langsæther and Evans 2020), and might also be explained by early life experiences (Langsæther, Evans, and O’Grady 2022) and the class profile of a person’s social network (Lindh, Andersson, and Volker 2021), which indicates that there is also a social or cultural dimension to these preferences.

Economic concerns and symbolic concerns, however, need not be mutually exclusive. Green, Hellwig, and Fieldhouse (2022) advance that what they call group-based economics influence political preferences. They argue that perceptions of the economic gains of the out-groups compared to their own group are important considerations for voters, in keeping with the relational perception of the political world that was mentioned earlier. Also, previous work has underlined that important judgments in social group thinking include who gets what, whether that is deserved, and who is to blame for group injustice (Conover 1988; Miller et al. 1981). In other words, it can be fruitful to bridge economic assessments and group status assessment when examining the economic preferences of left-behind voters.

3.3.1 Expectations and research approach

In accordance with the notion of group-based economics, and the group consciousness approach to cleavages, in this thesis I employ a group perspective on economic preferences of voters. All three articles employ groups as reference points or conditions in the survey items to elicit how drawing attention to groups influences working class and rural voters’ preferences. The overall expectation is that group considera-

tions are decisive for voters, also when it comes to views on redistribution. Further, voter groups that are structurally more exposed and less privileged, or more likely to feel that their position is threatened, which applies to the left-behind voters more broadly, are expected to be more clearly mobilized by appealing to relevant group considerations.

How this is tested empirically using experiments is illustrated in Table 2. The thesis first draws attention to groups by testing the effect of targeting the richest on the support for the inheritance tax, particularly focusing on how this matters to the working class. Secondly, the thesis concentrates on perceptions of redistribution between rural and urban groups. This is tested by introducing different group conditions in experiments asking about who is deserving of government resources. This also includes comparing how working people in different types of places are viewed in terms of deservingness among left-behind voters. Thirdly, the thesis also compares the difference between spatial and economic redistribution in an experiment, to test whether these are concerns that divide the rural and working class voters, and could create trouble for parties trying to attract these voter groups, or whether there is an overall consensus between these voters on redistribution between class groups and place groups. Together, this approach reveals how groups influence the economic preferences of left-behind voters.

Table 2: Overview of how economic preferences are tested in thesis.

Economic preference:	Group conditions:	Outcome:
Inheritance tax	(No mention) The richest	Class support
Place deservingness	Rural areas Cities	Place and class support
Place and class deservingness	People in rural areas People in cities Working people Working people in cities Working people in rural areas	Place and class support
Redistribution support	Between people Between rich and poor Between people in rural and urban areas	Place and class support

4 The case of Norway

The theoretical background builds on insights from literature discussing Western democracies, but the thesis is a case study of Norway, in the years around the 2021 election. Understanding more of what happens in a country where the periphery strikes back by voting for the center-left and not the populist radical right gives us a broader understanding of the left-behind voters. In many ways, Norway is similar to other Western democracies, although it also has more distinct features. This section will explain the Norwegian case and why it is interesting to study left-behind voters in this context.

4.1 Structural changes

Importantly, the structural changes following a post-industrial development, which were described earlier, also apply in this context. Figure 2 shows that, since 1970, there has been a considerable decline in the number of people working in agriculture

and manufacturing, in contrast to the substantial increase in the number of people working in health, education, sales and administration. In fact, 78% of Norwegians worked in the tertiary sector in 2020, compared to 56% in 1970 (Statistics Norway 2021b). Accompanying this development is the surge in educational attainment. In 2021, 36% of the Norwegian population had attained higher education, which is in stark contrast to about 7% in 1970 (Statistics Norway 2022c). In the capital Oslo, the proportion of people with higher education is above 50%, showcasing the typical concentration that comes with knowledge-economies.

In terms of rural development, although the primary sector is greatly reduced due to technological change and globalization (Vik, Fuglestad, and Øversveen 2022), this has to some extent been replaced by other types of industry in coastal rural areas. In these parts of the country, people have been employed in the oil and gas extraction business and in the aquaculture industry, and moreover some rural areas have managed to successfully establish tourism as an opportunity for employment (Hemmings 2016).

However, when it comes to demographics, the process of urbanization has been even more dramatic in Norway, with an increase in the size of the urban population from about 50% in 1960 increasing to about 83% in 2021 (World Bank 2021a).⁴ The decline in the rural population has caused political concern (see, e.g., NOU 2020: 15), especially related to the increasing share of elderly inhabitants in rural municipalities, and the challenges this creates for public service delivery given dispersed

4. The exact figure is of course dependent of how you classify urban and rural. For instance, Statistics Norway's centrality index with six classes placed 13.5% in the most rural areas (classes 5 and 6), while 44.8% lived in the most central municipalities (classes 1 and 2) in 2022 (Statistics Norway 2022b). Eurostat's urban-rural typology suggests that 25.5% lived in predominately rural regions, whereas 24.7% lived in predominately urban regions, meaning that about half of the population were placed in an intermediate category (Eurostat 2022b).

settlement patterns, in a country where built-up areas only account for 1.7% of land use (Statistics Norway 2022a).

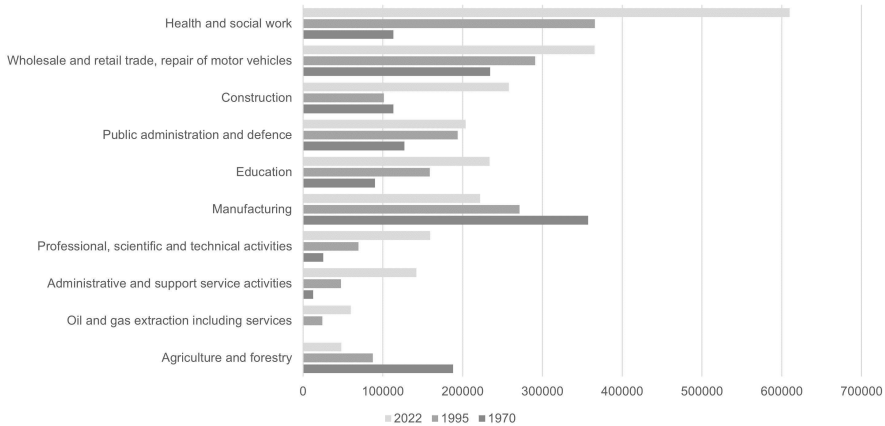


Figure 2: Number of employed in selected industries. Source: Statistics Norway (2023b)

4.2 Political context

4.2.1 Parties and parliamentary election 2017-2021

In the eight years before the Norwegian general election in 2021, the government had been led by the Conservative Party in coalition with other center-right parties (the Progress Party from 2013 to 2020, the Liberal Party from 2018, the Christian Democratic Party from 2019).⁵ The 2021 election, held on September 13, was won by the center-left parties, gaining a sizable 100 seats of the available 169 (see election

5. Until 2018, these parties had a parliamentary agreement that also gave influence to the parties outside government.

results in Table 3).⁶ As a result, the largest party on the left, the Labour Party, formed a minority government with the Center Party.⁷ This collaboration was announced ahead of election day.

Table 3: Norwegian election results 2021, compared to 2017

Party	Share 2021 (%)	Diff. from 2017 (%)	Seats 2021	Diff. from 2017
Labour	26.3	-1.1	48	-1
Conservative	20.4	-4.7	36	-9
Center	13.5	+3.2	28	+9
Progress	11.6	-3.6	21	-6
Socialist Left	7.6	+1.6	13	+2
Red	4.7	+2.3	8	+7
Liberal	4.6	+0.2	8	0
Green	3.9	+0.7	3	+2
Christian Dem.	3.8	-0.4	3	-5
Patient Focus	0.2	+0.2	1	1

The Norwegian political context has been described as consensual, which means that elections produce a more proportional distribution of seats between parties in parliament, resulting in a system of multiple parties (Heidar and Rasch 2017). Several interests have been represented and been influential in the Norwegian multiparty political system. Nordic countries were previously known for the “frozen” and stable five-party systems that became solidified in the 1920’s, although Norway deviated somewhat with the addition of the Christian Democratic Party in 1933 (Arter 1999).

In the Norwegian parliament, the Storting, nine parties were represented in the 2017–2021 period. The parties can broadly be placed into two blocs – a center-

6. The Socialist Left secured parliamentary support for the government’s first state budgets. These three parties could not, however, agree upon one government platform. The leader of the Socialist Left stated that they pulled out of the government negotiations because the other parties did not meet their demands on climate and economic policies (Carlsen et al. 2021).

7. The most common form of government has been minority government, as only about a third of governments have had majorities (Rasch 2020), which has been the dominating type since 1970s. These minority governments have often comprised either Labour Party or non-socialist parties in coalitions.

left and a center-right bloc. In the center-left bloc, the Labour Party (Ap) is the mainstream left party.⁸ Two parties, the Socialist Left (SV) and the Red Party (R) can be considered new radical left parties. In addition, there is also a Green Party (MDG).⁹ The Center Party (Sp) can also be considered to be in the left bloc, but is more a party of the center. In the center-right bloc, the Conservative Party (H) is the large mainstream right party. Two smaller parties, the Christian Democratic Party (KrF) and the Liberal Party (V), consider themselves to be non-socialist. The center-right bloc also contains the populist radical right Progress Party (FrP).

4.2.2 Place divides in Norway

The tension between central and urban areas on one side, and rural and peripheral areas on the other, has long traditions in Norway (Rokkan 1989). Rokkan described this as representing an important core in Norwegian politics, cutting across other cleavages, and as having several outlets. In his account of the Norwegian multi-party system, Rokkan (1989) identified five politically decisive cleavages in the Norwegian party system: a territorial cleavage, a socio-cultural cleavage, a religious cleavage, an urban-rural economic cleavage and the class cleavage.

The south-western region has been described as the counter-cultural periphery (Rokkan 1989). This was expressed in the antagonism towards the dominance of the center through the temperance movement, the layman's movement and the pro-

8. The center-left – center-right division that describe politics before the 2021 election became evident after the Labour Party's defeat in the parliamentary election in 2001, in which they only gained 24% of the votes (Rasch 2020). This paved the way for a broad majority coalition on the left, which formed the government of Norway between 2005 and 2013 (consisting of Ap, Sp and SV).

9. The Green Party refers to itself as a party that does not belong to either of the blocs. On many issues they side with the left, as will be described later in this section, such as with regard to economic issues and immigration.

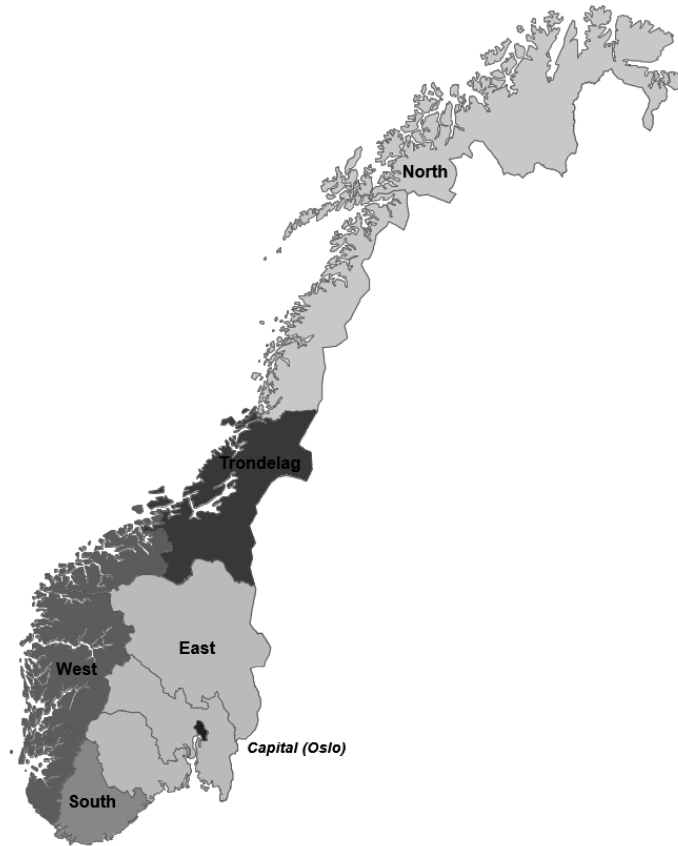


Figure 3: Main parts of Norway. Source of original map: Kartverket.

motion of the New Norwegian language, as opposed to the Danish-derived written standard. This periphery was a stronghold for the Liberal Party and the Christian Democratic Party. The more egalitarian structure of agriculture, with smaller-scale farms, has been put forward as an explanation of why the labor movement was not

more successful in this region (Berglund 2020).

More currently, Norwegian voters tend to be liberal on moral and religious issues (Jenssen 2020b), the church has been separated from the state, and membership of and participation in the Norwegian church has gone down (Østhus 2021). The party that has mobilized most strongly on religious counter-culture, the Christian Democratic Party, has continued to disproportionately attract voters from the counter-culture regions (Berglund 2020). Since the turn of the century, however, it has declined, and is now a party that struggles to attract support above the electoral threshold of 4%. A recent study also shows that there is a correlation between being rural and having religious attitudes, although this is weak (Saglie 2023), which implies that, overall, this type of periphery mobilization is no longer a strong political force.

By contrast, the northern periphery has been singled out as being class-polarized, due to the hierarchical structures in fishery-based economics between the buyers of fish and those who sold them or their labor (Rokkan 1989). The Labor Party mobilized support from this rural working class. The connection between the Labor Party and the north was reflected in the Labor Party gaining its first seat in parliament in this area, as well as in the party's regional development policies after the war, and later policies to counteract population decline (Stein 2019b; Almås and Fuglestad 2020).

The rural-urban cleavage was another expression of the place-based friction between rural interests and the interests of the urban centers. The party representing farmers' interests in Norway, which was previously named the Farmers' Party but, in 1959, became the Center Party, was first established in 1920. Rural parties in the Nordic countries promoted the protection of home markets against foreign imports, securing the prices for agricultural products and land reform (Knutsen 2017).

The presence of strong agrarian parties characterized Scandinavian political systems during the post-war period. In these countries, the rural-urban cleavage was not absorbed into alignments founded on state-church or left-right conflicts. Small-scale family farmers who also had part-time wage work were a central part of the rural population in Scandinavian countries (Marklund 1988). They typically benefited from state intervention. A common narrative in historical accounts is that agrarian parties played a decisive role in the formation and development of the welfare state, either as part of red-green coalitions or by tolerating social democratic minority governments (Manow 2009). As support for social policy hinged on support from the agrarian parties, the policies that were adopted also reflected rural concerns and interests. Recent research, however, has cast doubt on this worker–farmer coalition argument, showing that farmers and the Farmers’ Party largely voted against welfare policies in the parliament before the 1940’s (Rasmussen 2022).

Despite the drop in the number of people working in agriculture, the Center Party has managed to remain relevant by becoming a party for rural areas in general. The party was placed in the center of politics — for example, being in favor of import regulation on the one hand, and being a defender of private property on the other (Jenssen 2020a). Its government record reflects this position. Although now in government together with the left, the Center party has historically been in government with parties on the center-right.¹⁰ Notably, as shown in Figure 4, in addition to the elections in 2017 and 2021, the Center Party also fared well in the election of 1993, winning its highest share of the votes (16.7%). This has been attributed to a revival of the center-periphery conflict prior to the referendum on joining the EU – a conflict

10. In 1963, 1965-1971, 1972-1973, 1983-1986, 1989-1990, 1997-2000.

in which the Center Party was prominent in the opposition to the proposed membership. The risk of losing national sovereignty and local democracy was one of the main reasons highlighted for why Norway should not join the EU (Ryghaug and Jenssen 1999).

The Norwegian population ended up rejecting the proposed EU-membership, both in 1972 and in 1994, resisting the will of central elites in Oslo on two separate occasions.¹¹ Voters in Oslo and the central areas around the capital and other urbanites had supported joining the EU, while the resistance had been the strongest in rural areas and coastal peripheries (Bjørklund 1997; Pettersen, Jenssen, and Listhaug 1996). Findings also show that opposition to the EU was more prevalent among those supporting the so-called countercultures and those working in the primary sector (Pettersen, Jenssen, and Listhaug 1996). The resistance is enduring, as polls reveal that there is still no majority in favor of joining the union today (e.g., Kullmann Five 2023).

Similar to the lasting EU opposition, general discontent with the way central government handles rural areas is widespread. Almost 70% of voters agreed to some extent with this notion in our previous study (Auerbach et al. 2022). This is especially interesting considering that Norway, together with other Scandinavian countries, enjoys high levels of political trust and satisfaction from its citizens (Bengtsson et al. 2013).

11. The majorities were remarkably similar, with 53.5% voting "No" the first time and 52.2% the second time.

4.2.3 Key political developments and current party positions

While Norway has a specific political history, some key developments are similar to what literature has identified in other Western countries. This subsection highlights more recent similarities and differences.

History has shown that the Nordic party system was not “frozen”. In 1973, Norway and Denmark held elections that would later be referred to as “earthquake elections”, marking the electoral breakthrough of new parties – especially the new left and the populist radical right – and a weakening of old ties between parties and voters. One important reason was how the aforementioned referendum campaign for European membership had challenged the relationship between the established party elites and their voters (Goul Andersen and Bjørklund 2000). Since then, the political developments have also followed a pattern similar to those of other Western European democracies.

Norwegian voters are similar to other Western European voters in that they are less attached to parties, and are willing to vote for different parties in different elections (Dalton and Wattenberg 2002; Dassonneville 2022). Vote switching between elections has increased (Aardal and Bergh 2022).¹² More voters also decide who they will vote for during the election campaign (Haugsgjerd, Karlsen, and Aalberg 2019), and the number of people that are members of a party or who identify with a party has declined significantly (Nordø and Ivarsflaten 2020). Moreover, party support has become more fragmented (Saglie and Allern 2020). In the 2021 election, the two mainstream parties received less support, and the support of fringe parties rose

¹². For example, 37% of Norwegian voters switched between parties between the 2017 and 2021 elections (Aardal and Bergh 2022)

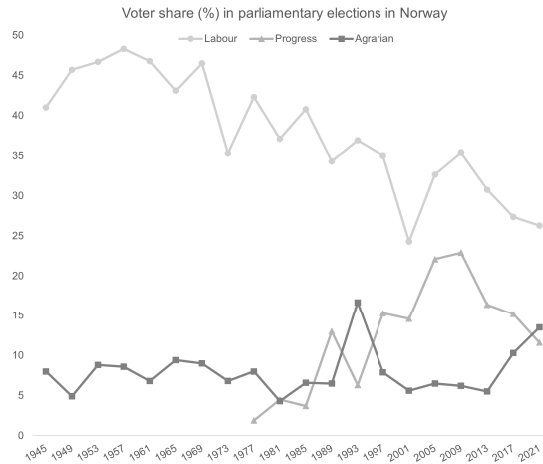


Figure 4: Election results for three parties over time. Source: Statistics Norway (2021a).

(Aardal and Bergh 2022).

Support for the social democratic Labour Party has declined, from having received well above 40% of the votes in the decades after the war, to below 30% in the latest elections, as illustrated in Figure 4. This is in line with developments in many Western European countries (Benedetto, Hix, and Mastrocco 2020). The Labour Party was dominant in the post-war era, governing Norway for large parts of this period. The social democratic parties in the Nordic countries laid the basis for the welfare states with a program of social policy and public investment (Knutson 2017). In 1965, 68% of workers voted for the Labour Party (Bjørklund 2009). Although voters today still care about economic issues, the strength of class voting in Norway has weakened (Bengtsson et al. 2013; Bjørklund 2009).

Bengtsson et al. (2013) discuss several factors that could explain this development,

such as the diversified working class, lower levels of unionization coupled with fewer workers identifying with the working class, more issue-based voting, and the challenge of other concerns put forward by the populist right. Similarly, Salo and Rydgren (2021) cite the direct appeal to workers by the populist Progress Party targeting workers, calling themselves the party for “most people”. The working class vote in 2021, illustrated using Norwegian Citizen Panel data (see Figure 5), is fragmented, but with some notable tendencies – namely, that those who identify as working class are still most likely to vote for the Labour Party (AP) (almost 30%), and that, in this election, the Center Party (SP) is the second-most favored party by this group (20 %).¹³

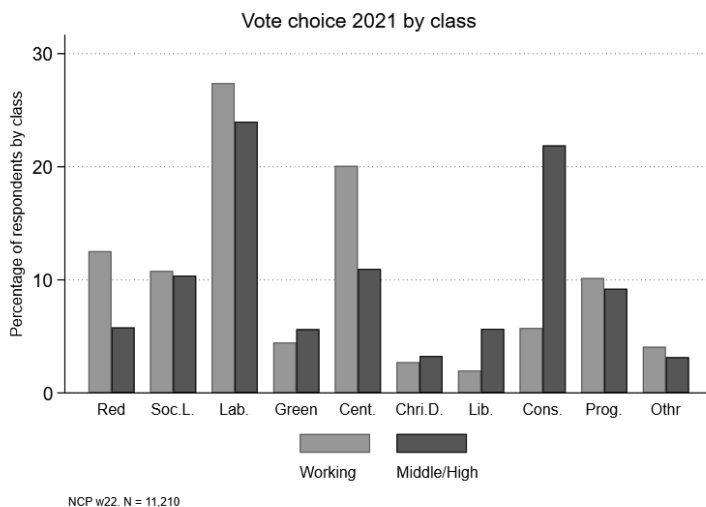


Figure 5: Vote choice by class, 2021

Furthermore, the aforementioned populist radical right – the Progress Party – has

13. More details about this data are provided in the supplementary material of this introduction.

become established with a significant share of the votes, making it a prime example of a successful populist radical right party. Starting out as a party protesting against taxes and state intervention (first named “Anders Lange’s Party for Strong Reduction in Taxes, Fees and Public Intervention”), the party’s main area of focus has become immigration and issues of law-and-order, meaning that it combines a socio-economically right-wing agenda with a socio-culturally authoritarian one (Jungar and Jupskås 2014). The party has also taken more pro-welfare stances, in what has been described as a chauvinistic fashion, focusing on the deserving groups such as the sick and elderly, which they have suggested could be financed by oil wealth revenues instead of increased taxes (Jupskås 2016). In the years following the turn of the century, researchers pointed out that the Progress Party was gaining support in peripheries, which suggests that also in Norway there has been a tendency for peripheral voters, at least earlier, to turn towards the populist radical right (Baldersheim and Fimreite 2005).

What turned out to be the case in Norway in the 2010s was that the political landscape saw a considerable surge in support for the agrarian Center Party, which set Norway apart from many other contexts, as was mentioned in the introduction to this thesis and expanded upon in the theoretical background. In the years leading up to the 2021 election campaign, the Center Party had been on the rise again (Stein et al. 2021). The party voiced the loudest opposition to the Conservative-led government’s structural reforms, such as the merging of municipalities, regions, higher education institutions and police districts. As brought up in the introduction, news media covered this resistance, in addition to several other rural grievances and described it as a rural uproar (*distriktsopprør* in Norwegian). Perhaps the most

memorable image from this period is that of women dressed in the national costume protesting in front of the Storting against the closure of delivery rooms in peripheries.¹⁴ The Center Party's main message was that the government was centralizing Norway and was not listening to the needs of the people across the country. From 2013 to 2021, the party more than doubled its support, from 5.5% to 13.5%.¹⁵ Prior to the election, they had announced that they would enter government with the Labour Party.¹⁶

Research has suggested a rise in general discontent with central government and centralizing consequences of reforms as being the drivers of the upheaval and the electoral results (Eidheim and Fimreite 2020; Jenssen 2020a; Melås and Blekesaune 2020; Almås, Fuglestad, and Mahlum Melås 2020). Figure 6 shows how people in different types of area voted in 2021. Based on the results from the Norwegian Citizen Panel, we observe that voters in very rural areas indeed supported the Center Party over the mainstream left and right and the populist right (about 30% voted for the Center Party). The graph also shows it was certainly not an especially urban party (4% voted Center in cities).

In 2021, the rural voters thus protested by voting for the Center Party rather than the Progress Party. To further illuminate the difference between these parties, the graphs below plot political parties on two-dimensional spaces, using the 2019 Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES) (Bakker et al. 2020).¹⁷ The four spaces all share the

14. As illustrated by, for example, Eriksen, Nærø, and Hunshamar (2019)

15. The party did even better in polls around the turn of the year 2020/2021, reaching as many as 20 % of the votes.

16. At the time of writing this introduction the government was performing poorly in the polls. The reason for this is a subject for another dissertation, but rises in electricity prices and inflation are some of the issues that the government has had to deal with quite early on in its mandate period.

17. Details on the variables used are found in the supplementary material.

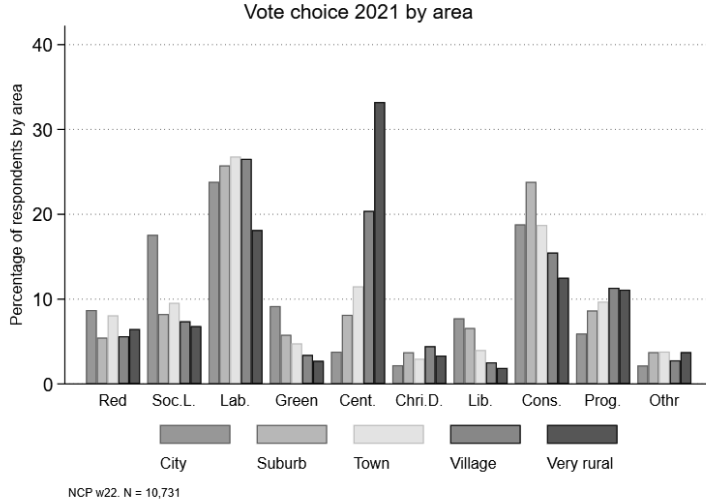


Figure 6: Vote choice by type of area, 2021

same x-axis – namely, redistribution position – to account for the traditional left-right conflict. The results show that the Center Party (Sp) is located on the center-left on these policy issues, while the Progress Party (Frp) is located to the right, close to the Conservative Party (H). In the top-left panel, the graph shows party position on economic and immigration policies. This illustrates that the Progress Party (Frp) is clearly the most negative of all parties, while the Center Party (Sp) and the Conservative Party (H) are considered to be more strict than the Labor Party (Ap). The top-right panel shows that the Progress Party is also considered to be the most nationalistic party, and the Center Party is also more on the nationalistic side. The bottom-left panel shows how parties are placed in the context of GAL/TAN, which in this case refers their to position on social and cultural values. Here, the Christian Democratic Party (KrF) is positioned as the most TAN, and the Center

Party and the Progress Party were also placed on the TAN side. The bottom-right panel shows how parties are placed on the rural-urban dimension. One party stands out – the Center Party is viewed as the party that is most supportive of rural interests, and the other parties are clustered around the middle. The CHES data is also in keeping with voters' perceptions. The Progress Party has had issue ownership of immigration policies for consecutive elections, and the Center Party has owned rural issues consistently over time (Hesstvedt, Bergh, and Karlsen 2021). The Center Party does nevertheless hold a place that is somewhat to the left on economic issues, and somewhat to the right on issues that are associated with the second dimension of politics, according to the 2019 CHES data.

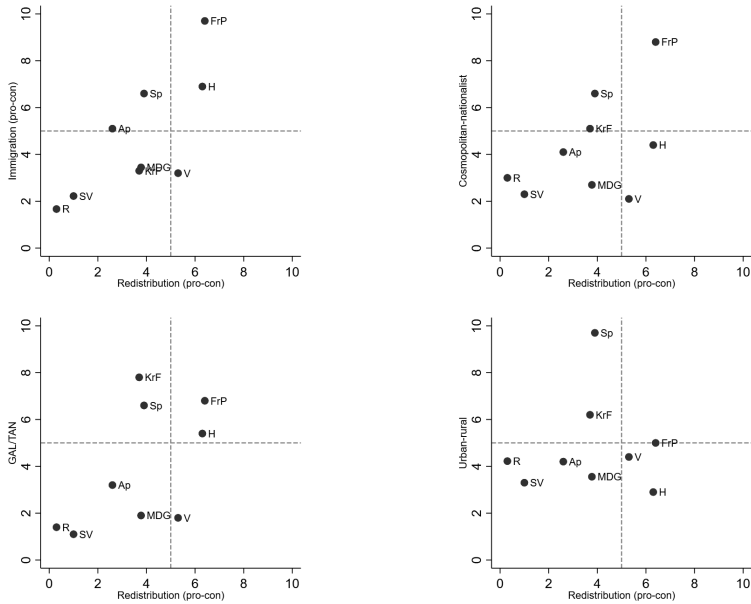


Figure 7: Positioning of Norwegian political parties. Data from the 2019 Chapel Hill Expert Survey.

4.2.4 Welfare state

A key feature of the Norwegian context is the welfare state. The Norwegian welfare state, which redistributes income and wealth between citizens and municipalities (places), makes for a useful institutional comparison with systems where this kind of redistribution is more modest. Norway ranks among the countries with the highest GDP per capita and the lowest levels of income inequality (OECD 2023a, 2023b), thereby constituting a quite wealthy and comparatively egalitarian context. The income differences between rural and urban areas are not considerable, although difference in wealth increased somewhat during the 21st century (Aaberge et al. 2021).

Notably, and more unique to Norway, is the growth of the oil and gas sector, which is the largest industry in terms of value (Statistics Norway 2021b). Oil revenue contributes to the public wealth that is accumulated in the Government Pension Fund Global (Oil fund), which gives central government more room for maneuver and reduces the pressure on them to make strict prioritizations. It has been argued that the oil wealth gives voters higher expectations, thereby raising the bar for government evaluation (Baldersheim and Fimreite 2005; Jenssen and Male Kalstø 2011).

The Norwegian welfare state falls under the category of a social democratic welfare state which is characterized by the principle of universalism (Esping-Andersen 1990), securing equal access independent of, for example, where a person lives. The welfare state provides social insurance, redistribution of income and production of services (Cappelen 2018). It redistributes resources to those who are poor, sick, disabled or retired, through a system of fees and taxes. Importantly, the redistributive arrangement also functions as spatial redistribution, as these groups are over-represented in rural areas (Frisvoll 2020).

Local municipalities are key actors in the Norwegian welfare state, as they deliver welfare services, which have expanded during the past 40 years (Cappelen 2018).¹⁸ They guarantee the provision of kindergartens, schools and social services to cities and small rural communities alike, ensuring both accessible welfare and jobs (Stein 2019a). In rural municipalities the share of people employed in the municipal sector is typically larger than in central municipalities, which also makes this a significant place of employment (NOU 2020: 15, 39).

18. Since 2020, Norway has been divided into 365 municipalities, ranging from about 700,000 inhabitants in the largest municipality of Oslo to 208 inhabitants in the smallest municipality of Utsira, in 2023 (Statistics Norway 2023a).

Further, rural municipalities in Norway often have more expenses per inhabitant and less tax income, due to the demographic make-up of the population, such as a smaller proportion of people in working age. Municipalities in Norway are partly financed by a central government scheme that redistributes resources based on different levels of tax revenue and on running expenses related to the proportion of elderly inhabitants and children, and traveling distances within the area (NOU 2020: 15). Moreover, the scheme also includes grants and reduced employer's tax for disadvantaged areas. In total, most rural municipalities end up with a higher level of income per capita, compared to the national average in this scheme (NOU 2020: 15), which suggests that the spatial redistributive arrangement is beneficial to rural inhabitants.¹⁹ This means that, to a large extent, the central government decides the incomes of the municipalities (Østerud and Selle 2006). Also of relevance is that central government supports agriculture through an extensive system of subsidies and tariff-based import regulations (Hemmings 2016).

To summarize this section, the case of Norway is a setting that follows some key developments seen in other Western European democracies. The mainstream left has declined, and voters have become more volatile. The populist radical right, which had previously gained support in the peripheries, has become an established party. Moreover, rural areas have been in decline. What is characteristic of Norway is that peripheries and rural populations had previously overruled national elites, and their interests together with working class interests have had considerable influence on party politics. Despite this and a comparatively generous welfare state, rural voters tend to be dissatisfied with central government's treatment of rural areas. The Norwegian

19. Due to revenue from power production, several rural municipalities do not fit into a picture of a poor rural municipality that benefits from the central redistributive scheme.

context has, as with similar countries, also seen uproar from left-behind voters — an uproar that, in 2021, helped the center-left to gain power. This case highlights the circumstances that contribute to this type of outcome.

5 Data and methodological considerations

In the following, I will present the data employed in this thesis in more detail, and give an account of methodological considerations and measurements. The analytical strategy is to combine original survey questions and survey experiments to examine the political behavior of the left-behind voter groups in Norway. The thesis relies on data from the Norwegian Citizen Panel (NCP) (Ivarsflaten et al. 2020–2022), and this general population survey allows us to draw conclusions about public opinion in Norway, and the political views of social groups in the population.

5.1 Survey data

The Norwegian Citizen Panel is a research-purpose online survey that has more than 10,000 active participants and is owned by the University of Bergen.²⁰ The panel members are asked to answer a questionnaire three times per year. It employs a probability-based recruitment strategy, meaning that all people in Norway with a registered address in the National Population Registry over the age of 18 have an equal chance of being invited onto the panel. Research has shown that probability samples outperform non-probability samples in accuracy (Cornesse et al. 2020; Dutwin and

20. The Norwegian Citizen Panel was financed by the University of Bergen (UiB) and Trond Mohn Foundation (TMS). Data collection was coordinated by UiB, implemented by Ideas2Evidence, and distributed by Sikt and UiB.

Buskirk 2017; MacInnis et al. 2018). Invitations are sent to potential participants by post. Participation is incentivized through a lottery of travel gift cards that is held for each wave of the panel.

The NCP has regularly recruited new members to the panel, specifically in November 2013 (wave 1), October 2014 (wave 3), March 2017 (wave 8), March 2018 (wave 11), January 2019 (wave 14), November 2019 (wave 16), June 2020 (wave 18), and November 2021 (wave 22).²¹ The recruitment rate of members has varied, between 14% (wave 18), and 23% (wave 3), reflecting the age of declining response rates (Cornesse et al. 2020). The response rate among panel members, on the other hand, has ranged from 66.8% (wave 24) to 76.8 % (wave 19)(Skjervheim et al. 2020–2022).

The NCP adheres to specific ethical and scientific guidelines. Data is made available for research purposes via the website of the Norwegian Agency for Shared Services in Education and Research (Sikt), and the NCP is thus an example of an open data practice. This means that all the data employed in this thesis is available to other researchers. Moreover, respondents provide written consent for participation. Data is treated confidentially, and is kept anonymous in publications. The data collection is also compliant with EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), and a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) has been conducted and approved by the University of Bergen. Further, the NCP has a scientific committee that evaluates all suggested survey items based on ethical, scientific and respondent considerations. Questions and experiments are also piloted prior to the data collections.

Table 4 gives an overview of the NCP data used in this thesis, focusing on outcome variables. To utilize the number of respondents efficiently, the NCP is set up

²¹. There has been additional recruitment after this, but these are the rounds relevant for this thesis.

in such a way that all respondents answer some core questions, while other questions are provided to randomly assigned sub-samples.²² The experiments and place-based resentment items designed for this thesis were implemented in sub-samples of the survey. The table shows that the thesis builds on quite an extensive data collection. It also reflects a process of learning in sequence.

Table 4: Overview of data used in the thesis.

Wave	Field period	Article	Items	Sample size
18	3 June - 29 June 2020	1	Inheritance tax experiment	2,694
19	2 Nov. - 27 Nov. 2020	2 and 3	Questions on place-based resentment	2,022
21	26 May - 15 June 2021	2	Questions on place-based resentment	1,391
22	2 Nov. - 30 Nov. 2021	3	Place and class experiment	2,000
24	23 May - 15 June 2022	3	Place and class experiment	2,045

5.2 Survey experiments

When examining what characterizes economic preferences, survey experiments are ideal because they allow examining different conditions of these views. Survey experiments have become an increasingly used research strategy in political science, and are now implemented in online surveys without much difficulty. The main advantage of survey experiments in representative sample is that they can “provide firmly grounded inferences about real-world political attitudes and behavior” (Gaines, Kuklinski, and

²² Background questions are given to respondents upon recruitment and updated in later waves. Core questions are often asked in the first wave of the year. Therefore these independent variables are not always asked at the same time as the outcome variables.

Quirk 2007, 2). Controlling random assignment of treatments is fundamental to the causal inference. The intervention thus takes place by the researcher in the data-generating process, compared to non-experimental research, which uses data where all variation comes from factors outside the control of those conducting the research (Morton and Williams 2008). Another crucial element is that conducting experiments in population surveys secures larger and more diverse samples, and allows us to test whether the experimental effect is not equal among sub-groups of the population, which is key in this project (Mutz 2011).

The experiment treatments can be seen as variations in information given to the respondents (Sniderman 2018). This takes many forms, such as framing experiments, list experiments and conjoint designs. In this study, I have used the common between-subjects design, where participants are randomly assigned to the treatments in the experiment, varying only a small fraction of the question given to the respondent. The experiments could be referred to as cross-category comparisons (Sniderman 2018), as the purpose is to test how connecting groups to economic preferences affect results. The intention is not to change people's views; rather, it is a strategy to uncover similarities and differences that already exist in the public opinion (as outlined by Sniderman 2023). In addition to revealing causal effects, the experiments cancel out consistency pressures on respondents. In this thesis the goal was also to formulate clear-cut questions that did not demand much reading, as the target population consists of respondents with different levels of proficiency and interest.

Sniderman (2018) also highlights the value of using survey experiments as a process of trials, learning and testing new explanations in series, as thoughtfully and extensively demonstrated by Iversflaten and Sniderman (2022). While the scope of

this study is limited to these three articles, some of the experiments were designed in a step-wise process.²³ The repetition of experiments in the NCP contributes to transparency, openness and reproducibility. Data is available and open for others to reproduce. All questions and experiments are documented without alterations from the researchers in the independent NCP codebooks. Crucially, the effects found in the central experiments are replicated in follow-up experiments, giving increased confidence in results.²⁴

In Table 5, I have illustrated the process and design of two of the experiments described in article 3. In article 3, the first objective was to examine if the working class and the rural voters aligned on ideas about fair distribution of resources between places, or if this was primarily a rural interest. The first experiment tested this by varying whether the statement mentioned cities or rural areas, meaning that the experiment had two treatment variations. In the next experiment I expanded the scope, aiming to find out if it made a difference whether the experiment mentioned that it was working people in those type of areas. The the follow-up experiment therefore included five treatments with those variations. The general effect was replicated (rural areas were more favored), but new nuances were added, finding that rural people, rural working people and working people were seen as equally deserving by the two voter groups of interest in this study.

23. It should be noted that this thesis does not follow the protocol of sticking to a strict repeatable template.

24. In addition to the experiment below, I also replicated the main effect of inheritance tax experiment, which can be found in the supplementary material of article 1.

Table 5: Experiment illustration.

	Experiment 1	Experiment 2
	<i>Place deservingness</i>	<i>Place and class deservingness</i>
Treatment 1	in cities	those who live in cities
Treatment 2	in rural areas	those who live in rural areas
Treatment 3		working people
Treatment 4		working people who live in cities
Treatment 5		working people who live in rural areas

5.3 Measuring social groups

5.3.1 Class

In understanding the political dynamics of society, social class has long been a key concept. Scholars have tried to adapt the concept to the transformation to a post-industrial society. A common way of measuring class in social science is based on occupation. From a political science point of view, an argument for this kind of measure is that political parties developed around certain classes, and not income intervals or education levels (Rennwald 2020), which makes this measure more theoretically relevant. Capturing social class on the basis of occupation and employment relationships stems from the sociological tradition that views social class as structural positions in the labor market or the workplace. What is fundamental in this tradition is that people in the same class have similar life chances, restrictions and opportunities. The EGP class schema is a widely-used example (Erikson and Goldthorpe 1992; Erikson, Goldthorpe, and Portocarero 1979; Goldthorpe 1980), which divides occupations into a kind of hierarchy based on the skills and type of contract a person has, which in turn determine a person's working conditions. Further, a person's occupation gives us information about their exposure to risk and motivation to seek

security (Rehm 2009).

More recent work has focused on how occupational task structures (work logics) shape preferences (Oesch 2006). This perspective views a person's work environment and how it is organized as an arena in which they can attain certain experiences, which in turn influence their world views (Kitschelt and Rehm 2014). Scholars have used quantitative tests to examine the added value of employing Oesch's schema vis-à-vis the widely-used EGP class schema (Knutsen and Langsæther 2015; Vestin and Oskarson 2017). Although these studies show that the schemas are quite similar in explaining vote choice, other researchers have demonstrated that the classes in Oesch's framework are useful in instances where the aim is to observe the social class of voter bases and contested strongholds of parties (Abou-Chadi, Mitteregger, and Mudde 2021; Oesch and Rennwald 2018). Chiefly, the Oesch schema provides more nuances to both the middle class and the working class, which reflect central developments in the post-industrial society. This measure is therefore employed as the objective measure of class in the first article of the thesis.

The drawback of an occupation-based measure is that it typically involves manually coding several thousand open-text answers where people describe their occupations. This is obviously time-consuming, and this measure is therefore not always available to researchers. In addition, what is described by respondents is, in some cases, not possible to place in a particular occupation, due to the vague nature of the description. In the Norwegian Citizen Panel, these occupation-related questions were implemented in wave 17, which means that, due to reasons of attrition and new recruitment, this measure is not available for an increasingly larger proportion

of respondents in the subsequent waves.²⁵

An alternative to this is, therefore, to use income. Having access to more or less money should capture a person's economic security and freedom. In their helpful review, Manza and Crowley (2018) raise several points about using income as a class measure. First, there might be varying levels of income within classes, and employing income rather than occupation might therefore better account for the economic position than occupation alone. However, belonging to an income interval or percentile is hard to imagine will yield a kind of group awareness that lies in the traditional concept of social class. Merely finding meaningful cut-off points in the income ladder where the different classes stop and start is a challenge. Also, although income in itself tells us something about a person's economic resources, it says little about their prospects and how vulnerable they are to change. However, we know from numerous studies that income predicts political preferences, and that it has been employed as a class measure. In this thesis, the measure is used in article 3, albeit in addition to a subjective class measure.

As this thesis focuses on the role of group consciousness, it also employs a subjective measure of class, which is a standard background question in the NCP. Respondents were asked to place themselves in one of the following six classes: the lower class, the working class, the lower middle class, the middle class, the upper middle class or the upper class. There is also an option to select "Don't know". Most respondents placed themselves in classes – for example, in wave 22, just 4.4% stated that they did not know.²⁶

25. This was also implemented in earlier waves, but this is the wave that is relevant for my data collection.

26. Supplementary material for articles 1 and 3 display the relationships between the class measures.

5.3.2 Place

Measuring a rural-urban divide “is a compromise between detail and summary” (Scala and Johnson 2017, 181). Nemerever and Rogers (2021) advice scholars to carefully consider which concept they are really measuring, stressing the difference between subjective and actual location. Studying respondents in the US, they find that these two types of measure do not always overlap. Against this background, this thesis has consciously applied both subjective and objective measures of place to test the robustness of results, and moreover to compare the subjective understanding of place with the objective position.

Three measures are used to capture place, and specifically the urban-rural divide, in this study. The first measure is the most subjective, attempting to gauge both a sense of self and the level of attachment. We asked respondents to choose whether they were a rural or an urban person. Although these are broad categories, we accounted for differences in identity strength by adapting questions from measures that had been used in studies of partisan identities (Greene 2000; Huddy and Bankert 2017). From these answers, we created a latent score measuring identity strength. These measures are employed in the second article of this thesis.

The second measure, which is available in all waves of the NCP, is still semi-subjective, but lies quite far from a social identity measure as it does not gauge any kind of attachment. It simply asks respondents which kind of area they live in, presenting them with five options, ranging from city to sparsely populated area. This measure is used in the third article of the thesis, but was coded into three categories in order to capture the most important divide – between cities and rural areas.

The last measure employed was developed by Statistics Norway, and is an objective

estimate of the rural-urban divide. Also utilized (for example) in the official Norwegian reports describing Norwegian society (e.g. NOU 2020: 15), the so-called centrality measure is based on calculations of the number of workplaces and services within the proximity of a 90-minute drive per unit in the municipalities (called *grunnkrets* in Norwegian) (Høydahl 2020). The unit estimate is further aggregated into a centrality measure for the municipality, accounting for the number of inhabitants in the units. This measure is originally an index that is divided into six categories by Statistics Norway, ranking from the most-central and to the least-central municipalities. This measure is applied in the second article, using all six categories, and a version that compiles the most-central, medium central and least-central into three categories is used in the third article, for ease of interpretation.²⁷

5.4 Challenges and limitations

Naturally, the research approach used in this thesis has both limitations and challenges. First, survey data has a common challenge, even with random sampling, that the sample tends to be somewhat skewed. The NCP has some identified biases (Skjervheim et al. 2020–2022). People with lower education levels, and younger age groups are underrepresented, especially among males. There is also some bias in terms of geography, in that people from Western Norway and Oslo are overrepresented, while people from Northern, Southern and Eastern Norway are underrepresented. To compensate, weights that account for education, age, gender and location biases, are employed when presenting descriptive results in this introduction and in means and regressions results based on observational data in the second article. In

²⁷ Supplementary materials for articles 2 and 3 display the relationships between these place measures.

all cases, these biases should be kept in mind when analyzing the data. The under-representation of certain groups also poses a challenge when conducting analyses of subgroups in experiments. Although there is a sufficient amount of (for example) rural respondents in the sample, the estimates involve somewhat more uncertainty, and there is not enough statistical power to interact sub-groups when analyzing the experiments.

Moreover, studying voters using broad categories of identity, such as rural or urban, inevitably leads to loss of nuance. Some people probably feel more at home in intermediate categories such as suburban areas and towns. As pointed out earlier, these are trade-offs that researchers grapple with when measuring social groups. With regard to place identity, the inquiry has focused on broad groups, and should be seen as part of an incremental process, gradually increasing our level of insight. Further studies could explore other types of place-attachments – for example, examining peripheral voters, in addition to rural voters, could add important nuances to the investigation of the left-behind voters. As I have emphasized in previous work, it is possible to be peripheral but not rural – for example, in a city located far away from the capital (Eidheim and Fimreite 2020).

Further, I do not account for place and class upbringing in this thesis. This kind of socialization factor might also influence how voters are placed in these divisions. Studies have pointed to how, in some contexts, class background is more decisive for class identity than current economic situation (Evans, Stubager, and Langsæther 2022). Place background – of respondents or their parents – might, for example, explain why many urban voters express sympathy towards their out-group (see article 2).

The study does not address whether voters actually live in left-behind places, in the sense that the thesis does not include measures of objective structural conditions that could account for such a position – for example, by using multilevel models that include municipal or regional variables such as population decline and loss of public services. This study is therefore not concerned with identifying how specific, structural left-behind factors contribute to the political behavior of voters.

Another factor not considered by this study is that of non-voting, meaning whether the left-behind voter groups cast votes on election day, and whether that is connected to group consciousness. Although not studied here, the act of voting and how that is linked to feelings of being left behind deserve attention in further studies.

With regard to experiments, the process of designing them also involves trade-offs. Although it would be interesting to examine even more experiment conditions, there is a limit in terms of statistical power and in terms of how much one study should tackle. Studies with larger N could, for example, find out more about where the threshold is for the working class to support a reintroduction of the inheritance tax, or indeed the thresholds for support for other taxes. One could also imagine several follow-up experiments regarding spatial redistribution, including support for specific and actual schemes and subsidies. Finally, another possibility would be to use conjoint designs – for example, to gauge how left-behind voter groups weigh cultural issues compared to economic issues in their vote choice.

What is more, key work that has informed this study (Cramer 2012; Cramer 2016), has examined left-behind voters using a qualitative approach that digs deeper into voters' ways of thinking about politics. This is not what is achieved with my quantitative analyses of left-behind voters. This thesis offers insights into overarch-

ing attitudes, and the findings cover the rural population of Norway. Conducting interviews in rural communities in Norway could provide valuable, complementary knowledge about the kinds of understanding and rationales that lie behind attitudes on the aggregated level, while also revealing whether rural voters in Norway reason in the same way as rural people in other contexts, such as in Wisconsin.

The final question concerns the extent to which the findings from Norway can be generalized. The answer to this question is likely to vary between the findings of the articles. The first two articles build on observations from the US, and argue that identifying effects in Norway also points to more general effects. The third article might be more dependent on context, as the findings call for comparative studies of the economic views of left-behind groups. In addition, as I am using cross-sectional data, there are limitations to what this thesis can infer about effects over time. Given the salience of rural grievance at the time of the data collection, we might want to follow up on some of these survey items later, to examine how this plays out under other circumstances.

6 Presentation of the articles

In the following, I will present the findings and contributions of the articles included in this thesis. The main purpose is to call attention to how each of the articles contributes to the thesis, which aims to broaden our understanding of left-behind voters. The focus of the first article is on examining the economic preferences of the first left-behind group — the working class — concentrating on the case of the inheritance tax. The second article centers around the place conflict and the resentment of the

second left-behind group — the rural voters. In the third and final article, the aim is to find out whether there is consensus or conflict between the left-behind voter groups in their economic views.

6.1 Article 1: Aligning working class interest and preferences:

The case of the inheritance tax

In the first article, the main objective is to test the effect on the social class support for a tax policy of being explicit about who will pay for it. The abolished inheritance tax is chosen as a hard test as it is especially unpopular, even in the egalitarian Norwegian context studied in this article. In order to test this effect, a between-subject design experiment was conducted in the Norwegian Citizen Panel. The experiment has a straightforward set-up, varying only with regard to whether it is made clear that it is the richest members of society who are the target of the policy or whether there is no mention of the target. The outcome is support for the reintroduction of the inheritance tax. The article employs two measures of class – one objective and one subjective – to study both types of social group responses.

The article offers new insights to the discussion of lack of alignment between preferences and economic interests, and suggests that the formulation of taxes should also be considered when explaining such developments. The findings show that clarifying the distributional consequences raises support for the inheritance tax. The results reveal that, in the treatment with a clear target, the working class is more supportive than the middle class, while that is not the case in the baseline treatment, thereby showing that being explicit about who will be paying the tax strengthens the connection between preference and what could be considered traditional class in-

terest. Moreover, this pattern is most evident when examining the subjective class support. With regard to the objective class support, the traditional working class is less affected by the treatment than the new working class.

More broadly, the findings suggest that the left-behind voters can be mobilized to support specific tax policies, but this seems to be contingent on a structure that is explicitly redistributive – i.e., it is the richest who will pay. When that is made evident, working class voters connect their preference to traditional class interests, and their general redistributive preferences. The results also contribute by suggesting that identities are more closely connected to group interests, including on the matter of the inheritance tax. The article adds to existing literature by showing that mobilizing against the richest makes support less dependent on education and political efficacy, not only in more unequal democracies, but also in an egalitarian welfare setting, thereby implying that this is a more general mechanism.

6.2 Article 2: Place-based resentment in an egalitarian welfare state

The second article explores the nature of the rural-urban divide by employing a group consciousness framework.²⁸ Using original survey questions collected in the Norwegian Citizen Panel, the article offers solid measures of place resentment as it captures the difference between in-group and out-group grievances at the individual level for both urban and rural voters. Specifically, participants were asked to answer four grievance items, and two trust items, in addition to questions capturing rural or urban identity and identity strength prior to the parliamentary election in 2021. In addition we

²⁸. Co-authored with Kiran Auerbach and Anne Lise Fimreite.

include a question about vote choice that was asked after the election.

The findings provide new insights to the literature on place divides and left-behind voters. Firstly, with the measures we have developed, we are able to show that place grievances are highly asymmetric, adding to findings from previous literature. Rural voters are resentful over place-based grievances, while urban voters are not. In fact, urbanites even sympathize to some degree with rural grievances, highlighting that group consciousness tied to a structural divide can, in some cases, be one-sided. We discuss in the paper that a likely explanation behind the result is that the group ending up with the short end of the stick in a structural development will be more aware of their status and thus be more likely to mobilize and act on group belonging. We find that identity, and identity strength explain resentment more than objective location, giving further weight to the idea that group consciousness is an essential factor in the place divide. Trust questions, more in accordance with traditional affective polarization measures, did not reveal any great resentment towards voters' out-group. The article therefore illustrates that the place conflict is more important to rural voters, and contributes by showing that it is rooted more clearly in perceptions of place-based grievances, rather than as a general animosity towards those who live in cities.

Secondly, rural voters in Norway, living in a context where there is considerable spatial redistribution, are more resentful when it comes to resources than respect for lifestyle. This is interesting as, to some extent, it runs counter to findings from the US, where symbolic or cultural concerns have been proposed as being especially important. Moreover, it shows that rural grievances also exist in an egalitarian welfare state, implying that this is more of a general phenomenon tied to structural

developments, such as the decline of rural areas in the age of technological change, de-industrialization, globalization and urbanization, which are common across Western democracies.

A third contribution to the literature that this article makes is that it demonstrates how rural resentment, and not urban resentment, also contributes to explaining vote choice on the other side of the Atlantic, and, more importantly, it illuminates how rural resentment does not necessarily benefit the (populist) right. The article shows that rural resentment was channeled through voting for the party that most clearly voiced rural grievances, which in the Norwegian case was the Center Party. This implies more broadly that the electoral mobilization of social group voters, and who they align with, is contingent on the supply side – that is, which party options are available and which party most clearly appeals to their interests.

6.3 Article 3: Redistribution between people and places: Conflict or consensus among rural and working class voters?

While previous studies have shown that, due to cultural preferences and political alienation, rural and working class voters can turn to the populist right, this third article investigates whether there is consensus or conflict between the left-behind voter groups on their redistributive views. It addresses whether there is also potential to mobilize these voters jointly with regard to their views on redistribution, both between class and place.

I propose a group-based theoretical and empirical approach to understanding their economic preferences, as voters are often guided by thinking about which groups get what, and whether this is deserved. I outline two competing expectations – either

that they follow more-narrow group interests (meaning, for example, that rural voters favor redistribution to rural areas and people) or that they jointly find working people and rural people more deserving, based on their shared outlook from the left-behind side in the knowledge economy. The empirical strategy of the article relies on using a series of three original survey experiments to examine the contingencies in their economic preferences.

The article has significant implications for the study of left-behind voters. Overall, the findings point towards a consensus between the left-behind voter groups with regard to redistribution between place and class. Both the working class and rural voters are more likely to agree that rural areas, compared to urban areas, receive more than a fair share of public resources. These groups also find working people, rural working people, and rural people to be more deserving of government resources than urban people. Moreover, both groups ultimately support traditional economic redistribution somewhat more than spatial redistribution. In other words, there is no sign of conflict between these voter groups with regard to redistribution across place and class, as measured in this article. This implies that there is potential for parties to mobilize these voter groups on a broad redistributive agenda that covers the needs of both rural and working people. In this sense, the article offers an alternative perspective of what could jointly engage these voters, compared to the choice of emphasis employed in the previous literature.

7 Conclusions and future research

The aim of this thesis has been to broaden our understanding of the political behavior of left-behind voters. I have defined the left-behind as the working class and the rural voters, due to their exposed structural positions in post-industrial societies. These groups risk falling behind, as growing service and knowledge sectors, educational expansion, globalization and urbanization continue to create greater structural divides in post-industrial societies. The existing literature has described left-behind voters as playing a crucial role in the rise of the populist radical right. Examining the Norwegian case, however, where rural voters contributed to the surge in support for the Center Party and the electoral success of the center-left bloc in 2021, I have emphasized contingencies that could connect the left-behind voters to the center-left. This thesis therefore brings new insights to the scholarship that investigates left-behind voters. I have argued that, to more fully understand these voters, the cleavages that they are associated with, and thus how they are mobilized to support parties and policies, we should theoretically and empirically address how group consciousness influences their political thinking and the contingencies of their economic preferences.

The thesis has brought the economic preferences to the forefront in the examination of the left-behind. While previous literature has, to a large extent, highlighted their preferences with regard to the cultural dimension and their dissatisfaction with government, this thesis has contributed to the field by addressing what characterizes their economic preferences. The theoretical and empirical approach has contributed a group-based perspective on economic preferences, and has focused on their views on redistribution. Examining whether there is conflict or consensus between working class and rural voters with regard to redistribution, the thesis has provided evidence

that there is a potential consensus between these groups (article 3). Both rural and working people are seen as deserving of government resources by the left-behind voter groups, and both groups favor traditional economic redistribution over spatial redistribution, which means that the demands of these voters regarding redistributive issues are not at odds with each other, as measured in this thesis. Rural voters in Norway do not display resistance towards traditional redistribution. What Cramer (2016) identified in Wisconsin – a refusal of the welfare state from rural voters – does not appear to be transferable to Norway. Moreover, the findings in article 1 show that working class voters are more likely to support an economic policy when it has a clear redistributive formulation. In summary, the findings imply that left-behind voters could also be mobilized to support parties promoting a redistributive program that ensures the redistribution of resources across place and class, thereby suggesting a potential for parties on the left to which the literature has so far not given much emphasis.

Another main implication of the thesis is that group consciousness affects how left-behind voter groups navigate politics. Group consciousness seems to be activated when voters are exposed to parties, policies and ideas that emphasize the group's interests or status, or that appeal to the group's identity. This consciousness influences vote choice, which in this thesis is demonstrated by rural resentment predicting voting for the Center Party in 2021. The findings also show that it affects how voters view economic policies. These left-behind voter groups are not only affected by in-group considerations in these views, but it also involve seeing the privileges or understanding the consequences for the out-group. This is found, for example, in the way in which rural people are deemed to be more deserving than urban people,

which is much more decisive for rural voters than for urban voters (article 3). In a different manner, this group consciousness also proves important with regard to how social identities are more strongly connected to group interests and preferences than structural belonging, as illustrated in the first and second articles. Overall, the results presented in the thesis give further credence to the literature that stresses how subjective perceptions of structural divides plays a key role in activating cleavages.

The thesis therefore brings further evidence to the emerging literature of place divides that argues that this is more than a structural divide. The conflict is not only related to structural differences or conservative preferences; the divide is also tied to a rural consciousness that entails certain place-based grievances. Finding this type of rural consciousness in Norway suggests that it is not necessarily a product of a moderate welfare state and economic marginalization. This group identity can also be politically manifest in contexts with a generous welfare state. This suggests that these rural grievances are tied to structural disparities that are hard to counteract, even for a rich welfare state – for example, the flight of the young and educated to urban areas, while rural areas are left with a declining and ageing population, which in turn leads to difficulties in delivering equivalent public services. This also poses a challenge for the central government to meet the demands of these voters. Structural reforms that were promoted as initiatives to strengthen welfare services across the country in Norway in the 2010s ended up creating more discontent with central political elites, as in many cases they involved the relocation of jobs and services. The measures suggested by the government instead reinforced the core of rural grievances – not receiving enough public resources compared to urban areas, and not having enough say in politics.

The thesis theoretically and empirically highlights that, when looking at the urban-rural-divide through the lens of group based-grievances, one does not find a divide that is a strong antagonism between two poles – rather, one that is highly asymmetric. This is driven by two factors – first, that rural voters are more resentful over place, and secondly, that urban voters to some extent even sympathize with rural voters. In terms of broader implications, this might be good news for governments seeking to reconcile voters across this divide, as they will not meet great resistance among the general population for compensating rural areas in the general population – at least not in Norway.

In total, the thesis has contributed by showing important variations in how left-behind grievances can be channeled politically. As this is a case study of Norway, it is not possible to conclusively say how differences in party systems might also influence the political behavior of the left-behind voter groups identified in this thesis. However, the thesis indicates that it is an important contingency. In some systems, the rural-urban divide aligns with cultural divides – i.e., where the rural voters mobilized by the populist radical right, or the right. In the Norwegian case, voters with a rural consciousness have been electorally mobilized, at least in 2021, by the party that had most clearly voiced rural interests – the Center Party. This implies, that in multiparty systems, there is room for a party to appeal to the interests of a certain social group, and that rural consciousness is not necessarily associated with right-wing voting. In Norway, the group was mobilized to support a center-left collation, through a cleavage that appears to stand on its own. Returning to the placement of parties shown in the case section, the Center Party was not only the party that was clearly most rural, but it also held a position that fits with the preferences of left-behind voters in general

— namely, somewhat to the right on cultural issues, and somewhat to the left on economic issues. The party’s cultural positions (on immigration and nationalism) are, however, less to the right than the populist right party, which in Norway is also placed to the right on economic issues. These types of alignments and party positions in the Norwegian political landscape could therefore also be part of the explanation behind the patterns identified in this thesis. In the next section, I will suggest paths for further research that could contribute to clarifying the role of party systems, as well as other factors regarding left-behind voters’ political behavior.

7.1 Future research

There are several avenues that can be explored by future research based on the findings presented in this thesis. The studies in this thesis have contributed with new and original ways of measuring the political behavior of left-behind voters. Conducting comparative studies on the effects and mechanisms identified in this research is one obvious path. In the Norwegian context, there is a party that has voiced rural grievances and collaborated with the left, while other systems do not have such a party. Comparative studies including both proportional and majoritarian electoral systems would expand our knowledge concerning the extent to which party options matter. In the case of Norway specifically, I would suggest conducting a follow-up on the same rural grievance items, to find whether there have been any changes in the level of grievance, as well as timing the study in close proximity to the next election, to find out whether there are differences in mobilization when the Center Party is no longer an opposition party attacking a center-right government that has implemented extensive structural reforms. This would shed light on the effect of rural consciousness

over time.

Another possible research design is to concentrate on the relationship between party behavior and voter behavior — i.e., supply and demand. This would entail measuring what parties communicate, combined with data on voters' attitudes over time. To the best of my knowledge, there are few studies that measure the extent to which parties appeal to or represent rural or left-behind voters, whether by looking at manifestos, speeches in parliament or plain descriptive representation. Such studies are available for the class cleavage. Connecting this type of data to voters' preferences over time would help to clarify the role of parties, and even the role of the party system, in the place divide.

The next path that I suggest is related to the interaction of place and class that characterizes knowledge-economy societies. In the third article, for example, I have shown that voters are more favorable towards redistribution to working people in rural areas than those in urban areas, but the thesis has not covered the full breadth of the interaction between place and class. Which combinations of place and class are more or less deserving of government aid than others? Are those politicians who appeal to certain place and class combinations more popular than others? Such studies would improve our knowledge about how concentrations of central social groups in knowledge-economy societies influence political preferences. More broadly, using large-N data, research could also examine how interactions of place and economic class background on the individual level affect political preferences. This study has, for example, not given attention to the working class in cities or to the wealthy in rural areas. Another angle could probe policy support more closely, using survey experiments to examine whether combinations of place and class constraints and con-

sequences affect support. In my study, I have concentrated on general notions of the redistribution of public resources, but further investigations could extend the scope and include more specific policies. These types of inquiries would further broaden our understanding of how place and class divides can mobilize voters living in post-industrial societies.

Another line of research could look into the role played by contextual factors on left-behind political divides. While structural factors have been found to influence preferences of the left-behind, few studies have combined social identity measures on the individual level with variables on a higher level. With this type of design, research could investigate whether (and which) structural disparities reinforce social group identities, grievances and resentment, and also explain when group grievances are asymmetric. Variables that could be of particular interest in this research include measures of declining and ageing population, public service delivery, subsidies, decline in industry, local economic inequality and housing prices. Such studies would deepen our understanding of the macro-mechanisms that contribute to the shaping of group identities and group grievances.

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The articles

- 1 Marta R. Eidheim. “Aligning working class interests and preferences: The case of inheritance tax.”
- 2 Auerbach, Kiran, Marta R. Eidheim, and Anne Lise Fimreite. “Place-based resentment in an egalitarian welfare state.”
- 3 Marta R. Eidheim. “Redistribution between people and places: Conflict or consensus among rural and working-class voters?”

Supplementary material

- 1 Supplementary material of “Introductory chapter”.
- 2 Supplementary material of “Aligning working class interests and preferences: The case of inheritance tax.”
- 3 Supplementary material of “Place-based resentment in an egalitarian welfare state.”
- 4 Supplementary material of “Redistribution between people and places: Conflict or consensus among rural and working-class voters?”

Supplementary material: Introductory chapter of the thesis

Marta R. Eidheim

A Data on voting in 2021 election

The case section of the thesis presents graphs that use data from the Norwegian Citizen Panel wave 22 (Section 4.2, Figures 5 and 6) (Ivarsflaten et al. 2021). This survey was administered to some 12,000 respondents November 1 - November 30 2021 – following the parliamentary election on September 13. In addition to vote choice, I employ two measures of social background, which captures where respondents live and their social class. Both of these measures are based on self-reported information and can therefore be described as subjective measures. They are asked upon recruitment and updated in later waves, and I therefore use compiled versions of these variables. In the tabulations shown in the figures, I apply survey weights that account for biases in distribution of region, age, gender and education in the sample (r22Weight2).

Variables:

Vote choice (r22k3): “Which party did you vote for in the parliamentary elections?”
Answer categories include all parties represented at Stortinget in addition to “Other”, “Did not vote”, “Not entitled to vote”, “Voted blank”. The three latter categories are coded as missing in the results of the chapter.

Subjective social class (r11pkklasse r14pkklasse r16pkklasse r18pkklasse r22pkklasse): “We sometimes talk about whether or not there are different social groups or classes. If you were to place yourself in such a social class, which one would it be?”
Answer categories: “Lower class”, “Working class”, “Lower middle class”, “Middle class”, “Upper middle class”, “Upper class”, “Don’t know”. The first two categories are coded as “Working”, the middle classes plus the upper class is coded as “Middle/higher”, and “Don’t know” is coded as missing.

Place (r18bk35 r20bk35 r22bk35): “Which description best fits the area you live in? We are thinking about Norwegian conditions here”.
Answer categories: “A city”, “A suburb or the outskirts of a city”, “A small or medium sized town”, “A village”, “A sparsely inhabited area”.

Vote choice	No.	%
R	847	6.8
SV	1,367	10.9
AP	3,149	25.1
MDG	694	5.5
SP	1,464	11.7
KRF	476	3.8
V	637	5.1
H	2,553	20.4
FRP	958	7.6
Othr	387	3.1
Total	12,532	100.0
Place	No.	%
City	2,990	25.6
Suburb	2,316	19.8
Town	3,273	28.0
Village	1,821	15.6
Very rural	1,288	11.0
Total	11,688	100.0
Subjective social class	No.	%
Working	1,734	14.3
Middle/High	10,430	85.7
Total	12,164	100.0

Table 1: Distribution of categories in sample. NCP Wave 22.

B Data on political positions of parties

The case section of the thesis introductory chapter employs data from the 2019 Chapel Hill expert survey (Section 4.2, Figure 6) (2020). The data set contains the mean positions of 32 parties including Norway (country number 35), which is the data extracted in the graphs presented in the case section. According to provided information the survey was fielded in winter 2020 and 421 political scientists completed the survey. The graphs presented in section .. are based on variables listed below. The information is retrieved from the Codebook of 2019 Chapel Hill Expert Survey.

Variables:

REDISTRIBUTION. Position on redistribution of wealth from the rich to the poor.

0 = Strongly favors redistribution

10 = Strongly opposes redistribution

IMMIGRATE.POLICY. Position on immigration policy.

0 = Strongly favors a liberal policy on immigration

10 = Strongly favors a restrictive policy on immigration

NATIONALISM. Position towards cosmopolitanism vs. nationalism.

0 = Strongly promotes cosmopolitan conceptions of society

10 = Strongly promotes nationalist conceptions of society

GALTAN. Position of the party in 2019 in terms of their views on social and cultural values. “Libertarian” or “postmaterialist” parties favor expanded personal freedoms, for example, abortion rights, divorce, and same-sex marriage. “Traditional” or “authoritarian” parties reject these ideas in favor of order, tradition, and stability, believing that the government should be a firm moral authority on social and cultural issues.

0 = Libertarian/Postmaterialist

5 = center

10 = Traditional/Authoritarian

URBAN_RURAL Position on urban/rural interests.

0 = Strongly supports urban interests

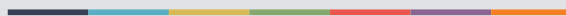
10 = Strongly supports rural interests

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