Identity Formation between Structure and Agency – How 'Us' and 'Them' Relates to Voting Behavior in Contexts of Electoral Realignment

Simon Bornschier, Lukas Haffert, Silja Häusermann,
Marco Steenbergen and Delia Zollinger[†]

July 29, 2022

Abstract

Western Europe is experiencing growing levels of political polarization between parties of the New Left and the Far Right. In many countries, the socio-structural foundations of this divide (class, education, residence) are by now so clear that many interpret this divide as a fully mobilized new electoral cleavage. At the same time, observers have highlighted a growing fragmentation of party systems and the proliferation of new competitors. We suggest to make sense of these contradictory developments by focusing on the shared group identities that constitute the "glue" of cleavage formation translating grievances into political antagonisms. Our contribution relies on data from an original online survey fielded in France, Germany, the UK and Switzerland. Respondents answered questions on their sense of belonging to a series of social groups, electoral preferences and socio-demographics. On this basis, we are able to show – observationally – that socio-structural categories relate to both socio-economically (e.g. class) and socio-culturally (e.g. cosmopolitanism, lifestyle) connoted group identities, which divide New Left and Far Right voters in surprisingly similar ways across contexts. We then study the extent of social closure and political mobilization at the extremes of the new divide through the analysis of social networks, perceived group alignments, and perceived representation. Our findings suggest that the new conflict is firmly rooted in socio-economic categories and at the societal level. Its political mobilization happens mostly via culturally connoted identities. What is more, social realignments and closure are highly similar across the four countries. This underscores that party competition remains rooted in structural antagonisms even as support for individual parties becomes more volatile. To detect this underlying similarity and stability, it is necessary to focus on voter alignments to ideological party blocs, rather than individual parties.

Keywords: Identities; cleavage formation; electoral realignment; far right; new left; Western Europe

[†]All University of Zurich. Authors listed in alphabetical order.

1. Introduction

Diverging interpretations exist of how and why electoral landscapes in Western Europe have transformed over the last decades. Emphasizing the role of party agency and strategy, one perspective sees new parties' issue-based challenges to the dominant position of mainstream parties as evidence of dissolving links between voters and parties and of growing party system fragmentation (for a recent defense of this position, see De Vries and Hobolt 2020; for older arguments of individualization and 'dealignment' see Franklin 1992; Green-Pedersen 2007, 2019). Another perspective highlights the role of long-term structural changes of the economy and society that give rise to fundamentally new conflicts across advanced democracies (Inglehart 1984; Dalton et al. 1984; Kitschelt 1994; Kriesi et al. 2008; Oesch and Rennwald 2018; Hooghe and Marks 2018; Bornschier 2010a; Häusermann and Kriesi 2015). While the former perspective paints a fluid, fragmented, and more volatile picture of 'dealigned' contemporary politics, the latter emphasizes patterns of realignment, implying a certain inertia and predictability of 21st century politics that remain socio-structurally embedded (also see Kriesi et al. 2021 and Kitschelt and Rehm 2015 for discussions of these debates). Although concerned with the same empirical reality, these strands of the literature have to a large extent been talking past each other. In this paper, we seek to present an account that reconciles the view that the structural roots of party systems in society incite stability, and that of an ever increasing role of political entrepreneurship, which induces change.

With this aim, we highlight key patterns of transforming cleavage structures found across countries in Western Europe (hence taking a structural 'realignment' approach). To do so, we focus on new collective identities emerging in transforming electoral landscapes. Building on cleavage theory (Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Bartolini 2000, 2005), we see such collective identities as rooted in socio-structural potentials that may or may not be politically mobilized. Our goal is to observe the extent to which a 'universalism-particularism' cleavage (Bornschier et al. 2021) has formed, both at the socio-structural level of identities and social closure, and at the partisan level of political mobilization. We show that, across different Western European countries, politics are increasingly drawn into the same field of tensions surrounding this new cleavage, evidenced by similar structurally rooted identity potentials and similar patterns of social closure.

If cleavages are alive and well, why do we see increasing instability of party systems in Western Europe? We suggest that the weakening of the encapsulation of voters by party organizations (e.g., Katz and Mair 2018) has resulted in an increase in volatility at the surface of party systems, giving more leeway to "issue entrepreneurs" (De Vries and Hobolt 2020) and elite political agency more generally (think of Boris Johnson, Emanuel Macron, or Sebastian Kurz). Yet these actors do not fundamentally alter the dimensionality of the political space and the way party systems are rooted in social structure. Hence we see less instability if we view party systems through the lens of ideological party blocks. A rich body of literature attests to the structural roots of the 'second dimension' of political competition – that we label the universalism-particularism divide because it has been articulated by green and other socially progressive left parties on the one hand and by conservative and nativist far right parties on the other (Kriesi et al. 2008; Kitschelt 1994; Bornschier and Kriesi 2013; Oesch and Rennwald 2018; Ivarsflaten

and Stubager 2013). The intriguing question then becomes how the link between social structural groups and ideological party blocks is maintained as individual parties' linkage to social constituencies erodes. To shed light on this process, we suggest to focus on social identities as the intermediate level connecting social structure and the organizational expression of cleavages.

In line with classical cleavage theory (Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Bartolini and Mair 1990; Bartolini 2005), we consider collective identities the 'glue' of cleavage formation, shaping how voters with a specific socio-structural location come to think about their own and others' place in society, as well as about their political affiliations. Evidence of broad collective identities, rooted in social structure and consistently mobilized by blocks of parties (if not necessarily by the same individual parties across contexts), would strongly speak against interpreting contemporary politics in advanced democracies as fragmented, volatile, and contingent on party strategy or idiosyncratic events. At the same time, by studying collective identities, we also avoid socio-structural determinism, since there is an important agency-based element to how new grievances and issues become bundled, how boundaries between 'us' and 'them' are drawn, and to how social identities and associated worldviews become tied to partisanship.

We add to the existing literature in three ways: first, we provide a theoretical account that reconciles the seemingly contradictory processes of party system fragmentation and realignment along a new cleavage. Since parties no longer appeal to specific social groups, broader group identities have been key in the mobilization of the universalism-particularism cleavage. These groups are much closer to the discourses parties use than the find-grained social categories we commonly employ to describe social structure in the knowledge economy. Second, we explore the mechanisms underlying alignments along the new cleavage by assessing the role of social closure and the perceived alignment of group boundaries as bottom-up processes of group formation underlying the new cleavage. Finally, building on Bornschier et al. (2021) and adding a comparative perspective, we investigate to what extent this universalism-particularism divide is congealing into a fully-fledged 'cleavage' comprised of structural, political *and* identity elements across different contexts (Bartolini and Mair 1990). Overall, we reveal a fundamental similarity of the social identities underlying party systems in four West European countries, namely, in France, Switzerland, Germany, and the UK. At the same time, a legacy of the earlier mobilization of the conflict in some countries relative to others becomes visible when we look at perceived political representation: Here, it seems that the process of realignment is much more advanced in Switzerland than in Germany and the UK.

2. Electoral Dealignment or Realignment?

The debate on whether we have been witnessing dealignment and the end of cleavage politics, or whether processes of realignment between social groups and parties continue to instill predictability in party politics is far from new (Dalton et al. 1984; Inglehart 1984). There is broad consensus that the cleavage structures originally identified by Lipset and Rokkan 1967 (most notably the traditional class and religious cleavages), which characterized West European party systems for decades, have

lost much of their structuring potential (Franklin 1992; Mair 2013; Kriesi 2014). Greater debate has long surrounded the question of whether the waning of classic cleavages and the weakening of associated identities is giving way to a more individualized, volatile, and issue-oriented form of politics, or whether we are witnessing the emergence of stable new alignments between voters and parties and hence the development of new cleavages (for a review of this debate, see Kitschelt and Rehm 2015). On the one hand, most observers of party system change in Western Europe will agree on the emergence of a 'second dimension' of politics (orthogonal to or at least clearly distinct from the traditional class cleavage), centered around predominantly socio-cultural questions of individual liberties, societal organization and community boundaries, and politically articulated by parties of the (new) left and the far right (Kitschelt 1994; Kriesi et al. 2008; Flanagan and Lee 2003; Hooghe and Marks 2018; Bornschier 2010a; De Wilde et al. 2019; Häusermann and Kriesi 2015).[1] On the other hand, there is major disagreement pertaining to the question whether this dimension is developing into a fully-fledged new cleavage, let alone one of the dominant cleavages, structuring in a lasting way how voters think about their own and others' place in society and politics. While such tendencies have been shown for specific contexts (Bornschier et al. 2021; Stubager 2009), both structural drivers and mobilization efforts must play together for the second dimension to not only bundle issues, but shape who people think they are politically.

Regarding socio-structural developments as the drivers of realignment, it is widely documented that societies in Western Europe have undergone similarly far-reaching transformations in terms of educational expansion, occupational change, feminization of labour markets, concentration of high value-added economic activity in cities, and exposure to the multi-faceted process of globalization (Garritzmann et al. 2021; Bornschier 2018; Kitschelt 1994; Kriesi et al. 2008; Iversen and Soskice 2019; Oesch 2006; Hooghe and Marks 2018). These developments change the composition of society and they benefit some groups more than others (notably: the higher educated compared to the lower-educated; workers in knowledge-intensive and creative jobs compared to those in routine work; globally connected urban centers compared to rural or industrial areas), materially but also more broadly in terms of social status, outlook, or the rise and demise of worldviews and ways of life (Kurer 2020; Gidron and Hall 2017; Hochschild 2016; Gest 2016; Cramer 2016; Fitzgerald 2020; Bolet 2021). Across Western Europe, these same structural transformations have also entailed the increasing saliency of questions related to cultural liberalism and changing gender roles, immigration and multiculturalism, or the boundaries of community. While the timing, strength, and scope of structurally driven societal change has differed across West European countries, most countries - at least in continental, northern and anglophone Western Europe - can today broadly be classified as post-industrial, globally integrated, knowledge-based economies. Hence, from the perspective of cleavage formation, similar structural potentials should exist across advanced democracies: The 'raw material' for a new cleavage (or cleavages) in terms of structural divides, new grievances, and disruptive issues has emerged across Western Europe, and this should be evident in the ways in which voters link their socio-structural situation to both

[1] The literature broadly identifies several waves in which the second dimension gained political traction, with the new social movements of the 1970s and 1980s finding expression in the emergence of the new left and green party family, followed by counter-mobilization on the part of far right (Bornschier 2010a; Häusermann and Kriesi 2015). The conflict over new issues thus articulated has variably been labelled GAL-TAN (Hooghe and Marks 2018), libertarian-universalistic or traditionalist-communitarian (Bornschier 2010a), integration-demarcation (Kriesi et al. 2008), or (encompassing ever more evident distributive conflicts) universalism-particularism (Beramendi et al. 2015; Bornschier et al. 2021).

economically and culturally defined group belongings.

At the same time, the literature on parties as organizations has put in evidence a dramatic erosion of parties' organizational links to their constituencies as they have become more detached from society (Katz and Mair 1994, 2018; Poguntke 2002; Ignazi 2020). As a result, party identification has declined (Dalton and Wattenberg 2002), and party system volatility has been on the rise in recent years (e.g., Chiaramonte and Emanuele 2017; Dassonneville and Hooghe 2017), in part as a result of growing "innovation" in party systems as new parties manifest themselves and others demise (Emanuele and Chiaramonte 2018). Katz and Mair (2018: 14-15) plausibly argue that parties have evolved from being the political expression of social groups to becoming brokers that build coalitions between social groups on ideological grounds. These changes impede parties' ability to encapsulate voters in the way they did in Lipset and Rokkan's (1967) days. Likewise, the organizations in which individuals were socially embedded, such as unions, the church and affiliated organizations, or business associations, and that cultivated close ties to traditional parties, have lost in importance as well (Gingrich and Lynch 2019). Concurring with this trend, the "personalization of politics" (McAllister 2007) has given more weight to the strategic action of party leaders, although the extent to which this process has occurred is debated (Poguntke and Webb 2005; Kriesi 2012; Marino et al. 2022). Indeed, an important strand of scholarships sees the ability of new parties or "political entrepreneurs" to enter party competition and weaken established parties as (indirect) evidence that voters elect politicians based on the issues of the day, rather than along cleavage lines characterized by inertia (Hobolt et al. 2020; Green-Pedersen 2019). Following the re-discovery of "identity politics" in the 1980s (e.g., Offe 1985), other scholars underscore the importance of new group identifications in shaping vote choice. At the extreme, these groups are seen as deprived of structural roots, and instead conceived of as a product of politics or partisanship itself (Achen and Bartels 2016).[2] In a similar vein, strands of the growing literature on affective polarization also tend to view politics, rather than social divisions, as the driver of partisan affect and disaffect (for overviews, see, Iyengar et al. 2019; Gidron et al. 2020; Reiljan 2020; Hobolt et al. 2020). Going along with affective polarization, different ideological camps are increasingly isolated from one another (McPherson et al. 2006).

We challenge the view that party system instability and affective polarization have uprooted politics from its social roots. We proceed in two steps. Building on ample evidence that the basic political space has remained fairly stable since Dalton, Flanagan, and Beck's (1984) writing, we tentatively explore the factors that account for the growing fragmentation of party system amidst a set of relatively stable cleavages. The main aim of this paper is then to take the analysis a step further by demonstrating how group identities mediate the link between social structure and partisan alignments in similar ways across the four countries we study in this paper.

In terms of the basic dividing lines in party systems, there is ample evidence that the basic two-dimensional space – composed of the economic state-market and a second dimension that we label as a universalism-particularism divide here – has remained stable in Continental and Northern Europe over the past two or three decades (e.g., Kitschelt 1994; Kriesi et al. 2008; Bornschier 2010b; Kriesi et al. 2012;

[2]While Mason (2018a) is also concerned with group identities that emerge from partisanship, her perspective is more nuanced as she emphasizes how social sorting occurs as the boundaries of different social and political divisions overlap.

Marks et al. 2006; Hutter and Kriesi 2019). Political actors and "issue entrepreneurs" for the most part move within this space without fundamentally altering it. Building on the seminal work of Bartolini and Mair (1990), much of the instability we witness at the surface of party system may therefore the product of vote switching within ideological party blocks. Several processes drive this trend towards growing volatility. In a more-dimensional space, parties face incentives to shift positions with respect to issues that do not form part of their ideological core (De Sio and Weber 2014), or that are situated on their secondary dimension (Koedam 2022) in order to maximize votes. Consequently, as party systems become more fragmented, voters' choice set – composed of parties that differ with respect to specific issues or issue emphasis, but that align in their basic cleavage positions – expands (Steenbergen et al. 2015; Oskarson et al. 2016). This process is supported by an increasing cognitive sophistication on the part of voters, especially among younger cohorts (Inglehart 1990; Dalton 2002). For another, instability is caused by the reactions of mainstream parties mainly on the center-right to the entry of far right parties that compete with them in terms of the universalism-particularism dimension (Bale 2003; Bale and Rovira Kaltwasser 2021; Meguid 2008; van Spanje 2010; Bornschier 2012; Abou-Chadi and Krause 2018; Gidron and Ziblatt 2019; de Jonge 2021). Some extent of volatility can itself be a reflection of realignment taking place along the new cleavage (Emanuele et al. 2020). Together with individual-level shifts in the relative salience of competitive dimensions, it is only the latter process that is likely to result in cross-cleavage volatility, while the presence of the other factors inciting greater instability are compatible with the presence of fundamental cleavages.[3]

At the same time, if the categories we use to describe society are adapted to capture the post-industrial conflicts we discussed above, there is no uniform decline in the degree to which politics is rooted in social groups (e.g., Evans 1999; Knutsen 2004; Kitschelt and Rehm 2015; Häusermann and Kriesi 2015; Oesch and Rennwald 2018; Marks et al. 2022).[4] What is more, the fact that the last bastions of resistance against the manifestation of the far right potential have fallen in Western European party systems suggests that the structural and identity potentials underlying the univeralism-particularism dimension severely limit the space for political agency. But if the classical agents of cleavage socialization such as unions and religious organizations have lost their hold on voters, how do parties maintain their links to social groups in today's more fluid political environment? We suggest that identities, far from being detached from social reality, constitute the 'glue' linking socio-structural and political divides.

3. Processes of Identity Formation

In line with important strands of cleavage theory, we conceptualize collective identities as located at an intermediary level between structure and politics (Bartolini and Mair 1990; Bartolini 2005; Bornschier 2010a; Bornschier et al. 2021). As Figure 1 illustrates, we can think of cleavages becoming consolidated as structural potentials for conflict become activated by political actors. The collective political

[3] Although they use a somewhat different classification of party blocks, Emanuele, Marino and Angelucci (2020) demonstrate that when looking at inter-block volatility, there is evidence of the congealing of a new cleavage that is obscured when looking at total volatility.

[4] A more recent strand of research taps into the role of political agency and conflict in either reinforcing or weakening the role of social class in shaping political alignments (e.g., Evans and de Graaf 2013; Evans et al. 2022).

identities resulting from such mobilization efforts interact with bottom-up processes of social group formation, which we explore below. As party narratives give meaning to existing similarities and group boundaries, these politicized identities inform voters' preferences within specific ideological schemas or worldviews (also see Huddy 2001; Stubager 2009). Once formed, they may also shape party politics in lasting ways as mobilization markets are 'narrowed' (c.f. Rokkan 1999; Mair 1997) by salient us-versus-them distinctions into which voters are socialized. Put differently, existing interpretations of what conflict is about limit the receptiveness of voters to new political appeals. Hence, even in light of on-going socio-structural change and party entrepreneurship, collective identity antagonisms may generate a certain inertia to party system change, confining the effects of idiosyncratic shocks or individual election campaigns within the bounds of overall cleavage structures.

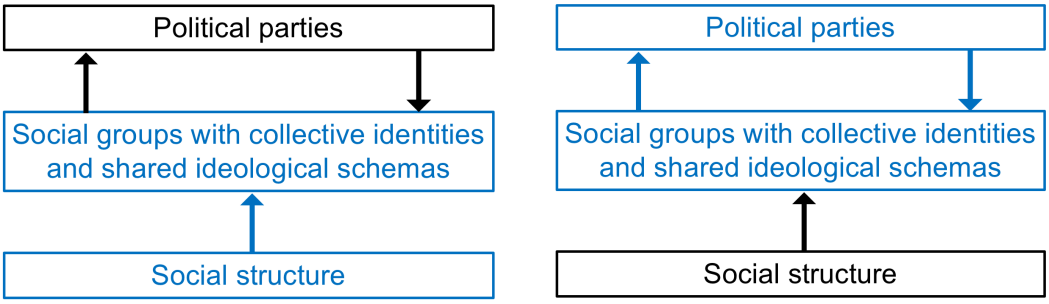

Figure 1: Processes of cleavage formation: social closure (left) and political mobilization (right)

'Critical junctures' that bring about far-reaching transformations of social structure and that generate fundamentally new conflicts and raise new issues may create openings for the weakening of old cleavages and the emergence of new ones (Bornschier 2009). In line with the discussion above, we contend that the transition from an industrial to a post-industrial, globalized knowledge society (driven and manifested by both societal and economic transformations, Kitschelt 1994; Kriesi et al. 2008; Iversen and Soskice 2019) presents just such an opening. Starting with the mobilization of new social movements in Europe in the 1980s, these underlying occupational and social changes increasingly manifested in new organized actors on the (libertarian-progressive) left, followed by a counter-mobilization of far right parties, raising communitarian-nationalist positions (Bornschier 2010b). The available evidence on the generational component of the processes of dealignment and increased issue voting lends additional credence to our restructuring perspective: While younger voters are less rooted in the traditional cleavages (van der Brug 2010), their vote is more strongly driven by issues associated with the new cleavage (Walczak et al. 2012). We suggest that both growing cognitive sophistication, as well as increased party system polarization have aided this process. Over three to four decades, these transformations have altered party system configurations across European countries.

If we conceptualize identities as the 'glue' linking socio-structural and political divides, how does this glue come about? Figure 1 makes clear that, in the cleavage framework, identities, i.e. categories of self- and other-perception, perceived group-boundaries and their political connotations, are the result of interacting structural and agency-driven processes. However, analytically and (to some extent) empirically we can distinguish between processes that play out closer to the socio-structural level and

others that are more strictly political in nature. Here, we will use the terms *social closure* for the former and *political mobilization* for the latter.

By social closure we mean the processes through which the sociability of groups is delimited (e.g. who marries, does business, or socializes with whom). The term 'closure' has been used loosely in the cleavage literature to refer to the stability of the social relationship(s) represented by a cleavage, including as evidenced by low inter-block voter volatility (c.f. Bartolini and Mair 1990). Sociologists in Weberian or Bourdieusian traditions, meanwhile, have more explicitly emphasized how groups struggle to monopolize privileges and access to resources by constructing 'symbolic boundaries' (Lamont 2000; Savage et al. 2013; Lamont and Molnár 2002; Westheuser 2019; Damhuis 2020, also see Bartolini 2005: 22) of who belongs and who does not. In particular, visible characteristics (such as social origin, occupation, ethnicity or religion) facilitate the drawing of boundaries, the labelling of outsiders, and the maintenance of exclusive status groups. This understanding emphasizes the structural roots of social closure and the role of material interests and grievances that might motivate that drawing of (cultural) in-group and out-group boundaries (for further discussion, see Westheuser and Zollinger 2021). Furthermore, while the classic literature emphasizes strains on social mobility as essential in creating social closure (Lipset and Rokkan 1967), Stryker (1980) suggests a synthesis of constructivism and structuralism in emphasizing how everyday interaction makes some group identifications become more salient at the expense of others.

While the literature on the classic cleavages by Lipset and Rokkan (1967) and beyond emphasized the role of churches or unions and affiliated social clubs or business associations for welding loose group boundaries into well-defined collectives, the mechanisms of social closure today are somewhat less clear. However, given the socio-structural underpinnings of the universalism-particularism divide, social networks linked to educational experiences (Stubager 2008; Kriesi et al. 2008), to the work place (Kitschelt 1994; Kitschelt and Rehm 2014), or to geographical place (Maxwell 2019; Cramer 2016; Wuthnow 2018; Savage et al. 2018; Iversen and Soskice 2019) likely all play an important role, especially where they reinforce rather than cross-cut each other. Indeed, social psychology (notably social identity theory) adds the important insight that while people have a natural propensity to categorize into 'us' and 'them' (Tajfel 1981; Tajfel and Turner 1979), increasing alignment of identities (i.e. a lack of 'identity complexity') enhances the tendency for out-group bias (Huddy 2001; Roccas and Brewer 2002; Brewer 1999). When socio-structural divides align or overlap (see Bartolini 2000; Mason 2018b; Mason and Wronski 2018) (say, educational divides coincide with residential segregation or occupational differences), this is likely to reinforce psychological drivers of social closure.

4. Expectations

Historically, close ties between parties and unions or the church fostered the political embeddedness of voters based on their identities (Gingrich and Lynch 2019). But even today, a rich literature on party system change emphasizes political actors' role in strategically making salient and bundling new issues, (thus) catering to growing or declining social groups, and (indirectly and directly) ap-

pealing to their identities. Much of this literature has focused on green and far right parties as 'issue entrepreneurs' advancing party system fragmentation (De Vries and Hobolt 2020; Green-Pedersen 2019). We rather see them as primary and catalyzing actors in the articulation of an encompassing universalism-particularism antagonism (in line with Gingrich and Häusermann 2015; Bornschier 2010a; Oesch and Rennwald 2018; Bornschier et al. 2021). Because this realignment is rooted in structural transformations prevalent across all advanced postindustrial democracies, our basic expectation is one of similarity. More specifically, we expect similar group group identities to be salient across our four countries and that this similarity extends to the way they have been mobilized by political parties. To see this underlying similarity in the way group identities are mobilized, we need to focus on ideological party blocks, rather than party families. For example, important parts of a class such as the socio-cultural professionals may be aligned with Green parties in some countries, and with a socialist party in others. Both party families belong to the New Left block, however, as we will show.

At the same time, there remains some degree of country variation. Institutional arrangements and context-specific opportunity structures have allowed new parties to become decisive forces in the party system early on, for instance because electoral hurdles for new party entry were low or because organizational structures facilitated the transformation of established parties' platforms. In others, as we discussed earlier on, green and/or far right parties have remained marginal until much more recently, but have nevertheless left their mark by mobilizing aspects of a universalism-particularism divide[5]. In the UK, the electoral system acts as an important constraint on the number of parties competing. Importantly, whether 'challengers' have become established or not, mainstream parties (notably social democratic and conservative parties) have had to make strategic choices regarding their positioning with regard to challengers on this new divide. The decisions of these mainstream parties to realign with the newly salient divide or to try to maintain their previous role and position in the political space is, of course, one of the key factors fuelling or moderating the realignment of party competition into a new fully-fledged cleavage, as we discussed earlier (e.g., Abou-Chadi and Wagner 2020; Chou et al. 2021).

Patterns of political mobilization over the last decades will have affected, first, the degree to which specific identities have congealed into an overarching, Manichean antagonism linked to specific (blocks of) parties in people's minds. Where challengers are established and/or mainstream parties started early on to mobilize new groups based on new sets of issues, we can expect universalist-particularist identity groups to have found a political home by now: in such cases, fragmentation may hide the formation of party blocks (c.f. Kriesi et al. 2021) mobilizing well-defined overarching identity antagonisms, hence representing opposing camps in a new cleavage. However, where far right and green parties became meaningful contenders in elections only more recently or where mainstream left and right parties remain divided over whether and how to appeal to new electorates, identity potentials associated with the universalism-particularism divide will be less firmly represented in party competition. In sum, while structural transformations suggest that voters across Western Europe will perceive similar divides in terms of education, occupation, urban-rural residence, lifestyle, or (nativist) national versus cosmopoli-

[5]For country(-comparative) studies on realignment processes, see e.g. Bornschier 2012; Kriesi et al. 2008; Bjørklund and Andersen 2002; Rydgren 2004; Rydgren and van der Meiden 2019; Schwarzbözl and Fatke 2016; de Jonge 2021 on the cases of Germany, Switzerland, France, UK, Sweden, Denmark, and the Benelux countries.

tan identity, these perceptions might still look different across cases of early and strong as opposed to recent and partial realignment. At the same time, a legacy of the earlier mobilization of the conflict in some countries relative to others becomes visible when we look at perceived political representation: Here, it seems that the process of realignment is much more advanced in Switzerland than in Germany and the UK.

To tap into the bottom-up component of the new cleavage in terms of group identity formation, we explore two mechanisms of social closure. First, we expect the new cleavage to be rooted in patterns of personal interaction defined by social class, education, and urban-rural residence. Individuals' embeddedness into more universalistic or more particularistic networks is likely to reinforce both the group identities underlying the cleavage, as well as individuals' worldviews along this divide. Second, we delve into the perceived overlap of these structural divisions (again, in terms of class, education, and urban-rural residence) in the minds of voters. In line with our general hypothesis, we expect the overlapping of several group boundaries to contribute to the maturation of the cleavage. If these mechanisms are indeed structural, rather than being shaped by partisan mobilization, we should not find a pronounced contrast across countries, despite the differences in the timing of the realignment.

In summary, we suggest that the level of collective identities represents a good place to study the interaction between structure and agency. While our evidence shows that group identities remain anchored in social structure, they are clearly closer to the discourses of political actors than social groups defined by class or education, which are rarely referred to directly in political discourse.[6]

5. Data and Measurement

The following results are based on four online surveys fielded in France, Germany, Switzerland, and the UK. The surveys were executed by the the survey firm Bilendi between November 2020 and January 2021. We recruited 2,000 participants in France and Germany and 3,000 participants in Switzerland in the UK. In Switzerland, we only recruited participants from the German and French speaking parts. In the UK, we only recruited participants from England. The samples are representative for education, age, and gender. We selected these four countries because they are at different stages of electoral realignment: while France and Switzerland are representative of countries that experienced early and strong realignment, Germany and the UK are cases of late realignment. However, the structural transformations generating new identity potentials have occurred in all four countries.

[aragraphIdentities] The fundamental setup of the survey follows Bornschier et al. (2021). In a series of closed-ended questions, we ask respondents about perceived closeness to a number of social groups ("Of the following groups, how close do you feel towards them? By 'close' we mean people who are most like you in terms of their ideas, interests, and feelings."). We consider this survey item a good starting point to extend research in cleavage theory to encompass group identities. Especially in a

[6]Rural and urban residents might be an exception here in that some parties explicitly defend rural ways of life.

context where identities may only be taking shape, the closeness item seems suitable for gaining a basic understanding of "who voters are" in their subjective self-understanding. The validity of this measure is explored more systematically in Bornschier et al. (2021).

The results shown in this paper are based on the battery of 17 specific groups that we presented respondents in a randomized order. In the identity question, we asked respondents to indicate how close they feel to each group on a ten-point scale ranging from 'very close' to 'not at all close'. The 17 categories tap into education (e.g. closeness to highly educated people), economic status (wealthy people) occupation (e.g. people who do creative work), residence (urban/rural), universalism-communitarianism (e.g. cosmpolitans) and lifestyle (e.g. culturally interested people). The full list of identities is presented below.

We can think of closeness as an indicator of the centrality of an identity. Other dimensions of group identities include affect and social ties (Cameron 2004). We shall comment below on the social ties, i.e., social closure. In terms of affect, we asked respondents to indicate their experiences of pride, fear, and anger for the three closest and three most distal groups. One would expect pride to be significantly higher for the closest than for the most distal groups, and it is: mean for the closest and most distal groups = 3.2 and 2.4, respectively ($t = 62.7$, $p < .005$). By contrast, one would expect fear and anger to be highest for the most distal groups and, again, they are. The mean levels of fear are 2.2 and 2.5, for the closest and most distal groups, respectively. While fear does not appear a prominent emotion for any of the groups, the difference is still statistically significant ($t = -30.4$, $p < .005$). The mean levels of anger are 2.4 and 3.0 for the closest and most distal groups, respectively. This difference is also statistically significant ($t = -46.8$, $p < 0.005$). In all, we believe these results on group affect show that we are indeed measuring identities.

In our survey, we used the same battery of 17 identities for other questions. While the first measure aims to tap into identities as such, we will us these measures to study the extent of group formation and political mobilization. In particular, we asked respondents about the intensity of their interactions with each group ("We would now like to ask you about personal interactions you may have with each of these different groups. How often do you have personal conversations or spend your time with people who belong to these groups?").

Finally, we asked respondents about which party they would associate with each identity ("Which party would you associate most closely with each of the following groups? In other words: which party do you think the members of each group would be most likely to vote for?").

In our analyses, we link peoples responses to their occupational class, their education background, and their place of residence. We operationalized objective occupational class following the Oesch (2006) 8-class scheme on the basis of ISCO-3d codes. The ISCO-3d codes were derived from a question in which peopel were presented the SERISS list of occupations, complemented by an open-ended question if people did not find their occupation. Education is recoded in three categories (below secondary, secondary, and tertiary degree). Finally, our measure of urban versus rural residence is based on a

Table 1: Party Clusters in the Country-Cases

Cluster	CH	DE	FR	UK
Europhile Left	GPS, SP	Grüne, Linke SPD	EELV, PS	Green, Labour LibDem
Euroskeptic Left	–	–	FI, PCF	–
Liberal	GPL	FDP	LREM, MoDem	–
Right	BDP, CVP, EVP, FDP	CDU, CSU	LR	Conservatives
Far Right	SVP	AfD	DLF, RN	Brexit, UKIP

question about the number of inhabitants of respondents place of residence.

Party Groupings Central to our analysis is the distinction between different political parties. We base our classification using a Gaussian mixture model in combination with the 2019 Chapel Hill Expert Survey [cite will follow]. The mixture model allows for a clear identification of clusters and their structures based on the Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC). Moreover, it probabilistically assigns parties to clusters, which makes it easier to handle parties with amorphous profiles.

Focusing on all Western European countries, we proceed in two steps. First, we cluster parties based on the economic left-right and the GAL-TAN variables, which serve as approximations of the key ideological dimensions of the European political space (Bornschier 2010a). As per the BIC, this results in three clusters: economic left-GAL, economic center-right-GAL/liberal, and economic right-TAN parties. In a second step, we differentiated the clusters further based on specific issues. The liberal cluster is already quite homogeneous and also small, so that we abstained from further differentiation. By contrast, the remaining two clusters are large and very heterogeneous. Here we selected the two issues with the largest within-cluster variance, i.e., nationalism and European integration for the economic left-GAL cluster and minorities and protectionism for the economic right-TAN cluster. Applying the Gaussian mixture approach in the second step results in a five cluster solution: Europhile left, Euroskeptic left, liberal, mainstream right, and far right. The appendix provides more details about the placements of the parties.

In this paper, we focus on just three of the five clusters: Europhile left, mainstream right, and far right. These are the clusters that can be found in all four of the countries in our sample. Moreover, these clusters are particularly relevant for the idea of a growing divide between universalistic and particularistic identities. The Europhile left holds clearly universalistic positions. On the other side, the far right is quite particularistic with its nationalistic focus. The mainstream right should be positioned in between. The downside to our focus on just three party clusters is that we miss the largest party in France, to wit *La Republique en Marche*.

6. Results

6.1. Social Structure, Identities, and Electoral Preferences

In this section, we study, first, the links between the key socio-structural categories that have been shown to structure vote choice for the left and the far right across countries (i.e. education, class and urban/rural residency) and closeness to different identity groups. Our aim is to show that voters' group identities - both when it comes to economic and culturally defined groups - are rooted socio-structurally. Second, we study the politicization of these group identities by analyzing how voters of left, mainstream right and far right parties differ in their closeness to the groups. Based on this analysis, we identify the most important in- and out-groups of the different electorates, and we show that these in- and out-groups are massively important predictors of vote-choice, substantively much more important than education as the key (antecedent) socio-structural variable identified in the literature. The analyses follow (Bornschier et al. 2021) but extend the focus comparatively.

The findings we present in this section show striking similarities across all four country-contexts when it comes to the socio-structural underpinnings of the most important politicized group identities. We also find very similar in- and outgroups of left, mainstream right and far right voters across countries. The main differences across countries are to be found with regard to relative party size and the role of the mainstream right vs the far right. While in France and Switzerland, the antagonism between left and far right voters dominates the electoral space, the right-wing side of the political spectrum is (still) more strongly dominated by conservative parties of the mainstream right in Germany and the UK. These voters of the mainstream right have in- and outgroups that are 'mixed', i.e. they encompass economically connoted groups, as well as traditional and recent culturally connoted groups (christian-western values, demarcation from low income groups and feminism). Voters of the far right, by contrast, explicitly identify with and demarcate themselves from culturally connoted groups (closeness to nationals, down to earth people, demarcation from people with migration background, cosmopolitans). On the left side of the political spectrum, such culturally connoted group identities also prevail consistently, which is particularly interesting since - based on the cluster analysis - we subsume all green, left-libertarian and social democratic parties in this category (wiht the exception of La France Insoumise). Here, the common pattern across countries shows that left-wing voters today feel closest to feminists, people with migration background, cosmopolitans. Their outgroups are a bit more varied across countries, but equally relate to mostly culturally connoted groups. The tentative take-away from this section is that we find similar identity divides emerging across countries, with similar roots in social structure.

In going through the empirical analyses of this section, we start with figures 2 and 3, which summarize the findings of 68 regression models (17 groups * four countries), regressing closeness to each of the groups (10-point scale) on education, class, urban-rural residency, age and sex. Rather than showing these regression tables, we show whether and how the socio-structural determinants relate to the different group identities. The shading of the cells indicates how consistent these links are across countries. Where cells are blank we find no significant association.

	Educational group identities			Income group identities			Class group identities	
	"People with a higher education degree"	"People with medium-level education"	"People with lower level education"	"Wealthy people"	"People with humble financial means"	"People who do hard, tiring work"	"People who do creative work"	"People who work in the social and education sector"
Education group closest	High	Medium	Low	High	low	Medium	High	High
Class closest	SCP	Clerks	PW&SW	MNG	PW&SW	PW	SBO	SCP
Class most distant	PW	SCP	TECH	PW&SW	MNG & SCP	SCP	Clerks	PW
Territorial group closest	Big city	(Sub)urban					Big city	

Note: Dark grey cells indicate that the socio-structural groups predict closeness to identity groups signifcantly in all 4 countries; light grey cells indicate that the socio-structural groups predict closeness to identity groups signifcantly in 2 or 3 countries;

Abbreviations of the class coding: SBO = Small Business Owners, TECH = Technical professionals, MNG = Managers, SCP = Socio-cultural professionals, PW = Production Workers, SW = Service workers;

Figure 2: Summary table of the main socio-structural correlates of feeling close towards different identity groups - A

	Territorial group identities		Cultural group identities						
	"People in rural areas"	"People in urban areas"	"Feminists"	"Swiss/ Germans/ French/ British people"	"People with a migration background"	"Cosmo-politans"	"Culturally interested people"	"People who are down to earth and rooted to home"	"People with Christian-western values"
Education group closest	Medium	High	High	Medium	High	High	High	Low/ medium	High
Class closest	PW		SCP		SCP	MNG & SCP	SCP	PW	MNG
Class most distant		PW&SW	PW/Clerks	SCP	PW	PW	PW	SCP	PW & SW
Territorial group closest	Small town/rural	Big city	Big city		Big city	Big city	Big city	Small town/ rural	

Note: Dark grey cells indicate that the socio-structural groups predict closeness to identity groups at p=0.001; light grey cells indicate prediction of closeness to identity groups at p=0.05-0.01

Abbreviations of the class coding: SBO = Small Business Owners, TECH = Technical professionals, MNG = Managers, SCP = Socio-cultural professionals, PW = Production Workers, SW = Service workers;

Figure 3: Summary table of the main socio-structural correlates of feeling close towards different identity groups - B

From figures 2 and 3, we derive three main insights: first, the 'objective' socio-structural characteristics of voters relate quite consistently to their corresponding 'subjective' group. This holds for education (i.e. highly educated people feel closest to 'people with a higher education degree' etc), income/vertical class (i.e. managers feel closest and workers most distant to 'wealthy people'), work logic/horizontal class (i.e. workers feel closest to people 'doing hard, tiring work', socio-cultural professionals feel closest to and production workers most distant from 'people who work in the social and education sector'), and residency (i.e. people living in small towns feel closest to 'people in rural areas', people living in big cities feel closest to 'people in urban areas'). These findings are less trivial than they might seem, as they validate the meaning of group identities, and they show that closeness to specific groups is not entirely detached from the structural underpinnings.

The second key finding, however, is that not only the materially defined groups have clearly identifiable structural roots, but the same goes for some of the cultural group identities: highly educated people feel closest to 'people with a migration background' across all four countries, despite compositions of the immigrant populations that would suggest otherwise. The same holds for people who live in big cities and for socio-cultural professionals. We find the almost identical pattern when we ask about closeness to 'cosmopolitans' and for 'culturally interested people'. For all three of these identity groups, production workers feel most distant. We also defined two 'conservative' cultural groups, which exhibit a still clear but somewhat less extreme pattern of determinants: closeness to 'people who are down to earth and rooted to home' and to 'people with christian-western values' differentiate between education groups, class and residency in most countries.

The third important observation in figures 2 and 3 is the high consistency across country contexts. For most of the associations, we find significant predictors in at least 3 countries. This is particularly noteworthy when it comes to the cultural identity groups, as for them, the link between socio-structural determinants and closeness is less straightforward and - one would think - more contingent. Yet, we find clearly discernible, highly similar links across countries. We interpret this as evidence of genuinely socio-structural processes of group identification.

Figure 4 complements this analysis by emphasizing the large substantive effects that we find for the links between education (as a key socio-structural determinant of behavior and preferences) and closeness to the direct correlate (closeness to people with a higher education degree), as well as for the links between this objective determinant and two of the main culturally connoted groups. At different baseline levels, of course, education levels predict about the same substantive effect in terms of closeness.

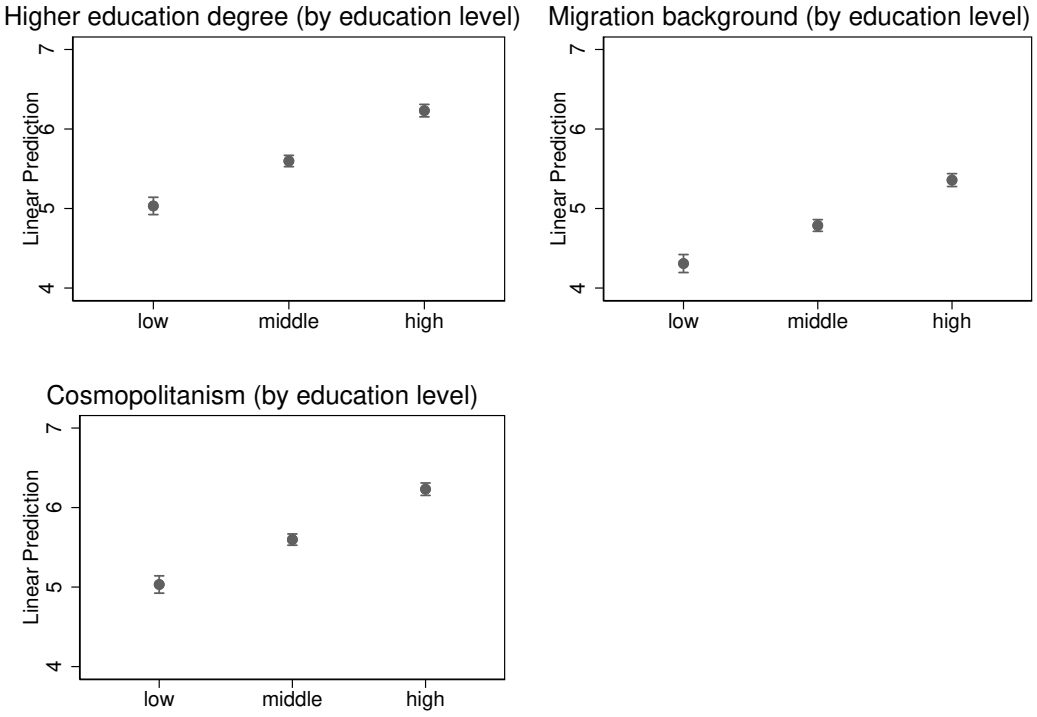

Figure 4: Predicted levels of closeness to highly educated people, people with migration background and cosmopolitan people, by education level of respondent

In this connection, the cross-national consistencies again deserve pointing out. For example, when we interact education with country, we find no evidence that the education-identity association varies by country. For all three identities the Wald test statistics lack statistical significance: $\chi^2 = 4.9$, $p = 0.55$ for higher education, $\chi^2 = 2.5$, $p = 0.86$ for migration background, and $\chi^2 = 9.8$, $p = 0.13$ for cosmopolitanism.

Knowing about the identity correlates of different socio-structural groups, however, does not preclude which of these identities are politicized, i.e. which of them structure political antagonisms between voters of the left, the mainstream right and the far right. We thus switch perspective by looking at group identities through the lens of party electorates. Figures 5 to 8 show how voters of the three party political blocs deviate from the country averages in their feelings of closeness to each of the 17 groups we include in this study.

Positive deviations from the country mean indicate that voters feel closer to this group and negative deviations indicate the opposite. Our focus here is on those group identities that most clearly and distinctively separate voters of the left (white bars) from voters of the far right (black bars). The height of the individual bars is proportional to the size of the electoral bloc in the respective country. The reason why we show the findings separately for each country is precisely to emphasize the highly different extent to which the far right has come to dominate and define the right-wing political spectrum in the different countries: while in Switzerland and France, the far right is stronger than the mainstream right

in mobilizing voters, the far right so far remains very much smaller in Germany and the UK.

However, the striking finding in figures 5 to 8 is that despite these highly different magnitudes of the 'extremes' of the new universalism-particularism divide, the politicization of particular group antagonisms is extremely similar. We interpret this not only as a sign of the potential for an equally fully realigned preference space in the UK and in Germany, but - maybe even more strikingly - as evidence that rising vote shares among the far right do not moderate or dilute (self-)perceptions of their voters. Even though the far right parties in France and Switzerland have become large parties mobilizing voters more broadly, their voters' identities diverge just as massively and starkly from the left as in countries where the far right is a fringe actor.

Substantively, we see that the economically connoted identity groups (education, vertical class groups) divide the self-perceptions of voters much less than more culturally connoted identity groups. Across all countries, the most divisive and politicized group identities are 'feminists', 'people with migration background', 'cosmopolitans', 'culturally interested people', and 'people who are down to earth and rooted to home'. Among the more structurally connoted identities, we also find 'people in rural areas', 'people in urban areas', as well as 'people who work in the social and education sector' to clearly divide voters of the left and the far right.

It is particularly important to notice that the social structuration of group identities (as shown in figures 2 and 3) and the politicization of group identities (as shown in figures 5 to 8) are not identical: group identities can be highly structured (such as education, wealth, income), but not clearly divisive between political camps. Reversely, the divisive potential of e.g. feminist identity is clearly stronger and more explicit in terms of dividing political electorates than education groups or classes.

The second relevant finding in figures 5 to 8 is that group identities of voters of the mainstream right generally diverge from those of far right voters when it comes to basic class identities (higher education, income, culturally interested). On the other hand, mainstream right voters have a tendency to identify with some of the same cultural identity groups that far right voters feel particularly close or distant to (demarcation from feminists, from people with migration background and national identity e.g.). Some of these culturally connoted categories of collective identity seem to be the joint basis of voters on the right side of the political spectrum. In this regard, however, it is important to notice that this similarity between voters of the far right and the (center-)right seems slightly more pronounced in France and Switzerland (where the far right is stronger) than in Germany and the UK. Voters of the (center-)right, on the other hand, do indeed display some distinctive and pronounced affinities related to older cleavages, in particular 'wealthy people' and 'people with christian-western values'. These categories are not part of the collective identity foundation of the universalism-particularism cleavage.

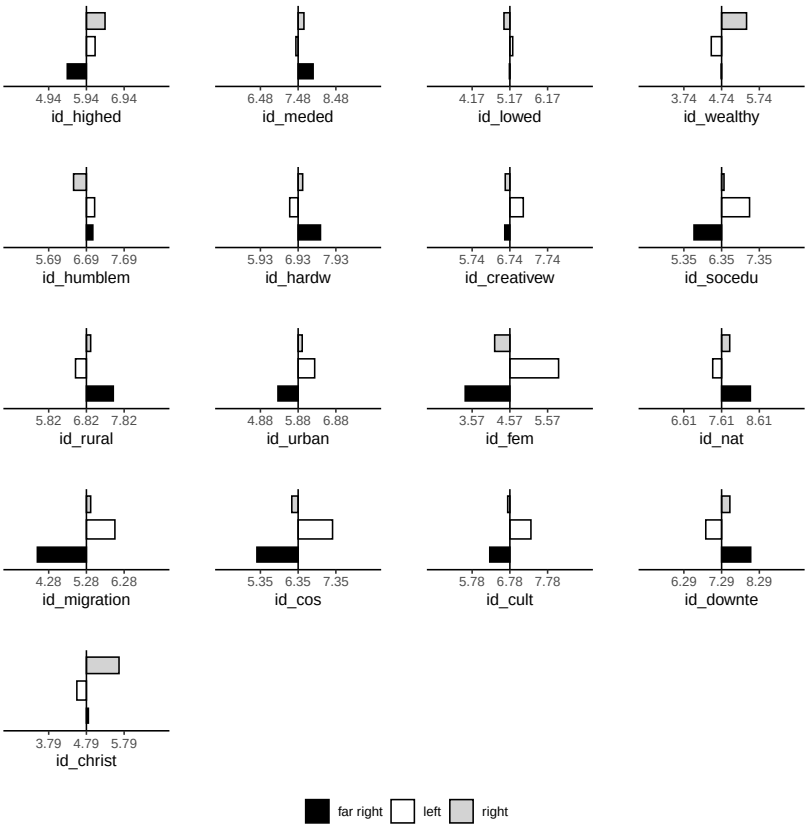

Figure 5: Identity divergence between supporters of the far right, left, and right (Switzerland)

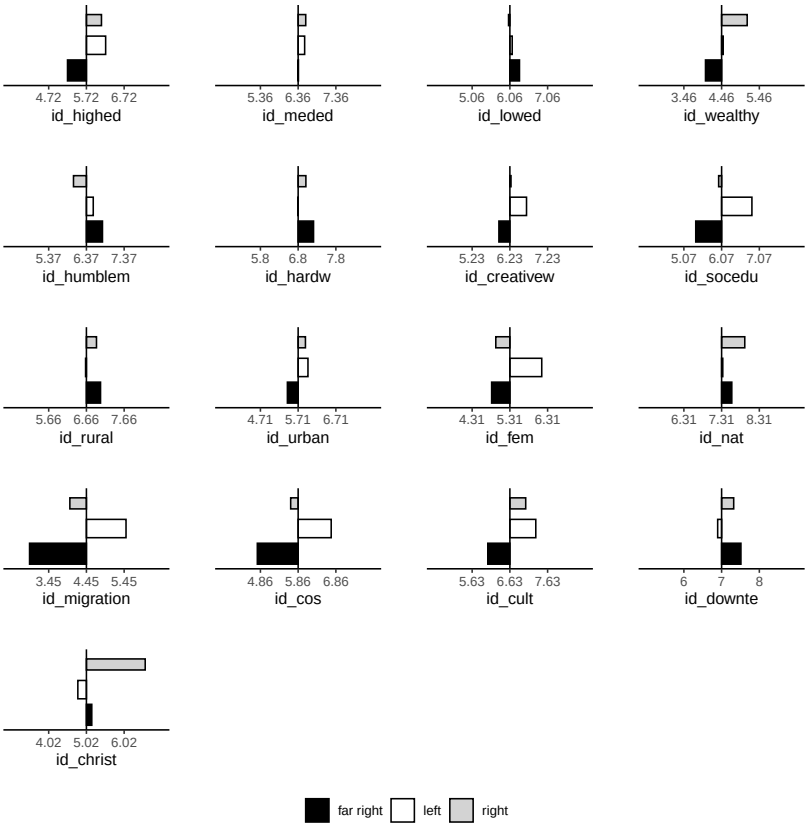

Figure 6: Identity divergence between supporters of the far right, left, and right (France)

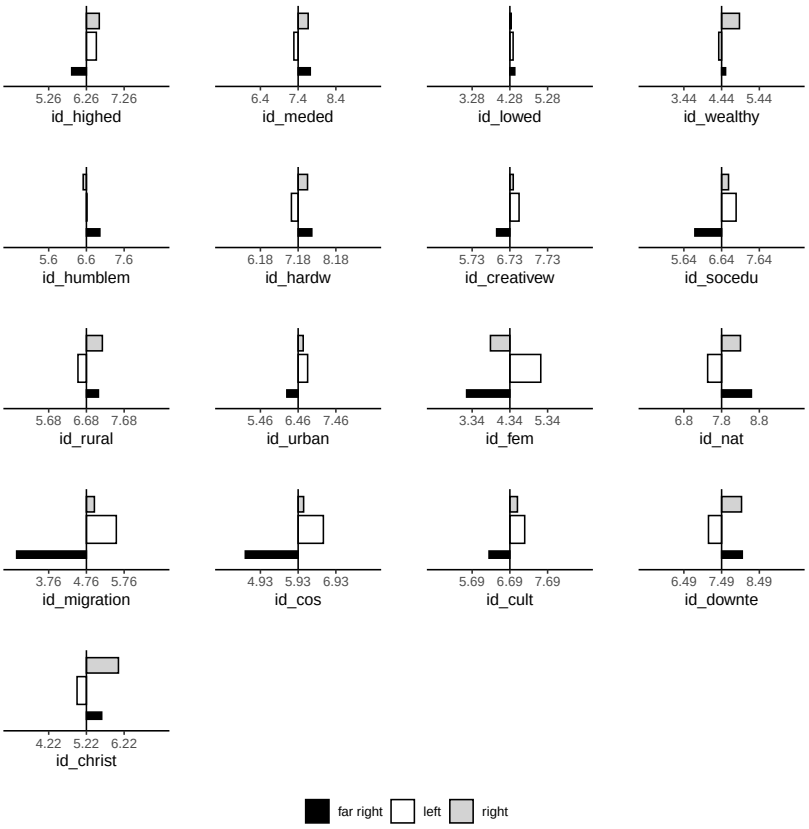

Figure 7: Identity divergence between supporters of the far right, left, and right (Germany)

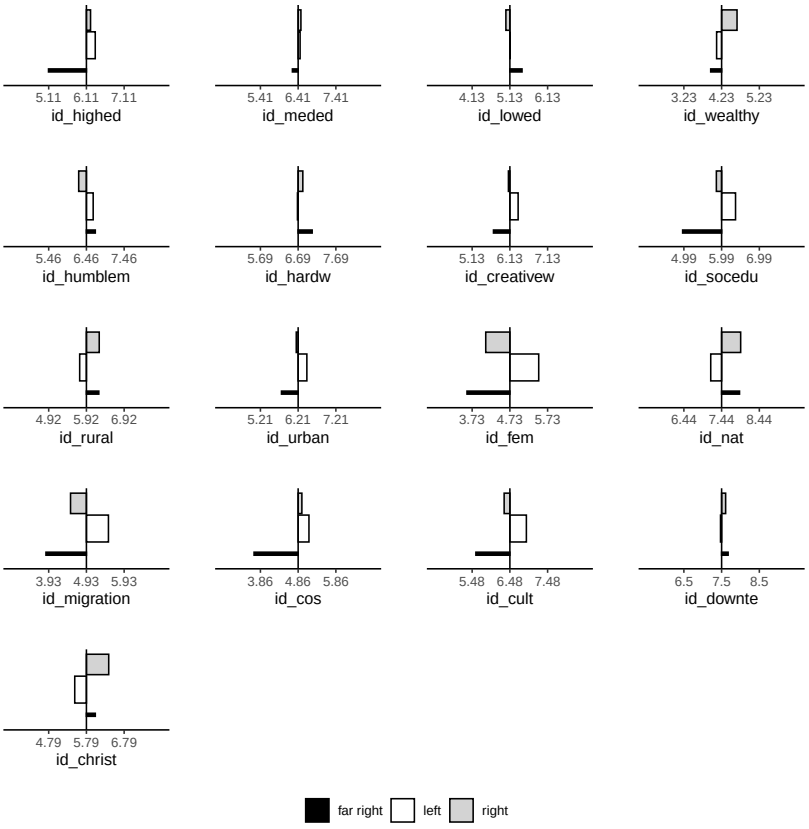

Figure 8: Identity divergence between supporters of the far right, left, and right (UK).

The average deviations from the country means as displayed in figures 5 to 8 allow us to identify the most important in- and outgroups of the different party electorates. Calculating the distance of partisans' average closeness from the sample mean allows us to determine which social groups partisans identify with or demarcate themselves from most distinctively. Figure 10 summarizes the three most distinctive ingroups and outgroups across the four countries. The darker grey shaded cells show those group identities that appear as key in all four countries, while the lighter grey shaded cells show those that appear consistently in 3 out of the 4 countries.

Again, the most striking finding is the similarity in the findings across the countries. Left voters share almost identical key ingroups, i.e. 'feminists', 'people with migration background' and 'cosmopolitans'. This similarity is particularly noteworthy as our category of left voters encompasses Green, social democratic and left-libertarian party voters. Despite this heterogeneity of broadly left parties, the self-definition of what it means to be a left voter today seems very consistent in all countries and - most importantly - clearly reflects the universalism-particularlism cleavage. Variation is somewhat larger when it comes to the outgroups of left voters.

At the other end of the spectrum, voters of the far right are equally similar in their identification with culturally connoted groups. However, the joint pattern relates most clearly to outgroups and it is indeed the mirror image of the left voters' ingroups. This clear and highly consistent antagonism between the in- and outgroups of these two electorates is evidence in favor of a joint collective identity foundation of the new electoral cleavage. The far right voters' affirmative self-perception in terms of ingroups is more heterogeneous, even though we find consistent references to identities of nationals, hard work, people in rural areas and people who are 'down to earth'.

The voters of the Mainstream right also share very consistent images of themselves and their outgroups across countries, but they refer to distinctive identities as affirmative ingroups ('people with christian-western values') and they seem to demarcate themselves with regard to culturally connoted groups from the left ('feminists') and with regard to economically connoted groups from the far right ('humble financial means').

		Left voters	Right voters	Far Right voters
Ingroups	*in 4 cc*	feminists, migration background	Christian-western values	
	in 3 cc	cosmopolitans	wealthy, nationals	nationals, down to earth
	other	cultured (UK)	higher education degree (CH), down to earth (GER)	rural (CH, UK), Christian-western values (GER), hard work (F, UK)
Outgroups	*in 4 cc*		humble financial means, feminists	migration background, cosmopolitans
	in 3 cc	down to earth, rural, Christian-western values		feminists
	other	wealthy (CH), nationals (GER, UK)	cosmopolitans (CH), migration background (F, UK)	people working in the social and education sector (F)

Figure 9: Most important in- and outgroups by party elecorates

These distinctive in- and outgroups are powerful predictors of party choice. We illustrate their importance in figures 10 and 11, which present predicted probabilities of voting for the partisan blocs depend-

ing on a) education as the key socio-structural determinant of electoral realignment and b) closeness to 'people with migration background', 'feminists', and 'cosmopolitans', which are the group identities that clearly antagonize left and far right voters. The regression models include age, sex, education, income, class and residency as socio-structural controls. The figures show the massive substantive link between these identities and party preference: identification with or demarcation with these culturally connoted groups is associated with 35-50 percentage point differences in the probability of voting for the left or the far right. The fact that figure 10 and 11 are based on pooled data means that these are even conservative estimates, as realignment is not equally developed across the countries.

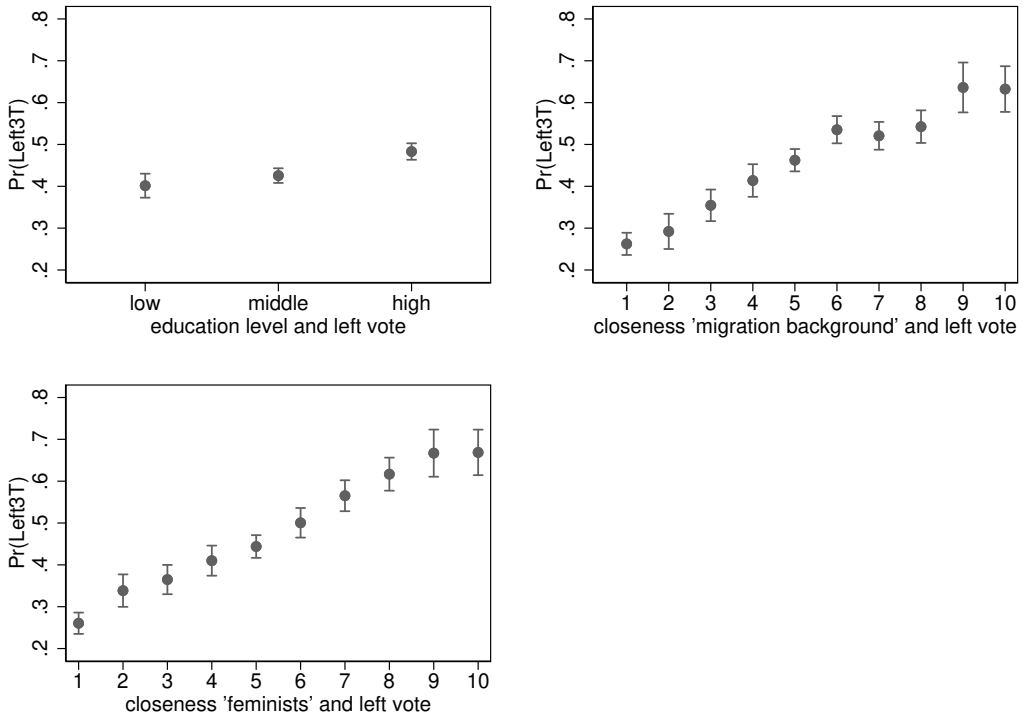

Figure 10: Education and main in-groups as determinants of the probability to vote Left

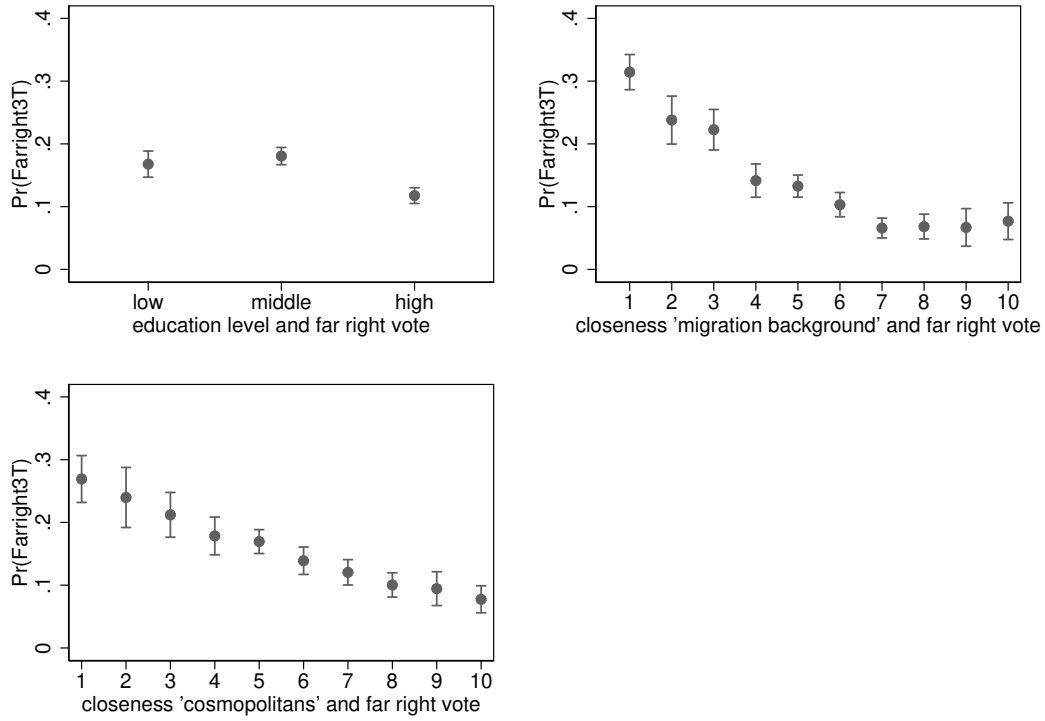

Figure 11: Education and main out-groups as determinants of the probability to vote Far Right

The tentative take-away from this section is that we find similar identity divides emerging across countries, with similar roots in social structure. In particular, the extremes of the new divide (left voters and far right voters) show striking resemblances in terms of group identification and demarcation and they are clearly the mirror image of each other. We interpret these findings as evidence for an emerging electoral cleavage, complete with socio-structural foundation, shared collective identities and political organization.

6.2. Social Closure and Political Mobilization of Identities

How far have various aspects of collective identity formation progressed in different countries? In this section, we look at the degree of social closure and the perceptions of political representation of social groups in the minds of voters. We start by considering processes of social closure situated closer to social structure and then move on to variables tapping into processes of political mobilization.

We first delve deeper into the process of social closure involved in the crystallization of the new cleavage. We have revealed strong similarities in terms of the identity potentials that the left and the far right – the two party families most strongly associated with the universalism-particularism divide – draw upon in our four countries. This suggests that the roots these identities have in social structure result not only from top-down political mobilization, but also from processes of social closure that are largely pre-political. Social closure can result from two or more salient group boundaries overlapping

(as emphasized in the classical cleavage literature), or from interaction closure (cf. Rueschemeyer et al. 1992: 52). We look at these two types of social closure in turn. A first factor impinging on the strength of the identity potentials that we suggested is thus the degree to which different group boundaries overlap in the minds of voters. In our survey, we asked respondents to which degree they perceived these overlaps. Focusing on two of the most salient structural divides underlying the new cleavage – urban-rural residence and education – we asked whether respondents thought that people living in cities and those residing in the countryside, or those with different levels of education, also differed in terms of social class, place of residence, education, their hobbies and leisure activities, and in their values. The responses suggest a high degree of perceived overlap between these groups (the detailed results are provided in the Appendix). For example, between 57 and 69 percent of respondents in the pooled sample considered people with different levels of education to typically differ or to differ strongly in terms of the social class they belonged to, their place of residence, the type of leisure activities they liked, and in the values they cherished.[7] The same is true of residence, where respondents perceived some or fairly strong differences between inhabitants of cities or the countryside in terms of social class (59 percent), education (56 percent), leisure activities (60 percent) and, finally, values (61 percent). These results point to fairly high degrees of perceived social closure, where different dimensions of distinction reinforce one another. Importantly, perceived social closure is high throughout the four countries in which we conducted surveys. This suggests that the perceived alignment of different group boundaries and lifestyle characteristics are not so much the product of the mobilization of the new cleavage by political actors itself (which has occurred only more recently in Germany and Britain), but rather lies in the domain of the raw material that political actors can draw upon in politicizing the universalism-particularism antagonism.

In a next step, we focus on interaction closure, i.e. the degree to which individuals interact with like-minded others in terms of their location on the universalism-particularism dimension. For this purpose, we arranged our identity groups in terms of their vicinity to the universalistic and particularist poles of the divide. In a battery of questions, we asked respondents how often they had personal conversations or spent time with people belonging to the identity groups we use throughout this paper[8]. This allows us to score each respondents' network on the particularist-universalist dimension, and then to compare the aggregated scores for different types of groups. We present the results for the three categories that we deem theoretically most interesting, namely, level of education, rural-urban residence, and the two social classes constituting the poles of the universalism-particularism divide in class terms, production workers and socio-cultural specialists. Figures 12-14 show the results for each of our four countries.

Starting with education (Figure 12), we can see that in all four countries, individuals have distinct networks that depend on their educational attainment (bar charts indicate the overall distribution of respondents' networks, while the line graphs break networks down by respondents with low, medium,

[7] We suggested to respondents for instance think of people with or without a university degree.

[8] The assignment of locations (and corresponding numerical values) to groups along the universalism-particularism divide is arguably crude, but we corroborated the assessment with a factor analyses of the identity categories that we do not present in detail in this paper. As an example, we assigned a score of 4 to daily interactions with "cosmopolitans" and a score of -4 to such frequent encounters with "down to earth" people (answer categories were: personal contact once a year or less=1, several times a year=2, once or several times a week=3, daily=4). We will provide a more complete documentation in future versions of the paper.

and high education). As we would expect, respondents with low and high education are generally most distinct.[9] Education-based networks appear most segregated in terms of the universalism-particularism divide in Britain, but the differences between education groups are only marginally less important in the other three countries. In Switzerland, individuals with intermediate levels of education actually have the most strongly particularist networks, but they do not differ much from those with low educational attainment.

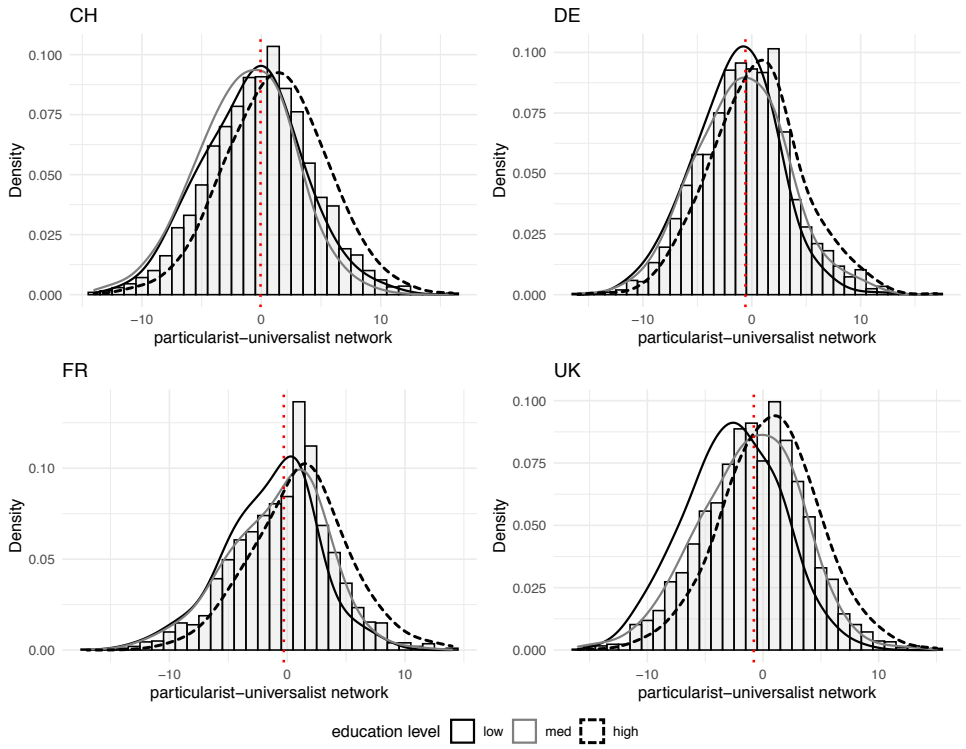

Figure 12: Homogeneity of social networks (universalist versus particularist), by education

Urban and rural residents have networks that are even more distinctive in their universalist-partiularist character, as we see in Figure 13. This holds for all four contries, with the strongest contrast being that between the inhabitants of big cities and those residing in the countryside. Those living in suburban areas lie in between. In France, rural residents stand out for having more diverse, but also more particularist networks than rural-urban groups elsewhere. The rural-urban basis of the universalism-particularism cleavage is thus strongly rooted in diverse social networks, as individuals tend to meet and interact with like-minded others in their daily lives.

[9] One might debate the strength of these differences, but keep in mind that we did not set the bar for interactions very high in designing the question (having personal conversations with the members of the various groups at work or during leisure time should be quite common).

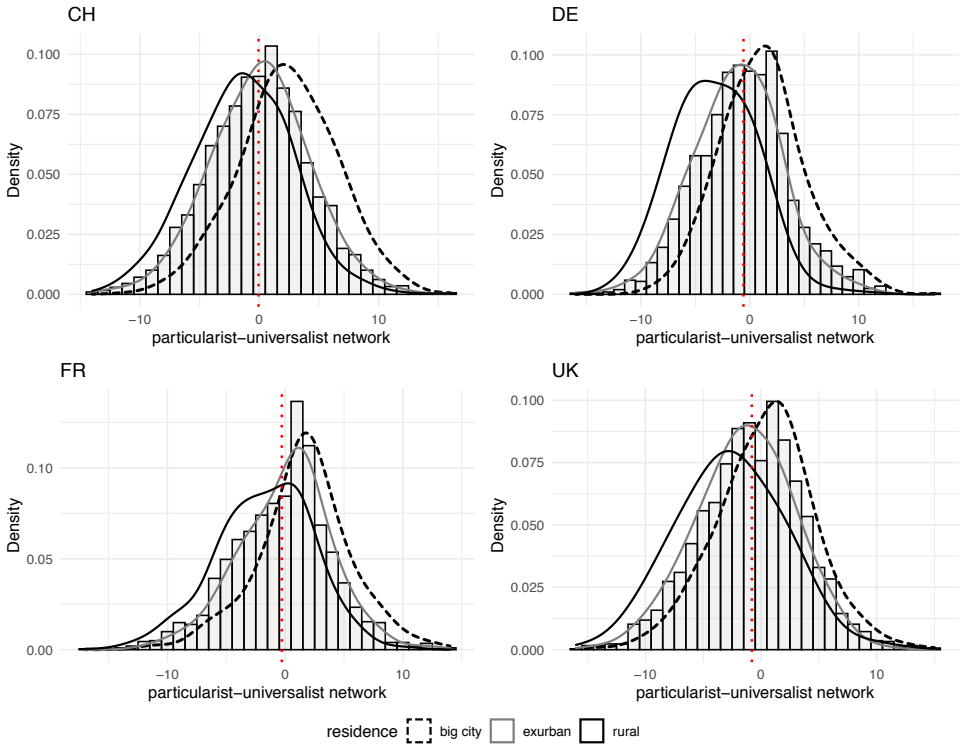

Figure 13: Homogeneity of social networks (universalist versus particularist), by urban-rural residence

Finally, in terms of the social classes that stand out for their allegiance to the left and far right blocks, respectively, we can see in Figure 14 that production workers have more particularist personal networks. And although socio-cultural specialists typically encounter a diverse set of clients in their jobs (Kitschelt 1994; Kitschelt and Rehm 2014), they nonetheless have a strong tendency to interact with individuals that share their universalistic outlook. The two classes that stood out in the analysis of the socio-structural correlates of our identity groups in Figures 3 and 4 are thus characterized by the most segmented networks in terms of the universalism-particularism divide, exhibiting relatively high degrees of social closure. The other social classes we used in our analysis lie in between production workers and socio-cultural specialists.

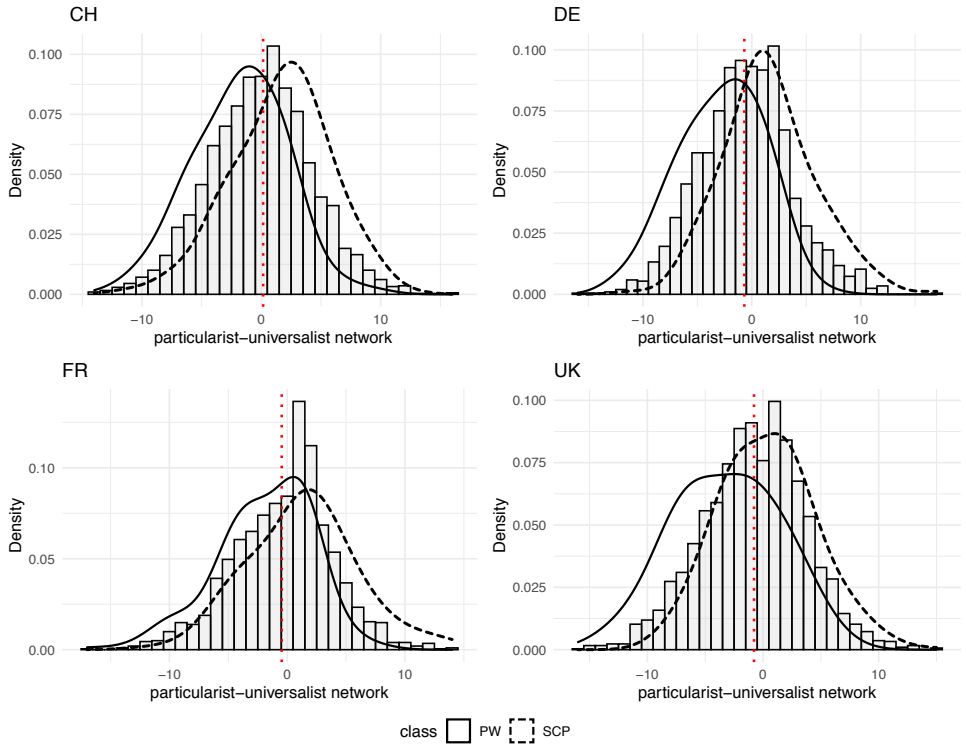

Figure 14: Homogeneity of social networks (universalist versus particularist), by class (production workers versus socio-cultural professionals)

To summarize, these results indicate that, rather than being solely a product of top-down mobilization processes or political allegiances, the link between social structure and group identities is rooted in mechanisms of social closure, where individuals tend to meet and interact in their everyday life with others that share their worldview in terms of the universalism-particularism cleavage. To some extent, individuals may select into these networks, particularly with respect to rural-urban residence. But their group identities and probably also their closeness to specific political parties are clearly reinforced by everyday interactions in the non-political realm. Of course, once politically mobilized, strong notions of 'us' versus 'them' will themselves limit sociability across group boundaries, and clear differences between groups also emerge when we look at the diversity of social networks through the lens of identities or partisanship (see appendix). This brings us to the role of political agency in activating the identity potentials that emerge through processes of social closure and in translating them into the political realm.

As discussed above, we are in this sense interested in whether certain identities are consistently mobilized by specific parties. Importantly, this question of mobilization goes beyond the simple question whether respondents who identify with certain groups individually support the same party. Instead, we study whether all respondents, including those who do not identify with a group, consistently link that group to a specific political party. An analogy would be that at the height of the class-cleavage, workers and non-workers would both consistently associate the working class with socialist or social democratic parties. Thus, when a cleavage is fully mobilized in the political system, parties are perceived as representing one side of that cleavage even by voters who support other parties.

To study to what extent this is the case for the universalism-particularism' cleavage, we asked respondents to link the 17 already familiar groups to specific political parties. That is, we asked them the following question:

Which party would you associate most closely with each of the following groups? In other words: which party do you think the members of each group would be most likely to vote for?

Respondents had the choice between the six largest parties in each country. Again, we lump together parties from the same party family and focus on the Europhile left, the mainstream right and the far right. With the exception of France, these three groups cover the large majority of the answers.

When we pool responses across all four countries, we see that most identities are clearly identified with a party group (Figure 15). A majority of respondents links feminists and people who work in the social and education sector with parties of the left. The left is also clearly seen as representing people who do creative work, people with a migration background, cosmopolitans and culturally interested people. Similarly, the mainstream right is associated with wealthy people and with people with Christian values.

For a number of identities, however, their partisan representation is more contested: co-nationals are seen as linked to both the mainstream right and the far-right, while the lower educated are contested between the left and the far right. For rural and down-to-earth people, finally, there does not emerge any clear pattern at all.

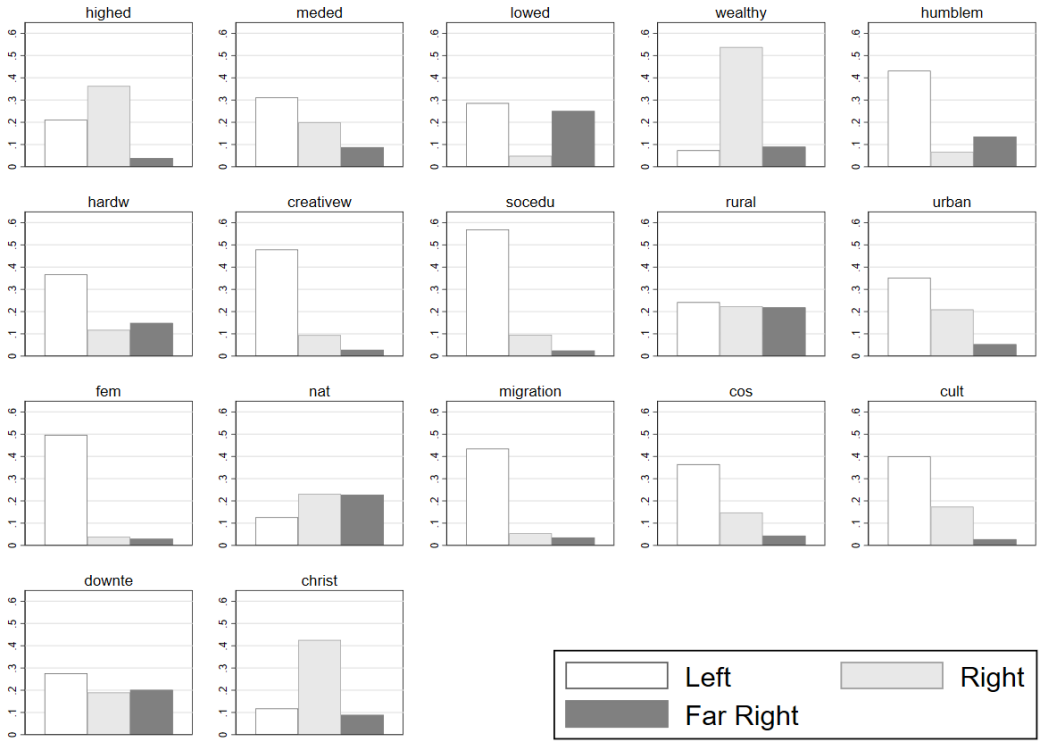

Figure 15: Perceived group-party link, all voters

To look more closely into this variation between groups that are clearly linked to a specific party and groups that are contested, we restrict the analysis to respondents who would vote for either the left or the far right. If we look at identities that are clearly linked to one party, it turns out that voters of both party groups pretty much agree in this assignment: Both voters of the left and the far right clearly associate feminists, a migration background and social or educational work with the left. What is more, both groups associate Christians with the mainstream right, that is, with a party neither of them is voting for (Figure 16).

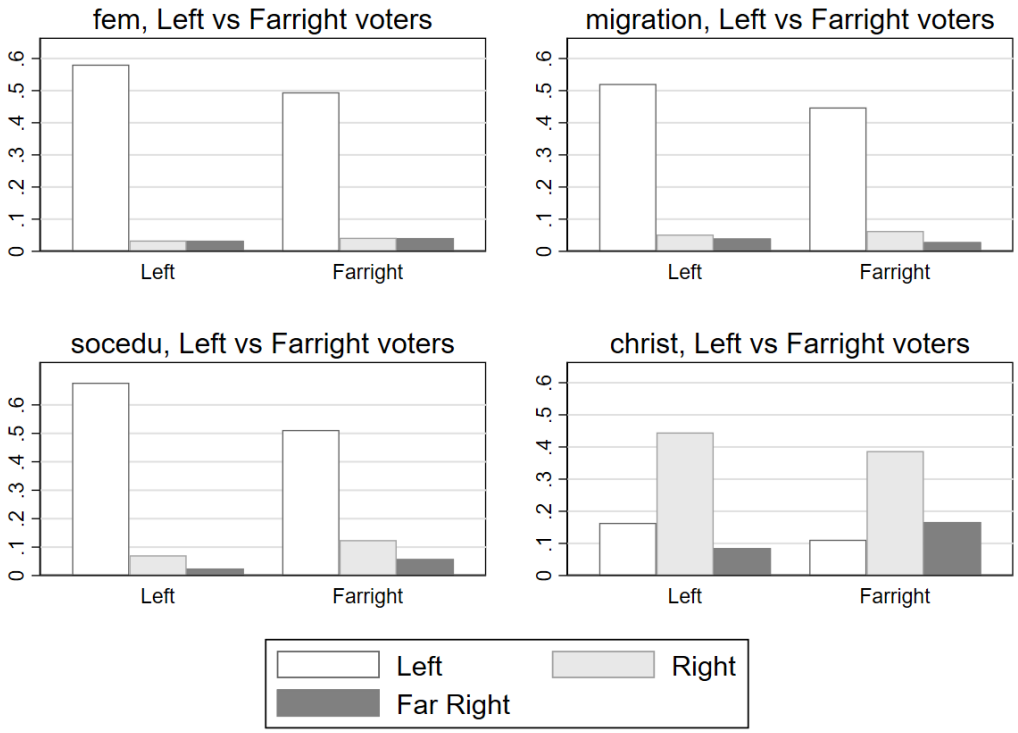

Figure 16: Perceived group-party link, agreement

For identities whose party-link is contested, by contrast, a very different picture emerges: for hard-working, down-to-earth and rural voters, left voters think that these voters predominantly vote for the left, while far right voters think that they vote far right. Thus, the overall pattern of contestation emerges because voters of different parties claim these groups for their own party (Figure 17).

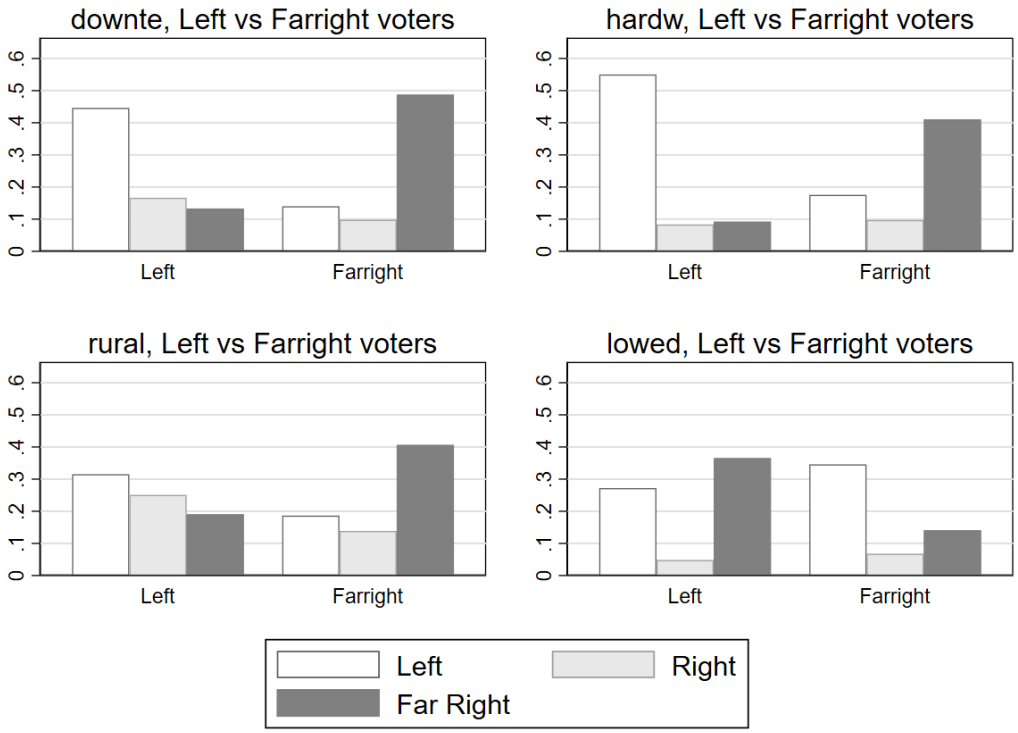

Figure 17: Perceived group-party link, contested

A unique pattern, finally, characterizes the attribution of "People with lower level education". Here, the pattern of contestation emerges because partisans assign them to the other party: Left voters think that these people vote for the far-right, while far-right voters think the opposite! Thus, low education appears to be a stigma that people don't want to see associated with their own party.

Apart from this special case, the most interesting cases are the contested identities of hardworking, down-to-earth, and, to some extent, rural voters. As we have seen above (figure 10), these are some of the clear ingroups of far-right voters. Moreover, down-to-earth and rural also belongs to the outgroups of left voters. And yet, these same left voters still tend to claim these groups for their own party. Hence, it seems that the process of realignment is not yet completed for these identities: the far-right has made a claim to represent them, but the left has not yet given up the same claim.

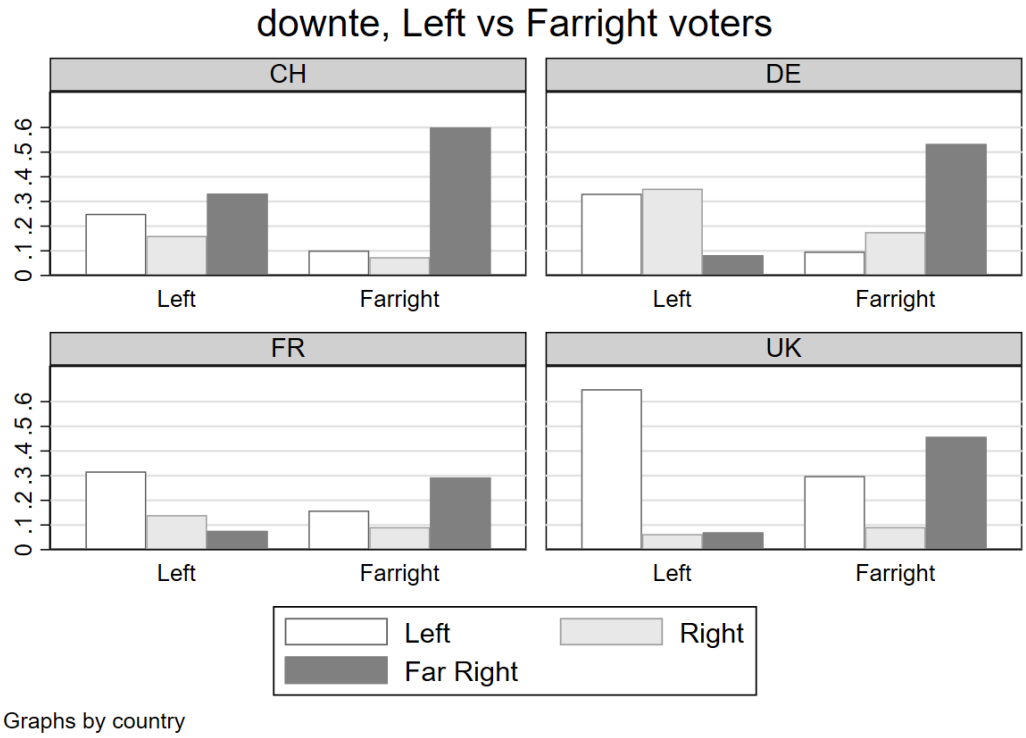

Figure 18: Perceived group-party link, down-to-earth people

However, this process of re-alignment is in different stages in the different countries. In fact, the relative majority of left voters in Switzerland already assigns down-to-earth people to the far right. In the UK, by contrast, an absolute majority of left voters still claims this group for the left. France and Germany are in between (Figure 18).

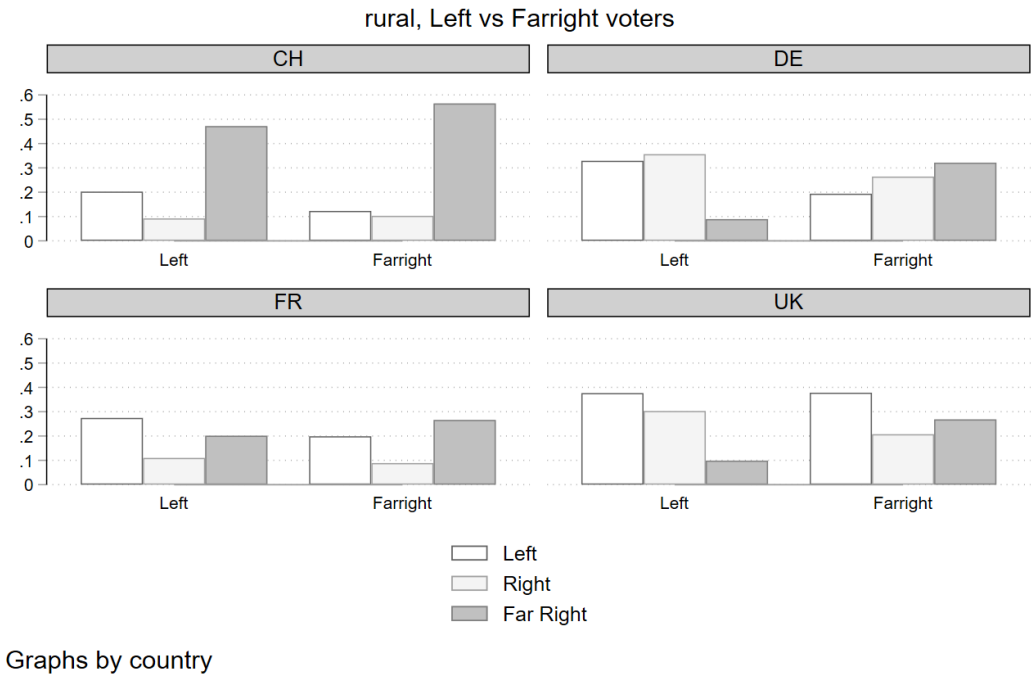

Figure 19: Perceived group-party link, down-to-earth people

Similarly, with regard to rural people, voters in Germany and the UK do not see them as represented by the radical right yet. Instead, considerable number of left and far-right voters still assign rural people to the mainstream right. By contrast, in Switzerland, voters of all parties agree that rural voters support the far right (Figure 19).

7. Conclusion

In this paper we have studied the formation of a new electoral cleavage in four Western European countries. Our main question was whether the structural foundations of this particularism-universalism divide have started to congeal into shared collective identities and into clear patterns of social closure and political mobilization. To the extent that this is the case, we can consider the universalism-particularism antagonism a full-fledged cleavage. A cleavage of this type serves a a heuristic for voters to orient themselves in politics, limiting the potential for new conflicts to manifest themselves. We have argued that due to various changes in the way parties organize and appeal to voters, as well as change at the voter level, the process of realignment we detect is compatible with the increase in party system instability in recent years.

Based on original survey data from France, Germany, Switzerland, and the UK, we have generally found support for this hypothesis. Across the four countries, we have found broadly similar trends of collective identity formation and hence a deepening of the universalism-particularism cleavage. Specifically, the electorates of the left and the far right share clearly identifiable ingroups and outgroups and these

in- and outgroups have clear socio-structural roots. Moreover, these links between structure and identity are based in processes of social closure within distinct social networks. Finally, most identities are clearly associated with specific parties also by non-partisans.

Generally, these patterns are relatively similar across all four countries. However, we have also found evidence that electoral realignment and the hardening of the cleavage have progressed at different speed across the four countries. While the link between social structure and collective identities is rather similar across the four countries, there appears to be variation in the extent to which these identity divides have already been mobilized politically. We have only started to explore this question, but we have found that in Switzerland, the identities associated with the traditional working class (down-to-earth, hard-working) have already been ceded to the far right, even by voters of the left. By contrast, supporters of the English and the German left associate these identities with their own party. Moreover, in Germany and the UK, the mainstream right is still associated with some traditionally conservative identities (rural, co-nationals) that are already linked to the far-right in Switzerland and, to a lesser extent, in France.

While these results suggest that the mobilization of identity divides does not occur automatically and that there is room for agency by political parties, our structural results suggest that this room is clearly shaped and limited by divides at the societal and identity level. While parties have managed to uphold certain identity-party links for longer in some countries than in others, we do not see the emergence of a new identity-party link that would be in conflict with the overall cleavage (due to space restrictions, we have not looked at La République en Marche in this paper but may do so in future versions).

We interpret this structuration of the political mobilization as evidence that we do not just observe party system fragmentation but rather a pattern of realignment. That electoral behavior is firmly rooted in collective identities implies a regularity and stability of this behavior and a narrowing of the mobilization markets for different parties. Our results thus suggest the potential for a pervasive, lasting divide that structures how people think about society and politics and their own place in it.

Appendix: Details on Party Clustering

Table 2 shows the predicted probabilities of the clustering procedure. Each entry shows the probability that a party belongs to a particular cluster of sub-cluster. The party is allocated to the cluster for which the predicted probability is the highest (maximum a posteriori or MAP allocation). For instance, the British Liberal-Democrats have a .85 probability of belonging to the left cluster and a 0.15 of belonging to the liberal cluster. MAP now implies that we assign the party to the left cluster. Within the left cluster, the probability that the Liberal-Democrats belong to the Europhile sub-cluster is 1.00. Thus, we designate the party as Europhile left.

Table 2: Predicted Probabilities of Cluster Membership

		Initial Clustering			Sub-clusters Left		Sub-clusters Right	
Country	Party	Left	Liberal	Right	Europhile	Europhobe	Right	Far Right
CH	BDP	0.00	0.03	0.97	—	—	0.99	0.01
	CVP	0.03	0.06	0.90	—	—	0.99	0.01
	EVP	0.01	0.00	0.99	—	—	1.00	0.00
	FDP	0.00	0.26	0.74	—	—	1.00	0.00
	GPL	0.15	0.84	0.00	—	—	—	—
	GPS	1.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	—	—
	SP	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.99	0.01	—	—
	SVP	0.00	0.00	1.00	—	—	0.02	0.98
DE	AfD	0.00	0.00	1.00	—	—	0.00	1.00
	CDU	0.01	0.05	0.95	—	—	1.00	0.00
	CSU	0.00	0.00	1.00	—	—	0.94	0.06
	FDP	0.00	0.93	0.07	—	—	—	—
	Grünen	0.96	0.04	0.00	1.00	0.00	—	—
	Linke	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.97	0.03	—	—
	SPD	0.95	0.05	0.00	1.00	0.00	—	—
FR	DLF	0.00	0.00	1.00	—	—	0.00	1.00
	EELV	0.99	0.01	0.00	1.00	0.00	—	—
	FI	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	—	—
	LR	0.00	0.00	1.00	—	—	0.90	0.10
	LREM	0.08	0.88	0.03	—	—	—	—
	MoDem	0.05	0.51	0.44	—	—	—	—
	PCF	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.99	—	—
	PS	0.99	0.01	0.00	1.00	0.00	—	—
	RN	0.00	0.00	1.00	—	—	0.00	1.00
UK	Brexit	0.00	0.00	1.00	—	—	0.13	0.87
	Cons	0.00	0.02	0.98	—	—	0.98	0.02
	Green	1.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	—	—
	Lab	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.50	0.50	—	—
	Libdem	0.85	0.15	0.00	1.00	0.00	—	—
	UKIP	0.00	0.00	1.00	—	—	0.30	0.70

References

Abou-Chadi, T. and Krause, W. (2018). Causal Effect of Radical Right Entry. *British Journal of Political Science*, 50(3):829–847.

Abou-Chadi, T. and Wagner, M. (2020). Electoral fortunes of social democratic parties: do second dimension positions matter? *Journal of European Public Policy*, 27(2):246–272.

Achen, C. H. and Bartels, L. M. (2016). *Democracy for Realists: Why Elections Do Not Produce Responsive Government*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ.

Bale, T. (2003). Cinderella and her ugly sisters: The mainstrem and extreme right in Europe's bipolarising party systems. *West European Politics*, 26(3):67–90.

Bale, T. and Rovira Kaltwasser, C. (2021). The Mainstream Right in Western Europe: Caught between the Silent Revolution and Silent Counter-Revolution. In Bale, T. and Rovira Kaltwasser, C., editors, *Riding the Populist Wave: Europe's Mainstream Right in Crisis*, pages 1–37. Cambridge University Press. Google-Books-ID: ZbgdzgEACAAJ.

Bartolini, S. (2000). *The Political Mobilization of the European Left, 1860-1980. The Class Cleavage*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Bartolini, S. (2005). La formations des clivages. *Revue internationale de politique comparée*, Vol. 12(1):9–34.

Bartolini, S. and Mair, P. (1990). *Identity, Competition and Electoral Availability: The Stabilisation of European Electorates 1885-1985*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Beramendi, P., Häusermann, S., Kitschelt, H., and Kriesi, H. (2015). *The Politics of Advanced Capitalism*. Cambridge University Press, New York.

Bjørklund, T. and Andersen, J. G. (2002). Anti-immigration parties in denmark and norway: The progress parties and the danish people's party. In Schain, M., Zolberg, A., and Hossay, P., editors, *Shadows over Europe: The Development and Impact of the Extreme Right in Western Europe*, pages 107–136. Palgrave Macmillan.

Bolet, D. (2021). *Drinking Alone: Local Socio-Cultural Degradation and Radical Right Support—The Case of British Pub Closures*.

Bornschier, S. (2009). Cleavage Politics in Old and New Democracies. *Living Reviews in Democracy*, 1(1):1–13.

Bornschier, S. (2010a). *Cleavage Politics and the Populist Right: The New Cultural Conflict in Western Europe*. Temple University Press, Philadelphia.

Bornschier, S. (2010b). The New Cultural Divide and the Two-Dimensional Political Space in Western Europe. *West European Politics*, 33(3):419–444.

Bornschier, S. (2012). Why a right-wing populist party emerged in France but not in Germany: Cleavages and actors in the formation of a new cultural divide. *European Political Science Review*, 4(1):121–145.

Bornschier, S. (2018). Globalization, Cleavages, and the Radical Right. In Rydgren, J., editor, *The Oxford Handbook of the Radical Right*. Oxford University Press, New York.

Bornschier, S., Colombo, C., Häusermann, S., and Zollinger, D. (2021). How 'Us' and 'Them' Relates to Voting Behavior - Social Structure, Social Identities, and Electoral Choice.

Bornschier, S. and Kriesi, H. (2013). The Populist Right, the Working Class, and the Changing Face

of Class Politics. In Rydgren, J., editor, *Class Politics and the Radical Right*, pages 10–29. Routledge, Abingdon and New York.

Brewer, M. B. (1999). The psychology of prejudice: Ingroup love or outgroup hate? *Journal of Social Issues*, 55(3):429–444.

Cameron, J. E. (2004). A Three-Factor Model of Social Identity. *Self and Identity*, 3(3):239–262.

Chiaramonte, A. and Emanuele, V. (2017). Party system volatility, regeneration and de-institutionalization in Western Europe (1945–2015). *Party Politics*, 23(4):376–388.

Chou, W., Dancygier, R., Egami, N., and Jamal, A. A. (2021). Competing for loyalists? how party positioning affects populist radical right voting. page 0010414021997166. Publisher: SAGE Publications Inc.

Cramer, K. J. (2016). *The Politics of Resentment - Rural Consciousness in Wisconsin and the Rise of Scott Walker*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

Dalton, R. J. (2002). The decline of Party Identifications. In Dalton, R. J. and Wattenberg, M. P., editors, *Parties without Partisans: Political Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies*, pages 19–36. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Dalton, R. J., Flanagan, S. C., and Beck, P. A. (1984). *Electoral Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies: Realignment or Dealignment*. Princeton University Press, Princeton.

Dalton, R. J. and Wattenberg, M. P., editors (2002). *Parties without Partisans: Political Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Damhuis, K. (2020). *Roads to the radical right*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Dassonneville, R. and Hooghe, M. (2017). Economic indicators and electoral volatility: economic effects on electoral volatility in Western Europe, 1950–2013. *Comparative European Politics*, 15(6):919–943.

de Jonge, L. (2021). *The Success and Failure of Right-Wing Populist Parties in the Benelux Countries*. Routledge. Google-Books-ID: kNYtEAAAQBAJ.

De Sio, L. and Weber, T. (2014). Issue Yield: A Model of Party Strategy in Multidimensional Space. *American Political Science Review*, 108(04):870–885.

De Vries, C. E. and Hobolt, S. B. (2020). *Political Entrepreneurs: The Rise of Challenger Parties in Europe*. Princeton University Press.

De Wilde, P., Koopmans, R., and Merkel, W. (2019). *The Struggle Over Borders: Cosmopolitanism and Communitarianism*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Emanuele, V. and Chiaramonte, A. (2018). A growing impact of new parties: Myth or reality? Party system innovation in Western Europe after 1945. *Party Politics*, 24(5):475–487.

Emanuele, V., Marino, B., and Angelucci, D. (2020). The congealing of a new cleavage? The evolution of the demarcation bloc in Europe (1979–2019). *Italian Political Science Review / Rivista Italiana di Scienza Politica*, 50(3):314–333. Publisher: Cambridge University Press.

Evans, G. (1999). *The End of Class Politics? Class Voting in Comparative Context*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Evans, G. and de Graaf, N. D., editors (2013). *Political Choice Matters: Explaining the Strength of Class and Religious Cleavages in Cross-National Perspective*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Evans, G., Stubager, R., and Langsæther, P. E. (2022). The conditional politics of class identity: class origins, identity and political attitudes in comparative perspective. *West European Politics*, 0(0):1–28. Publisher: Routledge _eprint: https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2022.2039980.

Fitzgerald, J. (2020). *Close to Home. Local Ties and Voting Radical Right in Europe*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Flanagan, S. C. and Lee, A.-R. (2003). The New Politics, Culture Wars, and The Authoritarian-Libertarian Value Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies. *Comparative Political Studies*, 36(3):235–270.

Franklin, M. (1992). The decline of cleavage politics. In Franklin, M. N., Mackie, T., Valen, H., and al., e., editors, *Electoral change. Responses to evolving social und attitudinal structures in western countries*, pages 383–405. Cambridge University Press.

Garritzmann, J. L., Häusermann, S., Kurer, T., Palier, B., and Pinggera, M. (2021). The Emergence of Knowledge Economies: Educational Expansion, Labor Market Changes, and the Politics of Social Investment. In *The World Politics of Social Investment*. Oxford: Oxford University Press (forthcoming).

Gest, J. (2016). *The New Minority. White Working Class Politics in an Age of Immigration and Inequality*. Oxford University Press, New York.

Gidron, N., Adams, J., and Horne, W. (2020). *American affective polarization in com- parative perspective*. Cambridge edition.

Gidron, N. and Hall, P. A. (2017). The politics of social status: economic and cultural roots of the populist right. *British Journal of Sociology*, 68(S1):57–84.

Gidron, N. and Ziblatt, D. (2019). Center-Right Political Parties in Advanced Democracies. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 22(1):17–35.

Gingrich, J. and Häusermann, S. (2015). The decline of the working-class vote, the reconfiguration

of the welfare support coalition and consequences for the welfare state. *Journal of European Social Policy*, 25(1):50–75.

Gingrich, J. and Lynch, J. (2019). Integrative institutions and mainstream party collapse: The regional context.

Green-Pedersen, C. (2007). The growing importance of issue competition: The changing nature of party competition in western europe. 55(3):607–628.

Green-Pedersen, C. (2019). *The Reshaping of West European Party Politics: Agenda-Setting and Party Competition in Comparative Perspective.* Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Häusermann, S. and Kriesi, H. (2015). What Do Voters Want? Dimensions and Configurations in Individual-Level Preferences and Party Choice. In Beramendi, P., Häusermann, S., Kitschelt, H., and Kriesi, H., editors, *The Politics of Advanced Capitalism*, pages 202–230. Cambridge University Press, New York.

Hobolt, S. B., Leeper, T. J., and Tilley, J. (2020). Divided by the Vote: Affective Polarization in the Wake of the Brexit Referendum. *British Journal of Political Science*, online:1–18.

Hochschild, A. R. (2016). *Strangers in Their Own Land.* The New Press, New York.

Hooghe, L. and Marks, G. (2018). Cleavage theory meets Europe's crises: Lipset, Rokkan, and the transnational cleavage. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 25(1):109–135.

Huddy, L. (2001). From Social to Political Identity: A Critical Examination of Social Identity Theory. *Political Psychology*, 22(1):127–156.

Hutter, S. and Kriesi, H., editors (2019). *European Party Politics in Times of Crisis.*

Ignazi, P. (2020). The four knights of intra-party democracy: A rescue for party delegitimation. *Party Politics*, 26:9–20.

Inglehart, R. (1984). The Changing Structure of Political Cleavages in Western Society. In Dalton, R. J., Flanagan, S. C., and Beck, P. A., editors, *Electoral Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies. Realignment or Dealignment?*, pages 25–69. Princeton University Press, Princeton.

Inglehart, R. (1990). *Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Society.* Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J.

Ivarsflaten, E. and Stubager, R. (2013). Voting for the populist radical right in Western Europe: The role of education. In Rydgren, J., editor, *Class Politics and the Radical Right*, pages 122–137. Routledge, Abingdon and New York.

Iversen, T. and Soskice, D. (2019). *Democracy and Prosperity: Reinventing Capitalism Through a Turbulent Century*. Princeton University Press, Princeton.

Iyengar, S., Lelkes, Y., Levendusky, M., Malhotra, N., and Westwood, S. J. (2019). The Origins and Consequences of Affective Polarization in the United States. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 22(1):129–146. _eprint: https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-051117-073034.

Katz, R. S. and Mair, P., editors (1994). *How Parties Organize. Change and Adaptation in Party Organizations in Western Democracies*. Sage, London.

Katz, R. S. and Mair, P. (2018). *Democracy and the Cartelization of Political Parties*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Kitschelt, H. (1994). *The Transformation of European Social Democracy*. Cambridge University Press, New York.

Kitschelt, H. and Rehm, P. (2014). Occupations as a Site of Political Preference Formation. *Comparative Political Studies*, 47(12):1670–1706.

Kitschelt, H. and Rehm, P. (2015). Party Alignments: Change and Continuity. In Beramendi, P., Häusermann, S., Kitschelt, H., and Kriesi, H., editors, *The Politics of Advanced Capitalism*. Cambridge University Press, New York.

Knutsen, O. (2004). *Social Structure and Party Choice in Western Europe. A Comparative Longitudinal Study*. Palgrave-Macmillan, Basingstoke.

Koedam, J. (2022). A change of heart? Analysing stability and change in European party positions. *West European Politics*, 45(4):693–715. Publisher: Routledge _eprint: https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2021.1915659.

Kriesi, H. (2012). Personalization of national election campaigns. *Party Politics*, 18(6):825–844. Publisher: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Kriesi, H. (2014). The populist challenge. 37(2):361–378.

Kriesi, H., Altiparmakis, A., and Wang, C. (2021). Explaining electoral choices of European voters.

Kriesi, H., Grande, E., Dolezal, M., Helbling, M., Höglinger, D., Hutter, S., and Wüest, B. (2012). *Political Conflict in Western Europe*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Kriesi, H., Grande, E., Lachat, R., Dolezal, M., Bornschier, S., and Frey, T. (2008). *West European Politics in the Age of Globalization*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Kurer, T. (2020). The Declining Middle: Occupational Change, Social Status, and the Populist Right. *Comparative Political Studies*, 53(10-11):1798–1835.

Lamont, M. (2000). *The Dignity of Working Men. Morality and the Boundaries of Race, Class, and Immigration.* Russel Sage Foundation, New York.

Lamont, M. and Molnár, V. (2002). The Study of Boundaries in the Social Sciences. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 28(1):167–195.

Lipset, S. M. and Rokkan, S. (1967). *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross-National Perspectives.* Free Press, New York.

Mair, P. (1997). *Party System Change. Approaches and Interpretations.* Clarendon Press.

Mair, P. (2013). *Ruling the Void: The Hollowing of Western Democracy.* Verso Books. Google-Books-ID: bblvDwAAQBAJ.

Marino, B., Martocchia Diodati, N., and Verzichelli, L. (2022). The personalization of party politics in Western Europe (1985–2016): evidence from an expert survey. *Acta Politica*, 57(3):571–596.

Marks, G., Attewell, D., Hooghe, L., Rovny, J., and Steenbergen, M. (2022). The Social Bases of Political Parties: A New Measure and Survey. *British Journal of Political Science*, pages 1–12. Publisher: Cambridge University Press.

Marks, G., Hooghe, L., Nelson, M., and Edwards, E. (2006). Party Competition and European Integration in the East and West. Different Structure, Same Causality. *Comparative Political Studies*, 39:155–175.

Mason, L. (2018a). Ideologues Without Issues the Polarizing Consequences of Ideological Identities. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 82:280–301.

Mason, L. (2018b). *Uncivil Agreement - How Politics Became Our Identity.* University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

Mason, L. and Wronski, J. (2018). One Tribe to Bind Them All: How Our Social Group Attachments Strengthen Partisanship. *Political Psychology*, 39:257–277.

Maxwell, R. (2019). Cosmopolitan Immigration Attitudes in Large European Cities: Contextual or Compositional Effects? *American Political Science Review*, 672(July 2017):1–19.

McAllister, I. (2007). The Personalization of Politics. In Dalton, R. J. and Klingemann, H.-D., editors, *The Oxford Handbook of Political Behaviour*, pages 571–588. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

McPherson, M., Smith-Lovin, L., and Brashears, M. E. (2006). Social Isolation in America: Changes in Core Discussion Networks over Two Decades. *American Sociological Review*, 71(3):353–375.

Meguid, B. M. (2008). *Party Competition between Unequals: Strategies and Electoral Fortunes in Western Europe.* Cambridge University Press.

Oesch, D. (2006). *Redrawing the Class Map. Stratification and Institutions in Britain, Germany, Sweden and Switzerland*. Palgrave Macmillan, London.

Oesch, D. and Rennwald, L. (2018). Electoral competition in Europe's new tripolar political space: Class voting for the left, centre-right and radical right. *European Journal of Political Research*, January:1–25.

Offe, C. (1985). New Social Movements: Challenging the Boundaries of Institutional Politics. *Social Research*, 52(4 (Winter)):817–868.

Oskarson, M., Oscarsson, H., and Boije, E. (2016). Consideration and Choice: Analyzing Party Choice in the Swedish European Election 2014. *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 39(3):242–263. _eprint: https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/1467-9477.12065.

Poguntke, T. (2002). Party Organizational Linkage: Parties Without Firm Social Roots? In Luther, K. R. and Müller-Rommel, F., editors, *Political Parties in the New Europe*, pages 43–62. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Poguntke, T. and Webb, P., editors (2005). *The Presidentialization of Politics: A Comparative Study of Modern Democracies*. Oxford University Press, Oxford. Google-Books-ID: fp0VDAAAQBAJ.

Reiljan, A. (2020). 'fear and loathing across party lines' (also) in europe: Affective polarisation in european party systems. 59(2):376–396.

Roccas, S. and Brewer, M. B. (2002). Social Identity Complexity. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 6(2):88–106.

Rokkan, S. (1999). *State Formation, Nation-building, and Mass Politics in Europe: The Theory of Stein Rokkan*. Oxford Universtiy Press, Oxford.

Rueschemeyer, D., Huber Stephens, E., and Stephens, J. D. (1992). *Capitalist Development and Democracy*. Polity Press.

Rydgren, J. (2004). Explaining the emergence of radical right-wing populist parties: The case of denmark. 27(3):474–502.

Rydgren, J. and van der Meiden, S. (2019). The radical right and the end of swedish exceptionalism. 18(3):439–455.

Savage, M., Devine, F., Cunningham, N., Taylor, M., Li, Y., Hjellbrekke, J., Le Roux, B., Friedman, S., and Miles, A. (2013). A New Model of Social Class? Findings from the BBC's Great British Class Survey Experiment. *Sociology*, 47(2):219–250.

Savage, M., Hanquinet, L., Cunningham, N., and Hjellbrekke, J. (2018). Emerging Cultural Capital in the City: Profiling London and Brussels. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 1:138–149.

Schwarzbözl, T. and Fatke, M. (2016). Außer protesten nichts gewesen? das politische potenzial der AfD. 57(2):276–299.

Steenbergen, M. R., Hangartner, D., and De Vries, C. E. (2015). The Adaptive Voter: Choice Sets and Party Competition in the 1988 and 1992 U.S. Presidential Elections.

Stryker, S. (1980). *Symbolic Interactionalism. A Social Structural Version*. Benjamin/Cummings Publishing Country.

Stubager, R. (2008). Education Effects on Authoritarian-Libertarian Values: A Question of Socialization. *British Journal of Sociology*, 59(2):327–350.

Stubager, R. (2009). Education-based group identity and consciousness in the authoritarian-libertarian value conflict. *European Journal of Political Research*, 48(2):204–233.

Tajfel, H. (1981). *Human Groups and Social Categories*. Cambridge University Press, New York.

Tajfel, H. and Turner, J. C. (1979). An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict. In Austin, W. G. and Worchel, S., editors, *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, pages 33–48. Brooks/Cole, Monterey.

van der Brug, W. (2010). Structural and Ideological Voting in Age Cohorts. *West European Politics*, 33(3):586–607.

van Spanje, J. (2010). Contagious parties: Anti-immigration parties and their impact on other parties' immigration stances in contemporary western europe. *Party Politics*, 16(5):563–586.

Walczak, A., van der Brug, W., and de Vries, C. E. (2012). Long- and short-term determinants of party preferences: Inter-generational differences in Western and East Central Europe. *Electoral Studies*, 31(2):273–284.

Westheuser, L. (2019). Theorizing and researching cleavage identities: The contribution of cultural sociology. *Presented at the 11th European Graduate Network Conference, London School of Economics & Political Science*, 12/04/2019.

Wuthnow, R. (2018). *The Left Behind. Decline and Rage in Rural America*. Princeton University Press, Princeton.

Appendix

A. Social closure

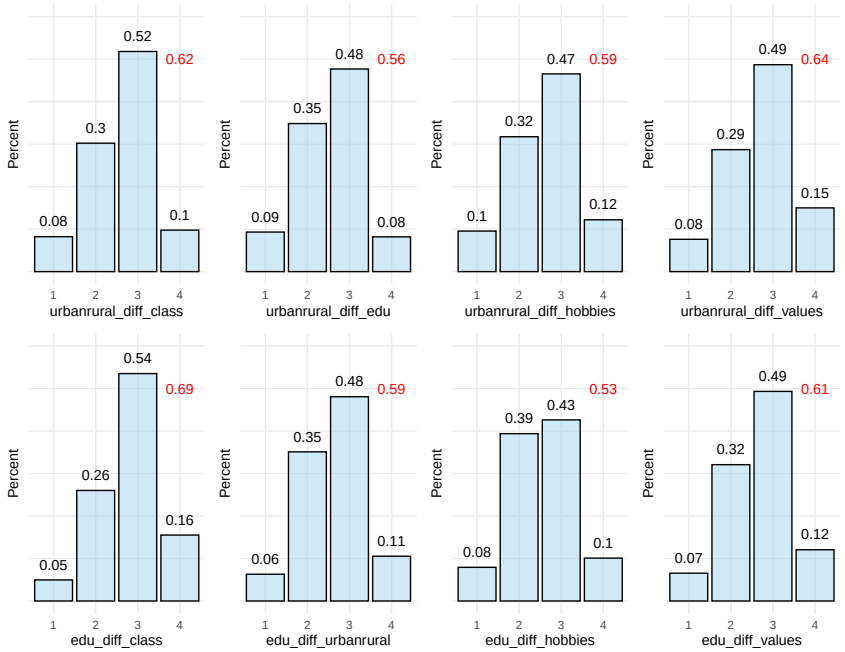

Figure A.1: Perceived alignment between different groups (Switzerland)

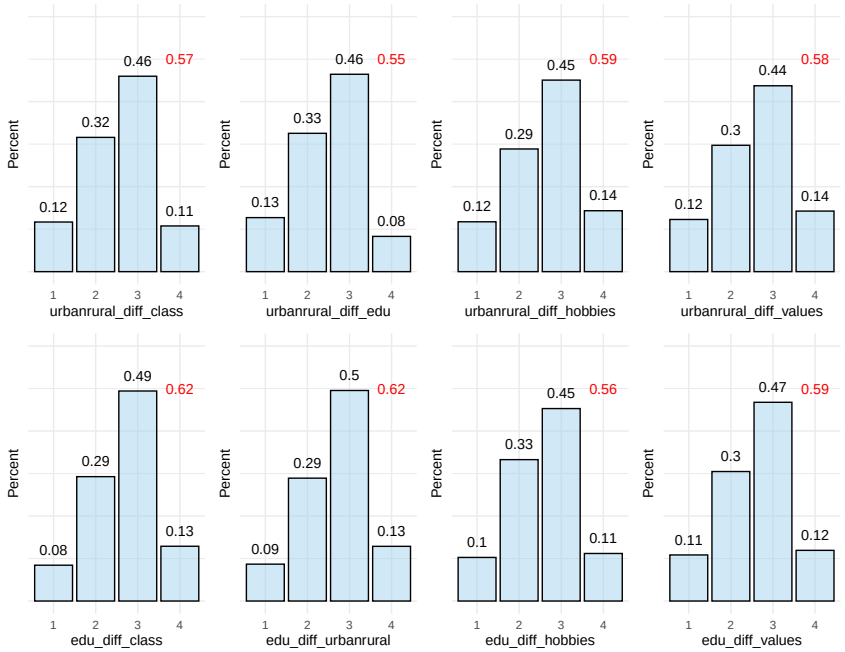

Figure A.2: Perceived alignment between different groups (France)

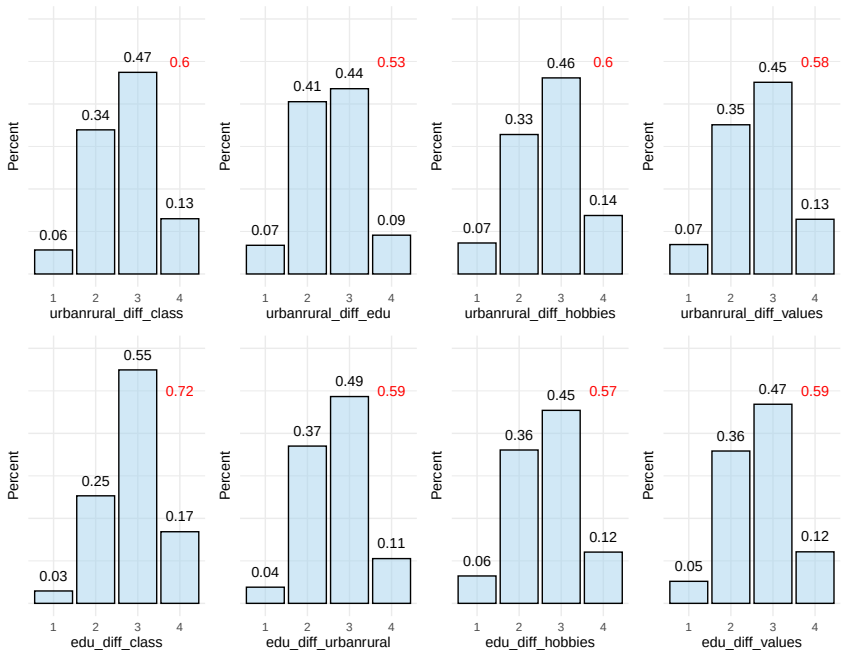

Figure A.3: Perceived alignment between different groups (Germany)

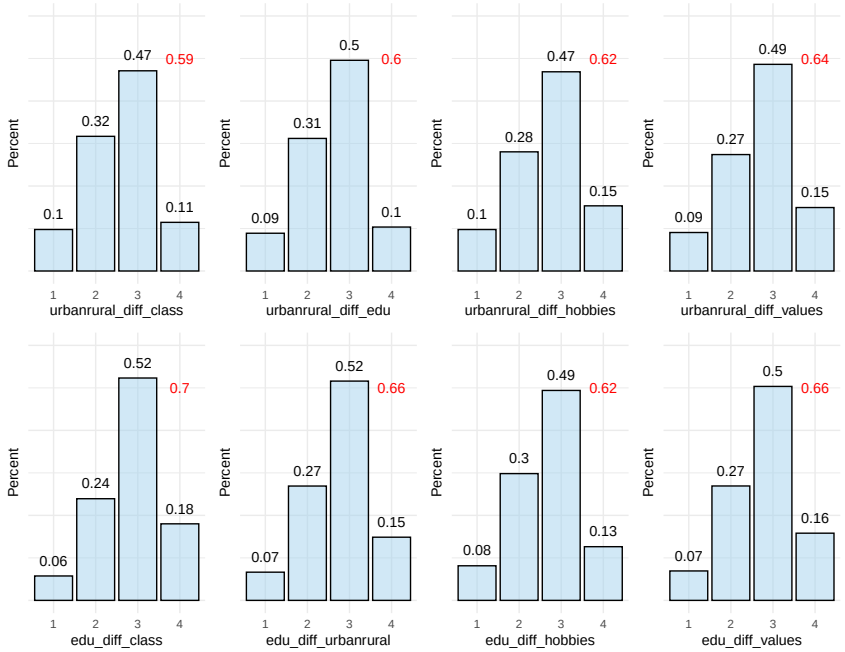

Figure A.4: Perceived alignment between different groups (UK)

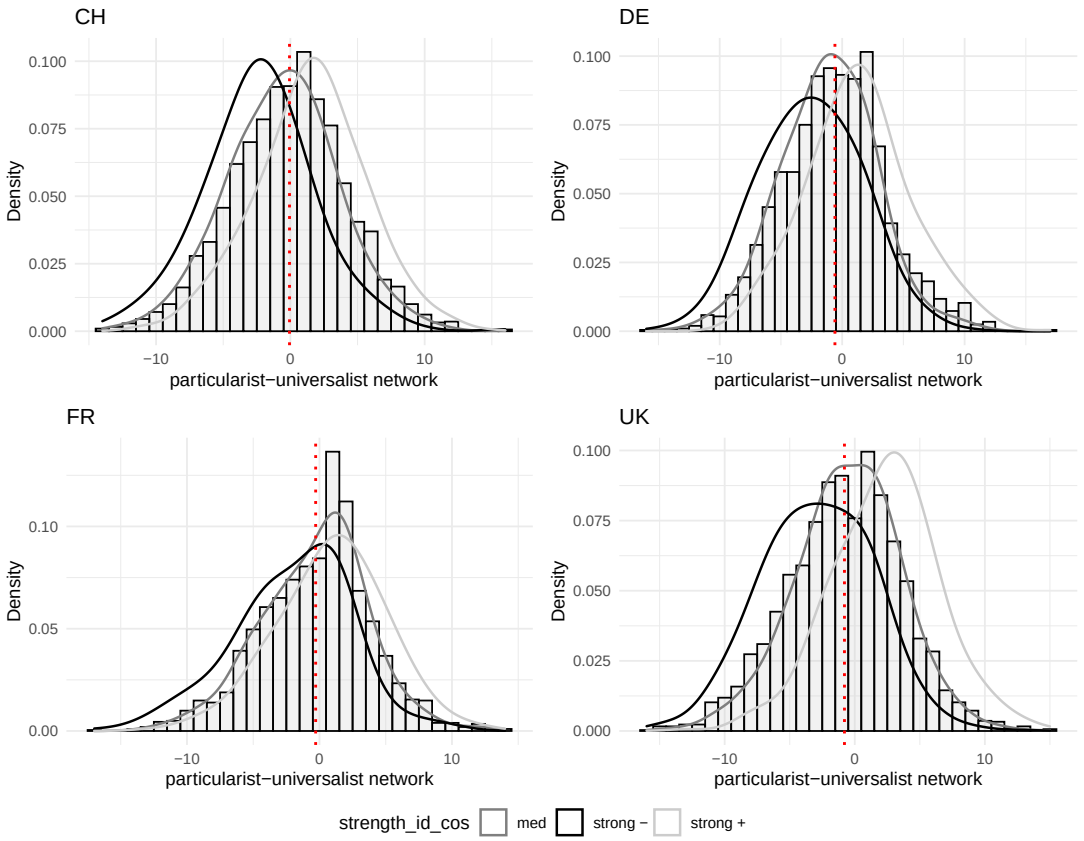

Figure A.5: Homogeneity of social networks (universalist versus particularist), by cosmopolitan identity

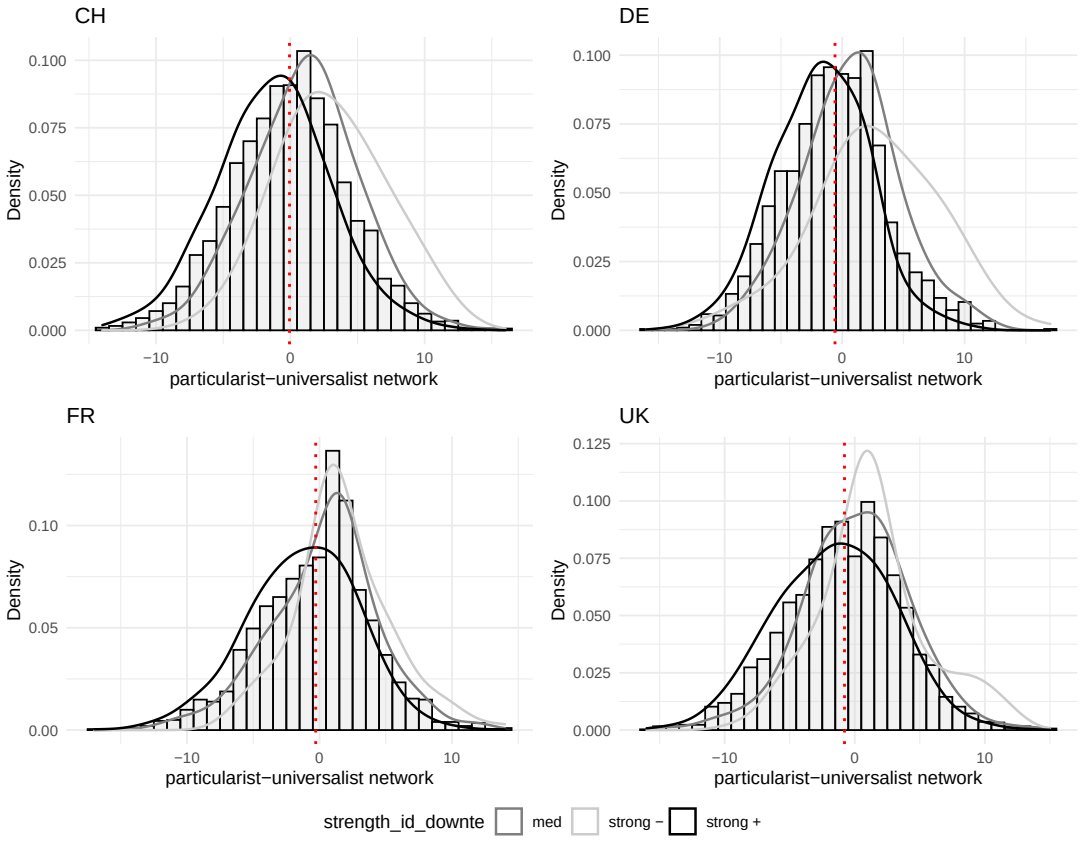

Figure A.6: Homogeneity of social networks (universalist versus particularist), by 'down-to-earth' identity

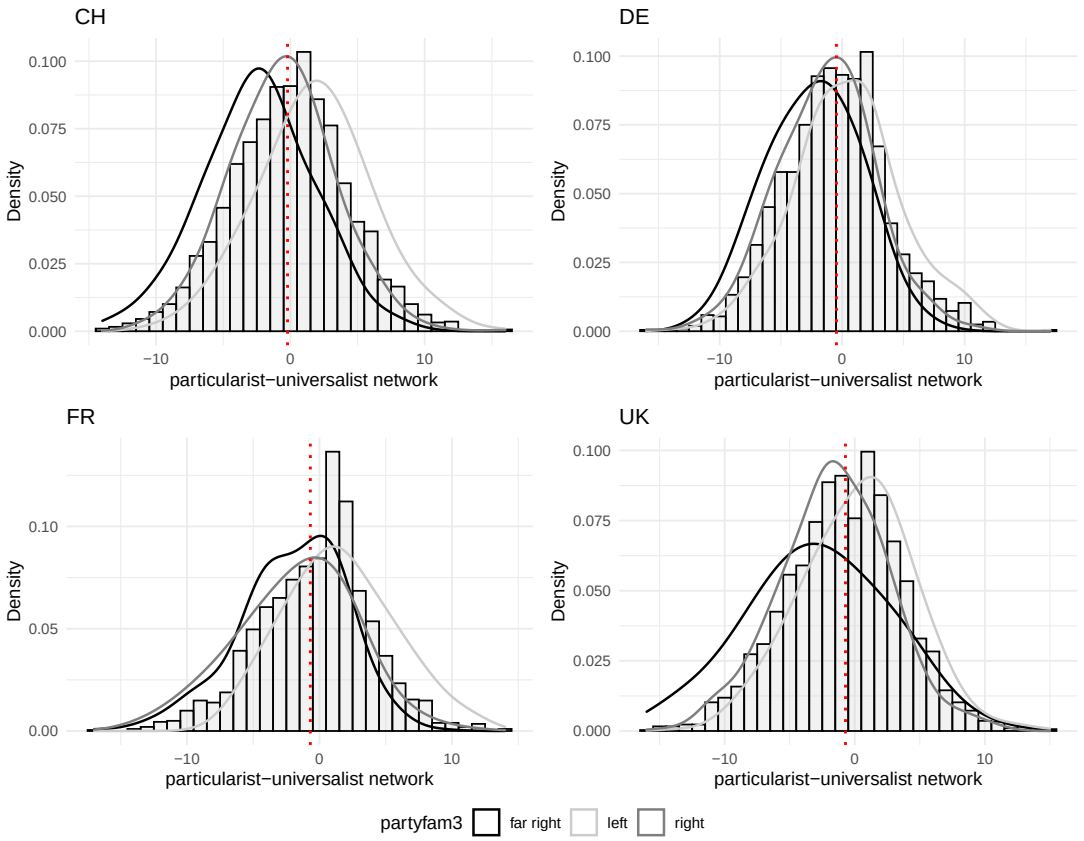

Figure A.7: Homogeneity of social networks (universalist versus particularist), by party support