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Place of Living as a Social Identity:
The Rural-Suburban-Urban Divide in Political Support

Inaugural dissertation submitted by Alina Zumbrunn

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Submitted by

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"Ein Mensch, der um anderer willen, ohne dass es seine eigene Leidenschaft, sein eigenes Bedürfnis ist, sich um Geld oder Ehre oder sonst etwas abarbeitet, ist immer ein Tor." – Johann Wolfang von Goethe (Die Leiden des jungen Werther)

Um eine Dissertation zu schreiben, braucht es ein ganzes Dorf. Denn auch wenn das Erlangen eines Doktortitels manchmal ein einsames Unterfangen ist, gibt es zahlreiche Menschen, die zur erfolgreichen Entstehung meiner Dissertation beigetragen haben und denen ich an dieser Stelle danken möchte.

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Table of Contents

List of Figures[1]

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[1] Please note that all figures are labelled as they appear in the respective articles, which leads to certain inconsistencies in the enumeration.

List of Tables[2]

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[2] Please note that all tables are labelled as they appear in the respective articles, which leads to certain inconsistencies in the enumeration.

4. Article 3: The Geography of Autocracy: Regime Preferences Along the Rural-Urban Divide in 32 Countries

Preface

The goal of this thesis is to investigate the Swiss and European rural-suburban-urban divide in political support through the lens of social identity theory. While earlier research on the places of living is mainly focused on its relationship with specific political events and policy attitudes, I move beyond the investigation of these concrete issues and analyse the rural-suburban-urban divide with regard to political support in general. I link the two concepts relying on social identity theory, thus bringing in a new theoretical viewpoint on place of living. In my dissertation, I show that place of living indeed forms a social identity and that elements of this social identity contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the rural-suburban-urban divide in political support. My three articles hence contribute to current literature in a number of ways: First, I present the first comprehensive theoretical model interpreting place of living in light of social identity theory. Second, relying on a novel data set, I am able to implement this model empirically using original items that operationalize place of living as a social identity. Third, I am able to investigate several measures of political support, thus taking into account its conceptual variety. Lastly, I specifically focus on the suburbs—a very relevant but often forgotten third group when discussing place of living. My analyses reveal that there exists a small rural-suburban-urban divide in political support, which is shaped by place-based identity and can to a large portion be explained through place-based resentment. In sum, this dissertation enhances our understanding of place of living by discussing it as a social identity, while simultaneously enriching our knowledge about the roots of political support.

This cumulative dissertation studies the rural-urban divide in political support through the lens of social identity theory. It consists of three articles that have all already been published in scientific journals and have hence fully completed a double-blind peer review process. All statistical analyses were conducted using STATA and R.[3] Datasets and replication files are either available online at the respective journal homepage or upon request.

Article 1: Zumbrunn, Alina. 2024. 'Country Bumpkin or City Slicker? The Role of Place of Living and Place-Based Identity in Explaining Place-Based Resentment'. *Political Research Quarterly* Online First. https://doi.org/10.1177/10659129241230541

SSCI 5-Year Impact Factor (2022): 2.8; number of reviewers: 2

Article 2: Zumbrunn, Alina. 2024. 'Confidence Across Cleavage: The Swiss Rural-Urban Divide, Place-Based Identity and Political Trust'. *Swiss Political Science Review* 30 (1): 46–54. https://doi.org/10.1111/spsr.12586

SSCI 5-Year Impact Factor (2022): 3.5; number of reviewers: 3

Article 3: Zumbrunn, Alina, and Markus Freitag. 2023. 'The Geography of Autocracy. Regime Preferences Along the Rural-Urban Divide in 32 Countries'. *Democratization* 30 (4): 616–634. https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2023.2171995

SSCI 5-Year Impact Factor (2022): 3.1; number of reviewers: 3

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[3] Information on the versions and packages used are available upon request.

Beyond the articles of this dissertation, I have also worked alone and with colleagues on several related manuscripts that have been presented as working papers at different conferences or that are to be published as a book chapter in the handbook edited by the RUDE project.

Lang, Antonia, Rubén García del Horno, and Alina Zumbrunn. 'Where Do Place-Based Identity and Place-Based Resentment Come From?' Working paper, presented at the NORFACE GOVERNANCE final conference in Vienna, 14.02.2024.

Webb, Michael, Alina Zumbrunn, and Sonja Zmerli. 'Roots of Resentment: Fact or Fiction?' Working paper, presented at the NORFACE GOVERNANCE final conference in Vienna, 14.02.2024.

Zumbrunn, Alina. 'An Unrequited Conflict: Affective Polarization among Ruralites, Suburbanites and Urbanites in Switzerland'. Working paper, presented at the PhD Workshop *Space for Place* in Paris, 13.12.2023; at the SPSA Annual Congress in St. Gallen, 09.02.2024; and at the NORFACE GOVERNANCE final conference in Vienna, 14.02.2024.

Zumbrunn, Alina, and Sonja Zmerli. 'Contextualising the Impact of Basic Human Values: Place of Living as a Moderator for Vote Choice?' Working paper, presented at the ECPR General Conference in Innsbruck, 23.08.2022; and at the Governance Mid-term Conference in Vienna, 24.09.2022.

Zumbrunn, Alina, Markus Freitag, Enrique Hernandez, and Sonja Zmerli. 'Political Support'. To be published as a chapter in the RUDE handbook on the rural-urban divide in Europe.

1. Introduction

In recent years, there has been an ever-growing scientific and media interest in the rural-urban divide (see e.g. Beckett 2016; García Del Horno, Rico, and Hernández 2023; Harteveld et al. 2022; Rachman 2018; SRF 2021; Thelitz 2021b; 2021a). Sizeable geographic differences have been reported with regard to events such as the Brexit (Brooks 2020; Jennings and Stoker 2016; 2019; Lee, Morris, and Kemeny 2018; Neal et al. 2021) or the French Yellow Vests movement (Brookes and Cappellina 2023; Lem 2020), but also in US elections (Cramer 2016; Jacobs and Munis 2019; 2022; Monnat and Brown 2017; Munis 2021; Scala and Johnson 2016; 2017; Wuthnow 2018), European elections (De Dominicis, Dijkstra, and Pontarollo 2020; Huijsmans and Rodden 2024), with regard to increasing populism and support for populist radical right parties (Agnew and Shin 2017; Arzheimer and Bernemann 2023; Berlet and Sunshine 2019; Brooks 2020; Deppisch, Osigus, and Klärner 2021; Huijsmans 2023a; Rodríguez-Pose 2018; Rossi 2018), when it comes to immigration or environmental attitudes (Arcury and Christianson 1993; Arndt, Halikiopoulou, and Vrakopoulos 2022; De Berenguer, Corraliza, and Martín 2005; Daneri, Krasny, and Stedman 2021; Diamond 2021; Frasure-Yokley and Wilcox-Archuleta 2019; Huijsmans 2023a) and in the Swiss case also in the quarterly direct democratic votes (Linder, Zürcher, and Bolliger 2008; Longchamp 2015; Mantegazzi 2021). However, all of these investigations focus on specific political events, parties, politicians or policy attitudes and do not go beyond. This is surprising, as many of these findings raise the question of whether rural dissatisfaction also applies to the political system in general. A smaller strand of studies indeed suggests lower levels of political support in ruralites, e.g. strong dissatisfaction with democracy and lower levels of trust in the political system as well as its actors (Kenny and Luca 2021; McKay, Jennings, and Stoker 2021; Mitsch, Lee, and Ralph Morrow 2021; Schoene 2019; Stein, Buck, and Bjørnå 2021).

This investigation of political support is especially important, as it measures a more general notion of satisfaction with how the political system works, which is in turn crucial for the survival of democracies (Claassen 2020; Easton 1965a; Lipset 1959). Concretely, political support describes a person's positive and negative orientations towards the political arena and is measured for example using political trust, democratic satisfaction or regime preference (Easton 1975). A positive evaluation of political support means that citizens are satisfied with the political rules, norms, values, actors and institutions, which legitimizes the continued existence of the political system. A lack of support, on the other hand, means a lack of legitimization, which opens up the possibility of challenging or even overthrowing the political system, hence forming a threat to democracy's continued existence (Norris 2017). In this sense, political support is essential for the survival of a political system. The apparent rural-urban divide in political support that has been

shown in previous studies (Kenny and Luca 2021; McKay, Jennings, and Stoker 2021; Mitsch, Lee, and Ralph Morrow 2021) is concerning from this point of view.

In order to better understand and explain the rural-urban divide in political support, I investigate it through the lens of social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 1979). Social identity theory generally claims that people categorize themselves and others into social groups, and view the world in light of those groups. Every person is thereby a member in a number of social groups, be it through their gender, their ethnicity, their occupation, their party membership, their religious denomination—or their place of living. Having the same type of place of living—i.e. being a rural, a suburban or an urban resident—means that these people live in a similar context, make similar experiences and feel connected to their place of living as well as to the other people living in the same type of place (Jacobs and Munis 2022). While differences with regard to place of residence have so far mainly been analysed as contextual or compositional effects (Maxwell 2019; 2020), a residual unexplained difference has always remained (Lancee and Schaeffer 2016). It could stem from the fact that a place of living is not only composed of certain people or forms a certain context, but that it constitutes an identity for the people living there. Hence, viewing place of living through the lens of social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 1979) might be an additional factor explaining this remaining difference.

Cramer (2016) uses the term *rural consciousness* to describe the phenomenon of a shared rural identity. In studies following on from Cramer's book, the term is generalized to *place-based consciousness* (see for example Borwein and Lucas 2023; Jacobs and Munis 2022; Munis 2022; Lunz Trujillo 2022). This common consciousness of people living in the same type of place encompasses two elements: *place-based identity* and *place-based resentment*. Place-based identity describes how strongly people identify with their place-based social group, while place-based resentment refers to the degree to which people feel that their own place-based in-group is disadvantaged compared to the other place-based out-groups. An emerging strand of literature is concerned with the investigation of place-based identity and resentment, their roots as well as their causes (Borwein and Lucas 2023; De Lange, Van Der Brug, and Harteveld 2023; Huijsmans 2023a; 2023b; Jacobs and Munis 2022; Munis 2022; Lunz Trujillo 2022; 2024; Lunz Trujillo and Crowley 2022). The goal of my dissertation is to build on this literature and to investigate how place of living as a social identity—i.e. place of living, place-based identity and place-based resentment—shapes political support in Switzerland as well as in Europe.

I chose to focus the main part of my analysis on Switzerland, as it can be viewed as a *least likely case* for place of living to form a relevant social identity and to impact political support for a number of reasons. First, Switzerland has a very pronounced level of direct democracy (Vatter 2020a, 351)

and the regular votes could serve as a lightning rod, discharging tensions between rural, suburban and urban regions. Second, Switzerland is a consensus democracy and takes into account as many opinions as possible, so no group should feel left behind in the long run. This also applies to rural infrastructure, which is well-developed in comparison to other countries, which should render rural resentment smaller in the Swiss case (Turuban 2021). Third, Switzerland is small, which means that rural, suburban and urban areas lie geographically close together. Also, they are well connected thanks to good roads and a well-developed public transport network. Geographical differences could therefore seem more surmountable than in other countries (Turuban 2021). Switzerland is also a special case with regard to the dependent variable of political support: In international comparison, Switzerland is among the countries with the highest levels of democratic satisfaction, national pride and political trust (Freitag and Zumbrunn 2024). With such a high overall level of political support, no place of living can fall behind dramatically. All this makes Switzerland a least likely case for my analysis. It is therefore all the more surprising that I find a strong place-based social identity in my first paper and that I can establish a relevant link of it to political support in the second paper. Such results in a least likely case call for an investigation of other European countries outside the better researched US (Cramer 2012; 2016; Munis 2022; Lunz Trujillo 2022; 2024; Lunz Trujillo and Crowley 2022). Therefore, in my third paper, I open up the focus to Europe and conduct a comprehensive study of 32 European countries. In doing so, I am following my own call and take a first step towards more multi-country research on place of living as a social identity.

My dissertation hence makes a number of contributions to current literature on the rural-urban divide: Firstly, it encompasses the first comprehensive theoretical model interpreting place of living in light of social identity theory. Second, I am able to employ data from an original survey that was conducted in the context of the RUDE project (The Rural-Urban Divide in Europe).[4] Due to the novelty of the concept of place-based consciousness, there exists no established measure of it yet (for a first operationalization in the US context, see Munis 2022). One of the RUDE project's goals was to develop an item set which empirically operationalizes place-based identity and place-based resentment. Using the Swiss data set collected during the project allows me to exploit sixteen original survey items with which I can investigate the interplay between place of living, place-based identity, place-based resentment and political support. Third, by investigating several measures of

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[4] The Rural-Urban Divide in Europe (RUDE) is a project which is part of the NORFACE Joint Research Programme on Democratic Governance in a Turbulent Age, and is a collaboration of researchers from France, Germany, Spain, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. The project received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant no. 822166) and from the Swiss National Science Foundation (grant no. 187822).

political support I am able to go beyond current research that is mainly concerned with rural-urban divides with regard to specific events or elections or with individual measures of political support. And fourth, my analyses shed light on the suburbs as a third and oftentimes forgotten group in the rural-urban divide (Lyons and Utych 2021; Nemerever and Rogers 2021). To summarize briefly, the three articles of my dissertation investigate the following research questions: 1) *How do place of living and place-based identity interact in shaping place-based resentment in Switzerland?* The goal of this first paper is to establish place of living as a social identity. 2) *How does place-based identity shape the Swiss rural-suburban-urban divide in political trust?* The second paper analyses the Swiss rural-suburban-urban divide in political trust, and then proceeds to scrutinize the moderating role played by place-based identity. 3) *What mechanisms explain the rural-urban divide in regime preference?* The last paper links the rural-urban divide in support for democratic and authoritarian regimes with three possible paths through which it runs: economic, political or cultural resentment. By theoretically linking the rural-urban divide with social identity theory and using original data sources, these three papers provide a holistic picture of how place of living as a social identity relates to political support. In sum, I find that the rural-suburban-urban divide in political support—which is rather small descriptively—is shaped by place-based identity and can, to a large portion, be explained through place-based resentment.

The rest of this synopsis is structured as follows: I will first start by discussing the concept of the rural-urban divide in light of cleavage theory (Lipset and Rokkan 1967) and will then explain how the understanding of the rural-urban divide has changed since. Then I proceed to introduce social identity theory and to elaborate how place of living forms a social identity. I also connect it to Cramer's (2016) concept of place-based consciousness. In the following chapter I introduce the concept of political support, link it with place of living as a social identity and establish my overarching model, before I proceed to summarize the three papers of my dissertation. I end with a brief conclusion in which I once again summarize my findings, discuss their implications, the limitations of my dissertation and an outlook on possible future research.

1.1 The return of a cleavage: the rural-urban divide over time

When discussing the rural-urban divide, it seems inevitable to begin with cleavage theory, as a lot of research in rural-urban differences is rooted in the according cleavage by Lipset and Rokkan (1967). I will first briefly summarize the rural-urban cleavage, before pointing out some relevant changes it has undergone in the last decades, on the one hand with regard to topics along which ruralites and urbanites are divided, and on the other hand with regard to the emergence of the suburbs as a third category. This then leads me to a discussion about a new understanding and different measurements of rural, suburban and urban that I follow in my dissertation.

1.1.1 The rural-urban divide as a classical cleavage

The roots of the rural-urban divide, as it has long been understood and analysed in political science research, go back to the cleavage theory of Lipset and Rokkan (1967). Their theory originally stems from party research and was intended to explain how social conflicts translate into the political arena and lead to the development of long-term party systems (Ford and Jennings 2020). *Cleavages* describe said societal conflict lines, which split the population into different groups with distinct political interests which are expressed in the political area (Ladner 2004, 282).

Lipset and Rokkan (1967) describe four cleavages along which in the middle of the 20th century relevant parties emerged during the national and industrial revolutions. The national revolution gave rise to the centre-periphery and state-church cleavages (Ford and Jennings 2020). The *centre-periphery cleavage* describes the conflict between the elites in the political and regional centres and the more peripheral regions and minorities (Lipset and Rokkan 1967). Since the peripheral group was defined to be a subordinate ethnic, linguistic or religious group, this conflict typically relates to regional nationalism, e.g. in the context of the German reunification (Magin, Freitag, and Vatter 2009), the regions of Flanders and Wallonia in Belgium (Ford and Jennings 2020), Catalan independence movement in Spain (Martinez-Tapia 2008) or with regard to the Swiss French- and Italian-speaking minorities (Linder 2015; Linder, Zürcher, and Bolliger 2008). The *state-church cleavage* describes the conflict over the control of school education, as the church tried to protect its historic power, while similarly becoming more irrelevant in the context of secularization. This conflict typically arose between religious and secular voters (Ford and Jennings 2020; Linder 2015; Lipset and Rokkan 1967). The industrial revolution then gave rise to the labour-capital and the rural-urban cleavage. The *labour-capital cleavage* describes the conflict that arose from the class struggle between the working class and the owning class surrounding the distribution conflicts in the labour market (Ford and Jennings 2020; Linder 2015; Lipset and Rokkan 1967). Lastly, the *rural-urban cleavage* similarly rose from the industrial revolution, describing the different interests of the agrarian population in the countryside and the new industrialist class in cities. While the rural population sought to protect food prices in order to generate as much income as possible and ensure their survival by selling their agricultural products, urban residents earned their money in the newly built factories and had an interest in keeping prices as low as possible so that they could consume as much as possible with their wages (Ford and Jennings 2020; Linder 2015; Lipset and Rokkan 1967). Hence, the rural-urban divide has originally been understood as a conflict between the primary and the secondary economic sector and was only concerned with economic interests regarding tariffs, taxes and agricultural protectionism.

<u>1.1.2 Changing cleavage: the rural-urban divide as a value-based conflict</u>

Over time, however, this narrow understanding of the rural-urban divide has softened, on the one hand with regard to the contents of the divide and on the other hand with regard to the groups represented in it. Lipset and Rokkan (1967) originally deem the cleavages they find *frozen*. Since they find that in the middle of the 20th century, the cleavages dominating party politics are still the ones that emerged 100 year prior, they argue that party systems and cleavages are stable and do not change over time. However, this assumption is contradicted by later findings, which not only show that the classic cleavages become less important over time, but also that new cleavages emerge (Kriesi 1998). The emergence of these new cleavages is mainly ascribed to more education, open borders, migration, ethnic diversity and aging society (Ford and Jennings 2020). On the one hand, changes of Europeanization and internationalization led to a new conflict on opening or closing one's country, in which the winners and losers of globalization face one another (Kriesi et al. 2008; 2012). On the other hand, a second, value-based conflict has arisen, in which liberal, green, post-materialist people and conservative, traditionalist, materialist people face each other (Ford and Jennings 2020). Despite similarities in content, this conflict has been analysed under different names. It is known as GAL-TAN (Green-Alternative-Liberal v. Traditional-Authoritarian-Nationalist) or transnational cleavage (Hooghe and Marks 2018; Hooghe, Marks, and Wilson 2002), as materialist-postmaterialist cleavage (Inglehart 1977), universalism-particularism divide (Zollinger 2024) or as cosmopolitan-communitarian conflict (De Wilde et al. 2019; Kriesi et al. 2012). However, these new cleavages are not independent, but they overlap—sometimes strongly—with previous cleavages; for example with the place of living (Borwein, Lucas, and Anderson 2024; Ford and Jennings 2020). While urbanites are associated with more liberal, green, post-materialist, universal and cosmopolitan values, that stem from them being winners of globalization, ruralites are associated with traditional, authoritarian, nationalist, particular and communitarian values, as they are typically the losers of globalization (Ford and Jennings 2020; Mantegazzi 2021). Over time, this overlap led to a new understanding of the rural-urban divide as a value-based conflict.[5]

Across Europe, the simultaneous decline of traditional cleavages and the emergence of new cleavages can be observed (Kriesi 1998), which led to a new understanding of the rural-urban divide in light of these new conflicts on globalization and GAL-TAN values. For example, a rural-urban divide becomes visible with regard to voting for parties from the populist right or the new left (Rodríguez-Pose 2018). With regard to attitudes associated with the newly emerging cleavages,

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[5] The reason for this overlap is usually either ascribed to compositional effects, i.e. residents sorting and self-selecting in a place where people with similar values and worldviews live, or to contextual effects, i.e. similar experiences in a context shaping people's values and worldviews (Bishop 2008; Ford and Jennings 2020; Maxwell 2019; 2020; Rodden 2019). However, since place of living is in this dissertation analysed in light of social identity theory, I will not go into these explanations any further.

rural-urban differences become apparent, too, e.g. when it comes to attitudes towards migration (Huijsmans 2023a; Kenny and Luca 2021; Maxwell 2019), European integration or globalisation (De Dominicis, Dijkstra, and Pontarollo 2020; Kenny and Luca 2021; Schoene 2019) as well as ecological attitudes (Arcury and Christianson 1993; Arndt, Halikiopoulou, and Vrakopoulos 2022; De Berenguer, Corraliza, and Martín 2005; Daneri, Krasny, and Stedman 2021; Diamond 2021). Despite its roots in cleavage theory, the content of the European rural-urban conflict has hence changed over time from a purely economic conflict to a value-based one.[6]

In Switzerland, this shift of the rural-urban cleavage from an economic to a cultural conflict can be observed even better in the quarterly-held direct democratic votes. At the end of the 19th century, Swiss agriculture was well protected through measures such as tariffs on foreign products, which led to some conflict between rural and urban residents. However, the Swiss rural-urban divide decreased during the two world wars, as the population became dependent on national self-sufficiency during this period, which in turn strengthens the position of the farmers and stifled urban protests (Linder 2015). At the end of the 1960s, the Swiss urban-rural gap in voting results first slowly and then rapidly reopened. However, this time it was no longer just about economic issues, but about ideological values: This was evident, for example, in votes on abortion, the rights of same-sex couples, membership of the UN and the votes on the Schengen Association Agreement and the Dublin Association Agreement, which were amongst the ones with the largest rural-urban gap in the voting result in Swiss history (Linder 2015; Linder, Zürcher, and Bolliger 2008). To date, about eighty percent of Swiss direct democratic votes are said to be significantly split along the rural-urban divide (Linder, Zürcher, and Bolliger 2008) with an average difference in the voting result between the big cities and the countryside of 12 up to 17 percentage points (Hermann, John, and Wenger 2023). In the latest legislature, big cities got overruled by the countryside in 14 out of 33 votes, while the countryside got overruled by big cities in 2 out of 33 votes (Hermann, John, and Wenger 2023). This renders the rural-urban divide the most salient of the four classical cleavages in direct democratic votes in Switzerland (Linder, Zürcher, and Bolliger 2008; Seitz 2014). The Swiss case thus clearly shows the change in the rural-urban conflict from an economic to a more value-based divide and how the rural-urban divide in this form is still relevant today (Mantegazzi 2021).

1.1.3 Changing cleavage: the emergence of the suburbs

There has not only been a change to the content of the rural-urban conflict, but a second change occurred in the second half of the last century with the rural-urban divide, too: suburbanisation.

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[6] This is why I try to avoid using the term *cleavage* to refer to the rural-urban divide as I understand it in this dissertation, since it is not the same as the rural-urban cleavage described by Lipset and Rokkan (1967).

Due to this suburbanisation, the understanding of who is confronting each other in the rural-urban divide changed.

Although there were already processes of suburbanisation in the 19th century, cities at that time grew primarily in the narrower sense through densification (Ströbele 2012). It was only after the Second World War, with the post-war boom and the emergence of motorised private transport and the expansion of public transport networks such as railways, buses, metros and trams, that new residential areas were developed outside the core cities. These initially often more affordable residential areas in the municipalities outside the city centres were attractive to less affluent residents, who could not afford to live in the core cities themselves (Kübler 2022; Ströbele 2012). Later, however, the suburban areas also became attractive for well-heeled people who had higher expectations and were looking for a quiet place to live in more green areas around the city (Kübler 2022). Today, about 60 percent of Western Europeans are said to live in suburban areas (Ströbele 2012, 93).

Suburban places are therefore characterised by lying in between rural and urban areas or being torn between them, not only geographically, but also with regard to many other characteristics (Longchamp 2015). They are typically part of metropolitan regions, but they do not lie in their centres. Therefore, suburban areas are less densely populated than core cities and they do not have the same central functions as the urban cores, i.e. they host less infrastructure such as administration, universities or theatres. On the other hand, while suburbs sprawl into the countryside, they are still clearly distinct from rural areas, as suburbs are still part of metropolitan regions and hence more densely populated and characterized through a more urban lifestyle (Ströbele 2012). Due to their historical development, suburban areas often form a clear separation between living and working—many people live there but commute to work in the city centres (Longchamp 2015). This is why they are also referred to as *bedroom communities* (Frasure-Yokley and Wilcox-Archuleta 2019).

1.1.4 A new understanding of the rural-urban divide

Both of these changes with regard to the content and geography of the rural-urban divide make the boundary between urban and rural areas less distinct and raise the question of a new definition and measurement. First, a new understanding of the rural-urban divide cannot only encompass dichotomous categories, but it should rather be understood as a continuum or at least as more than two distinct categories. Today, the rural-urban divide runs from core cities to the countryside, encompassing the newly emerging suburbs and a variety of places in between, whose inhabitants cannot be clearly assigned to either the rural or the urban side (Lyons and Utych 2021; Nemerever and Rogers 2021; Scala and Johnson 2017). I take this consideration into account in my dissertation

by either including the suburbs as a third category into my argumentation and analyses or by treating the rural-urban divide as a continuous variable. I try to increase the visibility of suburbs in my synopsis by from now on using the term *rural-suburban-urban divide* where applicable in order not to give the impression of a dichotomy.

Second, terms such as *urban*, *suburban* and *rural* are multi-layered and can refer to different characteristics depending on the discipline. If objective criteria are to be used for the definition and measurement, this can for example be done in the historical discipline via the archival method and historical records of city rights. In a juristic understanding, there are legal definitions and measurements of places via land use laws, for example. In economics, criteria such as the distribution of economic sectors, specifically the importance of the agricultural sector, can be used. In a geographical understanding, spaces can be measured by means of distances, number of inhabitants, population density or constructural connection. Finally, apart from these objective criteria, there are also subjective understandings of place of living, specifically when viewing place through a psychological lens and defining it through the personal identity of its inhabitants (Nemerever and Rogers 2021). It needs to be noted that the overlap between the subjective and objective measure of place of living is rather low and that the decision of how to measure place of living is not at all trivial, since the operationalization or typology used in empirical investigations of the rural-suburban-urban divide makes a difference with regard to results (Hermann, John, and Wenger 2023; Nemerever and Rogers 2021). A reason for the discrepancy between subjective and objective measures might be that the rural-suburban-urban divide has become more value-based and people might understand themselves as ruralites, suburbanites or urbanites due to their values corresponding to the ones associated with a certain place instead of historical, economic or geographical characteristics of the place itself (Lunz Trujillo 2024). Hence, a subjective measure of place of living might make especially sense when discussing political attitudes. This is why I will be following the subjective notion of the rural-suburban-urban divide in my dissertation, since my theoretical considerations rely on social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 1979) and are concerned with the attitude of political support.

1.2 Bringing in social identity theory

A new strand of literature, emerging from Cramer's (2016) book on rural resentment in the state of Wisconsin, focuses on the rural-suburban-urban divide as a social identity. The next sections will first discuss social identity theory in general, before applying it to place of living and linking it to the concept of *place-based consciousness* by Cramer (2012; 2016).

<u>1.2.1 What is social identity theory?</u>

According to social identity theory, people view themselves as well as everyone else as categorized into social groups (Huddy 2001). Tajfel und Turner (1979, 40) define a group as "a collection of individuals who perceive themselves to be members of the same social category, share some emotional involvement in this common definition of themselves, and achieve some degree of social consensus about the evaluation of their group and of their membership of it." Such a social categorization can be based on a large number of social characteristics, for example with regard to gender, ethnicity, occupation, religious denomination, partisanship and many more. People then differentiate between the in-groups—the groups of which they themselves are a member—and the out-groups—the respective other groups, to which they do not belong. Said in-groups provide people with heuristics and cues on how they should act and interact with one another, as well as prescriptions on how to think, what to believe in and how to behave (Borwein and Lucas 2021; Hogg 2016; Huddy 2001; Tajfel and Turner 1979). Hence, social identities are important for people to define themselves and for deriving their self-esteem from them. Based on these assumptions, social identity theory encompasses three hypotheses that form the basis of this dissertation and that will be discussed subsequently.

First of all, people need to *categorize* themselves into an in-group (Tajfel and Turner 1979). Hence, it is not sufficient for individuals to objectively belong to a social group or for others to ascribe them said group membership, but it depends on which group a person assigns themselves to. A social identity will be of no effect if individuals do not categorize themselves into a group and consider themselves to be a member of it. In this sense, it is less about what group a person objectively belongs to than about what group the person subjectively believes they belong to.

Second, the membership in a group needs to be a relevant social identity through a certain level of *identification* with said group for it to influence a person's attitudes and behaviour, i.e. people need to internalize their group membership as a part of their self-conception (Tajfel and Turner 1979). Every person is a member in a number of social groups and not all of them form a salient social identity in every situation. Instead, in different situations, people perceive themselves as part of different social groups, which then impact their attitudes and behaviour in this situation (Tajfel and Turner 1979). Therefore, only the social groups with which a person feels a certain level of identification become an aspect of their self-concept and matter subsequently. Where such an identification comes from is not entirely clear and it has been shown to be relatively low-threshold in experimental settings (Stewart et al. 2003; Tajfel and Turner 1979): Even minimal and arbitrary group affiliation are enough for people to identify with and to produce in-group bias and out-group hostility (Tajfel and Turner 1979; Lunz Trujillo and Crowley 2022).

Third, people will *compare* their own in-group with relevant out-groups. An out-group can be relevant either through the proximity to the in-group or through its situational salience (Tajfel and Turner 1979). When comparing two groups, they are typically not equal, but one group is superior due to better endowment with scarce resources such as political power, financial means or cultural prestige, while the other group is inferior. People evaluate their in-group's position by comparing their in-group and its resources to the relevant out-groups. Evaluating one's in-group as inferior can produce social conflict, as the superiority of the other group might appear unfair. However, evaluating one's in-group as superior can just as well lead to social conflict, since members of the superior group do not want to lose their higher status and hence try to defend it (Hogg 2016; Huddy 2001; Tajfel and Turner 1979; Lunz Trujillo and Crowley 2022).

As already mentioned, a variety of social characteristics can be the basis of a social identity. The next chapter applies social identity theory and the three hypotheses I just discussed to place of living and link it with Cramer's (2016) work on rural consciousness.

1.2.2 Place of living as a social identity

When discussing place of living as a social identity, place does not describe a specific location such as a specific city, village or canton, but it rather refers to a composition of attributes of a place that can form people's identity. These attributes can refer to the physical space (e.g. the landscape of places), it can refer to spatial settings and local services (e.g. the provision of public transport), political-economic dimensions (e.g. the fact that universities are typically located in urban spaces), but also human activities, interactions with the local community, symbolic meanings, and even psychological components such as shared memories, attitudes, values and feelings (e.g. the feeling of being left behind) (Cain 2020; Cramer 2016; Daneri, Krasny, and Stedman 2021; Fitzgerald 2018; Hochschild 2018; Maxwell 2020; Schulte-Cloos and Bauer 2023; Stedman 2002; Wuthnow 2018). No matter the attributes of a place people use for their categorization, they classify themselves and others into either the *rural, suburban* or *urban* group.[7]

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[7] Our survey specifically included a suburban category to account for the non-dichotomous nature of the rural-urban divide (see chapter 1.1.2). While the first paper uses this trichotomy of place of living, in the second paper I make an even more detailed categorisation of place of living: Since some studies find that the rural-urban divide can be mainly attributed to big cities drifting apart from the rest of a country (Huijsmans et al. 2021), I subdivide the urban group into big cities and small cities. Due to limitations in the items available in the EVS, I am not able to measure place of living as a categorical variable nor with a subjective measure in the third paper of my dissertation. In the EVS, place of living is measured on a 5-point scale that is based on the number of inhabitants, i.e. an objective measure. In the other two papers of my dissertation, I am able to compare results when measuring place of living subjectively as opposed to measuring it objectively via zip code and the objective FSO typology "Raum mit städtischem Charakter 2012". The results are similar, even though the effect sizes are significantly stronger for the subjective measurement. In this sense, the third paper with the objective measurement of place of living includes a rather conservative estimate for the effect sizes. And I am still able to take into account the non-dichotomy of the rural-urban divide by treating the five categories as continuous variables, in the knowledge that this contradicts the assumptions of social identity theory.

In the three hypotheses of social identity theory, the first one claims that people what matters is which in-group people *categorize* themselves into (Tajfel and Turner 1979). This means that what is really important for a social identity is how a person subjectively assesses their own place of living and not what it is classified as according to an objective typology. In the different understandings of the rural-suburban-urban divide as discussed in chapter 1.1.4, this would correspond to a subjective definition. It is important to note that place in this understanding can refer to a wide range of attributes, which makes it a vague term that does not necessarily mean the same thing to all respondents.

According to the second hypothesis, people need a certain level of *identification* with their place of living, while the third hypothesis claims that through *comparison* with the relevant out-groups, people might feel that their own in-group is over- or underprivileged, which can then lead to social conflict. For these two elements of social identity theory, Cramer (2016) coins the term *rural consciousness* in her book on elections in Wisconsin. She describes these two terms as follows:

> "I learned, as a city girl, that many rural residents have a perspective I am going to call 'rural consciousness.' To folks who grew up in rural areas, a fancy social science name like that probably seems unnecessary. But it is my shorthand for referring to this: an identity as a rural person that includes much more than an attachment to place. It includes a sense that decision makers routinely ignore rural places and fail to give rural communities their fair share of resources, as well as a sense that rural folks are fundamentally different from urbanites in terms of lifestyles, values, and work ethic. Rural consciousness signals an identification with rural people and rural places and denotes a multifaceted resentment against cities." (Cramer 2016, 5–6)

The two elements discussed by Cramer—identity and resentment—relate to the second and third hypothesis of social identity theory. While Cramer uses the term rural consciousness, later works generalize it to place-based consciousness, since identifying with one's place and feeling resentful about the distribution of resources between different places is not an inherently rural phenomenon (Borwein and Lucas 2023; Jacobs and Munis 2022; Munis 2022; Lunz Trujillo 2022). *Place-based identity* describes identification with one's place-based in-group, so how strongly a person feels similar and connected to other people living in the same type of place, and whether this social identity is important for their self-conception. *Place-based resentment* subsumes the feeling that one's own in-group is disadvantaged and does not get enough resources as opposed to the other place-based out-groups, which results from comparing one's in-group with the relevant out-groups as described in the third hypothesis of social identity theory. Place-based resentment can be split into three subdimensions, namely political resentment ("decision makers routinely ignore rural places"

(Cramer 2016, 5)), economic resentment ("fail to give rural communities their fair share of resources" (Cramer 2016, 5)), and cultural resentment ("rural folks are fundamentally different from urbanites in terms of lifestyle, values, and work ethic" (Cramer 2016, 5–6)). Some previous studies find that all three dimensions of place-based resentment are just "distinct components of a single latent construct" (Borwein and Lucas 2023, 4; see also Munis 2022), while other studies operate with the subdimensions as distinct feelings and find different effects of them, so that they recommend a separate analysis of the subdimensions (Lunz Trujillo and Crowley 2022).[8] In my dissertation, I analyze the dimensions separately and find that they exhibit differences both as explanatory and as explained variables, which justifies a separate investigation.

Lastly, it is noteworthy to discuss the question of which are the relevant out-groups to which a person compares their in-group to, and which then form the object of their resentment. Tajfel and Turner (1979) claim that an out-group is either relevant through proximity to the in-group or through its situational salience. In the discussion of the rural-suburban-urban divide, *rural* and *urban* are clearly the salient categories, as they are the ones discussed most in media and science (Beckett 2016; Lyons and Utych 2021; Nemerever and Rogers 2021; Rachman 2018; SRF 2021; Thelitz 2021a; 2021b). However, the *suburbs* as a phenomenon emerging in the aftermath of the Second World War, might still form a relevant out-group, as they are the more proximate group to urbanites as well as to ruralites, on the one hand through their geographic location between cities and the countryside, and on the other hand due to their attitudinal placement, which is often in between the polar opinions of rural and urban residents (Longchamp 2015; Ströbele 2012). Hence, I include the suburbs as a third relevant in- and out-group.

1.2.3 Conceptual delimitation: Place-based affect, municipal identity and place attachment

There is a variety of research that deals with concepts related to place-based identity: First, a study by Hegewald and Schraff (2022) examines the *affect* between rural and urban people and how it influences voting behaviour. I argue that place-based affect is distinct from place-based identity and place-based resentment, as it is the emotional response to identification with one's in-group and comparing said in-group to the relevant out-groups. This is in line with social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 1979), which argues that social conflict is one possible response to the comparison of one's in-group with the relevant out-groups. In this sense, place-based affect is a consequence of place-based identity and resentment and not a synonym for it.

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[8] Specifically, Trujillo and Crowley (2022) find that the political and cultural resentment dimensions—which they call symbolic—operates differently from the economic resentment dimension—which they call materialistic. They suggest a separate analysis of symbolic and materialistic aspects of resentment.

Second, there exists also a lot of research on *municipal and regional identities*, which describe an identification with a specific neighbourhood, town, city or region. Holding such a municipal identity for example influences local political interest and participation (Borwein and Lucas 2021), the preference for local candidates (Schulte-Cloos and Bauer 2023) as well as support for interregional fiscal redistribution (Jacques, Béland, and Lecours 2022). As opposed to place-based identity, where place is defined through attributes of a place (see chapter 1.2.2), municipal or regional identities describe a person's attachment to one specific municipality or region and hence is a clearly distinct concept.

Lastly, a third strand of research is concerned with *place attachment* and often investigates it in the context of residential mobility (Barcus and Brunn 2009; 2010; Gustafson 2006; 2014; Jacobs and Munis 2020; Low and Altman 1992; Vidal, Valera, and Peró 2010; Westin 2015). There exists no scientific agreement on the relationship between place-based identity and place attachment, as some scholars use it interchangeably, while others view it as two distinct concepts or as one being incorporated in the other (Hernández et al. 2007). However, it can certainly be argued that the two concepts are different. While place attachment is about an affective link that people establish with a type of place, place-based identity is primarily about personal identity with said group. The concepts are therefore not congruent and "one person could be attached to a place but not be identified with it (i.e. someone who likes to live in a place and wants to remain there but does not feel that this place is part of their identity; at least not their main place identity) and vice versa" (Hernández et al. 2007). Therefore, I argue that the strand of place attachment is yet concerned with another aspect of place-based research.

1.2.4 Literature review: the rural-suburban-urban divide from a social identity perspective

The goal of this chapter is to provide a brief overview of research concerned with place of living as a social identity. Even before Cramer (2012; 2016) put place-based identity back on the political science agenda, there was already a wide array of research on place-based identity in other disciplines: On the one hand, social psychology investigated place with regard to symbolic meaning, attachment and personal identification (see for example Stedman 2002) and generally discusses place-based identity in the context of a new theoretical model (Cain 2020). In ethnography, too, researchers have been concerned with place as a social identity for some decades. Here, however, the focus was primarily on rural identity and how it is connected to nature (Bell 1992; Walker 2007). This has resulted in a strand of research that links place-based identity to environmental attitudes and environmental policy preferences through its connection to nature (Daneri, Krasny, and Stedman 2021; Diamond 2021). However, I will focus my discussion on the emerging strand of literature building on Cramer's concept of place-based consciousness (Cramer 2012; 2016),

developing it into quantitative measurement scales as well as investigating its determinants and outcomes. Place-based identity as understood in this literature means *rural*, *suburban* and *urban* identification and is connected to resentment resulting from said identification.

Starting with place-based identity, first of all, research is concerned with showing that place of living forms a relevant social identity for its residents. In her qualitative works, Cramer (2012; 2016) shows through interviews and listening to conversations that rural and place-based identity exists and that it is intertwined with a perception of deprivation. In their more quantitative work, Lyons and Utych (2021) show that place of living is a relevant social identity, not only for ruralites, but also for urbanites. Second, there is a number of studies investigating the consequences of place-based identity. In their study, Lyons and Utych (2021) proceed to show that place as a social identity not only matters in the political arena—i.e. when assessing governmental resource redistribution—but that it even impacts the social arena, for example when rating hypothetical job applications. Other work by Trujillo (2021; 2022) points out a relationship between place-based identity and anti-intellectualism and that especially rural social identification contributes to anti-intellectualism, since experts and intellectuals are viewed as an out-group. Next, a number of studies establish a link between place-based identity and place-based resentment and show that people whose identification with their place of living is stronger are also more likely to feel resentful (Borwein and Lucas 2023; Cramer 2012; De Lange, Van Der Brug, and Harteveld 2023; Munis 2022).

Lastly, some studies not only investigate linear effects of place-based identity, but also discuss its *moderating* capacities. This fits nicely with social identity theory, which claims that a social identity only impacts people's attitudes and behaviour when they exhibit a certain level of identification with said identity. Specifically, Munis (2021) tests to what extent candidate origins matter and finds that they are especially important for people with a strong place-based identity, as they might be more sensitive to geographic cues.

Next, turning to place-based resentment, research is conducted on both, its roots as well as its consequences. When it comes to variables explaining who is more resentful, place of living, age, gender, education, income, place-based identity and racial resentment are found to be important explanatory factors (Borwein and Lucas 2023; Munis 2022). Starting with the place of living, research finds that place-based resentment is asymmetrically distributed and that ruralites are more resentful than urbanites or suburbanites (Borwein and Lucas 2023; Munis 2022). Similarly, De Lange, Van Der Brug, and Harteveld (2023) find that *regional* resentment also differs between rural and urban residents. Next, turning to the other sociodemographic characteristics, Munis (2022) finds that male, older Americans with high levels of place-based identity and racial resentment also exhibit higher levels of place-based resentment. Borwein and Lucas (2023), on the other hand,

differentiate the explanatory variables by place of living. They find that resentment is different in different places of living: While high-resentment rural residents are rather older and more conservative, high-resentment urban residents are younger, have a higher level of income and education and are more progressive.

Lastly, a number of studies is concerned with the effects of place-based resentment. Apart from explanatory factors, Borwein and Lucas (2023) also find that place-based resentment correlates with *democratic satisfaction*: In ruralites, place-based resentment is associated with less democratic satisfaction, while for urbanites, place-based resentment is associated with more democratic satisfaction. Further consequences of resentment concern political attitudes, political support and vote choice. Arzheimer and Bernemann (2023) investigate the relationship between place and *populist radical right attitudes* in Germany and find that place resentment accounts for a large amount of spatial variation in populist radical right attitudes. In their study on regional resentment, Jacques, Béland, and Lecours (2022) also find that it affects *support for fiscal redistribution* in Canada. Hegewald (2023) studies how the feeling that one's place is overheard affects *political trust*. In his study of nine European countries, he finds that high levels of place-based resentment go hand in hand with a shift in political trust from national to local institutions. With regard to *vote choice*, Jacobs and Munis (2022) find that place-based respectively rural resentment predicts vote choice in the US midterm elections of 2018 as well as in the national elections of 2020. Trujillo and Crowley (2022) also study the effect of rural resentment on *Trump support*, however differentiating between the three subdimensions of resentment. They find that political and cultural resentment correlate positively with Trump support, while economic resentment correlates negatively with Trump support, hence underlining the importance of a separate analysis of the three subdimensions of place-based resentment. Lastly, Huijsmans (2023b) investigates the relationship between place-based resentment and *macro variables* in the Dutch context, using geocoded data. He finds that place-based resentment is linked with spatial inequalities in unemployment and the size of the knowledge economy, with the linguistic distance between standard Dutch and the local dialect spoken, and with the proximity between the respondent's place of residence and the place of residence of members of the Dutch national parliament.

Next to the linear roots and consequences of place-based resentment, Huijsmans (2023a) investigates its *mediating* capacities in explaining geographical differences in anti-immigration and populist attitudes. He claims that place-based resentment explains why ruralites are more likely to hold populist and anti-immigration attitudes. He finds that place-based resentment is a stronger explanatory factor for geographic differences than other explanatory variables he explores.

16

While these studies link place of living as a social identity, place-based identity and place-based resentment to a variety of explanatory and response variables, most of these studies focus on policy attitudes or elections and there has been little research linking them theoretically and empirically to political support (see Borwein and Lucas 2023; Hegewald 2023 for two exceptions). This is surprising, as findings on place-based divergences with regard to concepts such as anti-intellectualism (Lunz Trujillo 2021; 2022) or populist attitudes and vote for populist politicians (Arzheimer and Bernemann 2023; Lunz Trujillo and Crowley 2022) also raise the question of how place of living relates to support for the democratic system or its institutions as such. The next chapter will therefore begin with a conceptualisation of political support before presenting the overall theoretical model linking political support to place of living as a social identity.

1.3 The rural-suburban-urban divide in political support

1.3.1 What is political support?

The concept of political support goes back to work of Easton (1965b; 1975). Generally, he defines support as "an attitude by which a person orients himself to an object either favourably or unfavourably, positively or negatively." (Easton 1975, 436) In this sense, support is not part of behaviour, but of attitudes preceding said behaviour. *Political* support then describes positive and negative orientations towards the political arena, e.g. political actors, institutions, norms or the political community. A positive evaluation of political support means that citizens are satisfied with the political system and politicians and do not question their legitimacy. This, on the other hand, is vital for democracies to survive (Claassen 2020; Easton 1965a; 1965b; Lipset 1959). Absence of political support, in turn, might be a sign that something is going wrong in the political system, that people are dissatisfied, do not legitimize political actors and institutions and might indicate a wish for change. Hence, in the worst case, a lack of political support could challenge the entire political system with its institutions and actors and thus cause a complete overthrow of said system (Dalton 2004, 9–13; Norris 2017, 19–20).

Political support generally distinguishes between specific and general support. *Specific support* is object-specific in two ways: On the one hand, it refers to current authorities and politicians, on the other hand, it refers to the specific decisions and policies of these authorities. For citizens to evaluate said people and their decisions, they need to be visible and known to the population in person (Easton 1975). Hence, specific support is very concrete and it does not refer to the system as such, but to specific policies and agents, which are evaluated independently of institutional aspects such as the position in the political process they currently fill or the decision-making process they partake in. This also makes specific support relatively volatile. Accordingly, a negative evaluation of specific support does not immediately need to have serious consequences for the

political system and usually dos not lead to fundamental changes, but merely to a change in the ranks of politicians or to new policies. In this sense, specific political support is also an accountability mechanisms. A negative of evaluation of specific support is therefore not in conflict with the survival of the political system, at least not in the short term and as long as it does not become chronic (Dalton 2004; Easton 1975).

Diffuse support, on the other hand, refers precisely to the political framework, the institutions, positions and decision-making processes that are then occupied by specific actors and policies. It is therefore much more fundamental than specific support. Diffuse support refers to "evaluations of what an object is or represents—to the general meaning it has for a person—not of what it does." (Easton 1975, 444) So it describes an abstract evaluation of the political system as such, independently of which actor currently occupies a position or of what policies are currently produced by the political system (Norris 2017). Consequently, it is much more difficult to change diffuse support through the outcomes of the political system, which in turn makes diffuse support more stable and less fluctuating over time (Easton 1975). A negative evaluation of diffuse support is hence much more consequential for the political system than a negative evaluation of specific support: Since diffuse support evaluates the regime as such, a lack of support could be interpreted as illegitimacy of political institutions and lead to instability or even the complete collapse of a political system (Easton 1975; Norris 2017). However, in the long run, a regime cannot survive with a lack of either specific or diffuse political support.

Table 1. Political support.

	Level	Object
most specific – most diffuse	**Political community**	National identities (feelings of patriotism and national pride)
	Regime	
	Regime values and principles	Approval of core regime principles and values (support for democratic ideals, rejection of autocratic principles)
	Regime norms	Evaluation of regime performance (satisfaction with the democratic performance of governments, evaluations of decision-making processes and policies)
	Regime structure	Confidence in regime institutions (Trust in the legislature, executive, judiciary, security forces, central, state and local governments)
	Political authorities	Approval of incumbent office holders (evaluations of the honesty, probity and responsiveness of politicians, approval of particular presidents and prime ministers, party leaders, elected representatives, civil servants)

Source: own depiction, based on Dalton (2004), Easton (1965b; 1975) and Norris (2017, 24).

Easton (1965b) distinguishes between three levels of objects political support can refer to: political authorities, the regime as well as the political community. Norris (2017) orders these three levels in

the sense of specific and diffuse support into a continuum (see Table 1).[9] Starting with specific support, Norris (2017) describes *political authorities* as the most specific object. It simply describes all political actors currently holding office and occupying a political position and is for example measured through approval of particular politicians (Dalton 2004; Easton 1965b; 1975; Norris 2017). With regard to the second object, the regime, Easton (1965b) distinguishes between regime structure, regime norms, and regime values and principles. *Regime structure* is the most specific of the three and refers to the orientation towards political institutions such as the parliament, political parties or the legislature, independently of which actors are currently occupying said positions (Dalton 2004; Easton 1965b; 1975; Norris 2017). It can for example be measured through political trust in said institutions (Dalton 2004; Easton 1965b; 1975; Norris 2017). Next, political support for *regime norms* describes the satisfaction with the rules of the game, i.e. the satisfaction with the concrete organisation of the political system and its performance such as the opportunities for citizens to participate. It can for example be measured through satisfaction with the government's democratic performance (Dalton 2004; Easton 1965b; 1975; Norris 2017). Third, support for *regime values and principles* evaluates the most diffuse form of regime support, namely the approval of the core ideas a political system operates under, e.g. whether it is organised democratically or autocratically. Hence, it can be measured through support for different regime types such as democratic or autocratic principles (Dalton 2004; Easton 1965b; 1975; Norris 2017). Lastly, the most diffuse measure of political support is support for the *political community*, which is even more diffuse than support for the regime and its authorities. It describes support for the political community as a nation in the sense of the people who come together in it and see themselves as the population of one united nation. So this is not yet about the organisation of the political system, but about the community of people who come together in a political system (Dalton 2004; Easton 1965b; 1975; Norris 2017).

Since a lack of specific political support does not have the same consequences as a lack of diffuse political support, it is important to empirically analyse different objects. In my dissertation, I specifically analyse the preference for democracies or autocracies as a measure of diffuse support (regime values and principles) (Zumbrunn and Freitag 2023) and political trust as a measure of specific support (regime structure) (Zumbrunn 2024a). This means that I am not analysing the most specific and most diffuse form of political support, but I can still cover part of the spectrum. In the following, I will theoretically and empirically link political support with place of residence as

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[9] Dalton (2004) contradicts this view. He claims that the object of political support and the type of orientation (what Easton (1975) calls specific or diffuse support) are two independent dimensions and that all objects of political support can be evaluated either with regard to specific or diffuse support. However, in this dissertation, to avoid additional complexity and since I only examine two operationalisations of political support, I follow the understanding by Norris (2017).

a social identity. For the sake of simplicity, I will treat political support as a homogeneous concept, as I do expect the same outcomes of place-based identity and resentment on specific as on diffuse political support. However, even though I ultimately expect the same outcomes, this does not mean that the mechanisms of effect sizes cannot vary depending on the object of support.

1.3.2 Linking the rural-suburban-urban divide and political support

In my dissertation, I interlink place of living, place-based identity, place-based resentment and political support in an encompassing model, which is split into three parts that are tested separately in the three papers. I will now first discuss the entire model, before turning to the papers and the submodels that are tested in them.

Empirically, there is a number of studies pointing to a rural-suburban-urban divide in political support. Starting with the most specific level, i.e. support for political *authorities*, it could be assumed that this specific notion of political support is highly dependent on the political authority under investigation. While studies from the U.S. for example show a higher level of political support for Donald Trump among the rural population (Scala and Johnson 2017; Lunz Trujillo and Crowley 2022), on a more general level, Mitsch, Lee, and Ralph Morrow (2021) as well as Stein, Buck, and Bjørnå (2021) show that rural residents are generally less trusting towards politicians than their urban counterparts. With regard to the *regime structure*, a number of studies show that rural residents generally exhibit lower levels of political trust with regard to political institutions such as the government, parliament or judiciary (Hegewald 2023; Kenny and Luca 2021; McKay, Jennings, and Stoker 2021; Mitsch, Lee, and Ralph Morrow 2021; Schoene 2019; Stein, Buck, and Bjørnå 2021)— this is true for studies encompassing many European countries as well as for studies of single country cases. However, Hegewald (2023) specifies that this lower level of political trust is only true at the national level and that ruralites shift their political trust from national to local institutions; Mitsch, Lee, and Ralph Morrow (2021) show that their findings are mainly driven by Southern Europe; and Stein, Buck, and Bjørnå (2021) claim that the rural-urban difference in political trust is rather small. When it comes to more diffuse levels of regime support, namely *regime norms*, Lago (2022) shows a lower level of satisfaction in democracy among European ruralites than among European urbanites. Kenny and Luca (2021) come to the same finding, namely that European ruralites show stronger levels of political dissatisfaction than urbanites. As there are no studies I know of that investigate the rural-suburban-urban divide with regard to *regime values and principles*, I lastly turn to the most diffuse level of political support: the *political community*. There is only a small number of studies linking it to place of living. Goodhart (2016) however claims that ruralites are *Somewheres*, connected to a specific place, while urbanites are *Anywheres*, more cosmopolitan and not associated with specific places. This would imply a stronger national identity among ruralites.

Similarly, Hegewald and Schraff (2022) find that place-based affect increases the likelihood for electing nationalist parties in rural respondents, but the opposite is true for urbanites. Despite certain inconsistencies in the direction of the effect from specific to diffuse political support, a general link with the place of living can be expected. This is why in the model in Figure 1, arrow 1 generally connects place of living to political support.

To explain this rural-suburban-urban divide in political support, I use place-based resentment as a mediating variable. In his study on anti-immigration and populist attitudes, Huijsmans (2023a) already points out that place-based resentment can explain geographic differences. Specifically, all three dimensions of place-based resentment can serve to explain rural-suburban-urban divides. With regard to *political* resentment, it can be argued that rural and suburban areas are more remote from the city centres, where political institutions and administration are typically located. Additionally, although there are mechanisms in many countries that give rural areas more political weight, the rural population still feels politically underrepresented (Borwein and Lucas 2023; García Del Horno, Rico, and Hernández 2023; Hermann, John, and Wenger 2023; Munis 2022). This feeling of being overheard might then translate into lower levels of political support with the political system, as it is this system that does not give rural and suburban places enough political say. An empirical analysis by Mitsch, Lee, and Ralph Morrow (2021) shows that perceptions that public services are less effective outside of urban areas decrease political trust. When it comes to *economic* resentment, it can be argued that ruralites and suburbanites feel as if their places are last in line when it comes to the distribution of economic resources and that they are being treated unfairly with regard to public spending (Borwein and Lucas 2023; Munis 2022). In turn, this might lead ruralites and suburbanites to withdraw political support, since they might feel systematically forgotten and attribute this to be the political system's fault. Empirically, McKay, Jennings, and Stoker (2021) and Mitsch, Lee, and Ralph Morrow (2021) indeed find that perceived economic deprivation and divergent economic experiences in different places explain the rural-urban divide in political support. And, finally, with regard to *cultural* resentment, ruralites and suburbanites might feel that they diverge culturally from big cities, which become ever more cosmopolitan and liberal (Borwein and Lucas 2023; Huijsmans et al. 2021; Munis 2021). They may feel as if the political system does not give enough importance to their values and lifestyle, but promotes globalisation and cosmopolitanism, both concepts that are more in line with urban interests and values (Mantegazzi 2021). In turn, this would lead resentful ruralites and suburbanites to withdraw political support. In line with this hypothesis, McKay, Jennings, and Stoker (2021) find that ruralites lack political trust because they feel socially marginalized, and Mitsch, Lee, and Ralph Morrow (2021) find that the rural-urban divide in political trust can partly be attributed to differences in values. To summarise, political, economic and cultural resentment can be expected to mediate the

rural-suburban-urban divide in political support, which is shown by arrows 2 and 3 in the model in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Model investigated in this dissertation.
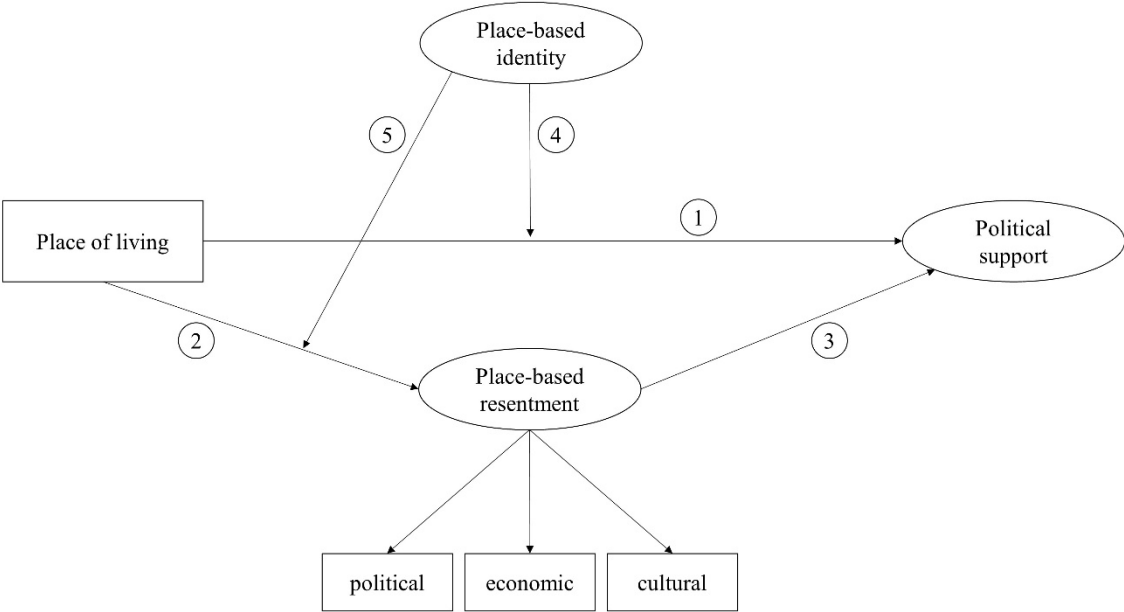
Lastly, the model focuses on moderating capacities of place-based identity. In his study of the role of candidate roots, Munis (2021) already explores moderating capacities of place-based identity and finds that people with a strong place-based identity are most sensitive to a candidate's geographic cues. This finding is in line with social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 1979) and its second hypothesis claiming that the social identity needs to be relevant or salient, i.e. identification with it needs to be strong, for it to impact a person's attitudes and behaviour. Therefore, any rural-suburban-urban divides in political support might only appear for people with a high level of place-based identity. If place of living is not a relevant social identity, it should not influence political support and people should define their level of political support through other variables. If, on the other hand, place of residence is an important social identity, the mechanisms described above can really take effect and a possible rural-suburban-urban divide opens up. Hence, I expect place-based identity to moderate the relationship between place of living and political support, as visualized by arrow 4 in the model in Figure 1. Second, this moderating effect should not only be true with regard to political support as a dependent variable, but also when it comes to place-based resentment. According to social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 1979), identification is a pre-condition for comparing one's in-group with out-groups and developing potential resentment. Hence, to account for this condition and due to my understanding of place of living as a social

identity, arrow 5 in the model in Figure 1 indicates a moderating effect of place-based identity on the relationship between place of living and place-based resentment. The expectation here is that ruralites' and suburbanites'—typically seen as the inferior place-based groups (Lunz Trujillo and Crowley 2022; Wuthnow 2018)—place-based resentment is influenced differently through place-based identity and that they exhibit higher levels of place-based resentment. This should however only be true if place of living is an important social identity for a person, i.e. when their place-based identity is high. Hence, I would only expect a rural-suburban-urban divide in place-based resentment to open up for people with a high level of place-based identity.

The three articles in my dissertation all test one part of this model, so that the three articles together form a holistic overview of the relationship between place of living as a social identity and political support. The first article establishes place of living as a social identity by connecting it to place-based identity and resentment (Zumbrunn 2024b). The second article studies the relationship of place of living and political support and simultaneously scrutinizes the moderating role of place-based identity (Zumbrunn 2024a). Finally, the third article investigates the mediating capacities of place-based resentment in explaining the relationship between place of living and political support (Zumbrunn and Freitag 2023). Below, all three articles and which part of the model they test is briefly summarised.

1.4 Summary of the three articles

1.4.1 Country bumpkin or city slicker? The role of place of living and place-based identity in explaining place-based resentment

The goal of the first article is to first address place of living as a social identity and answer the question: *How do place of living and place-based identity interact to shape place-based resentment?* The paper applies social identity theory to place of living and consequently expects a moderating effect of place-based identity on the relationship between place of living and place-based resentment. It employs data on around 4,000 respondents from Switzerland from 2022, collected in the context of the RUDE project. Place of living is measured through respondents' self-categorization, whereby the response categories were re-coded to yield a rural, a suburban and an urban group. Place-based identity and resentment are measured through sixteen original survey items developed in the RUDE project. Results of the paper indicate that rural residents hold the highest level of both, place-based identity and place-based resentment, and that suburban residents hold higher levels of place-based resentment than urbanites do. With regard to the moderating capacity of place-based identity, results show that the rural-urban divide in place-based resentment increases with increasing place-based identity, while the suburban-urban divide in place-based resentment decreases with increasing place-based identity. Hence, this paper is not only the baseline for this

dissertation by showing that place of living can indeed be viewed through the lens of social identity theory, but it also warrants the other two papers by claiming that the differences in place-based identity and place-based resentment could explain the rural-suburban-urban divide with regard to political attitudes and behaviour.

Figure 2: Model of the first paper.
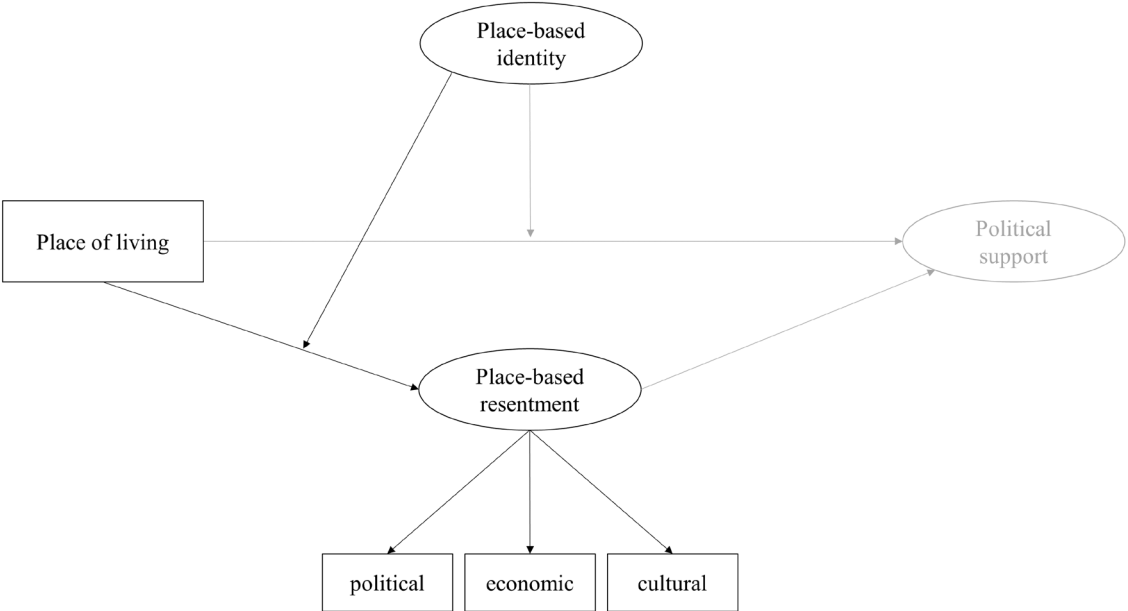
Source: own depiction.

1.4.2 Confidence across cleavage: the Swiss rural-urban divide, place-based identity and political trust

The second paper establishes a first link between place of living and political support by investigating the Swiss rural-suburban-urban divide in political trust. Additionally, it scrutinizes the moderating role of place-based identity. I test the relationships using the same RUDE data set as the first paper, this time with about 4,000 usable observations of Swiss residents. In this paper, I measure place of living with respect to four categories in which respondents could self-place: big cities, small cities, the suburbs and the countryside.[10] Political trust is measured through trust in the government, parliament, politicians and the judiciary. Place-based identity is once again operationalized through the six original survey items from the RUDE project. First, I descriptively find small differences in political trust, which could indicate that the rural-suburban-urban divide does not pose a threat to Swiss democracy. Second, I once again find a moderating role of place-

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[10] Since this paper does not make use of place-based resentment (for which the out-groups are coded as *rural*, *suburban* and *urban*) I decided to make use of the distinction between big and small cities in the urban in-group. See footnote 4 for why this distinction is interesting to investigate.

24

based identity: For residents with a high level of place-based identity, rural residents are the most distrusting ones, while more urban residents exhibit higher levels of political trust. For residents with a low level of place-based identity, however, there is the inverted relationship with rural residents being the most trusting ones and more urban residents exhibiting lower levels of political trust. Hence, I actually find two rural-suburban-urban divides with regard to political trust that depend on place-based identity. Since the expected rural-suburban-urban divide only appears in respondents with a high place-based identity and these identities are in turn exploited by the media and politics, this finding might give reason to worry.

Figure 3. Model of the second paper.
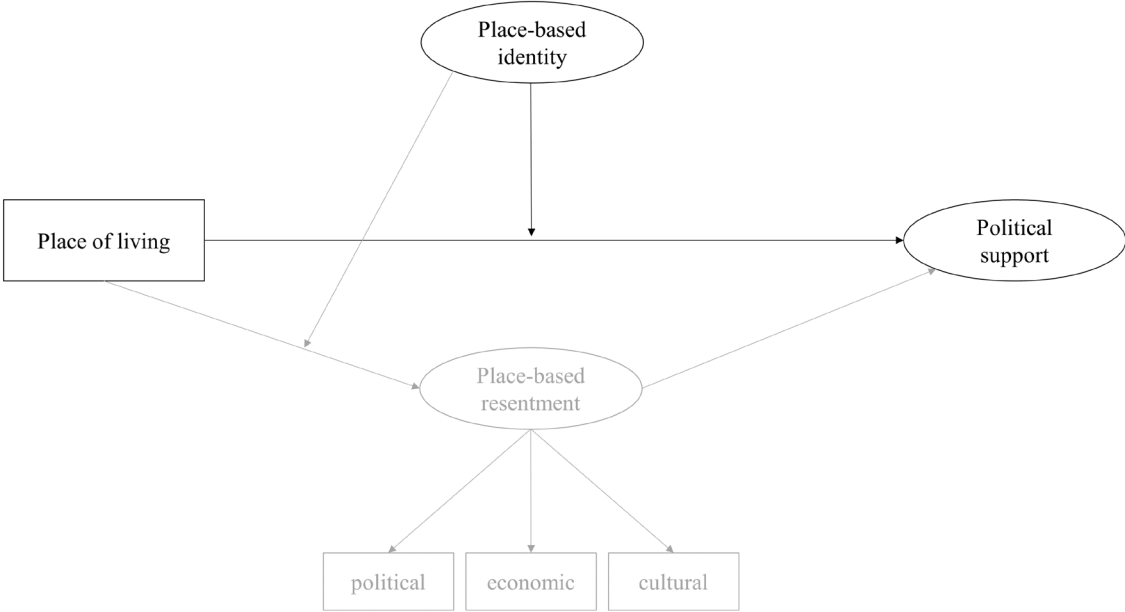
Source: own depiction.

1.4.3 The geography of autocracy. Regime preferences along the rural-urban divide in 32 countries (co-authored with Markus Freitag)

The third paper finally establishes a link between place of living, place-based resentment and more diffuse political support: It investigates regime preference, i.e. support for democracy and its authoritarian alternatives, in 32 European countries,[11] scrutinizing the mediating capacity of socio-economic, cultural and political factors. The paper uses data from the European Values Survey from 2017 to 2020 with over 30,000 respondents. It measures place of living continuously through

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[11] The countries under investigation are Albania, Azerbaijan, Austria, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Belarus, Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Lithuania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland.

the number of inhabitants. [12] For regime support, I form an index from the rating of three ways of governing, one of them being democratic and two authoritarian. Resentment is measured through socio-economic factors (education, income, dependency on social security), values (ethnic concept of nationhood, authoritarianism and a moral values index) and political factors (satisfaction with the functioning of the political system, trust in parliament and trust in the government).[13] Results indicate that rural residents are more supportive of authoritarian regimes than more urban dwellers are. Second, the path analyses show that economic and cultural resentment are equally powerful in explaining said differences—together they explain about 70 percent of the rural-urban divide in regime preference—while political resentment has basically no explanatory power. Hence, the rural-suburban-urban divide in political support is not only an economic, but also a cultural one.

Figure 4. Model of the third paper.
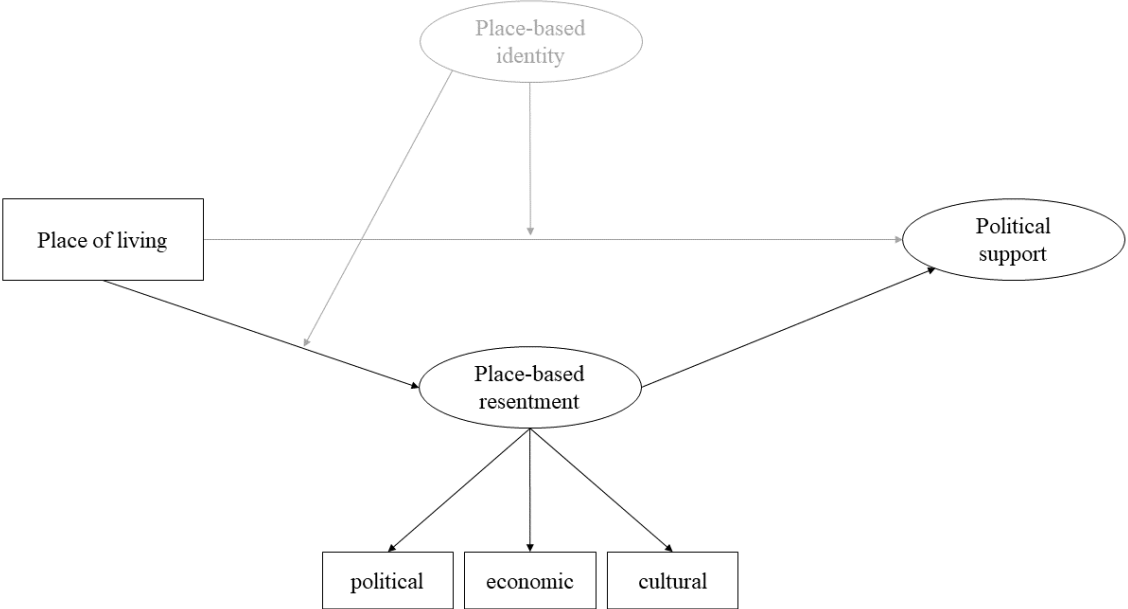
Source: own depiction.

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[12] See footnote 4 for a brief discussion of this operationalization.

[13] This is not an optimal measure of place-based resentment, as resentment is typically measured at the group level, while these variables are measured at the individual level. However, these were the only variables available in the data set and they form a useful proxy for place-based resentment.

2. Article 1: Country Bumpkin or City Slicker? The Role of Place of Living and Place-Based Identity in Explaining Place-Based Resentment

Abstract

In recent years, the rural-urban divide has not only made its way back into political science, but has also been given an entirely new angle by investigating place of living as its own social identity. However, research is still in its early stages and studies so far focus on linear explanations of place-based resentment. This paper studies place in the light of social identity theory and investigates how place of living and place-based identity interact in shaping place-based resentment. Original survey data on around 4,000 respondents from Switzerland from 2022 with a novel measure of place-based identity and resentment is used. A distinction is made not only between rural and urban residents, but also between the suburbanites. Results show that rural residents hold the highest levels of identity and resentment, while suburban residents hold higher levels of resentment than urban ones do. Findings show that there is a moderating effect, whereby the rural-urban divide in resentment increases with place-based identity, while the suburban-urban gap diminishes with increasing place-based identity. These differences in place-based identity and resentment could explain the rural-urban divide in political attitudes and behavior.

Keywords: rural-urban divide, place-based identity, place-based resentment, social identity theory, suburban areas

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[14] I have adapted the citation style so that it is consistent with the rest of the dissertation and I have updated the specified years of publications where applicable. The enumeration of the footnotes continues throughout the entire dissertation.I have not made any changes with regard to the content of the article.

Introduction

The rural-urban divide has become a salient and much researched topic in recent years—for example, during the economic protests of the yellow vest movement in France (Brookes and Cappellina 2023; Lem 2020), the British withdrawal from the European Union (Brexit) (Brooks 2020; Jennings and Stoker 2016; 2019; Lee, Morris, and Kemeny 2018; Neal et al. 2021) or the American presidential elections (Jacobs and Munis 2022; Monnat and Brown 2017; Munis 2021; Scala and Johnson 2016; 2017), but also with regard to Euroscepticism, political trust or democratic support (McKay, Jennings, and Stoker 2021; Mitsch, Lee, and Ralph Morrow 2021; Schoene 2019; Zumbrunn and Freitag 2023). They all find a ruralurban divide with ruralites being more likely to protest, to vote in favor of Brexit, the Republicans, being more Eurosceptic, less trusting and less supportive of democracy than urbanites are. The roots of this divide are said to lie in place-based resentment, which describes the feeling that one's area is being disadvantaged compared to other areas. Residents holding place-based resentment feel as if their area is ignored by the political elite, not receiving its fair share of resources and not being respected by the inhabitants of other areas (Cramer 2016; Huijsmans 2023b; Munis 2022). In this sense, place of living can be viewed as a social identity (Tajfel and Turner 2004). Recent studies by Munis (2022), Huijsmans (2023b), and Borwein and Lucas (2023) address the concept of place-based resentment by exploring its determinants and effects. Huijsmans (2023b) investigates the macro-level in the Netherlands and finds that place-based resentment is related to the level of local unemployment, the share of knowledge economy, the linguistic distance to Standard Dutch and physical proximity of national MPs. Munis (2022) investigates determinants at the micro-level for the US and finds age, gender, urbanity, ethnicity, racial resentment and, finally, place-based identity to influence place-based resentment. Additionally, he remarks that the effects of these variables are not equally strong when investigating rural and urban resentment separately. Finally, Borwein and Lucas (2023) measure place-based resentment in urban, suburban and rural areas of Canada. They find that resentment is correlated with age, education, income, attitudes, and democratic satisfaction. Despite this argument, no study to date investigates the interaction between place of living and place-based identity in shaping place-based resentment.

Drawing back on these findings and social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 2004), I argue that place of living is one of many possible social identities a person can hold. Consequently, place should only matter when identification with it is high, which means that place-based identity should function as a mediator for the rural-urban divide in place-based resentment. I therefore not only investigate the linear effects of place of living and place-based identity on place-based resentment, but interact the two variables with one another, thereby investigating the following research question.

How do place of living and place-based identity interact to shape place-based resentment?

I answer this question by investigating original survey data from 2022 from over 4,500 Swiss residents. Switzerland is well suited as a case for this research in many respects: First, the Swiss rural-urban divide has been relatively pronounced, especially in recent years, and regularly attracts media and academic attention due to its manifestation in the quarterly direct-democratic votes (Hermann, Bühler, and Wenger 2021). The topic of the rural-urban divide is even addressed by the largest party, the Swiss people's party (Schweizerische Volkspartei 2021), which might in turn encourage the emergence of place-based resentment. Second, Switzerland is an especially federal country and federalism encourages place-based identities to emerge (Jacobs and Munis 2020; Lunz Trujillo 2022). Therefore, Switzerland is a very likely case to find place-based identity and resentment, which makes Switzerland an interesting case to study. Third, the rural-urban divide is not only a dichotomy, but a continuum between rural and urban places and it is important to also investigate the role of the places in between the two poles. While more and more people live in suburban areas, they are a largely understudies place of living (Brookes and Cappellina 2023; Scala and Johnson 2017; Ströbele 2017). In Switzerland, about half of the population lives in suburban areas that classify neither as completely urban nor as entirely rural (Hermann, Bühler, and Wenger 2021) and these suburbs form a relevant group for place-based identities, as they serve as a reference for people living there (Scheuss 2013). This renders Switzerland an optimal case to investigate the places *in between* the rural and the urban pole and to expand research on the rural-urban divide. All these reasons make Switzerland an interesting and appropriate case to study place as a social identity.

This paper contributes to current research and the societal debate on the rural-urban divide in four ways. First, it contributes to the current literature by adding to the explanation of place-based resentment. Investigating the roots of place-based resentment is very important, as resentment has been shown to influence vote choice, support for Trump, populist, anti-immigration attitudes, and democratic satisfaction (Borwein and Lucas 2023; Huijsmans 2023a; Jacobs and Munis 2022; Lunz Trujillo and Crowley 2022). Hence, how place-based resentment is formed might also be interesting to know for policymakers and political strategies. Second, I add to the quantitative operationalization of Cramer's idea of *place-based resentment*.[15] So far, only a few studies tried to quantitatively operationalize place-based identity and resentment (Borwein and Lucas 2023; Munis 2022). In this study, I employ an original data set with original measures of place-based identity

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[15] Cramer originally only investigates rural consciousness, but recent research extended the concept of rural consciousness to a more general notion of place-based consciousness, as urban and suburban dwellers are just as well able to experience place-based identity and place-based resentment (Jacobs and Munis 2022; Munis 2022; Parker et al. 2018).

and resentment, drawing on the scale developed by Munis (2022). The items also allow me to divide place-based resentment into its original political, economic, and cultural component (Cramer 2016). As not all three dimensions of place-based resentment have the same effects (Zumbrunn and Freitag 2023), they need to be studied separately. Third, I follow the call for more investigations of place-based resentment outside Wisconsin and the US context (Munis 2022). Fourth, this study responds to the request of exploring resentment beyond the rural context (Munis 2022) and is especially able to investigate suburban residents, as these are often forgotten when investigating place of living (Lyons and Utych 2021). My novel data set includes data on residents of suburban areas and is thus able to close this gap in rural-urban research.

Theoretical considerations

Place of living as a social identity

When people act and interact with each other, they do so not only as individuals but also as members of social groups, into which they categorize themselves and others (Huddy 2001, 132). Social groups can be defined as "a collection of individuals who perceive themselves to be members of the same social category, share some emotional involvement in this common definition of themselves, and achieve some degree of social consensus about the evaluation of their group and of their membership in it." (Tajfel and Turner 2004, 283) This means that social groups provide individuals with heuristics on how to think about and interact with one another as well as prescriptions on beliefs and behavior, and people can draw their self-esteem from their memberships in social groups (Borwein and Lucas 2021; Hogg 2016; Huddy 2001; Tajfel and Turner 2004). Thus, a social identity is more than a simple membership in a group and generally encompasses three components: 1) categorizing one's self into a social group; 2) internalizing this categorization and identifying with the group; 3) evaluating one's membership in the group (Hogg 2016; Tajfel 1972; Tajfel and Turner 2004). A social identity might, for example, be one's gender, occupation, ethnicity, or place of living (Borwein and Lucas 2021; Stedman 2002).

The first element of a social identity is that individuals must *categorize* themselves as a member of the in-group. This means that one's own attribution to a social category does not need to be objective, but that the subjective categorization into groups matters more. Identities can mean something different for each person individually, because it is the meaning of the identities that ultimately influences attitudes and behavior (Huddy 2001; Lunz Trujillo and Crowley 2022). Second, individuals need to *identify* with their in-group. They "must have internalized their group membership as an aspect of their self-concept: they must be subjectively identified with the relevant ingroup." (Tajfel and Turner 2004, 284) Thus, their level of subjective identification with the relevant in-group matters. In their life, every person belongs to a variety of social groups and

consequently also carries different identities, which can be differently pronounced. For an identity to influence attitudes and behavior, it needs to be salient for the individual. Identification can in this sense be seen as a precondition for developing out-group antagonism (Tajfel and Turner 2004).[16] Third, self-categorization into and identification with an in-group will lead to *comparison* with the relevant out-group and might result in out-group hostility. In social identity theory, self-esteem from social identities is acquired by evaluating one's group membership in a—hopefully favorable—comparison with relevant out-groups. Typically, social groups are unequally equipped with scarce resources, that is, power, financial means or prestige (Tajfel and Turner 2004), which leads them to compete for these resources. As resources are distributed unequally, groups are typically not symmetrical, but some groups are usually overprivileged or *superior*, while other groups are underprivileged or *inferior*. When the in-group is inferior and has a low social status, comparison with out-groups leads to low prestige and a low self-esteem (Huddy 2001; Tajfel and Turner 2004; Lunz Trujillo and Crowley 2022). Such unsatisfactory social identities might lead members of the in-group to feel out-group antagonism and produce social conflict (Tajfel and Turner 2004). This will happen especially in situations where group membership is difficult to change and when the in-group is compared to the most superior out-group (Tajfel and Turner 2004). The need for positive distinctiveness of one's in-group from the relevant out-groups can also translate into the political sphere: While higher status groups usually want to defend their superior position in society, groups of lower social status try to change their negative evaluation, for example, through an attempt to increase the group's image, which might lead to social conflict and social change (Hogg 2016; Huddy 2001).

Along the course of their lives, people take on many different roles and are members of many different social groups, with which they identify and which lead to antagonism against the relevant out-groups. Social attributes such as gender or class are usually quite salient identities, but also the place of living can form a strong social identity (Borwein and Lucas 2021; Stedman 2002). Interaction with one's place of living leads to a place attachment through which individuals define themselves, and who they are becomes interlinked with where they are (Munis 2021; Stedman 2002). Place of living fulfills a number of different functions: It is a physical space with a certain landscape, there are a number of spatial settings and local services, but a place encompasses also human activities and interactions with the local community and, lastly, even psychological

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[16] Even though identification with the in-group is usually mentioned as a relevant precondition for group comparison and out-group antagonism, experiments have shown that even minimal and arbitrary group affiliation is sufficient in producing in-group bias and out-group hostility (Tajfel and Turner 2004; Lunz Trujillo and Crowley 2022).

processes such as shared feelings, memories, attitudes, and values (Cain 2020; Daneri, Krasny, and Stedman 2021; Schulte-Cloos and Bauer 2023; Stedman 2002).

<u>Place-based identity and place-based resentment</u>

While geographical place has long been at the center of interest in other disciplines, it has been largely overlooked in political science research until recently (Borwein and Lucas 2021). Some years ago and thanks in part to Katherine Cramer's book on rural consciousness, place of living has returned as a subject of political research. Cramer describes rural consciousness as follows:

> "I learned, as a city girl, that many rural residents have a perspective I am going to call 'rural consciousness'. To folks who grew up in rural areas, a fancy social science name like that probably seems unnecessary. But it is my shorthand for referring to this: an identity as a rural person that includes much more than an attachment to place. It includes a sense that decision makers routinely ignore rural places and fail to give rural communities their fair share of resources, as well as a sense that rural folks are fundamentally different from urbanites in terms of lifestyles, values, and work ethic. Rural consciousness signals an identification with rural people and rural places and denotes a multifaceted resentment against cities." (Cramer 2016, 5–6)

Cramer refers to two components of the concept of rural consciousness: rural identity and rural resentment. *Rural identity* encompasses the first two elements of a social identity: It means self-categorization into a social group, that is, feeling as being a member of the rural population, and identification with one's in-group, that is, identifying as rural resident. However, identity is not inherently rural (Jacobs and Munis 2022; Munis 2022; Parker et al. 2018) and place has the potential to become a strong identifier for people living in any area (Daneri, Krasny, and Stedman 2021; Lunz Trujillo 2022).

Rural resentment then encompasses the third element of a social identity: Out-group hostility and the feeling of being disadvantaged compared to the other group, which result from comparison between the in- and the out-group. As in the case of identity, resentment is not inherently rural, as urban residents might scapegoat the out-group of ruralites in order to maintain their positive distinction and their higher social status (Lunz Trujillo 2022). *Place-based* resentment is hence more generally defined as a feeling that one's "area is ignored by political elites, does not get its fair share of available resources, and that its inhabitants' values are disregarded by inhabitants of other areas" (Huijsmans 2023b, 1). Resentment thus has three dimensions: a *political* component which is about the distribution of power and a feeling that decision makers ignore the interest of one's are; second, an *economic* component which is about the distribution of resources and the notion that one's place

does not get its fair share of resources; third, a *cultural* component which is about the distribution of respect and the feeling that the residents of one's place do not get respected for their lifestyle and values.[17]

However, place-based identity and place-based resentment do not operate independently of one another. Instead, place-based identity can be viewed as a prerequisite for developing place-based resentment, as resentment can only really be felt when place of living is a salient identity in the first place (Cramer 2016; Tajfel and Turner 2004). "Place resentment emerges when place identity rise to the level of group consciousness due to a sense that their status in society as members of a symbolic geographical community has been unjustly and deliberately diminished by those wielding the levers of power." (Munis 2022, 1060)

The role of the suburbs

In their analysis of the rural-urban divide in the U.S. presidential elections, Scala and Johnson (2017) proclaim that the rural-urban divide cannot be simply viewed as a dichotomy between completely urban and completely rural areas. Instead, they claim that the rural-urban divide is more of a continuum and that places in between the rural and the urban pole—that is, the suburbs—are just as important as the poles themselves, especially since more and more people live in suburban areas (Scala and Johnson 2017). As suburbs are typically the places that decide votes and elections, Lyons and Utych (2021) underline the relevance of the investigation of suburban places in order to fully grasp the rural-urban divide.

But suburbs do not only matter as a third in-group. According to social identity theory, out-groups are either relevant through their proximity or through their situational salience (Tajfel and Turner 2004, 284). While rural respectively, urban places might be the more salient groups to compare themselves with, suburbs lie in between the two poles and are thus spatially but also in terms of attitudes and values closer to members of the other two groups: not only are suburbs defined to be located around cities, separating cities from the countryside, but their inhabitants are also a mix of urban lifestyle and rural values. Thus, while suburbs might not be the out-group with the highest situational salience, they are definitely the more proximate out-group. Therefore, the investigation of suburbs opens up the possibility for a more refined understanding of place-based resentment: As some research suggests, urbanites might not view ruralites but rather suburbanites as their main out-group (Borwein and Lucas 2023; Lyons and Utych 2021). While political scientists

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[17] While some literature claims that place-based resentment actually is a unidimensional construct (Munis 2022), other studies suggest that political, economic and cultural resentment do not have the same effects and should therefore be studies separately (Zumbrunn and Freitag 2023). Our factor analysis also reveals three separate dimensions of place-based resentment. To understand the concept in its entirety, the three dimensions will be investigated separately.

are starting to recognize the relevance of places in between the two poles, they rarely find their way into empirical analyses (Lyons and Utych 2021). In order to contribute a first step to the investigation of suburbs and to gain a broader picture of place-based resentment, suburbs will be included in the empirical analyses below.

Hypotheses

Combining the work of Cramer (2016) and social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 2004), I formulate my expectations for my analyses. Starting with the relationship between place of living and place-based identity, rural residents are typically said to feel more attached to their place of living than urban residents do, that is, having a higher level of place-based identity (Cramer 2016; Jacobs and Munis 2019; 2020; 2022; Lyons and Utych 2021). This is because rural residents are less mobile than urban ones in the sense that they move less often and are less likely to commute, which makes them more bound to their place of living. They are thus called *Somewheres* who feel a stronger place-based identity, while urban residents have more cosmopolitan attitudes, a higher likelihood of moving and commuting and feel thus less attachment to their place of living. This is why they are also called *Anywheres* (Goodhart 2016). My first hypothesis is therefore:

H1. Place-based identity is higher for rural residents than for urban residents.

Regarding suburban residents, there is theoretical reason and empirical evidence to assume that they are just as much motivated by place-based considerations and that they identify with their place of living (Jacobs and Munis 2022). Historically, the suburbs were built because living space in the cities became too scarce for the many workers working in the urban centers. Increased mobility due to the railway and car meant that workers could live in the suburbs outside of the cities but commute into the urban centers every day to work (Kübler 2022). This lead to a role of the suburbs as *bedroom* communities where residents only stay to sleep, while going to the city or countryside for their leisure and work (Frasure-Yokley and Wilcox-Archuleta 2019). Commuting and the connectivity to city centers nearby could however decrease place-based identity of suburban residents, as they spend less time in their places of living and might be more likely to identify with the city they commute to and spend much time in than with their actual place of living. This is why my second expectation is:

H2. Place-based identity is lower for suburban residents than for urban residents.

Next, turning to the relationship between place of living and place-based resentment, rural residents are usually claimed to feel a higher level of place-based resentment than their urban counterparts do, which is also why Cramer focuses in her book solely on rural resentment (Cramer 2016; Jacobs and Munis 2022). As the rural group is usually seen as the inferior or *left-behind* one

(Wuthnow 2018), their comparison with the relevant out-groups will probably yield unsatisfactory results and low levels of self-esteem. Therefore, it is more likely that rural residents react to the comparison of their in-group with the urban out-group with outgroup antagonism and resentment than urban residents do. This is in line with the finding by Munis (2022) whose analyses reveal higher levels of place-based resentment in rural Americans, as well as with the finding by Borwein and Lucas (2023) who find that ruralites experience the highest level of place-based resentment. Thus, my next hypothesis is:

H3. Place-based resentment is higher for rural residents than for urban residents.

With regard to the suburbs, their residents live close to urban centers and often commute to urban centers. The cities typically have better service provision, for example, with regard to public transport, health care, or leisure activities. Therefore, suburbanites might get the feeling that suburban areas are underprivileged compared to cities, as they view less resources being invested in suburban than in urban areas, and cities being the political and cultural centers of society (Munis 2022). This expectation is in line with the finding by Munis (2022) that suburban residents are more resentful than residents of cities, and leads me to the following hypothesis:

H4. Place-based resentment is higher for suburban residents than for urban residents.

Lastly, according to social identity theory, social conflict only becomes relevant when group members become conscious of their membership (Lunz Trujillo and Crowley 2022). Thus, place-based identity could be seen as a moderator and the rural-urban divide in place-based resentment should only emerge for citizens who identify with their place of living. Identity researchers typically claim that the effects of group membership depend on the strength of the identity and that out-group derogation depends on how salient group identity is (Huddy 2001). In accordance with this theory, similar effects have previously been found in other identity research: For example, in social psychology, Wilson and Liu (2003) found that the relationship between gender and social dominance orientation is moderated by gender identification. There is only a gender difference in social dominance orientation for those respondents high in gender identification. Similarly, Ellison et al. (2013) showed in their paper on the psychology of religion that the effect of spiritual struggles on mental health depends on religious identity. For people who identify as highly religious the impact of spiritual struggles on their mental health is stronger than for people with a low religious identity. As these examples show, place-based identity has the ability to influence people's attitudes and behaviour when it comes to gender and religion. Therefore, place-based identity could also be understood as a moderator for the relationship between place of living and place-based resentment: A potential rural-urban divide in place-based resentment should only appear in the subgroup of people with a high level of place-based identity. I expect that place of living has a stronger influence

on place-based resentment when place-based identity is high and that this is especially true for rural residents who are part of the inferior social group. Since the evaluation of group membership that takes places when place-based identity is high is more likely to yield unsatisfactory results for rural than for urban residents, they are more likely to develop resentment when place-based identity is high (Tajfel and Turner 2004). Thus, my last hypothesis is:

H5. Place-based identity moderates the relationship between place of living and place-based resentment.

Data, variables, and method

<u>Dataset and operationalization</u>

I employ data from an original data set with 3,929 Swiss residents, collected in September 2022 via the survey company Intervista (2022) in their opt-in online panel.[18] The sample is representative of the Swiss population with regard to age and linguistic region from the German-, French-, and Italian-speaking part of Switzerland with equally sized groups of urban, suburban, and rural residents.[19] Place of living was operationalized using a question on self-categorization into one of five urbanity categories: a city with more than 50,000 inhabitants, a city with less than 50,000 inhabitants, the suburbs, a country village, a farm or home in the countryside. The first two categories were then collapsed to form the urban in-group and the last two categories were collapsed into the rural in-group. The middle category remained the suburbanites. This simplification of place-based social groups was made to fit the relevant social groups with regard to place of living, that is, urban, suburban, and rural places. This question serves to assess the respondents' self-categorization into their in-group.[20]

In a next step, respondents were asked five original questions about their place-based identity and eleven original questions about their place-based resentment,which rely on a previously developed scale by Munis (2022) and are similar to items used in other studies (Borwein and Lucas 2023). The questions on their place-based identity were adjusted according to the in-group respondents categorized themselves into in the previous question (urban, suburban, rural). The questions asked about the importance of the place-based identity and the connection to other members of this in-group, thus encompassing descriptive and evaluative elements. For example,

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[18] The survey was conducted in the context of the RUDE project, which is part of the NORFACE Joint Research Programme on Democratic Governance in a Turbulent Age.

[19] The quotas on age, linguistic region and place of living were interlocked. However, there were too little people in the category of suburban, French-speaking people below the age of 45. To account for this imbalance, all analyses will be performed with respective weights.

[20] Respondents' self-categorization has its limits, as it might not be in line with an objective typology of their place of living and Swiss residents tend to overestimate their rurality (Hermann, Bühler, and Wenger 2021). Therefore, a robustness check with the objective place of living will be conducted.

respondents were asked whether being a member of their in-group is important to them or whether they feel as if they have similar values to other people in their in-group. The exact wording of the questions can be found in Table A1 in the online appendix. All questions were answered on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Next, to measure place-based resentment, respondents were assigned either of the two remaining groups as an out-group. They then responded to eleven questions on their resentment toward this out-group.[21] There were six questions on the political, two questions on the economic and three questions on the cultural dimension of place-based resentment, which makes it possible to split our analysis into the three components of resentment found by Cramer (2016). For example, respondents were asked whether they believe that politicians do not care about their in-groups or whether people in the respective out-group do not respect their lifestyle. The exact wording of the questions on resentment can be found in Table A1 in the online appendix. These questions were answered on the same scale as before, that is, a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Place-based identity and place-based resentment were then composed through an additive index—that is, the mean—of all questions measuring this construct.[22]

Lastly, in the regression models, I control for the respondents' age (measured in years), their gender (categorically; male, female, or other), their level of education (categorically; primary, secondary, or tertiary education), their political left-right self-placement (from 0 (left) to 10 (right)), whether they grew up in the same category as they live in now (dummy; 1 if their current in-group is the same urbanity category as the place where they mostly lived until they turned 18, 0 otherwise) and the linguistic region in which they live (categorically; German-speaking, French-speaking, or Italian-speaking part of Switzerland).[23] These are the variables Munis (2022) as well as Borwein and Lucas (2023) found to be influential. This is also the reason why in the models explaining place-based resentment, I control for place-based identity. Observations with missing data in any of these variables were excluded from the analysis.

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[21] Respondents never received their own in-group as an outgroup. Urban respondents, for example, either answered the resentment questions on suburban or on rural respondents. For each individual, the out-group did not change between the questions. An additional robustness check will differentiate between resentment towards the two possible out-groups.

[22] Parallel analysis suggested a number of four factors. I then calculated a confirmatory minimum residual factor analysis with oblimin rotation including all questions on place-based identity and place-based resentment (see Table A1 in the online appendix for the results). The analysis rendering four factors reveals that all items on place-based identity, political, economic, and cultural resentment load on one factor, each. This contradicts the findings by Munis (2022) who finds that resentment in his case is a unidimensional construct. Due to the results of my factor analysis and because I do not want to lose any information by combining several dimensions of resentment, I decided to operationalize political, economic, and cultural resentment separately. The result remains the same when conducting the factor analysis separately for the urban, suburban and rural subsample.

[23] Table A3 in the appendix replicates regression results without the left-right self-placement of respondents, as this might remove essential variance this study aims to investigate. Results remain substantially the same.

Method

Methodologically, I will start with some descriptive analyses and ordinary least squares regressions on the relationship between place of living, place-based identity and place-based resentment to evaluate which in-group has the highest level of place-based consciousness and whether it makes a difference which out-group is considered. I will also briefly study the influence of my controls on place-based identity and resentment. Then, I will employ a model with an interaction term between place of living and place-based identity to investigate the moderating capacity of place-based identity. Here, the assumption is that the effect of the independent variable (place of living) on the dependent variable (place-based resentment) is not homogeneous across all sub-groups but depends on the moderating variable (place-based identity). All regression analyses are run using R (R Core Team 2022) and plots are generated with the *ggplot* package.

Results

<u>Place-based identity and place-based resentment across places of living</u>

First off, I will start with some descriptive analyses on place of living, place-based identity, and place-based resentment. Figure 1 displays the boxplots for place-based identity and place-based resentment by self-categorized place of living. Table A2 in the online appendix summarizes the results of the according regression models without any control variables, while Table 1 summarizes the models including my controls.

With regard to *place-based identity*, Figure 1 shows that rural residents exhibit the highest level of place-based identity, while suburban residents have an even lower level of place-based identity than their urban counterparts do. Both effects are statistically significant ($p < .01$ for the rural-urban difference, $p < .05$ for the suburban-urban difference). However, after adding the controls, only the rural-urban gap remains statistically significant ($p < .01$). These findings are in line with my hypothesis H1, which expected higher levels of place-based identity in rural areas than in urban ones. With regard to effect size, the rural-urban difference in the model without any controls is about 20 percent of a standard deviation of the dependent variable and hence quite substantial. The suburban-urban difference is only about 8 percent of a standard deviation of the dependent variable in the models without any controls and becomes insignificant after adding my controls. Hence, I have to reject hypothesis H2, which expected lower levels of place-based identity in suburban areas than in urban ones.

Regarding said controls, I find that older people have a higher level of place-based identity, as do people who grew up in the same in-group as they are currently living in. Hence, the place where one grows up might still significantly impact identity years later, while being older might correlate with a longer time of living in the same place and thus also increase identity. Lastly, people living

in the Italian-speaking part of Switzerland have a higher level of place-based identity than people in the German-speaking part do, which is somewhat surprising, as their identity as a linguistic minority could also be expected to overshadow their place-based identity.

Figure 1. Place-based identity of urban, suburban and rural residents.
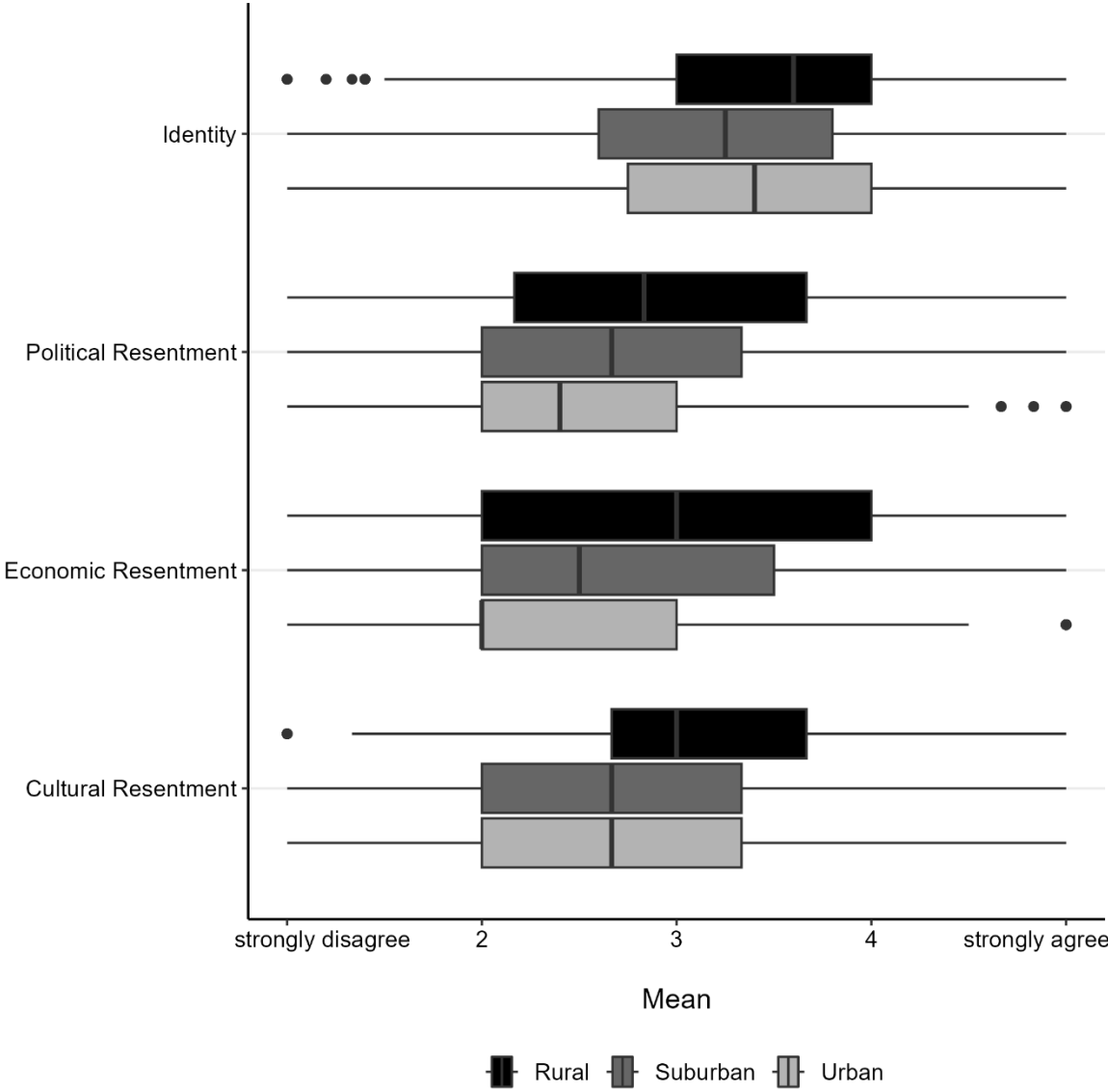
Table 1. Linear regression models with controls.

	Identity	Political resentment	Economic resentment	Cultural resentment
Suburban in-group	−0.014 (0.034)	0.193*** (0.039)	0.352*** (0.045)	−0.022 (0.036)
Rural in-group	0.120*** (0.034)	0.286*** (0.039)	0.554*** (0.045)	0.296*** (0.036)
Place-based identity		0.184*** (0.016)	0.207*** (0.018)	0.277*** (0.015)
Age	0.005*** (0.001)	0.003*** (0.001)	0.002* (0.001)	−0.000 (0.001)
Female	0.013 (0.028)	−0.089*** (0.028)	−0.034 (0.032)	−0.058** (0.026)
Other gender	−0.074 (0.248)	−0.041 (0.251)	0.183 (0.285)	0.303 (0.232)
Secondary education	0.048 (0.087)	−0.114 (0.088)	−0.237** (0.099)	−0.152* (0.081)
Tertiary education	−0.050 (0.087)	−0.304*** (0.088)	−0.429*** (0.100)	−0.243*** (0.082)
Left-right self-placement	0.006 (0.006)	0.044*** (0.006)	0.049*** (0.007)	0.034*** (0.006)
Grew up in same in-group	0.306*** (0.029)	−0.025 (0.029)	−0.003 (0.033)	0.022 (0.027)
French-speaking	0.050 (0.033)	0.176*** (0.033)	0.118*** (0.037)	−0.079*** (0.030)
Italian-speaking	0.128* (0.069)	0.291*** (0.069)	0.158** (0.079)	−0.128** (0.064)
Suburban out-group		0.046 (0.039)	0.044 (0.044)	−0.065* (0.036)
Rural out-group		−0.019 (0.039)	−0.172*** (0.044)	0.031 (0.036)
Constant	2.852*** (0.102)	1.747*** (0.118)	1.795*** (0.134)	1.871*** (0.109)
N	3,929	3,929	3,929	3,929
Adj. R²	0.050	0.105	0.144	0.138

Note: *p < 0.10, **p < 0.05, ***p < 0.01. Reference category for the in- and the out-group is urban. Reference category for gender is male. Reference category for education is primary education. Reference category for the linguistic region is German-speaking. Models are calculated employing the respective weights. *Source: own data set, own calculations.*

Next, I turn to place-based resentment. For the rural population, I find that economic resentment about the fair distribution of resources is highest, followed by resentment about the distribution of respect for one's culture, while political resentment regarding the distribution of power is slightly lower. This could be due to the design of the political institutions in Switzerland, which give the rural population greater weight than the urban population, for example, with the Council of States (Hermann, Bühler, and Wenger 2021). However, cultural resentment is distributed much more narrowly than political and especially economic resentment. Urban residents are on the other hand

most likely to feel resentful about the distribution of respect for one's way of life, followed by the distribution of political power, while their level of economic resentment is much lower and its distribution is skewed right. Hence, urban residents' main wish is more acceptance for their lifestyle and their values. Lastly, suburban residents feel a very similar level of resentment in all three categories of resentment, even though their resentment is slightly less about the economic dimension than it is about the political or the cultural one, as their distribution of economic resentment is skewed right, too. Despite place-based identity and place-based resentment being mainly rural, it is important to notice that ruralites are not the only ones experiencing place-based identity and resentment, but that suburbanites and urbanites also pertain to place-based social identities (see also the results of Borwein and Lucas 2023).

Comparing the three places of living for each sub-dimension of resentment, Figure 1 reveals the highest level of *political* resentment in rural places, followed by suburban residents. Both of these differences are statistically significant ($p < .01$) and remain it after adding the controls. The effect size of the difference between rural and urban residents is about 42 percent of a standard deviation of the dependent variable, while the difference between suburban and urban dwellers is around 20 percent of a standard deviation. Thus, both of these effects can be considered substantial. When it comes to *economic* resentment, there are once again clear differences between the three places of living with rural residents holding the highest level of resentment, followed by suburbanites and, lastly, urbanites. The difference between the rural and the urban group is statistically significant ($p < .01$) and is around 70 percent of a standard deviation of the dependent variable, thus depicting the largest rural-urban divide in resentment. The difference between the suburban and the urban group is around 32 percent of a standard deviation ($p < .01$). The differences remain similar when adding the controls. Finally, turning to *cultural* resentment, I find that rural residents hold a much higher level of resentment, while there is no difference between the cultural resentment of the suburban or the urban population. These results remain the same after adding the controls. The difference between the rural and the urban group is statistically significant ($p < .01$) and around 43 percent of a standard deviation of the dependent variable. This effect can therefore be considered substantial, too. With the exception of the lack of a suburban-urban gap in cultural resentment, these findings are in line with hypotheses H3 and H4 which expected higher levels of place-based resentment in rural and in suburban areas than in urban ones. Thus, I conclude that there are differences in place-based identity and place-based resentment between urban, suburban and rural residents and that they are especially pronounced when it comes to respect for the other groups' lifestyle.

<u>Place-based identity as a moderator</u>

Lastly, I test whether place-based identity only has a linear influence on place-based resentment or whether it also acts as a moderator for the relationship between place of living and place-based resentment. Figure 2 depicts the linear predictions of all three types of resentment for the urban, the suburban and the rural in-group along their levels of place-based identity. The models control for the same controls as before and employ the respective weights (see Table A5 in the online appendix for the corresponding regression table). It shows that resentment increases in all places with increasing identity. Thus, it could be claimed that identity indeed serves as an amplifier in the development of place-based resentment. However, the strength of the relationship between identity and resentment varies between the different places of living, which in turn impacts the magnitude of the rural-urban or suburban-urban divide.

With regard to *political* resentment, the figure on the top left shows that the level of resentment in urban and rural places does not differ for a low level of place-based identity. However, suburban resentment is significantly higher when place-based identity is low. Place-based identity has a stronger effect on resentment of urban residents than of suburban ones, and even stronger on rural residents' resentment. Thus, for a high level of place-based identity, there is no difference in resentment between urbanites and suburbanites, while ruralites exhibit a much higher level of resentment. For the highest value of place-based identity, the rural-urban divide is about 45 percent of a standard deviation of power resentment. With regard to *economic* resentment, the figure on the top right shows a similar picture. For a low level of place-based identity, there is a rather small difference in the level of resentment between the rural and the urban in-group, while suburban resentment is slightly higher. However, place-based identity increases resentment of suburbanites less strongly than resentment of urbanites and ruralites. Thus, for a high level of place-based identity, there is a significant divide in economic resentment between urban and rural places with rural resentment being higher, while suburban resentment lies close to urban resentment. For the highest value of place-based identity, the rural-urban divide is about 64 percent of a standard deviation of the dependent variable. Lastly, with regard to *cultural* resentment, the figure on the bottom left looks once again similar to the previous ones. When place-based identity is low, residents of all three places of living show equally low levels of place-based resentment in the respect component. Place-based identity has the strongest positive effect on place-based resentment of ruralites and the weakest effect on suburban residents. Once again, this leads to a rural-urban divide for residents with a high level of place-based identity with ruralites being most resentful and suburbanites being least resentful. The rural-urban divide for the highest value of identity is 50 percent of a standard deviation of cultural resentment, the suburban-rural divide is even higher with an astonishing 80 percent of a standard deviation of cultural resentment. Thus,

these three interaction models are in line with hypothesis H5 by showing that place-based identity has a moderating role on the relationship between place of living and place-based resentment. Place-based identity does not affect urban, suburban and rural residents equally strong when it comes to their level of place-based resentment, especially with regard to cultural resentment. I find that generally ruralites are most affected by place-based identity, while suburbanites are least affected. Therefore, it is important to understand the interaction between place of living and place-based identity to fully grasp rural, suburban and urban resentment.

Figure 2. Linear predictions of place-based resentment along place-based identity for all three in-groups.
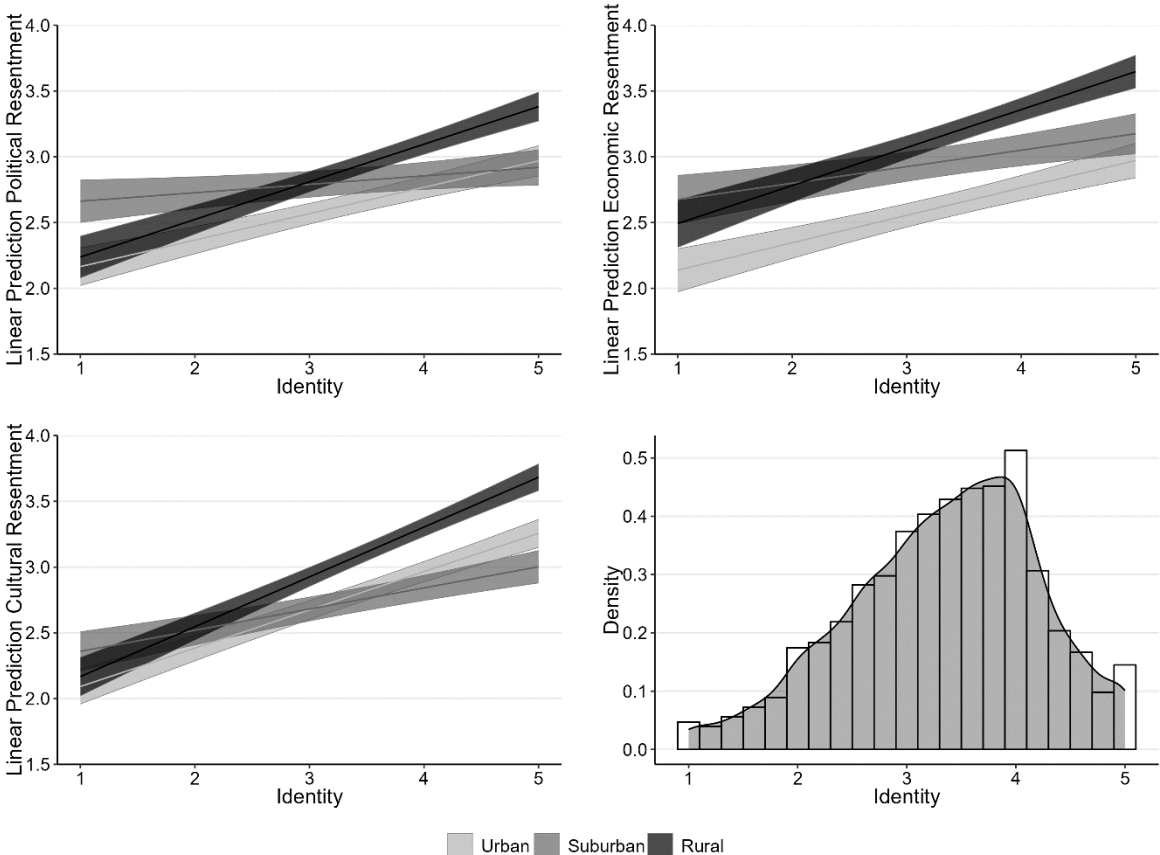
Note: The fourth panel depicts the distribution of place-based identity to discern where observations lie and what the regression lines are based on. *Source: own data set, own calculations.*

Robustness check: out-group of resentment

When measuring resentment, respondents were assigned different out-groups. This is why Figure A4 in the online appendix depicts resentment for each in-group with regard to the two possible out-groups. There are some noticeable differences in the level of resentment comparing the different out-groups for each in-group. First, urban residents are less resentful with regard to economic resources when confronted with the rural out-group than with the suburban out-group ($p < .01$). Here, comparison with the more proximal group seems to be less favorable than with the rural group. Similarly, the suburban in-group feels a higher level of economic resentment

towards the urban out-group than towards the rural out-group (p < .01). This could be because the countryside is usually ascribed an economically disadvantaged position anyway, which is why they are not the salient out-group for suburbanites. However, in all cases, the out-group only seems to play a limited role. This is in line with Hogg's (2016) observation that people tend to categorize the world into two groups, their own in-group as well as all the others, without much distinction between different out-groups (see also Borwein and Lucas 2023).

Robustness check: objective place of living

Place as a social identity is complex and consists next to the subjective component analyzed in this paper also an objective component (Cain 2020). The subjective and objective component are not completely independent of one another, however, they do not necessarily have to overlap. Social identity theory focuses on self-categorization into an in-group and identification is much more likely when individuals self-categorize into a social group than when their membership is assessed externally, which is why the subjective component was the main focus of this paper (Lunz Trujillo 2022). However, I recreate my analyses with an objective measure of place of living, as it makes places of living more comparable due to its independence of individual assessments. As respondents had to indicate their zip code, I can merge data from the Federal Statistical Office to my data set. I use the typology *Raum mit städtischem Charakter 2012* (FSO 2014) which categorizes all Swiss communities into seven groups, which I re-code to yield three categories, that is, an urban, a suburban and a rural category.[24]

   Tables A6 to A8 in the online appendix contain the results of my replication analysis. First, I find that, descriptively, the effects remain the same, even though suburban place-based identity is even lower, while the differences in resentment are a bit smaller (Table A6). Next, turning to the linear regression models including the controls, I find that the difference in place-based identity between suburban and urban residents remains statistically significant. Otherwise, results are similar, even though a bit smaller in magnitude (Table A7). Lastly, when it comes to the interaction effects (Table A8), I find that, even though the direction of the effects remains the same, no interaction term is statistically significant when it comes to the objective typology. This finding is in line with the claim that social identities mean something different for each person individually (Huddy 2001; Lunz Trujillo and Crowley 2022) and thus measuring it through an objective typology does not yield equally strong or meaningful results.

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[24] Agglomeration core municipalities (core cities) are coded as urban. Agglomeration main core, next to core, agglomeration belt municipalities and multi-oriented municipalities form the suburban group. Core municipalities outside an agglomeration are either coded as urban or as suburban, depending on whether they are classified as statistical cities or not. Finally, rural communities without urban character form the rural category.

Discussion and conclusion

The goal of this paper was to investigate the relationship between place of living, place-based identity and place-based resentment. Social identity theory has become salient in rural-urban literature, but has rarely been investigated empirically so far, especially not with regard to the interplay of the three variables. Using data from around 4,500 respondents in Switzerland, I compiled several linear and interaction models and found that place-based identity and resentment are highest in rural places and that place-based identity moderates the relationship between place of living and place-based resentment.

<u>More than "rural rage"</u>

The analysis of place-based identity and place-based resentment in urban, suburban, and rural Switzerland showed that the rural population holds the highest level of both, place-based identity and resentment. Therefore, as theorized in earlier work (see, e.g., Cramer 2016), place-based consciousness is indeed first and foremost rural. Nevertheless, it is remarkable to note that identifying with one's in-group is not an inherently rural feature, but that suburban and urban residents identify with their in-group, too, and even feel some extent of place-based resentment. Thus, it is not enough to tackle the rural population when trying to bridge the rural-urban divide, but to address suburban and urban resentment, too.

When addressing said resentment, it is further interesting to note that the feeling of resentment is not primarily about the distribution of political power, but about the distribution of respect for one's way of life and about the distribution of economic resources. This could be drawn back to some peculiarities of political institutions in Switzerland, that is, the Council of States and its veto power, which strengthen the position of rural cantons (Hermann, Bühler, and Wenger 2021). Still, these findings have important implications when addressing the rural-urban divide, too: It is not sufficient to give the population of different places of living the feeling that they are being heard and represented in the political arena. Public spending also needs to take better account of where people live, and trying to bridge the societal divide in terms of values and traditions is at least as important. The societal rural-urban divide could be addressed through mutual understanding and communication among different place-based groups. Hence, the rural-urban divide is more than mere rural rage about political matters, and needs to be addressed as such.

<u>The role of the suburbs</u>

The consideration of suburban areas, which are often forgotten in scientific empirics, unearths interesting findings: While urbanites as cosmopolitan *Anywheres* might be expected to have the lowest level of place-based identity, the analyses yields equally low levels of identity for suburbanites. Historically, the suburbs emerged when more and more jobs were created in city

centers, while housing in the cities themselves was limited. New neighborhoods were built close to the cities, where the majority of people only slept while they spent their work and leisure time in the city itself. This function of the suburbs could explain why suburban residents to not identify with their place: If people only sleep in a municipality, but commute to the city center for work and leisure, they probably identify more with the larger cities they commute to or with other identities they have.

At the same time, it is interesting to see that suburban resentment is nevertheless rather high: While suburbanites have similarly pronounced levels of political and economic resentment, it turns out that they are particularly culturally frustrated with cities as out-group. Suburbanites feel not taken seriously by residents the cities, which form the cultural center of metropolitan areas and do not seem to show enough respect to the suburban residential areas, their way of life and their values. Thus, to tackle suburban residents, it seems most important to make them feel that their way of life is equally valuable.

Place as a social identity

In social identity theory, people self-categorize into social groups and they identify with their in-groups, which leads them to feel resentment towards members of the out-groups. With this analysis, I thus show that place of living is a social identity, as it has reached group consciousness (Munis 2022). Next to testing whether people feel identity and resentment with regard to their place of living, the goal of this analysis was also to test whether place of living and place-based identity interact to shape resentment, as identity is theorized to be a precondition for developing resentment. Indeed, the interaction models showed that place-based identity increases resentment in all cases, however, the effect is not equally strong for residents of all places. While identity increases resentment especially strongly in the rural subgroup, the effect is weakest for suburbanites.

That the relationship between identity and resentment is strongest for ruralites is in line with social identity theory: The rural population is the inferior group and, hence, tries to shake off the lower status of its group and emphasize its own positivity by feeling antagonism towards the out-groups, especially when identification with their place of residence is high. In order to mitigate rural resentment, it could therefore be useful to specifically address their rural identity and to build bridges to members of other groups.

Suburban residents, who can also be viewed as inferior group when compared with urbanites, deal differently with their group's lower status: As suburbanites commute, suburban group membership is more fluid. Therefore, suburbanites rather try to change their identity by not identifying with their place at all. In the same vein, place-based identity does not affect suburban

resentment as strongly. This means that suburban resentment cannot be mitigated through the same means as rural resentment. Influencing suburban identity will achieve less than tackling the sources of suburban resentment by altering the distribution of resources. Thus, understanding the rural-urban divide through the lens of social identity theory has many fruitful implications that can be equally useful to policymakers as to political scientists.

<u>Limitations of this analysis</u>

Of course, this paper is not able to answer all of the questions surrounding this interplay. First, the adjusted R-squared of the models reveals that the independent variables are only able to explain between 6 and 15 percent of the variance of place-based identity and resentment. This means that this analysis is unable to explain the main part of where identity and resentment stem from in the first place.

In a similar vein, I also do not investigate why ruralites have the highest level of place-based identity and why suburbanites have the lowest level. Here, moving, commuting or socialization might explain why people differ in their place-based identity. Further, it is possible that a person lives in one place of living, for example, a city, but identifies more strongly with another place of living, for example, holding a rural identity, for example, because they have lived there for a long time or because they grew up in this place of living. With this design, I am unable to detect such identities, as I only investigate the identity with the place where people are currently living.

Next, due to the cross-sectional design of the data, I am unable to causally identify how place of living, place-based identity and place-based resentment interact causally and which variable influences which. For example, resentment might not only depend on place of living and place-based identity, but could also feed back into identity or influence the choice of place of living as well as the subjective perception of it. The same is true for place-based identity; it could feed back into self-categorization and be just as well impacted through the level of resentment a person feels.

Lastly, I only use data from Switzerland. As Jacobs and Munis (2020) as well as Lunz Trujillo (2022) argue, federalism might encourage place-based notions. Additionally, the rural-urban divide is quite a salient topic around the federal votes four times a year. Thus, Switzerland could be a most-likely case for place-based consciousness and results might not be transferable to other countries. Nevertheless, this analysis shows the importance of place as a social identity and is a starting point for future research.

<u>Outlook on future research</u>

In order to further develop research on this topic, the investigation of the rural-urban divide as a social identity should also be conducted in other countries with a salient rural-urban divide, for

example, France with the yellow vest movement (Brookes and Cappellina 2023; Lem 2020), Great Britain with Brexit (Brooks 2020; Jennings and Stoker 2016; 2019; Lee, Morris, and Kemeny 2018; Neal et al. 2021), or the U.S. with its rural-urban divide in presidential elections (Jacobs and Munis 2022; Monnat and Brown 2017; Munis 2021; Scala and Johnson 2016; 2017). Also, after shedding light on the interplay between its three components, future studies should investigate what consequences place-based identity and place-based resentment have on political attitudes and behavior and whether they are relevant, for example, in direct-democratic votes, elections or the participation in demonstrations and protests. Attitudes such as political support, populism or conspiracy beliefs are among the main concerns of policymakers and political scientists today. Investigating these phenomena through the lens of place-based identity and resentment could help to gain a better understanding of them (see, e.g., Borwein and Lucas 2023) and to overcome the current crisis of democracy.

Data availability statement

The data, replication instructions, and the data's codebook can be made accessible through PRQ's website. The data and replication instructions can be made accessible through Sage Publications' servers.

Supplemental material

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

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Appendix

Table A1. Items measuring place-based identity and place-based resentment and confirmatory factor analysis.

	Question	F1	F2	F3	F4
Place-based identity	The term [ingroup] resident is a good description of how I see myself.	0.07	**0.73**	-0.04	0.01
	Being a [ingroup] resident is very important to me.	-0.08	**0.65**	0.07	0.05
	When I meet someone who lives in an [ingroup] area, I feel connected.	0.01	**0.64**	0.03	0.07
	I have similar values to other people living in [ingroup] areas.	0.01	**0.80**	0.00	-0.01
	I have a lot in common with other people living in [ingroup] areas.	-0.01	**0.85**	-0.01	-0.04
Political resentment	Politicians don't care what people living in [ingroup] areas think.	**0.88**	-0.01	-0.03	-0.03
	Elites look down on people living in [ingroup] areas.	**0.44**	-0.07	0.19	0.12
	People living in [ingroup] areas have no say in what the government does.	**0.72**	0.01	-0.04	0.01
	There are too many MPs from [outgroup] areas who do not represent the interests of people living in [ingroup] areas.	**0.57**	0.06	0.06	0.18
	Politicians ignore the issues that really matter in [ingroup] areas.	**0.81**	-0.01	0.02	0.00
	[Ingroup] areas are not represented enough in the media.	**0.54**	0.06	0.21	0.01
Economic res.	[Ingroup] areas are usually last in line for government spending on things like roads, schools and healthcare.	0.02	0.01	**0.88**	-0.04
	The government spends too much money on the development of [outgroup] areas, while the development of [ingroup] areas falls by the wayside.	0.02	0.01	**0.79**	0.08
Cultural res.	People in [outgroup] areas do not respect the lifestyle of people in [ingroup] areas.	0.08	-0.06	0.02	**0.72**
	People in [outgroup] areas have quite different values to me.	-0.03	0.09	-0.05	**0.66**
	People in [ingroup] areas work harder than people in [outgroup] areas.	-0.02	0.04	0.19	**0.50**

Note: Oblimin rotated factor loadings for minimum residual factor analysis, rounded to two digits. Factor with the highest loading in bold. *Source: own data set, own calculations.*

Urban subsample

	Question	F1	F2	F3	F4
Place-based identity	The term [ingroup] resident is a good description of how I see myself.	0.00	**0.77**	0.03	0.02
	Being a [ingroup] resident is very important to me.	0.01	**0.73**	0.02	-0.01
	When I meet someone who lives in an [ingroup] area, I feel connected.	0.04	**0.62**	-0.02	0.04
	I have similar values to other people living in [ingroup] areas.	0.00	**0.80**	-0.05	0.01
	I have a lot in common with other people living in [ingroup] areas.	-0.01	**0.86**	0.01	-0.02
Political resentment	Politicians don't care what people living in [ingroup] areas think.	**0.86**	-0.01	-0.04	-0.01
	Elites look down on people living in [ingroup] areas.	**0.56**	-0.08	0.14	0.03
	People living in [ingroup] areas have no say in what the government does.	**0.77**	0.00	-0.03	-0.02
	There are too many MPs from [outgroup] areas who do not represent the interests of people living in [ingroup] areas.	**0.48**	0.12	0.13	0.14
	Politicians ignore the issues that really matter in [ingroup] areas.	**0.75**	-0.01	-0.01	0.03
	[Ingroup] areas are not represented enough in the media.	**0.58**	0.11	0.14	0.01
Economic res.	[Ingroup] areas are usually last in line for government spending on things like roads, schools and healthcare.	0.08	-0.02	**0.78**	-0.01
	The government spends too much money on the development of [outgroup] areas, while the development of [ingroup] areas falls by the wayside.	-0.03	0.02	**0.88**	0.02
Cultural res.	People in [outgroup] areas do not respect the lifestyle of people in [ingroup] areas.	0.02	-0.05	0.00	**0.78**
	People in [outgroup] areas have quite different values to me.	-0.04	0.10	-0.05	**0.61**
	People in [ingroup] areas work harder than people in [outgroup] areas.	0.04	0.02	0.15	**0.47**

Note: Oblimin rotated factor loadings for minimum residual factor analysis, rounded to two digits. Factor with the highest loading in bold. *Source: own data set, own calculations.*

Suburban subsample

	Question	F1	F2	F3	F4
Place-based identity	The term [ingroup] resident is a good description of how I see myself.	0.15	**0.65**	-0.12	0.02
	Being a [ingroup] resident is very important to me.	-0.03	**0.64**	0.04	0.02
	When I meet someone who lives in an [ingroup] area, I feel connected.	0.08	**0.67**	0.00	0.03
	I have similar values to other people living in [ingroup] areas.	-0.06	**0.78**	0.05	0.00
	I have a lot in common with other people living in [ingroup] areas.	-0.05	**0.81**	0.00	-0.03
Political resentment	Politicians don't care what people living in [ingroup] areas think.	**0.83**	0.00	0.00	-0.02
	Elites look down on people living in [ingroup] areas.	**0.46**	-0.05	0.15	0.06
	People living in [ingroup] areas have no say in what the government does.	**0.68**	0.04	0.01	-0.01
	There are too many MPs from [outgroup] areas who do not represent the interests of people living in [ingroup] areas.	**0.56**	0.01	0.03	0.25
	Politicians ignore the issues that really matter in [ingroup] areas.	**0.84**	-0.05	0.00	-0.02
	[Ingroup] areas are not represented enough in the media.	**0.60**	0.08	0.11	0.03
Economic res.	[Ingroup] areas are usually last in line for government spending on things like roads, schools and healthcare.	0.04	0.01	**0.89**	-0.05
	The government spends too much money on the development of [outgroup] areas, while the development of [ingroup] areas falls by the wayside.	0.02	0.00	**0.73**	0.15
Cultural res.	People in [outgroup] areas do not respect the lifestyle of people in [ingroup] areas.	0.08	-0.03	0.03	**0.71**
	People in [outgroup] areas have quite different values to me.	-0.05	0.02	-0.02	**0.68**
	People in [ingroup] areas work harder than people in [outgroup] areas.	0.00	0.07	0.11	**0.52**

Note: Oblimin rotated factor loadings for minimum residual factor analysis, rounded to two digits. Factor with the highest loading in bold. *Source: own data set, own calculations.*

Rural subsample

	Question	F1	F2	F3	F4
Place-based identity	The term [ingroup] resident is a good description of how I see myself.	-0.05	**0.76**	0.07	0.07
	Being a [ingroup] resident is very important to me.	-0.15	**0.61**	0.04	0.16
	When I meet someone who lives in an [ingroup] area, I feel connected.	0.08	**0.67**	-0.07	0.09
	I have similar values to other people living in [ingroup] areas.	0.11	**0.82**	-0.01	-0.08
	I have a lot in common with other people living in [ingroup] areas.	0.00	**0.84**	0.00	-0.04
Political resentment	Politicians don't care what people living in [ingroup] areas think.	**0.89**	0.01	-0.02	-0.04
	Elites look down on people living in [ingroup] areas.	**0.57**	-0.10	0.01	0.23
	People living in [ingroup] areas have no say in what the government does.	**0.69**	-0.01	0.00	0.06
	There are too many MPs from [outgroup] areas who do not represent the interests of people living in [ingroup] areas.	**0.71**	0.07	0.04	0.07
	Politicians ignore the issues that really matter in [ingroup] areas.	**0.81**	0.05	0.07	-0.04
	[Ingroup] areas are not represented enough in the media.	**0.67**	0.01	0.09	0.01
Economic res.	[Ingroup] areas are usually last in line for government spending on things like roads, schools and healthcare.	-0.03	0.01	**0.93**	-0.03
	The government spends too much money on the development of [outgroup] areas, while the development of [ingroup] areas falls by the wayside.	0.14	-0.01	**0.69**	0.07
Cultural res.	People in [outgroup] areas do not respect the lifestyle of people in [ingroup] areas.	0.27	-0.07	0.10	**0.50**
	People in [outgroup] areas have quite different values to me.	0.01	0.18	0.05	**0.62**
	People in [ingroup] areas work harder than people in [outgroup] areas.	0.14	0.06	0.14	**0.39**

Note: Oblimin rotated factor loadings for minimum residual factor analysis, rounded to two digits. Factor with the highest loading in bold. *Source: own data set, own calculations.*

Table A2. Linear regression models without controls.

	Identity	Political resentment	Economic resentment	Cultural resentment
Suburban in-group	–0.068**	0.179***	0.333***	–0.003
	(0.034)	(0.035)	(0.039)	(0.033)
Rural in-group	0.174***	0.378***	0.732***	0.364***
	(0.034)	(0.035)	(0.039)	(0.033)
Constant	3.304***	2.503***	2.418***	2.693***
	(0.024)	(0.025)	(0.028)	(0.023)
N	3,929	3,929	3,929	3,929
Adj. R²	0.013	0.028	0.080	0.040

Note: * p<.10, ** p<.05, *** p<.01. Reference category for the in- and the out-group is urban. Models are calculated employing the respective weights. *Source: own data set, own calculations.*

Table A3. Linear regression models with controls but excluding left-right self-placement.

	Identity	Political resentment	Economic resentment	Cultural resentment
Suburban in-group	−0.013 (0.034)	0.202*** (0.039)	0.363*** (0.045)	−0.014 (0.036)
Rural in-group	0.123*** (0.034)	0.310*** (0.039)	0.580*** (0.045)	0.314*** (0.036)
Place-based identity		0.186*** (0.016)	0.209*** (0.018)	0.279*** (0.015)
Age	0.005*** (0.001)	0.003*** (0.001)	0.002** (0.001)	0.000 (0.001)
Female	0.009 (0.027)	−0.118*** (0.028)	−0.067** (0.031)	−0.081*** (0.026)
Other gender	−0.088 (0.248)	−0.138 (0.252)	0.073 (0.286)	0.227 (0.233)
Secondary education	0.049 (0.087)	−0.109 (0.088)	−0.231* (0.100)	−0.148* (0.081)
Tertiary education	−0.052 (0.087)	−0.323*** (0.089)	−0.451*** (0.101)	−0.258*** (0.082)
Grew up in same in-group	0.307*** (0.029)	−0.021 (0.029)	0.001 (0.033)	0.025 (0.027)
French-speaking	0.051 (0.033)	0.185*** (0.033)	0.129*** (0.038)	−0.072** (0.031)
Italian-speaking	0.131* (0.069)	0.312*** (0.070)	0.182** (0.079)	−0.112* (0.064)
Suburban out-group		0.049 (0.039)	0.047 (0.044)	−0.063* (0.036)
Rural out-group		−0.013 (0.039)	−0.165*** (0.044)	0.036 (0.036)
Constant	2.880*** (0.098)	1.936*** (0.115)	2.007** (0.131)	2.021*** (0.106)
N	3,929	3,929	3,929	3,929
Adj. R²	0.050	0.095	0.135	0.131

Note: * p<.10, ** p<.05, *** p<.01. Reference category for the in- and the out-group is urban. Reference category for gender is male. Reference category for education is primary education. Reference category for the linguistic region is German-speaking. Models are calculated employing the respective weights. *Source: own data set, own calculations.*

Figure A4. Mean place-based resentment of all combinations of in- and out-group.
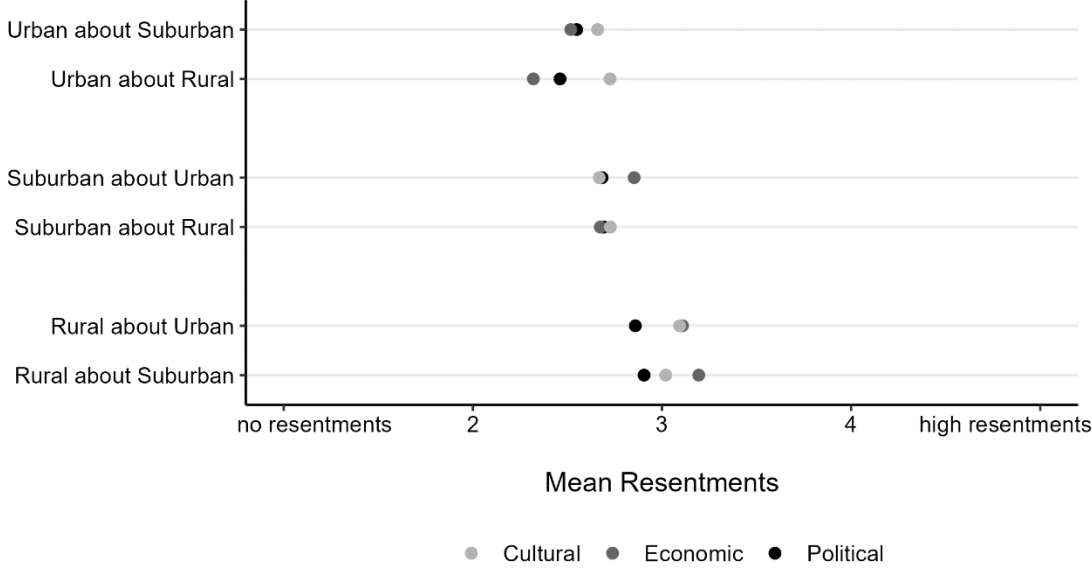
Source: own data set, own calculations.

Table A5. Interaction models.

	Political resentment	Economic resentment	Cultural resentment
Suburban in-group	0.634***	0.621***	0.397***
	(0.131)	(0.150)	(0.122)
Rural in-group	−0.012	0.275*	−0.012
	(0.137)	(0.156)	(0.127)
Place-based identity	0.201***	0.209***	0.291***
	(0.027)	(0.030)	(0.025)
Suburban #identity	−0.137***	−0.083*	−0.130***
	(0.039)	(0.044)	(0.036)
Rural #identity	0.085**	0.080*	0.088**
	(0.039)	(0.044)	(0.036)
Age	0.003***	0.002*	−0.000
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Female	−0.093***	−0.037	−0.062**
	(0.028)	(0.032)	(0.026)
Other gender	−0.041	0.184	0.304
	(0.250)	(0.285)	(0.231)
Secondary education	−0.114	−0.237**	−0.152*
	(0.087)	(0.099)	(0.081)
Tertiary education	−0.308***	−0.432***	−0.246***
	(0.088)	(0.100)	(0.081)
Left-right self-placement	0.042***	0.047***	0.032***
	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.006)
Grew up in same in-group	−0.029	−0.005	0.018
	(0.029)	(0.033)	(0.027)
French-speaking	0.172***	0.116***	−0.083***
	(0.033)	(0.037)	(0.030)
Italian-speaking	0.297***	0.164**	−0.122*
	(0.069)	(0.079)	(0.064)
Suburban out-group	0.042	0.040	−0.069*
	(0.039)	(0.044)	(0.036)
Rural out-group	−0.021	−0.174***	0.028
	(0.039)	(0.044)	(0.036)
Constant	1.709***	1.805***	1.843***
	(0.139)	(0.158)	(0.128)
N	3,929	3,929	3,929
Adj. R²	0.112	0.147	0.146

Note: * p<.10, ** p<.05, *** p<.01. Reference category for the in- and the out-group is urban. Reference category for gender is male. Reference category for education is primary education. Reference category for the linguistic region is German-speaking. Models are calculated employing the respective weights. *Source: own data set, own calculations.*

Table A6. Linear regression models without controls for objective place of living.

	Identity	Political resentment	Economic resentment	Cultural resentment
Suburban place	–0.137***	0.115***	0.264***	0.030
	(0.034)	(0.036)	(0.041)	(0.033)
Rural place	0.232***	0.447***	0.726***	0.425***
	(0.061)	(0.064)	(0.074)	(0.060)
Constant	3.422***	2.575***	2.532***	2.762***
	(0.030)	(0.031)	(0.036)	(0.029)
N	3,929	3,929	3,929	3,929
Adj. R²	0.013	0.012	0.025	0.013

Note: * p<.10, ** p<.05, *** p<.01. Reference category for the in- and the out-group is urban. Models are calculated employing the respective weights. *Sources: FSO 2014, own data set, own calculations.*

Table A7. Linear regression models with controls for objective place of living.

	Identity	Political resentment	Economic resentment	Cultural resentment
Suburban place	−0.154***	0.072**	0.171***	0.023
	(0.034)	(0.036)	(0.041)	(0.033)
Rural place	0.146**	0.305***	0.452***	0.260***
	(0.061)	(0.064)	(0.073)	(0.059)
Place-based identity		0.187***	0.216***	0.280***
		(0.016)	(0.019)	(0.015)
Age	0.005***	0.003***	0.002**	0.000
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Female	0.018	−0.085***	−0.029	−0.055**
	(0.027)	(0.028)	(0.032)	(0.026)
Other gender	−0.035	−0.037	0.184	0.357
	(0.248)	(0.252)	(0.289)	(0.234)
Secondary education	0.044	−0.119	−0.246**	−0.165**
	(0.086)	(0.088)	(0.101)	(0.082)
Tertiary education	−0.067	−0.320***	−0.458***	−0.267***
	(0.086)	(0.089)	(0.102)	(0.082)
Left-right self-placement	0.010	0.046***	0.053***	0.038***
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.006)
Grew up in same in-group	0.317***	−0.030	−0.002	0.059**
	(0.028)	(0.029)	(0.033)	(0.027)
French-speaking	0.076**	0.179***	0.115***	−0.071**
	(0.033)	(0.033)	(0.038)	(0.031)
Italian-speaking	0.107	0.305***	0.186**	−0.122*
	(0.069)	(0.070)	(0.080)	(0.065)
Suburban out-group		−0.033	−0.094**	−0.050
		(0.035)	(0.040)	(0.032)
Rural out-group		−0.121***	−0.376***	−0.085***
		(0.035)	(0.040)	(0.033)
Constant	2.967***	1.881***	2.012***	1.921***
	(0.103)	(0.119)	(0.136)	(0.110)
N	3,929	3,929	3,929	3,929
Adj. R²	0.057	0.098	0.119	0.123

Note: * p<.10, ** p<.05, *** p<.01. Reference category for the in- and the out-group is urban. Reference category for gender is male. Reference category for education is primary education. Reference category for the linguistic region is German-speaking. Models are calculated employing the respective weights. *Sources: FSO 2014, own data set, own calculations.*

Table A8. Interaction models for objective place of living.

	Political resentment	Economic resentment	Cultural resentment
Suburban place	0.288**	0.305**	0.198
	(0.135)	(0.155)	(0.126)
Rural place	0.132	0.665**	0.029
	(0.264)	(0.304)	(0.246)
Place-based identity	0.229***	0.249***	0.313***
	(0.034)	(0.039)	(0.031)
Suburban #identity	−0.064*	−0.040	−0.052
	(0.039)	(0.044)	(0.036)
Rural #identity	0.045	−0.060	0.061
	(0.071)	(0.082)	(0.066)
Age	0.003***	0.002**	0.000
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Female	−0.086***	−0.030	−0.055**
	(0.028)	(0.032)	(0.026)
Other gender	−0.036	0.185	0.357
	(0.252)	(0.289)	(0.234)
Secondary education	−0.120	−0.247**	−0.165**
	(0.088)	(0.101)	(0.082)
Tertiary education	−0.322***	−0.461***	−0.269***
	(0.089)	(0.102)	(0.082)
Left-right self-placement	0.046***	0.054***	0.038***
	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.006)
Grew up in same in-group	−0.030	−0.003	0.058**
	(0.029)	(0.033)	(0.027)
French-speaking	0.182***	0.116***	−0.068**
	(0.033)	(0.038)	(0.031)
Italian-speaking	0.305***	0.185**	−0.121*
	(0.070)	(0.080)	(0.065)
Suburban out-group	−0.033	−0.095**	−0.052
	(0.035)	(0.040)	(0.036)
Rural out-group	−0.121***	−0.377***	0.061
	(0.035)	(0.040)	(0.066)
Constant	1.733***	1.901***	1.807***
	(0.157)	(0.180)	(0.146)
N	3,929	3,929	3,929
Adj. R²	0.098	0.118	0.124

Note: * p<.10, ** p<.05, *** p<.01. Reference category for the in- and the out-group is urban. Reference category for gender is male. Reference category for education is primary education. Reference category for the linguistic region is German-speaking. Models are calculated employing the respective weights. *Sources: FSO 2014, own data set, own calculations.*

3. Article 2: Confidence Across Cleavage: The Swiss Rural-Urban Divide, Place-Based Identity and Political Trust

This chapter is identical with the following article published in Swiss Political Science Review:[25]

Abstract

Since political trust is crucial to the survival of political systems, securing its high levels is essential. While Switzerland exhibits a large rural-urban divide in direct democratic votes, it has not yet been researched whether such a divide also exists with regard to political trust. In my investigation of the Swiss rural-urban divide in political trust, I bring in place as a social identity and evaluate whether the rural-urban divide is contingent upon place-based identity. I employ OLS regression models using original survey data from 2022 with about 4,000 respondents. Results reveal a significant but irrelevantly small rural-urban difference in political trust. However, when interacting place-based identity with place of living, I find that identity inverts the rural-urban divide. When place-based identity is low, rural residents exhibit higher levels of political trust than urban residents, but when place-based identity is high, trust is higher in urban than in rural places.

Keywords: Place-based identity, Political trust, Rural-urban divide, Suburbs

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[25] I have adapted the citation style so that it is consistent with the rest of the dissertation and I have updated the specified years of publications where applicable. The enumeration of the footnotes continues throughout the entire dissertation. I have not made any changes with regard to the content of the article.

Introduction

Political trust matters. It is a precondition for democratic rule, for the quality and stability of political regimes, the provision of a social security system, and for preventing citizens from illegal behaviour; trust also increases voting participation, the willingness to pay taxes, and is even vital for the survival of democracies (Hetherington and Husser 2012; Hooghe and Zmerli 2011; Newton, Stolle, and Zmerli 2017; Uslaner 2017; Van Der Meer 2017; Van Der Meer and Zmerli 2017). This is why many political scientists investigate the foundations of political trust. They find that individual characteristics (such as personality), socio-economic traits, political variables (e.g. the perception of fairness and corruption), as well as policy attitudes influence political trust (Angelucci and Vittori 2023; Citrin and Stoker 2018; Listhaug and Jakobsen 2017; Newton, Stolle, and Zmerli 2017; Van Der Meer 2017). A more recent literature adds to the understanding of the manifold foundations of political trust by additionally investigating its geographical component (McKay, Jennings, and Stoker 2021; Mitsch, Lee, and Ralph Morrow 2021; Schoene 2019; Stein, Buck, and Bjørnå 2021). These studies reveal a considerable rural-urban divide in political trust that further increased during the last ten years. While some studies focus on individual countries, e.g. Great Britain (McKay, Jennings, and Stoker 2021), Italy (Angelucci and Vittori 2023) or Norway (Stein, Buck, and Bjørnå 2021), no study to date investigates the rural-urban divide in political trust in Switzerland.

Switzerland is one of the countries with the most salient rural-urban divides. The results of about 80 percent of the quarterly held direct democratic votes are split along the rural-urban line and this polarization is ever-growing, which makes the rural-urban divide the most salient of the four classical cleavages (Hermann, John, and Wenger 2023; Linder 2015; Linder, Zürcher, and Bolliger 2008).[26] The rural-urban divide is not only regularly taken up by the media (SRF 2021; Thelitz 2021), but also by the largest Swiss party, the Swiss people's party (Schweizerische Volkspartei 2021). Despite the salience and prominence of the Swiss rural-urban divide, research to date is, for the most part, focused on political behaviour in direct-democratic votes, while no research investigates whether the rural-urban divide also concerns political attitudes. This is why the goal of this paper is to take a first step into the analysis of attitudes by shedding some light on the Swiss rural-urban divide in political trust. However, I will not only discuss the distribution of political trust between rural and urban places, but I will also introduce place-based identity as a novel variable which might shape the rural-urban divide in political trust.

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[26] Rural-urban polarization in direct democratic votes is measured via the statistical significance of the difference in voting results between urban and rural districts (Linder, Zürcher, and Bolliger 2008). From 2015 to 2019, the mean difference in the percentage of 'yes' votes between rural municipalities and big cities was 13.3 percentage points and from 2020 to 2022, it was even 16.8 percentage points (Hermann, John, and Wenger 2023).

Place of living can be viewed as one of many possible social identities a person holds (Borwein and Lucas 2023; Stedman 2002). According to social identity theory, such identities have the ability to shape their members' behaviour and attitudes (Tajfel and Turner 1979). However, as every person is a member of various social groups, this only holds true when a person's identification with the respective in-group is salient. Drawing on social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 1979) and its adaptation to place in the form of place-based consciousness (Cramer 2016), I argue that the rural-urban divide in political trust should only manifest itself when identification with one's place is high. While place of living should not matter for the attitudes of people who do not identify with it, I expect the mechanisms of the *left behind* rural population described in the literature to only come into effect for people for whom place of living represents a relevant social identity. Hence, I introduce place-based identity as a moderator to the rural-urban divide in political trust.

To test my assumptions, I employ original survey data from Switzerland from 2022 with about 4,000 observations. My data set contains an original, unique measure of place-based identity and is one of the first operationalizations of this concept.[27] Additionally, my data goes beyond the usual dichotomization of place of living into a rural and an urban category; instead, it encompasses a more fine-grained measure of place of living with four categories: big cities, small cities, the suburbs and the countryside. My analyses reveal surprising findings: First, I find no substantial rural-urban divide with regard to political trust in Switzerland. Second, I find that place-based identity is highest for residents of a big city and of the countryside. Third, I find that place-based identity moderates the rural-urban divide in political trust: Amongst respondents with low levels of place-based identity, ruralites exhibit significantly higher levels of political trust than residents of big cities or the suburbs do. For respondents with high levels of place-based identity, this divide is inverted with ruralites exhibiting the lowest level of political trust compared to their urban counterparts.

The contribution of my paper is hence of both conceptual and empirical nature. Conceptually, I add place-based identity to the research on the geography of political trust; a growing field in which research is so far only loosely based on social identity theory. My paper is one of the first to connect these two strands of literature. Empirically, I contribute by investigating the case of Switzerland, a country with a stark rural-urban divide in political behaviour but so far little empirical research on the rural-urban divide in political attitudes. Additionally, I contribute to this strand of research by presenting an original data set, which contains a newly devised measure of place-based identity. As my analysis yields promising results for the role of place-based identity, I advise future

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[27] My operationalization is based on Munis (2022), who was the first to build a measure of place-based identity and place-based resentment drawing on the qualitative work by Cramer (2016) and Wuthnow (2018).

researchers to draw upon this operationalization of identity to investigate its moderating capacities with regard to other dependent variables.

Theoretical considerations

Background: the Swiss rural-urban divide

Drawing on cleavage theory (Lipset and Rokkan 1967), the rural-urban divide was originally defined as a divide between the primary and the secondary economic sector and was mainly economic in nature, i.e. concerning tariffs and agricultural protection (Linder, Zürcher, and Bolliger 2008; Lipset and Rokkan 1967). In Switzerland, this original rural-urban divide was not that pronounced, especially not during the two world wars when agricultural independence for the entire population was prioritised, which means that rural interests faced hardly any opposition (Linder, Zürcher, and Bolliger 2008). Later, the rural-urban divide developed into a divide that not only refers to the economic dimension of agricultural protection, but also to values and lifestyle, which describes the rural-urban divide as we understand it today (Kriesi et al. 2012; Linder, Zürcher, and Bolliger 2008; Wuthnow 2018). In Switzerland, the rural-urban divide started gaining traction in the 1970s with this new value-based dimension. During this time, polarization between urban and rural areas mainly grew with regard to non-economic issues such as abortion laws or Europeanization (Linder, Zürcher, and Bolliger 2008). Compared to the other cleavages, the rural-urban divide is the only one that only grew larger over time (Linder, Zürcher, and Bolliger 2008). Regarding the other three divides, the Swiss language regions, which represent the centre-periphery cleavage (Linder, Zürcher, and Bolliger 2008), are among the best researched and most relevant social groups in Switzerland (Linder, Zürcher, and Bolliger 2008; Watts 1988; Zierhofer 2005). The conflicts between the German-, French-and Italian-speaking parts of Switzerland were especially pronounced during the 1990s but decreased over time and have since lost part of their relevance. Second, the religious cleavage, which led to the Sonderbund war in 1847, was important in the 19th century but diminished rapidly over the course of the 20th century and does not play a significant role today (Linder, Zürcher, and Bolliger 2008). Lastly, the economic conflict between workers and owners decreased during the 1920s, but has recently made its way back on the political agenda of Switzerland (Linder, Zürcher, and Bolliger 2008) and social class or occupation can thus still today be regarded as an important social category.[28] Nevertheless, the rural-urban divide has become the most prominent of the four classical cleavages in Switzerland, with four out of five direct

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[28] Beyond these four classical cleavages, there are new cleavages coming into play and forming relevant social categories, especially the universalism-particularism divide, which becomes evident in a new collective identity and divides the far right from the new left (Oesch and Rennwald 2010; Zollinger 2024).

democratic votes being divided along its lines (Linder 2015; Linder, Zürcher, and Bolliger 2008; Longchamp 2015).

Next to its frequent appearance in the quarterly held direct democratic votes, the rural-urban conflict is also regularly taken up by the media (SRF 2021; Thelitz 2021; Turuban 2021) as well as by the largest political party in Switzerland, the Swiss People's Party. The Swiss People's Party was formerly known as the Party of Farmers, Traders and Independents and has its roots in the rural-urban cleavage, representing the interests of the agricultural workforce in Switzerland with regard to tariffs and subsidies, but later also on a wider range of topics.[29] It is the only party that emerged from the rural-urban cleavage and still represents rural interests today (Linder, Zürcher, and Bolliger 2008; Vatter 2020). For example, in September 2021, the party released a position paper on the Swiss rural-urban divide whose title roughly translates to "The parasitic policy of left-green cities" (Schweizerische Volkspartei 2021). In it, the Swiss People's Party not only defends the interests of the rural population but also stirs up resentment between rural and urban dwellers. The salience of the rural-urban divide in Switzerland is also reflected in a recent report that surveys feelings of resentment and finds that rural residents hold higher levels of resentment about their political, economic and societal position than their urban counterparts (Hermann, John, and Wenger 2023). Despite this salience of the Swiss rural-urban divide, most studies to date focus either on direct democratic votes or elections (Kübler, Scheuss, and Rochat 2013; Ladner 2004; Linder 2015; Linder, Zürcher, and Bolliger 2008; Mantegazzi 2021), or the role of the suburbs as a third category (Kübler 2022; Kübler and Bijl-Schwab 2014; Longchamp 2015; Scheuss 2013; Ströbele 2012; 2017). However, no research known to me looks into other aspects of the Swiss rural-urban divide, such as political trust.

<u>The geographical component of political trust</u>

Trust means that "a truster A […] trusts (judges the trustworthiness of) a trustee B with regard to some behavior X in context Y at time t" (Bauer and Freitag 2017, 16). When it comes to political trust, trustee B is either a political institution, e.g. the parliament, the government, the justice system, police or bureaucracy, or a political actor, e.g., party leaders, incumbent politicians or public officials (Uslaner 2017; Van Der Meer and Zmerli 2017). Thus, political trust measures a basic orientation of support toward the political system with its institutions and actors based on whether they act in the interest of the people and fulfil their expectation, while people are vulnerable to and uncertain of these institutions and actors (Angelucci and Vittori 2023; Van Der Meer 2017).

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[29] In the catholic cantons, rural interests were initially still represented by the conservative parties, which is also why the Party of Farmers, Traders and Independents only became a national party in 1936, almost 20 years after its first major electoral success (Vatter 2020). Today, they represent rural interests throughout Switzerland.

Political trust at the national level is also an important element of political support (Dalton 2004; Easton 1975; Norris 2017; Van Der Meer and Zmerli 2017).[30] Political support describes a citizen's orientations towards the nation-state, its agencies and actors and has important consequences for social cohesion and the survival of a political system (Dalton 2004; Easton 1975; Norris 2017). Within the concept of political support, more diffuse and more specific forms are distinguished and can have different effects on outcomes. Political trust is neither an expression of completely diffuse nor of completely specific support, as it links elements from the more diffuse level with elements from the more specific level and is correlated with both (Hetherington 1998; Van Der Meer 2017; Van Der Meer and Zmerli 2017). This makes political trust an even more relevant concept to study, as it can be seen as a sort of cross-section of political support, which is vital for the survival of democracies.

A lot of research has already been done on the foundations of political trust. On the micro-level, the socio-demographic and economic background, attitudes, personality, and political characteristics have been analysed and found to be influential (Angelucci and Vittori 2023; Citrin and Stoker 2018; Listhaug and Jakobsen 2017; Newton, Stolle, and Zmerli 2017; Van Der Meer 2017). On the macro-level, historical legacy, the properties of the social context, the political system and institutions, their objective performance as well as the subjective evaluation of their performance have been analysed (Angelucci and Vittori 2023; Citrin and Stoker 2018; Listhaug and Jakobsen 2017; Newton, Stolle, and Zmerli 2017; Van Der Meer 2017).

Recent studies also find a geographical component to political trust (Angelucci and Vittori 2023; McKay, Jennings, and Stoker 2021; Mitsch, Lee, and Ralph Morrow 2021; Stein, Buck, and Bjørnå 2021). The argument behind this finding is that rural residents usually feel as losers of social, political, and economic processes and as if they are left behind their urban counterparts (Cramer 2016; Hochschild 2018; Rodríguez-Pose 2018). Rural residents on average exhibit lower levels of education, social status and worse occupation opportunities, which might lead them to blame the political elite for not granting more resources to rural places (Gordon 2018; Schoene 2019; Zumbrunn and Freitag 2023). Further, rural residents tend to be more conservative, traditional, and nationalistic and feel threatened in their values by urban residents and the political elite, who hold more libertarian, alternative and green values. Rural residents hence fear that the political elite might not represent their values or interests enough (Cramer 2016; Gordon 2018; Mitsch, Lee, and

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[30] Political trust can either refer to institutions at the national or at the regional or local level. These forms of political trust are correlated (Angelucci and Vittori 2023), but they are not exactly the same. While local political trust is just as worthy of study, the focus of my analysis lies on the study of trust in national political actors and institutions, as these are the same for urban and rural dwellers, and any differences therefore cannot stem from the performance of different objects of trust.

Ralph Morrow 2021; Schoene 2019; Zumbrunn and Freitag 2023). Rural residents also live physically further away from the centres in which political institutions are set, which could make them feel alienated from politics, while service provision is usually worse in rural than in urban places. This could make rural residents believe that politicians do not care about them and their places (Angelucci and Vittori 2023; Cramer 2016; Hochschild 2018; Listhaug and Jakobsen 2017; Mitsch, Lee, and Ralph Morrow 2021; Schoene 2019; Stein, Buck, and Bjørnå 2021).[31] These elements can be expected to decrease political trust for rural, left behind residents, as they might feel that the design of political institutions and decisions by the political elite disregard rural interests, their values and their socio-economic position.

In line with this argument, McKay et al. (2021) investigate political trust in the *places that don't matter* in Britain. They find that people living in deprived and rural areas indeed exhibit lower levels of trust in the government due to economic deprivation and being socially marginalized. Angelucci and Vittori (2023) investigate local and national political trust in Italy and show that a lower perceived quality of life in one's neighbourhood diminishes political trust on the local and on the national level, while neighbourhood peripherality decreases local trust, too. Stein, Buck, and Bjørnå (2021) analyse the roots of political trust in Norway and, among other explanations, investigate the effect of rurality. They find a weak but significant influence of rurality on political trust in the Norwegian case. Schoene (2019) studies whether Euroscepticism is a by-product of the rural-urban divide by investigating trust in the European Parliament using data from the European Social Survey. He finds that trust in the European parliament is higher in big cities, even though place of residence seems to be only a weak predictor of it. Mitsch, Lee, and Ralph Morrow (2021) investigate the rural-urban divide in political trust in 18 European countries between 2008 and 2018. They find a growing divergence with urban residents becoming more trusting over time, while the level of trust of the rural population remains rather stable. However, they say that this finding is primarily driven by Southern Europe. Building on the theory and empirical evidence presented above, I formulate my first hypothesis:

H1. Individuals who live in rural areas have a lower level of political trust than individuals who live in urban areas.

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[31] To date, there are no studies known to the author which investigate the left behind phenomenon in Switzerland. There is good reason to assume that the Swiss rural population might not feel left behind: Switzerland has a very good service provision—even in rural areas—it is a small and simultaneously federal country and there exists institutional protection of the interests of rural cantons. However, a recent report suggests that Swiss ruralites indeed tend to feel left behind: They believe that in Switzerland urbanites oversee the country, national politics, the media, societal trends, and the economy (Hermann, John, and Wenger 2023).

It could be assumed, however, that this correlation between place of residence and political trust only applies to a certain part of the population, namely those who identify with their place of living in the first place. The perceived deprivation of rural people and the perceived favouritism of urban people should only be felt and should only matter for political trust in the context of a strong place-based identification. Similarly, Cramer argues that "[s]ome people make sense of politics through a social identity infused with notions of distributive justice" (Cramer 2012, 517). Hence, the second argument is based upon the assumption that place forms a social identity.

Place of living—like many other characteristics, e.g. gender, occupation, religion or ethnicity—can be viewed as a social identity (Borwein and Lucas 2023; Stedman 2002). A social identity means that people feel as if they belong to a social group by sharing a certain characteristic with other members of this group, which leads them to a common definition and evaluation of their in-group (Tajfel and Turner 1979). Such a shared characteristic can for example be the place where a person lives. In this strand of literature, *place* is not understood as a specific location, but rather defined through a place's specific attributes. In this sense, *place-based* research is different from concepts such as localism or regionalism (Briffault 2000), which are about one specific location, e.g., a canton or a municipality. While such local or regional identities certainly matter, too—especially in federal Switzerland (see also Müller 2013; Schroedter, Rössel, and Datler 2015)—this new research defines *place* through different attributes such as socioeconomic composition, values, political power or the common feeling of being left behind (Cramer 2016; Hochschild 2018; Maxwell 2020; Wuthnow 2018; Zumbrunn and Freitag 2023). This is why place can form an identity through a number of characteristics, e.g., a spatial dimension such as the landscape, a political-economic dimension, as for example universities are usually located in cities, shared social experiences, e.g., a higher likelihood of mingling with foreigners in cities, or a symbolic understanding of the place and its values (Bell 1992; Cain 2020). These social groups then provide their members with prescriptions on beliefs and behaviour and can thus shape their levels of political trust (Borwein and Lucas 2023; Hogg 2016; Huddy 2001). However, as every person is a member of several social groups, they cannot all equally influence their attitudes and behaviour, as some identities are more salient and influential than others (Huddy 2001; Lunz Trujillo and Crowley 2022).

Place-based identity has already proven influential on a number of political concepts, e.g., place-based resentment (Munis 2022), anti-intellectualism (Lunz Trujillo 2022), political interest and participation (Borwein and Lucas 2023), and candidate evaluation (Jacobs and Munis 2019). Literature has even tapped into the moderating capacities of place-based identity: Munis (2021) shows that the relationship between place of living and candidate evaluation depends on place-

based identity and is especially strong for people with a strong geographical identity. This is the same mechanism I expect for the relationship between place of living and political trust. As mentioned above, ruralites are claimed to be the *left behind* ones (Cramer 2016; Rodríguez-Pose 2018; Wuthnow 2018), which should translate into lower levels of political trust as compared to urbanites. According to Cramer, their identity "includes a sense that decision makers routinely ignore rural places and fail to give rural communities their fair share of resources" (Cramer 2016, 5–6). However, if a rural person does not identify with their place of living, they should not experience these feelings of resentment. Therefore, their level of political trust should be similar to urban residents who do not identify with their place of living either. As place-based identity increases, the mechanism of being left behind should however start diverging the level of political trust between urbanites and ruralites. Urbanites—who are said to be in a more advantaged position—should realize this and experience an increase in political trust as their place-based identity grows, because it is the political system and politicians themselves that cater to their needs (Zumbrunn and Freitag 2023). This is not the case for ruralites, whose level of political trust should not increase with their level of place-based identity, as they will realize that they are being *left behind*. Therefore, the rural-urban divide in political trust is *activated* by place-based identity. Hence, my second hypothesis is:

H2. Place-based identity moderates the relationship between place of living and political trust.

Data, variables, method

I make use of data from an original survey conducted in September 2022 using the survey company intervista (Intervista 2022).[32] 4,637 Swiss residents were surveyed on their place of living and a number of political attitudes and behaviour, as well as some sociodemographic control variables. 3,951 of these observations are used for this analysis, as the others exhibit missing values on some of the relevant variables.

Political trust can refer to several trustees such as the government, parliament, politicians, but also the judiciary or the police (Uslaner 2017). Even though these forms of trust are heavily correlated, the level of political trust still depends on which part of the political system respondents consider (Hetherington and Husser 2012). In this case, I measure trust in the national government, the national parliament, politicians and the judiciary. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of confidence on a scale from 0 ("no trust at all") to 10 ("complete trust").[33] The different objects

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[32] The survey was conducted as part of the RUDE project, which is part of the NORFACE Joint Research Programme on Democratic Governance in a Turbulent Age. The Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Business, Economics and Social Sciences of the University of Bern approved our project (Approval: 382022) on 12 December 2022.

[33] "Trust" and "Confidence" are empirically hardly separable and strongly correlated (Van Der Meer and Zmerli 2017), which is why they are used as synonyms here.

of political trust are usually claimed to be so highly interdependent, that political trust is oftentimes viewed as a unidimensional concept (Zmerli and Newton 2017). Additionally, it is often argued that citizens do not draw clear lines between different objects of political trust (Van Der Meer and Zmerli 2017) or that by using these questions it cannot be distinguished whether respondents thought about the institutions themselves or the officials running these institutions when answering (Marien 2017), which would make an index of the political trust scale questions preferable. A factor analysis of the four variables of political trust also reveals that they all load onto the same factor (see Table A1 in the appendix). This is why I form an index from them by taking the mean of the four measures of political trust. Nevertheless, the literature sometimes differentiates between different forms of political trust. There is for example a distinction between trust in more neutral institutions such as the judiciary or the police,[34] and trust in organizations of government such as the cabinet, parliaments or parties (Newton, Stolle, and Zmerli 2017; Zmerli and Newton 2017). This is why I replicate findings with the four objects of political trust separately, as there might still be some nuances between them. Results for these additional analyses can be found in the appendix.

Table 1. Measurement of place-based identity and factor analysis.

Question	Loading	Loading urban	Loading suburban	Loading rural
The term [group] resident is a good description of how I see myself.	0.736	0.790	0.648	0.795
Being a [group] resident is very important to me.	0.678	0.731	0.648	0.649
When I meet someone who lives in a [group] area, I feel connected.	0.676	0.648	0.667	0.716
I have similar values to other people living in [group] areas.	0.799	0.784	0.786	0.819
I have a lot in common with other people living in [group] areas.	0.821	0.844	0.792	0.829

Source: own data set, own calculations.

Place of living is measured with five categories into which respondents had to self-categorize their place of living. They could choose from the following five options: "A city with more than 50,000 inhabitants", "A city with less than 50,000 inhabitants", "The suburbs or outskirts of a city", "A village", "A farm or home in the countryside".[35] As only a very small number of respondents chose the last category, I combined them with the people living in a village to form the rural group. But as the rural-urban divide should be viewed in a more nuanced way rather as a continuum than as a

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[34] However, the neutrality of the police and the judiciary can be questioned in certain countries and contexts; e.g. in Switzerland where members of the Federal Supreme Court are elected based on their party membership and the partisan composition of the parliament (Vatter 2020).

[35] These are basically the same answer categories as on the rural-urban question in the European Social Survey, which is used in the study by Mitsch, Lee, and Ralph Morrow (2021).

dichotomy (Scala and Johnson 2017), I refrain from combining any other categories and instead investigate small cities and the suburbs separately from the most rural and the most urban group. In Switzerland, especially the suburbs are a relevant group for place-based references and identities (Scheuss 2013), not least because about half of the Swiss population lives neither in completely urban nor completely rural areas (Hermann, Bühler, and Wenger 2021). Place-based identity is measured using five questions on how important their place-based identity is to respondents and how similar they believe they are to other members of their place-based group. These questions encompass both a descriptive assessment of similarity with the in-group as well as evaluative components of subjective belonging, e.g., feeling connected to other people, thus covering the entire scope of place-based identification. The questions are adapted based on the place of living respondents indicated. For respondents living in a small or big city, "urban" is displayed, for respondents living in the suburbs or outskirts of a city, "suburban" is displayed, and for respondents living in a village or a farm or home in the countryside, "rural" is used to reference their group. The exact wording of the questions can be found in Table 1 (for a German, French and Italian translation of the items, see Table A2 in the appendix). The questions are answered on a scale from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree"). A factor analysis confirms that the five questions all load onto the same factor. The factor loadings are displayed in Table 1, too. I find that they are slightly lower for the suburban subsample, while they are largest for the rural subsample. Nevertheless, loadings are large enough in all three subgroups to continue with my analyses. To measure place-based identity, I build an index by taking the mean of the five variables.

Methodologically, I calculate OLS regression models with the recommended weight.[36] I control for a respondent's age in years, their gender (male, female, other), their level of education (primary education, secondary education, tertiary education), the subjective rating of their income (very difficult to cope, difficult to cope, can cope, live comfortably, live comfortably and save regularly), the political self-placement on a scale from 0 ("left") to 10 ("right") as well as which language region they belong to (German-speaking, French-speaking or Italian-speaking).[37] A summary statistic for the control variables can be found in Table A3 in the appendix.

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[36] The survey is representative for the Swiss population based on age and language region. However, there are not enough French-speaking respondents below the age of 45 in the suburbs, which is what the weight adjusts for.

[37] Education and income might partly mediate the rural-urban divide in political trust, which is why models A13 in the appendix replicate the linear and the interaction model of the trust index without controlling for education and income. Findings indicate that the main effects remain the same, even though their magnitude is slightly larger without controls for education and income. To make sure that the effect found does not only depend on alternative redistributive explanations such as the provision of public services, Table A14 in the appendix replicates the linear and interaction model of the trust index additionally controlling for the municipal share of residents receiving social assistance, the mean municipal distance to the closest medical practitioner in meters as well as the mean municipal distance to the closest elementary school in meters (FSO 2018; 2021). Results are not affected by these controls.

Figure 1. Mean political trust by place of living.
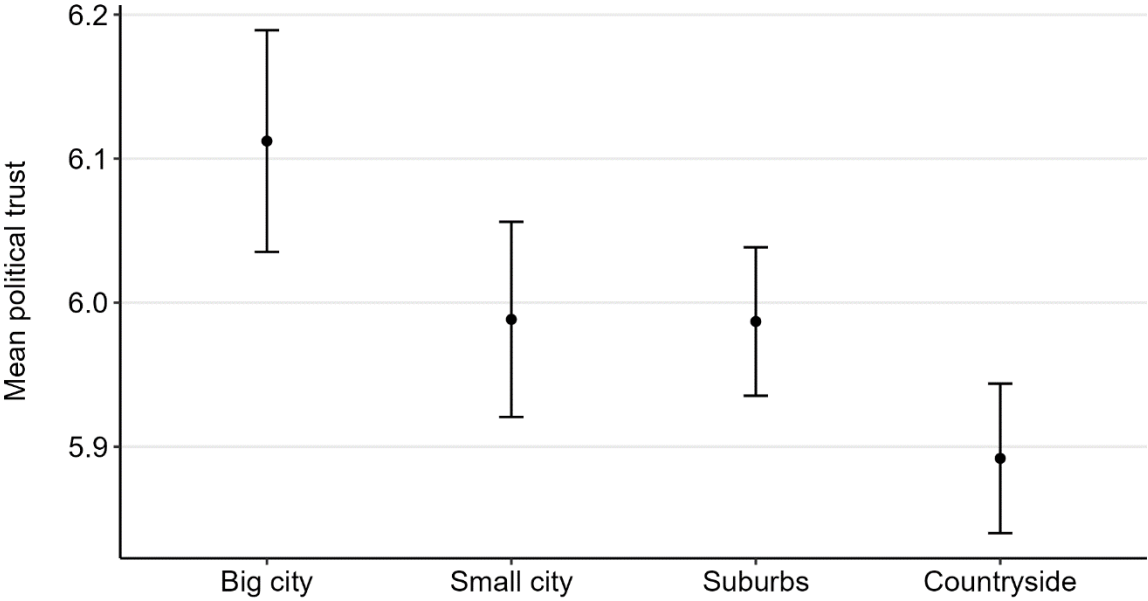
Note: Political trust is measured on a scale from 0 (no trust at all) to 10 (complete trust). The y-axis does not start at 0. *Source: own data set, own calculations.*

Results

The Swiss rural-urban divide in political trust

Starting with some descriptive analysis of the rural-urban divide in political trust, Figure 1 displays the means of the trust index by place of living. It shows that the average level of political trust is slightly higher for residents of big cities, while it is smallest for residents of the countryside with residents of small cities and the suburbs lying in between. The mean level of political trust between residents of the countryside and of big cities is, although statistically significant, not substantial in magnitude with only 0.22 scale points or 12 percent of a standard deviation of the dependent variable (see Table A4 in the appendix).[38] Figure A6 in the appendix presents the mean levels of political trust for the four different objects. While it shows that trust in the justice system is highest among respondents of all four places of living, followed by trust in the government and in the parliament with trust in politicians being much lower, the distribution of trust along the rural-urban continuum is similar with regard to all four objects. Residents of big cities remain the most trusting ones, while rural residents exhibit the lowest levels of political trust. The magnitude of the rural-urban differences are negligible in all four cases (see Tables A4 and A5 in the appendix).

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[38] To account for compositional effects, I re-calculate the same model including all of my controls. Results are presented in Table A5 in the appendix. The effect becomes statistically insignificant by adding the controls and diminishes to only 4 percent of a standard deviation of the dependent variable.

While I can reject the null hypothesis of H1 based on the statistical significance on the effect, it is noteworthy that the rural-urban divide in political trust is not substantial in magnitude. While this result contradicts previous studies, Mitsch, Lee, and Ralph Morrow (2021) find that the rural-urban divide in political trust is mainly carried by southern European countries, and Stein, Buck, and Bjørnå (2021) find a significant but small effect of rurality on political trust. Thus, the geography of political trust might be less clear-cut than research so far indicates. However, all these previous analyses disregard the role of place-based identity as a possible activator of the divide through identification with one's place of living. This is why in the next chapter I test the moderating capacities of place-based identity.

The role of place-based identity

Before turning to the interaction models, I briefly investigate the distribution of place-based identity across places of living. Figure 2 depicts a descriptive analysis of this. It shows that residents of big cities and the countryside exhibit the highest levels of place-based identity, while residents of small cities and suburbs identify significantly less with their place. This is not particularly surprising, since big cities and the countryside are the two most salient groups in the rural-urban conflict and are accordingly mentioned more frequently. This could lead to a stronger identity of the residents of these two pole categories. Residents of small cities, on the other hand, might not necessarily identify as *urban*, as their lifestyle in a small city could be more similar to suburban or rural life. Suburban residents, finally, might identify less strongly with the suburbs, as their identification might also be with the core city of their agglomeration. Hence, place of living as a social identity seems to be predominant in the two groups that are most salient and polar in this conflict, while place of residence matters less for residents of the categories in between the two poles. The difference in place-based identity between residents of big cities—the group with the highest level of place-based identity—and residents of small cities—the group with the lowest level of place-based identity—is 0.39 scale points on a scale from 1 to 5, which amounts to 44 percent of a standard deviation of place-based identity. This is a rather stark difference and shows the potential of place-based identity.

Next, I turn to the results of my interaction model. Figure 3 depicts the linear prediction of political trust for the four places of living along various levels of place-based identity. It shows that place-based identity has significant moderating capacities on the rural-urban divide in political trust. A rural-urban divide in political trust becomes visible for both, respondents with very low and with very high levels of place-based identity. However, the rural-urban divide is inverted by identity. For respondents with the lowest level of place-based identity, residents of the countryside exhibit the highest level of political trust (5.7), followed by residents of small cities (5.5), big cities (5.0) and

the suburbs (5.0). The difference between the rural group and big cities as well as the suburbs is largest and amounts to around 37 percent of a standard deviation of political trust. However, place-based identity increases political trust much stronger in more urban places and does not significantly increase it for rural residents (solid line). This means that for the highest level of place-based identity, the rural-urban divide is inverted with suburban residents (6.7), as well as residents of big cities (6.6) and small cities (6.5) exhibiting significantly higher levels of political trust than ruralites (6.1). The difference is largest between suburban and rural residents and amounts to about 32 percent of a standard deviation of the dependent variable. Hence, place of living indeed does have a moderating effect on the rural-urban divide in political trust and the inversion of the divide along identity might explain why there is barely any descriptive rural-urban divide in political trust, when not accounting for this variation along place-based identity. Table A7 in the appendix confirms that this result not only holds true for the index of political trust but also for all four objects of trust separately.[39]

Figure 2. Mean place-based identity by place of living.
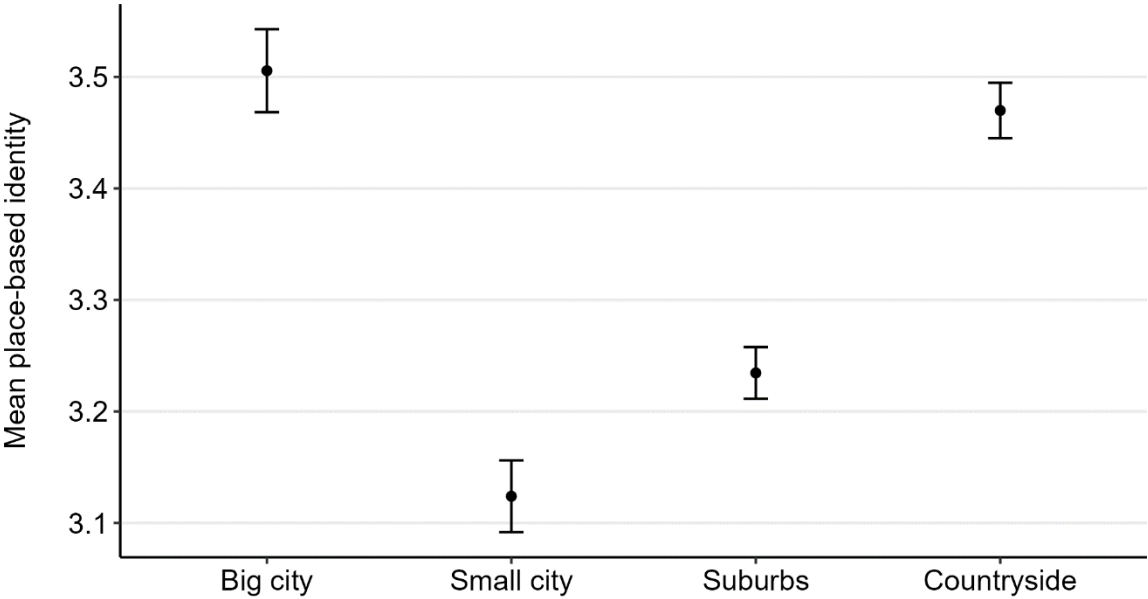
Note: Place-based identity is measured on a scale from 1 to 5 with higher values indicating a higher level of identification. The y-axis does not start at 0. *Source: own data set, own calculations.*

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[39] In all five models, the interaction term between big cities and place-based identity as well as the interaction term between the suburbs and place-based identity is statistically significant. In the model with trust in the justice system, the interaction term between small cities and place-based identity is significant, too.

Figure 3. Predicted political trust along place-based identity.
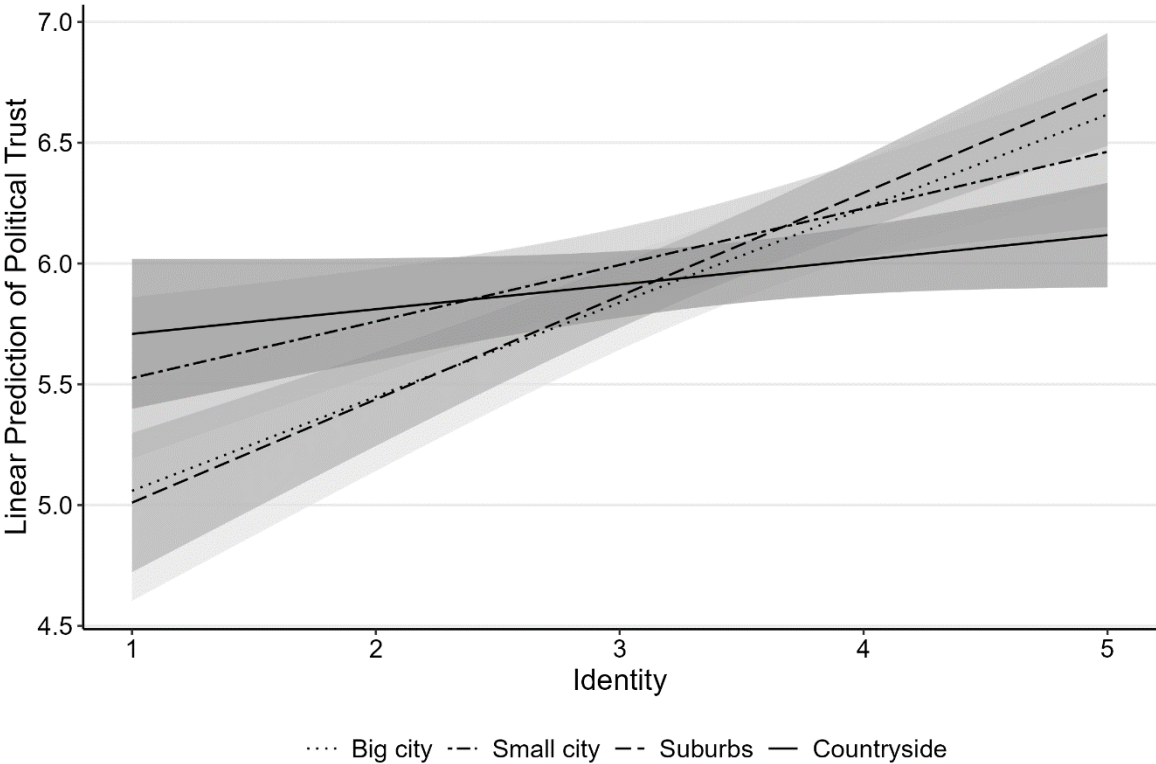
Note: Political trust is measured on a scale from 0 (no trust at all) to 10 (complete trust). The y-axis does not start at 0. *Source: own data set, own calculations.*

Thus, while place-based identity has no significant relationship with political trust of rural residents, it significantly increases trust for suburban and urban dwellers. As more urban places are typically winners of the political system and benefit from it, realising their role as place-based winners and identifying more strongly with their place of living enhances their levels of political trust. On the other hand, rural residents feel left behind by the political system. Hence, a stronger place-based identity does not increase political trust for them, because they do not seem to think that they benefit from the political system. Therefore, Switzerland appears to have two rural-urban divides, which are inverted by place-based identity. This also explains why the divide is rather small when studied descriptively.

The rural-urban divide for high levels of place-based identity is in line with the argument for hypothesis H1, which claims that rural residents are more distrusting of political institutions and actors. However, the finding that for low levels of place-based identity political trust is higher in rural than in urban places is surprising, as rural residents are usually claimed to be less trusting than urban dwellers. This calls for a closer look at those residents who have a low level of place-based identity, which is what I will do in the next section.

Figure 4. Comparison between all respondents and respondents with low place-based identity.

Source: own data set, own calculations.

<u>Who has a low level of place-based identity?</u>

The goal of this section is to shed some light on where a low level of place-based identity might stem from and who the people that express a low level of identification are. This is why Figure 4 summarizes the share of residents who grew up in the same category of place of living than they live in now, as well as the share of residents who would stay in their current place if they could freely choose where they want to live, each broken down by all residents of a place and the ones with a low level of place-based identity.[40] Tables A8 to A11 in the appendix give a more detailed overview of these variables for residents of big cities, small cities, the suburbs and the countryside.

I find that for all four places of living, people with a low level of place-based identity are less likely to have grown up in the same type of place than they are currently living in, and they are more likely to prefer to live in another place than the one they are living in now. The discrepancy is generally larger regarding the preferred place of living and is especially large for residents of big cities and the countryside. For residents of big cities with a low level of place-based identity, I find that they are mostly drawn to rural places which is where they tend to have grown up (see Table A8 in the appendix). Residents of small cities who do not identify with their place of living are also more likely drawn to rural places of living and more than half of them grew up in a rural place (see Table A9 in the appendix). Residents of suburban places are split: While some suburban residents with low levels of place-based identity grew up in big or small cities and would still prefer to live in a city today, an equally large share grew up in the countryside and is still drawn to the rural way of

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[40] I define a low level of place-based identity as someone with a place-based identity index of 2 or below.

life (see Table A10 in the appendix). Lastly, rural residents who do not identify with their place of living are mainly drawn to a more urban lifestyle. Compared to all rural residents, more rural residents with low levels of identity grew up in big cities, and many rural residents with low levels of place-based identity would not only prefer to live in big cities but also in small cities or the suburbs (see Table A11 in the appendix).

Thus, people who do not identify with their current place of living may not lack place-based identification altogether; but they might identify with a place they are not currently living in. Urban residents with low levels of place-based identity are more drawn to rural places, while ruralites with low levels of place-based identity are more drawn to urban places. Suburbanites who do not identify with the suburbs are equally drawn to a more rural and a more urban way of life. Hence, there might be a discrepancy between the place these people are currently living in and the one they subjectively identify with. This in turn would explain the inverted rural-urban divide in political trust I found for low levels of place-based identity: Residents of urban places who actually identify as ruralites might still experience rural resentment and feel as if they were being left behind. Rural residents who identify as urbanites might on the other hand not exhibit these feelings of being left behind. Therefore, the inverted rural-urban divide for people with a low level of place-based identity could in fact be a rural-urban divide as expected in hypothesis H1 but for *hidden* ruralites and urbanites. An investigation of these hidden urbanites and ruralites would therefore be necessary in order to find out whether they have no place-based identity at all or whether they indeed identify with other places of living; and whether this could shape their level of political trust.

In summary, the inverted rural-urban divide for people with low levels of place-based identity might stem from respondents not living in the place they actually identify with. Ruralites with low levels of place-based identity could therefore in fact be hidden urbanites and vice versa.

<u>Robustness checks</u>
Regarding the robustness of my findings, there is the obvious discussion about how to measure place of living. While I measure it with a subjective self-categorization by respondents, many papers also rely on an objective measure (e.g. Huijsmans 2023), using for example the number of inhabitants, density of inhabitants or functional criteria such as number of commuters and the link of continuity of the developed area (Nemerever and Rogers 2021). In Switzerland, there exists a typology by the Federal Statistics Office that relies on a number of objective criteria, i.e. the number of inhabitants, density of inhabitants, density of workplaces, constructural connection and number of commuters (FSO 2014). With some minor changes, the typology can be recoded to produce the

same four categories as I use in the self-categorization question.[41] Replicating my analyses with the objective typology results mainly in the same findings. Political trust does not differ between the different places of living, neither when controlling for age, gender, education, political position, and language region nor without any controls. The interaction model reveals significant interaction terms when comparing the countryside with all other places of living (see Table A12 in the appendix). Just as the findings in Figure 3, the analysis with the objective typology reveals a rural-urban divide with more political trust in rural than in urban places when place-based identity is low, while there is a divide with the least amount of trust in rural areas when place-based identity is high. Thus, my findings are robust to a subjective or an objective typology of the rural-urban divide.

Conclusion

Political trust matters and especially its absence can lead to serious consequences for a political system. This is why it is vital to know and understand the determinants of political trust. Recent literature, which investigates the geographical component of political trust, points out that residents of rural places exhibit significantly lower levels of political trust than their urban counterparts do. This is explained by rural residents' tendency to feel left behind urban residents. The goal of this paper is to investigate the rural-urban divide in political trust in Switzerland while considering place of living as a social identity. Results of a regression analysis based on an original data set from September 2022 reveal no substantial Swiss rural-urban divide in political trust when looking at it descriptively. However, place-based identity functions as a moderator and interacting place of living with place-based identity actually reveals two rural-urban divides: When identity is low, rural residents exhibit higher levels of political trust than their urban counterparts do, while for high levels of place-based identity the divide is reversed with urban residents being more trusting than rural ones. Hence, place-based identity moderates the rural-urban divide in political trust by inverting it. This also explains why there is barely any divide when investigating it descriptively. A brief investigation of residents with a low level of place-based identity further reveals that they may not lack a place-based identity altogether, but that they might currently not live in the place they identify with.

Obviously, this raises questions for future investigations, which could also tackle some limitations of the current paper. First, this paper is unable to make any causal claims about the relationship between place of living, place-based identity and political trust. According to self-

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[41] Agglomeration core municipalities are split according to their size into big (more than 50,000 inhabitants) and small (less than 50,000 inhabitants) cities. Agglomeration belt municipalities and multi-oriented municipalities build the suburban group. Core municipalities outside an agglomeration are either coded as small cities or as rural, depending on whether they are classified as a statistical city or not. Finally, rural communities without urban character form the rural category.

sorting, place of living could depend on the level of political trust instead of preceding it. Future research could tackle this issue by collecting panel data and observing how for example moving from rural to urban or urban to rural places influences political trust. Second, while I expected place-based identity to activate the rural-urban divide in political trust, results showed that identity even reversed the divide, and that rural political trust is higher than urban trust when place-based identity is low. I take a first step towards explaining this result by looking more closely at those people with a low place-based identity. My analysis points to the finding that place-based identity might not be contingent upon a person's current place of living, but that for example a rural resident might also hold an urban or a suburban identity. To investigate this idea more thoroughly, future research might want to survey all three identities—rural, suburban and urban identity—for residents of all places of living. However, future research could also try to find more explanations to why the rural-urban divide is inverted for low levels of place-based identity. Third, I only investigate the case of Switzerland and can therefore not make any claims about the generalizability of my findings. Switzerland is a very peculiar case for several reasons: First, it is a relatively small country and rural and urban places lie geographically close together, which could reduce a mental gap between rural and urban residents. Second, there are only a few very large cities in Switzerland,[42] while many cities are somewhat smaller and have a more rural feel than the very large cities in other countries (see Huijsmans 2023 for a similar argument in the Netherlands). Lastly, there is some institutional protection of the political interests of rural cantons, such as the *Council of States* and the *Majority of the Cantons*.[43] All this could shape the rural-urban divide in Switzerland differently than in other countries. Hence, future research could investigate this relationship and especially the moderating capacity of place-based identity in other contexts.

Political trust is the glue of political systems, and the fact that there is no urban-rural divide in Switzerland seems reassuring at first glance, especially since rural-urban polarization is quite strong in the quarterly direct democratic votes. However, a second glance reveals that there might still be reason for concern, because the expected rural-urban divide in political trust exists when place-based identity is high. If place-based identity becomes stronger in the future, the rural-urban divide could also manifest itself in Switzerland and endanger the stability of the political system. Seeing

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[42] The largest Swiss city is Zurich with about 1,400,000 inhabitants in its agglomeration, which is rather small in international comparison (United Nations 2018).

[43] The *Council of States* is the second chamber of the Swiss parliament and comprises of two members per full canton. Hence, smaller rural cantons are over-represented compared to larger urban cantons (Linder and Müller 2021). The *Majority of the Cantons* applies to constitutional amendments. These have not only to be approved by a majority of the people, but also by a majority of the cantons. Each full cantons gets one vote which is decided based on the popular majority in this canton. If a majority of these cantonal votes is against a constitutional amendment, it gets rejected irrespective of the popular vote (Linder and Müller 2021). Through this mechanism, a rural minority of the population receives veto power.

that the media keep the conflict salient (SRF 2021; Thelitz 2021) and that the Swiss People's Party actively accentuates it (Schweizerische Volkspartei 2021) is worrisome, as this could lead to an intensified place-based identity and more conflicts in the future. At the same time, urban residents who do not identify strongly with their place are already more distrustful of political actors and institutions. Thus, the political elite need to make sure that no geographical or identity group feels left behind, as this might threaten the cohesion of the entire political system.

I would like to conclude by pointing out that the relationship between place of living and political trust is not as simple as it has been discussed so far. Despite a common understanding of rural areas as *left behind* or as *places that don't matter*, my results show that this does not hold true for all rural residents and that in some cases their level of political trust is even higher than in other places of living. Second, my paper shows that place-based identity matters. Place of residence is more than a composition of various socio-demographic variables or different contexts but rather forms its own, distinct social identity. Keeping this finding in mind, I highly encourage future research to investigate the role of place-based identification and place as a social identity in more detail. Identity is a further piece of the puzzle that must be taken into account when trying to grasp and understand the rural-urban divide and its implications, e.g. for political trust and, hence, the stability of political systems.

Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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Appendix

Table A1. Factor analysis oft he four variables of political trust.

Question	Loading
Trust in government	0.853
Trust in parliament	0.898
Trust in the justice system	0.722
Trust in politicians	0.777
Correlation of (regression) scores with factors	0.95
Multiple R square of scores with factors	0.90
Minimum correlation of possible factor scores	0.81

Source: own data set, own calculations.

Table A2. German, French and Italian wording oft he items on place-based identity.

German	French	Italian
Der Begriff [ingroup] beschreibt gut, wie ich mich selber sehe.	Le terme de résident(e) d'une [ingroup] décrit bien la façon dont je me vois.	Il termine abitante della/dell' [ingroup] descrive bene come mi percepisco.
In/Auf [ingroup] zu leben ist sehr wichtig für mich.	Être un(e) habitant(e) d'une [ingroup] est très important pour moi.	Per me è molto importante abitare in [ingroup].
Wenn ich jemanden treffe, der oder die in/auf [ingroup] lebt, dann fühle ich mich dieser Person verbunden.	Quand je rencontre quelqu'un qui vit dans une [ingroup], je me sens proche de cette personne.	Quando incontro qualcuno che vive in [ingroup], mi sento in sintonia con lui o lei.
Ich habe ähnliche Werte wie andere [ingroup].	J'ai des valeurs similaires aux autres personnes qui vivent dans une [ingroup].	Condivido valori simili con le altre persone che vivono in [ingroup].
Ich habe viel mit anderen [ingroup] gemeinsam.	J'ai beaucoup en commun avec d'autres personnes qui vivent dans une [ingroup].	Ho molte cose in comune con le persone che vivono in [ingroup].

Table A3. Detailed description of the control variables.

Variable	Category	Mean or share
Place of living	Big city	14.1 %
	Small city	19.6 %
	Suburbs	33.9 %
	Countryside	32.4 %
Age in years		48.30
Gender	Male	52.8 %
	Female	46.9 %
	Other	0.3 %
Education	Primary education	2.6 %
	Secondary education	55.5 %
	Tertiary education	42.0 %
Income	very difficult to cope	3.9 %
	difficult to cope	10.1 %
	can cope	31.7 %
	can live comfortably	32.6 %
	can live comfortably and safe	21.8 %
Left-right self-placement (from 0 "left" to 10 "right")		4.78
Language region	German-speaking	73.3 %
	French-speaking	22.2 %
	Italian-speaking	4.5 %

Source: own data set, own calculations.

Table A4. Linear regression models without controls.

	Trust-Index	Government	Parliament	Justice system	Politicians
Big city	0.217**	0.142	0.176*	0.282**	0.267**
	(0.095)	(0.112)	(0.107)	(0.112)	(0.108)
Small city	0.098	0.079	0.101	0.144	0.070
	(0.085)	(0.101)	(0.096)	(0.100)	(0.097)
Suburbs	0.087	0.081	0.044	0.193**	0.031
	(0.073)	(0.087)	(0.083)	(0.086)	(0.083)
Constant	5.892***	6.415***	5.843***	6.574***	4.737***
	(0.052)	(0.062)	(0.059)	(0.062)	(0.059)
Observations	3,951	3,951	3,951	3,951	3,951
R^2	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.002	0.002
Adjusted R^2	0.001	–0.000	0.000	0.001	0.001

Note: * p<.10, ** p<.05, *** p<.01. Reference category for place of living is countryside. *Source: own data set, own calculations.*

Table A5. Linear regression models.

	Trust-Index	Government	Parliament	Justice system	Politicians
Big city	0.083	–0.020	0.115	0.066	0.171
	(0.093)	(0.111)	(0.106)	(0.109)	(0.108)
Small city	0.062	0.030	0.075	0.095	0.050
	(0.082)	(0.098)	(0.094)	(0.096)	(0.095)
Suburbs	0.003	–0.021	–0.010	0.077	–0.034
	(0.071)	(0.084)	(0.081)	(0.083)	(0.082)
Age	–0.001	0.005**	–0.007***	–0.001	0.000
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Female gender	–0.038	–0.117*	0.081	–0.252***	0.134**
	(0.058)	(0.069)	(0.067)	(0.068)	(0.068)
Other gender	–0.518	–0.852	–0.488	–1.034*	0.302
	(0.526)	(0.626)	(0.602)	(0.616)	(0.610)
Secondary education	–0.073	0.030	–0.111	0.002	–0.215
	(0.185)	(0.221)	(0.212)	(0.217)	(0.215)
Tertiary education	0.239	0.330	0.159	0.490**	–0.024
	(0.188)	(0.225)	(0.216)	(0.221)	(0.219)
Income	0.404***	0.414***	0.379***	0.453***	0.370***
	(0.028)	(0.034)	(0.032)	(0.033)	(0.033)
Left-right self-placement	–0.073***	–0.110***	–0.019	–0.105***	–0.059**
	(0.013)	(0.016)	(0.015)	(0.016)	(0.016)
French-speaking	0.034	0.067	0.347***	–0.275***	–0.002
	(0.069)	(0.083)	(0.079)	(0.081)	(0.080)
Italian-speaking	0.011	–0.298*	0.195	0.125	0.021
	(0.145)	(0.172)	(0.166)	(0.170)	(0.168)
Constant	4.835***	5.193***	4.804***	5.548***	3.794***
	(0.227)	(0.271)	(0.260)	(0.266)	(0.264)
Observations	3,951	3,951	3,951	3,951	3,951
Adjusted R^2	0.075	0.064	0.051	0.089	0.042

Note: * p<.10, ** p<.05, *** p<.01. Reference category for place of living is countryside, reference category for gender is male, reference category for education is primary education, reference category for the language region is German-speaking. *Source: own dataset, own calculations.*

Figure A6. Mean political trust by place of living for all four objects of political trust.
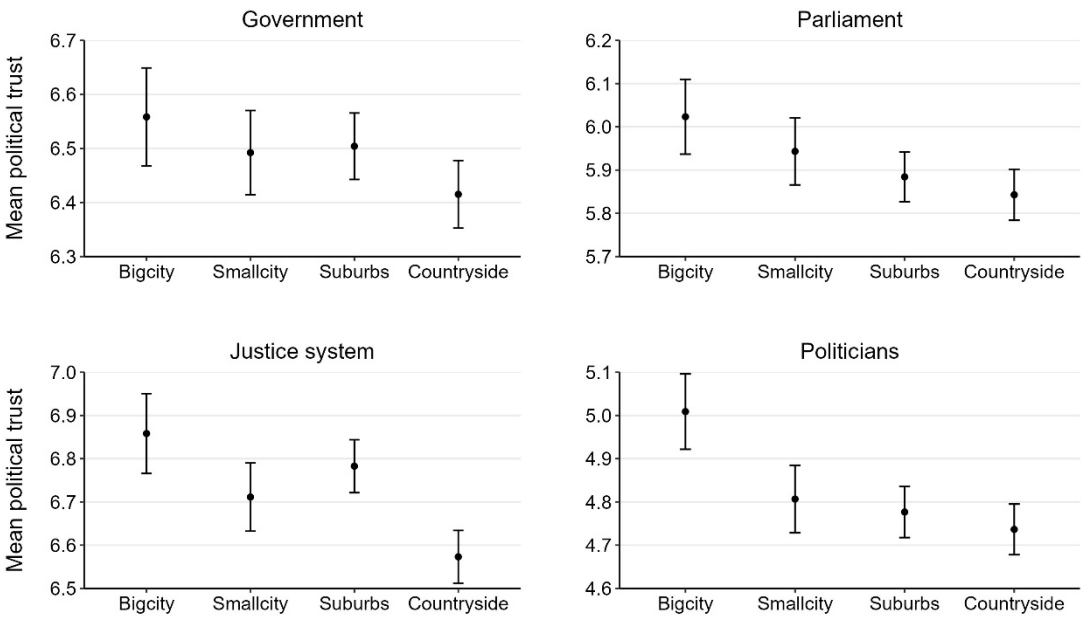
Source: own data set, own calculations.

Table A7. Interaction models for all objects of political trust.

	Trust-Index	Government	Parliament	Justice system	Politicians
Big city	−0.936**	−1.258***	−0.832*	−0.761*	−0.895**
	(0.374)	(0.447)	(0.429)	(0.441)	(0.434)
Small city	−0.315	−0.199	−0.173	−0.467	−0.419
	(0.314)	(0.375)	(0.360)	(0.369)	(0.364)
Suburbs	−1.023***	−1.142***	−0.961***	−1.016***	−0.975***
	(0.282)	(0.338)	(0.324)	(0.333)	(0.327)
Place-based identity	0.102*	0.066	0.133**	0.051	0.159**
	(0.058)	(0.070)	(0.067)	(0.069)	(0.068)
Big city #identity	0.287***	0.350***	0.266**	0.233*	0.299**
	(0.104)	(0.125)	(0.120)	(0.123)	(0.121)
Small city #identity	0.132	0.080	0.094	0.186	0.168
	(0.093)	(0.111)	(0.107)	(0.110)	(0.108)
Suburbs #identity	0.325***	0.352***	0.304***	0.342***	0.303***
	(0.082)	(0.098)	(0.094)	(0.096)	(0.095)
Age	−0.002	0.004*	−0.008***	−0.002	−0.001
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Female gender	−0.040	−0.118*	0.079	−0.253***	0.130*
	(0.058)	(0.069)	(0.066)	(0.068)	(0.067)
Other gender	−0.495	−0.823	−0.466	−1.014*	0.323
	(0.520)	(0.622)	(0.597)	(0.613)	(0.603)
Secondary education	−0.064	0.036	−0.103	0.011	−0.201
	(0.183)	(0.219)	(0.210)	(0.216)	(0.213)
Tertiary education	0.287	0.371*	0.209	0.533**	0.035
	(0.187)	(0.223)	(0.214)	(0.220)	(0.216)
Income	0.395	0.406***	0.370***	0.445***	0.359***
	(0.028)	(0.034)	(0.032)	(0.033)	(0.033)
Left-right self-placement	−0.071***	−0.107***	−0.017	−0.102***	−0.057***
	(0.013)	(0.016)	(0.015)	(0.016)	(0.016)
French-speaking	0.024	0.062	0.336***	−0.285***	−0.018
	(0.069)	(0.082)	(0.079)	(0.081)	(0.080)
Italian-speaking	−0.033	−0.330*	0.153	0.082	−0.035
	(0.144)	(0.172)	(0.165)	(0.169)	(0.167)
Constant	4.532***	5.009***	4.399***	5.414***	3.307***
	(0.296)	(0.355)	(0.340)	(0.349)	(0.344)
Observations	3,951	3,951	3,951	3,951	3,951
R²	0.098	0.080	0.070	0.103	0.066
Adjusted R²	0.094	0.076	0.067	0.100	0.062

Note: * p<.10, ** p<.05, *** p<.01. Reference category for place of living is countryside, reference category for gender is male, reference category for education is primary education, reference category for the language region is German-speaking. *Source: own data set, own calculations.*

Table A8. Comparison of all big city residents and big city residents with low place-based identity.

Variable	Category	Big city residents (all)	Big city resident with low identity
Place of growing up	Big city	41.7 %	25.0 %
	Small city	13.8 %	12.5 %
	Suburbs	13.1 %	10.4 %
	Countryside	31.3 %	52.1 %
Preferred place of living	Big city	60.0 %	33.3 %
	Small city	15.0 %	22.2 %
	Suburbs	10.7 %	22.2 %
	Countryside	14.3 %	42.2 %
Years of living in their place		15.7 years	14.5 years
		N=557	N=48

Source: own data set, own calculations.

Table A9. Comparison of all small city residents and small city residents with low place-based identity.

Variable	Category	Small city residents (all)	Small city resident with low identity
Place of growing up	Big city	17.1 %	9.3 %
	Small city	35.7 %	29.7 %
	Suburbs	9.2 %	8.5 %
	Countryside	38.1 %	52.5 %
Preferred place of living	Big city	13.4 %	1.8 %
	Small city	46.8 %	35.4 %
	Suburbs	21.5 %	21.2 %
	Countryside	18.2 %	41.6 %
Years of living in their place		16.4 years	15.0 years
		N=776	N=118

Source: own data set, own calculations.

Table A10. Comparison of all suburban residents and suburban residents with low place-based identity.

Variable	Category	Suburban residents (all)	Suburban resident with low identity
Place of growing up	Big city	17.8 %	19.0 %
	Small city	10.9 %	13.9 %
	Suburbs	33.2 %	23.4 %
	Countryside	38.1 %	43.8 %
Preferred place of living	Big city	9.8 %	20.3 %
	Small city	14.5 %	9.0 %
	Suburbs	51.5 %	33.8 %
	Countryside	24.2 %	36.8 %
Years of living in their place		16.3 years	13.8 years
		N=1,339	N=137

Source: own data set, own calculations.

Table A11. Comparison of all rural residents and rural residents with low place-based identity.

Variable	Category	Rural residents (all)	Rural resident with low identity
Place of growing up	Big city	11.5 %	19.6 %
	Small city	10.8 %	11.3 %
	Suburbs	11.1 %	8.2 %
	Countryside	66.5 %	60.8 %
Preferred place of living	Big city	4.4 %	19.1 %
	Small city	6.5 %	23.4 %
	Suburbs	11.6 %	19.1 %
	Countryside	77.4 %	38.3 %
Years of living in their place		17.3 years	15.4 years
		N=1,279	N=98

Source: own data set, own calculations.

Table A12. Results with objective typology.

	Trust-Index		
Big city	0.292** (0.143)	0.143 (0.139)	−1.102* (0.591)
Small city	0.242 (0.157)	0.182 (0.152)	−0.534 (0.614)
Suburbs	0.134 (0.122)	0.047 (0.118)	−0.776 (0.506)
Place-based identity			0.024 (0.131)
Big city#identity			0.349** (0.160)
Small city#identity			0.228 (0.172)
Suburbs#identity			0.255* (0.136)
Age		−0.001 (0.002)	−0.002 (0.002)
Female gender		−0.038 (0.058)	−0.047 (0.058)
Other gender		−0.520 (0.526)	−0.524 (0.522)
Secondary education		−0.065 (0.186)	−0.048 (0.185)
Tertiary education		0.251 (0.189)	0.304 (0.188)
Income		0.403*** (0.028)	0.394*** (0.028)
Left-right self-placement		−0.073*** (0.013)	−0.074*** (0.013)
French-speaking		0.039 (0.070)	0.010 (0.070)
Italian-speaking		−0.011 (0.146)	−0.046 (0.144)
Constant	5.816*** (0.117)	4.784*** (0.248)	4.757*** (0.534)
Observations	3,940	3,940	3,940
R²	0.001	0.078	0.095
Adjusted R²	0.001	0.075	0.091

Note: * p<.10, ** p<.05, *** p<.01. Reference category for place of living is countryside, reference category for gender is male, reference category for education is primary education, reference category for the language region is German-speaking. *Sources: FSO 2014, own data set, own calculations.*

Table A13. Models without education and income.

	Trust-Index	
Big city	0.150 (0.096)	−1.320*** (0.390)
Small city	0.068 (0.086)	−0.730** (0.328)
Suburbs	0.062 (0.074)	−1.029*** (0.298)
Place-based identity		0.029 (0.062)
Big city#identity		0.419*** (0.109)
Small city#identity		0.260*** (0.097)
Suburbs#identity		0.340*** (0.086)
Age	−0.001 (0.002)	−0.002 (0.002)
Female gender	−0.117* (0.061)	−0.121** (0.060)
Other gender	−1.011* (0.542)	−0.974* (0.537)
Left-right self-placement	−0.078*** (0.014)	−0.074*** (0.014)
French-speaking	0.018 (0.072)	0.008 (0.072)
Italian-speaking	−0.101 (0.150)	−0.150 (0.149)
Constant	6.403*** (0.128)	6.330*** (0.237)
Observations	3,861	3,861
R²	0.011	0.031
Adjusted R²	0.009	0.027

Note: * p<.10, ** p<.05, *** p<.01. Reference category for place of living is countryside, reference category for gender is male, reference category for the language region is German-speaking. *Source: own data set, own calculations.*

Table A14. Models controlling for factors on the municipal level.

	Trust-Index					
Big city	0.133 (0.107)	−0.928** (0.379)	0.063 (0.099)	−1.001*** (0.377)	0.133 (0.101)	−0.952** (0.378)
Small city	0.087 (0.087)	−0.367 (0.318)	0.046 (0.086)	−0.397 (0.317)	0.094 (0.087)	−0.375 (0.318)
Suburbs	0.029 (0.075)	−0.977*** (0.288)	−0.007 (0.075)	−1.004*** (0.288)	0.037 (0.075)	−0.975*** (0.288)
Place-based identity		0.086 (0.060)		0.089 (0.060)		0.083 (0.060)
Big city#identity		0.306*** (0.105)		0.300*** (0.105)		0.308*** (0.105)
Small city#identity		0.158* (0.094)		0.152 (0.094)		0.160* (0.094)
Suburbs#identity		0.320*** (0.083)		0.314*** (0.083)		0.320*** (0.083)
Share social assistance	−0.016 (0.017)	−0.024 (0.017)				
Distance to doctor			−0.000 (0.000)	−0.000 (0.000)		
Distance to school					0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)
Age	−0.001 (0.002)	−0.002 (0.002)	−0.001 (0.002)	−0.002 (0.002)	−0.001 (0.002)	−0.002 (0.002)
Female gender	−0.027 (0.059)	−0.030 (0.058)	−0.026 (0.059)	−0.028 (0.058)	−0.024 (0.059)	−0.026 (0.058)
Other gender	−0.519 (0.525)	−0.503 (0.520)	−0.500 (0.525)	−0.478 (0.520)	−0.540 (0.525)	−0.521 (0.520)
Secondary education	−0.050 (0.189)	−0.042 (0.187)	−0.045 (0.189)	−0.036 (0.187)	−0.049 (0.189)	−0.039 (0.187)
Tertiary education	0.267 (0.192)	0.311 (0.190)	0.273* (0.192)	0.318* (0.190)	0.272 (0.192)	0.317* (0.190)
Income	0.402*** (0.029)	0.391*** (0.028)	0.403*** (0.029)	0.393*** (0.028)	0.403*** (0.029)	0.392*** (0.028)
Left-right self-placement	−0.073*** (0.014)	−0.070*** (0.014)	−0.072*** (0.014)	−0.069*** (0.014)	−0.072*** (0.014)	−0.069*** (0.014)
French-speaking	0.055 (0.072)	0.047 (0.072)	0.039 (0.070)	0.024 (0.070)	0.022 (0.072)	0.005 (0.071)
Italian-speaking	−0.010 (0.146)	−0.058 (0.145)	−0.006 (0.146)	−0.051 (0.144)	−0.024 (0.146)	−0.071 (0.145)
Constant	4.847*** (0.236)	4.623*** (0.306)	4.836*** (0.237)	4.583*** (0.305)	4.706*** (0.243)	4.460*** (0.310)
Observations	3,861	3,861	3,861	3,861	3,861	3,861
R²	0.078	0.098	0.078	0.078	0.078	0.098
Adjusted R²	0.075	0.094	0.075	0.075	0.075	0.094

Note: * p<.10, ** p<.05, *** p<.01. Reference category for place of living is countryside, reference category for gender is male, reference category for education is primary education, reference category for the language region is German-speaking. *Sources: FSO 2018, own data set, own calculations.*

4. Article 3: The Geography of Autocracy. Regime Preferences along the Rural-Urban Divide in 32 Countries

Abstract

There is growing concern about a political divide between urban and rural places. Against this background, we evaluate the geography of regime preferences regarding a key aspect of democratic support, e.g. attitudes towards democracy and its authoritarian alternatives. We would like to find out whether possible rural-urban differences are due to different socio-economic situations, differing values or to the degree of political discontent of urbanites and rural dwellers. Using recent European Values Survey data from 32 European countries and over 30,000 respondents from 2017 to 2020, we show that rural residents are more supportive of authoritarian regimes than urban dwellers are. Moreover, our path analyses indicate that socio-economic and cultural differences between urbanites and ruralites are particularly crucial, while the political mechanisms cannot explain the spatial divide of regime preferences.

Keywords: rural-urban divide; democracy; authoritarian rule; comparative analysis; path analysis

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[44] I have adapted the citation style so that it is consistent with the rest of the dissertation and I have updated the specified years of publications where applicable. The enumeration of the footnotes continues throughout the entire dissertation. I have not made any changes with regard to the content of the article.

Introduction

There is growing concern about a political divide between urban and rural places (Lago 2022; Mitsch, Lee, and Ralph Morrow 2021).[45] Numerous studies demonstrate greater sympathy for right-wing populists, stronger opposition to immigration, less trust in political institutions and greater political dissatisfaction in rural regions than in urban ones (e.g. Cramer 2016; Dijkstra, Poelman, and Rodríguez-Pose 2020; Harteveld, Van Der Brug, and De Lange 2019; Jennings and Stoker 2016; Kenny and Luca 2021; Lichter and Ziliak 2017; Maxwell 2019; McKay, Jennings, and Stoker 2021; Neal et al. 2021; Scala and Johnson 2017). It seems, that democratic challenges are more pronounced amongst citizens in the rural periphery than amongst their metropolitan counterparts.

This is the starting point of our investigation. In this article, we aim to supplement previous research and evaluate the geography of regime preferences regarding a key aspect of democratic support, e.g. attitudes towards democracy and its authoritarian alternatives.[46] Building on key insights of social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 1979), we argue that place provides the basis for a shared place-based social identity. Munis (2022, 1059) maintains that "place identity refers to a sense of belonging to a group whose membership is defined by living in a particular place and having a psychological attachment of group-based perception with other group members." Moreover, people's consciousness of belonging to a group and their psychological bonds to those groups promote the propensity for in-group bias (Tajfel and Turner 1979). In competition-oriented settings such as politics, this kind of in-group bias can lead to animosity towards other groups and to intergroup conflict such as a rural-urban conflict.

With our study we address two primary goals. First, we want to investigate whether a rural-urban divide regarding regime preference exists. With this, we deal with the nitty-gritty: with the backing of democratic principles, which, as a pivotal aspect of diffuse political support are fundamental to the survival of a political system (Norris 2017b). Ever since Lipset (1959) and Easton (1965), it is widely believed that democracy requires public support to survive (Claassen 2020). Second, we aim to uncover the underlying mechanisms of this geographical divide. In general, research on the rural-urban divide agrees on the rural population feeling left behind their

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[45] With regard to political trust, Mitsch, Lee, and Ralph Morrow (2021) report that polarization between urban and rural Europe has actually increased over the past decade. We find the same for democratic support in recent years (results are available upon request).

[46] It should be noted that, building on Easton (1965) different types of diffuse and specific support can be identified. Thus, according to Dalton (2004) and Norris (2017b), the concept of democratic support examined here must be analytically separated from political trust types as an approval of core regime principles and values. While the latter tends to the specific types of support, the concept analysed here is to be classified as diffuse support. Moreover, according to this conceptual clarification, satisfaction with democracy is to distinguish from democratic support (Claassen 2020).

urban counterparts. This unpleasant feeling is fuelled by three mechanisms: socio-economic, cultural and political. While these paths have been theoretically asserted many times, they have not yet empirically been tested in a well-founded manner, especially not comparatively against one another or in a large number of countries.

The *socio-economic mechanism* follows the idea that people in rural areas are being "left behind" by current processes such as globalization and financial crises. Their socio-economic status worsens due to these challenges, while urban residents profit from them. This widening socio-economic gap leaves rural residents dissatisfied and resentful. They will consequently turn away from the current democratic government that seems unable to properly safeguard their socio-economic status. Instead, rural residents develop a stronger preference for an authoritarian government from which they expect greater protection (Kriesi et al. 2008; Lipset 1959; Rodríguez-Pose 2018).

The second mechanism follows a rural-urban divide with regard to *norms and values*, as it has recently been declared by Kaufmann (2016) regarding the 2016 UK Brexit vote. Rural residents adhere to more conservative authoritative and communitarian norms and values, whereas attitudes of urban dwellers are on average more liberal, cosmopolitan, transnational and progressive. Further, culturally conservative people are more open to authoritarian governments, as they might see authoritarian governance as an effective way of upholding their traditional virtues (Malka et al. 2022). Therefore, people in rural areas will exhibit a stronger preference for authoritarian as opposed to democratic governments.

Third, the *political path* follows the idea that the rural population's feelings of being left behind are mainly due to political reasons. Rural residents feel ignored and marginalized by political decision makers, who seem to be an urban elite only catering to the needs of big cities (Cramer 2016; Jacobs and Munis 2022). This political devaluation gives rise to dissatisfaction with and distrust of democratic institutions and leads to a lower preference for democracies as opposed to autocracies among the rural population (Sarsfield and Echegaray 2006).

We test these assumptions drawing on individual-level data from the European Values Study (EVS) from 2017 to 2020. The dataset consists of roughly 30,000 observations from 32 countries. We employ multiple regression and path analyses with country-fixed effects. Our analysis shows that, compared to urbanites, respondents living in rural areas indeed exhibit a stronger preference for authoritarian as opposed to democratic governments. Moreover, our path analyses indicate that education, moral values and ethnic conceptions of nationhood are the most crucial mediators. In a nutshell, our analyses show that socio-economic and cultural differences between urbanites and ruralites are particularly crucial, while the political mechanisms cannot explain the spatial divide of regime preferences.

Overall, our study contributes to the literature in several respects. First, despite growing research on the rural-urban divide in elections, policy-attitudes, populism, and political trust, little to no research in this strand of literature has yet explored public preferences for democracy and its authoritarian alternatives, e.g. rule by the army or a strong leader. In this respect, our study goes beyond previous analyses of political trust and populism and adds new nuances to the existing knowledge. In addition, we move beyond the investigation of the mere existence of a spatial divide. Our findings demonstrate the need to unravel the black box of possible mechanisms of the geographical gap to get a more accurate picture of the driving forces behind the rural-urban divide. Since there is growing evidence that spatial marginalization fuels feelings of discontent, we can reveal the deeper roots of this phenomenon. While these roots are by no means original arguments, we test them in a methodologically sound way. Comparing the different arguments via path-analyses, possible indications for bridging the rural-urban divide could be derived. To the best of our knowledge, this kind of analysis has never been carried out. Moreover, unlike most studies that rely on a single country to study the spatial divide with regard to political attitudes, we provide a comparative perspective of the rural-urban divide in 32 European countries to arrive at findings that are more generalizable. Finally, our findings also bear relevant policy implications. To increase support for democracy, it is essential that policymakers know where to start and where democratic support is high or low to begin with. Still, 30 percent of respondents in our European data set live rurally (see Figure A1 in the Supplemental Appendix), a number that is quite relevant against the background of the present results. Accordingly, if there is a geography of democratic support, it is vital to know and understand it.

Background: democratic deconsolidation and democratic support

For democracy to remain "the only game in town", three factors must be fulfilled: The state's key actors must reflect democratic norms and practices (constitution), no significant groups should attempt to overthrow the regime (behaviour) and, finally, the overwhelming majority of people should see democracy as the best type of regime (culture) (Linz and Stepan 1996; Norris 2017a). However, even in the most consolidated democracies in Europe, there has been a trend towards less democratic support in recent years. Foa and Mounk (2017) coined the term democratic deconsolidation to describe this process; a sizable minority of citizens ceasing to believe in democracy and instead preferring authoritarian alternatives.

More than 50 years ago, Lipset (1959) and Easton (1965) hypothesized that popular support is crucial for democracy. Since then, scholars have widely agreed and empirically demonstrated that popular backing for democratic regimes over their authoritarian alternatives is a pivotal democratic foundation (Claassen 2020; Dalton 2004; Foa and Mounk 2016; 2017; Inglehart 2016; Linz and

Stepan 1996; Norris 2017a; Zilinsky 2019). For this reason, democratic support has already received considerable scholarly attention. The roots of regime preference have already been explored in terms of life-cycle and generation effects, socio-economic status, political trust, values, populist attitudes and parties (see for example Ceka and Magalhães 2020; Foa and Mounk 2016; Klingemann, Fuchs, and Zielonka 2006; Letsa and Wilfahrt 2018; Norris 2017a; Zaslove et al. 2021; Zilinsky 2019). It is therefore quite startling, that there is no analysis on the geography of autocracy. We try to start to fill this gap.

Theoretical linkages: the rural-urban divide of democratic support

The rural-urban divide was popularized by the cleavage theory of Lipset and Rokkan (1967) and emerged at the time of the Industrial Revolution. At that time, a conflict arose between agricultural and industrial interests. In the last decades of globalization and modernization, the rural-urban divide also emerged in terms of values and attitudes between the winners and losers of globalization and has consequently received increased attention (Hooghe and Marks 2018; Kriesi et al. 2008). Today, differences between urban and rural populations can be seen in all kinds of political spheres such as the 2016 and 2020 US elections, and the 2016 Brexit vote, but also in political attitudes, populist party choice as well as political trust (Cramer 2016; De Dominicis, Dijkstra, and Pontarollo 2020; Deppisch, Osigus, and Klärner 2021; Jennings and Stoker 2016; 2019; Kenny and Luca 2021; Kelly and Lobao 2019; Maxwell 2019; 2020; Mitsch, Lee, and Ralph Morrow 2021; Munis 2022; Neal et al. 2021; Rodríguez-Pose 2018; Scala and Johnson 2017; Schoene 2019; Wuthnow 2018). However, the rural-urban divide has not yet been examined with regard to democratic support.

The main argument for a rural-urban divide is that the rural population feels as if they were *left behind* the urban population. The prerequisite for this argument are processes of social categorization, social identification, and social comparison (Tajfel and Turner 1979). People categorize themselves as belonging to a rural area. Through social interactions with the resident individuals, they develop a strong emotional attachment to this geographically bounded place. As shown by various geographers, sociologists, and environmental psychologists, people are connected to the places in which they live, and places operate as the basis for a shared place-based social identity (Munis 2022, 1059). The building of a place-based identity, however, leads to in-group favouritism and is accompanied by an ongoing comparison with out-groups one does not identify with. If the comparisons turn out to be unfavourable on the side of the in-group, animosities towards the out-group can arise and feelings of disadvantage can develop. Regarding the rural-urban divide on the political realm, this translates to less trust in political parties, politicians, and national parliaments by the rural population, compared to their urban counterparts, for example (Kenny and Luca 2021; Mitsch, Lee, and Ralph Morrow 2021).

While research on the rural-urban divide agrees that the rural population feels left behind and, therefore, tends to be critical of the political system (Cramer 2016; De Dominicis, Dijkstra, and Pontarollo 2020; Deppisch, Osigus, and Klärner 2021; Kenny and Luca 2021; Mitsch, Lee, and Ralph Morrow 2021; Rodríguez-Pose 2018; Schoene 2019; Wuthnow 2018), just what the driving force of this discontent is remains controversial (Cramer 2016; Gordon 2018). Here, previous studies on the rural-urban divide put forward a socio-economic, a cultural, and a political mechanism (Kaufmann 2016; Kelly and Lobao 2019; Maxwell 2019; Schoene 2019).

The *socio-economic* explanation suggests that rural people, who are often less educated, poorer and with worse employment and mobility opportunities, fear for their socio-economic status (Dijkstra, Poelman, and Rodríguez-Pose 2020; Gordon 2018; Kriesi et al. 2008; Maxwell 2019; Scala and Johnson 2017; Schoene 2019). Recent globalization and modernization developments downsize their manual jobs in traditionally protected sectors, which are to some extent outsourced or taken over by foreign workers. These developments are all the more threatening, because the democratic system with its institutionalized insecurities cannot guarantee that rural people get the "fair share" they believe they deserve (Cramer 2016; Przeworski 2019) In turn, individuals with a lower socio-economic status exhibit lower support for democratic settings and are instead more prone to preferring authoritarian political systems with strong leadership ensuring collective security (Howe 2017; Lipset 1959).[47] Thus, due to their on average lower socio-economic status and because of their unfulfilled economic interests, rural residents should exhibit higher levels of democratic deconsolidation as opposed to urban dwellers.

The *cultural* path follows a more value-based approach (Kaufmann 2016).[48] While cosmopolitan, liberal, progressive and open-minded values prevail in urban centres, rural residents are inclined to be more traditional, conservative, inward-looking and nostalgic. With the increasing globalization and modernization of society, the more conservative rural population also feels left behind in a cultural sense, while the world is growing ever more progressive (Cramer 2016; Gordon 2018; Jennings and Stoker 2019; Maxwell 2019; Mitsch, Lee, and Ralph Morrow 2021; Schoene 2019; Wuthnow 2018). That is, while urban dwellers see the changes as an opportunity and welcome the associated possibilities for personal development, rural residents feel that their traditions, identities, values and lifestyles are threatened by the ongoing modernization. This trend towards an ever-changing, cosmopolitan, transnational, and liberal world is reinforced by democracies. In contrast,

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[47] Such rhetoric is often used by populist-authoritarian parties that seek to appeal to the "losers" of globalization by promoting nativist values and scepticism towards globalization (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2012; Rooduijn 2015).

[48] Kaufmann (2016) investigates the UK 2016 Brexit vote and finds that rural-urban differences in the voting pattern are not primarily explained by the rural population feeling threatened in their socio-economic status and neglected with their material concerns, but rather that voting behaviour is mainly explained by personal values.

authoritarian systems may appear to preserve traditional values and the status quo better than their democratic counterparts. Malka et al. (2022) find that cultural conservatism is consistently associated with openness to authoritarian governance. Consequently, the more conservative rural population should show a stronger preference for authoritarian regimes than the urban population, mainly because they feel left behind in a cultural sense.

Finally, the *political* mechanism assumes that the rural population feels left behind mainly due to political reasons and that this leads to resentments towards the democratic regime. There are various reasons why the rural population could feel politically marginalized due to where they live. Media representation and political decisions lead them to feel as though politicians are an urban elite that ignores their needs, not recognizing the real problems in rural areas and instead only catering to the needs of big cities (Cramer 2016; Jacobs and Munis 2022; Mitsch, Lee, and Ralph Morrow 2021; Scala and Johnson 2017; Schoene 2019; Wuthnow 2018). Additionally, being physically removed from urban centres where political decisions are made, makes the rural population feel powerless and excluded from political processes (Stein, Buck, and Bjørnå 2021). These factors contribute to the rural population feeling disadvantaged, and dissatisfied with and distrusting of politics (Jacobs and Munis 2022). Altogether, these feelings might translate into a decrease in democratic support, e.g. a lower preference for a democratic regime (Sarsfield and Echegaray 2006). Authoritarian alternatives can subsequently appear as more efficacious systems from which the politically forsaken rural population expects to better meet their needs.

Research design, variables and methods

<u>Data and operationalization</u>

In the remainder of the article, we will empirically test the relationships presented above. We use data from the latest wave of the European Values Study from 2017 to 2020 (European Values Study 2017). The dataset contains around 30,000 usable observations from 32 different countries.[49] The respondents were interviewed face to face about various aspects of their lives, society and politics.

Regarding our dependent variable, we follow Erhardt, Wamsler, and Freitag (2021) and opt for a measure that distinguishes the support of respondents for a democratic regime vis-a-vis authoritarian alternatives.[50] The EVS asks respondents whether they perceive certain types of

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[49] Of the 34 countries in the EVS dataset, Great Britain and the Netherlands have to be excluded due to missing data.

[50] The democracy-autocracy preference scale has been established and has found increasing use in literature as a measure of diffuse support for democracy (Erhardt, Wamsler, and Freitag 2021). This scale is called a preference scale because it implicitly compares support for democracy with support for authoritarian alternatives, even though it does not directly measure an order of preference for different regimes. The EVS also includes the item d) having experts, not government, make decisions according to what they think is best for the country. However, as Erhardt, Wamsler,

political systems to be a good way of governing their country, including (a) a democratic political system, (b) a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections, and (c) having the army rule the country, with answers ranging from very bad (0) to very good (3). We combine the three items onto a single scale as the average of the three items (with leader rule and army rule reversed, so that higher values indicate a preference for more democratic systems).[51] The resulting variable ranges from "0" to "3", with a higher number indicating a stronger preference for democratic rule.

With respect to our main independent variable, urbanity is measured with the size of the town where the interview was conducted. This variable serves as a proxy for the actual place of residence of the respondents.[52] Population size is one of the most established measures of rurality and urbanity (Nemerever and Rogers 2021). The EVS asks for the size of the town with regard to five categories: less than 5,000 inhabitants, 5,000–20,000 inhabitants, 20,000–100,000 inhabitants, 100,000–500,000 inhabitants and more than 500,000 inhabitants. Most respondents (31 percent) live in the smallest category, while around 20 percent of respondents live in the second and third categories each; 16 percent live in the second largest category and about 13 percent live in a town with more than 500,000 inhabitants. We treat these five categories of urbanity as a continuous variable.[53]

With respect to the socio-economic status as our first mediator we follow the current literature on the rural-urban divide and political resentments and rely on variables commonly used to measure a respondent's socio-economic status: education, income and dependency on social security (Kenny and Luca 2021; Maxwell 2019; 2020). Education is operationalized using a 9-level variable measuring the highest educational attainment according to ISCED coding, with a higher number corresponding to a higher level of education. Income is measured using the decile of the net household income. The dependency on social security is a binary variable, which measures whether the respondent relied on social security during the last five years ("0" No; "1" Yes).

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and Freitag (2021) we exclude this item from the analysis because expert rule can occur in democracies and need not necessarily be undemocratic.

[51] An exploratory factor analysis (not shown here) indicates that the items load onto a single factor (factor loadings: democracy 0.58, strong leader −0.80, army −0.80).

[52] We are aware that the size of the town where the interview was conducted is only a proxy for urbanity. A small town could be located in between two large cities in a densely populated region. However, we are more interested in the rural-urban cleavage than in the center-periphery cleavage. The only alternative spatial data in the EVS are the NUTS regions, but we decided against them as they are too large and do not cover spatial differences accurately enough.

[53] We re-calculated the regression models with alternative codings of the urbanity variable, i.e. dichotomous variables with varying cut-off values. This did not change our findings substantially (results are available upon request).

The second mediator is cultural. To measure a respondent's values, we rely on a set of items that are used as an expression of a threatened lifestyle and of a (rural) moral community under siege (Cramer 2016; Kaufmann 2016; Mitsch, Lee, and Ralph Morrow 2021; Wuthnow 2018). Again, we employ three different operationalizations: ethnic conception of nationhood, authoritarianism and a moral values index. Ethnic conception of nationhood is a concept from national identity. It measures the degree to which respondents find ethnic characteristics important for belonging to a nation. Specifically, this is operationalized using the mean of the two items: Whether it is important to be born in a country and whether it is important to have ancestry from that country in order to be part of that nation. The variable runs from "1" (not at all important) to "4" (very important). Authoritarianism is measured with the question of whether it would be good or bad to have greater respect for authority. Respondents could answer this question with good (3), they do not mind (2) or bad (1).[54] Finally, the composite index of moral values consists of four items on moral value questions. Respondents could indicate whether they justify homosexuality, abortion, divorce and euthanasia on a scale from "1" (never) to "10" (always). The mean value of these four items is then taken to build an index of moral values.[55]

Third, three measures are used to operationalize the political path: satisfaction with the functioning of the political system, trust in parliament and trust in the government. Previous research has shown that these attitudes are important indicators of the feeling of not being heard politically (Cramer 2016; Mitsch, Lee, and Ralph Morrow 2021).[56] For political satisfaction, respondents could answer on a scale from "1" (not satisfied at all) to "10" (completely satisfied) how satisfied they were with the functioning of the political system. Regarding trust in parliament and trust in the government, respondents declare how much confidence they have in their government and their national parliament on a scale from "1" (none at all) to "4" (a great deal).

Finally, with regard to the controls, we include the respondent's sex ("0" = female, "1" = male), their age in years and their political left-right position on a scale from "1" (left) to "10" (right). We rely on these variables according to the rural-urban literature (Kenny and Luca 2021; Maxwell 2019).[57]

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[54] Even though authoritarianism might seem close to our dependent variable, it is empirically and conceptually distinct from attitudes towards democratic/authoritarian regimes (Dunn 2020). In this regard authoritarianism can be defined as "social attitudinal or ideological expressions of basic social values or motivational goals that represent different, though related, strategies for attaining collective security at the expense of individual autonomy" (Duckitt and Bizumic 2013, 842).

[55] An exploratory factor analysis (not shown here) indicates that the four items of moral values all load on a single factor with factor loadings of at least 0.74.

[56] Regrettably, indicators of political efficacy are not included in the EVS 2017–2020.

[57] We apply listwise deletion of missing data, as it is a preferred method for handling missing observations and offers more advantages than pairwise deletion (Allison 2002). This leads to a small bias in our sample compared to all

<u>Path analysis</u>

Path analysis is a causal modelling approach and a special case of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). SEM emerged to go beyond the usual case of one outcome variable and many covariates. Instead, SEM can be used to model more complex model structures in which, for example, direct and indirect effects of an independent variable on a dependent variable are measured. In this case, the exogenous covariate X not only influences Y directly, but is also a covariate for the mediator M, while M is simultaneously a covariate for Y. Thus, X not only has a direct effect on Y, but also an indirect effect via M. This chain of statistical associations is also referred to as *path analysis* (Castanho Silva, Bosancianu, and Littvay 2020). SEM can also calculate much more complex models, for example with latent variables, but since our models only operate with observed variables, we limit ourselves to a path analysis. Furthermore, all our models are calculated with country fixed effects and robust standard errors using the Huber Sandwich Estimator. Since we are only interested in effects at the individual level and not in national differences of democratic support, we employ contextual fixed-effects. These encompass a dummy for each country, accounting for all between-country variance and ensuring that results are not influenced by any differences between the countries (for example the rate of unemployment, political institutions, cultural heritages, etc.).[58] Lastly, we do not apply weights, as they are only recommended for single country studies and country comparisons in the EVS. Nevertheless, we re-calculated all models while applying weights and found that the results remained substantially the same (results available upon request).

Results

Before we examine the different mechanisms through which urbanity influences regime preference, we first examine the direct relationship between urbanity and preference for democracies with and without control variables (see models 1 and 2 in Table 1). The respective coefficients of urbanity (b = 0.035, SE = .002, p < .01 in model 1; b = 0.036, SE = .002, p < .01 in model 2) are statistically significant and positive in both models and do not change when control variables are included.[59]

respondents in the EVS. In this regard, comparing the values of the socio-demographic variables of the observations included in our regression models on the one hand and the excluded observations due to listwise deletion on the other, the deviations are nowhere greater than 23% of a standard deviation. The largest deviations are with regard to education, income and liberal values, with those in our sample being slightly more educated, and having higher incomes and more liberal values than in the EVS sample as a whole (each about 21–22% of a standard deviation). As the deviations between the included and the excluded observations are relatively small, we conduct listwise deletion.

[58] We replicate our linear regression analysis for the difference method using regional-level fixed effects instead of country-level ones and find substantially the same results (see table A16 in the Supplemental Appendix). However, there is a large number of excluded regions due to missing values or a lack of variance in one or more of the main variables, which is why it is not possible to replicate the path analysis with regional fixed effects. Due to this systematic exclusion of certain regions, we opt for country-level fixed effects in the paper.

[59] We also re-calculated the regression models including the squared self-placement on the political left-right scale (results available upon request). However, the coefficients were not statistically significant and did not change our

The positive coefficient indicates that the more urban the area is, the stronger the preference for a democratic political system. The effect size of an additional point on the urbanity scale is about 5 percent of the standard deviation of the dependent variable.[60]

Table 1. Linear regression analysis.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Urbanity	0.035*** (0.002)	0.036*** (0.002)	0.019*** (0.002)	0.020*** (0.002)	0.036*** (0.002)	0.011*** (0.002)
Gender (male)		0.011* (0.006)				
Age		0.002*** (0.000)				
Left-right position		–0.021*** (0.001)				
Education			0.048*** (0.002)			0.038*** (0.002)
Income			0.011*** (0.001)			0.006*** (0.001)
Social security			–0.058*** (0.009)			–0.064*** (0.010)
Ethnic nationhood				–0.089*** (0.004)		–0.080*** (0.004)
Authoritarianism				–0.013*** (0.003)		–0.011*** (0.004)
Moral values				0.042*** (0.001)		0.036*** (0.001)
Political satisfaction					0.004*** (0.001)	0.004*** (0.001)
Confidence in parliament					–0.004 (0.004)	–0.003 (0.005)
Confidence in government					–0.012*** (0.004)	0.003 (0.005)
N	44,435	36,902	37,885	39,038	42,246	32,623
R-squared	0.277	0.289	0.307	0.321	0.276	0.342

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. Models are estimated with country fixed effects and robust standard errors. *Source: European Values Study 2017, own calculations.*

As a first step to explore the theoretically introduced mechanisms, we include the socio-economic, cultural and political mediators (see models 3–5). This technique is described as the "difference

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results substantially, which is why we opted to leave the squared self-placement on the left-right scale out for our structural equation models.

[60] The coefficients in our models indicate quite small effect sizes, which may cast doubt on the substantivity of the reported relationships. However, "as is the case with virtually any effect size, relatively small effect sizes may be substantively important, whereas relatively large ones may be trivial, depending on the research context." (Preacher and Kelley 2011, 108) Especially considering our study works with observational data rather than experimentally manipulating or abstractly indexing it, even objectively small effect sizes can indicate important and substantial relationships.

method" (Van Der Weele 2016). We control for so-called post-treatment variables, i.e. mediating variables, assumed to be affected by the treatment (degree of urbanity of the respondent's environment) and to affect the outcome variable (regime preference). The decreasing size and significance of the coefficients of the urbanity variable after controlling for these mediating variables can be interpreted as an indication of mediation. Model 3 shows that the inclusion of the socio-economic variables almost halves the coefficient of urbanity (b = 0.019, SE = .002, $p < 0.01$). Model 4 shows that the inclusion of the cultural mediators reduces the coefficient of urbanity by about the same amount (b = 0.020, SE = .002, $p < 0.01$). As model 5 shows, however, the inclusion of the political variables does not influence the coefficient of urbanity substantially (b = 0.036, SE = .002, $p < 0.01$). We therefore assume no strong mediating effect of the political variables. Finally, in model 6, we find that the inclusion of all mediators simultaneously reduces the coefficient of urbanity to about a third of its original size (b = 0.011, SE = .002, $p < 0.01$). This shows that all mediators together can explain a large part of the effect of urbanity on democratic preference.[61]

To further test the role of our mediators we estimate several structural equation models. First, we calculate each of the three mechanisms separately (see tables A2 to A4 in the Supplemental Appendix). Second, structural equation models are estimated for each of the nine mediators alone (see tables A5 to A13 in the Supplemental Appendix). Finally, we conduct a structural equation model with all nine mediators simultaneously. In all models, we control for gender, age and the political left-right positioning of the respondents. The models all contain country fixed effects and are estimated with robust standard errors.

Regarding the socio-economic mechanisms, we find that all three variables together explain about 45 percent (0.015/0.033) of the effect of urbanity on the regime preference (see table A2 in the Supplemental Appendix). The models with only one mediator at a time (tables A5 to A7 in the Supplemental Appendix) reveal that education shows the strongest effect (0.014; SE = .001, $p < 0.01$) and explains about 40 percent of the relationship between urbanity and the preference for democratic systems. Thus, people living in urban areas are significantly more educated and these educated people have a significantly stronger preference for democracies as opposed to less educated people living in rural areas. Net household income (0.004, SE = .000, $p < 0.01$) is a much weaker mediator and explains only about 12 percent of the total effect. Nevertheless, this path shows that living in urban areas is associated with a significantly higher income and a higher income is simultaneously linked to a stronger preference for democracies. Dependency on social security, however, is not a significant mediator for the relationship between urbanity and regime preference

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[61] Table A1 in the Supplemental Appendix shows the results of Models 3–6 with the inclusion of our three controls sex, age and political left-right position. The controls do not change the results in a relevant way.

(b = −0.000, SE = .000, p = 0.91). This is because urbanity and dependency on social security payments are not significantly related, whereas people who were dependent on social security transfers have a significantly lower preference for democracies as opposed to autocracies. Altogether, these findings show that the socio-economic mechanism is pivotal in explaining the relationship between urbanity and preference for democracy, but that it is primarily education and, to a lesser extent, income that mediates the relationship.

Second, with respect to the cultural path model, table A3 in the Supplemental Appendix shows that all included cultural mediators together explain about 40 percent of the effect of urbanity on regime preference (0.015/0.036). In this regard, the cultural path seems a little less relevant than the socio-economic path. Regarding the single mediating variables (tables A8 to A10 in the Supplemental Appendix), we find that ethnic conception of nationhood and moral values are the main mediators. The indirect effect of ethnic conception of nationhood (0.007, SE = .000, p < 0.01) explains about 20 percent of the total effect. This reveals that people living in urban areas are less inclined to hold an ethnic conception of nationhood. Urban people therefore consider it less important to be born in a country or to have ancestors from a country in order to be part of that nation. At the same time, people with a more ethnic conception of nationhood show a lower preference for democracies as opposed to autocracies. A statistically significant but barely relevant explanatory path emerges via authoritarianism (0.001, SE = .000, p < 0.01). Authoritarian attitudes only explain about 2 percent of the relationship between urbanity and democratic preferences. Urban residents show less respect for authority than rural residents, and higher levels of authoritarianism are associated with a stronger preference for autocracies as opposed to democratic political systems. Finally, moral values are the most important cultural mediator (0.009, SE = .001, p < 0.01) and explain 26 percent of the relationship between urbanity and regime preference.[62] While urban residents tend to exhibit more modern moral values, people with more modern moral values have a stronger preference for democratic political systems.

Third, with respect to the political mediators (satisfaction with the functioning of the political system, trust in parliament and in the government), model A4 in the Supplemental Appendix shows that this mechanism explains only about 1 percent of the total effect of urbanity on regime preference (0.0002/0.037). As opposed to the socioeconomic and cultural mechanisms, political mediation seems to be irrelevant in explaining the relationship between living in urban areas and democratic preference. While the indirect effects of urbanity on democratic preference via political

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[62] A structural equation model including all four items of the moral values index (not shown here) reveals that the justification of divorce and especially homosexuality are the strongest mediators, while the justification of abortion and particularly euthanasia have a lower explanatory power.

satisfaction (−0.000, SE = .000, p = 0.45) and trust in parliament (b = 0.000, SE = 0.000, p = 0.45) are statistically not significant, the indirect effect through trust in government, though statistically significant (0.000, SE = .000, p < .10), fails to be relevant (see tables A11 to A13 in the Supplemental Appendix).

Finally, we estimate a structural equation model including all nine mediators simultaneously (see Table 2). It turns out that of the socio-economic variables, education in particular, still reveals a strong effect (b = 0.010, SE = .001, p < 0.01). About 29 percent of the effect of urbanity on democratic preference can be explained through this mediation. Among the cultural variables, moral values (b = 0.007, SE = .000, p < 0.01) explain about 20 percent of the total effect, while ethnic conception of nationhood (b = 0.005, SE = .000, p < 0.01) mediates 16 percent of the relationship between urbanity and regime preference. All other mediators contribute little to the decomposition of the analysed relationship in this model. Nevertheless, the various mechanisms mediate about 70 percent of the total effect of urbanity on democratic preference (0.024/0.036).[63]

Table 2. SEM with all mediators.

	Coefficient	Robust S.E.	% of TE explained
Total effect	0.035***	(0.002)	
Direct effect (urbanity → system preference)	0.011***	(0.002)	30.31%
Mediation via			
- education:			
Indirect effect	0.010***	(0.001)	28.99%
urbanity → education	0.249***	(0.008)	
education → system preference	0.040***	(0.002)	
- income:			
Indirect effect	0.002**	(0.000)	4.59%
urbanity → income	0.163***	(0.012)	
income → system preference	0.010***	(0.001)	
- social security:			
Indirect effect	−0.000	(0.000)	−0.14%
urbanity → social security	0.001	(0.001)	
social security → system preference	−0.049***	(0.011)	
- ethnic nationhood:			
Indirect effect	0.005***	(0.000)	15.59%
urbanity → ethnic nationhood	−0.062***	(0.004)	
ethnic nationhood → system preference	−0.088***	(0.004)	

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[63] We re-calculated the full model separately for Eastern and Western Europe (see tables A14 and A15 in the Supplemental Appendix). Our results reveal mainly the same effects in Eastern and Western Europe. However, the total effect of urbanity is larger in Eastern Europe than in Western Europe, while the mediators explain a slightly larger part of the effect in Western Europe. Concerning the individual mediators, income only has a mediating effect in Eastern Europe. While the ethnic conception of nationhood is a stronger mediator in Western Europe, moral values are more important in Eastern Europe.

- authoritarianism:			
Indirect effect	0.000**	(0.000)	0.65%
urbanity → authoritarianism	−0.027***	(0.004)	
authoritarianism → system preference	−0.008**	(0.004)	
- moral values:			
Indirect effect	0.007***	(0.000)	19.94%
urbanity → moral values	0.172***	(0.010)	
moral values → system preference	0.040***	(0.002)	
- political satisfaction:			
Indirect effect	−0.000	(0.000)	−0.02%
urbanity → political satisfaction	−0.001	(0.011)	
political satisfaction → system preference	0.006***	(0.002)	
- confidence in parliament:			
Indirect effect	0.000	(0.000)	0.01%
urbanity → confidence in parliament	−0.002	(0.004)	
confidence in parliament → system preference	−0.002	(0.005)	
- confidence in government:			
Indirect effect	0.000	(0.000)	0.10%
urbanity → confidence in government	−0.017***	(0.004)	
confidence in government → system preference	−0.002	(0.005)	
Observations	28,559		

Note: Models are estimated with country fixed effects and robust standard errors. Example: The total effect of urbanity on democratic preference is 0.035. The direct effect, after controlling for all mediators, is 0.011. This means that 0.024 (0.035–0.011) (about 60%, 0.024/0.035) of the total effect can be explained through our mediators. The indirect effect running through a mediator is calculated by multiplying the effect of urbanity on this mediator with the effect of the mediator on democratic preference. *Source: European Values Study 2017, own calculations.*

Discussion

Our study exposes multiple paths to explain why the rural-urban divide translates into regime preferences in comparative perspective. It is astonishing that not only socio-economic differences between urban and rural areas are important, but rather a combination of socio-economic and cultural differences, while political differences hold no explanatory power whatsoever. That is, cultural inequalities between urban and rural areas are just as important as socio-economic differences. It is not only socio-economic marginalization that makes rural residents turn away from democracy; the perceived loss of traditional values is equally relevant as to why rural dwellers seek salvation in authoritarian systems. Against this background, it seems imperative to look at all possible paths that lead to the rural population feeling left behind by urbanites.

If the rural-urban divide in terms of regime preference is to be overcome, the key lies in education policy, which in itself explains about 40 percent of the rural-urban divide in democratic support. Increased public investment in education and training in rural areas could ensure that the proportion of low-educated people in these areas declines. In addition, this could be linked to the

hope that rural residents will be freed from their fears of cultural decay if they expand their horizons and become more open to change. Those who already accept change have less of a problem accepting democracies. Change, again, is the lifeblood of democracies.

However, even though our analyses show that there is a rural-urban divide in democratic support, which can be explained through socio-economic and cultural differences, we cannot make any causal claims about these differences between ruralites and urbanites. Debates about geographical disparities usually emphasize two explanations: compositional effects and contextual effects (Maxwell 2019; 2020). Compositional effects suggest that people who move into urban or rural areas are different from one another, for example in their education, income or values. Based on these characteristics, they self-sort into the place that is most suitable to their lifestyle and worldviews. This then leads to different compositions of rural and urban places and accounts for aggregated rural-urban differences in attitudes and behaviour. Contextual effects, on the other hand, assume that distinct experiences in rural and urban contexts create differences between people living in or moving into these two areas (Lago 2022; Maxwell 2019; 2020). Even though studies try to conceptually separate these effects in a notable way, it seems difficult to distinguish between them without multi-layered panel data. A different composition of an area, for example a higher number of people holding cosmopolitan attitudes in cities, can also lead to different experiences in these contexts, such as getting more in touch with cosmopolitan arguments or lifestyle. Or, in the words of Jennings and Stoker (Jennings and Stoker 2016, 373): "In short, context and self-selection work together to produce location effects". With our data, we cannot make any causal claims about why people living in rural and urban places are different from one another and whether self-sorting or contextual effects are better at explaining these differences. Our approach is purely cross-sectional and aims to look at the distribution of today's urban and rural populations, regardless of why they live there and whether they were different before they moved.

Conclusion

In recent years, scholars in the political sciences have shown a resurgent interest in the analysis of the rural-urban divide from different angles. Our contribution investigates the rural-urban divide of public preferences for democracy and its authoritarian alternatives. In addition to the mere evaluation of whether a rural-urban gap regarding regime preference exists, we try to uncover the mechanisms of this geographical divide. We argue that possible rural-urban differences are due to the differing socio-economic situation, different values or to the degree of political discontent of urbanites and rural dwellers.

Employing data from the EVS 2017–2020 with around 30,000 observations from 32 countries, we find a geography of autocracy: Compared to rural dwellers, people living in urban areas exhibit a stronger preference for democratic political systems as opposed to their authoritarian alternatives. Thus, our study confirms that citizens' support for democracy is somewhat rooted in geographical conditions. Moreover, our structural equation models indicate that this relationship is mainly mediated by a socio-economic and a cultural mechanism. A respondent's education, their concept of ethnic nationhood and their moral values in particular stand behind the spatial divide of regime preference. However, according to our empirical analyses, unequal political trust or political dissatisfaction between urban and rural dwellers are not driving forces with respect to spatial differences of regime preferences.

It should be noted, however, that our results are only a first step and do not exhaust the analysis of a spatial dimension of democratic principles. Although they point in the right direction, we need more studies that empirically examine the consequences of the rural-urban divide with regard to regime preferences and the support of democracy. As such, our approach has its limitations that require further attention.

First, we have to admit that our measurement of spatial divide is very crude. The degree of urbanization is based on the pure number of inhabitants. Even though this is a well-established measure of the rural-urban divide (Nemerever and Rogers 2021), it disregards that urbanity can also be defined according to different, e.g. functional criteria or the duration of residence, and that the number of inhabitants alone is not a completely accurate dimension of urbanity (Beynon, Crawley, and Munday 2015). In addition, with our indicators we can only insufficiently capture the place-based resentments and cannot exactly determine which of the perceived grievances are directly linked to the place of residence (Cramer 2016). Second, as we only operate with cross-sectional data, we must underscore that future studies should empirically examine the causal mechanism between the rural-urban divide and political preferences in order to provide a more confident base to indeed speak of a causal relationship. In order to be able to make causal statements, a replication of this study with panel data would be necessary. Moreover, our study assumes that rural and urban respondents evaluate different political regimes according to their own socio-economic position and moral values. In this respect, we cannot determine whether the difference in population composition between urban and rural areas is due to geographical sorting or the influence of the distinct contexts (Bishop 2008). Third, as the spatial divide does not affect the entire population in the same way, it is reasonable to assume that the effects of the rural-urban divide are not uniform. It would therefore be advisable to model group-specific geographical effects.

Nevertheless, our analysis indicates that not all groups are equally supportive of democracy and that socio-economic as well as cultural factors explain this relationship. It is important to understand these geographical differences in order to counteract democratic deconsolidation and to be able to specifically target political sub-groups in campaigns with relevant arguments. This alone justifies analyses such as the present one, even if it operates with the shortcomings outlined.

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Appendix

Figure A1. Share of respondents living in the five urbanity categories by country.
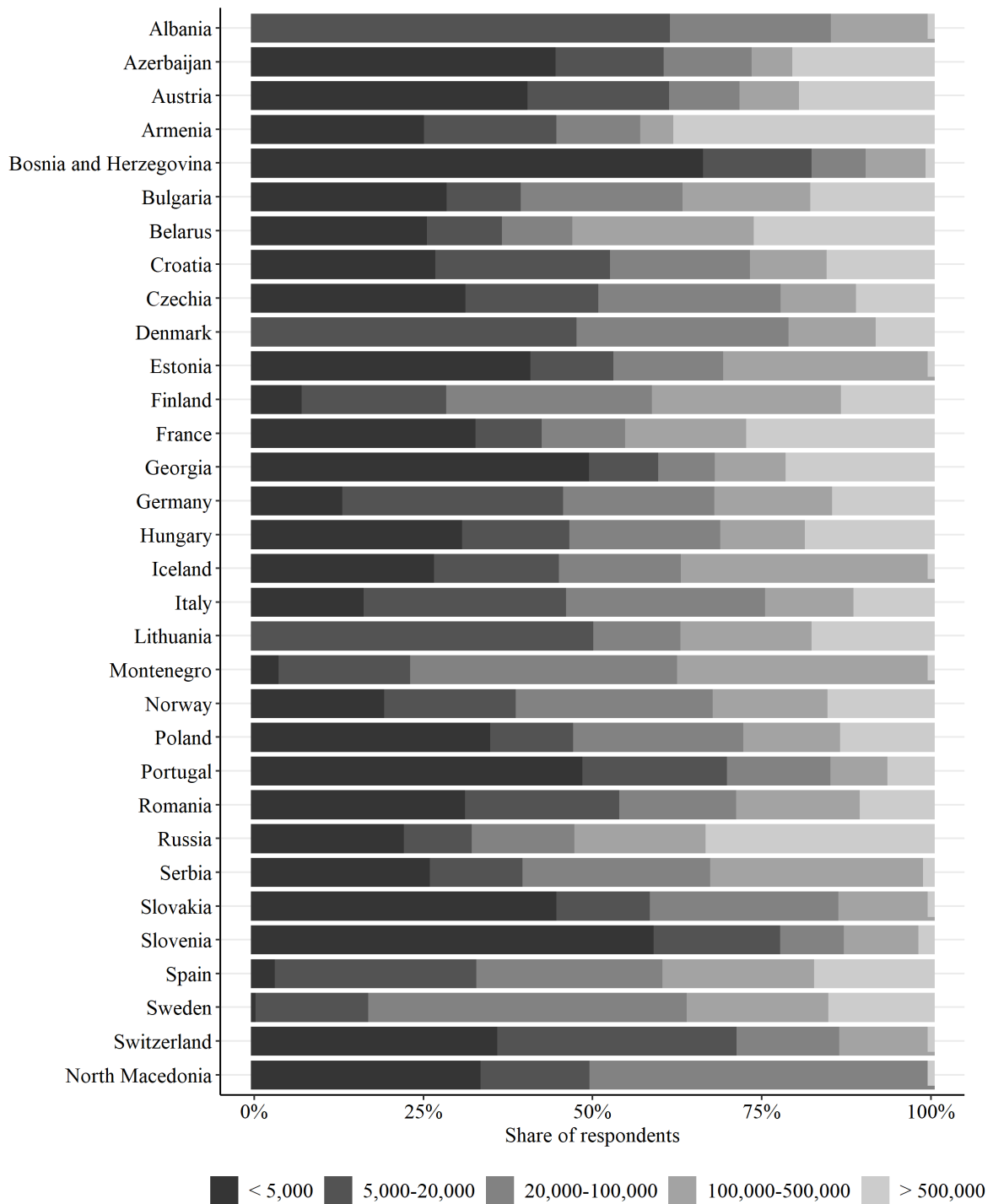
Source: EVS, "European Values Study 2017", own calculations.

Table A1. Regression models with controls.

	M1	M2	M3	M4
Urbanity	0.020***	0.021***	0.036***	0.011***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Gender (male)	0.008	0.026***	0.012**	0.022***
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)
Age	0.003***	0.003***	0.002***	0.004***
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Left-right position	–0.020***	–0.011***	–0.022***	–0.013***
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Education	0.051***			0.040***
	(0.002)			(0.002)
Income	0.014***			0.010***
	(0.001)			(0.001)
Social security	–0.049***			–0.049***
	(0.010)			(0.011)
Ethnic nationhood		–0.099***		–0.088***
		(0.004)		(0.004)
Authoritarianism		–0.011***		–0.008**
		(0.004)		(0.004)
Moral values		0.046***		0.040***
		(0.001)		(0.002)
Political satisfaction			0.006***	0.006***
			(0.001)	(0.002)
Confidence in parliament			–0.001	–0.002
			(0.005)	(0.005)
Confidence in government			–0.015***	–0.002
			(0.005)	(0.005)
N	32,146	33,252	35,670	28,559
R-squared	0.326	0.340	0.289	0.366

Source: EVS, "European Values Study 2017", own calculations.

Table A2. SEM with socio-economic path.

	Coefficient	Robust S.E.	% of TE explained
Total effect	0.033***	(0.002)	
Direct effect (urbanity → system preference)	0.018***	(0.002)	55.02%
Mediation via			
- education:			
Indirect effect	0.013***	(0.001)	38.10%
urbanity → education	0.252***	(0.008)	
education → system preference	0.050***	(0.002)	
- income:			
Indirect effect	0.002***	(0.000)	6.92%
urbanity → income	0.173***	(0.011)	
income → system preference	0.013***	(0.001)	
- social security:			
Indirect effect	−0.000	(0.000)	−0.03%
urbanity → social security	0.000	(0.001)	
social security → system preference	−0.046***	(0.011)	
Observations	32,146		

Note: Models are estimated with country fixed effects and robust standard errors. *Source: EVS, "European Values Study 2017", own calculations.*

Table A3. SEM with cultural path.

	Coefficient	Robust S.E.	% of TE explained
Total effect	0.036***	(0.002)	
Direct effect (urbanity → system preference)	0.021***	(0.002)	60.34%
Mediation via			
- ethnic nationhood:			
Indirect effect	0.006***	(0.000)	16.79%
urbanity → ethnic nationhood	−0.061***	(0.003)	
ethnic nationhood → system preference	−0.099***	(0.004)	
- authoritarianism:			
Indirect effect	0.000***	(0.000)	0.80%
urbanity → authoritarianism	−0.027***	(0.003)	
authoritarianism → system preference	−0.011***	(0.004)	
- moral values:			
Indirect effect	0.008***	(0.000)	22.07%
urbanity → moral values	0.171***	(0.009)	
moral values → system preference	0.046***	(0.001)	
Observations	33,252		

Note: Models are estimated with country fixed effects and robust standard errors. *Source: EVS, "European Values Study 2017", own calculations.*

Table A4. SEM with political path.

	Coefficient	Robust S.E.	% of TE explained
Total effect	0.037***	(0.002)	
Direct effect (urbanity → system preference)	0.036***	(0.002)	99.40%
Mediation via			
- political satisfaction:			
Indirect effect	–0.000	(0.000)	–0.14%
urbanity → political satisfaction	–0.008	(0.010)	
political satisfaction → system preference	0.006***	(0.001)	
- confidence in parliament:			
Indirect effect	0.000	(0.000)	0.01%
urbanity → confidence in parliament	–0.010	(0.025)	
confidence in parliament → system preference	–0.001	(0.005)	
- confidence in government:			
Indirect effect	0.000***	(0.000)	0.73%
urbanity → confidence in government	–0.018****	(0.003)	
confidence in government → system preference	–0.015***	(0.005)	
Observations		35,670	

Note: Models are estimated with country fixed effects and robust standard errors. *Source: EVS, "European Values Study 2017", own calculations.*

Table A5. SEM with education.

	Coefficient	Robust S.E.	% of TE explained
Total effect	0.036***	(0.002)	
Direct effect (urbanity → system preference)	0.022***	(0.002)	60.44%
Mediation via education			
Indirect effect	0.014***	(0.001)	39.56%
urbanity → education	0.251***	(0.007)	
education → system preference	0.056***	(0.002)	
Observations		36,711	

Note: Models are estimated with country fixed effects and robust standard errors. *Source: EVS, "European Values Study 2017", own calculations.*

Table A6. SEM with income.

	Coefficient	Robust S.E.	% of TE explained
Total effect	0.035***	(0.002)	
Direct effect (urbanity → system preference)	0.031***	(0.002)	77.58%
Mediation via income			
Indirect effect	0.004***	(0.000)	12.42%
urbanity → income	0.169***	(0.011)	
income → system preference	0.026***	(0.001)	
Observations	32,498		

Note: Models are estimated with country fixed effects and robust standard errors. *Source: EVS, "European Values Study 2017", own calculations.*

Table A7. SEM with social security.

	Coefficient	Robust S.E.	% of TE explained
Total effect	0.036***	(0.002)	
Direct effect (urbanity → system preference)	0.036***	(0.002)	100.04%
Mediation via social security			
Indirect effect	−0.000	(0.000)	−0.04%
urbanity → social security	0.000	(0.001)	
social security → system preference	−0.097***	(0.010)	
Observations	36,548		

Note: Models are estimated with country fixed effects and robust standard errors. *Source: EVS, "European Values Study 2017", own calculations.*

Table A8. SEM with concept of ethnic nationhood.

	Coefficient	Robust S.E.	% of TE explained
Total effect	0.036***	(0.002)	
Direct effect (urbanity → system preference)	0.029***	(0.004)	79.50%
Mediation via ethnic nationhood			
Indirect effect	0.007***	(0.000)	20.50%
urbanity → ethnic nationhood	−0.063***	(0.003)	
ethnic nationhood → system preference	−0.119***	(0.004)	
Observations	36,638		

Note: Models are estimated with country fixed effects and robust standard errors. *Source: EVS, "European Values Study 2017", own calculations.*

Table A9. SEM with authoritarian attitude.

	Coefficient	Robust S.E.	% of TE explained
Total effect	0.036***	(0.002)	
Direct effect (urbanity → system preference)	0.035***	(0.002)	97.78%
Mediation via authoritarianism			
Indirect effect	0.001***	(0.000)	2.22%
urbanity → authoritarianism	–0.026***	(0.003)	
authoritarianism → system preference	–0.032***	(0.004)	
Observations		35,385	

Note: Models are estimated with country fixed effects and robust standard errors. *Source: EVS, "European Values Study 2017", own calculations.*

Table A10. SEM with the moral values index.

	Coefficient	Robust S.E.	% of TE explained
Total effect	0.036***	(0.002)	
Direct effect (urbanity → system preference)	0.027***	(0.002)	73.94%
Mediation via moral values			
Indirect effect	0.009***	(0.001)	26.06%
urbanity → moral values	0.174***	(0.009)	
moral values → system preference	0.054***	(0.001)	
Observations		34,654	

Note: Models are estimated with country fixed effects and robust standard errors. *Source: EVS, "European Values Study 2017", own calculations.*

Table A11. SEM with political satisfaction.

	Coefficient	Robust S.E.	% of TE explained
Total effect	0.037***	(0.002)	
Direct effect (urbanity → system preference)	0.037***	(0.002)	100.08%
Mediation via political satisfaction			
Indirect effect	–0.000	0.000	–0.08%
urbanity → political satisfaction	–0.007	(0.009)	
political satisfaction → system preference	0.004***	(0.001)	
Observations		36,542	

Note: Models are estimated with country fixed effects and robust standard errors. *Source: EVS, "European Values Study 2017", own calculations.*

Table A12. SEM with trust in parliament.

	Coefficient	Robust S.E.	% of TE explained
Total effect	0.036***	(0.002)	
Direct effect (urbanity → system preference)	0.036***	(0.002)	99.94%
Mediation via confidence in parliament			
Indirect effect	0.000	(0.000)	0.06%
urbanity → confidence in parliament	−0.006**	(0.003)	
confidence in parliament → system preference	−0.003	(0.004)	
Observations		36,311	

Note: Models are estimated with country fixed effects and robust standard errors. *Source: EVS, "European Values Study 2017", own calculations.*

Table A13. SEM with trust in government.

	Coefficient	Robust S.E.	% of TE explained
Total effect	0.036***	(0.002)	
Direct effect (urbanity → system preference)	0.036***	(0.002)	99.66%
Mediation via confidence in government			
Indirect effect	0.000*	(0.000)	0.34%
urbanity → confidence in government	−0.018***	(0.003)	
confidence in government → system preference	−0.007*	(0.004)	
Observations		36,361	

Note: Models are estimated with country fixed effects and robust standard errors. *Source: EVS, "European Values Study 2017", own calculations.*

Table A14. SEM in Western Europe.

	Coefficient	Robust S.E.	% of TE explained
Total effect	0.030***	(0.003)	
Direct effect (urbanity → system preference)	0.006*	(0.003)	19.30%
Mediation via			
- education:			
Indirect effect	0.009***	(0.001)	30.52%
urbanity → education	0.242***	(0.013)	
education → system preference	0.038***	(0.002)	
- income:			
Indirect effect	0.000	(0.000)	0.00%
urbanity → income	0.000	(0.018)	
income → system preference	0.007***	(0.002)	
- social security:			
Indirect effect	−0.000**	(0.000)	−1.27%
urbanity → social security	0.008***	(0.002)	
social security → system preference	−0.049***	(0.017)	
- ethnic nationhood:			
Indirect effect	0.007***	(0.001)	24.09%
urbanity → ethnic nationhood	−0.068***	(0.006)	
ethnic nationhood → system preference	−0.106***	(0.005)	
- authoritarianism:			
Indirect effect	(0.001***	(0.000)	2.97%
urbanity → authoritarianism	−0.035***	(0.006)	
authoritarianism → system preference	−0.026***	(0.005)	
- moral values:			
Indirect effect	0.005***	(0.001)	16.74%
urbanity → moral values	0.129***	(0.015)	
moral values → system preference	0.039***	(0.002)	
- political satisfaction:			
Indirect effect	0.002***	(0.000)	5.15%
urbanity → political satisfaction	0.090***	(0.016)	
political satisfaction → system preference	0.017***	(0.002)	
- confidence in parliament:			
Indirect effect	0.001***	(0.000)	2.33%
urbanity → confidence in parliament	0.028***	(0.005)	
confidence in parliament → system preference	0.025***	(0.007)	
- confidence in government:			
Indirect effect	0.000	(0.000)	0.16%
urbanity → confidence in government	0.010*	(0.005)	
confidence in government → system preference	0.005	(0.007)	
Observations	13,656		

Note: Models are estimated with country fixed effects and robust standard errors. Western European countries are Austria, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Italy, Norway, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland. Portugal is excluded due to missing values in the income variable. *Source: EVS, "European Values Study 2017", own calculations.*

Table A15. SEM in Eastern Europe.

	Coefficient	Robust S.E.	% of TE explained
Total effect	0.038***	(0.003)	
Direct effect (urbanity → system preference)	0.011***	(0.003)	30.59%
Mediation via			
- education:			
Indirect effect	0.010***	(0.001)	26.69%
urbanity → education	0.254***	(0.011)	
education → system preference	0.039***	(0.003)	
- income:			
Indirect effect	0.004***	(0.001)	9.41%
urbanity → income	0.296***	(0.015)	
income → system preference	0.012***	(0.002)	
- social security:			
Indirect effect	0.000*	(0.000)	0.60%
urbanity → social security	−0.005**	(0.002)	
social security → system preference	−0.047***	(0.014)	
- ethnic nationhood:			
Indirect effect	0.003***	(0.000)	8.50%
urbanity → ethnic nationhood	−0.053***	(0.005)	
ethnic nationhood → system preference	−0.060***	(0.006)	
- authoritarianism:			
Indirect effect	−0.000**	(0.000)	−0.92%
urbanity → authoritarianism	−0.020***	(0.005)	
authoritarianism → system preference	0.017***	(0.006)	
- moral values:			
Indirect effect	0.008***	(0.001)	22.10%
urbanity → moral values	0.203***	(0.013)	
moral values → system preference	0.041***	(0.002)	
- political satisfaction:			
Indirect effect	0.000	(0.000)	0.67%
urbanity → political satisfaction	−0.074***	(0.015)	
political satisfaction → system preference	−0.003	(0.002)	
- confidence in parliament:			
Indirect effect	0.001***	(0.000)	1.89%
urbanity → confidence in parliament	−0.027***	(0.005)	
confidence in parliament → system preference	−0.027***	(0.007)	
- confidence in government:			
Indirect effect	0.000	(0.000)	0.46%
urbanity → confidence in government	−0.038***	(0.005)	
confidence in government → system preference	−0.005	(0.007)	
Observations		14,903	

Note: Models are estimated with country fixed effects and robust standard errors. Eastern European countries are Albania, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Belarus, Croatia, Czechia, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Lithuania, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia and North Macedonia. *Source: EVS, "European Values Study 2017", own calculations.*

Table A16. Linear regression analysis with regional fixed effects.

|	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
Urbanity	0.036*** (0.002)	0.035*** (0.003)	0.024*** (0.004)	0.019*** (0.003)	0.036*** (0.003)	0.012*** (0.003)	0.010*** (0.003)
Gender (male)		0.010* (0.006)					0.020*** (0.006)
Age		0.002*** (0.000)					0.004*** (0.000)
Left-right position		−0.019*** (0.001)					−0.012*** (0.001)
Education			0.046*** (0.002)			0.037*** (0.002)	0.039*** (0.002)
Income			0.011*** (0.001)			0.007*** (0.001)	0.011*** (0.001)
Social security			−0.056*** (0.010)			−0.063*** (0.010)	−0.049*** (0.011)
Ethnic nationhood				−0.085*** (0.004)		−0.076*** (0.004)	−0.086*** (0.004)
Authoritarianism				−0.013*** (0.004)		−0.012*** (0.004)	−0.009** (0.004)
Moral values				0.042*** (0.001)		0.036*** (0.002)	0.041*** (0.002)
Political satisfaction					0.002* (0.001)	0.003** (0.002)	0.005*** (0.002)
Confidence in parliament					−0.004 (0.005)	−0.002 (0.005)	−0.002 (0.005)
Confidence in government					−0.015*** (0.004)	−0.000 (0.005)	−0.006 (0.005)
N	42,467	35,092	36,120	37,286	40,382	31,089	27,105
R-squared	0.303	0.316	0.333	0.344	0.302	0.366	0.390

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. Models are estimated with regional fixed effects and robust standard errors. *Source: EVS, "European Values Study 2017", own calculations.*

5. Conclusion

5.1 Summary

The goal of my dissertation was to investigate how place of living as a social identity—i.e. place of living, place-based identity and place-based resentment—shapes political support. To this aim, I created a model based on social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 1979) that connects place of living, place-based identity, place-based resentment and political support. While place-based identity is ascribed a moderating role—shaping the rural-suburban-urban divide in place-based resentment as well as in political support—, place-based resentment is thought of as a mediator explaining a potential rural-suburban-urban divide in political support. I then divided the model into three submodels, which I tested in the three papers of my dissertation. Figure 5 briefly summarizes the main model and findings of the three papers.

Figure 5. Summary of the findings.
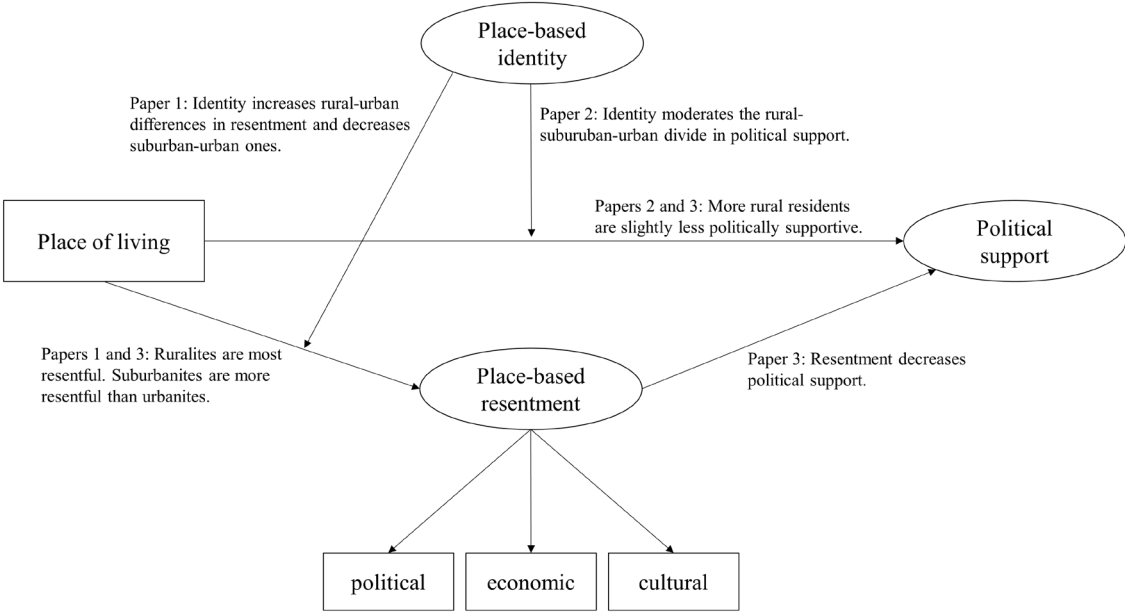
Source: own depiction.

The first paper started by establishing that place of living is indeed a social identity. Hence, I established the relationship between place of living and place-based resentment by showing that ruralites have the highest level of place-based resentment, while suburban resentment lies in between rural and urban resentment. Additionally, I was able to show that the rural-urban divide in place-based resentment is especially high for people with a high level of place-based identity, while the suburban-urban divide in place-based resentment is especially high for people with a low level of place-based resentment.

In the second paper, I investigated the moderating capacities of place-based identity with regard to political support. I found no significant rural-suburban-urban divide with regard to political trust. However, scrutinizing the moderating capacity of place-based identity revealed that there are actually two rural-suburban-urban divides with regard to political trust: For people with a low level of place-based identity, ruralites are more trusting than suburbanites or urbanites. For people with a high level of place-based identity, the expected rural-suburban-urban divide appeared with rural residents being less trusting than more urban ones.

The third paper lastly tested the mediating capacities of place-based resentment in explaining rural-suburban-urban differences in regime preference—a more diffuse measure of political support than the measure in the second paper, i.e. political trust. Results indicated a descriptively small rural-suburban-urban divide in regime preference, which is mainly explained through socio-economic and cultural resentment.

This work offers several contributions: On a *theoretical* level, it is the first comprehensive model interpreting place of living as a social identity and modelling it in an encompassing depiction, establishing arguments and expectations about the roles of place-based identity and place-based resentment. So far, studies only offered a fragmented understanding of how these elements interact with one another and how place of living can form its own social identity (Borwein and Lucas 2023; Cramer 2016; Munis 2022; Lunz Trujillo 2022; Lunz Trujillo and Crowley 2022).

On an *empirical* level, two of the three papers of this dissertation use novel survey data that includes original measures of place-based identity and place-based resentment, which were developed in the RUDE project and based off of previous work by Cramer (2016) and Munis (2022). This quantification of Cramer's qualitative results makes it possible for the first time to measure place-based identity and place-based resentment in the European context in their true senses and to not simply rely on proxy variables, as I have to do in my third paper due to data availability. Only with this new data is it possible to really explore place of living as a social identity with all its associated elements.

Third, since *political support* is vital for the survival of political systems (Lipset 1959; Claassen 2020), an investigation into its geographical explanations was more than warranted. In contrast to other studies dealing with similar variables, my dissertation embeds the two objects of investigation, political trust and regime preference, within Easton's (1965b; 1975) concept of political support, thus allowing a broader categorisation of the results and a comparison of the rural-suburban-urban divide in specific and in diffuse support.

Lastly, by including *suburban residents* as another category, contrasting the urban and rural groups, my studies account for the complexity and non-dichotomy of the rural-urban conflict and depict the reality of place of living as a social identity much more realistically. Today, more than half of Europe's population lives in suburbs, so it is essential to include them in empirical studies in order to understand them as a distinct group and to accurately reflect our society.

In sum, the three papers were able to establish all hypothesized connections from my overarching model and results fit in nicely with the arguments drawn from social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 1979). The rural-suburban-urban divide in political support—which is descriptively rather small, when it comes to both, diffuse and specific political support—is shaped by place-based identity and can, to a large portion, be explained through place-based resentment, which has a number of implications for political science as well as for society.

5.2 Implications

5.2.1 Not per se a lack of rural political support

Political support is vital for the survival of political systems, which is why the investigation of its geographical roots was more than warranted. The descriptive analyses of this dissertation do not reveal any rural-suburban-urban divide with regard to specific political support: The difference in specific support for the regime structure, i.e. political trust, between residents of different types of places is not only small, but it is not substantial at all. In this sense, results are in line with findings by Stein, Buck, and Bjørnå (2021) who show in their study of the Norwegian case that the rural-urban divide in political trust is small, while it is mainly the centre-periphery divide explaining geographical variances in political trust. The absence of a dramatic gap in political trust is relieving, as a rural, suburban or urban lack of specific political support could still indicate a fundamental problem with the legitimacy of a political system and threaten its continued existence in the long run.

With regard to more diffuse political support—operationalized through regime preference for democratic or autocratic regimes—differences can certainly be found between rural, suburban and urban residents in the European context. My analyses reveal that more rural residents have a higher openness to autocratic regimes as opposed to democratic ones. This is worrisome, as diffuse support is especially vital for the survival of political systems (Easton 1975; Norris 2017). Although these differences are not particularly large, they could nevertheless be an indication of an emerging threat to European democracies, as even small effect sizes might be substantively important (Preacher and Kelley 2011, 108). Additionally, diffuse support for democracy entails the rejection of alternative authoritarian forms of government. Hence, even a failure to reject authoritarian regimes might already threaten democracies. The small rural-suburban-urban gap in regime

preference should therefore not be underestimated and it is essential not only to keep an eye on this gap, but to also emphasise the value of democracy more strongly, especially in rural regions, so as not to endanger democracy in Europe.

5.2.2 Possible consequences of strengthening place-based identity

My analyses show the added value of investigating place of living through the lens of social identity theory. While the descriptive rural-suburban-urban divide in political support is rather small, interacting it with place-based identity revealed interesting nuances: The expected divide with rural residents being less politically supportive than more urban ones only appears in residents with a high level of place-based identity. For residents with a low level of place-based identity, on the other hand, ruralites are the most supportive ones.

First of all, this findings underlines the importance of investigating place as a social identity in order to better understand possible rural-suburban-urban differences in political support, as the two divides in political support were masked by one another and only appeared when taking place-based identity into account. The rural, suburban or urban population is therefore not per se a threat to the survival of political systems, but the subgroup of rural residents who identify strongly with their place of living as well as the subgroup of suburban and urban residents who do not identify with their place of living could be.

Second, to understand the inverted rural-suburban-urban divide in residents with a low level of place-based identity, this subgroup of people needs to be investigated in order to comprehend who has a low level of place-based identity and how this then shapes the inverted rural-suburban-urban divide in political support (see Lunz Trujillo 2024 for a first paper tackling residents with low levels of place-based identity).

Lastly, the expected divide in political support—which only appears in residents with a high level of place-based identity—allows to draw some possible consequences of strengthening place-based identity: In recent years, politicians and parties—especially on the right wing of the political spectrum—started campaigning on rural feelings of being left behind and overlooked, offering ruralites to lend them a voice and addressing their resentment (Berlet and Sunshine 2019; Cramer 2016; Huijsmans 2023a; Schweizerische Volkspartei 2021). At the same time, media increasingly reported on the rural-urban divide and rural-suburban-urban differences in elections and voting results (Caro 2018; Plozza 2022; SRF 2021; Thelitz 2021a; 2021b). The media and politics increasing the salience of place-based identities in recent years could not only be a response to said identities, but could in turn lead to their strengthening. One's place-based identity being constantly addressed in media and political campaigns might re-inforce place-based identity in people's minds and lead it to impact political attitudes and behaviour more strongly. Similarly, a narrative of

disadvantage has been shown to increase individuals' feelings of relative group deprivation (Filsinger 2023). Hence, a media and political narrative of rural areas being left behind might reinforce rural resentment and its consequences. In combination with my finding—i.e. that the rural-suburban-urban divide in political support only appears in individuals with a high level of place-based identity—this could lead to a growing rural-suburban-urban division in the years to come.

The rural-suburban-urban divide in political support among people with a strong place-based identity is a problem in itself, as it defines a distinct subgroup that could threaten a political system through its lack of support, namely the rural population with a strong place-based identity. Ruralites are already the place-based group with the strongest level of place-based identification (Zumbrunn 2024a). If this group now grows as a result of political campaigns and media coverage, this is a threat to the survival of the political system. In order to diminish the rural-suburban-urban divide in political support, it is therefore also necessary to carefully consider how to address place-based identities in the media and political campaigns, so as not to further set place-based groups against each other.

5.2.3 More than just economic resentment

My third paper shows the mediating capacity of place-based resentment in explaining the reasons for the rural-suburban-urban divide in political support. Hence, said resentment does not only help explain the divide, but it could also point to a way of fighting it. My analyses show that economic and cultural resentment are about equally strong in explaining why ruralites are less supportive of democracy and together they explain about 70 percent of place-based differences. Political resentment, on the other hand, does not explain much of the difference in regime preference. We can derive possible avenues in fighting the rural-suburban-urban divide from this finding. First, the apparent lack of explanatory power of the political path might stem from the fact that political systems in Europe generally tend to have a mechanism of electoral malapportionment in favour of sparsely populated areas, which results in a de facto overrepresentation of rural areas (García Del Horno, Rico, and Hernández 2023). Despite the rural population still feeling overlooked politically (Borwein and Lucas 2023; García Del Horno, Rico, and Hernández 2023; Hermann, John, and Wenger 2023; Munis 2022), this objective overrepresentation might diminish the explanatory power of the political path.[64] The economic path is probably the best researched one, as there is a number of studies investigating the effect of spatial inequalities such as local economy and unemployment, or industrial decline with regard to the *places that don't matter* or *left behind places*

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[64] It could be expected that such mechanisms of electoral malapportionment increase suburbanites' or urbanites' place-based resentment, as they are the losers of these mechanisms. However, there are no studies on this hypothesis that I am aware of. Investigating the effects of such institutional structures on place-based resentment of suburban and urban residents might be an avenue for future research.

(Dijkstra, Poelman, and Rodríguez-Pose 2020; Huijsmans 2023b; Rodríguez-Pose 2018). And despite my analysis once again underlining the role of economic factors, it shows that cultural resentment is just as important when it comes to understanding the effects of place-based resentment on political support. Kaufmann (2016), McKay, Jennings, and Stoker (2021), and Mitsch, Lee, and Ralph Morrow (2021) are some examples of previous studies calling to go beyond the study of economic factors and underlining the importance of values.

Hence, when politically trying to address ruralites and their resentment, it is vital to not only offer economic compensation and solutions, but to reinforce the value of rural lifestyle and traditions and to give ruralites the feeling that their values and way of life are respected by society and still have a place in it. Accordingly, measures to bridge the rural-suburban-urban divide do not have to cost a lot and involve economic compensation, but could, for example, consist of a simple exchange between politicians and the rural population or between ruralites, suburbanites and urbanites, in which mutual understanding can be built. As known from partisan literature, intergroup contact indeed decreases out-party hostility and affective polarization (Amsalem, Merkley, and Loewen 2022; Wojcieszak and Warner 2020). A similar effect could be expected with regard to place-based groups.

5.2.4 The suburbs: an important third category

Lastly, one goal of this dissertation was to also investigate the role and position of the suburbs. Even though more than half of the European population lives in the suburbs (Ströbele 2012), they are often overlooked in empirical studies on the rural-urban divide (Lyons and Utych 2021). In order not to overlook them in this dissertation, I tried to refer to my subject of investigation as *rural-suburban-urban divide*. Nevertheless, I would like to pay particular attention to the results of the suburbs in this section, and to illustrate why it is not sufficient to think of the suburbs as middle point between the rural and the urban pole on the continuum.

Starting with place of living as a social identity, interestingly enough, suburbanites exhibit the lowest level of place-based identity, even lower than urban place-based identity.[65] However, their place-based resentment is higher than the one of urban residents—at least when it comes to the political and economic dimension. Regarding cultural resentment, on the other hand, they are no more resentful than urbanites are. An additional analysis reveals that their resentment is slightly higher towards urban than towards rural residents. From this it can be concluded that suburbanites feel particularly disadvantaged compared to urbanites, but not necessarily on the cultural dimension, which is so important for explaining rural-urban differences. This is possibly because

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[65] Actually, suburban place-based identity is about as low as urban place-based identity of residents of small cities, while residents of big cities have a place-based identity that is about as high as the one of rural residents.

suburbanites and urbanites are more similar in terms of values and lifestyle, not least because of their strong interconnection due to mobility and commuting. On the other hand, suburbanites are more resentful when it comes to the political and economic dimension, on which they frequently fall shorter than the core cities themselves due to the lack of centre functions of the suburban areas (Longchamp 2015; Ströbele 2012). When it comes to the effect of place-based identity on resentment, this relationship is weakest in suburban areas. Hence, for residents with a low level of place-based identity, there is a gap to residents of both other places, rural and urban ones, with suburbanites being the most resentful. The suburban-urban gap is closed for residents with high levels of place-based identity, while ruralites with a high level of place-based identity are more resentful. All in all, suburban social identity seems to be more about resentment—especially political and economic one—than about identification.

When it comes to political support, the descriptive level of political trust in suburban areas lies between the one in urban and in rural areas. However, as opposed to place-based resentment as a dependent variable, the relationship between place-based identity and political trust is *strongest* for suburban residents—even slightly stronger than for residents of big cities, despite this difference not being statistically significant. Even though place-based identity is a somewhat rare phenomenon among suburban residents, it leads to increased political trust, which means that its strengthening might have positive effects on political support. This shows once again that the place of living as a social identity functions differently for suburban dwellers and that it has different effects that cannot simply be placed between those of urban and rural residents or attributed to either of the two sides. This dissertation therefore clearly shows that a separate investigation of suburban residents adds big value in terms of political science and society and that this large group definitely needs more scientific attention, not least because they consist a majority of the population and have hence the ability to change voting and election results (Hermann, John, and Wenger 2023).

5.3 Limitations and avenues for future research

Despite many theoretical and empirical contributions and a number of scientific and societal implications that can be drawn from my dissertation, it nevertheless has a number of limitations. These limitations can at the same time be avenues for future investigations following this line of research into place as a social identity and the rural-suburban-urban divide in political support. In the following, I will address the five main limitations of my analyses and draw some ideas for future investigations from them.

<u>5.3.1 The full spectrum of political support</u>

First of all, my two measures of political support—political trust and regime preference—stem both from the regime level of political support. However, I investigate neither more specific measures, i.e. support for political authorities, nor more diffuse measures, i.e. support for the political community. All statements on political support in this dissertation must therefore be understood within this framework. It remains unclear what the relationship between place of living as a social identity and very specific or very diffuse forms of political support looks like. This would also be a possible avenue for future research. Especially because there is evidence that leads to a different expectation of the rural-suburban-urban divide with regard to both extremes of political support: On the one hand, when it comes to the evaluation of *political authorities*, the rural-suburban-urban divide in support probably depends heavily on who the politician is and where they positioned themselves on the rural-suburban-urban conflict. A good example for this is Donald Trump, who tried to take up rural resentment in his political campaign and is indeed more strongly supported by ruralites (Scala and Johnson 2017; Lunz Trujillo and Crowley 2022). On the other hand, when it comes to the *political community*, ruralites are expected to be rooted more strongly in their place (Goodhart 2016), which could in turn translate into higher levels of national identities, patriotism or national pride, as results on voting preference for nationalist parties suggest (Hegewald and Schraff 2022). There is still a research gap here that this dissertation is unable to close.

<u>5.3.2 Generalizability of the Swiss case</u>

Turning to the cases analysed in this dissertation, two out of the three papers are only concerned with the Swiss case. This raises the question of how generalizable results on the Swiss rural-suburban-urban divide are to other European countries. I would like to take up the points mentioned in the introduction once again and discuss to what extent they could influence my results and whether they tend to weaken or rather strengthen the rural-suburban-urban divide: Firstly, I argued that Switzerland is the country with the highest level of *direct democracy* (Vatter 2020a, 351) and that the quarterly direct-democratic votes could serve as a lightning rod for discharging tensions between rural, suburban and urban regions. Neither side wins or loses all direct democratic votes; instead, all sides are sometimes winners and sometimes losers (Hermann, John, and Wenger 2023), which could help mitigate the conflict, as long as no side loses repeatedly (Kern, Marien, and Muradova 2024). On the other hand, the quarterly votes with the subsequent analyses of the voting results by place of living also allow the conflict between rural, suburban and urban areas to become salient over and over again, making the differences more visible and strengthening place-based identities. And, as I showed in the second paper, this could actually increase the rural-suburban-urban divide instead of mitigating it.

Second, I argued that Switzerland is a *consensus democracy* and hence tries to take as many opinions as possible into account. This is for example reflected in the partisan composition of the Federal Council, which is an oversized coalition and has—with a short break—ever since 1959 consisted of members of the four largest political parties (Vatter 2020b, 70). Like in the case of direct democracy, this means that no major group has to feel left behind or overlooked in the long term. However, social and above all media discourses on the representation of places of living of members of the Federal Council and political representation in general can also arise here (Alabor and Schlumpf 2022; Cavalli 2022; Meyer 2023; Tempelmann 2022). In line with the findings of my second paper, this could again reinforce the divide instead of mitigating it.

Third, I argued that Switzerland is an extremely *small* country where rural, suburban and urban areas lie geographically close together and are well connected thanks to good roads and a well-developed public transport network. This could also be a factor adding to the mitigation of the rural-suburban-urban divide. However, the mere possibility of mobility between different places of living does not necessarily have to mean that their residents do indeed travel to these other places.

Hence, it remains unclear to what extent these factors impact my results. In my third paper, I therefore open my perspective to the international sphere and analyse 32 European countries. While findings are generally in line with those of the Swiss papers, I still advocate for more studies in other European countries, to be able to say conclusively how much of the effects found are due to Swiss specifications and how much of the rural-suburban-urban divide in political support can be transferred to other contexts.

5.3.3 Measuring place of living in existing surveys

As mentioned previously, while two of my three papers focus in the Swiss case, the third one exploits data from 32 European countries. However, this comes at the expense of the quality of the measures of place of living and place-based resentment. Hence, investigating the European rural-suburban-urban divide in light of social identity theory is currently a trade-off between the breadth of the data and the quality of the items that can be used. On the one hand, the European Values Study does not provide any measure of actual group-level resentment. Instead, we needed to rely on a number of individual-level measures. On the other hand, existing surveys oftentimes only let us measure place of living with a relatively crude operationalization. In the case of the third paper, we had to measure place of living using the number of inhabitants, grouped into five categories. This is far from optimal. While the five categories still allowed taking into account the idea that the rural-urban divide is a continuum rather than a dichotomy, we were unable to create and investigate a distinct suburban category. Additionally, the number of inhabitants is an objective

measure of place of living, while theory of our paper is based on place of living as a social identity, i.e. a subjective understanding of place of living. Whilst I can show in my other two papers that the results with objective and subjective measures of place of living are similar, this of course in no way reduces the call for more European surveys that include better measurement of place of living, place-based identity and place-based resentment to continue this research into place of living as a social identity.

5.3.4 Heterogeneity within place-based groups

Next, I need to discuss the fact that I treat the three places of living—rural, suburban and urban areas—as distinct and homogeneous categories. However, results of my research show that they are all but homogeneous groups and that there exist significant differences within said groups. On the one hand, not all cities or suburbs or villages are alike. This is reflected in my second paper, which subdivides urban places into big and small cities with remarkable results: Not only is place-based identity for residents of big cities as high as it is for ruralites, while residents of small cities exhibit the lowest level of place-based identity, but the effect of this identity on political trust also differs dramatically among residents of big and small cities. While political trust of residents of big cities is strongly influenced by place-based identity, this relationship is much weaker for residents of smaller cities. Similarly, Kübler (2022) argues that there exist two types of suburbs, which means that they should not be investigated as a homogeneous group.

On the other hand, the rural, suburban and urban groups not only consist of residents of very different villages, suburbs, towns or cities, but there even exist differences within the same city or village, when investigating residents of different neighbourhoods and districts (McGrane, Berdahl, and Bell 2017). In line with this claim, McKay, Jennings, and Stoker (2021) find that socially marginal and economically deprived regions of Britain both lack political trust but for different reasons. They hence call for the recognition of diversity among the *places that don't matter*. Similarly, De Lange, Van Der Brug and Harteveld (2023) find that rural resentment is especially strong in areas that are simultaneously peripheral and deprived, which again illustrates the heterogeneity of place-based groups. Further investigation into such geographical variations might certainly nuance research on the rural-suburban-urban divide.

5.3.5 Incongruence between place of living and place-based in-group

Lastly, this dissertation is based on the assumption that the subjective notion of one's place of living automatically corresponds to one's place-based in-group. However, a person might actually identify with a different place-based in-group than they currently live in. This is illustrated by my findings on the inverted rural-suburban-urban divide in political trust for residents with low levels of place-based identity in my second paper. I show that ruralites with a low level of place-based

identity are actually more politically trusting than suburbanites or urbanites with a low level of place-based identity. I argue that this finding might stem from the fact that some people do not live in the place that consists their main place-based social identity and that they hence do not identify strongly with it. I illustrate this by showing that residents with a low level of place-based identity are less likely to have grown up in the same type of place, have lived in their current place for a shorter amount of time, and that they are more likely to prefer to live in a different place. My assumption is also in line with findings by Lunz Trujillo (2024), who shows that one's place of living and the place that forms one's social identity do not necessarily need to align.

Consequently, future research would need to go beyond investigating people's place-based identity and place-based resentment with regard to the place they are currently living in. Instead, place-based identity and resentment would need to be investigated with regard to all possible groups in order to fully comprehend a person's place-based social identity. Such an encompassing analysis of all aspects of place-based social identity is another possible and promising avenue for future research in order to disentangle the rural-suburban-urban divide even further.

5.4 Concluding remarks

I would like to end my dissertation with three main takeaways that can be drawn from the findings of my analyses. *First*, I would like to empathize that the rural-urban divide is much more complex than often assumed or even made out to be. Critical voices occasionally claim the nonexistence of the rural-urban divide due to a lack of differences when it comes to the descriptive comparison of attitudes or behaviour between a rural and an urban group. However, the rural-urban divide is neither a dichotomous one, nor is it generalizable to all citizens, and in this sense, views on place of living need to be more nuanced. One the one hand, the binary distinction between rural and urban disregards the large group of residents in between the two poles. A more nuanced understanding of place of living would hence describe it as a continuum or take into account possible groups beyond the rural and the urban one, e.g. investigating the suburbs as an additional and very relevant group. On the other hand, the rural-suburban-urban conflict does not need to be understood as a general one. A more nuanced view of said conflict allows us to recognize that there is a specific subgroup of people for whom their place of living is an important social identity and that it is in this subgroup in which we find potential rural-suburban-urban differences. In this sense, the simple absence of descriptive differences between a rural and an urban group does not warrant the inexistence of the much more complicated rural-suburban-urban divide.

My *second* main takeaway from this dissertation is that we should care about the place of living in the sense of a social identity. Place of living indeed forms a relevant identity group for quite a large number of people, especially for those that think of themselves as rural residents. Hence, it is

not enough to think about a person's place of living in terms of a context with certain economic opportunities and a level of service provision, or to believe villages, suburbs and cities to be a mere accumulation of similar people who self-selected into these places. People identifying with residents of other rural, suburban or urban places encompasses more than a geographic context or composition through sorted people. Additionally, place is also more than just one specific municipality. A place-based identity is a person's sense of belonging to a group of like-minded people, irrespective of their specific geographical location, it means seeing the world through the eyes of this group and experiencing group-based feelings and attitudes. We need to start thinking about place in this rich and encompassing manner and we need to start caring about place-based social identities.

Third, I would like to raise some awareness to the fact that place of living as a social identity indeed does have real political and social consequences. The fact that place of living is not just a meaningless social identity is shown in this dissertation with regard to political support and a number of authors have also investigated similar effects with regard to other phenomena such as populist attitudes or vote choice. Taking place-based social identities seriously also means recognizing the fact that it has real consequences and making an effort to understand where place-based social identity comes from and what effects it has—on the political as well as on the societal sphere. This for example opens up the question of whether and to what extent such rural, suburban and urban identities can be shaped, mobilized or even exploited politically and medially or how social cohesion is impacted by place-based identities. We need to become aware of place of living as a social identity and take it seriously in order to open up the black box of the full range of its causes and effects.

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153

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Declaration of independent work

«Ich erkläre hiermit, dass ich diese Arbeit selbstständig verfasst und keine anderen als die angegebenen Quellen benutzt habe. Alle Koautorenschaften sowie alle Stellen, die wörtlich oder sinngemäss aus Quellen entnommen wurden, habe ich als solche gekennzeichnet. Mir ist bekannt, dass andernfalls der Senat gemäss Artikel 36 Absatz 1 Buchstabe o des Gesetzes vom 5. September 1996 über die Universität zum Entzug des aufgrund dieser Arbeit verliehenen Titels berechtigt ist.»

Bern, 13. März 2024   Alina Zumbrunn

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