

# **From Identity to Cleavage: Parties and the Transformation of European Territorial Identification**

Martin Lukk  
University of Toronto

DRAFT 2025-08-20

## **ABSTRACT**

How has the relationship between local, national, and European identification changed in recent decades, and how is it linked to political party competition? Research finds that collective identities sort European voters into opposing sides of a cultural cleavage that separates radical-right parties from the new left and less-educated voters from university graduates. Notably, the cleavage overlaps with a division between “particularists” and “expansivists,” distinguished by their emphasis on either local and regional or European and global identities. Although such forms of territorial identification are linked to contemporary party support, it remains unclear whether they are long-standing identification patterns that have recently become politicized or new kinds of identification that parties themselves have cultivated. Using latent class analysis and 1995–2007 Eurobarometer data, I find that territorial identification patterns underwent rapid transformation in the late 1990s, coinciding with major European institutional reforms. While particularism previously dominated, an inclusive, pluralist form of identification became the most common by 1999. Using panel data from the 2017 German federal election, I find that voters’ identification patterns can change modestly during political campaigns and that radical-right supporters were particularly likely to transition from pluralism to particularism. These findings show how stable identity structures emerge from institutional developments but do not automatically become politically significant. The radical right’s electoral success, despite the long-term decline of particularism in the electorate, underscores parties’ autonomous role in incorporating identities within political cleavages.

Appeals to collective identity are a prominent feature of contemporary political rhetoric, as parties seek to mobilize support through cultural issues and symbolic boundaries. This is especially true for radical-right leaders, whose speeches combine populist, anti-elite claims with endorsements of exclusionary national identity (Bonikowski 2017; Mudde 2007). Although nationalism is arguably their key ideological commitment (Eger and Valdez 2015; Rydgren 2017), radical-right actors also position themselves in relation to other territorially defined identities, including Europe, “the West,” and the broader world (Brubaker 2017; Cerrone 2023). U.S. President Donald Trump exemplified this when he proclaimed, “The future does not belong to globalists. The future belongs to patriots,” drawing a moral distinction between national and supranational loyalties.<sup>1</sup> U.K. Prime Minister Theresa May, following the Brexit referendum, similarly declared: “if you believe you are a citizen of the world, you are a citizen of nowhere,” lamenting that “too many people . . . behave as though they have more in common with international elites than with the people down the road.”<sup>2</sup> As party leader, she appeared to align the Conservatives with locally oriented forms of collective identification over transnational, cosmopolitan ones (Gorman and Seguin 2018; Nicoli, Kuhn, and Burgoon 2020). The conflict over particularistic versus expansive attachments that these leaders illustrate constitutes a significant political division in European party politics (De Vries 2018; Hooghe and Marks 2018), and, more than mere rhetoric, reflects meaningful differences in how voters understand themselves (Bornschier et al. 2021; Zollinger 2024).

But where do these distinct forms of collective identification come from? And what does this reveal about how identities become incorporated within political cleavages? One perspective on the question emphasizes sociological factors and argues that identities are deeply held, durable forms of self-understanding, developed through long-term socialization. On this account, people develop attachments at multiple levels of territorial hierarchy (Medrano and Gutiérrez 2001; Wimmer 2008) through a combination of bottom-up and top-down processes, including repeated exposure to one’s local environment and the promotion of identities by institutions like the nation-state and the European Union (Hadler, Tsutsui, and Chin 2012; Opp 2005). This

---

<sup>1</sup> Trump’s statement appeared in a 2019 address to the United Nations General Assembly (Borger 2019).

<sup>2</sup> May’s statement appeared in a speech at the 2016 U.K. Conservative Party Conference (Bearak 2016).

perspective sees territorial identification patterns as deep-rooted and relatively stable (Antonsich and Holland 2014), suggesting that these distinct forms have existed in similar configurations for decades. Under this view, the recent prominence of particularist–expansivist divisions reflects parties increasingly appealing to pre-existing identity patterns, so that political supply is meeting existing demand, rather than creating new bases for mobilization (see Bonikowski 2017).

A second perspective emphasizes political factors and raises the possibility that particularistic and expansive identification patterns have been cultivated by parties themselves. On this account, parties do not simply reflect existing social divisions but play a decisive role in constructing them as a basis for political mobilization (De Leon, Desai, and Tuğal 2009; Eidlin 2016). This suggests that when party leaders appeal to particularistic and expansive cleavage identities through references to groups like “patriots” and “globalists,” they are not addressing previously established collectivities but actively creating them, by emphasizing certain territorial attachments over others and giving them political expression (Bartolini and Mair 1990; cf. Meguid 2005). This view suggests that parties can reshape the structure and prevalence of territorial attachments, whether by propagating entirely new identity configurations or convincing voters to adopt existing ones aligned with their rhetoric. If parties create rather than merely respond to identities, this should be reflected in shorter-term fluctuations in how the electorate identifies. The key distinction between these perspectives lies in whether parties politicize existing identity distributions or actively alter them through their behavior.

Despite widespread recognition of collective identities’ importance in political conflict, there is limited evidence of their origins, development, and relationship to party strategy. This study examines how territorial identification in Europe has evolved in recent decades and how its structure relates to electoral campaigns. Understanding these links is crucial for democratic politics because it clarifies whether parties merely respond to existing social divisions or actively create them, which provides broader insights into the nature of political representation and sources of group conflict. The study asks three main research questions: (1) How have aggregate levels of identification with different territorial entities in Europe changed since the 1990s, a period marked by institutional transformation, financial crises, and increased migration? (2) How have underlying patterns of identification across multiple territorial levels evolved during the same period? (3) How did these patterns shift during the 2017 German federal election, a pivotal

contest that marked the radical right’s breakthrough and provides a valuable case for assessing how electoral campaigns reshape territorial identification?

To address these questions, I first conduct a descriptive analysis of 1991–2023 Eurobarometer data and find considerable stability in aggregate levels of identification with all territorial levels except Europe, attachment to which surged in Western Europe in the 1990s. Second, using latent class models fitted to 1995–2007 Eurobarometer data, I find that, in much of Western and Northern Europe, identity structures underwent rapid crystallization in the 1990s, transforming from inchoate, poorly differentiated patterns into those resembling the distinctive particularist, expansivist, and pluralist classes discovered more recently. This period also features a striking reversal in the prevalence of identity types: whereas locally oriented identification was most common in the early 1990s, it was surpassed by inclusive, pluralist identification by 1999 and continued to grow in influence throughout the 2000s. Finally, using latent transition analysis and data from the German Longitudinal Election Survey, I find that voters’ identification patterns can change, albeit modestly, during political campaigns and that radical-right supporters were especially likely to adopt an exclusive, particularist form of identification during the 2017 federal election cycle, aligning with the far-right Alternative for Germany’s identity-based appeals.

Taken together, the results advance scholarly understanding of how territorial identification in Europe has evolved and how it intersects with party competition. I find that the identity-based divide between particularists and expansivists, which underpins a broader cultural cleavage between the new left and radical right, has existed in a stable configuration since the late 1990s, likely driven by the founding of the European Union and resulting surge in European attachment. My analysis thus strongly suggests that contemporary territorial identities were not recently invented by parties but are the product of socialization and critical junctures in institutional development. Moreover, the distribution of these identities and their population trends are starkly at odds with how these identities appear to have been incorporated within political conflict. Far from riding a wave of growing particularist identification among Europeans, radical-right actors have been swimming against a tide of declining locally oriented identification since the 1990s. The fact that the electorate has largely abandoned this form of attachment makes it all the more remarkable that the radical right appears to have successfully mobilized “patriots” and politicized a particularist–expansivist divide, speaking to parties’ autonomous role in generating social cleavages (Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Sartori 1969). Evidence from the 2017 German federal

election confirms that, in addition to mobilizing those with identities that are already aligned with appeals, parties can modestly reshape voter identification during campaigns, contributing to the partisan sorting of collective identification (Bonikowski, Feinstein, and Bock 2021).

## 1 Background

### 1.1 Collective Identities in Cleavage Politics

Recent decades have seen the rise of a new cleavage in European politics that separates radical-right supporters from those of “new left” parties based on cultural and identity concerns (Ford and Jennings 2020; Kitschelt 1994). This division is variously described as “universalist–particularist” (Häusermann and Kriesi 2015), “cosmopolitan–parochial” (De Vries 2018) and “globalist–nationalist” (Scotto, Sanders, and Reifler 2018), and has reshaped the structure of electoral competition: what was once primarily a one-dimensional competition over economic issues has evolved in a two-dimensional one, where positions on multiculturalism, national sovereignty, gender equality, and environmental protection, among others, cut across the traditional left-right axis concerned with market regulation and state intervention (Dassonneville, Hooghe, and Marks 2024; Guth and Nelsen 2021). The transformation has coincided with the rise of new party families, including green, left-libertarian, and radical-right parties, that prioritize cultural issues while holding relatively inconsistent and ambiguous economic stances (Bornschier 2010a; March 2012). The result is an expanded electoral space, where established center-left and center-right parties continue to attract voters along traditional socioeconomic lines while new parties draw support across conventional boundaries. Evidence of such cross-cutting appeal is seen in the radical right’s ability to attract both working-class voters and small business owners (Oesch and Rennwald 2018), suggesting that identities and broader value orientations, rather than socioeconomic position, unite voters on different sides of the cultural division.

Research has begun to identify the kinds of collective identities that matter most for Europe’s cultural cleavage. Theoretical accounts understand identities as a necessary component of political cleavages, since individuals’ subjective identification with politically salient groups (e.g., owners and workers or Catholics and Protestants), along with the organizing efforts of parties, reinforces intergroup conflicts and contributes to their ability to structure party systems (Bartolini and Mair 1990; Lipset and Rokkan 1967). Empirically, studies find that voters

associate with a wide range of both objective group identities (e.g., “student,” “service worker”) as well as more diffuse, culturally inflected ones (e.g., “hard-working,” “down-to-earth”) and that these are connected in complex ways. Studying Switzerland, Bornschier et al. (2021) find that people identify with social groups in ways that go beyond their own objective group characteristics, so that, for example, rural residents tend to feel closer than urban ones to groups like manual workers and “Swiss people,” regardless of their own occupation and even when compared to other Swiss citizens. Moreover, new left voters, compared to radical-right voters, are more likely to feel close to “cosmopolitan” and “cultured” people, and more distant from “Swiss” and “rural” people, regardless of their own objective characteristics, suggesting that entire sets of collective identities have become associated with opposing sides of the cleavage separating the radical right and new left (Bornschier et al. 2021; Zollinger 2024).

## 1.2 Territorial Identification in Europe

Among the many collective identities involved in cultural division, numerous scholarly accounts suggest that territorially defined ones are particularly relevant. Häusermann and Kriesi (2015) describe the division in terms of an overarching “universalism–particularism” dimension that separates those with supranational attachments from those with strong national loyalties. De Vries (2018) similarly identifies a “cosmopolitan–parochial” dimension separating inclusionary, internationally-oriented voters from inward-looking, locally-minded ones, while Hooghe and Marks (2018) discuss a “transnational cleavage” that divides voters based on their commitment to either the national community or transnational connections (see also Bornschier 2010b; Kriesi et al. 2006; Teney, Lacewell, and De Wilde 2014). These accounts consistently point to the importance of territorial identification within contemporary political conflict, and they suggest it is both polarized (Fiorina and Abrams 2008) along a local–global axis and sorted by party (Levendusky 2009). This implies that voters identify with either proximal (e.g., local and national) or distal (e.g., European and global) territorial entities and that these preferences are associated with support for the radical right and new left, respectively, while distinguishing them from mainstream party supporters.

Empirical research has found qualified support for identity polarization while clarifying its structure and scope. In contemporary Europe, Lukk (this dissertation, Chapter 3) finds evidence of an identity-based division between “particularists,” who tend to emphasize proximate

identities (town/city and regional), and “expansivists,” who emphasize distal (European and global) ones. Beyond exhibiting divergent identification patterns, the two groups have distinct socio-economic profiles and political preferences, with generally less-educated, non-urban particularists preferring the radical right and urban expansivists with university degrees preferring green parties. The particularist–expansivist division is relatively rare, however, and appears in only a subset of 11 countries, primarily in Northern and Central Europe, establishing sizable limits on the scope of identity polarization and challenging grand narratives of electorates split between urban “globalists” and heartland “nationalists” (e.g., Slaughter 2017). Instead, most Europeans are pluralists who identify broadly with multiple entities, spanning the range from local to global, and support mainstream parties. Further complicating the “globalist versus nationalist” narrative, particularists, expansivists, and pluralists alike identify relatively strongly with the nation-state, suggesting that conflicts over the nation may have less to do with attachment than competing vision of who rightfully belongs to the nation (Lukk 2024; this dissertation, Chapter 2). Despite these qualifications, empirical findings are consistent with the idea that, at least in parts of Europe, entire sets of territorial identities have become mobilized along a cultural cleavage that has the potential to spread and appears likely to shape European politics for the foreseeable future (Bornschier et al. 2021).

### 1.3 Socialization and Territorial Identification

While research has established that distinct forms of territorial identification are linked to party support, it remains unclear whether they are long-standing identification patterns that have recently become politicized or new kinds of identification that parties themselves have cultivated. The primarily cross-sectional nature of previous studies more generally means that relatively little is known about how territorial identities have evolved. This is despite the fact that scholars have linked the cultural cleavage’s development to critical junctures in recent European history, including the dissolution of the Soviet Union; institutional reforms in the 1990s that established the E.U., centralized governance, and liberalized trade and migration; and more recent shocks like the Great Recession (Hooghe and Marks 2018; Noury and Roland 2020).

Previous research argues that both socialization and party strategy play a role in shaping identities. The former perspective emphasizes sociological factors and understands territorial identities as durable and deeply held forms of self-understanding developed through long-term

socialization. This account recognizes that collective identification is multiple and nested (Medrano and Gutiérrez 2001; Wimmer 2008), so that people simultaneously develop attachments at several different levels of spatial hierarchy (Nicoli et al. 2020) through a combination of bottom-up and top-down processes. They begin developing identifications with their local area and region through childhood socialization and everyday experiences in their immediate environment (Opp 2005; Skey 2011). Attachments to higher-order entities like the nation-state and Europe are then further developed through interactions with institutions like public schools (Grever and Vlies 2017) and the E.U. (Fligstein, Polyakova, and Sandholtz 2012), especially when those identities are seen as providing status and security (Barrie 2021; Gorman and Seguin 2018). Attachments are also mutually reinforcing, so that identification with a superordinate entity can promote identification with its constituent parts (Antonsich and Holland 2014; Hadler et al. 2012). Understanding territorial identification as deep-rooted and stable implies that that an increase in its role in political conflict results from parties increasingly appealing to identity patterns that have long been latent in the population (see Bonikowski 2017). This expectation is also consistent with political socialization research more generally, which emphasizes the persistence of attitudes and dispositions acquired by early adulthood (Kiley and Vaisey 2020; Sears and Brown 2023).

## 1.4 Articulation and Territorial Identification

A second perspective emphasizes shorter-term political factors and raises the possibility that particularistic and expansive identification patterns have been cultivated by parties themselves. On this account, parties do not simply reflect existing social divisions but actively participate in constructing them, as a basis for political mobilization (De Leon et al. 2009). The “political articulation” perspective emphasizes that various possible group conflicts do not automatically become politically consequential. Rather, political actors help construct them as such by aggregating disparate interests and identities into coherent blocs and framing particular issues as sources of grievance. In India, for example, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the 1980s forged a “Hindu” bloc out of antagonistic groups, including tribal, lower-, and upper-caste communities, positioning them against the Congress Party and a shared Muslim enemy (De Leon et al. 2009). In Turkey, the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in the 2000s supplanted the previous secular–Islamist cleavage by constructing a new “conservative democratic” coalition, composed of businessmen, religious intellectuals, and the urban poor, united against an authoritarian and

elitist state bureaucracy (Tuğal 2009). In the U.S. during the Great Depression, Democratic Party appeals to the “forgotten man” helped incorporate farmers and workers into a diverse New Deal coalition, whereas alternative articulation strategies in Canada organized these same constituencies under an independent labor party (Eidlin 2016). These examples show how parties can mold popular concerns and recombine social groups under new collective identities, forging new axes of political conflict.

From the articulation perspective, the division between particularists and expansivists does not reflect deep-seated, stable attachments but results from parties’ efforts to construct and promote such divisions, by aggregating disparate groups under shared identities and grievances.

Specifically, radical-right parties have assembled coalitions that cut across traditional lines of conflict, bringing together groups like production workers and small business owners (Oesch and Rennwald 2018), and articulated them as “patriots” defending local ways of life against “globalist” elites. Through repeated rhetorical and organizational appeals to this bloc, and the territorial attachments it implies, radical-right actors have propagated particularistic identification within the electorate, helping to naturalize the globalist-nationalist cleavage and its grievances. This perspective parallels research on agenda-setting and issue evolution (De Vries and Hobolt 2012; Meguid 2005), which likewise shows how parties shape political competition by strategically elevating certain issues over others, and is consistent with studies of parties’ group appeals more generally (Huber 2022). Overall, this view holds that parties can reshape how voters combine territorial attachments and alter the prevalence of different identification patterns. Whether parties invent new configurations or transform existing ones, their actions should be reflected in shorter-term fluctuations in how the electorate identifies, especially during periods of intense political mobilization.

## 1.5 Empirical Predictions: Stability Versus Change

The political socialization and articulation perspectives generate distinct sets of empirical expectations about the development of territorial identification across different time scales and units of analysis. For the socialization perspective to find support, Europeans should exhibit relatively stable aggregate patterns of identification over time, and the underlying distribution of attachments across different territorial scales should also remain consistent within the population. The perspective also predicts that individuals will maintain their existing identification patterns

even during periods of heightened political articulation, such as election campaigns, when parties are likely to deploy frequent identity-based appeals. To the extent that individuals do change their identification, such changes should occur primarily among younger voters, as late adolescence and early adulthood represent “impressionable years” in political socialization (Sears and Brown 2023). If population identification trends are found to be steady and essentially unrelated to the apparent rise of elite identity appeals, as this perspective predicts, then it would nonetheless speak to parties’ impressive ability to politicize issues independent of mass opinion.

By contrast, for the articulation perspective to find support, I would expect to observe shorter-term shifts in territorial identification, rather than stability, especially during periods of active political contestation. At the aggregate level, the apparent growth in party appeals to particularism and dramatic rise in radical-right vote shares in recent decades (Mudde 2019), would suggest that Europeans have also recently adopted increasingly particularist identification patterns. Such a development might also be accompanied by an aggregate increase in attachment to proximate identities (e.g., town, region, and nation) that tracks the growth in far-right electoral gains. Most directly, the perspective predicts that individuals will change their territorial attachments during election campaigns, as parties articulate new collective identities and form new voter coalitions under them. Specifically, radical-right voters should move toward particularism and new left party supporters toward expansivism in response to campaigns, given the associations between these party families and identification patterns.

## 2 Methods

### 2.1 Data and Measures

I study the evolution of territorial identification in Europe using data from several sources. First, to assess long-term cross-national patterns, I use data from 34 repeated cross-sections of the Eurobarometer, a well-established series of high-quality surveys conducted by the European Commission to monitor public opinion trends in E.U. states (European Commission 2023).<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Specifically, the study uses data from the Candidate Countries Eurobarometer (CCEB) 2003.4 and the following editions of the Standard Eurobarometer (EB): 98.2, 97.5, 96.3, 95.3, 94.3, 93.1, 92.3, 91.5, 90.3, 89.1, 88.3, 87.3, 87.1, 86.2, 84.3, 84.1, 82.3, 80.1, 79.5, 77.3, 73.3, 68.1, 67.2, 58.1, 67.1, 65.2, 63.4, 62.0, 60.1, 56.3, 54.1, 51.0, 43.1bis. The resulting time series can be seen as an extension of the one analyzed by Antonsich and Holland (2014).

Covering the period 1991–2023 and featuring questions gauging attachment to multiple territorial entities, the Eurobarometer provides considerable, albeit varying, longitudinal insight on identification in all 27 E.U. member states. While my descriptive analysis uses the full temporal range, my cross-national analysis using latent class models is restricted to the 1995–2007 period due to limited country coverage in the earliest wave and changes in question availability in later waves.<sup>4</sup>

Second, to assess within-person change, I use data from the 2016–2021 German Longitudinal Election Survey ( GLES) Panel, waves 3 and 9 ( GLES 2023). Similarly to other major national election surveys, the GLES provides high-quality data for the analysis of voters’ attitudes and political behavior during and between national elections. The GLES Panel in question specifically enables the study of intra-individual attitudinal change during the 2017 German federal election campaign. Waves 3 and 9 were conducted before and after the September 25, 2017 election, in May 2017 and March 2018, and they feature completed interviews with 9,372 and 7,753 eligible voters, respectively, including responses to questions concerning territorial attachments as well as vote choice and demographic characteristics.<sup>5</sup> Together, these data sources allow me to provide both a comprehensive account of long-term identification trends and a focused analysis of short-term shifts in response to election campaigns.

I measure the focal concept in this analysis, territorial identification, using a series of survey responses in both the Eurobarometer and GLES gauging respondents’ closeness to key territorial entities. The relevant question in the Eurobarometer asks, “Please tell how attached you feel to...?” before listing five different identity sources: “your city, town, village,” “your [region],” “[country],” “the European Union,” and “Europe.” The specific question phrasing is adjusted to each nation-specific context and available to respondents in several local languages. Respondents are asked to answer on a four-point scale for each item, with the options “very attached,” “fairly attached,” “not very attached,” and “not at all attached.” I harmonized data from 34

---

<sup>4</sup> After 2007, the “region” and “Europe” territorial attachment items were no longer consistently featured in the same Eurobarometer surveys.

<sup>5</sup> Specifically, the analysis uses data from Sample A1, the largest GLES Panel sub-sample, selected via quota sampling from opt-in online panels.

Eurobarometer waves that asked respondents about at least 4 of the above territorial entities using a consistent scale and question wording (see Antonsich and Holland 2014:216). I collapsed the first and second two response categories to reduce model complexity and improve interpretability, resulting in a binary variable indicating the presence or absence of attachment.

The relevant GLES question asks, “People feel attached to Germany, Europe, their state and their community to a different degree.” It then asks “How about you? How strongly do you feel attached to...?” and lists five identity sources: “the community you live in,” “the state you live in,” “Germany,” “the European Union,” and “Europe.” Responses are provided on a five-point scale ranging from “strongly attached” to “not attached at all.” Although there may be some ambiguity in how European residents understand what it means to be “attached” to different territorial scales, these and related questions are widely used as identification measures in research on nationalism, cosmopolitan, and related sociopolitical orientations (e.g., Bonikowski and DiMaggio 2016; Pichler 2009). Moreover, the repeated inclusion of questions of this type across decades of surveys provides the benefit of unusually extensive longitudinal comparison (Sinnott 2006). I collapsed the first three (“very,” “somewhat,” and “moderately” attached) and last two response categories (“not very” and “not at all”) to, once again, reduce the complexity of latent class models and improve interpretability, resulting in a binary variable indicating the presence or absence of attachment. The analysis of GLES data also uses standard variables measuring respondents’ party vote choice and demographic characteristics including age, sex, education, and household income (Table A1, in the chapter appendix, reports descriptive statistics for covariates analyzed).

## 2.2 Analytic Strategy

### 2.2.1 Aggregate Territorial Identification (1991–2023)

I begin by conducting a descriptive analysis of the harmonized Eurobarometer data set, covering the period 1991–2023. This involves plotting aggregate country-level attachment to four territorial entities over time and across countries, fitting smoothed regression curves, and visually inspecting the resulting trends. This approach considerably extends the temporal scope of previous descriptive analyses (e.g., Antonsich and Holland 2014) and provides a high-level overview of long-term changes in territorial identification. I also examine trends by major region to capture broad cross-national differences.

## 2.2.2 Cross-National Identification Patterns (1995–2007)

After conducting a descriptive analysis of aggregate identification trends in all 29 countries included in the Eurobarometer (27 E.U. member states, Great Britain, and Türkiye), I examine underlying patterns of identification across territorial entities in a subset of countries.

Specifically, I focus on six countries where previous research has found a salient identity-based divide that separates radical right and new left voters. Based on analyses of the 2017–2020 European Values Survey (EVS), Lukk (this dissertation, Chapter 3) finds that 11 countries, primarily in Northern and Central Europe, exhibit a clear division between “particularists,” who emphasize proximate territorial attachments, and “expansivists,” who emphasize distal ones, including identification with Europe. The analyses presented here focus on six countries from this group—Germany, Denmark, Finland, France, Netherlands, and Sweden—that (a) are featured in the Eurobarometer and (b) include sufficient data on relevant variables for longitudinal analysis. This means leaving out non-E.U. countries (Iceland, Norway, and Switzerland) and countries with limited temporal coverage on key measures (Hungary and Poland). I focus on these six because their electorates show well-established identity cleavages in the present day, making them the most informative cases for tracing the emergence of such divisions over time.

To move beyond aggregate trends and better understand how individuals identify with multiple territorial levels simultaneously, I use latent class analysis (LCA) for the 1995–2007 period, where consistent territorial attachment measures are available. This method allows me to find distinct identification profiles within countries and compare how they vary between points in time. LCA involves modeling a set of observed categorical variables (in this case, survey responses to questions about territorial attachment) as a function of an unobserved nominal variable, whose values represent respondents’ membership in “latent classes,” and account for the covariance between observed responses (McCutcheon 2002). This method finds subsets of respondents who share distinct response patterns across observed variables and is commonly used to infer about “types” of individuals within populations based on social and cultural attitudes (e.g., types of understandings about gender roles; Knight and Brinton 2017).

Latent class models estimate two parameters of interest: class probabilities and class-conditional response probabilities. The first indicates the probability that a randomly chosen respondent

belongs to a given class, which can be used to infer about the prevalence of classes within a population. The second indicates the probability that a member of a class gives a particular categorical response, which can be used to characterize classes substantively. LCA thus makes it possible to go beyond the description of aggregate trends and understand major groupings of individuals in the population, who respond to sets of questions about territorial attachment in similar ways, and how they differ from each other.

I apply LCA in two steps to data from the six European countries discussed above, for all applicable survey years from 1995 to 2007. First, I fit structurally heterogeneous multi-group latent class models that allow both the structure of latent classes (i.e., class-conditional response probabilities) and their prevalence to vary freely across countries and years, while constraining the number of classes to be equal across samples (Clogg and Goodman 1985; Kim et al. 2022). Although this approach sacrifices some measure of cross-national and temporal comparability, it helps establish the full range of identification patterns that exist in the data and makes it possible to detect how the substantive meaning of classes changes through time. Second, I fit a structurally homogeneous model that constrains class structures to be identical across countries and years while allowing class proportions to vary. This more parsimonious specification makes it possible to directly compare how the prevalence of particular identification patterns evolves over time. Together, these approaches allow me to assess both the substantive evolution of how Europeans simultaneously identify with multiple territorial entities and document changes in the prevalence of distinct patterns across time.

### 2.2.3 Individual-Level Identification Patterns (2017 Germany Election Campaign)

Finally, I focus my analysis of within-person change on Germany, which exemplifies the ongoing transformation of European party systems into two-dimensional conflict structures, where parties compete based on cultural, identity, and values-based issues alongside traditional economic ones. Compared to other Western European countries, like Switzerland and Austria, which saw the emergence of successful green and radical-right parties by the 1990s, Germany's political restructuring along cultural lines has been comparatively late and remains incomplete (Bornschier 2010b). The 2017 federal election marked a pivotal moment in this transformation, bringing the radical-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) into the Bundestag for the first time in postwar history, a development described as a “political earthquake” (Siri 2018). Following a

campaign that aggressively politicized issues like immigration, German identity, and European integration, the AfD emerged as the country's third most popular party, capturing over 12 percent of the vote (Dostal 2017; Faas and Klingelhöfer 2019). The result was the most fragmented party system since the 1950s, with six party groups competing over an expanded issue set that heavily featured identity and immigration (Bräuninger et al. 2019). Given that it marked a critical juncture in the restructuring of party competition along cultural conflict, the 2017 German federal election provides a valuable case for investigating whether and how electoral campaigns, especially those marked by ethno-nationalist and anti-immigration rhetoric, affect voters' territorial identification patterns.

To move beyond analyses of repeated cross-sections and understand how identification patterns change within individuals, I use latent transition analysis (LTA). This method extends the basic latent class approach by modeling how individuals move between classes over time using hidden Markov models (Collins and Lanza 2009). LTA proceeds in two steps. First, as with standard LCA, it involves fitting a model that explains variation in responses across survey items in terms of a set of unobserved, latent classes. In this case, these are survey questions gauging territorial identification among a panel of respondents before and after the 2017 election. Second, and distinctively, LTA estimates transition probabilities, the likelihood that someone in a particular class at one point in time will move to a different class (or remain in the same one) in the next (Bartolucci, Pandolfi, and Pennoni 2017). Crucially, these probabilities can be modeled as functions of individual demographic and attitudinal characteristics, allowing me to examine whether supporters of different parties, and voters of different backgrounds, systematically differ in how their identification patterns change during a campaign period. To this end, I include covariates for party vote choice and demographic characteristics, including age, gender, income, and education. The resulting models simultaneously capture both the structure of identity configurations and the dynamics of identity change, providing direct evidence of whether electoral campaigns—especially those marked by heightened identity-based appeals—can change territorial attachments.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> The final LTA model includes covariates only for transition probabilities, not initial class membership, a specification that aligns with my theoretical focus on identity change during the campaign, rather than pre-existing differences between party supporters, which have been established in previous research.

### 3 Results

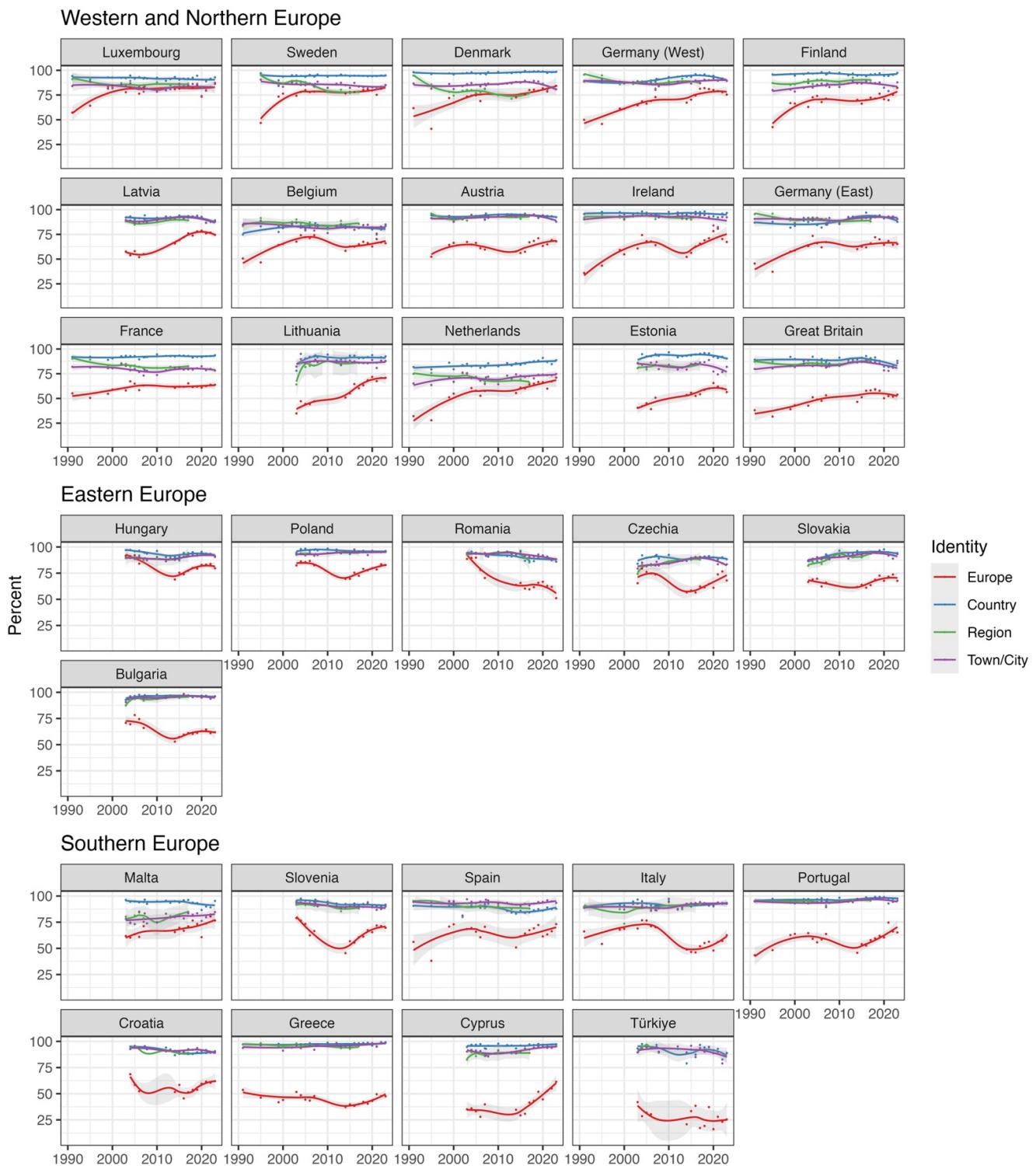
#### 3.1 Aggregate Trends in Territorial Identification in Europe, 1991–2023

What broad trends characterize territorial identification in Europe in recent decades? Figure 1 displays average levels of territorial identification in 30 countries, organized by region, between 1991 and 2023, based on data from 34 Eurobarometer waves. Data points represent the proportion of a country’s respondents that reports feeling either “close” or “very close” to four key territorial identities, based on weighted samples. The data show that, among these territorial identities, individuals are most likely to identify with the nation-state, and that in some cases (e.g., Denmark, France, Netherlands) identification with the nation is considerably more common than other territorial scales. In most cases, however, similar shares of the population identify at local (i.e., city, town, or village), regional, and national scales. By contrast, identification with Europe is considerably less common, although the size of this gap varies drastically. In Greece, for example, only about half of survey respondents have consistently identified with Europe while this proportion is around four-fifths in Sweden, where it rivals local identification. Moreover, the data provide considerable evidence of country-level stability in identification. There is overall little evidence of change in national, regional, or local identification across almost 30 years in some cases. Notably, there is nothing to suggest drastic surges in national or local identification within electorates that might explain the emergence of particularistic identification patterns or nationalism’s increased prominence in institutional politics.

An exception to patterns of stability is seen in European identification. Figure 1 provides evidence of significant change in identification with this entity since the mid-1990s, although patterns of change vary by country and region. In Western and Northern Europe, European identification has generally grown and in some cases done so substantially. Only about 25 percent of respondents in the Netherlands identified with Europe in 1991, shortly before the E.U.’s establishment, whereas nearly 75 percent did 30 years later. The countries in Central and Eastern Europe, all of which joined the E.U. in the mid-2000s, are instead characterized by a roughly U-shaped trajectory, with relatively high initial identification levels, followed by a slump in the mid-2010s, from which some but not all states recovered. Southern Europe sees

among the lowest rates of European identification, relatively flat trends, but also fluctuations in the period from approximately 2008 to 2015, corresponding to the European debt crisis, which disproportionately affected Greece, Portugal, Spain, and Cyprus. Overall, given the regionally heterogeneous effects of many aspects of E.U. governance, these regionally patterned identification trajectories suggest that critical junctures in E.U. development may indeed have promoted new transnational identities among European residents. Such identities may be linked to new social divisions that have found representation among parties mobilizing on cultural issues like migration and Euroscepticism.

**Figure 1. Aggregate Territorial Identification Trends in European States, 1991–2023**



Note: Data from 1991–2023 Eurobarometer waves. Points represent weighted proportions of country sample that report feeling "close" or "very close" to different identities. Smooth curves are fitted via LOESS regression. Countries within regions are sorted by average attachment to Europe. Regional classifications are based on the United Nations geoscheme, with the exception of Cyprus and Türkiye ("Western Asia").

### 3.2 Cross-National Identification Patterns, 1995–2007

The aggregate trends described above provide important context regarding the overall trajectory of European territorial identification, but they cannot show changes in how individuals combine attachments across territorial scales. To address this question, I apply LCA to data from six countries found to feature a contemporary particularist–expansivist identity division. I first fit structurally heterogeneous latent class models to each applicable Eurobarometer survey wave, 1995–2007 and compare results across years to trace changes in identification patterns. LCA typically begins with identifying the number of classes that best accounts for variation in the data, based on both statistical criteria and interpretability. In this case, likelihood ratio tests indicate that three-class specifications provide statistically significant model fit improvements in all years, while standard fit statistics generally show small differences between models with two and three classes, indicating that both solutions fit adequately. The Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC) tends to favor the more parsimonious two-class solution but, notably, the penalty for three-class models is largest in 1995 and decreases over time (Table A2 reports fit statistics for all candidate models). This pattern itself provides substantive insights and suggests the transformation and growing complexity of identity structures beginning in the late 1990s, as the three-class solution becomes increasingly statistically justified. Given the overall evidence of good model fit and theoretical rationale, I select a three-class solution for all waves, which facilitates temporal comparison and helps illustrate how identity structures became increasingly differentiated.

Figure 2 compares territorial identification patterns between 1995 and 1999, based on results from three-class heterogeneous latent class models, showing rapid change in how European electorates combine territorial attachments. Bar heights indicate the estimated probability that a respondent in a given country, year, and class reports identifying with each of the four territorial entities, while values in parentheses show the estimated proportion of each country’s sample belonging to that class. Results in the top row are based on pooling all six countries and allowing their class structures to vary between years, providing an aggregate summary, while results below them are based on models that allow each country’s classes to vary within years.

**Figure 2.** Identification Patterns by Latent Class in Six European Countries, 1995 and 1999

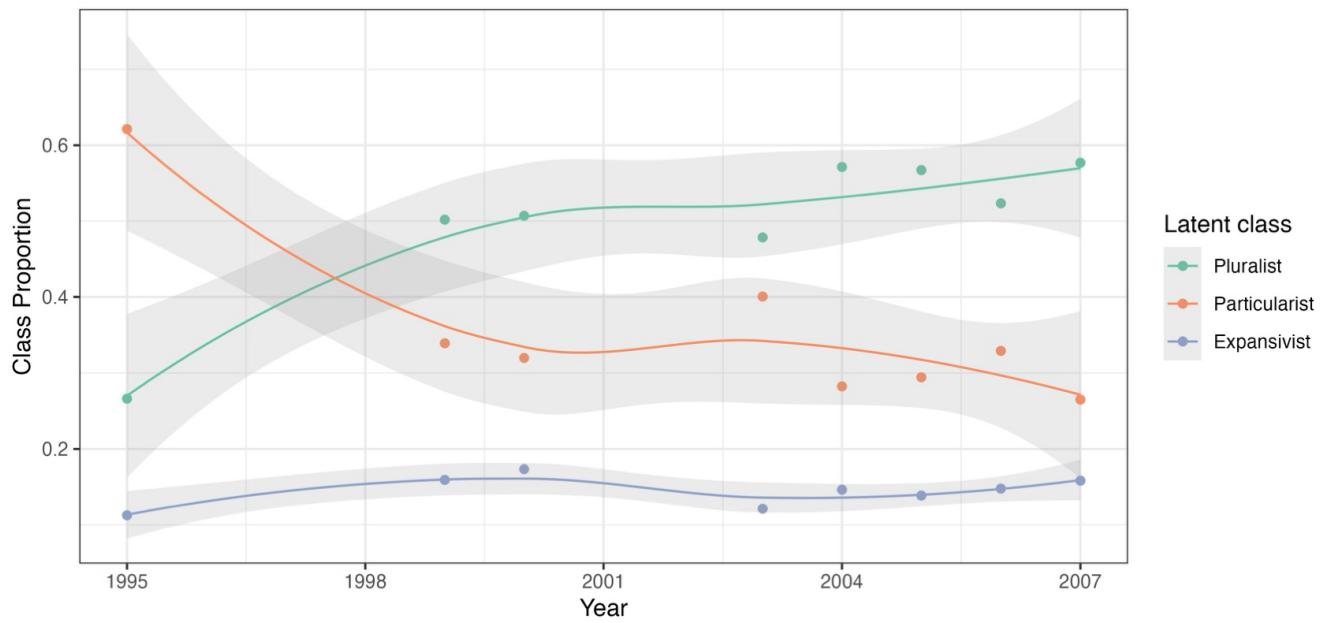


Note: Estimates from multi-group structurally heterogeneous latent class models fitted to 1995 and 1999 Eurobarometer data (3-class solutions), grouped by year (top row) and country and year (remaining rows). Bar heights indicate estimated class-conditional response probabilities for territorial identification items. Estimated class proportions listed in parentheses.

These results show that territorial identity structures underwent rapid crystallization between 1995 and 1999, transforming from inchoate, poorly differentiated patterns into durable ones resembling the particularist, expansivist, and pluralist classes found in recent data. Finland provides the most striking example: Classes 1 and 2 exhibit nearly identical profiles in 1995, showing similarly high attachment across proximal entities and modest European attachment. By 1999, however, these classes become clearly differentiated, with Class 1 emerging as a dominant pluralist class that identifies broadly with all entities while Class 2 preserves its particularist structure but becomes less prevalent. Class 3, meanwhile, becomes an expansivist class that combines strong national and European attachment. Sweden demonstrates a similar process, whereby poorly differentiated initial classes, exhibiting varieties of local attachment, are reshaped by a surge of European identification that establishes a large pluralist class alongside two smaller classes, polarized based on their emphasis on either subnational or European attachment. Some countries, like France and the Netherlands, already exhibit elements of this structure in 1995, suggesting earlier transformation, but see its consolidation as the expansivist class becomes much more common. This broader trajectory of increasing European attachment and growth in expansivism also appears in aggregate patterns (Figure 2, top row). Overall, the differentiation and consolidation of identity types across multiple countries in just four years suggests that Europe saw a sharp transformation in how its residents structured their territorial attachments in the 1990s.

The rapid transformation of identification patterns is further illustrated by tracking their prevalence over time. I do this by fitting a structurally homogeneous multi-group LCA model to 1995–2007 Eurobarometer cross-sections, which imposes a single latent class structure on all years while allowing their proportions to vary. This approach makes it possible to directly compare the prevalence of a single latent structure through time and estimates from a comparable heterogeneous model (reported in Figure A1) indicate that the more parsimonious model does not unduly distort underlying patterns. Results suggest that variation in survey responses over the period is best explained in terms of three classes who exhibit very similar response patterns to those found in Lukk’s analysis of EVS data (this dissertation, Chapter 3). These are: (1) pluralists, who identify with all territorial entities; (2) particularists, who identify primarily with the town/city, region, and country; and (3) expansivists, who identify primarily with the country

**Figure 3.** Identification Patterns by Year and Latent Class in Six European Countries, 1995–2007

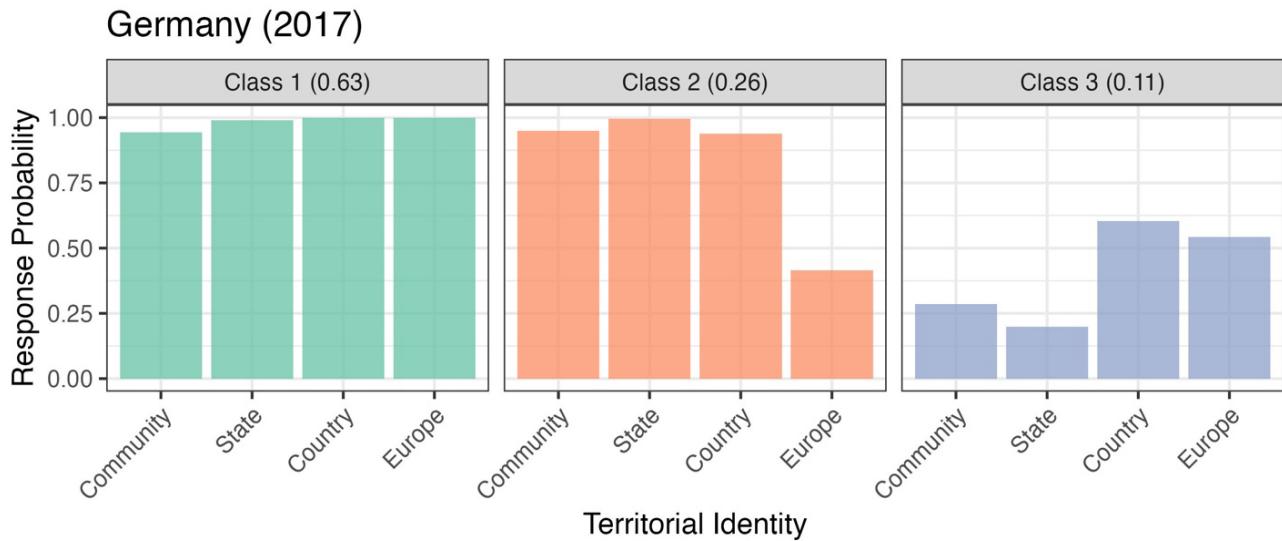


Note: Estimates from multi-group structurally homogeneous latent class models fitted to 1995–2007 Eurobarometer data (3-class solution) for six European countries, grouped by year. Points represent estimated class proportions by year. Smooth curves are fitted via LOESS regression.

and Europe (the resulting response patterns closely match those reported in Figure 2 for Finland in 1999).

Figure 3 plots the estimated proportions of respondents belonging to pluralist, particularist, and expansivist classes in the six previously analyzed countries. It depicts a dramatic crossover in the shares of the two largest classes in the beginning of the period, whereby particularists, making up nearly two-thirds of the 1995 sample, decline to approximately one-third by 1999, while the proportion of pluralists grows from about a quarter in 1995 to about half by 1999. Trends stabilize after this striking reversal, although the gap between classes continues to increase gradually throughout the 2000s, with pluralists reaching a high point of almost 60 percent by 2007 while particularists approach a low of about 25 percent. Comparable data for 1991 are only available for four of the six countries analyzed but are consistent with the trend observed in later years (see Figure A2). Expansivists, by contrast, appear to be a persistent minority, consistently making up between 10 and 15 percent of samples. These trends suggest that the mid-1990s, coinciding with key junctures in European institutional development, including the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997) and adoption of the Euro (1999), represented a critical moment for the rise and consolidation of an identification pattern that includes supranational attachment and the

**Figure 4.** Territorial Identification Patterns by Latent Class in Germany



Note: Estimates from a latent transition model fitted to the German Longitudinal Election Survey, waves 3 and 9. Bar heights indicate estimated class-conditional response probabilities for territorial identification items. Estimated class proportions listed in parentheses.

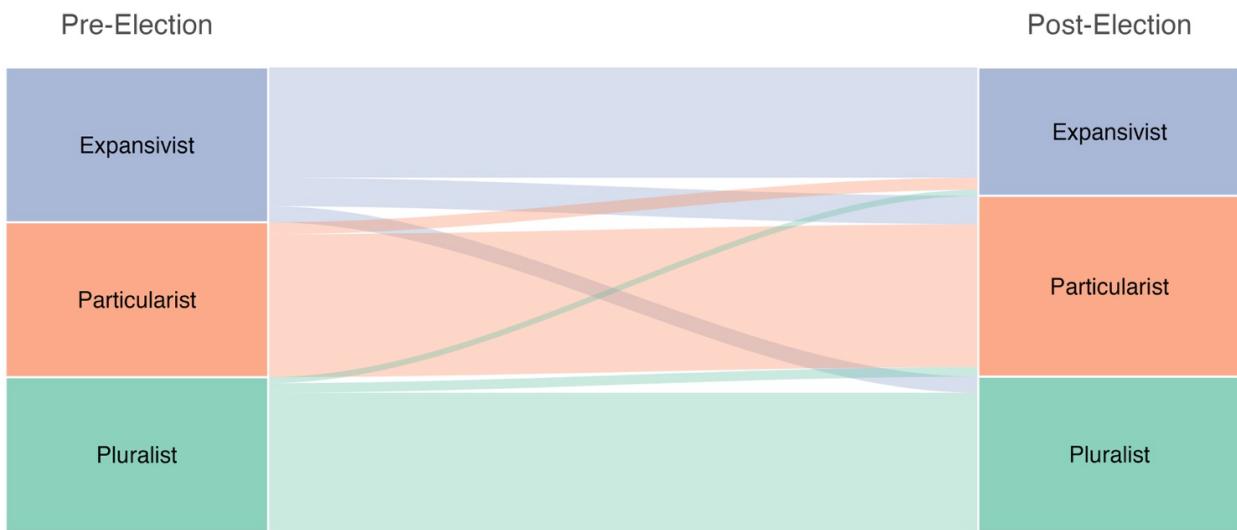
displacement of the previously dominant particularistic form of identification. At the same time, once established, these patterns remained relatively stable and can be seen in similar proportions in contemporary data.

### 3.3 Individual-Level Identification Patterns, 2017 Germany Election Campaign

While cross-sectional evidence suggests that relatively stable identification patterns at the aggregate level can be punctuated by rapid changes linked to institutions, it cannot determine whether political parties can reshape individual identities in the short term. To investigate this possibility, I examine within-person change during Germany's 2017 federal election campaign with LTA and panel data from the GLES. This approach tracks how the same individuals move between identity classes from pre-election to post-election, thereby showing whether exposure to heightened identity-based appeals, particularly from the German radical right's breakthrough campaign, coincided with systematic shifts in Germans' territorial attachments.

Figure 4 presents the latent classes identified in the 2017 German electorate. As before, the analysis begins with determining the appropriate numbers of classes that explains variation in responses across survey items, based on theoretical and empirical considerations. As in the cross-

**Figure 5.** Territorial Identity Transitions During the 2017 Germany Federal Election Campaign



Note: Transition probability estimates from a latent Markov model fitted to the German Longitudinal Election Survey, waves 3 and 9. Width of flows from each pre-election class represents the probability of transitioning from that class to another class in the post-election period. Only transitions with probabilities greater than 0.01 are displayed.

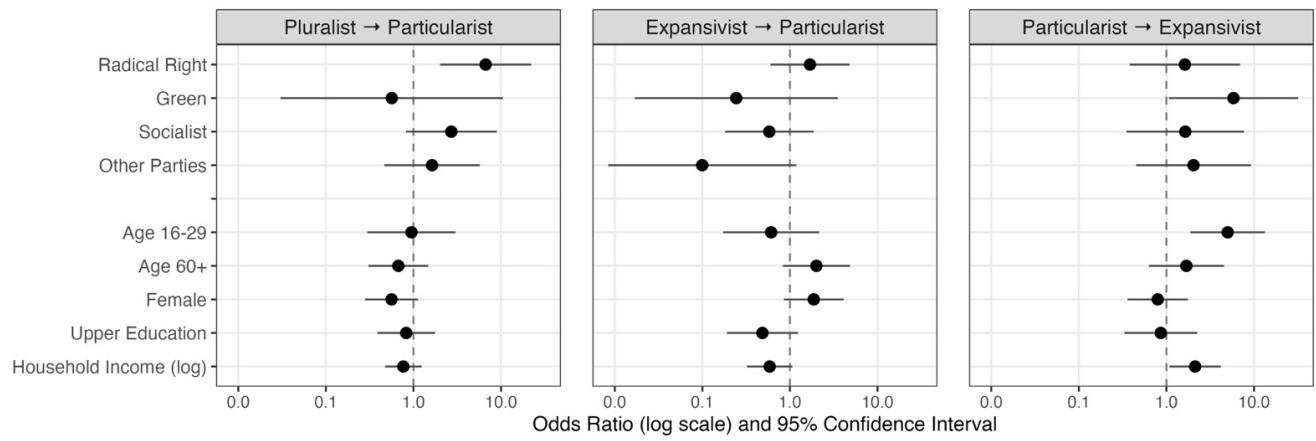
national analysis, statistical criteria indicate that a three-class solution fits the data very well, and the solution is both highly interpretable and theoretically justified. The resulting response pattern estimates closely match those found in the cross-national data and feature even more clearly differentiated forms of the three classes identified in the 1990s. Pluralists (approximately 60 percent of the sample) show attachment across all levels; particularists (26 percent) identify strongly with their community, state, and Germany, while largely rejecting Europe; and expansivists (11 percent) combine European and national attachment with weak local ties. The fact that the GLES analysis yields three classes with very similar response patterns and class proportions as those from earlier Eurobarometer data strongly supports the validity and stability of these identity configurations. The pluralists, particularists, and expansivists identified in the GLES are also very similar to the classes Lukk (this dissertation, Chapter 3) found in a set of European countries using contemporaneous EVS data.

Do voters consistently hold the same identification patterns or do they switch between them, especially during periods of heightened identity-based appeals, as seen during the 2017 German federal election? Figure 5 displays estimated transition probabilities from a latent Markov model fitted to pre- and post-election GLES data. The widths of flows from each pre-election class correspond to the estimated probability of moving from that class into another one in the post-

election period. Overall, the visualization shows a remarkable pattern of stability in class membership, with particularists and pluralists both having approximately 90 percent estimated probabilities of remaining in their class. Expansivists show the most movement, with only about two-thirds of those entering the election period with expansivist identity patterns reporting holding them six months after the election. Notably, approximately 20 percent of initially expansivist voters develop particularistic attachments during the campaign, the single largest inter-class transition observed, while about 10 percent become pluralists. This pattern suggests that, among the three identity configurations, expansivism is the most volatile and susceptible to campaign influence, something that may be explained by the disproportionate share of younger voters in this class (this dissertation, Chapter 3). Meanwhile, the very low estimated transition probabilities out of particularism, to either pluralism or expansivism, suggest that campaigns mobilize identities in structured ways that reinforce existing divisions.

Do supporters of different parties vary in their probability of changing identity patterns, and what does this reveal about parties' ability to shape identification? If campaigns influence territorial attachments, I should observe distinct transition patterns among different parties' voters that align with the nature of their campaign appeals. Lukk (Chapter 3) finds that radical-right support is strongly associated with particularist class membership while green voting correlates with expansivist membership, but it remains unclear whether these associations develop during campaigns. While campaign exposure itself is unmeasured in this analysis, if it exists, it should encourage voters to both support a given party and adopt the identity configuration consistent with its appeals. If voters who support the radical right disproportionately transition to particularist identities, while green voters move toward expansivist ones, then this provides indirect evidence of campaign effects and suggests that parties can change how people identify rather than merely appeal to voters whose identities already align with party appeals. Given that most voters do not change their identification patterns during the campaign period, such systematic correlations between party choice and identity transitions would be difficult to attribute to unobserved confounding alone, the idea that unmeasured factors independent of campaign appeals affect both outcomes.

**Figure 6. Effects of Party Choice and Demographics on Territorial Identity Transitions**



Note: Estimates are from a hidden Markov model fitted to the German Longitudinal Election Survey, waves 3 and 9. The reference category for parties is the center-right (CDU/CSU and FDP) and the reference category for age is 30-59. N = 4,350

Figure 6 reports coefficient estimates from the full transition model that includes vote choice and demographic covariates as predictors of transition probabilities. The panels report estimates for the three most frequent transition sequences involving particularist or expansivist classes, which are most theoretically relevant for understanding how identity supports radical-right and new left parties. Results show clear, party-specific patterns of identity change during the campaign. Most notably, radical-right voters, compared to mainstream, center-right voters, are estimated to be almost seven times more likely to transition from inclusive, pluralist identification to particularism, net of covariates (leftmost panel, top row). Green party voters, meanwhile, are an estimated six times more likely to transition from particularism to expansivism (rightmost panel, second row). Along with other party effects, however, these values are estimated with considerable uncertainty due to the relatively few non-mainstream party voters in the sample and the rarity of identity transitions. I also estimate that, on average, younger and higher-income voters are more likely to transition from particularism to expansivism, providing some evidence that younger people have less entrenched attitudes and find expansivism particularly appealing. Otherwise, although the transition from expansivist to particularist is relatively common, it shows no systematic associations with party support, though there is some indication it is more likely among older, lower-income voters. Overall, the anticipated associations for radical-right and green parties provide evidence of campaign effects and suggest that parties have some ability to change how people identify, rather than merely appealing to those with aligned identities.

## 4 Discussion and Conclusion

Contemporary radical-right leaders regularly frame political conflict in terms of an opposition between locally minded voters committed to the national community and globally oriented cosmopolitans whose loyalties lie beyond the nation-state. This worldview is reflected in appeals to “patriots” defending local ways of life against “globalist” elites and the endorsement of particularistic attachments, to one’s local community, region, and nation, over identification with supranational entities like Europe and the broader world. The conflict between these contrasting orientations toward the world has become a significant division in European party politics and, more than just a rhetorical strategy, reflects meaningful differences in how voters see themselves. In numerous European countries, particularism and expansivism have become another way that collective identities bind voters to particular parties, reinforcing a broader electoral cleavage between the radical right and new left that cuts across the traditional left–right divide.

But where did “nationalist” and “globalist” identities, and their underlying patterns of attachment, come from? Are they, as political socialization research suggests, long-established identification patterns that have developed slowly and in a largely bottom-up manner, through interactions with the local environment and influential institutions like the nation-state? Or, following the political articulation perspective, are they new kinds of identification that parties themselves have promoted, as they seek to unite diverse voter coalitions through oppositional identities? If the socialization perspective is correct, and particularist and expansive identities are long-standing, then I should be able to find empirical evidence of their presence over a longer, multi-generational time scale and, crucially, before the significant increase in electoral success that European radical-right parties began to see in the 2000s (Mudde 2019). Moreover, the prevalence of these identities should be relatively stable at the population level and within individuals, reflecting the slow-changing and durable nature of political socialization. By contrast, if the articulation perspective is correct, I should fail to find evidence of particularism and expansivism over a longer time scale and observe its emergence more recently, coinciding with the radical-right’s success and mainstreaming in the twenty-first century. If parties really can cultivate identities, I should also observe individuals change their identification in the short term. Support for the socialization perspective implies that parties have responded to the electorate’s demands for the particularist worldview to gain representation in institutional

politics, while support for articulation suggests that parties construct the very divisions they claim to represent.

## 4.1 Origins of Cleavage Identities

My analyses of time-series cross-sectional data from the Eurobarometer have considerably clarified the origins and development of particularistic and expansive identity configurations over recent decades. First, aggregate trends in attachment to key territorial entities show that identification was relatively stable in European populations between 1991 and 2023. The exception to this was identification with Europe, which surged in much of Western and Northern Europe from the 1990s to the 2000s. In Eastern and Southern Europe, identification with the continent is generally weaker and appears to have fluctuated in tandem with events like the European debt crisis, which had regionally patterned consequences. The analysis provides no evidence of a surge in national or otherwise local attachment over a thirty-year period that would track the rise of particularist, radical-right political success. Instead, I find a surge in European identification in much of Western and Northern Europe that coincides with critical junctures in European institutional development, most notably the establishment of the E.U. in 1992, border-free travel within the Schengen Area in 1995, and the introduction of a common currency in 1999, which deepened European integration and Europe's prominence in people's daily lives. Aggregate attachment trends thus indicate that, amidst considerable stability, new transnational identities may have emerged during a period of large-scale institutional change. These may have, in turn, become incorporated within new kinds of party–voter linkages as parties mobilized for and against issues like migration and further European integration.

Second, my analysis of Eurobarometer data using LCA shows the rapid emergence of new identity configurations in the mid-1990s followed by their relative stability that appears to have persisted until present day. I find that in six major Western European countries identity structures saw rapid crystallization between 1995 and 1999, transforming from poorly differentiated patterns into clear-cut ones resembling the particularist, expansivist, and pluralist configurations that research has identified in contemporary data. Although different countries exhibited different stages of this transformation, the overall pattern was that of different types of locally oriented attachments being reshaped by a surge of European identification that established a large, inclusive pluralist class alongside two smaller ones, polarized by an emphasis on either

subnational or European attachment. Tracing the prominence of the three major classes over a longer period reveals a dramatic cross-over in the 1990s, whereby particularists, who made up nearly two-thirds of these countries' samples in 1995, decline sharply to about one-third by 1999, while the proportion of pluralists grows from about a quarter to half of the sample. These groups' population shares stabilize afterwards, with the gap between them expanding only gradually during the 2000s. Expansivists consistently made up 10–15 percent of samples in this period. These analyses show that contemporary cleavage identities have existed for at least a generation, predating the radical right's mass electoral success. Moreover, they have been relatively stable, outside of an exceptional period of institutional upheaval in the 1990s.

Third, my analysis of panel data from the 2017 Germany federal election campaign period shows modest amounts of within-person identity change concentrated among radical-right and green party supporters. Importantly, the analysis of contemporary Germany finds evidence of the same three identity configurations as before, speaking to the validity of these types and their stability. I also find that once voters held a given identity configuration, they were relatively unlikely to switch to a different one, even during an election campaign featuring prominent identity-based appeals by the radical-right Alternative for Germany party and debate over cultural issues by parties in general. I estimate that the probability of pluralists and particularists remaining in their class six months after the election is about 90 percent, while the probability for expansivists is about 70 percent. Individual transition probabilities vary considerably by party support, however. Compared to mainstream center-right supporters, I estimate that those who voted for the radical right were about seven times more likely to transition from pluralist to particularist identification, controlling for demographic characteristics. Meanwhile, green voters were about six times more likely than mainstream voters to transition from particularism to expansivism. These findings confirm previous indications that radical-right and green parties are linked to distinct identity configurations. Moreover, they suggest that, amidst overall stability, these parties' campaigns can actually change voters' identification patterns to align more closely with their appeals.

When it comes to explaining the origins of particularist and expansivist identities, the evidence provides strong support for the political socialization perspective. I find that this identity divide, which underpins a broader division between the new left and radical right, has existed in a stable configuration since the late 1990s. Consistent with socialization, these identities are thus long-standing constructs that pre-date the radical-right's widespread success, rather than something

that parties have recently invented. In terms of their origins, the timing of both the surge in European attachment and crystallization of diffuse identity patterns in Western and Northern Europe strongly points to institutional effects resulting from the critical policy junctures in the 1990s that centralized governance and liberalized trade and migration in Europe. The findings thus contribute to research on the consequences of European integration on citizens' self-understandings (Fligstein et al. 2012; Nicoli et al. 2020), and they suggest that contemporary electoral conflicts are partly attributed to path dependence, whereby particular identity configurations emerged and stabilized, constraining the kinds of appeals available for political entrepreneurs (Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Thelen 1999). While parties can shift voters' identities during campaigns, the overall scale of identity change within the electorate is relatively limited. This supports previous research on the stability of political attitudes in general (Kiley and Vaisey 2020; Sears and Brown 2023) and attitudes linked to far-right politics in particular, especially immigration attitudes (Kustov, Laaker, and Reller 2021), and findings about political campaigns' limited long-term persuasion effects (Jacobson 2015; Kalla and Broockman 2018).

## 4.2 Mobilization of Cleavage Identities

Although the territorial identities dividing radical-right and new left supporters may not be new themselves, the fact that these longstanding identity patterns have become successfully incorporated in a broader cultural cleavage nonetheless speaks to the powerful role that parties play in structuring political conflict. This is evident in the drastically different directions that public trends in identification and political appeals to these identities appear to have taken. As I have documented, the proportion of particularists in Western Europe was at a high of almost two-thirds of the population in the early nineties and began to rapidly decline thereafter, making up only about an estimated one quarter of the German electorate by 2017. If party politics solely reflected underlying preferences of the population, then we would expect to see a long-term decline in party appeals to particularism, which has fallen out of favor in the European electorate as a whole. Instead, these appeals have plausibly increased alongside growing radical-right success. This implies that, far from riding a wave of growing particularist identification, radical-right actors have been swimming against, and overpowering, a tide of declining locally oriented identification since the 1990s. Their success in systematically aligning the shrinking share of voters with particularist identity patterns with radical-right politics speaks to their autonomous

role in selectively incorporating particular bundles of collective identities into broader political cleavages (Bartolini and Mair 1990; Bornschier et al. 2021).

Theoretically, the rise of particularist politics alongside the decline of particularism demonstrates how political articulation operates within constrained possibilities derived from socialization. This is consistent with Eidlin's (2016) modified account of articulation, where parties shape conflict by naturalizing particular coalitions and divisions within structural constraints, rather than constructing new identities outright. This study develops political articulation theory further along these lines. Previous accounts largely focus on parties aggregating disparate existing groups under new collective identities, as when lower- and upper-caste communities were forged into a unified "Hindu" bloc (De Leon et al. 2009) or farmers and workers into the New Deal coalition (Eidlin 2016). In the case of the European radical right, parties appear to have similarly assembled a diverse coalition, including groups like workers and small business owners (Oesch and Rennwald 2018), and united them under the category of "patriots" defending local ways against "globalists." Where this study innovates, however, is by linking parties' articulation of new group identities to individual-level identity conceptions. This reveals that political articulation incorporates not only pre-existing, well-defined groups like farmers and workers, but also more diffuse aspects of self-understanding, like territorial identification. Possible articulation strategies are constrained by the existing structure and distribution of these identities, however, opening the possibility of forming groups like "patriots" while foreclosing others that lack a sufficient attitudinal basis. Finally, I show that articulation happens not only by aggregation but transformation, as when the radical right converts pluralists to particularists by weakening their attachment to Europe.

While this study has considerably advanced understanding of how territorial identities have become incorporated into European political cleavages, several limitations suggest directions for future research. First, the analysis has largely assumed that particularist political rhetoric has increased alongside radical-right electoral success. Future research should empirically measure the prevalence of "patriot versus globalist" discourse among parties and trace its evolution, to understand whether, beyond prominent examples, it is indeed a novel rhetorical strategy that has emerged amidst declining particularist identification. Second, limitations in data coverage restrict the scope of this study's conclusions. The 10-month gap between GLES survey waves limits insight into the overall strength of campaigns' ability to change identities and the persistence of

such changes, while the lack of consistent Eurobarometer measures before 1991 and after 2007 limits insight into the broader trajectory of identification in Europe. Third, and most fundamentally, while this study shows that parties can modestly change individual identities during campaigns, the relative contributions of socialization versus political articulation to identity patterns are difficult to disentangle with available data. Future research that combines the analysis of supply and demand, or temporal patterns in elite discourse with individual-level identification, across periods of contextual change would further advance understanding of how parties not only reflect but actively construct the social divisions structuring democratic politics.

## REFERENCES

- Antonsich, Marco, and Edward C. Holland. 2014. “Territorial Attachment in the Age of Globalization: The Case of Western Europe.” *European Urban and Regional Studies* 21(2):206–21. doi:10.1177/0969776412445830.
- Barrie, Christopher. 2021. “Sect, Nation, and Identity after the Fall of Mosul: Evidence from a Natural Experiment.” *American Journal of Sociology* 127(3):695–738. doi:10.1086/718179.
- Bartolini, Stefano, and Peter Mair. 1990. *Identity, Competition and Electoral Availability: The Stabilisation of European Electorates 1885-1985*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bartolucci, Francesco, Silvia Pandolfi, and Fulvia Pennoni. 2017. “LMest: An R Package for Latent Markov Models for Longitudinal Categorical Data.” *Journal of Statistical Software* 81:1–38. doi:10.18637/jss.v081.i04.
- Bearak, Max. 2016. “Theresa May Criticized the Term ‘Citizen of the World.’ But Half the World Identifies That Way.” <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2016/10/05/theresa-may-criticized-the-term-citizen-of-the-world-but-half-the-world-identifies-that-way/>.
- Bonikowski, Bart. 2017. “Ethno-Nationalist Populism and the Mobilization of Collective Resentment.” *The British Journal of Sociology* 68(S1):S181–213. doi:10.1111/1468-4446.12325.
- Bonikowski, Bart, and Paul DiMaggio. 2016. “Varieties of American Popular Nationalism.” *American Sociological Review* 81(5):949–80. doi:10.1177/0003122416663683.
- Bonikowski, Bart, Yuval Feinstein, and Sean Bock. 2021. “The Partisan Sorting of ‘America’: How Nationalist Cleavages Shaped the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election.” *American Journal of Sociology* 127(2):492–561. doi:10.1086/717103.
- Borger, Julian. 2019. “Donald Trump Denounces ‘Globalism’ in Nationalist Address to UN.” <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/sep/24/donald-trump-un-address-denounces-globalism>.
- Bornschier, Simon. 2010a. *Cleavage Politics and the Populist Right: The New Cultural Conflict in Western Europe*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Bornschier, Simon. 2010b. “The New Cultural Divide and the Two-Dimensional Political Space in Western Europe.” *West European Politics* 33(3):419–44. doi:10.1080/01402381003654387.
- Bornschier, Simon, Silja Häusermann, Delia Zollinger, and Céline Colombo. 2021. “How ‘Us’ and ‘Them’ Relates to Voting Behavior—Social Structure, Social Identities, and Electoral Choice.” *Comparative Political Studies* 54(12):2087–2122. doi:10.1177/0010414021997504.

- Bräuninger, Thomas, Marc Debus, Jochen Müller, and Christian Stecker. 2019. “Party Competition and Government Formation in Germany: Business as Usual or New Patterns?” *German Politics* 28(1):80–100. doi:10.1080/09644008.2018.1538362.
- Brubaker, Rogers. 2017. “Between Nationalism and Civilizationism: The European Populist Moment in Comparative Perspective.” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 40(8):1191–1226. doi:10.1080/01419870.2017.1294700.
- Cerrone, Joseph. 2023. “Reconciling National and Supranational Identities: Civilizationism in European Far-Right Discourse.” *Perspectives on Politics* 21(3):951–66. doi:10.1017/S1537592722002742.
- Clogg, Clifford C., and Leo A. Goodman. 1985. “Simultaneous Latent Structure Analysis in Several Groups.” *Sociological Methodology* 15:81–110. doi:10.2307/270847.
- Collins, Linda M., and Stephanie T. Lanza. 2009. *Latent Class and Latent Transition Analysis: With Applications in the Social, Behavioral, and Health Sciences*. Hoboken, N.J.: John Wiley & Sons.
- Dassonneville, Ruth, Liesbet Hooghe, and Gary Marks. 2024. “Transformation of the Political Space: A Citizens’ Perspective.” *European Journal of Political Research* 63(1):45–65. doi:10.1111/1475-6765.12590.
- De Leon, Cedric, Manali Desai, and Cihan Tuğal. 2009. “Political Articulation: Parties and the Constitution of Cleavages in the United States, India, and Turkey.” *Sociological Theory* 27(3):193–219. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9558.2009.01345.x.
- De Vries, Catherine E. 2018. “The Cosmopolitan-Parochial Divide: Changing Patterns of Party and Electoral Competition in the Netherlands and Beyond.” *Journal of European Public Policy* 25(11):1541–65. doi:10.1080/13501763.2017.1339730.
- De Vries, Catherine E., and Sara B. Hobolt. 2012. “When Dimensions Collide: The Electoral Success of Issue Entrepreneurs.” *European Union Politics* 13(2):246–68. doi:10.1177/1465116511434788.
- Dostal, Jörg Michael. 2017. “The German Federal Election of 2017: How the Wedge Issue of Refugees and Migration Took the Shine off Chancellor Merkel and Transformed the Party System.” *The Political Quarterly* 88(4):589–602. doi:10.1111/1467-923X.12445.
- Eger, Maureen A., and Sarah Valdez. 2015. “Neo-Nationalism in Western Europe.” *European Sociological Review* 31(1):115–30. doi:10.1093/esr/jcu087.
- Eidlin, Barry. 2016. “Why Is There No Labor Party in the United States? Political Articulation and the Canadian Comparison, 1932 to 1948.” *American Sociological Review* 81(3):488–516. doi:10.1177/0003122416643758.
- European Commission. 2023. “Eurobarometer 98.2.” GESIS, Cologne. ZA7953 Data file Version 1.0.0. <https://doi.org/10.4232/1.14081>.

- Faas, Thorsten, and Tristan Klingelhöfer. 2019. “The More Things Change, the More They Stay the Same? The German Federal Election of 2017 and Its Consequences.” *West European Politics* 42(4):914–26. doi:10.1080/01402382.2018.1561079.
- Fiorina, Morris P., and Samuel J. Abrams. 2008. “Political Polarization in the American Public.” *Annual Review of Political Science* 11:563–88. doi:10.1146/annurev.polisci.11.053106.153836.
- Fligstein, Neil, Alina Polyakova, and Wayne Sandholtz. 2012. “European Integration, Nationalism and European Identity.” *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 50(s1):106–22. doi:10.1111/j.1468-5965.2011.02230.x.
- Ford, Robert, and Will Jennings. 2020. “The Changing Cleavage Politics of Western Europe.” *Annual Review of Political Science* 23(1):295–314. doi:10.1146/annurev-polisci-052217-104957.
- GLES. 2023. “GLES Panel 2016-2021, Waves 1-21.” *GESIS, Cologne*. ZA6838 Data file Version 6.0.0. doi:10.4232/1.13897.
- Gorman, Brandon, and Charles Seguin. 2018. “World Citizens on the Periphery: Threat and Identification with Global Society.” *American Journal of Sociology* 124(3):705–61. doi:10.1086/699652.
- Grever, Maria, and Tina van der Vlies. 2017. “Why national narratives are perpetuated: A literature review on new insights from history textbook research.” *London Review of Education* 15(2). doi:10.18546/LRE.15.2.11.
- Guth, James L., and Brent F. Nelsen. 2021. “Party Choice in Europe: Social Cleavages and the Rise of Populist Parties.” *Party Politics* 27(3):453–64. doi:10.1177/1354068819853965.
- Hadler, Markus, Kiyoteru Tsutsui, and Lynn G. Chin. 2012. “Conflicting and Reinforcing Identities in Expanding Europe: Individual- and Country-Level Factors Shaping National and European Identities, 1995–20031.” *Sociological Forum* 27(2):392–418. doi:10.1111/j.1573-7861.2012.01323.x.
- Häusermann, Silja, and Hanspeter Kriesi. 2015. “What Do Voters Want? Dimensions and Configurations in Individual-Level Preferences and Party Choice.” Pp. 202–30 in *The Politics of Advanced Capitalism*, edited by H. Kriesi, H. Kitschelt, P. Beramendi, and S. Häusermann. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hooghe, Liesbet, and Gary Marks. 2018. “Cleavage Theory Meets Europe’s Crises: Lipset, Rokkan, and the Transnational Cleavage.” *Journal of European Public Policy* 25(1):109–35. doi:10.1080/13501763.2017.1310279.
- Huber, Lena Maria. 2022. “Beyond Policy: The Use of Social Group Appeals in Party Communication.” *Political Communication* 39(3):293–310. doi:10.1080/10584609.2021.1998264.

- Jacobson, Gary C. 2015. "How Do Campaigns Matter?" *Annual Review of Political Science* 18(Volume 18, 2015):31–47. doi:10.1146/annurev-polisci-072012-113556.
- Kalla, Joshua L., and David E. Broockman. 2018. "The Minimal Persuasive Effects of Campaign Contact in General Elections: Evidence from 49 Field Experiments." *American Political Science Review* 112(1):148–66. doi:10.1017/S0003055417000363.
- Kiley, Kevin, and Stephen Vaisey. 2020. "Measuring Stability and Change in Personal Culture Using Panel Data." *American Sociological Review* 85(3):477–506. doi:10.1177/0003122420921538.
- Kim, Youngsun, Saebom Jeon, Chi Chang, and Hwan Chung. 2022. "Glca: An R Package for Multiple-Group Latent Class Analysis." *Applied Psychological Measurement* 46(5):439–41. doi:10.1177/01466216221084197.
- Kitschelt, Herbert. 1994. *The Transformation of European Social Democracy*. Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Knight, Carly R., and Mary C. Brinton. 2017. "One Egalitarianism or Several? Two Decades of Gender-Role Attitude Change in Europe." *American Journal of Sociology* 122(5):1485–1532. doi:10.1086/689814.
- Kriesi, Hanspeter, Edgar Grande, Romain Lachat, Martin Dolezal, Simon Bornschier, and Timotheos Frey. 2006. "Globalization and the Transformation of the National Political Space: Six European Countries Compared." *European Journal of Political Research* 45(6):921–56. doi:10.1111/j.1475-6765.2006.00644.x.
- Kustov, Alexander, Dillon Laaker, and Cassidy Reller. 2021. "The Stability of Immigration Attitudes: Evidence and Implications." *The Journal of Politics* 83(4):1478–94. doi:10.1086/715061.
- Levendusky, Matthew. 2009. *The Partisan Sort: How Liberals Became Democrats and Conservatives Became Republicans*. University of Chicago Press.
- Lipset, Seymour Martin, and Stein Rokkan. 1967. "Cleavage Structures, Party Systems and Voter Alignments: An Introduction." Pp. 1–64 in *Party systems and voter alignments: cross-national perspectives*, edited by S. M. Lipset and S. Rokkan. New York: Free Press.
- Lukk, Martin. 2024. "Politics of Boundary Consolidation: Income Inequality, Ethnonationalism, and Radical-Right Voting." *Socius* 10. doi:10.1177/23780231241251714.
- March, Luke. 2012. *Radical Left Parties in Europe*. New York: Routledge.
- McCutcheon, Allan L. 2002. "Basic Concepts and Procedures in Single-and Multiple-Group Latent Class Analysis." Pp. 56–88 in *Applied latent class analysis*, edited by J. A. Hagenaars and A. L. McCutcheon. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Medrano, Juan Díez, and Paula Gutiérrez. 2001. “Nested Identities: National and European Identity in Spain.” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 24(5):753–78. doi:10.1080/01419870120063963.
- Meguid, Bonnie M. 2005. “Competition Between Unequals: The Role of Mainstream Party Strategy in Niche Party Success.” *American Political Science Review* 99(3):347–59. doi:10.1017/S0003055405051701.
- Mudde, Cas. 2007. *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mudde, Cas. 2019. *The Far Right Today*. Medford, MA: Polity.
- Nicoli, Francesco, Theresa Kuhn, and Brian Burgoon. 2020. “Collective Identities, European Solidarity: Identification Patterns and Preferences for European Social Insurance.” *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 58(1):76–95. doi:10.1111/jcms.12977.
- Noury, Abdul, and Gerard Roland. 2020. “Identity Politics and Populism in Europe.” *Annual Review of Political Science* 23(Volume 23, 2020):421–39. doi:10.1146/annurev-polisci-050718-033542.
- Oesch, Daniel, and Line Rennwald. 2018. “Electoral Competition in Europe’s New Tripolar Political Space: Class Voting for the Left, Centre-Right and Radical Right.” *European Journal of Political Research* 57(4):783–807. doi:10.1111/1475-6765.12259.
- Opp, Karl-Dieter. 2005. “Decline of the Nation State? How the European Union Creates National and Sub-National Identifications.” *Social Forces* 84(2):653–80. doi:10.1353/sof.2006.0024.
- Pichler, Florian. 2009. “‘Down-to-Earth’ Cosmopolitanism: Subjective and Objective Measurements of Cosmopolitanism in Survey Research.” *Current Sociology* 57(5):704–32. doi:10.1177/0011392109337653.
- Rydgren, Jens. 2017. “Radical Right-Wing Parties in Europe: What’s Populism Got to Do with It?” *Journal of Language and Politics* 16(4):485–96. doi:10.1075/jlp.17024.ryd.
- Sartori, Giovanni. 1969. “From the Sociology of Politics to Political Sociology.” *Government and Opposition* 4(2):195–214. doi:10.1111/j.1477-7053.1969.tb00173.x.
- Scotto, Thomas J., David Sanders, and Jason Reifler. 2018. “The Consequential Nationalist–Globalist Policy Divide in Contemporary Britain: Some Initial Analyses.” *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties* 28(1):38–58. doi:10.1080/17457289.2017.1360308.
- Sears, David O., and Christia Brown. 2023. “Childhood and Adult Political Development.” P. 0 in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology*, edited by L. Huddy, D. O. Sears, J. S. Levy, and J. Jerit. Oxford University Press.

- Sinnott, Richard. 2006. “An Evaluation of the Measurement of National, Subnational and Supranational Identity in Crossnational Surveys.” *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 18(2):211–23. doi:10.1093/ijpor/edh116.
- Siri, Jasmin. 2018. “The Alternative for Germany after the 2017 Election.” *German Politics* 27(1):141–45. doi:10.1080/09644008.2018.1445724.
- Skey, Michael. 2011. *National Belonging and Everyday Life: The Significance of Nationhood in an Uncertain World*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Slaughter, Anne-Marie. 2017. “Nationalists and Globalists.” *Project Syndicate*, March 23.
- Teney, Céline, Onawa Promise Lacewell, and Pieter De Wilde. 2014. “Winners and Losers of Globalization in Europe: Attitudes and Ideologies.” *European Political Science Review* 6(4):575–95. doi:10.1017/S1755773913000246.
- Thelen, Kathleen. 1999. “Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Politics.” *Annual Review of Political Science* 2:369–404. doi:10.1146/annurev.polisci.2.1.369.
- Tuğal, Cihan. 2009. *Passive Revolution: Absorbing the Islamic Challenge to Capitalism*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Wimmer, Andreas. 2008. “The Making and Unmaking of Ethnic Boundaries: A Multilevel Process Theory.” *American Journal of Sociology* 113(4):970–1022. doi:10.1086/522803.
- Zollinger, Delia. 2024. “Cleavage Identities in Voters’ Own Words: Harnessing Open-Ended Survey Responses.” *American Journal of Political Science* 68(1):139–59. doi:10.1111/ajps.12743.