SCORE

Subnational Context and Radical Right Support in Europe

SUB-NATIONAL CONTEXT
AND RADICAL RIGHT SUPPORT
IN EUROPE

POLICY BRIEF

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INTRODUCTION

The SCoRE project focuses on **explaining regional differences in support for populist radical right parties**. More specifically, it examines how developments in citizens' immediate environment - what one would commonly call the 'neighbourhood' or 'community' level - affect their attitudes towards immigrants and political elites and thereby their support for populist radical right parties. The project focuses on the impact of developments that manifest themselves very differently in urban and rural areas, such as the settlement of immigrants in cities and the exodus of young citizens and the decline in public services in rural areas.

The project is **comparative in nature** and looks at the impact of these developments in four countries: **United Kingdom** (excluding Northern Ireland and Scotland**), France, Germany, and the Netherlands**. These countries are characterized by different historical trajectories with respect to, for example, urban-rural relations, immigration patterns, and support for populist radical right parties.

In the countries under study, **large-scale representative surveys** have been conducted, with proper representation of citizens with different background characteristics (e.g. also including the less educated and politically alienated) and from different kinds of municipalities and neighbourhoods. The survey data, consisting of the same core set of questions in each country, have been connected to **statistical data on developments at the community level**, embedding the surveyed respondents in the characteristics of their neighbourhood.

On the basis of these data we have investigated how citizens' attitudes – especially nativist attitudes (the feeling that countries should be populated primarily by natives, and that non-natives are a vital threat to the nation-state) and political discontent (the feeling that political elites are not taking the people and their interests seriously) – are influenced by their daily environment (the environment in which they live), as well as by their broader environment (the environment that they might visit on a regular basis, or read about in the local media). Hence, the impact of developments in the surrounding neighbourhoods on citizens' opinions and political behaviour has also been examined.

MAIN FINDINGS

1) The support for populist radical right parties differs between countries, with higher levels of support in the Netherlands and France than in Germany and especially the United Kingdom. Anti-immigration attitudes (on a scale from 1 to 7, higher scores indicate more opposition) are prevalent in the four countries, at roughly the same level. Political discontent (on a scale from 1 to 5, higher scores indicate more discontent) is highest in France and lowest in the Netherlands.

Figure 1 *The level of populist radical right support (%) , anti-immigration attitudes (1-7), and political discontent (1-5) in the UK, France, Germany, and the Netherlands*
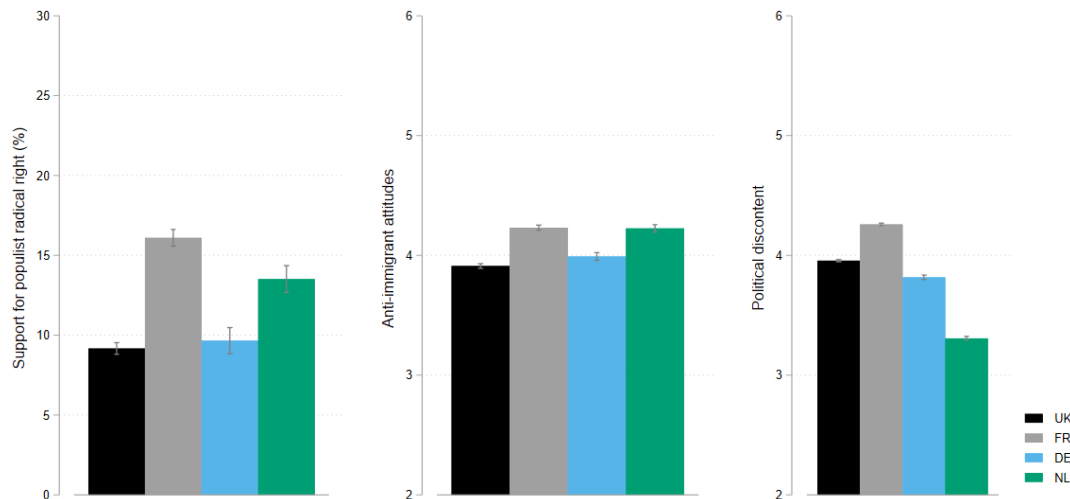
2) The existence of nativism and political discontent, and the ensuing support for populist radical right parties are **neither a typically urban nor mainly a rural phenomenon**. With the exception of France, the variation within urban and rural areas in anti-immigration attitudes and political discontent, and in support for populist radical right parties, is much larger than the variation between these areas. The rise of the populist radical right should therefore not be interpreted as simply an urban clash between ethnic and or cultural groups, nor should it just be seen as a rural revolt against cosmopolitanism.

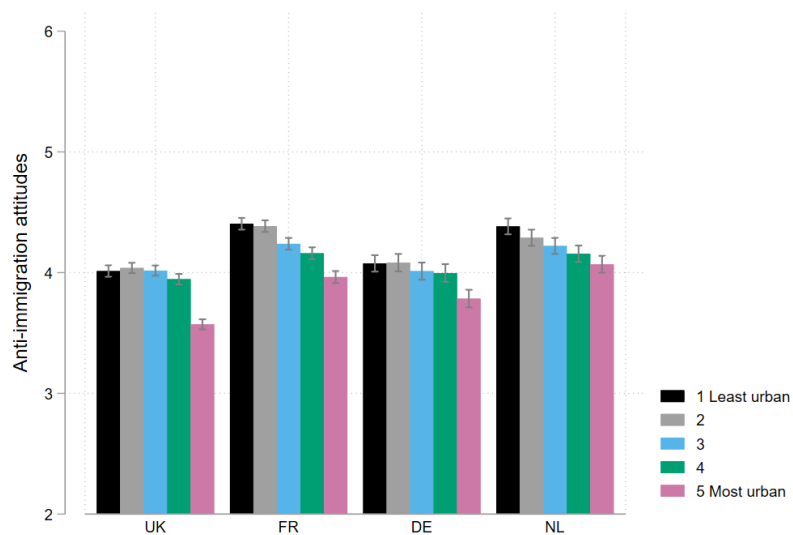**Figure 2a** *The level of anti-immigration attitudes (1-7) in urban and rural areas*

Figure 2b *The level of political discontent (1-5) in urban and rural areas*
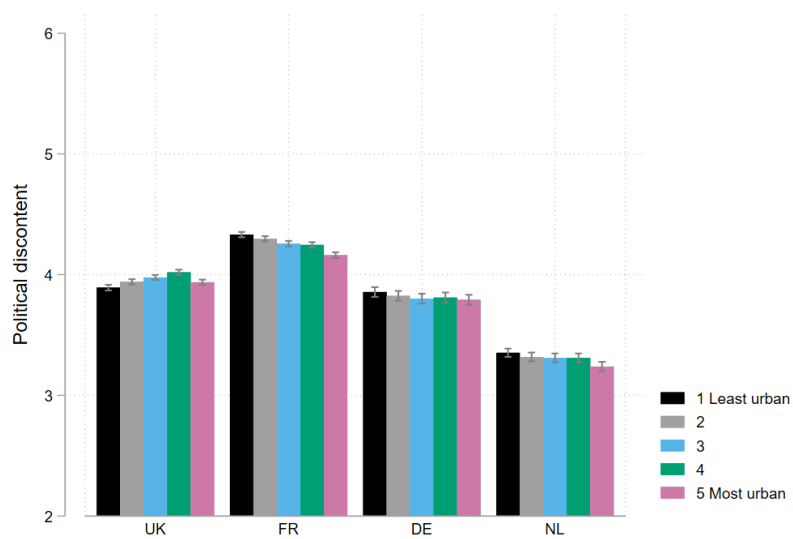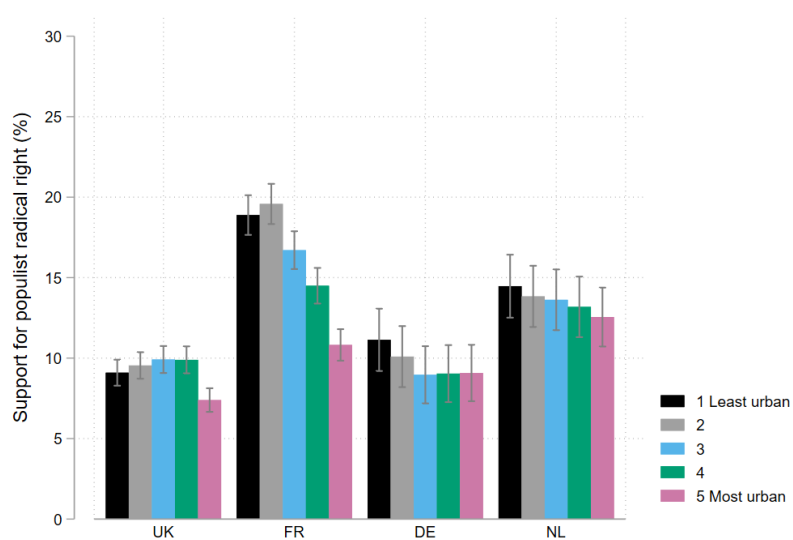

Figure 2c *The level of support for populist radical right parties (%) in urban and rural areas*

3) The context in which citizens live influences their attitudes and behaviour. Their political views depend on their evaluation of their immediate environment (neighbourhood or community). Those who feel their **environment is deteriorating** are more likely to oppose immigration and the establishment and to support a populist radical right party.

Figure 3 *The relationship between evaluation of the neighbourhood change and anti-immigration attitudes (1-7)*
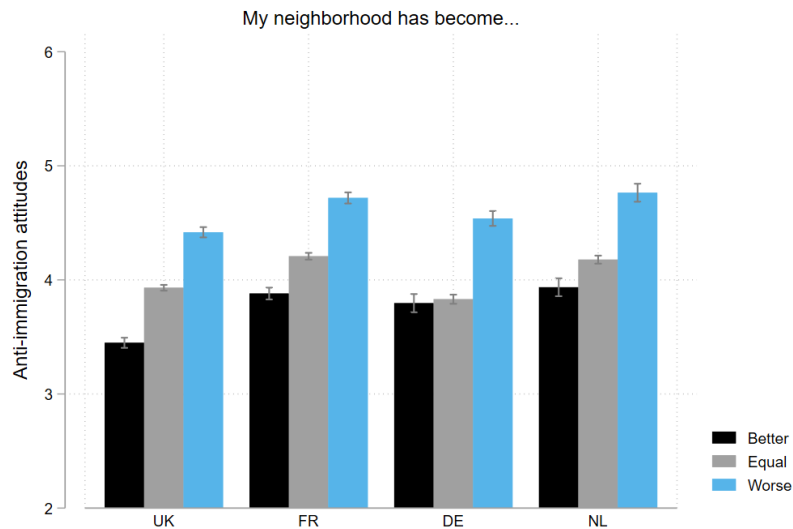
4) **The actual number of immigrants** in citizens' immediate surroundings does not predict anti-immigrant sentiments in a straightforward way. In France and Germany, anti-immigration attitudes are at similar levels in communities irrespective of whether respondents live in the presence of immigrants or not. In the Netherlands and the UK, anti-immigrant sentiments are stronger in areas with fewer immigrants, contrary to what often is assumed.

Figure 4 *The relationship between the number of immigrants in a neighbourhood (%) and the level of anti-immigration sentiments (1-7)*
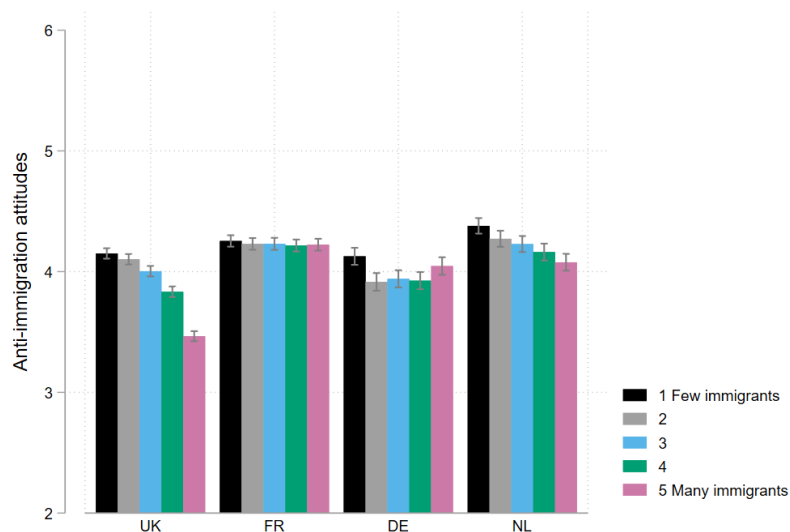
5) However, these findings are partly the result of the fact that neighbourhoods with many immigrants are sometimes populated by many highly educated citizens with favourable attitudes towards immigrants. Moreover, in rural areas with few immigrants other factors fuel anti-immigrant attitudes, such as the exodus of young citizens and economic decline.

Figure 5a *The relationship between the level of unemployment (%) and the level of anti-immigration attitudes (1-7)*
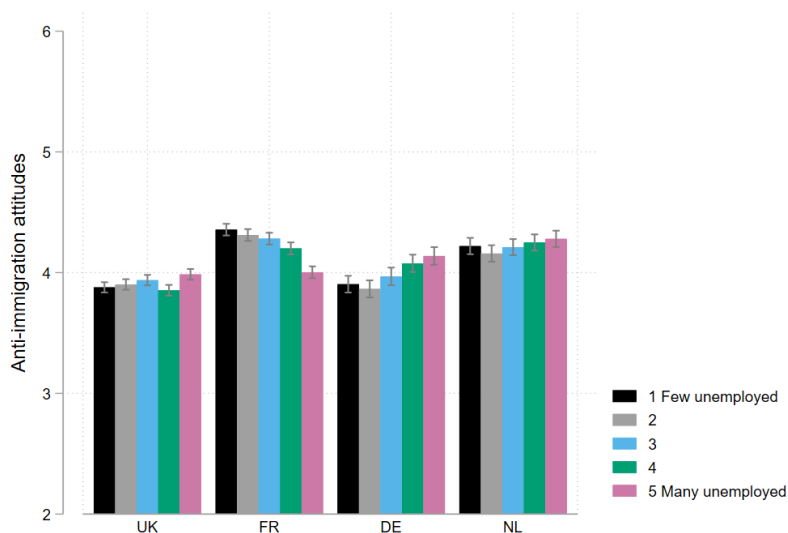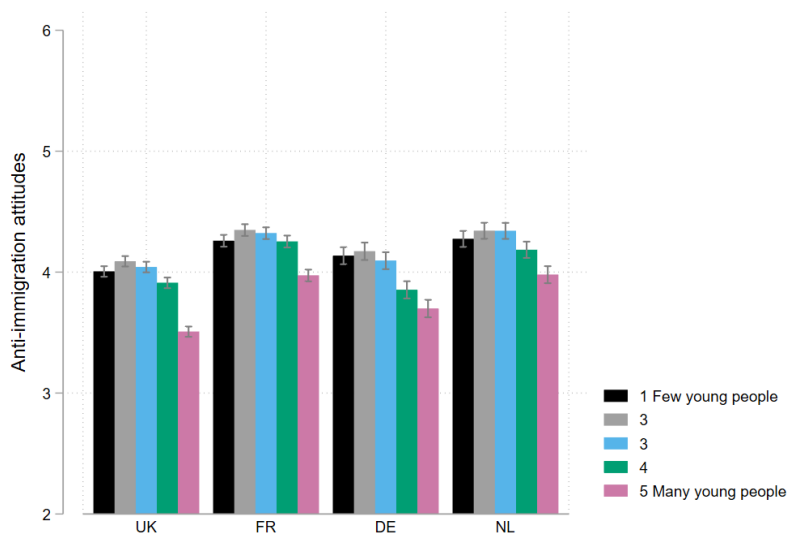

Figure 5b *The relationship between the presence of young citizens (%) and the level of anti-immigration attitudes (1-7)*

6) When these factors are taken into consideration, the presence of, and especially increases in immigrants in citizens' direct environment, do generally lead to stronger anti-immigrant sentiments.

TWO PARADOXES

The first paradox

Strong opposition to immigration exists in many rural areas, where neighbourhoods are usually populated by few immigrants. While anti-immigrant backlash is often due to anxiety over immigration, it is sometimes also due to anxiety over other rapid social changes, such as socio-demographic decline, or unemployment. These changes are often blamed on immigrants, even when they are not physically present. Some of these societal changes are more prevalent in rural areas than in urban ones.

The second paradox

Strong support for immigration among non-immigrants exists in some urban areas, whereas in other areas this support is very low. The variation between neighbourhoods with large immigrant populations can be explained by the fact that the higher educated with pro-immigration views tend to live among immigrants. Among the higher educated, those living among many migrants are actually more positive about migrants than those living among few immigrants. However, a rapid change in the ethnic composition of a neighbourhood seems to be a stronger predictor of anti-immigration backlash than a high share of immigrants per se.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- ❖ Take into consideration *variation on the local level* when thinking about policy making.
- ❖ Be aware that differences *within* urban and rural areas are as important as differences *between* urban and rural areas.
- ❖ Target groups not only regionally, but also focus on particular groups of citizens within regions and neighbourhoods. Some citizens are more likely to be influenced by their environment than others, and might thus have to be targeted specifically in policy making.
- ❖ Anti-immigrant sentiments are not only fostered by the presence of immigrants (in urban areas), they are also fostered by socio-demographic decline (in rural areas). The policy domains that should be involved in addressing anti-immigrant sentiments thus differ between areas.
- ❖ Anti-immigrant sentiments seem more strongly affected by rapid changes in immigrant presence than by immigrants' long-term stable presence. Policy makers should thus be particularly alert when a large influx of immigrants in an area is expected.
- ❖ The delivery of public services is sometimes framed as a zero-sum game between disadvantaged groups. Our research suggests that it is important for policy makers to focus on the social, economic, and political problems of left-behind regions and neighbourhoods.
- ❖ Objective living conditions are only partly responsible for perceptions of citizens' neighbourhood. However, by supporting social communities their perceptions can be positively influenced.

METHODOLOGICAL NOTE

The survey data were collected in the four countries between March and May 2017 by ICM (UK), BVA (FR), Infratest (DE), and GfK (NL) using population-representative samples. The effective sample sizes were 24415 (UK, excluding Northern Ireland and Scotland because of very low support for UKIP), 19408 (FR), 6883 (DE) and 8013 (NL). The data on respondents' immediate environment were derived from the latest public and official sources. Anti-immigration attitudes were measured by a battery of four questions relating to perceived cultural and economic threat of migrants, such as "Would you say that [country]'s cultural life is generally undermined or enriched by people coming to live here from other countries?". Political discontent was measured by five questions relating to the role of politicians, such as "Elected officials talk too much and take too little action". For graphing purposes, the context variables – urbanity (population density), immigrant presence, the level of unemployment, and the presence of young residents (below 44) – were divided in five categories of equal size in each country. All conclusions presented here have been tested using multilevel regression and/or structural equation models with controls for respondents' socio-demographic characteristics, but are presented here using bivariate graphs for descriptive purposes. For a full methodological report, see score.uni-mainz.de/policybrief.

UNITED KINGDOM

The United Kingdom has experienced a number of transformations in recent decades. Population density has quickly increased, with England approaching the Netherlands with an average of 426 inhabitants per square kilometre, compared to 505 inhabitants per square kilometre in the Netherlands (2016 figures of Office of National Statistics). However, population density differs greatly across the nations, with England being more densely populated than Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Moreover, populations are concentrated in a limited number of larger cities, such as Birmingham, Manchester, Bristol, Edinburgh and Cardiff, plus the London Metropolitan Region – Greater London and surrounding commuter zones – which, with a population almost 14 million inhabitants, make the population density more than three times of the England average (see Figure 1).
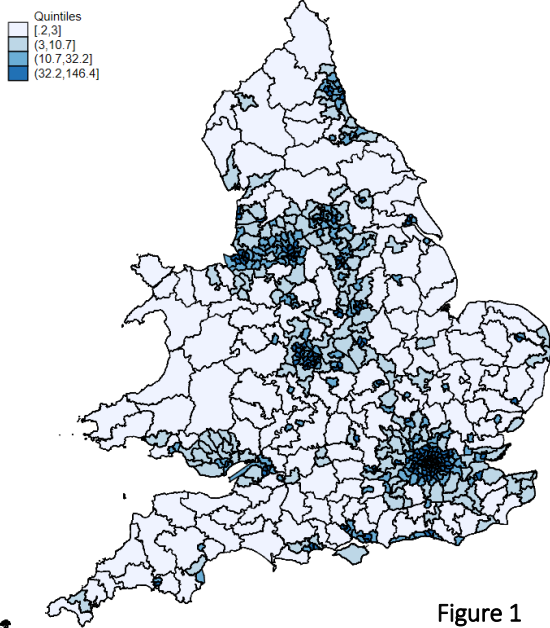
Population density

Figure 1

To some extent, the growth and differences in population density are related to recent patterns of migration. Internal migration has seen two counter-tendencies, with more educated young people moving disproportionately to London and other cities in the South-East, and their lower-educated counterparts moving to other towns and cities in England and Wales. Transfers amongst thirty-year olds and early middle-aged individuals away from cities tend to stay within the same region. Foreign migration mirrors these internal fluxes. Around half of the foreign-born population in the UK live in London and the South-East, drawing principally upon the Sub-Continent and European migration (ONS / Migration Observatory figures). Nonetheless, in the almost doubling of foreign population between 2004 and 2017, the largest relative increases have been found mainly in the North of the country, across Yorkshire, the Midlands, Merseyside and Scotland, and often rural areas surrounding existing urban communities. Nonetheless, the difference between metropolitan areas and their suburban and rural peripheries remain marked, and London's predominance is striking.

These differences are reflected in politics. Historically, whilst there has been a differential in North-South support for the Conservative and Labour parties, the more marked distinction has contrasted the rural shires of the Tories, with urban and inner city Labour. Hence, Conservative strongholds have included classic safe seats, such as the North Yorkshire rural constituency of Richmond, and wealthy rural areas in Hampshire, Dorset and the Home Counties. Labour safe seats have been found in the former industrial heartlands of Manchester, Liverpool, the North-East cities of Newcastle and Sunderland, and the South Wales Valleys.

REGIONAL DIFFERENCES IN UKIP SUPPORT

The support for the radical right-wing populist UK Independence party (UKIP) does not neatly fit into the traditional urban-rural and north-south divide in Great Britain. In the 2013 local elections, for example, Conservative shires proved fertile ground for UKIP, as did many mid-sized towns that had previously gone to Labour. On the one hand, UKIP managed to attract an electorate of mostly older voters that had previously leaned towards the Conservative party. On the other hand, UKIP was able to pick up support among white working-class citizens - a group of voters often described as the 'left

behind' -, that had previously leaned towards Labour. Although coming from different backgrounds the two groups of voters shared stances towards, most importantly, Europe and migration. However, UKIP was unable to challenge the established parties in large metropolises, such as Birmingham, London, and Manchester. In these cities, voters with higher levels of education living in neighbourhoods with greater ethnic diversity proved unreceptive to the party's appeal.

In the 2015 General Election support for UKIP peaked (+9.5% increase in vote share) and placed the party third in terms of votes cast (3.8 million voters), behind the Conservatives and Labour. However, due to the first past the post system, UKIP won only one seat in the House of Commons. In 2015 the support for UKIP was lower amongst citizens living in city or suburban neighbourhoods (around 9.5%) compared to citizens living in rural areas, villages or small towns, and medium large towns (all approximately 13% on average). Regionally the highest levels of support for UKIP were reported in the North East and the East Midlands, where the party garnered more than 15% of the vote. Taken together UKIP performed strongest in semi-rural areas in England, as well as on the edges of urban areas in this region. In London, the cosmopolitan capital of Britain, the support for UKIP was by and large absent, with exception of the eastern margins of the city where UKIP gained some support (see Figure 2a). The success of UKIP in areas with historical instances of National Front and British National Party support have been notable; conversely, in Scotland, where anti-establishment mobilisation is the preserve of the leftist and pro-European Scottish National Party, and certainly unpersuaded by a nationalism perceived as English, UKIP has always struggled to make any mark.

Figure 2a

Figure 2b
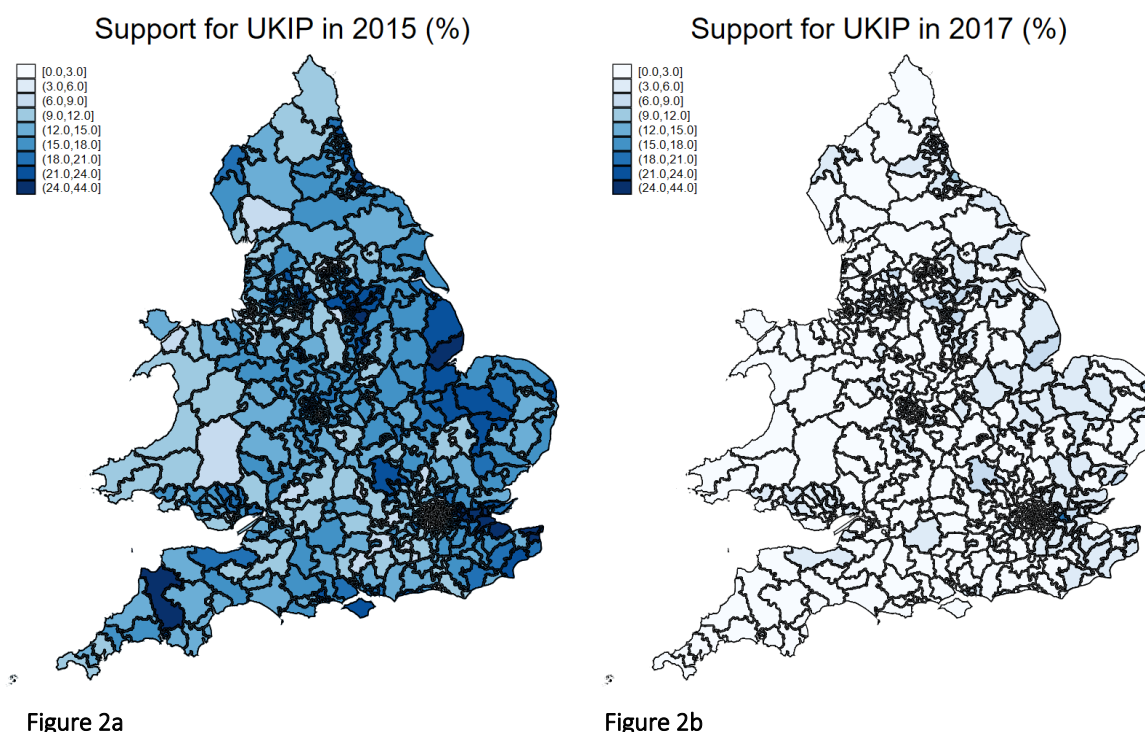
In the 2017 General Election UKIP fielded only 378 parliamentary candidates compared with 624 in 2015. The support for UKIP plummeted in the elections, given that the party's raison d'être seemingly was fulfilled after the 2016 Brexit Referendum. Fewer than 600,000 people voted for UKIP – a 10.8% reduction in vote share compared to 2015 -, and it lost their only seat.
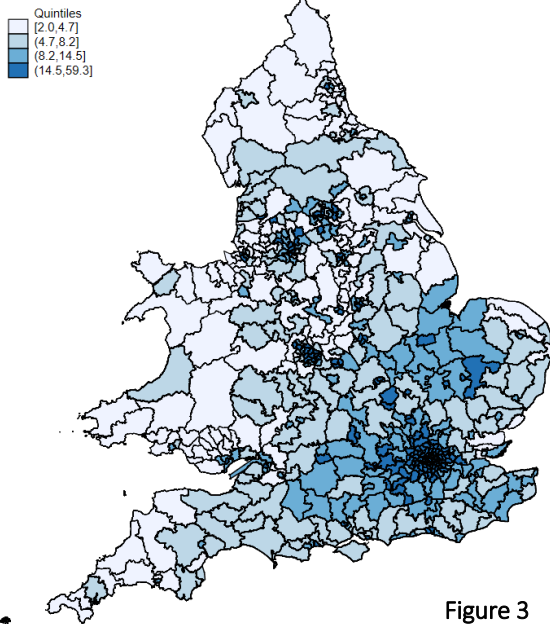
Immigrant presence (%)

Figure 3

MIGRATION, UNEMPLOYMENT, AND THE YOUNG

When we relate the patterns of support for UKIP to the patterns of migration in Great Britain (indicated by the distribution of persons not born in the UK), it becomes apparent that the two maps display almost opposite patterns. While 2015 support for UKIP is concentrated in Eastern towns, including the seaboard, and the Northern corridor, the largest migrant populations are still clustered in the South and Midlands. Thus, in the constituencies in which citizens were more likely to support UKIP, the percentage of immigrants was generally low.

Nonetheless, in more urban environments, particularly those in post-industrial decline with higher levels of unemployment, outwards migration to service-economy based cities, and greater reliance on welfare provision, immigrant *presence* in neighbouring areas has been characterised as engendering similar perceptions of threat and of competition for resources, including welfare benefits. Looking at vote shares for UKIP in the 2015 local elections, for example, a very plausible 'halo effect' appears. As the size of neighbouring immigrant community increases, so does the support for UKIP, in all areas but the most rural.

The more densely populated the area, the more variation in UKIP vote the halo appears to pick up. The SCoRE survey data confirms this, with evidence of more ethnocentric attitudes in these halo centres, particularly among intermediate educational groups.

Unemployed (%)

More generally in the SCoRE survey, support for the statement that immigrants enrich culture and economy is related to the urban rural divide, with over 20% of city residents showing the highest level of support. However, inhabitants of larger towns are far more ambivalent on this. This is only partially explained by the higher proportion of immigrant respondents in the most urban category. Similarly, our data show that the most urban areas manifest the greatest positivity towards inter-ethnic contact, but it should be noted that only a very small minority of persons in any population area report this to be negative.

Figure 4

UKIP support and opposition to immigration has been linked to various types of deprivation. Government cuts in local service provision has been perceived as hitting rural communities harder than elsewhere, and accompanied by closures of post offices, banking provision and public transport routes; and a sense of local decline coupled with the ageing population of these areas has given credence to narratives scapegoating other groups, including immigrants, for demand on public resources despite immigrant *absence*. However, in neighbourhoods that were the least deprived
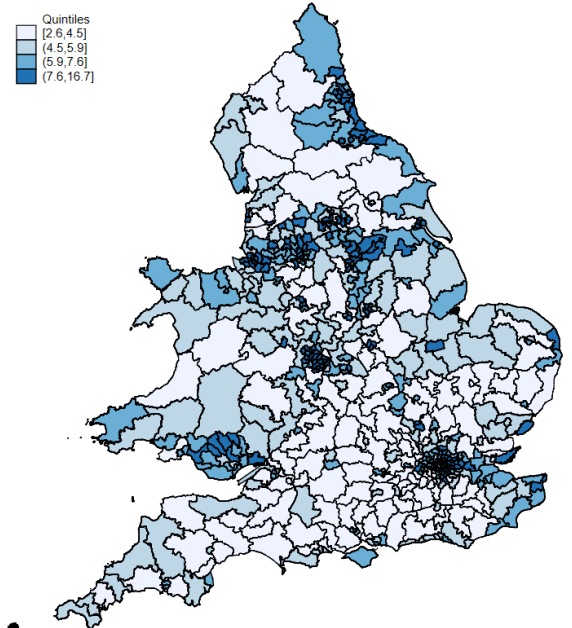
support for UKIP was not much lower (approx. 11% support for UKIP) than in neighbourhoods that were moderately deprived or most deprived (approx. 12% support for UKIP). This is in contrast to both marked patterns of highest levels of Conservative support found for those in the least deprived neighbourhoods and also highest levels of Labour support in areas of most deprivation.
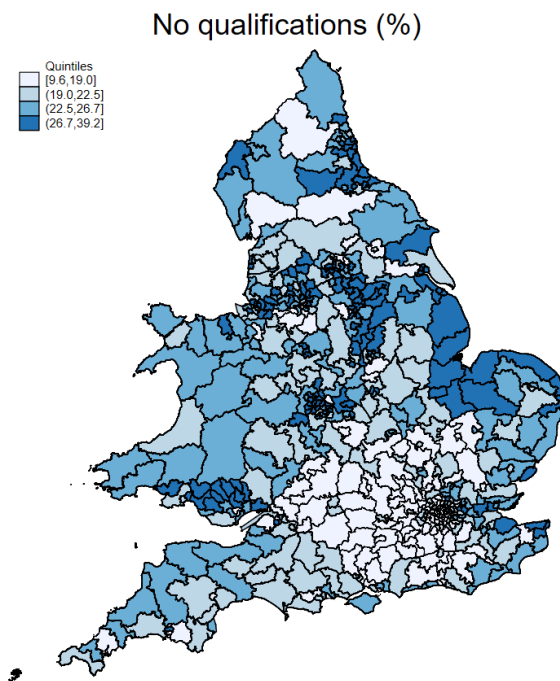
No qualifications (%)

Figure 5

Interestingly, other characteristics of neighbourhoods also seem to matter, and again are related to the demographic dynamics of local populations. The distribution of persons with no qualifications, for example, has a fair degree of congruence with pattern of support for UKIP, with areas with high levels of citizens without qualifications displaying high levels of support for the party. However, it should be observed that urban centres in the north of England are characterised by lack of qualifications and low levels of UKIP support.

COUNTRY REPORT: FRANCE

Support for Le Pen in first round (%)

Quintiles
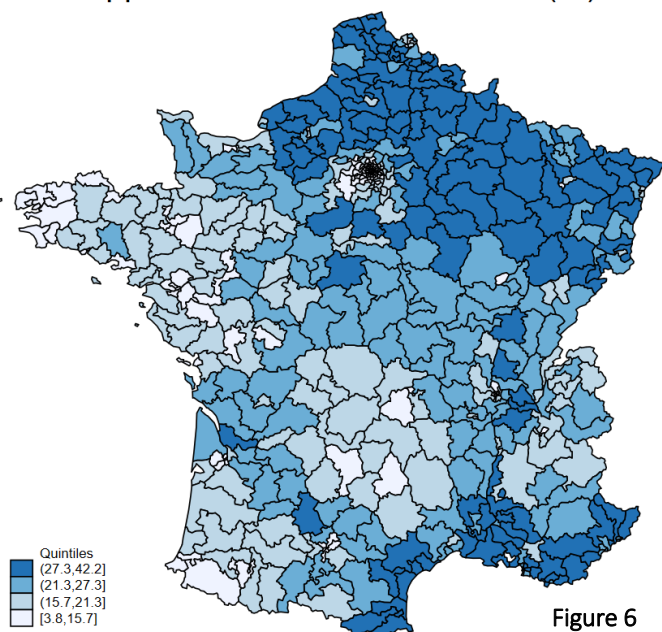[27.3,42.2]
[21.3,27.3]
[15.7,21.3]
[3.8,15.7]

Figure 6

The *Rassemblement National* (RN) (formerly *Front National*, FN up until June 2018) is a major political party in French politics, and one of the oldest populist radical right actors in Europe, formed in the early 1970s. In the 2017 presidential election, Marine Le Pen received 21.3% of the first-round vote, and 33.9% in the runoff against Emmanuel Macron. Current polls suggest that the RN could win over 20% of the vote in the European elections of May 2019.

A RURAL AND 'PERI-URBAN' PHENOMENON

During the 1980s, the FN emerged as a predominantly urban phenomenon. Its politicization of immigration and law-and-order issues strongly resonated with voters in urban constituencies, particularly in high immigrant density areas around the big city centres. Electoral support for the FN originated primarily in the more industrialized and urban regions of the country, which are situated east of a Le Havre-Valence-Perpignan north-south line.

Since the early 2000s, however, support for the FN has decreased in urban areas and it has substantially increased in rural and 'peri-urban' municipalities, further away from the large metropolitan centres. The 'ruralization' of the FN reflects the diversity of the rural coalition and the variety of socio-economic groups and interests, which currently coexist in rural territories in France.

First, there has been a substantial increase in farmer support for the radical right since the early 2000s. While farmers have traditionally been associated with the Gaullist right, they have become over-represented in the FN's electoral base in the past two decades. Support for the FN in the French farming sector can be explained by the party's Eurosceptic and protectionist policies, and criticism of the EU's Common Agricultural Policy, which strongly resonate with small lower-income farmers who see themselves as the 'left-behind' of European farming subsidies, and the victims of increasingly stringent EU regulations.

A second aspect concerns the 'peripheralization' of the FN vote and the growth in support for the radical right in 'peri-urban' areas – i.e. the more distant outskirts of large metropolitan areas. The current FN vote is spatially distributed along an urban-rural gradient, whereby FN voters cluster in rural areas at further distance from city centres. This 'peripheralization' of the FN vote has been a constant fixture of the FN since the late 1990s and it has accentuated over time.

In 2017, the FN vote was stronger in rural communes than in the more urbanized areas. More importantly, electoral support for the radical right peaked in peri-urban areas characterised by 'multicentricity' i.e. adjacent to multiple centres of economic activity and employment. The 2017 election showed a significant drop in support for the radical right in France's largest metropolitan

areas such as Lyon (8.9%), Toulouse (9.4%), Bordeaux (7.4%) and Nantes (7.2%). In Paris, Marine Le Pen won just 5% of the vote, compared with 21.3% nationally.

This distribution of the FN vote along the 'urban gradient' mirrors the geography of social and economic inequalities between urban and rural areas in France, reflecting a process of 'social relegation' in rural peripheries. It has been argued that the process of 'metropolitanization' may push voters in middle and low-income households further away from urban centres, towards more distant outskirts, where these voters feel socially excluded, experience a loss of status and 'cultural insecurity'. This territorial divide is embedded in the class cleavage: voters in middle and lower class locations tend to cluster in semi-rural areas, where the FN is increasingly drawing electoral support.

As recently illustrated by the 'Yellow Jackets' movement, current waves of rural protest in France mobilize on issues concerning housing prices, transport, energy, employment opportunities and the scarcity of public services. Recently, the FN under Marine Le Pen has embraced an agenda of economic redistribution and state regulation, tackling issues of social decline and rural marginalization through the provision of public services and national health centres, while reaching out to all the left-behind in 'forgotten rural France'. This new agenda of rural frustration certainly resonates strongly with voters in the periphery.

NORTH / SOUTH DIVIDE

The Rassemblement National achieves heterogeneous rates of success across different areas in France. Typically, support for the party clusters in the Northern and Eastern regions of Hauts-de-France, Grand Est and Bourgogne-Franche-Comté, as well as in the Mediterranean South-East in Provence-Alpes-Côte-d'Azur (PACA) and Occitanie.

PACA and Hauts-de-France in particular have been long-term FN electoral strongholds. In the first round of the 2017 presidential election, Marine Le Pen won her highest scores in those regions with 28.2 and 31% of the vote, in PACA and HDF respectively, making significant gains in northern constituencies.

While the 'relative' electoral geography of the FN is quite stable, there has been a nationalization of the vote through a process of 'diffusion' from the party's electoral strongholds to neighbouring regions. In the north, for instance, electoral support for the FN has increased in the north-western part from Picardie to Normandie, with the exception of Bretagne which remains more adverse to the radical right. A similar shift can be seen south of Ile-de-France in Beauce, Sologne and Berry.

Finally, support for the FN is still considerably lower in the less densely populated western regions, such as Bretagne, Pays-de-la-Loire and Aquitaine, as well as in the centre of France (Limousin and Auvergne), where Le Pen won about 15% on average of the 2017 presidential vote. Levels of support for the FN are also substantially lower in Paris and the immediately-surrounding suburban departments of Hauts-de-Seine (7.6%), Val de Marne (11.5%) and Seine-Saint-Denis (13.6%).

IMMIGRATION

Electoral support for the FN is primarily driven by immigration fears. The SCoRE survey data confirm findings by previous studies which identify a positive correlation between immigrants and support for the FN at high levels of aggregation (e.g. departments and regions), and a negative correlation at the

local level: while support for the FN is stronger in departments with large immigrant populations, FN voters are more likely to be found in local areas with lower shares of immigrants, and this is consistent across regions, as well as across a range of local community factors such as population density and unemployment. This is illustrated in Figure 3a and 3b.

These findings may reflect different factors. First, the negative correlation may indicate a compositional effect: voters in ethnically diverse areas are more likely to be of ethnic descent and therefore less likely to vote for the FN. The SCoRE survey data shows that voters who have an immigrant background are much less likely to vote for the FN, controlling for their other socio-demographic characteristics such as gender, age and education.

Second, contextual effects relating to contact with immigrants and perception of ethnic threat may operate at different geographic levels. While intergroup contact may reduce ethnic prejudice locally, perception of ethnic threats may nevertheless be higher in departments with larger immigrant populations where immigration issues have greater salience and are 'available' for politicization by the FN.

Support for Le Pen in Hauts-de-France (%)

Quintiles
[0.0,29.5]
(29.5,34.7]
(34.7,40.0]
(40.0,72.2]
No data

Figure 7a

Third, the negative correlation between immigration and FN voting at the local level may be a response by native voters to ethnic change, taking the form of 'white residential flight' from minorities. There has been significant change in the spatial distribution of the radical right vote in France since the early 2000s. While mostly urban phenomenon during the 1980s and the 1990s, the geography of the FN has gradually changed over time, shifting away from larger cities towards rural areas. FN voters are now predominantly found in more remote peri-urban and rural peripheries, which have lower shares of immigrants – the latter generally cluster in large urban centres and suburban peripheries (*banlieues*).

Based on the analysis of the geography of immigration and FN voting across relatively small spatial units of about 2,000 inhabitants (IRIS), the French SCoRE survey data suggest a possible 'halo effect', whereby individual support for the FN tends to be weaker in highly ethnically diverse areas yet stronger in the immediately neighbouring ones. This effect is curvilinear and it has a relatively wide geographical spread: the probability of Le Pen vote rises in the vicinity of areas with high immigrant concentration, up to a distance of about 30 km where the effect 'plateaus' before decreasing again as the distance to the immigration centre increases.

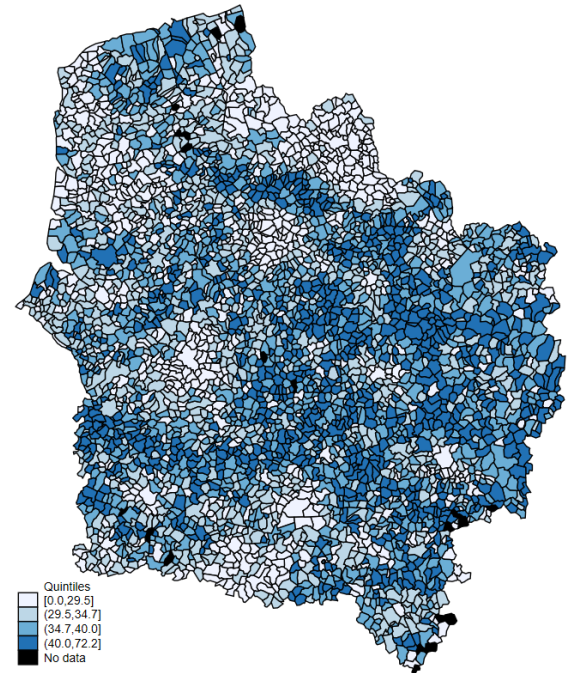**Immigrant presence in Hauts-de-France (%)**

Quintiles
[0.0,0.9]
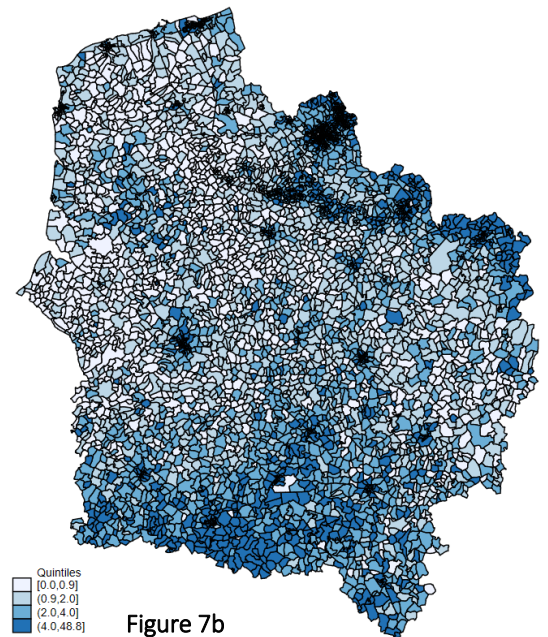(0.9,2.0]
(2.0,4.0]
(4.0,48.8]

Figure 7b

ECONOMIC HARDSHIP

Economic hardship, unemployment and poverty are crucial factors of voting for the radical right in France. The correlation between unemployment and support for the FN is strong and positive at the

departmental level. In 2017 Le Pen won her best scores in French departments most affected by the economic crisis and unemployment such as Pyrénées-Orientales, Aude, Hérault, Gard and Vaucluse in the south, and Aisne, Nord, Pas-de-Calais, Ardennes and Aube in the northern regions.

The correlation between economic hardship and FN voting is further illustrated at the sub-regional level, by looking at the distribution of the electoral support for the radical right across France's local employment areas (*zones d'emplois*). In 2017, Le Pen's presidential vote was significantly stronger in the areas where unemployment was higher: Le Pen won an average 29.2% in the upper quartile of unemployment as opposed to less than 20% in the lower quartiles.

COUNTRY REPORT: GERMANY

Germany is best described as a high population density country. In fact, the density is one of the highest for all territorial states, and generally, the country is defined by its urban life. Three in four

Average population density (1000 per km²)

Figure 8
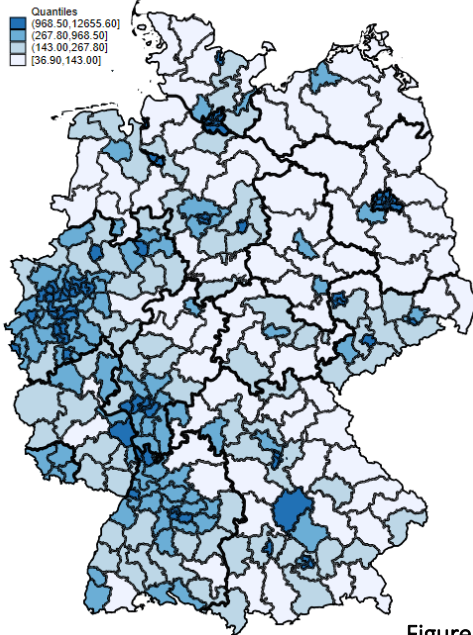
Germans live in a city, and this share is still rising. Many rural areas function only as residential areas, with people commuting to the city for work. Only one percent of the population travel more than 30 minutes by car to get to the next city. This is certainly not only a German trend per se, but still very notable. Urbanisation is visible even in the rural heartland, as only a fraction of people work in agriculture, and access to public transportation and communication technology have improved in recent years. While equality of living conditions ranks high on the political agenda, population density varies a lot across districts (see Figure 8). That is, in metropolitan areas such as Berlin, Frankfurt, or the Ruhr area, population densities of more than 20 thousand people per km² are quite common in some areas, and smaller clusters of medium density can be found in many parts of the country. However, the intensity of the urban/rural divide varies across regions, especially when one compares the territory of the former GDR to that of the former FRG. Urbanization presents a special challenge for the rural areas in the former GDR. Young professionals tend to leave the countryside and move to western population, thereby contributing to resentment and economic hardship amongst the "left-behind". Germany's comprehensive system of financial redistribution amongst regions makes these effects bearable, but the demographic differences between East and West Germany remain challenging.

REGIONAL DIFFERENCES OF AFD SUPPORT

Results of the 2017 general elections for the AfD in %

Figure 9

The 2017 elections showed that support for the Alternative for Germany (AfD) is the strongest in East Germany. The regional divide is striking. Since the fall of the Berlin wall, East-Germany had stronger support for radical right parties. The extremist national democratic party (NPD) held seats in multiple East-German parliaments and several district councils. The AfD leverage upon the latent support for radical right parties and have attracted most of the former NPD electorate. In Saxony, the AfD came first in nearly all constituencies and outpolled the Christian Democrats with 27%. While the East-West difference in support for the AfD is very visible (see Figure 9), there are various constituencies in West-Germany where the AfD did extremely well, e.g. in some wards in Bavaria and Baden-Wuerttemberg. There are also some cities in North-Rhine Westphalia such as Gelsenkirchen or Duisburg where support for the AfD is remarkably hight. These former cores of the Ruhr agglomeration are still reeling from the decline of the coal and steel industries and struggle with high unemployment and demographic decline. And yet, AfD is not confined to economically declining parts of the country: some areas in Saxony, Bavaria, and also Baden-Wuerttemberg where the AfD is particularly strong are doing more than well. Looking at the regional distribution at a more fine-grained level, it becomes clear that most of the variation can be
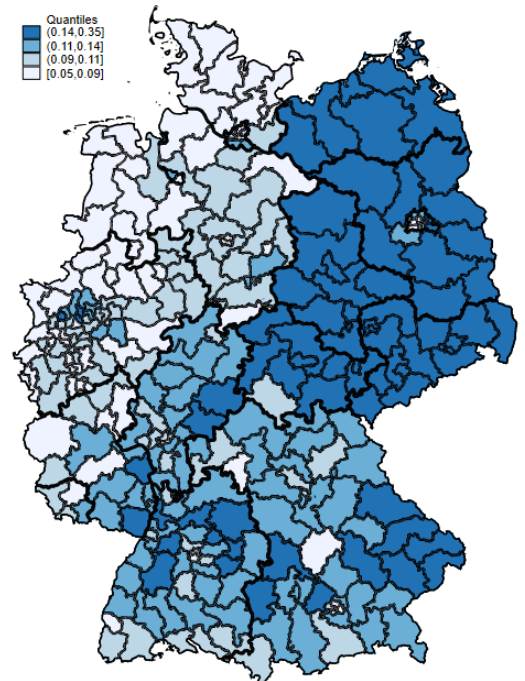
attributed to individual and not structural differences. That means the underlying story is more about the socio-demographic composition of declining areas and attitudinal resentments than about certain areas per se.
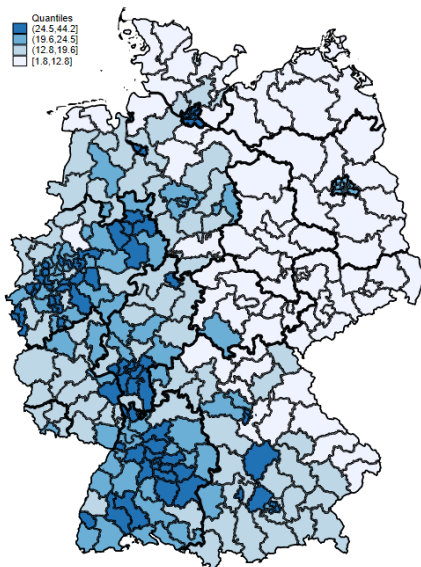
% Population with a migration background

Figure 10

MIGRATION, UNEMPLOYMENT, AND THE YOUNG

East and West Germany are not only very different politically, but also socio-structurally. Figure 10 shows the distribution of the population with a "migration background" (i.e. first and second generation migrants) across constituencies. The immigration history to postwar Germany started with "Guest workers" from Italy and Turkey that arrived in the western industrial centres during the late 1950s and the 1960s. Thus, it is not surprising that most of the people with a migration background live in West Germany. There was also migration to the former GDR, mostly from Vietnam, but on a much smaller scale, and many of these migrants left Germany in 1990s. Currently, migration is relatively absent in East Germany, except in Berlin. Most people with a migration background live in bigger cities such as Hamburg, Frankfurt, and the Ruhr area, or in smaller cities that cluster around vibrant industries, such as parts of Baden-Wuerttemberg with its booming auto industry. Generally speaking, unemployment is higher in the East than in the West, but within both areas, there is also a marked North-South divide: the economy in some of the southern districts in the former GDR is performing so well that they have overtaken some of the poorer areas in the North-West. In sum, the de-industrialised parts of North Rhine Westphalia and most rural areas in East Germany are worst off (see Figure 11). The spatial in variation of age in Germany is generally modest, but differences between East and West stands out as a result of younger people moving westwards (Figure 12).

Unemployment rate

Figure 11

% Population younger than 25 years
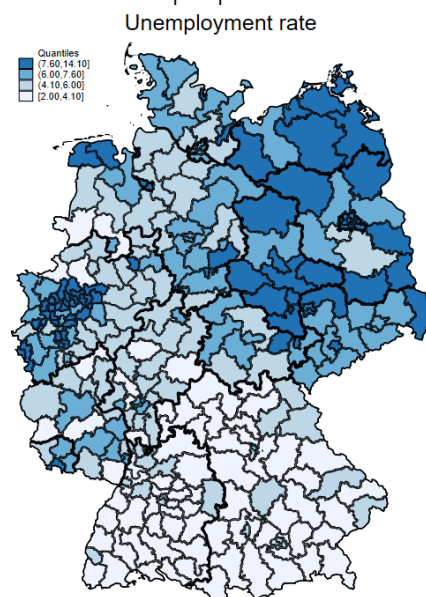
Figure 12

Almost thirty years after the German reunification structural and political differences between East and West Germany are still very real. While the support for the AfD in the new federal states such as Saxony is unprecedented, the AfD is successful in many German regions, East and West. Comparing contextual differences of socio-economic structure with support for the AfD paints a rather complex picture. The broader regional differences provide merely conditions for the rise of the German radical right. There is no simple, mono-causal explanation for regional variation radical right support in Germany. That said, the anti-immigration narrative of the AfD does not require a comparatively large percentage of actual migration and it is certainly not just the economy or the social composition that motivates people to support the AfD, but individual anti-immigrant sentiments and political discontent. The tale of flourishing radical right support in areas that 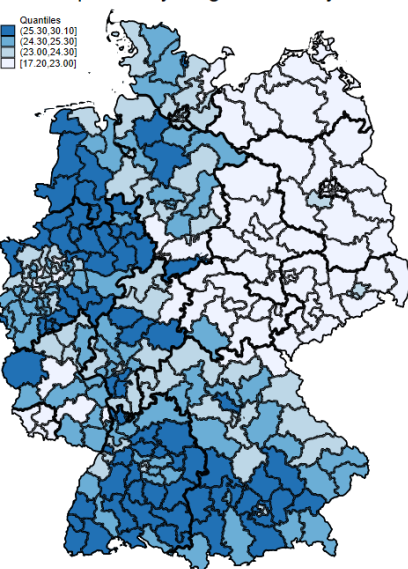economically struggle overlooks large parts of Baden-Wuerttemberg and Bavaria. The rural-urban difference structure how people perceive and experience their environment, e.g., whether or not they connect with their neighbours and form

communities, and mostly what contextual conditions prevail. Nonetheless, most of the variation is explained by individual characteristics. In other words, the who is far more important than the where.

COUNTRY REPORT: NETHERLANDS

The Netherlands are a small, highly urbanized, and densely populated country, and has been so for several centuries. As a result, some of the stark regional distinctions – economic, political, and/or cultural – found in other countries are not present. Nevertheless, there are geographical factors that are relevant for politics, and that shape support for the Party for Freedom (PVV), the Dutch populist radical right party.
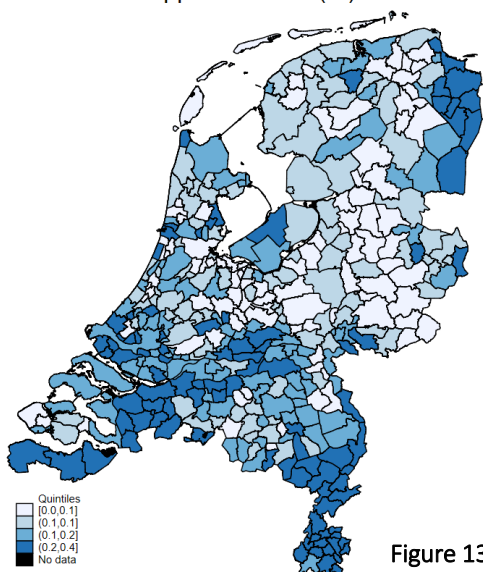
The PVV performed particularly well in three regions: 1) the southern provinces of Brabant and Limburg (and some adjoining areas); 2) the municipalities surrounding Rotterdam; and 3) in border regions, especially in the northeast. This does not reflect one underlying cause, but rather the interplay of several, which together help to better understand the geographic distribution of PVV support.

Support for PVV (%)

Figure 13

"THE WEST VS THE REST"

While most of the Netherlands is densely populated by European standards, there exists a clear concentration in the west of the country. Almost half of the Dutch population lives in an area consisting of the four largest cities (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, and Utrecht) and their broadly defined agglomerations, which together are called *Randstad* ("Ringcity", after their shape encircling a less-populated area). This area spans much of the provinces of North-Holland, South-Holland, and Utrecht, which have historically been most prominent (since the Dutch Revolt starting in 1572) and which is the home of the capital (Amsterdam) and many important institutions (parliament, media organizations, company headquarters, etcetera).

Outside of the Randstad, people are likely to identify with their province, for instance Friesland (in the north) or Brabant (in the south), most of which have existed in their current shape since the 15th or 16th century. The result is a certain centre-periphery tension – not with merely the capital at one pole, but between the 'almighty' Randstad and the other provinces. While this tension over economic and political asymmetry has long existed, it never had a very strong political articulation. Recently, it has gained some additional traction in the public and political debate, with the Randstad being depicted as cosmopolitan, imposing cultural change (for instance abolishing the *Zwarte Piet* character) on the rest of the provinces. This should not be overstated, because parts of the 'peripheral' provinces (above all, but not only, university towns) vote for culturally progressive parties, while the populist radical right actually does quite well in parts of the Randstad.

Population density (km2)

Figure 14

At any rate, politics in the Netherlands is highly centralized. The country consists of a single electoral constituency, there are no substantial regional parties and only few regional candidates, and local media does not play a large role. As a result, campaigns are fought nationally, with only minor
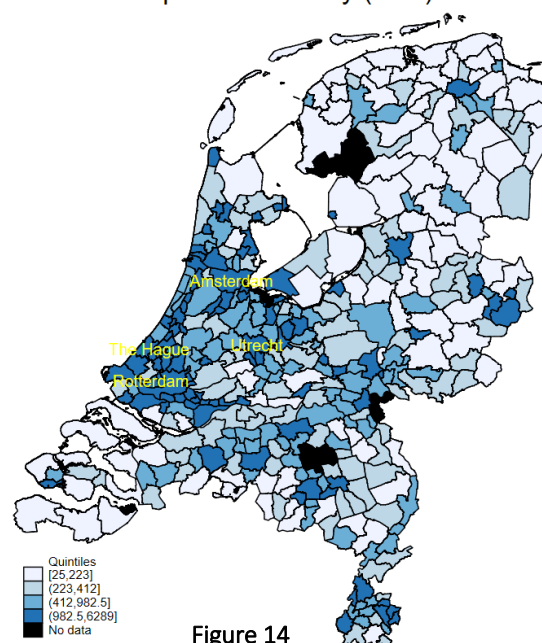
attention for regional interests. Still, a feeling of regional frustration exists outside of the Randstad, projected on politicians in The Hague, and which correlates with support for parties such as the PVV that oppose the political mainstream. The PVV party has its roots in the southern province of Limburg, and indeed the south has been its stronghold from the start. Recently, the north-eastern 'periphery', as well as some other border regions, has also emerged as an area with strong PVV support.

Immigrant presence (%)

Quintiles
[1.0,2.5]
(2.5,4.2]
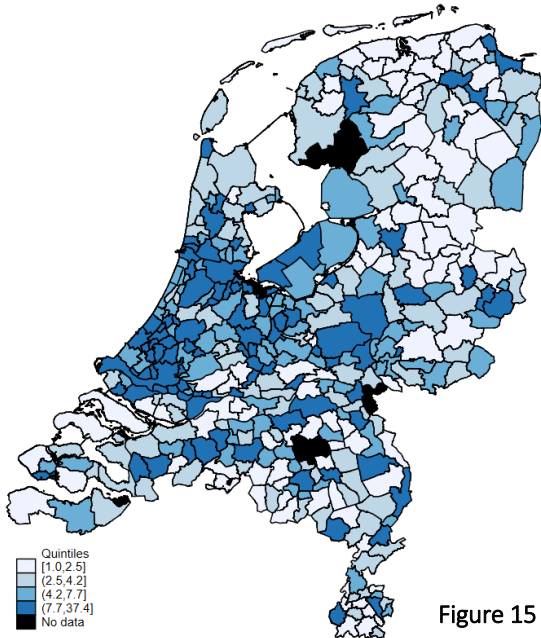(4.2,7.7]
(7.7,37.4]
No data

Figure 15

IMMIGRATION

The Randstad is also the area where most citizens with an immigration background live. Part of this population has its roots in the Dutch colonial history, as many Surinamese moved to the Netherlands following Suriname independence (mostly settling in Amsterdam). Furthermore, the Netherlands attracted 'guest workers', especially from Turkey and Morocco, in the 1960s and 1970s. They mainly settled in the industrialized urban areas in the west of the country (and some dispersed other industrial centres, such as Twente in the east). This is also the area where most immigrants seeking family reunion, as well as different groups of refugees, have settled. These are the immigrants or descendents of immigrants, often with an Islamic background, that the PVV mobilizes against. *Statistics Netherlands* categorizes them as 'non-Western immigrant'.

Indeed, some of PVV's support can be found in and around the large cities which large contingents of (descendents of) immigrants, such as Rotterdam. At the same time, in Amsterdam, with many immigrants but a relatively higher educated population, there is on average less opposition to immigraition or support for PVV. Moreover, there exists opposition to immigration in rural and peripheral areas where few immigrants are present.

A more recent group of immigrants consists of Central and Eastern Europeans (CEEs), such as Poles, who often work in agriculture. They can be found in other areas, often outside the Randstad, though also in the high-density agricultural area between The Hague and Rotterdam ('Westland'). There has been some mobilization against CEE immigrants (including a campaign by PVV in 2012), but not the same extent as against 'older' immigrant groups.

Unemployment benefits (%)

Quintiles
[1.0,2.1]
(2.1,2.4]
(2.4,2.7]
(2.7,4.2]
No data

Figure 16

ECONOMIC AND SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC HARDSHIP

There are some differences in economic outlook between regions, but these do not neatly follow urban-rural or Randstad-periphery lines. For instance, highly competitive (techno-)industries can be found in the southern province of Brabant, as well as in and around some university towns (such as Enschede or Groningen), which result in high wages, an attractive environment for the higher educated, and low unemployment. By contrast, unemployment is high in some areas in and around Rotterdam due to de-industrialization. Still, economic misery – in city or countryside – correlates to some extent with PVV support.
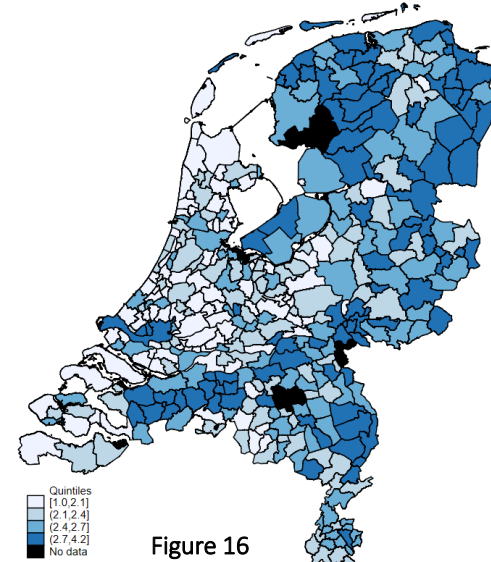
A more specific phenomenon is rural marginalization. This occurs in rural areas that struggle to upkeep public and private services in their community, and that see its most active (young and educated) population emigrate. In some of these areas the population has been shrinking for a while (*'krimpgebieden'* such as parts of Limburg or the northeastern border regions in Groningen and Drenthe). In these areas, citizens face not only economic problems but also an undermining of the viability of their community. Most of these areas are strongholds of support for the PVV (or the social-populist SP).

The role of region and context in shaping political outcomes should not be overstated, as individual characteristics and worldviews are most decisive, regardless of where people live. That being said, even though the Netherlands are a densely populated and relatively homogeneous country, it too does experience certain geographical divisions that interact to shape political outcomes. The presence of immigrants is a factor boosting PVV support in and around large cities, but less so elsewhere. In some rural areas, economic hardship combined with demographic decline, resulting in stronger PVV support. In the periphery, these factors are galvanized by a more general sense of regional frustration directed at the Randstad, which resonates with PVV's populist message.

Below 45 (%)

Quintiles
[22.9,31.8]
(31.8,33.8]
(33.8,35.6]
(35.6,54.6]
No data

Figure 17
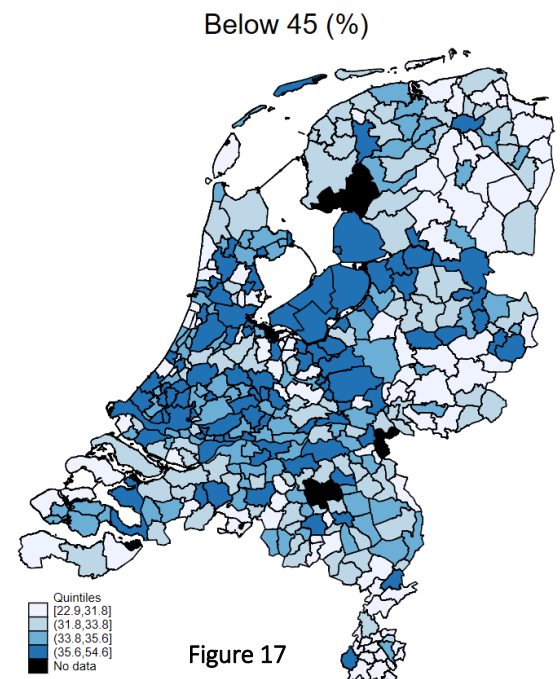
PROJECT PUBLICATIONS

Berning, C., J. Evans, M. Gould, E. Harteveld and G. Ivaldi (2018) 'Assessing the effect of neighbourhood context on Populist Radical Right voting: a four-country comparison of France, Germany, the Netherlands and the UK', paper presented at European Consortium of Political Research annual conference, Hamburg, 23-25 August.

Evans, J., N. Hood, M. Gould and P. Norman (2018) 'Immigrant proximity, ethnocentrism and radical right vote: a multi-level test of the halo effect in England', paper presented at Election, Public Opinion and Parties PSA specialist group, annual conference, Royal Holloway, University of London, 14-16 September.

Harteveld, E., W. van der Brug, S.L. de Lange, and T.W.G van der Meer (2018) 'Multiple roots of the populist radical right: voting for populist radical right parties in cities and the countryside', paper presented at Harvard's *Populism, Nationalism and Radical Politics Study Group*, 17 April.

Hood, N., M. Gould, J.Evans and P. Norman (2017) 'Differentiating UKIP support using an area based classification of electoral wards', European Colloquium on Theoretical and Quantitative Geography, York, 7-11 September.

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