University of Zurich[UZH]

URPP Equality of Opportunity

Asymmetric effects of group-based appeals: the case of the urban rural divide

Lukas Haffert
Tabea Palmtag
Dominik Schraff

Equality of Opportunity Research Series #26
July 2023

URPP Equality of Opportunity

URPP Equality of Opportunity Discussion Paper Series No.26, July 2023

Asymmetric effects of group-based appeals: the case of the urban rural divide

Lukas Haffert
University of Zurich
haffert@ipz.uzh.ch

Tabea Palmtag
University of Zurich
palmtag@ipz.uzh.ch

Dominik Schraff
Aalborg University
dosc@dps.aau.dk

URPP Equality of Opportunity, University of Zurich, Schoenberggasse 1, 8001 Zurich, Switzerland
info@equality.uzh.ch, www.urpp-equality.uzh.ch

Asymmetric effects of group-based appeals: the case of the urban rural divide

Lukas Haffert, University of Zurich

Tabea Palmtag, University of Zurich

Dominik Schraff, Aalborg University

Abstract

Group-based identities are an important basis of political competition. Parties appeal consciously to specific social groups and these group-based appeals often improve the evaluation of parties and candidates. Studying place-based appeals, we advance the understanding of this strategy by distinguishing between dominant and subordinate social groups. Using two survey experiments in Germany and England, we show that group appeals improve candidate evaluation among subordinate (rural) voters. By contrast, appeals to the dominant (urban) group trigger a negative reaction. While urban citizens' weaker local identities and lower place-based resentment partly explain this asymmetry, they mainly dislike group-based appeals because of their antagonistic nature. If the same policies are framed as benefiting urban and rural dwellers alike, candidate evaluation improves. Thus, people on the dominant side of a group divide reject a framing of politics as antagonistically structured by this divide, even if they identify with the dominant group.

We gratefully acknowledge funding from the URPP Equality of Opportunity Program, University of Zurich.

1 Introduction

Political scientists have recently rediscovered the importance of social identities and group memberships for political behavior. Based on a revived theoretical interest in the importance of social cleavages (Bornschier et al. 2021a; Ford and Jennings 2020; Guth and Nelsen 2021; Hooghe and Marks 2018, 2022), these studies investigate the role of social groups on the demand and supply side of politics. On the demand side, several studies have analyzed the importance of social identities and group attachments for individual political behavior (Bornschier et al. 2021b; Zollinger 2022; Evans et al. 2022; Mason and Wronski 2018). On the supply side, a growing number of studies investigates how parties use group-based appeals to mobilize different social groups (Huber 2021; Thau 2019; Stuckelberger and Tresch 2022; Horn et al. 2021; Jacobs and Munis 2019; Robison et al. 2021; Dassonneville et al. 2022; Dolinsky 2022).

The literature on group-based appeals has established the relevance of such appeals in party manifestos and campaign communications (Huber 2021; Thau 2019; Stuckelberger and Tresch 2022; Horn et al. 2021; Dolinsky 2022). Moreover, researchers have collected experimental evidence that voters indeed react positively to these types of appeals (Jacobs and Munis 2019; Robison et al. 2021; Dassonneville et al. 2022). These experimental studies generally paint the picture of a highly effective political instrument: Most appeals investigated elicit a positive reaction from the targeted ingroup. What is more, even outgroups often react neutrally to such appeals (e.g., in Robison et al. (2021), the upper-middle class shows no negative reactions to a working-class appeal). Thus, group-based appeals seem to have a considerable upside but little downside from the perspective of parties.

In this paper, however, we demonstrate that group-based appeals can have very different effects, depending on which side of a structural divide they address. We do so by reporting the results of two survey experiments in Germany and the UK. They allow us to distinguish in more detail for whom such group-based appeals have a positive impact, and in which cases they even can elicit a negative reaction. The context in which we encounter these asymmetric effects are appeals to urban or rural voters. These appeals are of increasing substantive interest, as urban-rural divides characterize many recent elections in the US and across Europe. Indeed, `place` is increasingly seen as a crucial element of people's social and political identities (Bornschier et al. 2021a; Cramer 2016; Munis 2020). Accordingly, place-based identities are an important potential target for group-based appeals. Rural (Dassonneville et al. 2022; Jacobs and Munis 2019) and urban (Jacobs and Munis 2019) appeals have already been studied in the experimental literature on group-based appeals.

Moreover, the urban-rural divide is of particular interest for two reasons. Firstly, it is increasingly stratifying Western societies, with urban people acquiring a socially dominant position while rural people are increasingly in a (objectively and subjectively) subordinate position. Secondly, however, it allows for positive

in-group identification on both sides of the divide. While most rural citizens clearly have a positive identity as "rural", a smaller but substantial number of urban citizens also holds a positive "urban" identity (Lyons and Utych 2021; Lin and Lunz Trujillo 2023). Still, group-based appeals are typically studied in a context where only one group (the group with subordinate status, e.g. the working class, or ethnic minorities) holds an ingroup identity and sees the dominant, upper status group as a clear outgroup. The members of the dominant group, by contrast, do typically not have a strong group identity. Few people identify as upper middle class. In the case of urban-rural divides, by contrast, it is much more plausible that one person's outgroup is another person's ingroup. Hence, studying the power of appeals on both sides of the urban-rural divide allows us to study the scope conditions of group appeals.[1]

Theoretically, we combine insights from the literature on cleavages and social positions with the group-appeals literature to theorize the scope conditions for when group appeals work. Specifically, we distinguish between dominant and subordinate groups, based on their position in a social divide and propose that group-based appeals will have asymmetric effects on these two groups. People on the dominant side of a social divide will typically have no interest in a framing of politics as revolving around this divide and will thus resist antagonistic appeals. After all, such a framing necessarily emphasizes their dominant, privileged position, which often triggers negative emotions of self-directed anger and guilt (Leach et al. 2006; Harth et al. 2008; Dover 2022). Therefore, voters on the winning side of a social divide reject appeals that emphasize this divide. Even though they might value a policy that would favor their in-group, they prefer appeals that depict this policy as serving a common interest of all groups and thereby downplay the importance of the divide. The subordinate group, on the other hand, is more receptive to conflictual appeals, as their position in the societal divide provides for moral grounds to challenge the existing order and the out-group's dominance. The increased effectiveness of group-based appeals among subordinate groups mirrors the existing literature's focus on studying appeals to disadvantaged social groups, such as the working class, rural people, or people with lower education (e.g., Robison et al. 2021, Dassoneville et al. 2022).

We test this theoretical argument with a set of survey experiments that expose dominant (i.e. urban) or subordinate (i.e. rural) social groups to group-based appeals. We find that appeals to rural voters indeed have the intended effect. In both Germany and the UK, rural voters evaluate candidates who appeal to them as a group significantly better than generic candidates that make a general appeal to all voters. By contrast, we do not find a positive effect of appealing to urban voters. To the contrary, urban appeals reduce urban voters' evaluation of a candidate.

[1] Other divides in which the dominant group may hold a positive in-group identity include education, gender, and center-periphery-divides.

Urban voters' antipathy towards an ingroup appeal is partly explained by the fact that urban citizens on average have weaker local identities and report lower place-based resentment. Nevertheless, there remains a substantial difference between urban and rural voters' reaction to the in-group appeal, even after controlling for these factors. Even people with a strong urban identity at best react neutrally to an urban appeal.

To gain a better understanding of this negative reaction among urban voters, we ran a second survey in Germany, in which we only recruited urban respondents. In this survey, we vary both the specific policy issues addressed in the appeal, as well as how the relationship between urban and rural interests is presented. We find that the specific issues do not make a difference: Urban respondents dislike an innovation-focused appeal and a housing-focused appeal just as much as a generic economic appeal. However, how the appeal presents the relationship between urban and rural interests has a decisive impact: if the appeal presents politics as an *antagonistic* conflict between urban and rural citizens, urban voters reject the appeal. If the exact same policies are presented in a *harmonious* framework that emphasizes their benefits for all citizens, urban voters react positively.

These findings provide important scope conditions to the political effectiveness of group-based appeals. Antagonistic appeals to dominant groups may even reduce a politician's support. Conflictual appeals only mobilize support among subordinate groups, for whom such appeals present societal order in line with their own experiences. This suggests that successful group-based appeals require a consideration of the *type* of social group targeted by the politician with respect to dominant vs. subordinate status.

We also contribute to the literature on urban-rural divides by shedding new light on the importance of this divide for the supply side of politics. Our findings indicate that politicians can systematically mobilize this conflict by appealing to rural voters. Moreover, we demonstrate the importance of local identities and place-based resentment for voters' reactions to place-based appeals.

The paper is organized as follows: In the next section, we develop our argument about the limits of group-based appeals and the importance of considering which side of a structural divide is the target of the appeal. We then explain why the urban-rural context is suitable for studying the differential reaction to group-based appeals. Afterwards, we explain our survey design. In the results section, we first present the results from our comparative survey, along with several subgroup analyses. We then dig deeper into the behavior of urban voters by analyzing the results of the follow-up survey. In the conclusion, we discuss potential avenues for future research, in particular with regard to the limits of group-based appeals.

2 Argument

Group-based mobilization

The literature on group-based appeals starts from the theoretical premise that politics is fundamentally characterized by a conflict between social groups (Thau 2021). Therefore, these studies argue that group-based appeals improve people's evaluation of the appealing political candidate or party if people perceive the group that is the target of the appeal as an important part of their own social identity.

Some studies in this literature use observational data to study parties' actual appeals (Thau 2019; Horn et al. 2021; Stuckelberger and Tresch 2022; Dolinsky 2022). They show the continuing importance of group-based appeals across countries and across types of groups. While the most important group membership analyzed is class (Evans and Tilley 2017; Robison et al. 2021; Thau 2021), other studies have focused on gender (Kam et al. 2017) or on a wider range of groups (Huber 2021; Stuckelberger and Tresch 2022; Dolinsky 2022). Moreover, these studies show that parties target these appeals strategically (Huber 2021).

In addition to these observational studies, a growing number of studies use survey experiments to provide causal evidence for the effectivity of group-based appeals. This literature typically asks survey participants to evaluate fictitious candidates for political office, based on short statements or visual cues (Jacobs and Munis 2019; Dassonneville et al. 2022; Robison et al. 2021). These experimental studies generally show that group-based appeals elicit a positive reaction from the targeted group. What is more, even out-groups often seem to react neutrally to them. Thus, these appeals appear to have a considerable upside but little downside from the perspective of political actors.

That said, this literature indicates two scope conditions for the success of group-based appeals. Firstly, voters must identify with the group targeted by the appeal, and the appeal must make this identity salient and imbue it with political meaning (Huddy 2013). Secondly, group members need to see themselves in conflict with the out-group of the appeal and have to harbor resentment against this out-group. Hence, as depicted in the framed part of Figure 1, group-based appeals only work when there is a certain identification with the in-group as well as a certain resentment towards the out-group of the social divide.

However, the existing literature typically focuses on appeals to socially subordinate groups. Robison et al. (2021), for example, study the effectiveness of working-class appeals, while Dassonneville et al. (2022) include appeals to four groups: the working class, people with lower education, rural people and the young. In all these cases (perhaps with the exception of the young), the ingroup of the appeal is in a socially subordinate position, while the outgroup is in a dominant position. An exception to the focus on the disadvantaged side of societal divides is the study by Jacobs and Munis (2019), who study both urban and

rural appeals in the American context. Here, the authors find clear positive effects among rural voters, but less effectiveness of appeals among urban voters.

Based on this experimental literature, we can thus formulate two general hypotheses about the effectivity of group-based appeals.

H1: Group-based appeals improve candidate assessment.

H2: The effect of group-based appeals is moderated by the strength of in-group identification and out-group resentment.

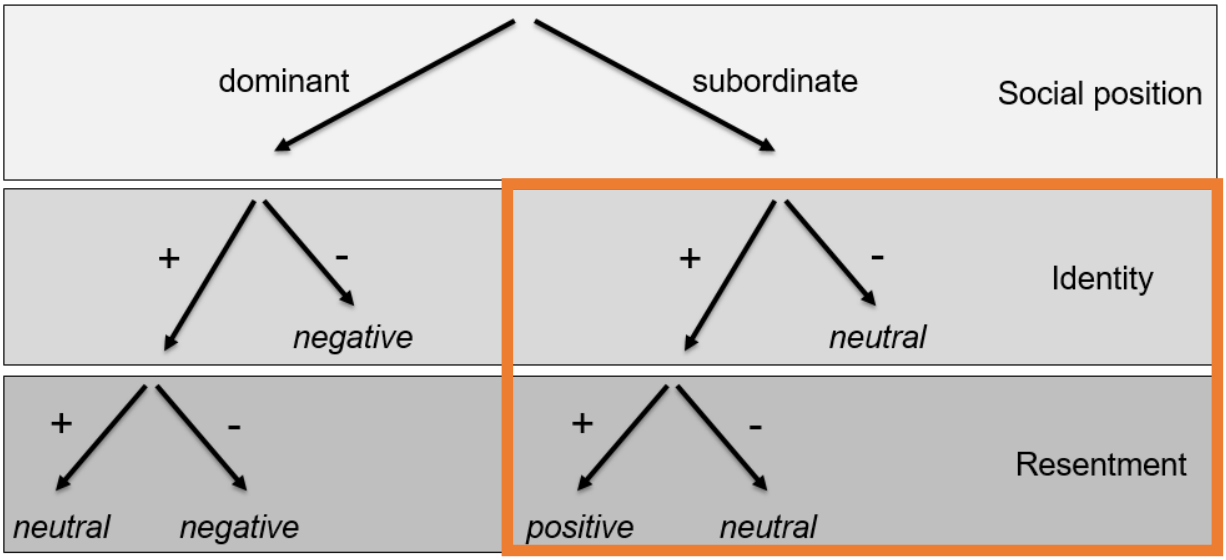
Asymmetry of group-based conflict

Political cleavages typically emerge in reaction to the discontent of subordinate or threatened groups. Thus, the focus on subordinate groups in the political appeals literature makes sense from a broader theoretical perspective. As Hooghe et al. (2022: 2) put it: "In the Lipset and Rokkan (1967) model, a major shock to the fabric of society motivates opposition to the status quo on the part of groups whose lives are affected in ways that are difficult or impossible for them to escape." Hence, parties representing a specific cleavage – be it Socialists, Catholic parties, or Farmers' parties – typically emerged as representatives of those who saw themselves on the losing side of the industrial or national revolution.

By contrast, few parties actively seek to mobilize the other side of a cleavage. Whereas working-class parties historically mobilized class-based divides, liberal or Christian-Democratic parties often sought to deflect the importance of these divides, rather seeking to emphasize the commonalities between bourgeois and working-class voters – e.g. their common nationality or faith.

Thus, the losing side typically drives the political mobilization of societal divides with clear winners and losers. Ralf Dahrendorf already in 1959 argued that groups of lower social status were much more likely to see society in terms of conflict (Dahrendorf 1959). As he explained, "the dominant groups of society express their comparative gratification with existing conditions inter alia by visualizing and describing these conditions as ordered and reasonable; subjected groups, on the other hand, tend to emphasize the cleavages that in their opinion account for the deprivations they feel" (Dahrendorf 1959: 293). While Dahrendorf focused on the class divide, contemporary accounts emphasize that dominant groups such as white people or men are reluctant to see society as structured by racial or gender divides (Phillips and Lowery 2018; Friedman et al. 2021).

Figure 1: The general model of group-based appeals and its potential variation across social groups



This suggests an important scope condition for the effectiveness of group-based appeals. As the literature amply demonstrates, such appeals generally work for the subordinate side of a political divide, as presented in the framed part of Figure 1 (e.g. Robison et al. 2021). For subordinate groups these appeals "emphasize the cleavages that in their opinion account for the deprivations they feel" (Dahrendorf 1959: 293). Thus, these appeals present a group's self-interest as morally justified. Moreover, they may increase the political entrepreneur's credibility as an advocate of this group.

By contrast, for dominant groups, these appeals clash with their preference for "visualizing and describing these conditions as ordered and reasonable" (ibid.). To the contrary, the *antagonistic* nature of these appeals has quite the opposite effect: it taps into distributive conflicts between a person's in-group and out-group and thereby emphasizes the existing inequalities that favor the dominant group. Group-based appeals to dominant social groups thus run the risk of activating privilege and concerns for out-group disadvantage. Indeed, inequalities across social groups induce feelings of guilt and unfairness, which play a key role in producing out-group concern among individuals belonging to dominant groups (Powell et al. 2005; Chudy et al. 2019). Indeed, dominant groups have been shown to bias political party agendas by exempting divisive issue from political competition (Weber 2020; Traber et al. 2022). We therefore expect that in-group appeals will be less effective on the dominant side of a structural divide. Instead, we expect that dominant groups

rather prefer *harmonious* appeals, which address the interest of a social group, but avoid opening a conflict with other groups and rather emphasize that the group's interest is aligned with the interests of other groups.

Moreover, within the dominant group, the reaction to group-based appeals will again depend on the factors identified above: in-group identification and out-group resentment. Among group-members without in-group identification or out-group resentment, these appeals might even elicit a negative reaction, as these groups prefer to avoid and diffuse social conflicts over inequalities from which they are benefitting.[2] Trying to mobilize people as "wealthy", "white", or "West German" can backfire, since few individuals strongly identify with these groups. Similarly, if the dominant group does not harbor any resentment towards the out-group, group-based mobilization attempts could trigger negative reactions. However, this becomes less clear if membership in the dominant group is an important social identity. For example, highly educated people are clearly privileged; yet they hold a positive ingroup identity (Stubager 2009). In these situations, the reaction to in-group appeals among the dominant group may be more neutral. Still, it will not have the same positive effect as for subordinate groups. Based on these considerations, we thus hypothesize:

H3: Group-based appeals work better for subordinate than for dominant groups, even after controlling for in-group identification and out-group resentment.

A priori, it is hard to predict how strong the difference between dominant and subordinate groups will ultimately be. In the preregistration of our first survey experiment[3], we preregistered a strong positive effect of rural appeals and a weaker, yet still positive effect of urban appeals. Theoretically, however, we can mainly predict an asymmetry, but not its magnitude.

3 Research Design

Case Selection: The Urban-Rural Divide

To provide empirical evidence on the asymmetry of group-based appeals, we ideally would want to study a societal divide in which dominance and subordination are clearly distributed, but which yet allows people on

[2] Indeed, Robison et al. (2021) find some negative reaction to class-based appeals among upper-middle class voters, while working class voter react very positively to such appeals.
[3] Pre-registration available at: https://osf.io/m572d/?view_only=c47d54d51aa147bbbfea3d353d32479e

both sides of the divide to hold positive in-group identities. Many divides, such as class, only fulfil the first criterion: while dominance and subordination are clearly assigned, those on the dominant side usually do not develop strong in-group identities. Other divides, such as age, only fulfil the second criterion: While "young" and "old" may be relevant identities, it is less clear which group is dominant and which is subordinate. We propose that the urban-rural divide is well suited to fulfil both criteria. It clearly differentiates winners and losers and yet offers a positive identification to both groups.

We study this divide in England and Germany, following a most-different case design. In England, urban places (in particular London) clearly dominate the country in economic and cultural terms. Moreover, British (English) centralism reinforces center-periphery dynamics. In Germany, the economic model is centered on a strong industrial sector, whose "Hidden Champions" are often based in rural areas. Moreover, strong federalism and the proportional electoral system incentivize parties to represent voters from all parts of the country. We then ran the follow-up survey only in Germany, given that our initial results were very similar across the two countries.

Despite these differences, urban dwellers are typically seen as economic and cultural winners in both countries. In economic terms, the countryside is often characterized as being "left behind", while urban areas benefit from economic modernization and the transformation to a knowledge economy (Rodríguez-Pose 2017, Iversen and Soskice 2019). At the same time, there is a growing cultural divergence between 'cosmopolitan' cities and 'nationalist' towns and rural areas (Cramer 2016; Huijsmans et al. 2021; Maxwell 2019, 2020). Finally, urban dwellers have better chances to make their political voices heard (Haffert 2022).

Most empirical analyses focus on rural voters and argue that their strong local attachments can lead them to develop "rural resentment" (Cramer 2016; Munis 2020). In economic terms, rural voters often feel that they do not get their "fair share". In cultural terms, these voters feel that their way of life is not being respected by urban voters. Both types of grievances are much less common among urban voters.

While this characterization of rural places is relatively uncontested, there are two potential objections to the characterization of urban places as being advantaged. Firstly, not all urban places are on the winning side. Rustbelt cities such as Sunderland or Newcastle in England or Gelsenkirchen or Chemnitz in Germany often experience higher unemployment and lower incomes than rural counties. Secondly, not all inhabitants of booming cities are actually winners. Processes of gentrification often push out longstanding dwellers since they cannot afford rising rents and costs of living.

The important point, however, is that these relative losers do not see themselves on the losing side of the urban-rural divide. Even if they identify strongly with their place, they will not see rural people as the outgroup responsible for their plight. At the same time, they will not feel strong commonalities with rural

losers. For example, they will often struggle with the consequences of population growth (in the form of rising rents) rather than population decline. Still, our empirical design includes appeals that tap into both the strength of booming cities ("innovation centers") as well as in the difficulties of some urban dwellers ("affordable housing").

Domination and subordination in the urban-rural divide are thus clearly recognized. Moreover, `place` is increasingly seen as an important element of people's social and political identities (Bornschier et al. 2021). Many studies emphasize the conflict between identities based in rural communities (Cramer 2016) and cosmopolitan cities (Cunningham and Savage 2015) when seeking to explain the rise of anti-establishment parties (see also Lyons and Utych 2021; Lunz Trujillo 2022). Indeed, place-based identities are likely becoming more important to people, as other sources of identity, such as membership in collective organizations become less salient (Fitzgerald 2018). In the German context, Hegewald and Schraff (2021) demonstrate the existence of an identity-based affective polarization between urban and rural voters, while Schulte-Cloos and Bauer (2021) show that voters have an identity-based preference for candidates from their own municipality.

As with the objective position of both groups, it is widely accepted that "rural" is an increasingly important social identity. By contrast, it is less clear whether "urban" is a meaningful identity. We argue that it is meaningful for an important subgroup of urban dwellers. One way to demonstrate this is by asking about people's perceived closeness to "urban" and "rural" people (for a validation of this question, see Bornschier et al. 2021b). In Appendix A, we show that perceived closeness to urban people varies just as much with local population density as perceived closeness to rural people. However, identification is weaker for both urban and rural voters who grew up in a different type of place (Hegewald and Schraff 2021; Lunz Trujillo 2022).

While there seem to be distinct identities on both sides of the urban-rural divide, this is less clear for the existence of place-based resentment. Indeed, the literature has a clear focus on "rural resentment" (Cramer 2016). Using a place resentment scale, Munis (2020) finds that place-based resentment is much higher among rural than among urban Americans. Urban voters may reject the existence of a conflict with rural voters since they often have an idealized or nostalgic picture of rural areas. However, the growing salience of urban-rural conflicts in politics may mean that urban dwellers start to develop an anti-rural resentment for political reasons. In the US context, this is epitomized in the sentence "land does not vote, people vote" in response to choropleth maps of electoral results. More generally, rural voters may be seen as blocking important reforms in areas from climate policies to social liberalization.

In terms of parties' actual behavior, finally, existing observational studies show that place-based appeals are an important element of parties' repertoire. This is particularly true of rural appeals, which parties regularly employ in both Austria (Huber 2021) and the UK (Thau 2019). Urban appeals are much less common in

Austria, at least between 2013 and 2019 (Huber 2021). In the UK, by contrast, they have been employed about as often as rural appeals between 1964 and 2015 (Thau 2019).

Data and Operationalization

To study group appeals across the urban-rural divide, we fielded two survey experiments. The first experiment was conducted in Germany and England in September 2021. The second experiment was conducted in Germany in June and July 2022, serving as a follow-up study for questions arising from the first study. In the following, we describe the design of the first survey in detail. When we introduce the follow-up survey below, we then only explain where the design deviated from the first survey.

The design of both experiments follows established approaches from the literature on group-based appeals (Robison et al. 2021; Dassonneville et al. 2022). In both surveys, we asked respondents to evaluate a candidate for parliament at the next national election.[4] Within each survey, we hold constant the overall candidate description. In the first survey, we presented the candidate as follows: "David Williams is 46 years old. He is an office clerk and has two kids. He has been living in your constituency for 20 years and volunteers as a youth coach in a local sports club." In the second survey, we changed the candidate's gender, name, and occupation (see below).

The treatment conditions then attach a certain appeal to this candidate and test whether this affects respondents' candidate evaluation. Our main outcome is a question that asks: "How would you rate a candidate with political views like those of David Williams?" The outcome measure then varies between "0 – I think very poorly of him" to "10 – I think very highly of him".

We measure self-perceived place of residence pre-treatment to establish whether people understand themselves as residing in a rural or urban context. For this, we use a four-category scale, which we then dichotomize into "urban" and "rural". In Germany, 62% of respondents describe their residence as "very urban" or "somewhat urban", while this number is even 70% in the UK.

We prefer a perception-based measure of place to an objective one, as we want to tap into people's urban/rural self-identification.[5] To maximize statistical power, we then expose all participants to a treatment that fits their perceived place of residence. In other words, there is in principle no mis-treatment (Hersh and Schaffner 2013).

[4] This is a natural task in the candidate-centered British electoral system but may appear less natural in the party-centered German system. However, since we fielded the survey during the 2021 election campaign in Germany, local candidates were very salient at the time of the survey.

[5] In Appendix A, we show that people's self-categorization correlates strongly with an objective measure of urbanity.

We measure the strength of place-based identity by showing respondents five pairs of photos, one of an urban and one of a rural environment, and have them choose in which of the two places people are more like themselves “in terms of their lifestyle and their opinions”. These photos seek to illustrate both the advantages and disadvantages of an urban or rural lifestyle (see Appendix B for the photos). Respondents who chose four or five photos matching their perceived place of residence are coded as having a strong place-based identity. We prefer this measure to a survey question about attachment to ones’ place of residence since the reaction to the photos better captures an abstract identification with urban or rural places, not the very concrete identification with one’s individual place of residence. This is important, since we are interested in the mobilizing power of appeals to urban/rural places as such, and not in the power of specific appeals to respondents’ local place.

In Germany, 62% of those who described their place as "very urban" picked four or five urban photos, while 92% of those who described their place as "very rural" picked four or five rural photos. In the UK, the respective number were 53% and 90%. While rural identities are thus more widespread than urban identities, more than half of urban respondents seem to have some form of urban identity.

We measure people’s place-based resentment using a five-question battery based on Munis (2020). These questions ask whether people feel that their place-based in-group is disadvantaged compared to the outgroup in terms of their economic, cultural or political situation (see Appendix B for full list of questions). Answers for all items range from 1 to 5, we code everyone with a mean across all items above 3 as having place-based resentment.

This setup of the survey was basically identical in the first and the second survey. However, the surveys differed regarding the target population and the content of the presented appeals. We first present the specific design and the results of the comparative survey before we move on to the German survey of urban respondents.

4 Results from comparative survey in Germany and the UK

The survey experiment follows a multi-arm vignette design with a control group and three treatment groups. This leads to a set of seven groups receiving separate appeals, as presented in Table 1. Following the appeals-literature (Robison et al. 2021), we differentiate between symbolic and policy appeals. Symbolic appeals portray the political elite as an ally of some social group but are void of any specific policy statements (Hersh and Schaffner 2013). Policy appeals, in contrast, try to appeal to a social group by elaborating on a substantive political issue that might be of concern to this group.

The control group received the following generic appeal that does not engage with the urban-rural divide: "I want to be a voice for everyone in our country. It is time to put the people at the center of politics." All other appeals start with an identical frame, which presents politics as a conflict between urban and rural people: „Too much attention has been given to big cities/rural areas in recent political debates".[6] After this, we add the appeals. The symbolic appeal is formulated in broad terms, appealing to the urban or rural groups, but not mentioning any substantive societal issues: „I want to be a voice for rural areas/our cities. It is time for politicians to prioritize rural areas/our cities."

Table 1: Structure of the vignette experiment

	Control Group	**Treatment 1**	**Treatment 2**	**Treatment 3**
Urban residence	Control Statement	Symbolic Appeal (Urban)	Economic Appeal (Urban)	Cultural Appeal (Urban)
Rural residence		Symbolic Appeal (Rural)	Economic Appeal (Rural)	Cultural Appeal (Rural)

Our policy appeals are derived from the place-based resentment literature, as outlined in the theory part. The economic appeal implies competition regarding investment between urban and rural areas: „I want to support economic development in rural areas/our cities. The government needs to invest more in infrastructure and the creation of jobs in rural areas/our cities." The cultural appeal, by contrast, forwards a competition in lifestyles across the urban-rural divide: „I want to fight for the lifestyle of people in rural areas/our cities. The government needs to support social and cultural activities in rural areas/our cities".

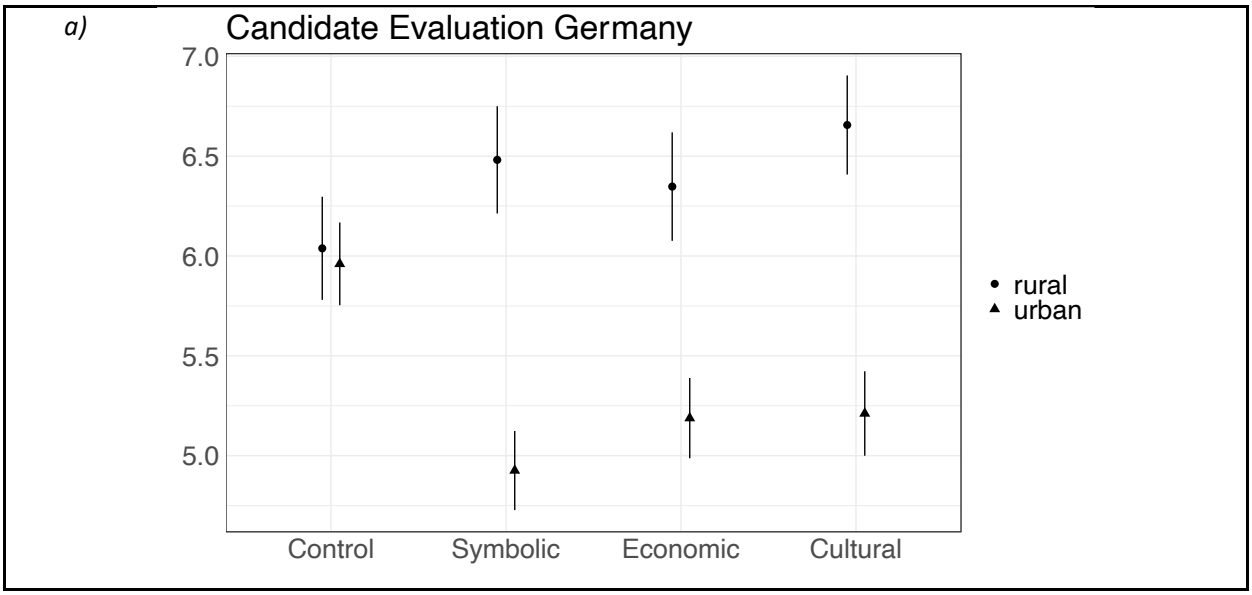
We collected nationally representative samples (according to gender, age, education, and region/state) with around 2'500 respondents. Our study is well powered to uncover effect sizes of 0.6 or more, assuming a standard deviation of 2.5 on the standard normally distributed outcome and splitting the sample into two equally sized groups (e.g, urban and rural residents). We can capture even smaller effects if we pool across treatment conditions or people's place of residence. Appendix C presents descriptive statistics for the control and treatment groups. The means indicate that samples are balanced and randomization was successful. We restrict our analyses to the almost 90 percent of respondents who passed an attention check that was included in the survey.

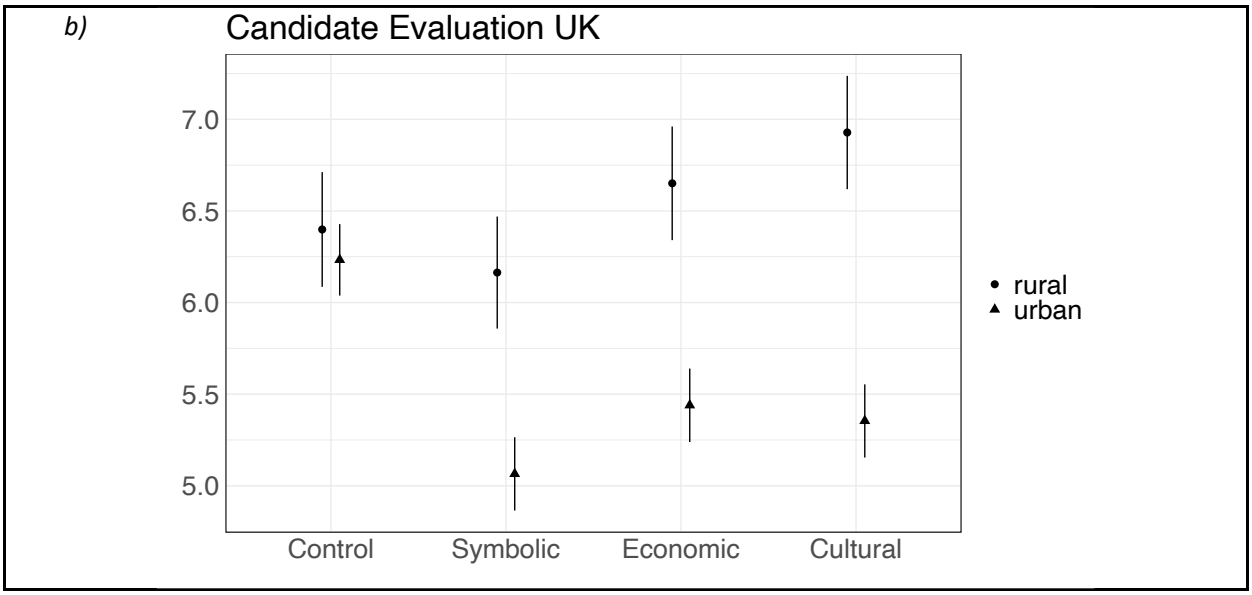
The empirical analysis presents the results from ordinary least squares (OLS) regressions of candidate evaluation on the treatments. Figure 2 presents predicted values of the candidate evaluation with 95%

[6] This framing exactly follows the design in Robison et al. (2021) and Dassonneville et al. (2022).

confidence intervals over the type of place and the experimental conditions. The complete regression results are presented in Appendix D. Overall, we see similar patterns in both countries. There is no statistical difference between urban and rural residents' candidate evaluation in the control group, suggesting that our neutral description of the candidate did not trigger an urban or rural frame. Looking at the treatments, the place-based appeals tend to increase candidate evaluation among rural voters but consistently decrease the rating among urban respondents. Among rural identifiers, we find that the cultural appeal increases candidate evaluations by 0.6 points in Germany and 0.5 points in the UK. These ATEs are statistically significant at the one and five percent level respectively. Economic and symbolic appeals do not affect candidate evaluations among rural voters in England. In Germany, both appeals improve candidate evaluations among rural respondents. The symbolic appeal increases evaluations by 0.5 points, statistically significant at the five percent level. The economic appeal has an ATE of 0.3 and is only marginally significant at the ten percent level.

Figure 2: Main results – candidate evaluation





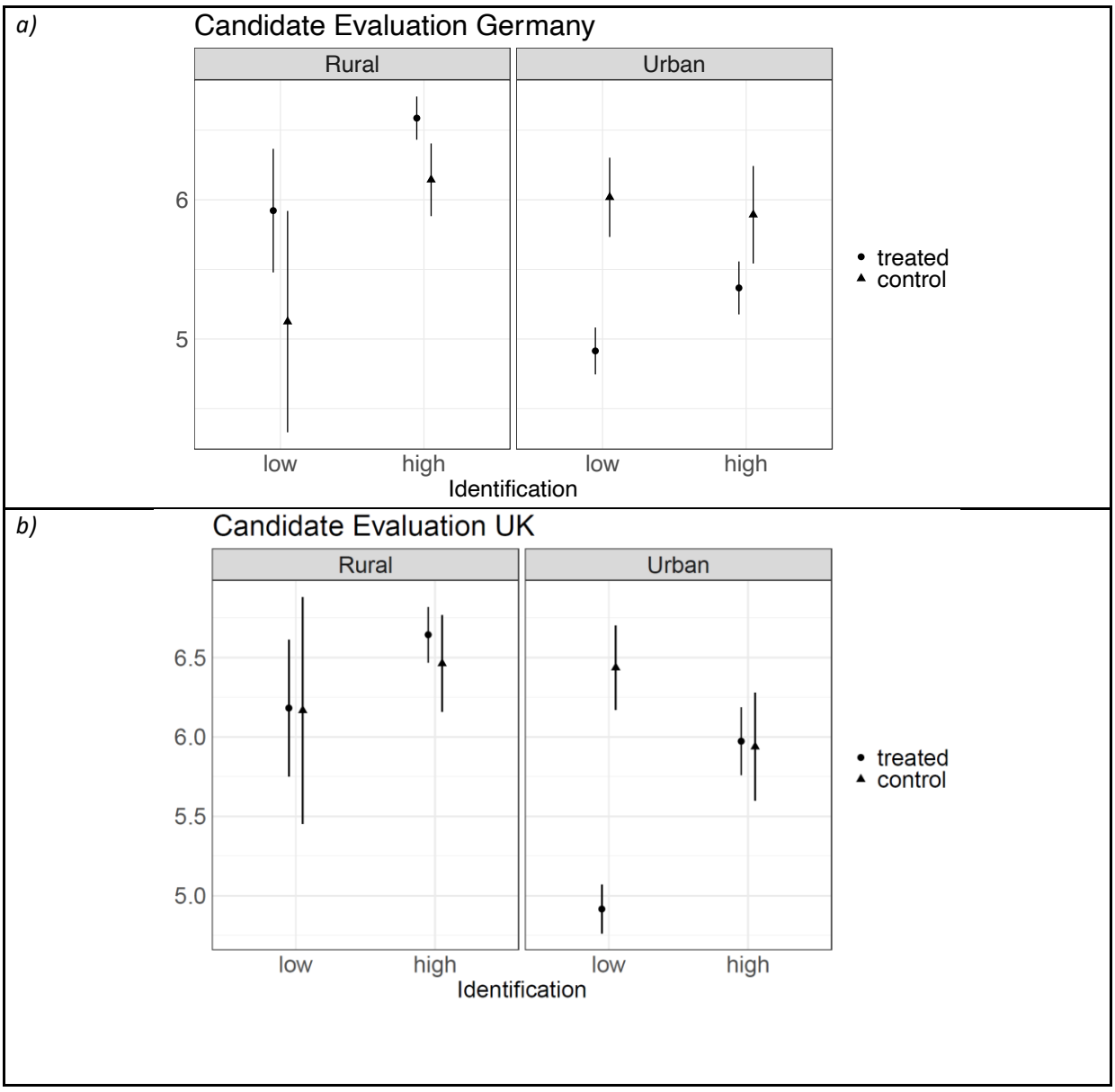
We thus find clear, although not unequivocal, evidence for Hypothesis 1 in rural areas. Among urban identifiers, by contrast, all appeals strongly decrease candidate evaluations. This negative response is significant at the one percent level in all treatment conditions. The cultural and economic appeals decrease candidate assessment by about 0.7 points compared to the control group, while the negative effect of the symbolic appeal is even bigger at around 1.1 points. These results are nearly identical across both countries. While rural voters seem to be most susceptible to appeals that emphasize a cultural conflict, urban voters dislike all three appeals to a similar extent.

In line with Hypothesis 3, these findings suggest that the effects of place-based appeals are highly asymmetric: place-based appeals hurt candidates in an urban setting, while they can benefit their evaluation in a rural context. However, the strength of this asymmetry and of the negative reaction of urban identifiers to the urban appeal is remarkable and deserves further attention.

In the next step, we test whether different reactions of urban and rural voters can be explained with a weaker place-based identity among urban voters. To do so, we collapse all three treatments into a single category "treated" and compare all treated respondents to the non-treated for each country. We interact the treatment variable with our measures of place-based identity. Figure 3 shows how respondents with different identities react to the treatment. Panel a) shows results in Germany, panel b) the findings for the UK. In both countries, respondents with a weak urban identity react very negatively to the treatment. In the UK, this effect disappears among high identifiers. That said, high identifiers still do not rate the candidate better than the control candidate, meaning that the appeal may not hurt, but also does not benefit the

candidate. In Germany, even strong urban identifiers react negatively to the place-based appeal, although the effect is considerably smaller than among low identifiers.

Figure 3: Strength of place-based identity and candidate evaluation



Unfortunately, in this survey we only measured respondent's place-based resentment after the treatment, since we had pre-registered a hypothesis on the effect of treatment on place-based resentment. Hence, this measure might be confounded by the treatment. We thus only look into the effect of resentment in the second survey. Moreover, we also pre-registered a range of hypotheses about the different types of appeals

(symbolic/economic/cultural) and about subgroup effects (by age or political ideology). These were meant to explore variation within the group of urban and rural respondents. However, our results indicate that the most important question is not the variation within these groups, but the massive difference between these groups. While our results indicate that place-based appeals are a promising strategy for rural candidates, we see no evidence for positive reactions even among high-identifying urban voters to any of our appeals.

Hence, rather than studying within-group variation, we choose to focus on the big difference between urban and rural residents. To understand the reactions of the dominant side of the urban-rural divide to place-based appeals better and discern why a majority of urbanites rejects urban appeals, we fielded a second survey in Germany that focused on urban voters, testing our argument on the relevance of harmonious appeals for dominant groups. As negative reactions among urban voters were very similar in Germany and England, we think that just focusing on Germany speaks to the broader puzzle.

5 Results from urban survey in Germany

While repeating the fundamental setup of the first survey among urban voters in Germany, we introduce *two major types of variation* in the design of the follow up survey. Firstly, we increase the *specificity* of the policy proposal contained in the appeals, since one reason for the failure of urban treatments in study 1 could be that they do not pick up relevant policy concerns. Secondly, we vary whether urban and rural interests are presented as *antagonistic or harmonious*, following our theoretical argument on the relcutance of dominant groups to endorse antagonistic appeals. In addition, we also changed the demographic attributes of the fictitious candidate and presented the candidate as follows: “Carolin Reuss is 42 years old. She is a graphic designer and a single mother of a daughter. She has been living in your constituency for 20 years and volunteers in the admin team of a local climbing hall.” This allows us to see whether urban voters may have considered the original candidate as an implausible advocate of urban issues because of his gender, occupation or lifestyle.

For the follow-up survey, we recruited a total of 2850 inhabitants of the 150 biggest German cities (i.e. all cities with more than 60,000 inhabitants). Of these respondents, 54% described their place of residence as “very urban”, 39% as “rather urban”, 6% as “somewhat urban”, and 1.5% as “not urban” (descriptive statistics in Appendix E). Our results are robust to excluding the two latter groups. This sampling strategy allows us to focus on the main puzzle emerging from Study 1, namely the strong negative reactions to political appeals among urban respondents.

As control condition, we used exactly the same generic appeal as in survey 1. As our first treatment, we repeat the urban economic appeal from study 1 in order to see whether we could replicate our initial findings. As Figure 4 demonstrates, urban voters again react negatively to this appeal (complete regression results in Appendix F). Even if we describe the candidate in a way that more closely fits the image of an urban lifestyle, respondents dislike the antagonistic group-based appeal just as much.

We use the rural economic appeal from study 1 as our second treatment to test whether urban respondents may actually prefer a pro-rural (out-group) appeal. Exposing a subgroup of respondents to the supposed outgroup-appeal is similar to the design of Robison et al. (2021), who administer a working class-appeal not just to working class but also to middle and upper-middle class respondents. Similarly, Dassonneville et al. (2022) expose all respondents to the same working class/rural/non-graduate/young appeal. Hence, they also administer the same appeal as an in-group- and as an out-group appeal.

Figure 4 shows that urban voters also dislike the rural appeal. That is, they do not just reject a specific type of place-based appeal for targeting the wrong group but rather reject any type of place-based appeal. This negative reaction demonstrates that the original finding is not due to the fact that people actually perceive of rural people as their ingroup or have strong out-group concern. Such a negative reaction to appeals to a deserving outgroup is a relatively uncommon finding. Dassonneville et al. (2022) find that people react neutrally to outgroup-appeals in most cases. The exception are appeals to the young, which are actively disliked by old respondents. Yet, young people are significantly more positive towards this appeal. In our case, however, urban respondents dislike pro-urban and pro-rural appeals just as much. This suggests that urban voters have a more general preference for attenuating the urban-rural divide, no matter from which side it is polarized. This is in line with our argument on the behavior of dominant groups in the theory section and broader insights on the political interest representation of advantaged groups (Weber 2020).

In addition to these replications and extensions, we then introduce four new appeals. Here, the most important change concerns how the appeal presents the relationship between urban and rural citizens. An important feature of study 1 is that all three appeals clearly depicted an antagonistic *us-them* dichotomy, a conflict between urban and rural areas. As demonstrated above, the lower level of place-based resentment among urbanites may partly explain their negative reaction to this frame. However, even among the resentful urbanites, the original treatments did not generate positive effects. We thus vary whether respondents are confronted with a similarly antagonistic appeal, or whether the appeal emphasized the harmonious interests of all voters, while still catering to urban interests.

Secondly, we also vary the specificity of the candidate's proposal and seek to address it to different aspects of the urban-rural divide. On the one hand, we introduced an appeal that addresses cities as beneficiaries of the transition to the knowledge economy.

The antagonistic version of this appeal read as follows:

> *"Germany is falling behind with regard to innovations and technologies, since policymakers have given too much attention to the economic interests of rural areas. The government needs to invest more into the generation of future-proof jobs and the creation of innovation centers in our cities."*

By contrast, the harmonious appeal reads as follows:

> *"Germany is falling behind with regard to innovations and technologies, since policymakers have given too little attention to the future. The government needs to invest more into the generation of future-proof jobs and the creation of innovation centers in the whole country."*

Moreover, we introduce two appeals on the issue of housing, which addresses the problems that go along with the growth of cities. Housing has been one of the most discussed political issues in German cities in recent years. Hence, rent should be a topic of high salience to urban voters and one where they see a shared group interest with other urbanites. In the antagonistic version, the rise in costs of housing is attributed to the influx of rural people. Investment in housing in this case is geared towards alleviating the worries of urban residents and their rent costs. The appeal is formulated as follows:

> *"More and more people in our cities suffer from rising rents. Because of the influx from the countryside, people who have been living there for many years cannot afford the rent in their district anymore. I want to invest in affordable housing for the people in our cities. The government needs to stop the influx from the countryside and to improve the housing situation in the cities."*

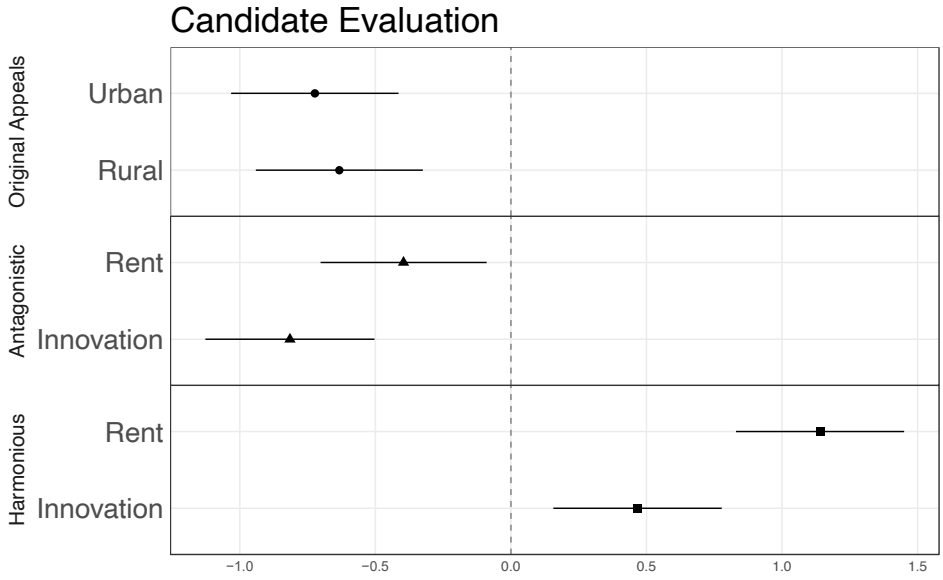
In the other condition, we refrain from pitting urban against rural constituencies and present the suggested housing policies as benefitting people across the country. This of course hides the fact that high rent prices are primarily an issue for urban residents. The appeal, therefore, pitches a policy that is very much tuned towards the urban in-group, but sells it as a beneficial policy for everyone. This appeal reads as follows:

> *"More and more people in our country suffer from rising rents. Increasingly, people who have been renting for many years cannot afford their flats anymore. I want to invest in affordable housing. The government needs to stop rent increases across the country."*

We expect that compared to the appeals presented to urban voters in the first survey, increasing the specificity of the appeal and reducing how antagonistic it is, should result in higher approval of the candidate by urban voters. Especially, the non-antagonistic framing of pro-housing policies should bolster the approval

of the candidate amongst urban constituencies, as it presents a clear in-group interest in a way that hides the group's dominance.

Figure 4: Effect of treatment on candidate evaluation in study 2 (urban respondents only)



The mid-part of Figure 4 shows that the specificity of the proposed policy at most has minor effects. The antagonistic innovation appeal is evaluated just as negatively as the original economic appeal, while the antagonistic housing appeal is evaluated slightly, but not statistically significantly, better. Thus, all four appeals that present the urban-rural divide as an antagonistic, group-based conflict are negatively evaluated by urban respondents – no matter whom politicians seek to benefit in this conflict and which policy they propose to do so.

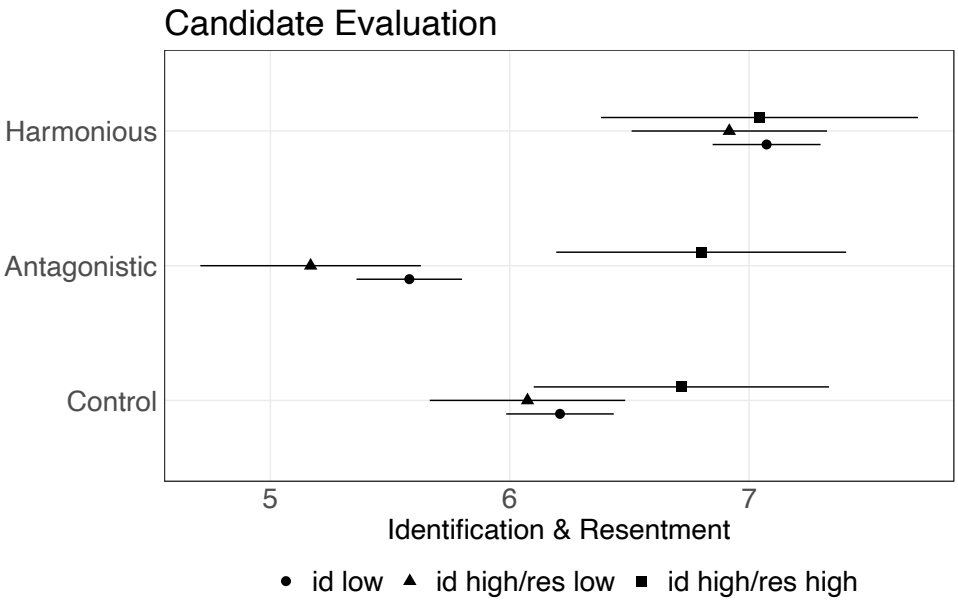
Yet, our findings show that urban voters react positively to appeals that use a more harmonious language. As soon as the same policies are presented as benefitting the whole country, respondents evaluate them positively. This is most clearly the case for housing: the promise to tackle an issue that is of primary concern in urban areas receives a very positive reaction among urban voters when it is presented as helping people "across the country". However, even the somewhat less specific innovation appeal is evaluated positively when presented in a harmonious framework.

This is in line with our argument on the asymmetric reaction of dominant and subordinate groups to group-based appeals. While subordinate groups support the antagonistic framing of appeals as they reference a legitimate fight against social inequalities, dominant groups prefer de-emphasizing inequalities and conflicts. This finding is in line with insights from social psychology that demonstrate the strong role of guilt and

fairness concerns in understanding privileged individuals' reactions to inequality (Powell et al. 2005; Chudy et al. 2019), as well as with Dahrendorfian conflict sociology. Our findings indicate that dominant groups, such as urban identifiers, actively punish politicians for polarizing the societal conflict. This shows that individuals do not just adjust their own behavior in reaction to dominance, as the psychological literature indicates, but that dominant groups also adjust their expectation towards the behavior of political elites accordingly.

In this survey, we measured both identity and resentment pre-treatment. This allows us to observe to what extent a combination of identity and resentment affects the results – although the small number of respondents in this group leads to very imprecise estimates. We therefore pool the innovation and rent treatment according to the antagonistic or harmonious framing.[7] As expected, we see that those respondents who combine urban identity and urban resentment are indeed considerably more positive towards the antagonistic appeals. That said, they still do not rate the antagonistic appeals better than the control appeal. Hence, the antagonistic appeal does not even work in the most likely condition. At the same time, these respondents seem to be least willing to endorse a harmonious appeal – although the large confidence interval again cautions against reading too much into this result.

Figure 5: Identity and Resentment among Urbanites



[7] Please note that there is only a very small number of urban respondents with low identification and high resentment. We therefore collapse the resentment category for the low identity condition. Appendix G1 also shows the results for the interaction with the rent and innovation treatment separately.

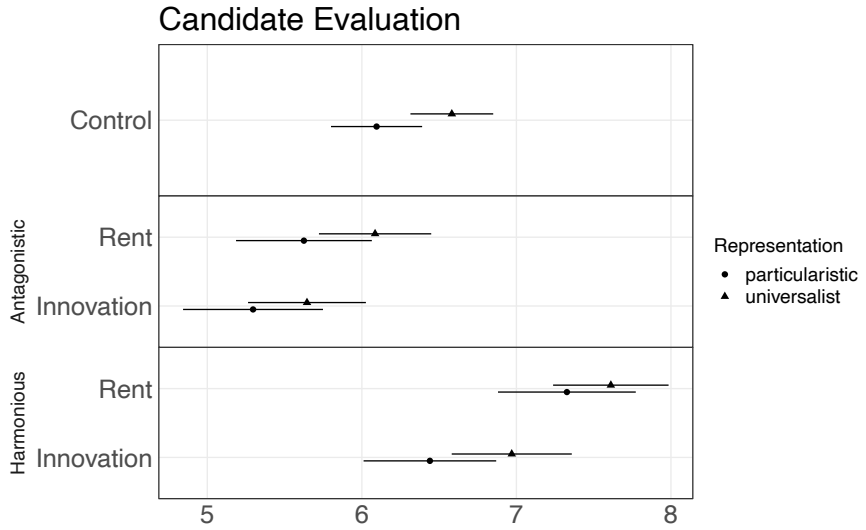
Alternative Explanations

An alternative way to read these results is that they are not so much about the implicit degree of conflict, but rather about the implicit *justifications* provided in the appeals. After all, an important difference between antagonistic and harmonious appeals is that antagonistic appeals provide "pluralistic" justifications, aimed at advancing the good of a group, while harmonious appeals provide "republican" justifications, appealing to the public good (Rehfeld 2009; Wolkenstein and Wratil 2021).

People living in cities might have a specific self-conception as championing universal values and policies that are advancing the greater good of the entire society, not just the places they live in. Hence, even if urban voters would not reject the "us-them" setting of the antagonistic appeals in general, they might reject these appeals because of their group-centered justifications.

To test this interpretation, we asked people about their representation ideals; that is, whether they preferred politicians to focus their work on improving the situation of their constituents or on the public good. While there was a quite substantial variation in respondents' representation ideals, they contribute relatively little to the explanation of candidate evaluations. As Figure 6 shows, urban respondents with a universalist representation ideal always evaluated the candidate slightly but insignificantly more positively. However, this is even the case for the antagonistic appeals, which universalists should actually dislike more strongly than particularists (full regression in Appendix G).

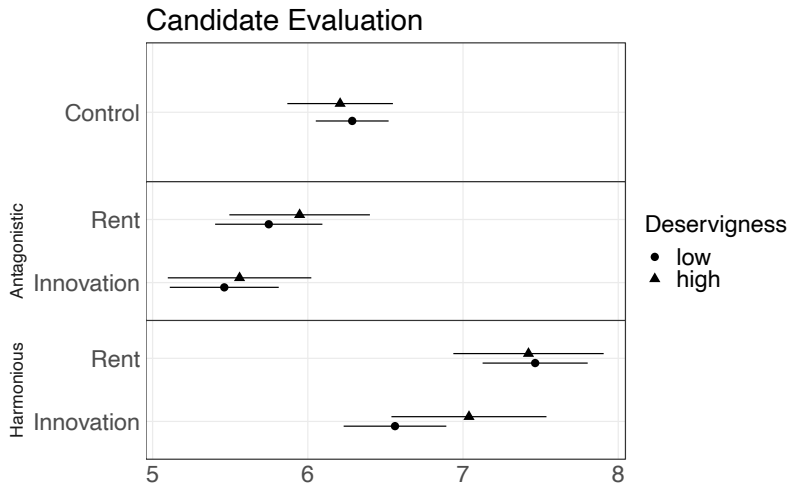
Figure 6: Effect of treatment on candidate evaluation by representation ideal in study 2



Our results could also be driven by urbanites who perceive the out-group (rural people) as more deserving than the in-group.[8] Negative reactions to the antagonistic appeals would then be due to out-group concern and not hinge on the framing of the societal divide as either antagonistic or harmonious.

Such an explanation is already put into question by the fact that urbanites actively dislike the rural appeal as well. To further probe this explanation, we distinguish the reactions of urbanites who rate rural dwellers as highly deserving from those who attribute less deservingness to the out-group.[9] Figure 7 shows that both urbanites who perceive the out-group as deserving and those who are less out-group oriented react similarly negative to the antagonistic frame. Moreover, the reactions of both respondent groups are similar for the harmonious appeals to which both react more positively (full regression in Appendix G).

Figure 7: Effect of treatment on candidate evaluation by deservingness of out-group in study 2



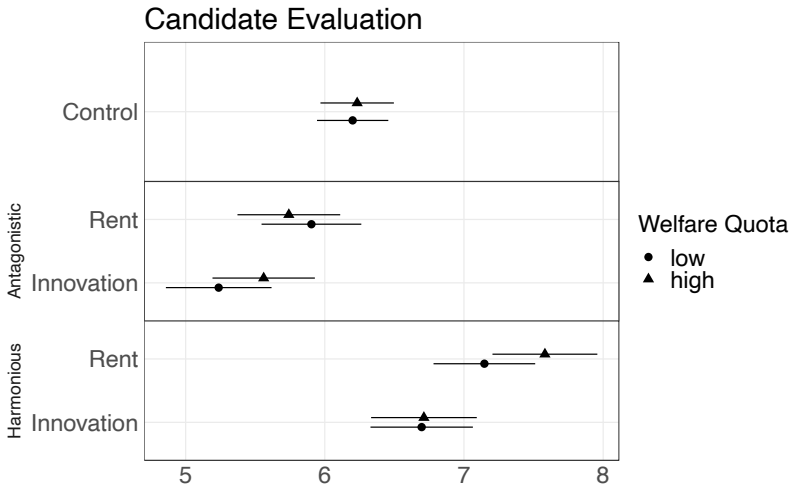
Moreover, one could argue that the negative reaction to antagonistic appeals by urbanites is driven by those residing in objectively well-off places, where the proposed policies are less relevant and therefore also potentially less credible. We thus measure the objective economic conditions in the cities of our urban respondents and show the different reactions of those who live in places with relatively low/high welfare

[8] Deservingness perceptions are an important mediator investigated in (Dassonneville et al. 2022).

[9] We measure deservingness with a question that asks respondents to indicate which groups deserve particularly strong support by politics. Respondents who answered that they think people in rural places deserve more support from politics than urban people were coded as attributing a high deservingness to their rural out-group.

quotas.[10] As with the other subgroup analyses, we find relatively little variation in terms of economic conditions or hardship in the respective place of residence (full regression in Appendix G).

Figure 8: Effect of treatment on candidate evaluation by objective economic conditions in city



Moreover, in Appendix G we distinguish urbanites according to their length of residence in the particular city they live in. Overall, the results show that there is almost no difference between urbanites who have lived in the respective city their entire life and even those who have lived less than 5 years in their city.

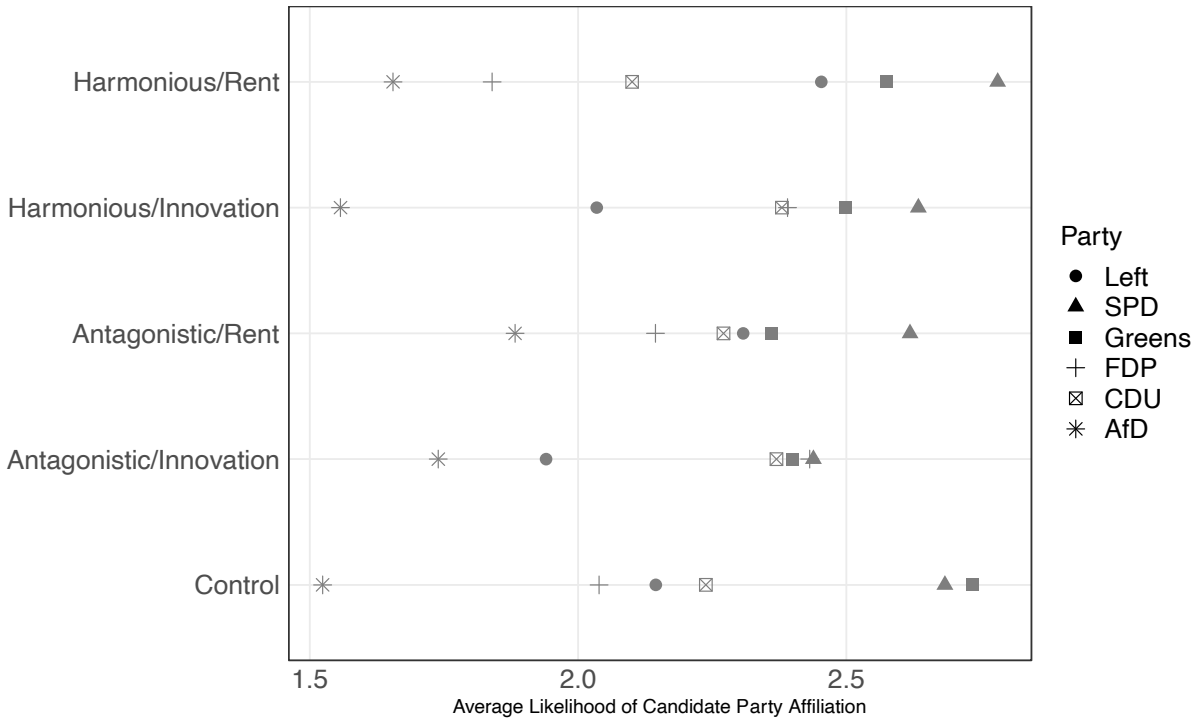
Last, we analyze whether the effect of our group appeals is driven by respondents' assumptions about the candidates' partisanship. Whereas we refrained from indicating the party affiliation of our fictitious candidate, we asked respondents to indicate how likely they though that the candidate is affiliated with each of the parties represented in the German parliament. Figure 9 shows the average association of each appeal (and appealing candidate) with one of the six parties (the original scale ranged from “not at all likely” (1) to “very likely” (4)).

The innovation appeal is more closely associated with the policy program of business-friendly, liberal parties (CDU and FDP), while the rent appeal is perceived to come from a left party (SPD or LINKE). Interestingly, there is very little variation for the Greens, while the AfD is most strongly associated with antagonistic appeals. Since urban respondents dislike the rent and the innovation appeals to a similar extent, however, it

[10] We use the population share that receives social assistance (SGBII quota). All urban places with a SGBII quota below the mean (11.65) are coded as relatively well off, implying a low welfare quota, all above this threshold are coded as having a high welfare quota.

does not seem to play a major role whether the appeal is more strongly perceived to come from the right or from the left.

Figure 9: Average Likelihood of Candidate Party Affiliation by Condition for study 2



6 Conclusion and Outlook

In this paper, we study the conditions under which the mobilization of social groups by politicians appealing to them works or backfires. Using the case of place-based appeals across the urban-rural divides, we argue that the success of group-based appeals hinges on the fit of the appeal with the groups' relative position in a social divide. While subordinate social groups buy into antagonistic appeals that mobilize against the dominant group, dominant groups react negatively to attempts of appealing to them by polarizing existing inequalities.

We test this argument with two survey experimental studies on how urban and rural voters are receptive to political appeals that target the places people self-identify with. Our findings show that it is indeed possible to garner support from rural voters with place-based appeals. Candidates are evaluated significantly more positively when they address rural voters with place-based appeals, in particular when these appeals focus

on cultural issues. By contrast, urban voters are actively opposed to the place-based appeals that pitch urban and rural places against each other.

In a follow-up survey among urban voters, we find that the antagonistic framing of place-based appeals produces a strong negative reaction among urban residents. However, more harmonious appeals to urban interests that emphasize the common societal good are successful and substantially increase candidate approval. This demonstrates that the success of political appeals hinges on the type of social group. Ignoring dominant groups' aversion against conflictual appeals risks hurting politicians using conflictual language.

Compared to the existing survey-based literature on group-based appeals, we thus find an important new pattern. While it is not uncommon to find that group-based appeals may have null-effects on certain groups of voters, we are to the best of our knowledge the first to find that group-based appeals can actually hurt a candidate under certain conditions. Urban respondents react decisively negative to appeals that cater to them as a group. Most urban voters are not only unmoved by candidates who are claiming to advance their "urban" causes, they are less likely to approve of these candidates making urban appeals, be they economic, cultural or symbolic. Importantly, these voters also react negatively to group-based appeals that emphasize the other side of the divide, i.e. rural voters. Thus, urban voters reject any appeal that presents an urban-rural divide as a group-based divide. At the same time, these voters are not critical of the policies proposed in these appeals – they react positively to the same policy proposals when they are presented in a harmonious framework.

While our study is empirically restricted to the case of urban-rural divides, these findings may hold broader importance for the analysis of group-based appeals. After all, the fundamental setup of this divide is quite common: it is very clear which of the two groups is seen as being on the winning side of the conflict and which of the two groups is seen as being on the losing side. This also holds for other group-based divides, such as class, education, race, or even gender. Hence, we may speculate that group-based appeals would also have an asymmetric effect on those divides. Indeed, it may be common that the dominant group actively rejects a framing that presents them as a group that is in conflict with another group. We think it is worthwhile to explore this possibility in further research on the effectiveness of group-based appeals.

References

Bornschier, Simon, Lukas Haffert, Silja Häusermann, Marco Steenbergen, and Delia Zollinger. 2021a. "Identity Formation between Structure and Agency – How 'Us' and 'Them' Relates to Voting Behavior in Contexts of Electoral Realignment." In *Working Paper*.

Bornschier, Simon, Silja Häusermann, Delia Zollinger, and Céline Colombo. 2021b. "How "Us" and "Them" Relates to Voting Behavior—Social Structure, Social Identities, and Electoral Choice." *Comparative Political Studies* Online First.

Chudy, Jennifer, Spencer Piston, and Joshua Shipper. 2019. "Guilt by Association: White Collective Guilt in American Politics." *Journal of Politics* 81 (3):968-81.

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

Cunningham, Niall, and Mike Savage. 2015. "The secret garden? Elite metropolitan geographies in the contemporary UK." *Sociological Review* 63 (2):321–48.

Dahrendorf, Ralf. 1959. *Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Dassonneville, Ruth, Rune Stubager, and Mads Thau. 2022. "The Effectiveness of Group Appeals." ed. P. p. a. t. E. G. C. 2022.

Dolinsky, Alona O. 2022. "Parties' group appeals across time, countries, and communication channels—examining appeals to social groups via the Parties' Group Appeals Dataset." *Party Politics*.

Dover, Tessa. L. 2022. "Not all inequalities are created equal: Inequality framing and privilege threat for advantaged groups." *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations* 25:746–67.

Evans, G., and J. Tilley. 2017. *The new politics of class in Britain: The political exclusion of the working class.* . Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Evans, Geoffrey, Rune Stubager, and Peter Egge Langsæther. 2022. "The conditional politics of class identity: class origins, identity and political attitudes in comparative perspective." *West European Politics* 45 (6):1178-205.

Fitzgerald, Jennifer. 2018. *Close to Home: Local Ties and Voting Radical Right in Europe.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ford, Robert, and Will Jennings. 2020. "The Changing Cleavage Politics of Western Europe." *Annual Review of Political Science* 23 (1):295-314.

Friedman, Sam, Dave O'Brien, and Ian McDonald. 2021. "Deflecting Privilege: Class Identity and the Intergenerational Self." *Sociology* 55 (4):716-33.

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.

Harth, Nicole Syringa , Thomas Kessler, and Colin Wayne Leach. 2008. "Advantaged Group's Emotional Reactions to Intergroup Inequality: The Dynamics of Pride, Guilt, and Sympathy. ." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 34 (1):115–29.

Hegewald, Sven, and Dominik Schraff. 2021. "Affective polarization across place: How place-based affect shapes voting behaviour along the cosmopolitan-nationalist divide in Germany." In *Working Paper*.

Hersh, Eitan D., and Brian F. Schaffner. 2013. "Targeted Campaign Appeals and the Value of Ambiguity." *The Journal of Politics* 75 (2):520-34.

Hooghe, Liesbet, Jonne Kamphorst, and Gary Marks. 2022. "Field of Education and the Transnational Cleavage." In *Paper presented at the workshop "Cleavage Formation in the 21st Century," University of Zurich, July 18th and 19th 2022*.

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.

———. 2022. "The social roots of the transnational cleavage: sex, education, and occupation." In *RSCAS Working Paper*.

Horn, Alexander, Anthony Kevins, Carsten Jensen, and Kees van Kersbergen. 2021. "Political parties and social groups: New perspectives and data on group and policy appeals." *Party Politics* 27 (5):983-95.

Huber, Lena Maria. 2021. "Beyond Policy: The Use of Social Group Appeals in Party Communication." *Political Communication*:1-18.

Huddy, Leonie. 2013. "From group identity to political cohesion and commitment." In *The Oxford handbook of political psychology*, ed. L. Huddy, D. O. Sears and J. S. Levy. Oxford Oxford University Press.

Jacobs, Nicholas F., and B. Kal Munis. 2019. "Place-Based Imagery and Voter Evaluations: Experimental Evidence on the Politics of Place." *Political Research Quarterly* 72 (2):263-77.

Kam, Cindy D., Allison M. N. Archer, and John G. Geer. 2017. "Courting the Women's Vote: The Emotional, Cognitive, and Persuasive Effects of Gender-Based Appeals in Campaign Advertisements." *Political Behavior* 39 (1):51-75.

Leach, Colin Wayne, Aaarti Iyer, and Anne Pedersen. 2006. "Anger and Guilt About Ingroup Advantage Explain the Willingness for Political Action. ." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 32 (9):1232–45.

Lin, Jennifer, and Kristin Lunz Trujillo. 2023. "Urban-Rural Residency, Place Identity, and Affective Polarization in the United States."

Lunz Trujillo, Kristin. 2022. "Rural Identity as a Contributing Factor to Anti-Intellectualism in the U.S. ." *Political Behavior* Online First.

Lyons, Jeffrey, and Stephen M. Utych. 2021. "You're Not From Here! The Consequences of Urban and Rural Identities." *Political Behavior* Online First.

Mason, Liliana, and Julie Wronski. 2018. "One Tribe to Bind Them All: How Our Social Group Attachments Strengthen Partisanship. ." *Political Psychology* 39:257-77.

Munis, B. Kal. 2020. "Us Over Here Versus Them Over There…Literally: Measuring Place Resentment in American Politics." *Political Behavior*.

Phillips, L. Taylor, and Brian S. Lowery. 2018. "Herd Invisibility: The Psychology of Racial Privilege." *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 27 (3):156-62.

Powell, Adam A., Nyla R. Branscombe, and Michael T. Schmitt. 2005. "Inequality as Ingroup Privilege or Outgroup Disadvantage: The Impact of Group Focus on Collective Guilt and Interracial Attitudes." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 31 (4):508-21.

Rehfeld, Andrew. 2009. "Representation Rethought: On Trustees, Delegates, and Gyroscopes in the Study of Political Representation and Democracy." *American Political Science Review* 103 (2):214-30.

Robison, Joshua, Rune Stubager, Mads Thau, and James Tilley. 2021. "Does Class-Based Campaigning Work? How Working Class Appeals Attract and Polarize Voters." *Comparative Political Studies* 54 (5):723-52.

Stubager, Rune. 2009. "Education-based group identity and consciousness in the authoritarian-libertarian value conflict." *European Journal of Political Research* 48:204–33.

Stuckelberger, Simon, and Anke Tresch. 2022. "Group Appeals of Parties in Times of Economic and Identity Conflicts and Realignment." *Political Studies* Online First.

Thau, Mads. 2019. "How Political Parties Use Group-Based Appeals: Evidence from Britain 1964–2015." *Political Studies* 67 (1):63-82.

———. 2021. "The Social Divisions of Politics: How Parties' Group-Based Appeals Influence Social Group Differences in Vote Choice." *The Journal of Politics* 83 (2):675-88.

Traber, Denise, Miriam HÄNni, Nathalie Giger, and Christian Breunig. 2022. "Social status, political priorities and unequal representation." *European Journal of Political Research* 61 (2):351-73.

Weber, Till. 2020. "Discreet Inequality: How Party Agendas Embrace Privileged Interests." *Comparative Political Studies* 53 (10–11):1767–97.

Wolkenstein, Fabio, and Christopher Wratil. 2021. "Multidimensional Representation." *American Journal of Political Science* 65 (4):862-76.

Zollinger, Delia. 2022. "Cleavage Identities in Voters' Own Words: Harnessing Open-Ended Survey Responses." *American Journal of Political Science*.

Appendix

Appendix A: Relationship between population density and urban/rural identification

In this appendix, we validate our main independent variables: people's self-categorization as urban or rural (as this determines treatment assignment) and the strength of respondent's urban or rural identity.

First, we demonstrate that people's self-categorization as urban or rural correlates strongly with an objective measure of urbanity.

Figure A1 demonstrates this for Germany by plotting the logged population density of a respondent's ZIP code against the self-assessed urbanity. Black vertical lines indicate the median population density within each category of self-assessed urbanity. On a scale from 1 (very rural) to 4 (very urban), the population density of the average respondent increases substantially from each category to the next.

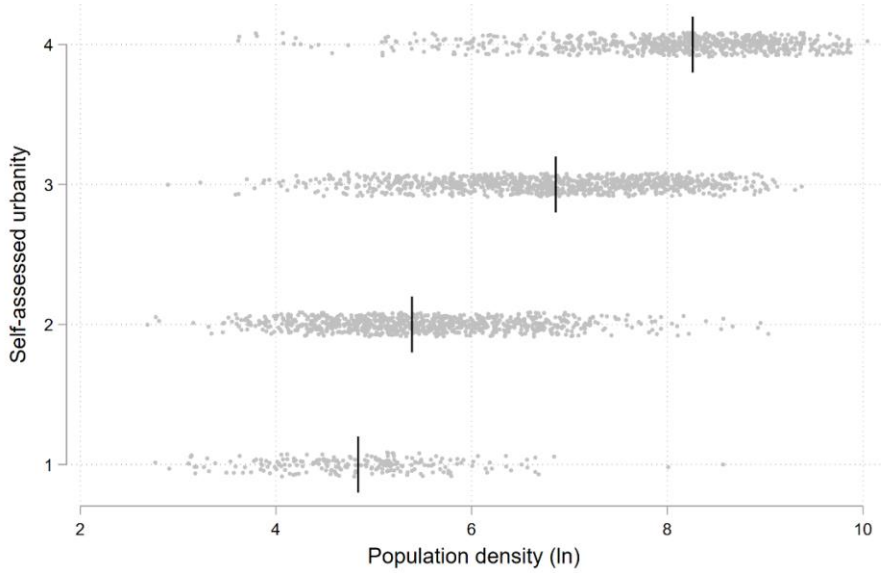


Figure A1: Subjective and objective measures of urbanity, Germany

Figure A2 demonstrates the same relationship for the UK. Again, we find that subjective and objective measures of urbanity are very strongly correlated.

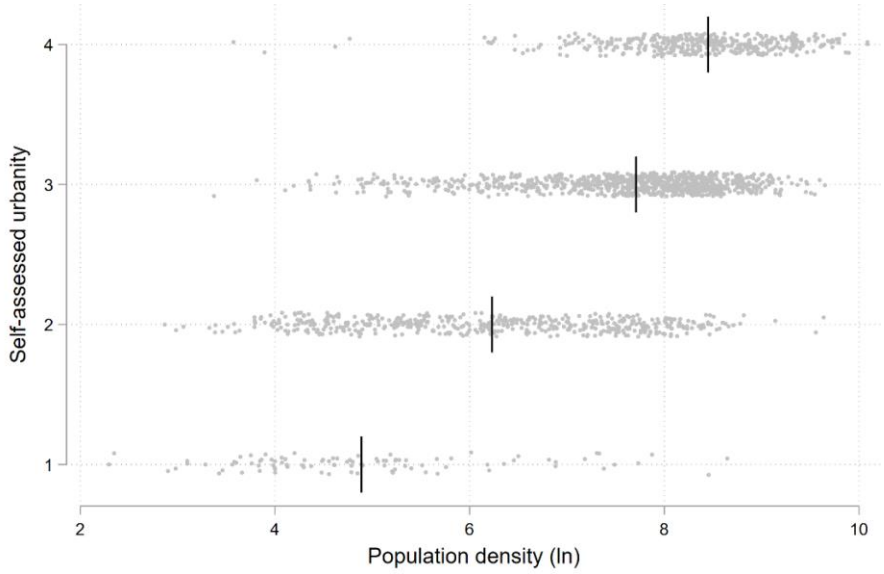


Figure A2: Subjective and objective measures of urbanity, UK

In a next step, we demonstrate the association between objective indicators of urbanity and our measure of identity strength. Again, we find a monotonous relationship: The more urban photos people pick in our choice task, the more densely populated is their ZIP code on average.

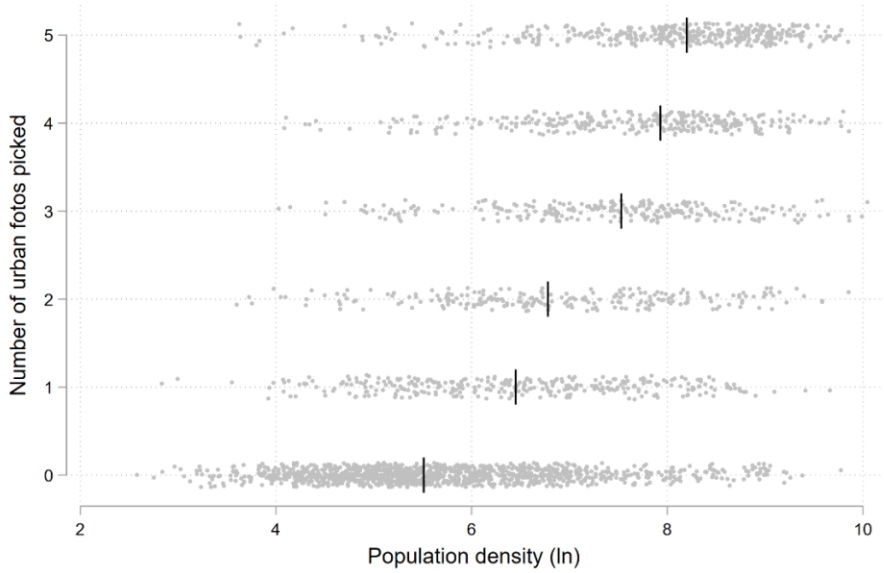


Figure A3: Identity strength and objective measures of urbanity, Germany

This relationship is stronger in Germany than in the UK. Nevertheless, we also find a monotonous relationship between the number of urban photos selected and the median population density in the UK.

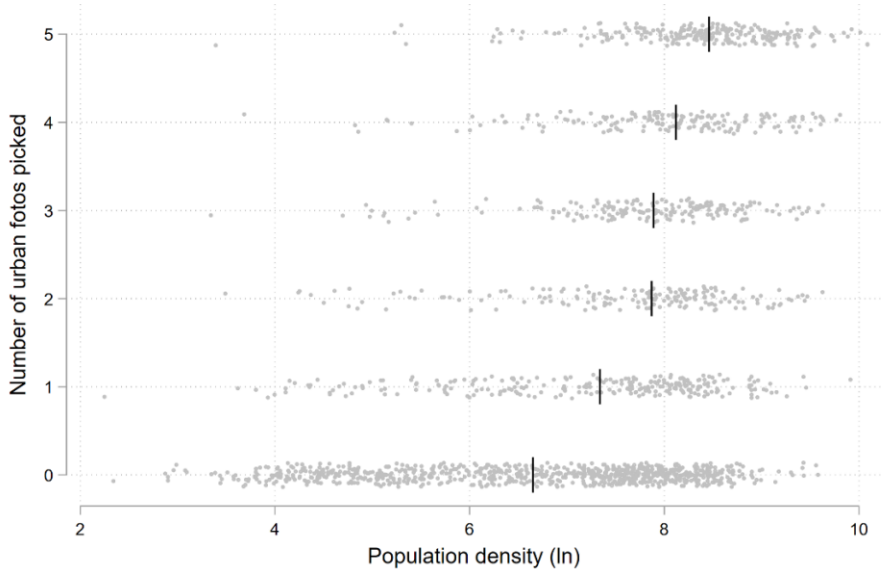


Figure A4: Identity strength and objective measures of urbanity, UK

We now bring self-assessed residence and strength of identification together by looking at how many urban photos respondents in each self-assessment category picked. Figure A5 shows this for Germany: almost nobody who described their residence as "rural" or "very rural" picked more than 1 urban photo. By contrast, 2 out of 5 respondents who described their residence as "very urban" picked 5 urban photos.

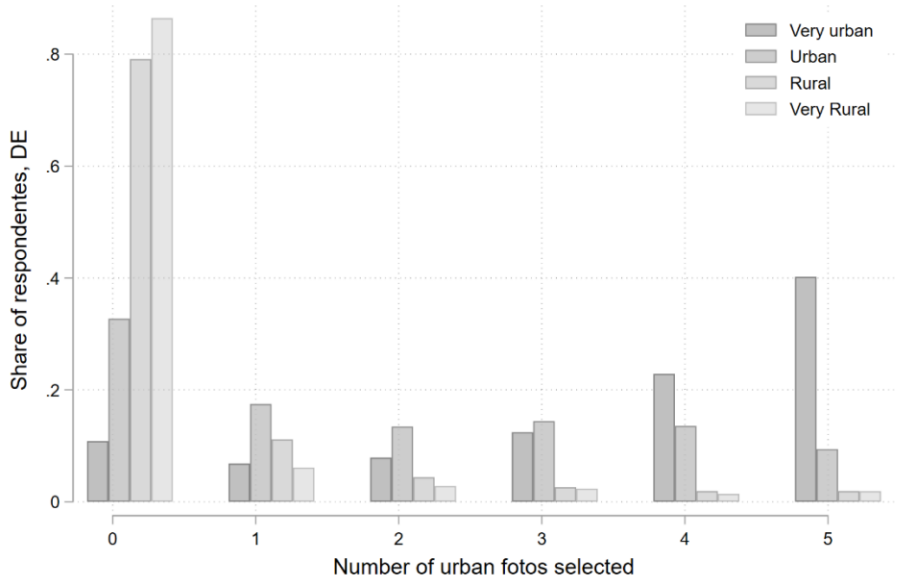


Figure A5: Subjective residence and identity strength, Germany

Figure A6 shows a very similar picture for the UK, even if the shares at both ends of the scale are slightly less extreme.

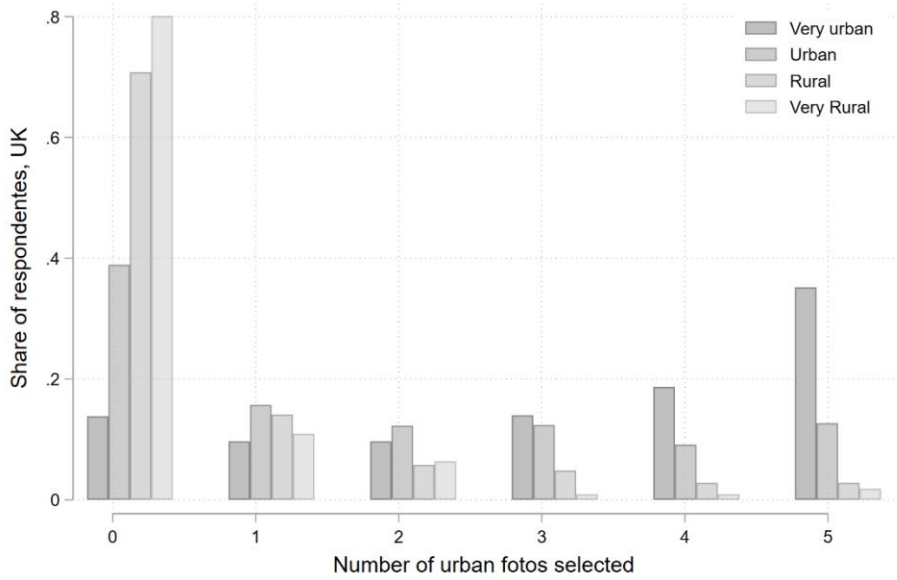


Figure A6: Subjective residence and identity strength, UK

Finally, we use data from a different survey, conducted in November 2020, to show that perceived closeness to urban people varies just as much with local population density as perceived closeness to rural people. In this survey, we asked the question “Of the following groups, how close do you feel towards them? By ‘close’ we mean people who are most like you in terms of their ideas, interests, and feelings”, a question introduced and validated by Bornschier et al. (2021). In the UK

Figure A7 shows the relationship between ZIP code population density and closeness to "rural" and "urban" people (n=2059) in Germany. As the graph shows, closeness to urban people varies just as strongly with population density as closeness to rural people, even if the most urban people do not feel just as close to urban people as the most rural people feel close to rural people.

The British survey was only conducted in England (n= 2755), making the sample more urban. Figure A8 shows the relationship between population density and the two measures of closeness. Here, closeness to rural people varies slightly more strongly with population density than closeness to urban people, but the difference is rather minor.

Figure A7: Population density and closeness to rural and urban people, Germany

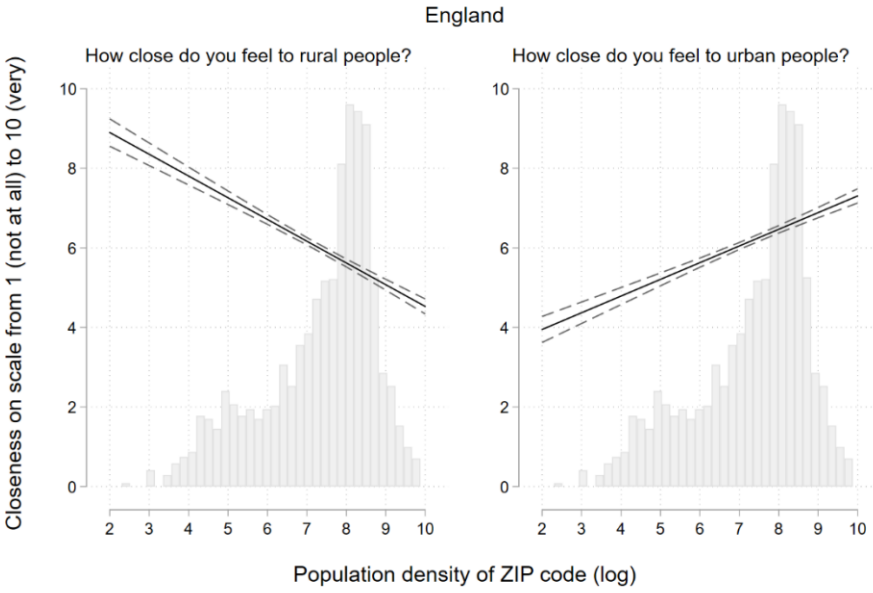


Figure A8: Population density and closeness to rural and urban people, England

Appendix B: Measures of Place Identity and Resentment

We measure the strength of place-based identity by showing respondents five pairs of photos, one of an urban and one of a rural environment, and have them choose in which of the two places people are more like themselves "in terms of their lifestyle and their opinions". These photos seek to illustrate both the advantages and disadvantages of an urban or rural lifestyle. In the following, we first show the British and then the German version of this task.

UK Version

What do you think, in which of the two places are people more like you in terms of their lifestyle and their opinions?

Urban	Rural
	
	
	
	
	

Figure B1: Photo choice tasks, UK

German Version

Urban	Rural
	
	
	
	
	

Figure B2: Photo choice tasks, Germany

Measuring place-based resentment

We measure people's place-based resentment using a five-question battery based on Munis (2020). These questions ask whether people feel that their place-based in-group is disadvantaged compared to the outgroup in terms of their economic, cultural or political situation. These are the questions we used:

How much would you agree with the following statements?

1) Rural areas/big cities give more in taxes to the state than they get back because the money goes to big cities
2) It's fair to say that people in areas/big cities are working harder than people in big cities/rural areas because it's more difficult to get by in in rural areas
3) In recent years, parties have been given too much attention to the concerns of people in big cities/ rural areas and too little attention to the concerns of people in rural areas/big cities
4) Generally speaking, big cities/rural areas have too much say in British politics
5) People in big cities/rural areas don't understand or respect the lifestyle of people in rural areas/big cities

Appendix C: Descriptive Statistics, Survey 1

In this appendix, we report descriptive statistics of the control group and all treatment groups in Survey 1 for Germany and the UK.

Survey 1 – Descriptive Statistics

Table C1: Descriptive statistics, control group Germany

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Pctl(25)	Pctl(75)	Max
Gender	671	1.501	0.503	1	1	2	3
Age	671	46.274	15.768	18	33	60	74
Education	671	4.447	1.763	1	3	6	7
Rural ID	671	0.395	0.489	0	0	1	1

Table C2: Descriptive statistics, treatment groups Germany

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Pctl(25)	Pctl(75)	Max
Gender	2,029	1.504	0.506	1	1	2	3
Age	2,029	46.423	15.635	18	33	60	74
Education	2,029	4.467	1.692	1	3	6	7
Rural ID	2,029	0.375	0.484	0	0	1	1

Table C3: Descriptive statistics, control England

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Pctl(25)	Pctl(75)	Max
Gender	585	1.518	0.514	1	1	2	3
Age	585	48.395	14.652	18	36	60	74
Education	585	4.638	1.821	1	3	6	7
Rural ID	585	0.280	0.450	0	0	1	1

Table C4: Descriptive statistics, treatment groups England

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Pctl(25)	Pctl(75)	Max
Gender	1,710	1.507	0.509	1	1	2	3
Age	1,710	46.827	14.825	18	35	59	74
Education	1,710	4.602	1.844	1	3	6	7
Rural ID	1,710	0.297	0.457	0	0	1	1

We gratefully acknowledge funding from the URPP Equality of Opportunity Program, University of Zurich.

Appendix D: Regression Results, Survey 1

The following regressions are the basis for Figure 2 in the main text.

Table D1: OLS regressions of candidate evaluation

	Dependent variable:	
	Evaluation of Candidate	
	Germany	UK
Symbolic Appeal	0.44**	-0.24
	(0.19)	(0.22)
Economic Appeal	0.31*	0.25
	(0.19)	(0.22)
Cultural Appeal	0.62***	0.53**
	(0.18)	(0.22)
Urban ID	-0.08	-0.17
	(0.17)	(0.18)
Symbolic Appeal x Urban ID	-1.48***	-0.93***
	(0.24)	(0.26)
Economic Appeal x Urban ID	-1.08***	-1.05***
	(0.24)	(0.26)
Cultural Appeal x Urban ID	-1.37***	-1.41***
	(0.23)	(0.26)
Constant	6.04***	6.40***
	(0.13)	(0.16)
Observations	2,687	2,285
R^2	0.08	0.08
Adjusted R^2	0.08	0.08
Residual Std. Error	2.09 (df = 2679)	2.00 (df = 2277)
F Statistic	33.89*** (df = 7; 2679)	29.98*** (df = 7; 2277)
Note:		*p**p***p<0.01

Appendix E: Descriptive Statistics, Survey 2

In this appendix, we report descriptive statistics of the control group and all treatment groups in Survey 2.

Table E1: Survey 2 – Descriptive statistics, control group

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Pctl(25)	Pctl(75)	Max
Gender	596	1.535	0.509	1	1	2	3
Age	596	46.379	15.519	18	33	59	74
Education	596	4.582	1.874	1	3	6	7
Rural ID	596	0.072	0.259	0	0	0	1

Table E2: Survey 2 – Descriptive statistics, treatment groups

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Pctl(25)	Pctl(75)	Max
Gender	1,775	1.497	0.510	1	1	2	3
Age	1,775	45.532	15.220	18	33	58	74
Education	1,775	4.657	1.844	1	3	7	7
Rural ID	1,775	0.070	0.255	0	0	0	1

Appendix F: Regression Results, Survey 2

The regression in Table F1 is the basis for Figure 4 in the main text.

Table F1: OLS regression of candidate evaluation (survey 2)

	Dependent variable:
	Evaluation of Candidate (Survey 2)
Urban	-0.72***
	(0.16)
Rural	-0.63***
	(0.16)
Antagonistic/Innovation	-0.81***
	(0.16)
Antagonistic/Rent	-0.40**
	(0.16)
Harmonious/Innovation	0.47***
	(0.16)
Harmonious/Rent	1.14***
	(0.16)
Constant	6.23***
	(0.09)
Observations	2,369
R^2	0.07
Adjusted R^2	0.07
Residual Std. Error	2.22 (df = 2362)
F Statistic	31.35*** (df = 6; 2362)
Note:	*p**p***p<0.01

The regression in Table F2 is the basis for Figure 5 in the main text. In this analysis, we pool the antagonistic innovation and rent as well as the harmonious innovation and rent treatment. We separate reactions to the pooled antagonistic or harmonious treatment by the strength of respondents' urban identity and anti-rural resentment.

Table F2: OLS regression for Identity & Resentment (pooled antagonistic and harmonious treatments)

	Dependent variable:
	Evaluation of Candidate
Antagonistic	-0.63***
	(0.16)
Harmonious	0.86***
	(0.16)
High Identity/Low Resentment	-0.14
	(0.23)
High Identity/High Resentment	0.51
	(0.33)
Antagonistic x High Identity/Low Resentment	-0.28
	(0.35)
Harmonious x High Identity/Low Resentment	-0.02
	(0.33)
Antagonistic x High Identity/High Resentment	0.71
	(0.46)
Harmonious x High Identity/High Resentment	-0.54
	(0.48)
Constant	6.21***
	(0.11)
Observations	1,703
R^2	0.07
Adjusted R^2	0.07
Residual Std. Error	2.24 (df = 1694)
F Statistic	16.81*** (df = 8; 1694)
Note:	*p**p***p<0.01

In Table F3, we repeat this analysis but show the results for the each of the treatments separately.

Table F3: OLS regression for Identity & Resentment (all treatments separately)

	Dependent variable:
	Evaluation of Candidate
Antagonistic/Innovation	-0.87***
	(0.19)
Antagonistic/Rent	-0.39**
	(0.19)
Harmonious/Innovation	0.55***
	(0.19)
Harmonious/Rent	1.19***
	(0.19)
High Identity/Low Resentment	-0.14
	(0.23)
High Identity/High Resentment	0.51
	(0.33)
Antagonistic/Innovation x High Identity/Low Resentment	-0.42
	(0.46)
Antagonistic/Rent x High Identity/Low Resentment	-0.26
	(0.41)
Harmonious/Innovation x High Identity/Low Resentment	-0.22
	(0.40)
Harmonious/Rent x High Identity/Low Resentment	0.20
	(0.40)
Antagonistic/Innovation x High Identity/High Resentment	1.06*
	(0.59)
Antagonistic/Rent x High Identity/High Resentment	0.39
	(0.54)
Harmonious/Innovation x High Identity/High Resentment	-0.16
	(0.63)
Harmonious/Rent x High Identity/High Resentment	-0.90
	(0.56)
Constant	6.21***
	(0.11)
Observations	1,703
R^2	0.09
Adjusted R^2	0.08
Residual Std. Error	2.23 (df = 1688)
F Statistic	11.23*** (df = 14; 1688)
Note:	*p**p***p<0.01

Appendix G: Additional Results, Survey 2

In this appendix, we provide additional analyses of the data from survey 2 to test alternative explanations for our findings. In the main text, we present tests for some alternative explanations. In the following, we show the regression tables on which the figures in the text are based.

Table G1 shows the regression that is the basis for Figure 6 in the main text.

Table G1: Representation Ideal: OLS regression of candidate evaluation

	Dependent variable:
	Evaluation of Candidate (Survey 2)
Antagonistic/Innovation	-0.80***
	(0.27)
Antagonistic/Rent	-0.47*
	(0.27)
Harmonious/Innovation	0.35
	(0.26)
Harmonious/Rent	1.23***
	(0.27)
Universalist	0.49**
	(0.20)
Antagonistic/Innovation x Universalist	-0.14
	(0.36)
Antagonistic/Rent x Universalist	-0.03
	(0.35)
Harmonious/Innovation x Universalist	0.04
	(0.35)
Harmonious/Rent x Universalist	-0.20
	(0.36)
Constant	6.10***
	(0.15)
Observations	1,490
R^2	0.08
Adjusted R^2	0.07
Residual Std. Error	2.26 (df = 1480)
F Statistic	14.08*** (df = 9; 1480)
Note:	*p**p***p<0.01

Table G2 shows the regression that is the basis for Figure 7 in the main text.

Table G2: Deservigness: OLS regression of candidate evaluation

	Dependent variable:
	Evaluation of Candidate (Survey 2)
Antagonistic/Innovation	-0.82***
	(0.21)
Antagonistic/Rent	-0.54**
	(0.21)
Harmonious/Innovation	0.28
	(0.20)
Harmonious/Rent	1.18***
	(0.21)
Deservigness	-0.08
	(0.21)
Antagonistic/Innovation x Deservigness	0.18
	(0.36)
Antagonistic/Rent x Deservigness	0.28
	(0.35)
Harmonious/Innovation x Deservigness	0.55
	(0.36)
Harmonious/Rent x Deservigness	0.03
	(0.36)
Constant	6.29***
	(0.12)
Observations	1,537
R^2	0.08
Adjusted R^2	0.07
Residual Std. Error	2.21 (df = 1527)
F Statistic	13.97*** (df = 9; 1527)
Note:	*p**p***p<0.01

Table G3 shows the regression that is the basis for Figure 8 in the main text.

Table G3: Welfare Quota: OLS regression of candidate evaluation

	Dependent variable:
	Evaluation of Candidate (Survey 2)
Antagonistic/Innovation	-0.67***
	(0.23)
Antagonistic/Rent	-0.49**
	(0.23)
Harmonious/Innovation	0.48**
	(0.23)
Harmonious/Rent	1.35***
	(0.23)
Welfare Quota	-0.03
	(0.18)
Antagonistic/Innovation x Welfare Quota	-0.29
	(0.32)
Antagonistic/Rent x Welfare Quota	0.19
	(0.32)
Harmonious/Innovation x Welfare Quoat	0.02
	(0.32)
Harmonious/Rent x Welfare Quota	-0.40
	(0.32)
Constant	6.23***
	(0.13)
Observations	1,761
R^2	0.07
Adjusted R^2	0.07
Residual Std. Error	2.24 (df = 1751)
F Statistic	15.49*** (df = 9; 1751)
Note:	*p**p***p<0.01

As an additional analysis that is not presented in the main text, Table G4 distinguishes respondents according to the length of residence in the particular city they live in. Overall, the results show that there is almost no difference between urbanites who have lived in the respective city their entire life and even those who have lived less than 5 years in their city.

Table G4: Length of Residence in City: OLS regression of candidate evaluation

	Dependent variable:
	Evaluation of Candidate
Antagonistic/Innovation	-1.34**
	(0.54)
Antagonistic/Rent	-0.50
	(0.45)
Harmonious/Innovation	0.50
	(0.47)
Harmonious/Rent	1.29***
	(0.48)
5-10 years in city	0.10
	(0.37)
> 10 years in city	-0.28
	(0.30)
Always	0.20
	(0.31)
Antagonistic/Innovation x 5-10 years	0.08
	(0.72)
Antagonistic/Rent x > 5-10 years	-0.74
	(0.66)
Harmonious/Innovation x > 5-10 years	-0.004
	(0.66)
Harmonious/Rent x > 5-10 years	-0.65
	(0.68)
Antagonistic/Innovation x > 10 years	0.79
	(0.59)
Antagonistic/Rent x > 10 years	0.12
	(0.52)
Harmonious/Innovation x > 10 years	0.24
	(0.54)
Harmonious/Rent x > 10 years	-0.03
	(0.55)
Antagonistic/Innovation x Always	0.47
	(0.59)
Antagonistic/Rent x Always	0.38
	(0.52)

Harmonious/Innovation x Always	-0.27
	(0.54)
Harmonious/Rent x < Always	-0.23
	(0.54)
Constant	6.26***
	(0.27)
Observations	1,757
R^2	0.08
Adjusted R^2	0.07
Residual Std. Error	2.23 (df = 1737)
F Statistic	8.23*** (df = 19; 1737)
Note:	*p**p***p<0.01