

More Than Just Places, More Than Just Feelings: People Feeling Left Behind in Places Being Left Behind as Supporters of radical-right Partys

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Abstract

Public discourse and scholars alike argue that the increasing spatial polarization in voting behavior is rooted in geographic inequalities. Citizens living in relatively deprived places are assumed to feel left behind by globalization and politics, which, in turn, makes them more susceptible to radical-right parties. However, the interplay of living in a left behind place and feeling left behind has rarely been tested directly since previous studies often focused either on attitudinal-level or on aggregate-level effects. This paper examines whether and when living in a left behind place and feeling left behind drive RRP support, and if left behind feelings reinforce the place-based effects. The study focuses on Germany during the 2021 federal election as a particularly interesting case because of previous inconclusive empirical evidence regarding the effects of regional inequalities on AfD voting. Geocoded survey data of the Pre- and Post Cross-Section of the German Longitudinal Election Study (GLES) is used to analyze the relationship between living in a ‘left behind place’ and the subjective ‘feeling of being left behind’ by linking the survey data with fine-grained measures of living conditions provided by Microm and the Federal Agency of Cartography and Geodesy. Results show that living in a left behind places is only partially associated with RRP ratings, while the feeling of being left behind – and, especially having the impression that ones’ opinion cannot be expressed freely – increases approval ratings. The reinforcing relation of left behind places and feeling is confirmed for some dimension and found to be particularly strong among rural residents that feel left behind by cultural shifts. Furthermore, I find that these relationships differ considerable between East and West Germans.

INTRODUCTION

The discussion on left behind places has gained significant attention in recent years, as it has become increasingly evident that spatial disparities can shape political attitudes and behavior in Western democracies. The spatial clusters indicate the “revenge of the

places that don't matter" (Rodríguez-Pose 2018) that serve as breeding grounds for political discontent and radical-right voting behavior. It is hypothesized that citizens living in a left behind place, feel neglected by society and politics. As a consequence, residents feel marginalized and disconnected making them susceptible for radical-right party policies and rhetoric. While considerable research has focused on either the attitudinal level of feeling left behind and populist attitudes or party support (Gidron and Hall 2017) or the direct, aggregate-level effects of local contexts on voting behavior (Broz, Frieden, and Weymouth 2021), there are still gaps in our understanding of the interplay between living in a left behind place, feeling left behind, and its impact on political preferences.

This study aims to address these gaps by examining the relationship between living in a left behind place, feeling left behind, and support for radical-right parties (RRP). The central research question is whether and when living in a left behind place and feeling left behind drive RRP support, and if left behind feelings reinforce the place-based effects. The article contributes to existing research by re-examine the dispute about places being or people feeling left behind on a unique data set that incorporates small scale information on peoples neighborhood to capture place characteristics with a novel measurement of the feeling of being left behind. This approach allows to demonstrate the necessity of differentiating between objective measurements and subjective feelings, as well as examining sub-dimensions of being and feeling left behind to gain a better understanding of the underlying mechanisms. As such, I explore the influence of various place-based factors, such as economic hardship, service access, rurality, and the presence of foreigners, on RRP ratings as well as economic, infrastructural and cultural dimensions of feeling left behind. Furthermore, I build on literature studying the mobilizing effects of emotions and feelings, arguing that the feeling of being left behind might have a mobilizing effect by affecting the perception and processing of political information cues embedded in the neighborhood. Hence, RRP should be particularly appealing to those who live in a left behind place and feel left behind.

Germany offers a particularly interesting case to examine the relationship between living in a left behind place, feeling left behind, and preferences for the *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD) as a RRP. The country's diverse regions, including persistent disparities between East and West Germany, contribute to its complex political landscape. Rural districts and East German states have been notable strongholds for the AfD (Haffert 2022; Stroppe and Jungmann 2022). However, previous research on the relationship between AfD vote choice and spatial factors has produced mixed findings, with some studies emphasizing the rural-urban divide or economic factors while others find no significant or only very limited impact of place-based effects. This might be due to persistent disparities between East and West Germany, and heterogeneity within rural and urban areas. Therefore, the German case provides an interesting backdrop to investigate small scale variations and similarities and differences of East and West German citizens.

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To answer if it is places left behind, people feeling left behind and/or their interplay driving RRP support, I rely on cross-sectional survey data of the 2021 German Longitudinal Election Study (GLES 2022). Using geocoordinates, nearly 6,500 interviews were linked with contextual data provided by *micromarketing -Systeme und Consult GmbH* (microm), *Die Bahn*, and the *Bundesamt für Kartographie und Geodäsie* (BKG) on the 1km*1km INSPIRE grid cells. The results show that, first, place-based factors are associated with AfD preferences but only some dimensions are robust and show the expected effects. While lacking service access and living in a rural place show robust associations with RRP preference, the analyses of economic hardship produces no conclusive results and a higher share of foreigners in the neighbourhood makes the AfD less appealing. Second, left behind feelings have more explanatory power and closer relationship to RRP preference, even when controlling for other attitudes. Especially, the feeling to not be able to express ones' opinion has a particular strong effect while the lacking recognition for work and economic situation is less closely associated. Finally, the reinforcing relation of left behind places and feeling is confirmed for some dimensions and found to be particular strong among rural residents. The effect of living in sparsely populated areas strongly depends on citizens perceiving a lack of freedom to express their opinions. Furthermore, I find that these relationships differ considerable between East and West Germans.

LEFT BEHIND PLACES, PEOPLE - OR BOTH?

From a theoretical viewpoint, explanations of individuals supporting RRPs are structured in supply- and demand-side arguments (Koopmans et al. 2005; Mudde 2007; Rydgren 2007). The supply-side factors revolve around all factors attributed to the parties themselves, e.g., their content, communication, and resources, and the institutional framework and media environment of a country (Arzheimer 2018). The demand-side arguments center on the RRP's voters and their traits, experiences, and attitudes (Arzheimer 2018; Golder 2016). According to most demand-side explanations, people who support RRPs are motivated by grievances related to perceived economic and cultural losses (Rydgren 2007). Additionally, the role of place as a distinct demand-side dimension has been increasingly studied in the last decade, re-examining contextual explanations of party preference (Broz, Frieden, and Weymouth 2021; Gimpel et al. 2020; Golder 2016; Rodríguez-Pose 2018). In the following sections, I will discuss studies dealing with place-based approaches and the concept of feeling left behind as the linking element between place and party preference. While other studies usually assume a mediating link of perceived deprivation, societal recognition, and status loss, I argue that the feeling of being left behind stems from several sources and can feed back into the perception of the current living conditions. As such, I assume that objective living conditions and the subjective feeling of lacking resources and recognition have a reinforcing effect on RRP party preference and voting. While previous studies have often overlooked the differentiation between "objective living conditions" and "subjective feelings," , this article aims to redress this by providing a more nuanced analysis that explores the complex interplay between these factors in relation to support for RRPs.

Places That Are Left Behind

Place-based theories have a long history in explaining party preferences, with influential theories such as the rural-urban and center-periphery divide (Lipset and Rokkan 1967). Recent studies analyzing spatial voting patterns in relation to Trump support (Scala and Johnson 2017), Brexit vote (Becker, Fetzner, and Novy 2017; Carreras 2019), and RRP voting in European countries (Ford and Goodwin 2014; Hartevelde et al. 2021; Rooduijn and Burgoon 2018) indicate that place services still is a conflict line that divides society. In contrast to Lipset and Rokkan (1967), researchers nowadays primarily distinguish between prosperous, easily accessible urban regions and the culturally and economically isolated, shrinking surrounding areas (Ford and Jennings 2020). Several empirical studies support this idea, most notably Rodríguez-Pose (2018)’s study on “the revenge of the places that don’t matter.” Furthermore, Golder (2016) identifies place as a distinct demand-side dimension when explaining far-right support. Although local differences in the supply-side of far-right parties exist, they cannot sufficiently explain the sub-national variations among similar individuals. The theoretical mechanism driving this observation is closely related to other grievance-based explanations of RRP support. In this study, I focus on three distinct characteristics of place that stand in relation with RRP party preference: economic hardship, infrastructure provision, rurality and presence of migrants.

First, the socioeconomic and sociocultural situation in one’s living environment can induce economic threat perceptions. Within this framework, economic place factors are most commonly studied lately, identifying economic shocks (Autor, Dorn, and Hanson 2013; Colantone and Stanig 2018; Dippel, Gold, and Heblich 2015), short- and long-term income decline (Broz, Frieden, and Weymouth 2021; Greve, Fritsch, and Wyrwich 2023) as drivers of populist party and candidate support. Unemployment has produced mixed results (Sipma and Lubbers 2020), whereas in urban areas, low income is strongly linked to populist attitudes (Hartevelde et al. 2021).

Second, the lack of infrastructure can be seen as a consequence of economic deterioration, but recent studies found that lacking access to public services is not always correlated with economic factors and contributes to more populism, distrust and RRP voting (Diermeier 2020; Hartevelde et al. 2021; Stroppe Forthcoming). Citizens in Western democracies expect the state to provide them with public services and infrastructure (Dalton 2004; Luehiste 2014). If the provision of these services is lacking, the livelihood of an area, hence the social and cultural capital, is threatened - a development also titled as local or rural marginalization (Bock 2016).

The rural-urban continuum itself serves as a third explanatory factor. Rural areas have unique traditions, values, and beliefs that are deeply rooted in the cultural history of a place and can shape citizens’ political preferences (Gimpel et al. 2020). Rural citizens tend to have a stronger attachment to conservative values, such as family and religious beliefs. Thereby, historically grown traditions and opinions stand in strong contrast to the multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism of cities, inducing a sympathy for RRP that call for a return to old traditions (Dijkstra, Poelman, and Rodríguez-Pose 2020; Maxwell 2020). Further, people who have cultural markers that indicate a lower social status, like rural dwellers using a nonstandard dialect or language, are now more prone to feeling excluded. The sense of

exclusion is frequently accompanied by stronger feelings of resentment towards out-groups and anti-elite sentiment which makes them more inclined to support RRP (Ziblatt, Hilbig, and Bischof 2020). In her qualitative study of rural Wisconsin, Cramer (2016) argues that “rural consciousness” is driving feelings of social exclusion because rural citizens perceive that the urban elites make all political decisions without caring about the needs of rural citizens, who rely on different industries and hold different values than their urban counterparts.

Finally, local levels of immigration have always been an important factor in analyzing RRP voting (Arzheimer 2009; Lubbers, Gijsberts, and Scheepers 2002; Mudde 2007). Even though the presence of migrants is not a characteristic of a left behind place, I include this dimension as a place-based factor to account for previous findings and possible interactions with the left behind dimensions like economic anxieties. Most influential is the assumption that a high share of foreigners can increase competition for scarce resources and pose a cultural threat (Koopmans et al. 2005; Tajfel et al. 1971). In those cases, RRP voting relates to anti-immigrant sentiments because residents would blame immigrants for threatening their economic security and changing the social values of the country. In contrast to this ethnic threat hypothesis, contact and revitalizing hypotheses propose that contact reduces prejudices and fosters acceptance. Additionally, the inflow of young migrants can revitalize areas with a high level of an outflow of young people. The competing theories have been put to a test several times with empirical results pointing in both directions (Evans and Ivaldi 2021; Guriev and Papaioannou 2022: 66f; Rydgren and Ruth 2013). I follow the economic and cultural threat argument within the grievance-based framework arguing that exposure to a high share of foreigners seems most likely to increase RRP support.

RRPs gain sympathy from citizens living in places with weak economic conditions, lacking infrastructure, in rural areas and high share of foreigner when they convincingly argue that the political establishment is unable to answer the citizens’ needs, put more efforts in prospering regions and do not address the perceived threats in their neighborhood. Besides the socioeconomic threats, RRP’s promise to return to the old order and anti-migration policies addresses fears of social change and feelings of cultural exclusion making them appealing to voters. Based on these assumption, I formulated the following hypotheses:

H1a: Citizens who live in a place that is characterized by economic hardship are more likely to support a radical-right party.

H1b: Citizens who live in a place lacking infrastructure are more likely to support a radical-right party.

H1c: Citizens who live in a less dense populated place are more likely to support a radical-right party.

H1d: Citizens who live in a place with a high share of foreigners are more likely to support a radical-right party.

However, the empirical findings from recent electoral geography studies are not as conclusive as they may appear at first glance. First, although economic hardship is one of the most important indicators for measuring economic threat, some studies fail to find direct significant effects on party preference when using this measure (e.g., see Sipma and Lubbers

(2020) on unemployment). Similarly, the impact of migration levels and inflows, which has already been suggested by theoretical implications, varies between positive, negative, or no significant effects (Evans and Ivaldi 2021). Second, studies that incorporate multilevel data - which remain a minority - often reveal only small or negligible contextual-level effects compared to individual-level drivers (Gallego et al. 2016; Koeppen et al. 2021), indicating an entanglement of context and attitudes. Although few exceptions exist Koeppen et al. (2021) the pathway connecting context, political attitudes, and behavior still lacks extensive research. Furthermore, the “feeling of being left behind,” which is at the core of the observed mechanism and frequently mentioned in discussions of “left behind places,” lacks a clear theoretical framework and empirical examination. To address whether it is the left behind people, place, or both that drive RRP preferences, I will examine the conceptualization of the feeling of being left behind and its association with RRP preferences in the next section before discussing its interplay with place characteristics.

People Who Feel Left Behind

While the causal pathway of these contextual effects assumes that RRP support results partially from context-infused sentiments against voters’ living situations, few studies attempt to investigate effects on these attitudes and emotions and even fewer focus on the underlying mechanism. One reason might be that the “feeling of being left behind” that reappears in the scholarly and public debate is yet lacking a clear theoretical framework. Goodwin and Heath (2016) describe the left behind as “social groups that are united by general sense of insecurity, pessimism and marginalisation, who do not feel as though elites [...] share their values, represent their interests and genuinely empathise with their intense angst about rapid social, economic and cultural change.” (Goodwin and Heath 2016: 331). Other frame the “feeling of being left behind” as a “sense of political abandonment [...] based on a lack of recognition and mishandling of the problems of one’s reality” (Hillje 2018: 10), and “the perception of being treated unfairly, of being ignored and dismissed [...] and a panolpy of fears of irretrievable loss, both economic and cultural, and anxieties and pessimism with respect to the future” (Betz and Oswald 2022: 134-136). In other words, the term is used to describe a feeling or emotion that is experienced by frustrated and deprived citizens that are threaten by economic and social change and have the impression that society does not care about their struggles. It becomes obvious that the construct heavily draws from several grievance-based approaches that have dominated the analysis of populist and extreme right support in the past, like relative deprivation and cultural backlash.

Relative deprivation - the feeling of not having what one deserve and the resulting emotions of anger and resentment - was already introduced in the 1940s as an explanation for social behavior (see Smith and Pettigrew (2015) for a comprehensive meta-analysis of relative deprivation studies). Runciman (1966) developed the concept further and put an emphasis on fraternalistic or group relative deprivation. Focusing on group-based relative deprivation, individuals compare the access to resources of their in-group either to what they used to posses, think they ought to have or what the out-group possesses. Hence, deprivation is known to induce grievances against social groups that threaten the existing social status or hinder groups from restoring their prosperity. Similarly, the political system and political elites can be blamed because they are subjected to create and prolong unfair conditions.

The theoretical and empirical focus of relative deprivation theory lies on objective economic indicators, analyzing regional- and individual-level education, income, income (changes), unemployment and economic shocks as triggers.

Cultural shifts and especially, the erosion of traditional values are, however, a second source for grievances that contributes to the feeling of being left behind. In the recent influential study by Inglehart and Norris (2016) the focus lies on the parts of society that fear the cultural threat of immigration, diversification and expansion of liberal values. As a results, groups rejecting the increasing expansion of progressive values and are anxious about their identity and their standing in society. Cultural backlash approaches are usually operationalized by either focusing on regional migrant inflows or subjective measurements of ones' social situation. Additionally, scholars argue that the social recognition of the perceived economic or social threat matters too (or even more). This aspect stands at the core of the concept of subjective social status that "embodies a person's sense of where she stands in relation to the full social assembly and [...] whether or not the person feels herself to be a fully recognized member of society" (Gidron and Hall 2017: 61). They argue that a low subjective social status is rooted in an interaction of perceived economic disadvantage and exclusion from the cultural shifts within society. The construct of perceived societal marginalization (PSM), recently introduced by Bollwerk, Schlipphak, and Back (2021), puts a similar emphasis on the subjective perception of insignificance and lacking recognition of individuals as a part of a social group. They define PSM as "the subjective and cognitive perception that one's own social group is unappreciated and treated as unimportant by society in the domains of economy, culture, and politics" (Bollwerk, Schlipphak, and Back 2021: 4). To allow more pronounced analyses, the construct differs from the general approach of social status by explicitly covering three dimensions that explain societal discontent and radical-right party support: loser of modernization (economy), cultural backlash (culture), and post-democratization (politics) (ibid). Even though the three explanatory factors are related, the authors show that they are distinct and can be experienced separately. This finding is supported by a study of Steiner, Schimpf, and Wuttke (2023) that emphasizes the multiple roots of feeling socially excluded, based on the same concept and data applied in this study. Their results indicate that each facet of lacking recognition - economic, work, service access, and freedom of opinion - has a distinct effect on populism and is rooted in distinct social characteristics. At the same time, the lack of recognition in one sub-dimension is sufficient to trigger citizens' populist attitudes, explaining why different social groups are united by populism.

For the study at hand, the feeling of being left behind is defined based on these three approaches as a subjective sense of one's needs being recognized and respected by society. The dimensions of these feeling are multidimensional and cover the financial and economic situation, access to resources as well as cultural values like the freedom of opinion.

But what makes RRP's appealing to citizens that are under the impression that their ingroups' deprived situation is not recognized by society? First, RRP's stress that mainstream politics and parties are unable to answer the citizens' needs and do not recognize or protect their economically threatened citizens. They gain protest votes and support of disappointed and disenchanting citizens. Second, RRP's promise to return to traditional values and

stopping the social shifts makes them susceptible to individuals who feel that they hold opinions that are no longer accepted in society (Mutz 2018). Further, their anti-migration policies appeal to voters that feel economically and culturally threatened by migrant inflows. Lastly, lacking societal recognition mirror social exclusion (or disintegration) from the society. Social Identity Theory has stated that humans feel the need to belong to a group. If they feel left out from society, the populist idea of representing the ‘ordinary citizen’ becomes appealing. As such, feeling excluded by society (Sachweh 2020) and populist sentiments are again strongly associated with RRP support (Steiner and Landwehr 2018; van Hauwaert and van Kessel 2018)

To sum up, theory and empirical results suggest that the feeling of being left behind should increase the likelihood of voting for a RRP in four sub-dimensions: economic needs, work esteem, service access, and freedom of opinion. The resulting hypotheses read as following:

H2a: Citizens who feel left behind in their economic situation are more likely to support a radical-right party.

H2b: Citizens who feel left behind in their work esteem are more likely to support a radical-right party.

H2c: Citizens who feel left behind in their service access are more likely to support a radical-right party.

H2d: Citizens who feel left behind in their free expression of opinion are more likely to support a radical-right party.

Left Behind People Living in Left Behind Places: A Moderation Approach

Only a few previous studies investigate the link of objective measurements of places being left behind, the subjective feeling of individuals being left behind, and preferences for RRP. On the one hand, researchers discuss if the contextual living conditions or the individual social status is more influential on party preferences. On the other hand, it stands to reason that living in a left-behind place has a one-directional effect on the feeling of being left behind which then again translates into RRP support. However, in both cases, the argumentation falls short to consider the interaction of being and feeling left behind. As suggested by previous research on the role of feelings and behavior, feelings can shape the perception of the actual living environment and hence, take influence if and how the living conditions affect political attitudes and preferences. Therefore, I argue in this study that place characteristics are activated and reinforced by the feeling of being left behind.

The feeling of being left behind can play a significant role as an activating factor for the neighborhood effects, as individuals become more aware of the disparities present and are more inclined to adjust their party support if the subjective frustration and the objective conditions align. A broad research strand dealing with immigration and perceived group threat has shown that political cues are differently processed and have different behavioral consequences dependent on emotions (Brader, Valentino, and Suhay 2008; Danckert, Dinesen, and Sønderskov 2017). Especially anxieties play a critical role in affecting information processing by shaping the selection and perception of information cues.

In those studies, political cues are usually found in media environments and political rhetoric but one of the core assumptions in political geography is that political information and attitudes are embedded in the living place of individuals who are inevitably confronted with their environment (Baybeck and McClurg 2005; Cho and Rudolph 2008). Through interpersonal encounters, experience, and observations, people gather information about their neighborhood, like the economic status, presence of foreigners, or the accessibility of infrastructure (Bailey et al. 2013; Galster 2012; Salomo 2019). If citizens feel that their ingroups' needs and situation is not recognized by society, I would assume that they are more likely to incorporate their unjust living conditions into the political decision-making process and consequently assume a (stronger) reaction to it. Hence, I assume that people who feel left behind and live in a left-behind place are especially susceptible to RRP. Since I can draw on multiple dimensions for both the place features and the feeling of being left behind, I can investigate the interplay separately. For the economic situation and access to services and infrastructure, the dimensions relate directly to each other.¹ For rurality and the presence of foreigners, I refer to the cultural threats mentioned above and assume that the sense of freedom of expression acts as a moderator. In both cases, however, one can also assume an interaction with economic threat perception and the economic dimension of feeling

H3a: Citizens who live in a place that is characterized by economic hardship are more likely to support a radical-right party if they feel left behind in their economic situation.

H3b: Citizens who live in a place lacking infrastructure are more likely to support a radical-right party if they feel left behind in their service access.

H3c: Citizens who live in a less dense populated place are more likely to support a radical-right party if they feel left behind in their free expression of opinion.

H3d: Citizens who live in a place with a high share of foreigners are more likely to support a radical-right party if they feel left behind in their free expression of opinion.

The generalized mechanism and an overview of all hypotheses is provided in Figure 1.

THE GERMAN CASE

In Germany, the success of the radical AfD party in the 2017 federal election followed a long-running upsurge of parties at the right end of the ideological spectrum in many Western European countries (Arzheimer and Berning 2019). From its founding as primarily a Eurosceptic and market liberal party, the AfD transformed itself into the first nationally successful radical-right-wing party in post-war Germany (ibid.), and its electorate gradually approached the standard characteristics of the electorate of a right-wing populist party (Klein and Kühling 2022). I follow the definition of Cas Mudde (2007), who focuses on nativism and authoritarianism as the main characteristics of the radical-right party group. Like the AfD, many radical-right parties are also populist, expressed in their rhetoric as advocates of

¹The economic dimension was conceptualized in terms of the general economic situation and recognition for one's work that one does. Since information on industrial sectors and unemployment is not available at the small-scale level, I use only the financial situation of the individuals involved in the present hypotheses and the later analyses under the assumption that both feelings should be closely related.

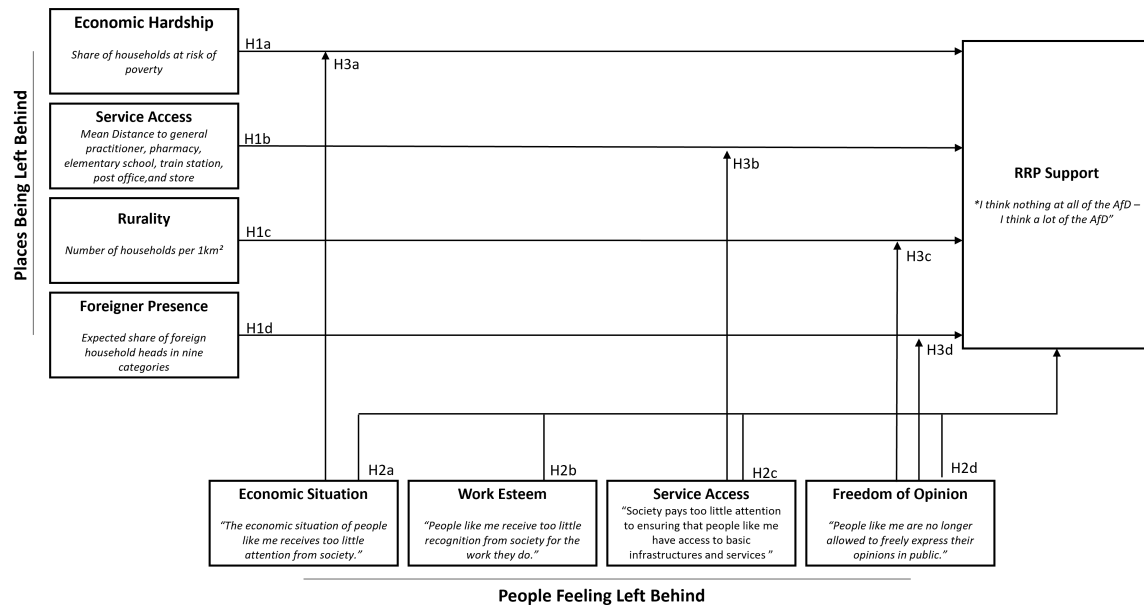


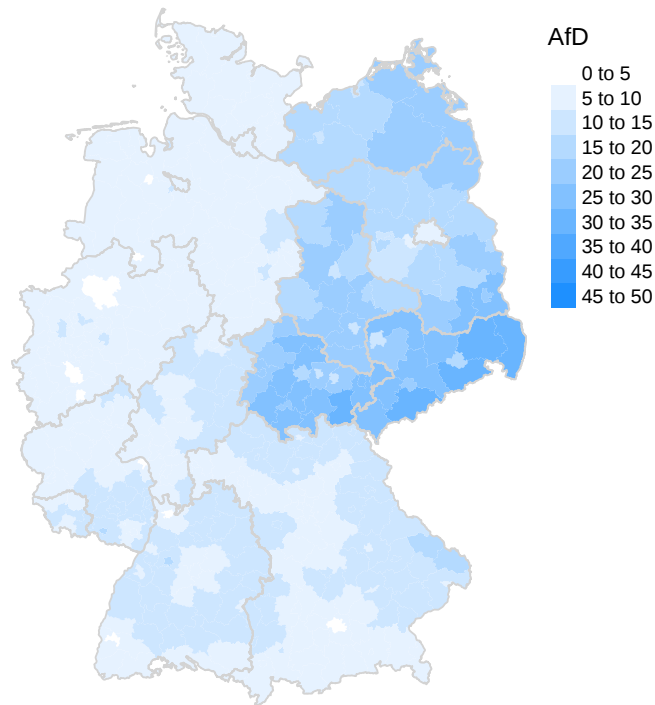
Figure 1. Generalized Mechanism and Hypotheses

ordinary citizens in the fight against (corrupt) elites. In the context of previous elections, studies of the AfD and its electorate have shown that support for the party correlates strongly with nativism and populism, as do anti-EU, anti-elitism, and anti-immigration attitudes, dissatisfaction with democracy, and right-wing ideology (Arzheimer and Berning 2019; Jung and Jung 2022; Klein and Kühling 2022; Lewandowsky, Giebler, and Wagner 2016; Pesthy, Mader, and Schoen 2021). Moreover, AfD supporters are more pessimistic about their economic future, but objective economic indicators generally show no evidence of an effect of individual socioeconomic status (Bergmann, Diermeier, and Niehues 2017; Wurthmann et al. 2021).

The 2021 federal election was dominated by issues such as the flooding in parts of Germany, the effects of the COVID 19 pandemic and personnel debates. But it was also about whether and where the AfD would gain support after its first legislative period in opposition at the federal level and as the parliamentary voice of the Corona protests (Rensmann and Zee 2022). An examination of the election found that anti-EU, anti-elite, and anti-immigrant attitudes, as well as dissatisfaction with governments' handling of the Corona pandemic, were associated with a higher likelihood of voting for the AfD, while sociodemographic characteristics (age, gender, education, income, and, surprisingly, East German residence) appeared to be weak predictors compared to other German parties (Hansen and Olsen 2022). A spatial examination of the 2021 election shows that the AfD achieved its best results in eastern German counties, which were at least partially rural as plotted in Figure 2 Haffert (2022). Nevertheless, research on the relationship between AfD turnout and spatial explanatory factors in the last elections has yielded mixed results. Support for the AfD is stronger where access to services is poor, but not necessarily in small and rural communities (Diermeier 2020), in not very but fairly rural areas (Deppisch

2021; Klärner and Osigus 2021), and in economically depressed neighborhoods in cities as well as rural areas (Förtner, Belina, and Naumann 2020; Kurtenbach 2019). Haffert (2022) argues for the yet strongest rural-urban divide in the 2021 federal election, while Stroppe and Jungmann (2022)’s analyses find no significant impact of county-level factors after controlling for the east-west divide.

The overall mixed results are less surprising when one considers that a rural-urban divide does not easily apply to the German case, given the heterogeneity within rural areas and the persistent differences between East and West Germany. Economic prosperity, such as income levels and unemployment, remains divided between east and west, with rural counties in eastern Germany and metropolitan areas in western Germany having the highest unemployment rates, while many rural counties in southern Germany are comparatively prosperous. In addition, accessibility to services such as public transportation, primary care physicians, pharmacies, and supermarkets is a challenge in particularly remote areas, but is not a problem for all rural areas (Deppisch 2021; Küpper 2016). A contrasting pattern emerges for migration: large cities and highly urbanized regions are the main places of residence for migrants, while rural areas play a negligible role in attracting migrants (Heider et al. 2020).



(c) Der Bundeswahlleiter, Wiesbaden 2021 and GeoBasis-DE / BKG (2022)

Figure 2. AfD Vote Share on the District Level, German Federal Election 2021

Regional indicators show heterogeneity between and within urban and rural communities in Germany, but the emerging spatial clusters include a persistent difference between

East and West Germany, which is also reflected in previous studies on place- and attitude-based explanations of AfD success. Manow and Schwander (2022) attributes the prevailing East-West divide to different causes of fear of status loss, with East German voters sharing a common experience of mass unemployment after reunification. Arzheimer (2022) finds that the AfD is not the voice of East Germans per se, but that the East-West divide is a reflection of more pronounced anti-migration attitudes and higher dissatisfaction with democracy in East Germany, while Pesthy, Mader, and Schoen (2021) shows that higher levels of nativist and populist sentiment in East Germany contribute to the divide. Weisskircher (2020) summarizes that “a long-term perspective points to the importance of economics, migration, and representation, combined with social disintegration and a sense of lack of recognition” (Weisskircher 2020: 615) for AfD’s success in East Germany, and AfD is more likely to mobilize voters on this basis. Therefore, I expect a stronger association of feeling left behind, being left behind, and the interplay of these factors in East Germany.

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

Data

The 2021 GLES Cross-Section, Pre- and Post-Election (GLES 2022) is a probabilistic survey conducted between August 26 and September 25, 2021 (pre-election) and September 27 and November 11, 2021 (post-election). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2021 survey used a mixed mode design consisting of web (CAWI) and paper and pencil interviews (PAPI). The survey was based on a multistage register sample, with municipalities drawn in the first stage. Municipalities in the former East Germany were oversampled to allow meaningful comparisons between citizens living in East and West Germany, resulting in a total sample of 162 municipalities. In the second stage, municipalities were asked to provide a random address sample of persons aged 16 and older, on which the final sample was based. In order to link the survey data with information about the neighborhood of the respondents, the addresses of the respondents were geocoded using the Rtool ‘bkggeocoder’. Using the geocoordinates, respondents were located in 1km*1km INSPIRE grid cells and linked to available contextual information at that level. Previously, administrative units, e.g., (electoral) districts, were used to account for subnational contextual differences, but they often cannot adequately capture the significant spatial differences in Germany. Municipalities should also be treated with caution, as they include population sizes ranging from 9 in Dierfeld (6 inhabitants/km²) (Rhineland-Palatinate) to 3.6 million inhabitants in the city-state of Berlin (4127 inhabitants/km²). Therefore, especially the heterogeneity within cities is often not captured by administrative data. By using grid data, much smaller and standardized units can be used. The drawback of this approach is that data availability at this small spatial scale is limited.

For this study, I therefore rely on data from “Micromarketing - Systeme und Consult GmbH” (microm), which usually provides indicators for target group marketing and location analyses, e.g. purchasing power and social milieus. Microm works with several partners to collect data at the household level, which can then be further used from a segment consisting of at least 5 households to any aggregation level and unit. Data at such a fine spatial scale is also of great interest for scientific analysis and is not available from any public institution to a similar extent (Breidenbach and Eilers 2018; Dittmann and Goebel 2010).

One shortcoming is that the data documentation and the composition of the individual indicators are not comprehensively documented, so one has to rely on outdated data reports and SOEP documentation (Goebel et al. 2014). In addition to the microm data, point coordinates of train stations are available through the “Deutsche Bahn” Open Data portal (Deutsche Bahn 2017) and all other locations of public services were taken from the “Points of Interest” dataset curated by the “Bundesamt für Kartographie und Geodäsie” (BKG) (Bundesamt für Kartographie und Geodäsie 2021). These point coordinates can be used to construct the accessibility measures.

Operationalization

AfD Support. Most of the articles discussed analyze election results or voting decisions to answer the question of which left behinds - people or places - determine support for the RRP. However, when relying on survey data, voting decision indicators have several drawbacks. First, social desirability effects can be observed in reported voting decisions and turnout, which can skew the results. Second, many respondents choose not to report their voting intention and choice at all. About ten percent of the present sample refuse to answer the question on voting intention/choice. Party ratings also reflect a more stable and longer-term assessment of political parties, less influenced by events and short-term developments that occur during the field period. As a result, the AfD party scalometer is used as an alternative measure in the main analyses, as questions on propensity to vote were only included in the pre-election survey. Respondents were asked what they thought of the various parties in general, and their responses were coded on a scale from 0 *I think nothing at all of this party* to 10 *I think a lot of this party*. To check the robustness of the analyses, support for the AfD is measured as voting intention or voting decision. Respondents in the pre-election survey were asked to indicate their voting intention for the upcoming 2021 federal election or, if they had already voted by absentee ballot, they were asked the same question as post-election respondents to indicate their voting decision. Based on these responses, a dummy variable is provided with information on whether respondents intended to vote for the AfD or whether they had voted for the AfD compared to voting for another party. All other cases were coded as missing, e.g. respondents who indicated they would probably or certainly not vote or had not voted.

Left Behind Places. The context-level indicators cover economic hardship, infrastructure accessibility, rurality, and the proportion of foreigners. To measure economic hardship in a neighborhood, I calculate the share of households with a monthly net income of less than 1500 euros for each grid cell based on microm data.² The income threshold roughly corresponds to the definition of poverty risk as an income that is less than 60% of the median income of the total population. Based on the available income categories in the microm data and the monthly German median net income of about 2000 euros in 2021, the measurement captures neighborhoods with an average income below that.

For the accessibility of services and infrastructure, the Euclidean (straight-line) distance in kilometers between a respondent and the nearest facility serves as a proxy for the

²Grid cells coded as industrial buildings only or without microgeographic information were coded as missing.

accessibility of services and infrastructure³. To obtain a single measure, I calculate the distance in kilometers to the nearest general practitioner, pharmacy, elementary school, train station, post office, and take the mean value.

In addition, the number of households per grid cell acts as a continuous measure of rurality and is also provided by microm. Deppisch, Osigus, and Klärner (2021) point out the problem of oversimplification in defining rurality, which is often based only on population density and ignores other important factors such as settlement density or land use. The authors caution against using simplistic measures of rurality to draw conclusions about the geography of populist voting behavior in disadvantaged areas. In this study, however, the dimension of population density is considered as an independent factor alongside other economic and infrastructural indicators. To allow for a more intuitive interpretation of the results, the values are inverted to measure rurality, with higher values describing less densely populated places.

Finally, the measurement of the foreigner share is again based on microm data. Instead of actual migrant shares, microm provides an indicator that divides the expected share of foreign household heads into nine roughly equal classes from the lowest to the highest share of foreigners. In 2019, the lowest share of foreigners was 4.24% and the highest share was 27.5%. (microm 2019) The expected percentage of foreigners is derived from the evaluation of first and last name analyses. Name-based identification strategies have been used in the past to explicitly survey immigrants (Galonska, Berger, and Koopmans 2004) or to measure assimilation by analyzing the first names of German-born children of immigrants (Gerhards and Hans 2006). However, the data do not allow us to distinguish between Western and non-Western immigrants, between German and non-German citizens, or between first, second, or third generation immigrants. However, the only other source of data available at this level of aggregation is the proportion of persons without German citizenship based on the 2011 Census, which was collected before immigration in 2013 and does not include Germans with a migration background.

Feeling of Being Left Behind. The measurement of the feeling of being left behind is based on four indicators covering the proposed sub-dimensions of the construct: economic situation, work esteem, access to services and freedom of expression. The measurement is based on the scale proposed by Bollwerk, Schlipphak, and Back (2021) to measure “perceived social marginalization,” with some items from the scale taken over unchanged, the wording of some questions adapted, and an additional item on access to services included. Respondents indicated their level of agreement with each question on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 0 *disagree at all* to 4 *agree completely*.

Individual Level Controls. All models include core sociodemographics drawn from the survey data: age (squared), gender, education level and occupation status. The education measurement is based on the “International Standard Classification of Education” and recoded to three levels: lower secondary education and lower (1), upper secondary and post-secondary (2), short-cycle tertiary and higher (3). To control for the occupation

³In certain cases, the direct distance between two points may not accurately reflect the actual travel time required to reach a facility due to physical barriers and road networks. However, previous research has found a strong correlation between the two measurements, suggesting that more accurate travel time calculations do not significantly affect the results (Boscoe, Henry, and Zdeb 2012; Phibbs and Luft 1995).

status, I combine information on employment status with information on occupational in seven categories (Oesch 2014). For robustness check, I add additional controls that are associated with AfD evaluation and left behind places and people: left-right self placement and evaluation of the own prospective economic situation, anti-EU and anti-immigrant sentiments.

Each measurement included in the analyses was rescaled to range from 0 to 1. Summary statistics can be found in the supplementary material.

EMPIRICAL ANALYSES

For the analyse, I run OLS models with clustered robust standard errors (HC1, which corresponds to the Stata standard) at the INSPIRE grid level. All models include *Bundesland* fixed effects and the sociodemographic control variables. As I pool data collected before and after the federal election, I also control for effects related to election outcomes with a dummy variable that takes the value of 1 for all post-election interviews. Design weights are included in all models to compensate for oversampling in East Germany (except in split-sample analyses). After row-wise deletion of missing data, the models are based on the responses of 6,491 individuals clustered into 3,182 grid cells.

Places or People Being Left Behind?

The first set of models concerns the direct effects of objective measures of being left behind. I assumed that the place characteristics, namely economic hardship, infrastructure accessibility, rurality, and foreigner presence increases AfD evaluation. Table 1 shows that contextual measures of poverty risk, mean distance to infrastructure and population density point in the expected direction. A higher proportion of low-income households, greater average distance to public services and infrastructure, and lower population density are associated with better AfD evaluations. These coefficients are significant when all contextual measures are included as controls. The effect of exposure to foreigners loses its significance level when controlling for all other contextual factors, which might be partly explained by the fact that foreigners might cluster in urban centers (see supplementary material for descriptives). Further, contrary to the formulated hypothesis, the presence of foreigners in a 1 km² neighborhood is negatively associated with AfD scalometers when not controlling for other contextual factors. Thus, the results argue in favor of the contact hypothesis and not the expected threat hypothesis.

The models reported in Table 2 focus on the subjective feeling of being left behind. In general, all subjective measures point in the expected direction: The feeling that one's economic situation, work esteem, access to basic services and infrastructures, freedom of expression are not sufficiently taken care of and respected by society is positively related to the AfD scalometer. Controlling for all dimensions of feeling left behind, the coefficient on freedom of expression proves to be the strongest and its inclusion in the model contributes significantly to its explanatory power. Another observation of Model 4 in Table 2 is that the coefficient on feeling left behind in public services reverses direction. Multicollinearity could pose a threat to the item scale of feeling left behind that would explain this result. Even though the VIF values do not exceed 5 and the correlation coefficients (Pearson's R)

Table 1

Regression Analyses: Places Being Left Behind

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Places Being Left Behind					
% HH at Poverty Risk	0.02 (0.02)				0.04 (0.02)*
Mean Dist. Services		0.22 (0.05)***			0.20 (0.06)**
Population Density			0.11 (0.03)***		0.09 (0.03)**
Share of Foreigners (Cat.)				-0.03 (0.01)*	0.02 (0.02)
State FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sociodemographic Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Adj. R ²	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.07
Num. obs.	6491	6491	6491	6491	6491
N Clusters	3182	3182	3182	3182	3182

Data: GLES 2022, microm, Deutsche Bahn Open Data and BKG 2022. Fitted Models: OLS with clustered robust standard errors on the grid-level. Controls: post-election survey, gender, age squared, education in 3 categories (reference: middle), Oesch classes in 8 categories (reference: Higher-grade service class). Design weights applied. Standard errors reported in parentheses. *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

all range from .31 to .64, the sub-dimensions could interact with each other. Therefore, I will not analyze the freedom of opinion item with the other dimensions of feeling left behind in the following analyses.

In addition to these separate analyses, Table 3 shows the association of feeling and being left behind together. The results mirror the previous analyses with some exceptions, especially concerning the neighbourhood effects. The effects of mean distance to nearest infrastructure and rurality remain statistically significant in almost all models. The only exception is Model 4, where rurality is not significant when controlling for freedom of expression. In addition, residing in a neighborhood with a high proportion of households at risk of poverty has no significant association with AfD ratings when controlling for any dimension of feeling left behind.

For the models presented in Table 3, I run two additional robustness tests. Fixed-effect logit models are run and odds ratios are reported to explain intended and actual voting for the AfD in the federal election. The direction of all effects remains the same, but again, the objective condition of being left behind turns out to be not as robust as the feeling of being left behind. At the grid level, rurality is the only significant robust factor, but its strength also decreases when the feeling of being able to express one's opinion is included. A second robustness check concerns the inclusion of a second set of control variables. For now, the models were kept on the conservative side to avoid over-specification of the models. However, several individual-level attitudes are known to influence AfD evaluations and could also contribute to perceptions of the objective left behind characteristics of one's neighborhood and the newly introduced measure of the feeling of being left behind. By including left-right self-placement, assessment of one's prospective economic situation, and anti-EU and anti-immigrant sentiments, I not only safeguard against omitted variables effects but also test whether the measure of feeling left behind becomes obsolete once controlling

Table 2

Regression Analyses: People Feeling Left Behind

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
People Feeling Left Behind					
Economic Situation	0.11 (0.01)***				0.03 (0.01)*
Work Esteem		0.09 (0.01)***			−0.02 (0.01)
Service Access			0.09 (0.01)***		−0.04 (0.01)**
Freedom of Opinion				0.36 (0.01)***	0.37 (0.01)***
State FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sociodemographic Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Adj. R ²	0.08	0.08	0.07	0.25	0.25
Num. obs.	6491	6491	6491	6491	6491
N Clusters	3182	3182	3182	3182	3182

Data: GLES 2022, microm, Deutsche Bahn Open Data and BKG 2022. Fitted Models: OLS with clustered robust standard errors on the grid-level. Controls: post-election survey, gender, age squared, education in 3 categories (reference: middle), Oesch classes in 8 categories (reference: Higher-grade service class). Design weights applied. Standard errors reported in parentheses. *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

Table 3

Regression Analyses: Places Being and People Feeling Left Behind

	Model 1	Model 2
Places Being Left Behind		
% HH at Poverty Risk	0.02 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)
Mean Dist. Services	0.18 (0.06)**	0.20 (0.05)***
Population Density	0.07 (0.03)*	0.02 (0.03)
Share of Foreigners (Cat.)	0.01 (0.02)	0.01 (0.01)
People Feeling Left Behind		
Economic Situation	0.08 (0.02)***	
Work Esteem	0.03 (0.01)*	
Service Access	0.04 (0.01)**	
Freedom of Opinion		0.36 (0.01)***
State FE	Yes	Yes
Sociodemographic Controls	Yes	Yes
Adj. R ²	0.09	0.25
Num. obs.	6491	6491
N Clusters	3182	3182

Data: GLES 2022, microm, Deutsche Bahn Open Data and BKG 2022. Fitted Models: OLS with clustered robust standard errors on the grid-level. Controls: post-election survey, gender, age squared, education in 3 categories (reference: middle), Oesch classes in 8 categories (reference: Higher-grade service class). Design weights applied. Standard errors reported in parentheses. *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

for other attitudes. The results show that feeling left behind still contributes significantly to explaining AfD support. At the grid level, the relationship between AfD support and distance to infrastructure also remains significant.

Overall, the first set of analyses shows that both objectively being left behind as well as the subjective left behind feeling contribute to a positive evaluation of the AfD but place-based effects prove to be not as robust or strong as the individuals' characteristics. Besides these results, it is striking that models containing only context measures and sociodemographics perform comparatively worse than models containing individual attitudes and, later, feelings of being left behind based on goodness-of-fit measures. It seems that although living conditions contribute independently to a positive evaluation of AfD, the explanatory power of context effects is limited compared to individual-level effects.

Left Behind People in Left Behind Places

Besides the main effects, I also hypothesized that the effects of being objectively left behind are activated and amplified by left behind feelings. Thus, if citizens feel that their financial situation is not recognized by society, the risk of poverty in their neighborhood should have a stronger influence on their evaluation of AfD. I suspect the same interaction for accessibility of services and recognition of lack of access, rurality and freedom of expression, and foreigners and freedom of expression. To interpret the interaction effects of "being left behind" and "feeling left behind", the predicted marginal effects of the place-based effects using the mean value of feeling left behind as well as one standard deviation below and above mean value) for each model are shown in Figure 3.

Each panel shows the interactions between the respective sub-dimension of being left behind and feeling left behind, controlling for all other contextual measures. The upper left panel shows the interaction between poverty risk and feeling left behind in one's economic situation. The graphs show no evidence of an interaction effect. The situation is different for the provision of infrastructure and the feeling that society does not care about access to infrastructure facilities, displayed in the upper right panel. The effect of lack of infrastructure indicates with a steeper slope that the effect becomes particularly strong for citizens who also feel disconnected in this area. The same, albeit more pronounced, interplay occurs for rurality and lack of recognition for opinion expression. The effect of population density depends on the feeling of being left behind and even changes direction depending on that feeling. As for the proportion of foreigners in the neighborhood, the differences in effect strength are mainly determined by the feeling of being left behind with some slight evidence of interaction: The negative effect of the share of foreigner on AfD evaluation appears to be stronger for citizens who feel they cannot freely express their opinion, but not for those who do not hold this feeling.

Overall, the hypothesized interactions do not appear for the economic dimension but occur for service access and especially strong for rurality. As a consequence of the finding that a higher share of foreigners decreases AfD support, the interaction is reversed as well and not particularly pronounced.

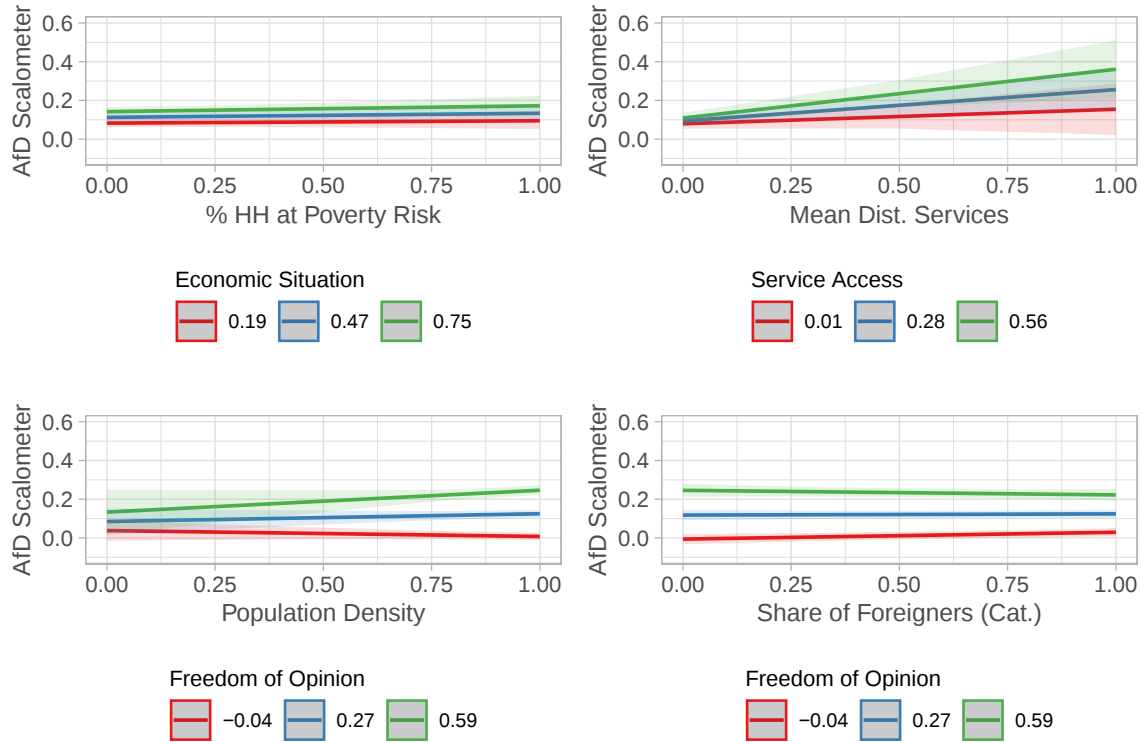


Figure 3. Predicted Marginal Effects of Place-Based Factors by Feeling Left Behind

East-West German Comparisons

Based on the theoretical discussion and the empirical evidence, there is reason to believe that the effects found for all of Germany might not apply equally to East and West Germans. The conjecture is that both living in a left-behind place and the feeling of being left behind - and also their interaction - should be more pronounced in East German regions than in West Germany. In the preceding analyses, we control for *Bundesland* fixed effects and therefore do not consider the East-West difference further. To examine similarities and differences between East and West Germany in terms of the associations found, I split the sample by region and reran the main models. Table 4 shows the results of these models. Regarding the places being left behind, the results show that the negative effect of the proportion of foreigners on AfD ratings occurs in East Germany, but not in West Germany. In contrast, infrastructure accessibility is positively associated with AfD evaluations only in West Germany, but not in East Germany. With regard to the feeling of being left behind, not being recognized for one's financial situation and freedom of expression have a robust positive effect in both regions. In contrast, the appreciation of work contributes to explaining high AfD ratings only for East Germans and the lack of access to services again only for West Germans.

Different main effects also indicate the possibility of different interaction effects, which are shown in Figure 4. The left panel shows the predicted marginal effect of feeling left

Table 4

Regression Analyses: East-West Comparison Places Being and People Feeling Left Behind

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Places Being Left Behind				
% HH at Poverty Risk	0.01 (0.03)	0.03 (0.02)	0.01 (0.03)	0.02 (0.02)
Mean Dist. Services	0.10 (0.09)	0.22 (0.08)**	0.13 (0.08)	0.24 (0.07)***
Population Density	0.06 (0.06)	0.06 (0.04)	−0.02 (0.05)	0.01 (0.03)
Share of Foreigners (Cat.)	−0.16 (0.05)**	0.03 (0.02)	−0.13 (0.04)**	0.02 (0.02)
People Feeling Left Behind				
Economic Situation	0.12 (0.03)***	0.07 (0.02)***		
Work Esteem	0.09 (0.03)**	0.01 (0.01)		
Service Access	0.03 (0.03)	0.04 (0.02)**		
Freedom of Opinion			0.45 (0.02)***	0.34 (0.01)***
Region	East	West	East	West
State FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sociodemographic Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Adj. R ²	0.12	0.06	0.29	0.22
Num. obs.	1917	4574	1917	4574
N Clusters	948	2238	948	2238

Data: GLES 2022, microm, Deutsche Bahn Open Data and BKG 2022. Fitted Models: OLS with clustered robust standard errors on the grid-level. Controls: post-election survey, gender, age squared, education in 3 categories (reference: middle), Oesch classes in 8 categories (reference: Higher-grade service class). Standard errors reported in parentheses. *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

behind in East Germany, the right panel in West Germany. As in Germany as a whole, the proportion of households at risk of poverty in a neighborhood differs only marginally between citizens with a high and a low feeling of being left behind in that area. In terms of access to infrastructure, the feeling of being left behind strengthens the positive association between lack of infrastructure and positive AfD rating only in West Germany. The visualization of interaction effects also shows that places with a particularly high mean distance to infrastructure are located in East and not in West Germany. For East Germany, however, neither a direct nor an interaction effect can be found for the infrastructure dimension. In contrast, the positive interaction effect of rurality and feeling free to express one's opinion found for all of Germany is especially strong in East German neighborhoods compared to West German ones. The same tendency is also observed in West Germany but is less pronounced and does not reach sufficient levels of significance. A similar picture emerges for the effects of the presence of migrants in one's own neighborhood. An interaction effect between the proportion of foreigners and the feeling of being left behind in terms of free opinion occurs only in East Germany. Citizens who feel they cannot freely express their opinion rate the AfD more positively in neighborhoods with a lower proportion of foreigners than in a place with a higher proportion of foreigners. By contrast, for citizens who feel they can freely express their opinion, the proportion of foreigners in their neighborhood makes no difference to their evaluation.

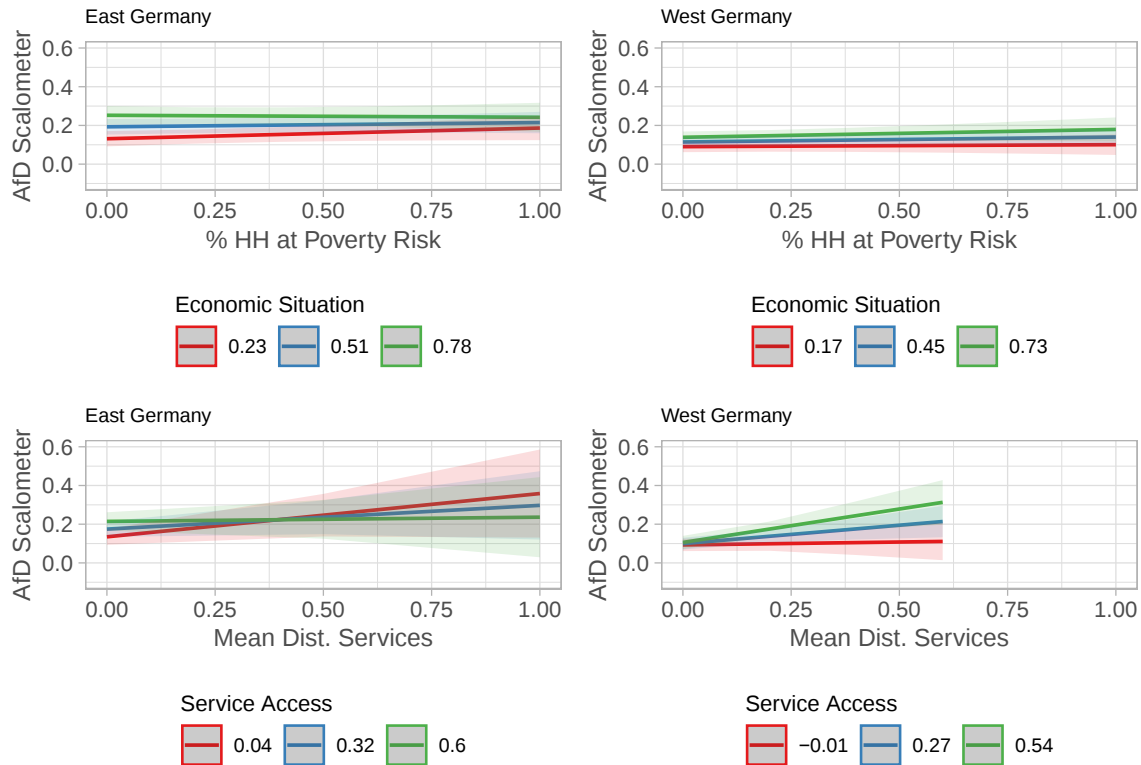
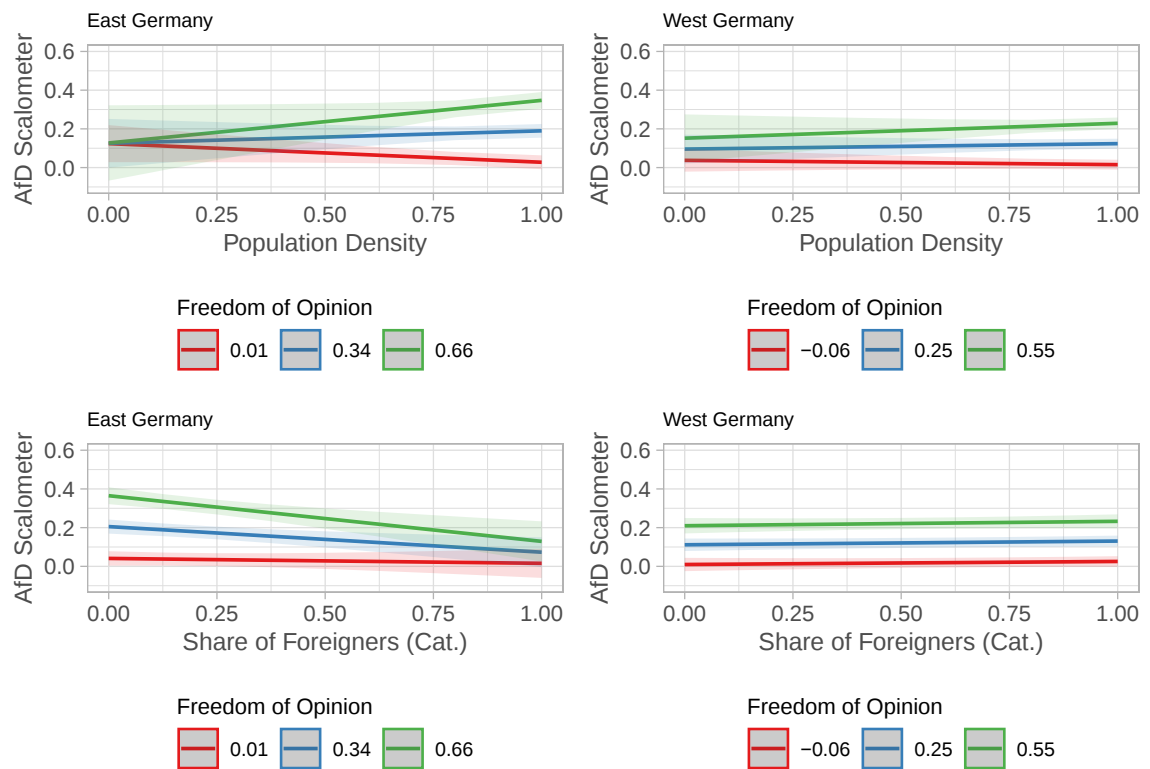


Figure 4. Predicted Marginal Effects of Place-Based Factors by Feeling Left Behind in East and West Germany (I)



DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study's departing point has been the question of whether and when living in a left behind place and feeling left behind drives RRP support and if the feeling reinforces the place-based effects.

In a first step, I argued that several place-based factors previously studied to explain spatially polarized party preferences, such as economic hardship, service access, rurality, and foreigner presence, should increase support for RRP in Germany. The results showed that while service and infrastructure access, as well as rurality, are positively associated with RRP ratings, economic hardship does not have a robust association when controlling for other factors. It is surprising that economic hardship plays only a minor role compared to other characteristics. However, measuring economic hardship on a small spatial scale remains challenging due to the limited availability of indicators. It would be interesting to compare these findings with other measurements, such as unemployment rates. Further, when comparing neighborhoods in East and West Germany, only infrastructure accessibility is significantly associated with AfD ratings in West Germany. This finding might be explained by improvements of infrastructure and service access in some East German regions after reunification, leading to better evaluations of service accessibility by East Germans compared to West Germans, despite their worse-off conditions. Results regarding the presence of foreigners yield mixed findings. If there is a significant association, it is in the opposite direction than hypothesized but the effect is only robust and strong in East Germany. Hence, citizens living in more diverse neighborhoods tend to have less support for the AfD. This supports the contact and revitalizing hypotheses, challenging the economic threat assumption discussed in this article. This finding contributes to the ongoing debate on the effect of immigration presence on party preferences and vote choice.

In the second step, the feeling of being left behind was conceptualized as a subjective sense of one's needs being recognized by society. Four hypotheses were formulated regarding the feeling of being left behind: economic situation, work esteem, service access, and freedom of opinion should have a positive association with RRP support. The empirical analyses confirmed these expectations. Among the four aspects, the strong effect of freedom of opinion stands out, highlighting the assumption that the perception of a cultural shift in society, diverging from one's own values and opinions, makes RRP particularly appealing. This finding applies to both East and West Germany. Though, differences between East and West German citizens regarding the relation between other dimensions of feeling left behind and AfD support are observed. Economic aspects are only relevant in East Germany, while the feeling of not receiving enough attention for lacking infrastructure is more prominent in West Germany. The robustness of service access as a predictor in West Germany may be attributed to bespoke development after reunification, while the impression of insufficient attention to one's financial situation and work likely reflects the existing income differences and present debates about the East-West divide.

One central contribution of this article is to analyze if the feeling of being left behind reinforces the effect of living in a left-behind place. I argued that the citizens' feeling draws attention to the context as an information cue. Consequently, place-based information becomes part of the political evaluation and decision-making processes. The interplay of

left behind places and feeling is confirmed, especially among rural residents. The effect of living in sparsely populated areas strongly depends on citizens perceiving a lack of freedom to express their opinions. The feeling of being left behind directs individuals' attention to the rural-urban divide, leading them to support a party that does not align with the cosmopolitan values of urbanites and calls for the return to the old order. This mechanism seems to happen in West and East Germany but is particularly pronounced in the East. The reinforcing effects appear also for lacking and feeling no recognition for lacking service access in West Germany. In contrast, for East Germans I find that the presence of foreigners makes only a difference for citizens who feel that they cannot express their opinion. These results indicate that the place effects indeed rely at least partially on the feelings of citizens living in an area. The results underline that neighborhoods do not affect each individual similarly but that the individual situation and perception of one's living condition are decisive for the (strength of) the relationship of place-based effect and political attitudes and behavior.

Overall, the results of the analyses align with previous studies on places being left behind and people feeling left behind, with some exceptions such as the non-robust findings regarding economic hardship. Like previous research, I also find that place-based effects have limited explanatory power compared to individual-level effects. Therefore, it is crucial to utilize survey data linked with information on the respondent's neighborhood to better assess the influence of place-based factors on citizens' decision-making and evaluation processes.

By adopting this approach, this article contributes to the re-exploration of place in shaping political attitudes and behavior in several ways. It demonstrates the necessity of differentiating between objective measurements and subjective feelings, as well as examining sub-dimensions of being left behind to gain a better understanding of the underlying mechanisms. Furthermore, the inclusion of literature on the activating properties of feeling in relation to neighborhood effects proves to be a valuable addition to the argument. The findings suggest that further investigation of these interactions across different countries and over time would enhance our understanding when place-based factors influence individual-level mechanisms. A methodological advancement in this article is the utilization of geodata at a small spatial scale to address the issue of unobserved heterogeneity within large administrative units and to capture the living environment of respondents more accurately. Simultaneously, the novel measurement of feeling left behind offers new insights into grievance-based explanations of support for the RRP.

Still, some limitations of this study need to be addressed. Firstly, one limitation of this study with regard to the effects of living in a left behind place pertains to sorting effects. Individuals may choose or remain in neighborhoods based on their predispositions, including political attitudes, needs for public services and lifestyle decisions. Additionally, sociodemographic and cultural differences in regional composition can contribute to politically divided landscapes. Even though we often speak of "context effects", the observed effects may simply reflect the existing neighborhood composition. Addressing this limitation, the study included various individual and contextual factors to mitigate omitted variables and demonstrate the robustness of the relationship. However, resolving the potential endogeneity issue resulting from respondent self-selection into contexts would require longitudinal data, which is beyond the scope of this study.

Secondly, when discussing the feelings of being left behind, there is an ongoing debate regarding the conceptualization and measurement of this construct. Several large-scale study programs as well as research projects, have started to incorporate the feeling of being left behind in their studies. The conceptualization and measurement approaches vary, ranging from resentments to perceptions of living conditions and representation to subjective feelings. Furthermore, the analyses in this paper demonstrate that the recognition of one's values and opinions, which are threatened by cultural shifts, as measured by the feeling of freely expressing one's opinions, is strongly associated with evaluations of RRP and other dimensions of feeling left behind. This finding raises questions for future research regarding how these sub-dimensions interact and whether they should be summarized.

Lastly, one drawback of the individual-level study is the challenging trade-off decision when relying on either party evaluations or self-reported voting behavior. While using AfD scalometers allows for analysis of a larger number of respondents and more variation in their appeal among voters, it does not enable us to draw conclusions about the behavioral consequences of being and feeling left behind. In this article, I chose to utilize party evaluations to facilitate split-sample analyses with an adequate number of cases across all German regions and to minimize social desirability and non-response biases. The applied robustness tests demonstrate that, despite a decrease in statistical power, most of the associations found in the main study also apply to voting behavior.

All in all, the results of this article show that feeling left behind is a crucial factor mitigating place-based effects. As a consequence, the improvement of living conditions might not be enough to address the spatial divides in Germany but it deems necessary to directly address citizens' concerns and feelings as well.

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Supplementary Material

Table A1

Survey Data Descriptive Statistics

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Afd Scalometer	8,300	0.15	0.27	0.00	1.00
Feel: Economic Situation	8,435	0.48	0.28	0.00	1.00
Feel: Work Esteem	8,398	0.49	0.30	0.00	1.00
Feel: Service Access	8,401	0.30	0.28	0.00	1.00
Feel: Freedom of Opinion	8,432	0.30	0.32	0.00	1.00
Female	8,454	0.48	0.50	0	1
Age	8,369	0.44	0.22	0.00	1.00
Age ²	8,369	0.24	0.19	0.00	1.00
Education: Low	8,268	0.17	0.38	0	1
Education: Middle	8,268	0.31	0.46	0	1
Education: High	8,268	0.51	0.50	0	1
Oesch: Unemployed	7,686	0.02	0.13	0	1
Oesch:Temporarily Inactive	7,686	0.07	0.25	0	1
Oesch:Permanently Inactive	7,686	0.33	0.47	0	1
Oesch:Lower-grade service class	7,686	0.20	0.40	0	1
Oesch:Small business owners	7,686	0.03	0.18	0	1
Oesch:Skilled workers	7,686	0.14	0.34	0	1
Oesch:Unskilled workers	7,686	0.03	0.18	0	1
Left-Right Self-Placement	7,861	0.44	0.20	0.00	1.00
Own Prospective Economic Situaton	8,489	0.51	0.19	0.00	1.00
Anti-European Sentiment	8,440	0.29	0.27	0.00	1.00
Anti-Immigration Sentiment	8,433	0.54	0.28	0.00	1.00
AfD Vote	7,241	0.07	0.25	0	1

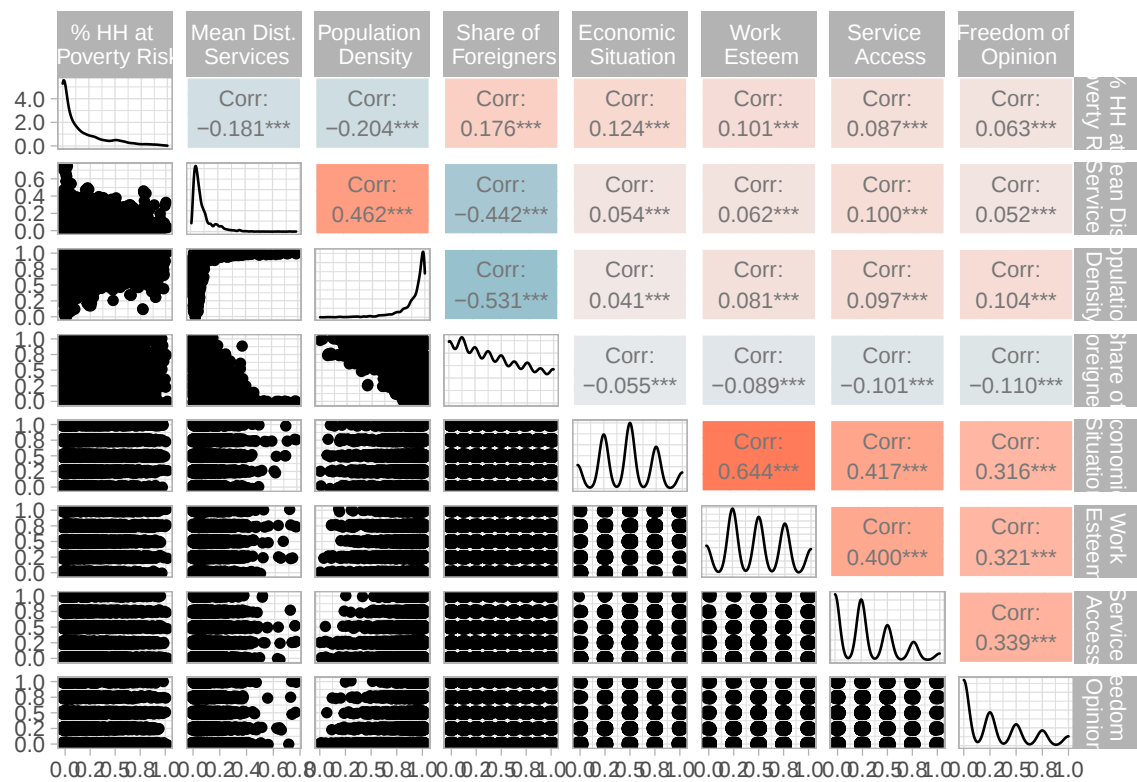


Figure A1. (#fig:ggpairs_plot)Distribution and Correlation of Main Variables

Table A2

Regression Analyses: Places Being Left Behind

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Places Being Left Behind					
% HH at Poverty Risk	0.02 (0.02)				0.04* (0.02)
Mean Dist. Services	−0.04*** (0.01)	−0.04*** (0.01)	−0.04*** (0.01)	−0.04*** (0.01)	−0.04*** (0.01)
Population Density	−0.12*** (0.03)	−0.12*** (0.03)	−0.13*** (0.03)	−0.12*** (0.03)	−0.12*** (0.03)
Share of Foreigners (Cat.)	0.02* (0.01)	0.02* (0.01)	0.03* (0.01)	0.03* (0.01)	0.02* (0.01)
Controls					
Female	−0.04*** (0.01)	−0.04*** (0.01)	−0.04*** (0.01)	−0.04*** (0.01)	−0.04*** (0.01)
Age ²	0.04 (0.03)	0.05 (0.03)	0.04 (0.03)	0.04 (0.03)	0.04 (0.03)
Education: Low	−0.05*** (0.01)	−0.05*** (0.01)	−0.06*** (0.01)	−0.05*** (0.01)	−0.06*** (0.01)
Education: High	0.04** (0.01)	0.04** (0.01)	0.03** (0.01)	0.04** (0.01)	0.03** (0.01)
Oesch: Unemployed	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
Oesch:Temporarily Inactive	0.04* (0.02)	0.03 (0.02)	0.04 (0.02)	0.04* (0.02)	0.03 (0.02)
Oesch:Permanently Inactive	0.05*** (0.01)	0.05*** (0.01)	0.05*** (0.01)	0.05*** (0.01)	0.05*** (0.01)
Oesch:Lower-grade service class	0.13*** (0.03)	0.13*** (0.03)	0.13*** (0.03)	0.13*** (0.03)	0.12*** (0.03)
Oesch:Small business owners	−0.01 (0.01)	−0.01 (0.01)	−0.01 (0.01)	−0.01 (0.01)	−0.01 (0.01)
Oesch:Skilled workers		0.22*** (0.05)			0.20** (0.06)
Oesch:Unskilled workers			0.11*** (0.03)		0.09** (0.03)
Post				−0.03* (0.01)	0.02 (0.02)
State FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sociodemographic Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Adj. R ²	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.07
Num. obs.	6491	6491	6491	6491	6491
N Clusters	3182	3182	3182	3182	3182

Data: GLES 2022, microm, Deutsche Bahn Open Data and BKG 2022. Fitted Models: OLS with clustered robust standard errors on the grid-level. Controls: post-election survey, gender, age squared, education in 3 categories (reference: middle), Oesch classes in 8 categories (reference: Higher-grade service class). Design weights applied. Standard errors reported in parentheses. *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

Table A3

Regression Analyses: People Feeling Left Behind

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
People Feeling Left Behind					
Economic Situation	0.11*** (0.01)				0.03* (0.01)
Work Esteem	-0.04*** (0.01)	-0.05*** (0.01)	-0.04*** (0.01)	-0.04*** (0.01)	-0.04*** (0.01)
Service Access	-0.10*** (0.03)	-0.10*** (0.03)	-0.12*** (0.03)	-0.07** (0.03)	-0.07** (0.03)
Freedom of Opinion	0.02 (0.01)	0.02 (0.01)	0.02 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
Controls					
Female	-0.03*** (0.01)	-0.04*** (0.01)	-0.04*** (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)
Age ²	0.02 (0.03)	0.03 (0.03)	0.03 (0.03)	0.03 (0.02)	0.04 (0.02)
Education: Low	-0.06*** (0.01)	-0.05*** (0.01)	-0.06*** (0.01)	-0.03** (0.01)	-0.03** (0.01)
Education: High	0.02* (0.01)	0.03** (0.01)	0.03* (0.01)	0.02 (0.01)	0.02 (0.01)
Oesch: Unemployed	0.00 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)
Oesch:Temporarily Inactive	0.03 (0.02)	0.03 (0.02)	0.03 (0.02)	0.01 (0.02)	0.01 (0.02)
Oesch:Permanently Inactive	0.04*** (0.01)	0.04*** (0.01)	0.05*** (0.01)	0.02* (0.01)	0.03* (0.01)
Oesch:Lower-grade service class	0.11*** (0.03)	0.12*** (0.03)	0.12*** (0.03)	0.07** (0.02)	0.07** (0.02)
Oesch:Small business owners	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)
Oesch:Skilled workers		0.09*** (0.01)			-0.02 (0.01)
Oesch:Unskilled workers			0.09*** (0.01)		-0.04** (0.01)
Post				0.36*** (0.01)	0.37*** (0.01)
State FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sociodemographic Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Adj. R ²	0.08	0.08	0.07	0.25	0.25
Num. obs.	6491	6491	6491	6491	6491
N Clusters	3182	3182	3182	3182	3182

Data: GLES 2022, microm, Deutsche Bahn Open Data and BKG 2022. Fitted Models: OLS with clustered robust standard errors on the grid-level. Controls: post-election survey, gender, age squared, education in 3 categories (reference: middle), Oesch classes in 8 categories (reference: Higher-grade service class). Design weights applied. Standard errors reported in parentheses. *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

Table A4

Regression Analyses: Places Being and People Feeling Left Behind

	Model 1	Model 2
Places Being Left Behind		
% HH at Poverty Risk	0.02 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)
Mean Dist. Services	0.18 (0.06)**	0.20 (0.05)***
Population Density	0.07 (0.03)*	0.02 (0.03)
Share of Foreigners (Cat.)	0.01 (0.02)	0.01 (0.01)
People Feeling Left Behind		
Economic Situation	0.08 (0.02)***	
Work Esteem	0.03 (0.01)*	
Service Access	0.04 (0.01)**	
Freedom of Opinion	−0.04 (0.01)***	−0.04 (0.01)***
Controls		
Female	−0.10 (0.03)***	−0.07 (0.03)**
Age ²	0.02 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
Education: Low	−0.03 (0.01)***	−0.00 (0.01)
Education: High	0.02 (0.03)	0.03 (0.02)
Oesch: Unemployed	−0.06 (0.01)***	−0.03 (0.01)**
Oesch:Temporarily Inactive	0.02 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
Oesch:Permanently Inactive	−0.01 (0.01)	−0.00 (0.01)
Oesch:Lower-grade service class	0.02 (0.02)	0.01 (0.02)
Oesch:Small business owners	0.03 (0.01)**	0.02 (0.01)*
Oesch:Skilled workers	0.10 (0.03)***	0.06 (0.02)**
Oesch:Unskilled workers	−0.00 (0.01)	−0.00 (0.01)
Post		0.36 (0.01)***
State FE	Yes	Yes
Sociodemographic Controls	Yes	Yes
Adj. R ²	0.09	0.25
Num. obs.	6491	6491
N Clusters	3182	3182

Data: GLES 2022, microm, Deutsche Bahn Open Data and BKG 2022. Fitted Models: OLS with clustered robust standard errors on the grid-level. Controls: post-election survey, gender, age squared, education in 3 categories (reference: middle), Oesch classes in 8 categories (reference: Higher-grade service class). Design weights applied. Standard errors reported in parentheses. *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

Table A5

Fixed Effect Logit Models: AfD Vote.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Places Being Left Behind				
% HH at Poverty Risk	1.23 (0.30)	1.32 (0.30)	1.36 (0.30)	1.25 (0.32)
Mean Dist. Services	1.46 (0.79)	1.69 (0.79)	1.50 (0.79)	2.76 (0.90)
Population Density	10.36 (1.13)*	10.38 (1.12)*	9.76 (1.11)*	4.01 (1.04)
Share of Foreigners (Cat.)	0.93 (0.38)	1.00 (0.38)	0.97 (0.38)	0.85 (0.39)
People Feeling Left Behind				
Economic Situation	5.07 (0.22)***			
Work Esteem	0.52 (0.13)***	0.51 (0.13)***	0.53 (0.13)***	0.56 (0.15)***
Service Access	0.40 (0.52)	0.38 (0.53)	0.30 (0.52)*	0.62 (0.58)
Freedom of Opinion	1.29 (0.17)	1.30 (0.17)	1.31 (0.17)	1.00 (0.21)
Controls				
Female	0.60 (0.15)***	0.58 (0.15)***	0.58 (0.15)***	0.76 (0.16)
Age ²	1.13 (0.45)	1.32 (0.46)	1.26 (0.45)	1.58 (0.50)
Education: Low	0.35 (0.48)*	0.42 (0.48)	0.39 (0.48)*	0.65 (0.50)
Education: High	1.21 (0.25)	1.31 (0.25)	1.27 (0.25)	1.16 (0.28)
Oesch: Unemployed	1.04 (0.22)	1.05 (0.22)	1.12 (0.22)	1.05 (0.24)
Oesch:Temporarily Inactive	1.49 (0.33)	1.62 (0.33)	1.79 (0.32)	1.25 (0.35)
Oesch:Permanently Inactive	1.39 (0.23)	1.44 (0.23)	1.52 (0.23)	1.32 (0.26)
Oesch:Lower-grade service class	3.06 (0.30)***	3.33 (0.30)***	3.52 (0.30)***	2.80 (0.34)**
Oesch:Small business owners	0.93 (0.13)	0.92 (0.12)	0.92 (0.12)	1.02 (0.14)
Oesch:Skilled workers		3.03 (0.21)***		
Oesch:Unskilled workers			2.81 (0.21)***	
Post				81.48 (0.22)***
State FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
SocioDem Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Num. obs.	5813	5813	5813	5813
Num. groups: as.character(bula)	16	16	16	16
Log Likelihood	-1181.73	-1195.78	-1198.83	-922.81
Pseudo R ²	0.02	0.01	0.01	0.23

Data: GLES 2022, microm, Deutsche Bahn Open Data and BKG 2022. Fitted Models: OLS with clustered robust standard errors on the grid-level. Controls: post-election survey, gender, age squared, education in 3 categories (reference: middle), Oesch classes in 8 categories (reference: Higher-grade service class). Design weights applied. Standard errors reported in parentheses. *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

Table A6

Regression Analyses: Additional Attitudinal Controls

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Places Being Left Behind				
% HH at Poverty Risk	0.02 (0.01)	0.02 (0.01)	0.02 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
Mean Dist. Services	0.14 (0.05)**	0.14 (0.05)**	0.13 (0.05)**	0.16 (0.05)**
Population Density	-0.01 (0.03)	-0.02 (0.03)	-0.02 (0.03)	-0.03 (0.02)
Share of Foreigners (Cat.)	0.01 (0.01)	0.02 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
People Feeling Left Behind				
Economic Situation	0.04 (0.01)***			
Work Esteem		0.04 (0.01)***		
Service Access			0.05 (0.01)***	
Freedom of Opinion				0.22 (0.01)***
Controls				
Female	-0.04 (0.01)***	-0.04 (0.01)***	-0.03 (0.01)***	-0.03 (0.00)***
Age ²	-0.16 (0.02)***	-0.16 (0.02)***	-0.17 (0.02)***	-0.13 (0.02)***
Education: Low	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
Education: High	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.02 (0.01)**
Oesch: Unemployed	0.03 (0.02)	0.03 (0.02)	0.03 (0.02)	0.04 (0.02)
Oesch:Temporarily Inactive	0.00 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
Oesch:Permanently Inactive	0.02 (0.01)	0.02 (0.01)	0.02 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
Oesch:Lower-grade service class	0.00 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)
Oesch:Small business owners	0.02 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)	0.01 (0.01)
Oesch:Skilled workers	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.02 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
Oesch:Unskilled workers	0.06 (0.02)**	0.06 (0.02)**	0.06 (0.02)**	0.05 (0.02)*
Left-Right Self-Placement	0.20 (0.02)***	0.20 (0.02)***	0.21 (0.02)***	0.18 (0.02)***
Own Prosp. Eco. Situaton	0.08 (0.02)***	0.08 (0.02)***	0.08 (0.02)***	0.06 (0.02)***
Anti-European Sentiment	0.23 (0.01)***	0.23 (0.01)***	0.23 (0.01)***	0.17 (0.01)***
Anti-Immigration Sentiment	0.24 (0.01)***	0.24 (0.01)***	0.24 (0.01)***	0.18 (0.01)***
Post	-0.00 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)
State FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sociodemographic Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Adj. R ²	0.31	0.31	0.31	0.37
Num. obs.	6491	6491	6491	6491
N Clusters	3182	3182	3182	3182

Data: GLES 2022, microm, Deutsche Bahn Open Data and BKG 2022. Fitted Models: OLS with clustered robust standard errors on the grid-level. Controls: post-election survey, gender, age squared, education in 3 categories (reference: middle), Oesch classes in 8 categories (reference: Higher-grade service class). Design weights applied. Standard errors reported in parentheses. *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

Table A7

Regression Analyses with Interactions: Places Being and People Feeling Left Behind (Fig. 1)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Places Being Left Behind				
% HH at Poverty Risk	0.01 [−0.05; 0.07]	0.03 [−0.00; 0.06]	0.02 [−0.01; 0.05]	0.02 [−0.01; 0.05]
Mean Dist. Services	0.18 [0.06; 0.30]*	0.07 [−0.07; 0.22]	0.19 [0.09; 0.30]*	0.20 [0.09; 0.30]*
Population Density	0.08 [0.02; 0.14]*	0.08 [0.02; 0.15]*	−0.02 [−0.07; 0.03]	0.03 [−0.03; 0.08]
Share of Foreigners (Cat.)	0.01 [−0.02; 0.04]	0.01 [−0.02; 0.05]	0.01 [−0.02; 0.04]	0.03 [0.00; 0.06]*
People Feeling Left Behind				
Economic Situation	0.11 [0.08; 0.13]*			
Service Access		0.05 [0.02; 0.09]*		
Freedom of Opinion			0.15 [−0.03; 0.34]	0.40 [0.36; 0.44]*
Interactions				
Poverty Risk*Economic Sit.	0.03 [−0.09; 0.15]			
Mean Dist.*Service Access		0.32 [−0.05; 0.69]		
Pop. Density*Opinion			0.23 [0.02; 0.43]*	
Foreigners*Opinion				−0.09 [−0.17; −0.02]*
State FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sociodemographic Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Adj. R ²	0.08	0.08	0.25	0.25
Num. obs.	6491	6491	6491	6491
RMSE	0.24	0.24	0.22	0.22
N Clusters	3182	3182	3182	3182

Data: GLES 2022, microm, Deutsche Bahn Open Data and BKG 2022. Fitted Models: OLS with clustered robust standard errors on the grid-level. Controls: post-election survey, gender, age squared, education in 3 categories (reference: middle), Oesch classes in 8 categories (reference: Higher-grade service class). Design weights applied. Standard errors reported in parentheses. * Null hypothesis value outside the confidence interval.

Table A8

Regression Analyses: East-West Comparison Places Being and People Feeling Left Behind

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Places Being Left Behind				
% HH at Poverty Risk	0.01 (0.03)	0.03 (0.02)	0.01 (0.03)	0.02 (0.02)
Mean Dist. Services	0.10 (0.09)	0.22 (0.08)**	0.13 (0.08)	0.24 (0.07)***
Population Density	0.06 (0.06)	0.06 (0.04)	-0.02 (0.05)	0.01 (0.03)
Share of Foreigners (Cat.)	-0.16 (0.05)**	0.03 (0.02)	-0.13 (0.04)**	0.02 (0.02)
People Feeling Left Behind				
Economic Situation	0.12 (0.03)***	0.07 (0.02)***		
Work Esteem	0.09 (0.03)**	0.01 (0.01)		
Service Access	0.03 (0.03)	0.04 (0.02)**		
Freedom of Opinion	-0.05 (0.01)***	-0.04 (0.01)***	-0.05 (0.01)***	-0.03 (0.01)***
Controls				
Female	-0.08 (0.06)	-0.10 (0.03)***	-0.07 (0.05)	-0.07 (0.03)*
Age ²	0.02 (0.03)	0.02 (0.01)*	0.01 (0.02)	0.01 (0.01)
Education: Low	-0.05 (0.02)**	-0.02 (0.01)*	-0.01 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)
Education: High	0.06 (0.06)	0.01 (0.03)	0.07 (0.05)	0.03 (0.03)
Oesch: Unemployed	-0.08 (0.03)**	-0.06 (0.01)***	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.03 (0.01)**
Oesch:Temporarily Inactive	0.03 (0.02)	0.02 (0.01)	0.04 (0.02)	0.01 (0.01)
Oesch:Permanently Inactive	0.01 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.01)	0.02 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.01)
Oesch:Lower-grade service class	0.07 (0.04)	0.01 (0.02)	0.06 (0.04)	-0.00 (0.02)
Oesch:Small business owners	0.08 (0.03)**	0.02 (0.01)	0.09 (0.02)***	0.01 (0.01)
Oesch:Skilled workers	0.17 (0.04)***	0.09 (0.03)**	0.15 (0.04)***	0.05 (0.03)
Oesch:Unskilled workers	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)
Post			0.45 (0.02)***	0.34 (0.01)***
State FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sociodemographic Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Adj. R ²	0.12	0.06	0.29	0.22
Num. obs.	1917	4574	1917	4574
N Clusters	948	2238	948	2238

Data: GLES 2022, microm, Deutsche Bahn Open Data and BKG 2022. Fitted Models: OLS with clustered robust standard errors on the grid-level. Controls: post-election survey, gender, age squared, education in 3 categories (reference: middle), Oesch classes in 8 categories (reference: Higher-grade service class). Standard errors reported in parentheses. *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.