



## Full Length Article

## Place-based resentment in an egalitarian welfare state

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## ABSTRACT

A divide between people in rural areas and in cities contributes to the current wave of populist backlash and the realignment of party systems across Western democracies. Does place-based resentment also exist and influence vote choice in an egalitarian welfare state, and if so, what is its basis? Building on the literature of place resentment and social identities, we examine place-based resentment in the Norwegian context. Employing original survey data, we measure rural-urban resentment by comparing the difference in an individual's in-group and out-group sentiment. We find that rural voters are more resentful of urbanites. Despite extensive redistributive public policies, a sense of unfair resource distribution spurs greater rural resentment than a cultural grievance. In response to current debates in the American and West European scholarship, our findings illustrate that rural resentment can develop in contexts where rural voters are not economically marginalized. Rural resentment also explains voting for the center-left agrarian party. Our work demonstrates the importance of place-based social identities in explaining rural political backlash in advanced democracies. Moreover, rural backlash does not always strengthen the populist right.

## 1. Introduction

When the Norwegian government shut down a military air base on the remote island of Andøya, a local resident responded: "I have never voted Center [agrarian] Party before, but I am done with the Conservatives. I get fuming mad when they suck everything into the cities."<sup>1</sup> Far from the gas station meetings in rural Wisconsin where Cramer (2016) conducted ethnographic research, this quote nonetheless reflects the concept of *rural resentment* that she identified. How generalizable is place-based resentment outside of the United States? Are ruralites similarly resentful in contexts in which the state makes huge efforts to redistribute wealth from cities to less developed, sparsely populated areas?

Although territorial divisions have been found to affect policy preferences, political trust, populism, and partisanship in different countries (e.g., Bolet, 2023; Bornschier et al. 2021; Cramer, 2016; Ford & Jennings, 2020; Huijsmans, 2022; Munis, 2020; Rodriguez-Pose, 2018; Stein et al., 2021; Ziblatt et al., 2020), existing research has not directly measured resentment at the individual level as the divergence between in-group and out-group attitudes rooted in place. This gap limits our

understanding of the rural-urban cleavage. In particular, which individuals espouse the greatest out-group animosity compared to their in-group? How well does resentment link to partisan voting in multi-party systems and in the context of low economic inequality?

Building on the literature of place-based resentment and social identities, we analyze rural and urban resentment in relation to cultural, economic, and political grievances in Norway. To do so, we employ six measures of place resentment, which reflect animosity toward the out-group compared to the in-group. We then explore the determinants of resentment by looking at subjective place identity, objective location, and demographic factors. Further, we also investigate the impact of place-based resentment on partisan voting.

The Norwegian context, with its vast territory, multi-party system, and generous welfare state, sheds new light on place-based political divisions. Having a sizable rural population, geographic tensions have been historically present in Norway and have recently risen to the forefront of national politics. Yet the enormous spatial redistribution of public resources ensures low economic inequality across the entire territory, which could ostensibly blunt polarization. Our findings, however, show that place-based resentment exists even in a context in which rural

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citizens benefit from a multitude of compensatory schemes.

Despite the Norwegian state's efforts to pump resources into declining and underdeveloped rural areas, we find striking similarities between rural-urban divisions in Norway and the United States. First, we find that rural resentment is linked to both symbolic and material grievances. Rural identifiers also exhibit more place-based resentment when it comes to redistribution of public funding. This finding bolsters the importance of group-based, social identities over objective policies in explaining rural resentment and its impact on political behavior. It also slightly differs from research in the US, which has shown the primacy of symbolic, cultural concerns over material resources (Trujillo & Crowley, 2022).

In line with existing knowledge, place-based resentment in Norway is asymmetric as it is driven by the rural group (Borwein & Lucas, 2023; Munis, 2020; Cramer, 2016). Moreover, our findings also show that, at least in Norway, the urban identifiers to some extent recognize rural grievances. The asymmetry also applies to partisan voting. Here, our findings demonstrate a notable consequence of rural resentment. In Norway, this strongly links to voting for an agrarian, center-left party, whereas urban resentment does not affect vote choice. This challenges what is generally found in the current literature, in which rural resentment and feelings of being left behind are shown to benefit the populist radical right (Arzheimer & Bernemann, 2024; Huijsmans, 2022; Jacobs & Munis, 2022; Rodriguez-Pose, 2018; Trujillo & Crowley, 2022). Looking at a new context, our study therefore demonstrates that rural resentment can play out differently than what literature so far has highlighted.

## 2. Place-based resentment, social identity and vote choice

The rural-urban divide is a historical cleavage that shaped party systems in Western democracies. Linked to the industrial revolution, the conflict pitted rural communities, who were the producers of primary agricultural goods, against wealthier cities where these goods were bought and consumed (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967). This cleavage, however, has recently unfrozen and contributed to the rise of right-wing populist movements that gained political support from rural areas across Western democracies (Hooghe & Marks, 2018; Fitzgerald, 2018; Rodriguez-Pose, 2018; Wuthnow, 2019). In general, rural voters have been associated with radical-right, nationalist parties, while urban voters are linked to left-wing, cosmopolitan positions (Ford & Jennings, 2020; Gimpel et al., 2020; Maxwell, 2020). Rural voters are also less satisfied with democracy, less trusting of politicians and institutions, and more politically alienated (Lago, 2022; Mitsch, Lee, and Ralph Morrow 2021; García del Horno, Rico, & Hernández, 2023).<sup>2</sup> In short, the rural-urban division is associated with polarization in political attitudes and voting behavior.

According to recent research, place attachment – a type of social identity – and resentment are key in politicizing this structural divide (Trujillo & Crowley, 2022; Huijsmans, 2022; Jacobs & Munis, 2022; Jacobs & Munis, 2019; Lyons & Utych, 2021; Cramer, 2016; Borwein & Lucas, 2023; Arzheimer & Bernemann, 2024). The concept of “rural consciousness” relates structural decline to perceptions of disrespect for rural culture, inadequate distribution of public resources to rural areas, and a lack of rural representation in policy-making (Cramer, 2016; Munis, 2020). Cities are centers of international trade, the service sector, and knowledge-intensive industries; whereas rural areas experience deindustrialization, aging and declining populations, lower education rates, and fewer employment opportunities (Ford & Jennings, 2020; Kriesi et al., 2006). These structural disadvantages fuel rural perceptions of their subordinate group status. In line with research from other

<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that there are bounds to this rural dissatisfaction. Munis et al. (2023), for example, find that rural dwellers in the US are not more likely to endorse political violence than urban dwellers.

countries, we expect that place-based resentment is asymmetric due to structural disparities that fuel rural resentment (Borwein & Lucas, 2023; Jacobs & Munis, 2022; Lyons & Utych, 2021; Huijsmans, 2023).

We define place-based resentment as the difference between an individual's in-group resentment and resentment toward her out-group. This definition builds on Cramer (2016) and Munis (2020)'s work, and also incorporates social identity polarization. Recent behavioral research ascribes place-based identities to rural and urban groups (Bornschieer et al. 2021; Cramer, 2016; Lyons & Utych, 2021; Munis, 2020; Zumbrunn, 2024). In social identity theory the starting point is an individual's emotional attachment and self-identification with an in-group, as well as negative sentiment towards an out-group (Tajfel et al., 1979). Social identities have mainly been studied in relation to partisanship, in which the term refers to positive sentiments towards one's co-partisans and dislike and distrust toward opposing partisans (e.g., Iyengar, Lelkes, et al., 2019; Iyengar et al., 2012). We extend this approach to study place-based resentment between rural and urban groups.

In order for social identities to become politically engaged, individuals must also feel a sense of grievance, meaning that they have an awareness of differential status between one's in-group and out-group (Huddy, 2013; Miller et al., 1981). Place-based resentment is founded on the feeling that one's in-group is being left behind or treated unfairly compared to the out-group. The non-dominant position and accompanying grievance strengthens rural group identity and leads ruralites to resent the urban out-group. Conversely, urbanites do not perceive a threat to their group's status, so they are less resentful of ruralites. Although urban voters may well have subordinate status in relation to other group identities such as race or class, it is unlikely that they experience a feeling of subordination due to their urban belonging. Based on this perspective, we incorporate both in-group and out-group sentiments into our measure of resentment. This way, we are sure to measure the voter's perception of the in-group compared to an out-group, in line with the group consciousness perspective and literature on affective polarization. This approach also accounts for the fact that individuals may simultaneously have grievances towards both rural and urban culture, representation, and resource distribution. As such, we are able to capture those who have a net urban or rural resentment.

To summarize, we expect place-based resentment to be *asymmetric*, in which rural people have stronger resentment and negative affect towards urban out-groups than vice-versa. Our first hypothesis follows.

**H1.** Rural identity is associated with greater place-based resentment than urban identity. The stronger the identity, the greater the resentment.

Political parties and elites also activate social groups. Parties can politicize collective identities in order to attract certain groups of voters. Research suggests that explicitly tying politics to a social group increases the likelihood of engaging the group (Robison et al., 2021; Thau, 2021). Indeed, evidence from the U.S. shows that place-based social group divisions influence partisan voting (Gimpel et al., 2020; Jacobs & Munis, 2022). We can therefore assume that parties that clearly appeal to or stress rural interests and grievances, are more likely to mobilize rural voters. While many party systems combine the rural-urban divide with right-left platforms, the Norwegian party system does not. More specifically, the Center Party is a center-left agrarian party that has historically and recently defended rural interests. We thus expect people with rural resentment to vote for the Center Party in this context.

There is no political movement in Norway that appeals to urban grievances in the same way, although the new leftist block of parties is more electorally successful in urban areas. Findings in other countries show that left partisans feel closer to cosmopolitan and urban residents (Bornschieer et al. 2021; Maxwell, 2020). However, given our assumption that urbanites do not feel their dominant group status to be threatened, we do not expect the new leftist block to mobilize urban resentment. Our second hypotheses is as follows.

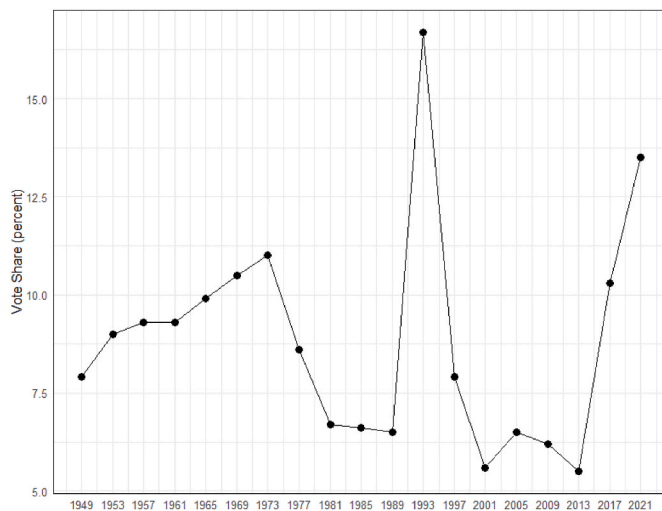


Fig. 1. Center Party's vote share in parliamentary elections.

**H2.** Rural resentment is associated with voting for parties that appeal to rural resentment, whereas urban resentment is more weakly associated with partisan voting.

As some studies have shown that not all aspects of place resentment may influence vote choice equally, we also disaggregate the cultural, political, and economic grievances when looking at their impact on vote choice (e.g., see [Trujillo & Crowley, 2022](#), who differentiates between symbolic versus material concerns).

### 3. Rural-urban divisions in Norway

We study place-based resentment using the case of Norway. Geographic tensions have been historically present in Norwegian politics. Structures and institutions that reinforce differences, distance, and dependence of peripheral populations on cities have shaped people's world views ([Rokkan & Urwin, 1983](#)). In terms of territory, Norway is characterized by great physical distance between people living in the north and the south, where the political center is located (i.e., Oslo). Although 83% of the population live in cities (the same proportion as in the United States), a substantial amount also live in sparsely populated areas.<sup>3</sup>

Geographic tensions arose during the EU-referenda campaigns in 1972 and 1994, in which a majority of Norwegians rejected EU-membership. Rural and peripheral voters were instrumental in both referenda, wanting to protect national sovereignty and the primary sector from competition ([Pettersen et al., 1996](#); [Bjørklund, 1997](#)). As [Fig. 1](#) exhibits, these are years where the agrarian, Center Party reached its highest vote shares after World War II. More recently, the Center party increased its vote share from 5.5% in 2013 to 13.5% in 2021 and entered the national government. This electoral result reflects a resurgence of the geographic conflict.<sup>4</sup>

The declining demographic, and economic base of rural areas and the Norwegian oil-boom have increased the power and wealth of the central state over the past 40 years, leading to greater administrative centralization ([Baldersheim & Fimreite, 2005](#)). The demographic decline has been a particular political concern (exemplified by Official Norwegian Reports such as [NOU, 2020](#)). What is more, [Vik et al. \(2022\)](#) argue that technological change, globalization, and centralization of public

<sup>3</sup> World Bank, World Development Indicators, <http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/world-development-indicators>.

<sup>4</sup> See [Appendix A](#) for more details on the Norwegian party system, and the position of the Center Party in this system.

Table 1

Distribution of identities over objective location.

Location	Rural ID	Urban ID	Total
1 (Most urban)	20.1%	79.9%	100.0%
	65	258	323
2	30.8%	69.2%	100.0%
	127	286	413
3	42.9%	57.1%	100.0%
	137	182	319
4	73.2%	26.8%	100.0%
	150	55	205
5 (Most rural)	85.4%	14.6%	100.0%
	111	19	130
Total %	42.4%	57.6%	100.0%
Total N	590	800	1390

services leads to an alienation of the Norwegian rural population, which is losing work places, services and control over economic resources.

In recent years, the issue of public services in rural areas has received considerable public attention. The Conservative Party-led government (2013–2021) initiated several reforms, including merging municipalities and counties together, as well as centralizing the police force, higher education, and courts. This government argued that larger and stronger units would improve efficiency.

In practice, these reforms relocated public services and corresponding employment opportunities away from rural areas. The Center Party highlighted the disadvantage these reforms had for rural areas. The party communicated in its electoral campaign that it would enter government with the mainstream left and reverse several of these conservative-led structural reforms if their coalition were to win a majority.

The universal Norwegian welfare state ([Esping-Andersen, 1990](#)), on the other hand, might have a blunting effect on rural grievances. The state redistributes enormous resources between wealthy and less wealthy people and places, resulting in low income inequality between rural and urban citizens ([Aaberge et al., 2021](#)). Municipalities deliver about half of all public services, including day care, primary school, health services, and elderly care. They are financially compensated for revenue shortages and running expenses inflicted by demographic and geographic disadvantages, e.g., having a large senior population, delivering services across large, sparsely populated areas, etc. ([NOU, 2020](#), p. 15). Through such transfers, the state tries to ensure that public services are equivalent and equally accessible across the vast Norwegian territory.

In sum, long-run socio-economic structures and national political institutions have accentuated territorial divisions. Political discourse has highlighted the disadvantage of rural areas, which likely heightens rural resentment. On the other hand, the generous Norwegian welfare state compensates rural areas for their underdevelopment, which could dampen tensions.

### 4. Data and measurement

To test our hypotheses, we fielded original survey items in the Norwegian Citizen Panel (NCP), a general population survey that recruits respondents based on a random draw from the National Population Register ([Ivarsflaten et al., 2020-2023](#)).<sup>5</sup> The first set of responses were gathered in the fall of 2020 (wave 19), with a sample size of 2022 respondents. We followed up with additional questions in the spring of 2021 (wave 21), which reduced the sample to 1391, or 69% of our original respondents. Our data is structured as cross-sectional rather

<sup>5</sup> The Norwegian Citizen Panel was financed by the University of Bergen (UiB) and Trond Mohn Foundation (TMS). Data collection was coordinated by UiB, implemented by Ideas2Evidence, and distributed by Sikt and UiB.

**Table 2**  
Distribution of demographic variables in urban/rural location.

Group	1: Most urban	2	3	4	5: Most rural	Total
Male	150 (52%)	184 (49%)	150 (52%)	99 (53%)	53 (49%)	636 (51%)
Female	138 (48%)	188 (51%)	139 (48%)	87 (47%)	56 (51%)	608 (49%)
1959 and older	138 (48%)	176 (47%)	146 (51%)	98 (53%)	59 (54%)	617 (50%)
1960 to 1979	94 (33%)	123 (33%)	106 (37%)	64 (34%)	38 (35%)	425 (34%)
1980 and younger	56 (19%)	73 (20%)	37 (13%)	24 (13%)	12 (11%)	202 (16%)
No higher edu	68 (24%)	114 (31%)	119 (41%)	80 (43%)	49 (45%)	430 (35%)
Higher edu	220 (76%)	258 (69%)	170 (59%)	106 (57%)	60 (55%)	814 (65%)

Rows show N and column percentage. Total shows row N and percentage. Unweighted distribution.

**Table 3**  
Grievance Resentment items.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:
1. People in [villages/cities] don't appreciate life [cities/villages].
2. People in [villages/cities] think more about themselves than what is best for the nation as a whole.
3. Generally speaking, people [villages/cities] get more than their fair share of public resources.
4. People in [village/cities] areas have too much say in Norwegian politics.

**Table 4**  
Trust items.

On a scale of 0–10, how confident are you that ...
rural/urban voters make good decisions?
elected rural/urban politicians make good decisions?

than panel, as the same questions were not asked in multiple waves. The analysis includes survey weights to correct for potential bias (for details about these weights, see: Skjervheim et al., 2020; Skjervheim et al., 2021).

#### 4.1. Measuring place: identity versus location

Our main explanatory variable is place identity. To operationalize this concept, we first asked whether respondents see themselves mainly as an urban or a rural person, which serves as the respondents' in-group. Next, we measure the strength of this place identity by asking four questions that gauge in-group attachment (Appendix Table A2). We use factor analysis to aggregate the four items and employ these latent scores as independent variables in our regressions (See Appendix B; Tables A.3–A.5 for details). The mean score for rural respondents is 0.223 compared to  $-0.168$  for urbanites, which demonstrates that on average, rural identity is stronger than urban identity. This asymmetry in place-identity between ruralites and urbanites has also been documented in other contexts (Borwein & Lucas, 2023; Munis, 2020).

In addition to place-identity, we include the location where the respondent currently lives. Location is a measure of municipal centrality calculated by Statistics Norway and is based on the number of workplaces and services within a 90 min-drive of the respondent's municipality. Originally, there were six ordinal categories in this measure; category 1 contains the most central municipalities located in the greater Oslo area, and category 6 includes the most rural municipalities (Høydahl, 2020). We combine categories 5 and 6 as they are the most rural areas with small populations (and together comprise 9% of the sample).<sup>6</sup> Table 1 shows the distribution of objective location over place identity. In the most urban municipalities, approximately 20% (of category 1) and 30% (of category 2) identify as rural. Category 3

<sup>6</sup> Appendix B.2 contains a map of the distribution of the centrality categories across all municipalities in Norway.

contains more urban versus rural identifiers, whereas category 4 contains a majority of rural identifiers. The most rural category (5) contains the fewest number of urban identifiers. These patterns echo evidence from other countries showing that subjective and objective place measures are not interchangeable. In the U.S., for example, there is a tendency for individuals not living in rural areas to identify as rural (Nemerever & Rogers, 2021; Lunz Trujillo, 2024; Dawkins et al., 2023).

We acknowledge that compositional effects may confound our analysis (Ford & Jennings, 2020; Maxwell, 2019). Urban areas in Norway and elsewhere tend to have greater shares of younger, more highly educated, and females than rural areas (NOU, 2020). Table 2 depicts the distribution (in percentages and raw numbers) of these demographic covariates across location categories in our sample. We find that there is still substantial variation on these socio-economic variables within urban and rural areas. The proportion of males and females are roughly equivalent across all location categories; the two most urban categories have a slightly higher share of younger people (19 and 20% compared to 11% in the most rural areas); most urban areas contain a greater percentage of people with higher education, but again we still find that 55% of respondents in the most rural category have higher education.

#### 4.2. Measuring place resentment

The purpose of our study is to explore the determinants of place resentment and to examine the effect of this resentment on voting. As our central concept, we include six items capturing place-based resentment. We first employ four questions on grievances related to culture, political representation, and resources (cf. Cramer, 2016; Munis, 2020). As displayed in Table 3, Question 1 captures respect for urban and rural lifestyles; question 2 captures perceptions of group selfishness; question 3 captures fair distribution of public resources; question 4 captures the equality of political representation. Respondents were asked to rate their in-group and their out-group for each question on a six-point scale that ranges from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." In-group and out-group attitudes were asked in different waves for three out of four questions to minimize potential bias.<sup>7</sup> We also measure resentment as trust towards politicians and voters (similar to Druckman and Levendusky (2019) who looked at polarization) as presented in Table 4, where the response scales ranged from 0 (no confidence) to 10 (full confidence). Trust items were asked in wave 21. Figs. 2 and 3 display the mean scores of in-group and out-group attitudes across each item for urban and rural identifiers.

Resentment is operationalized as the difference between an individual's in-group and out-group ratings. The scores for the four grievances thus range from  $-5$  to  $5$ , with positive values indicating

<sup>7</sup> In Wave 19 of the NCP, respondents were randomly assigned to rate their in-group or out-group (rural or urban) according to the first three items. In wave 21 they were asked about the opposite group. Item 4 (political representation question) was only asked in wave 21, so respondents got both in-group and out-group prompts in that wave.



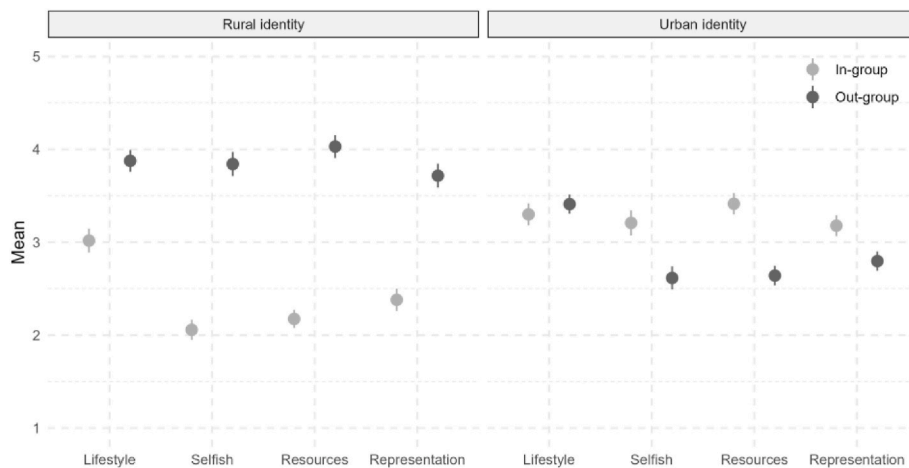


Fig. 2. Grievance resentment.

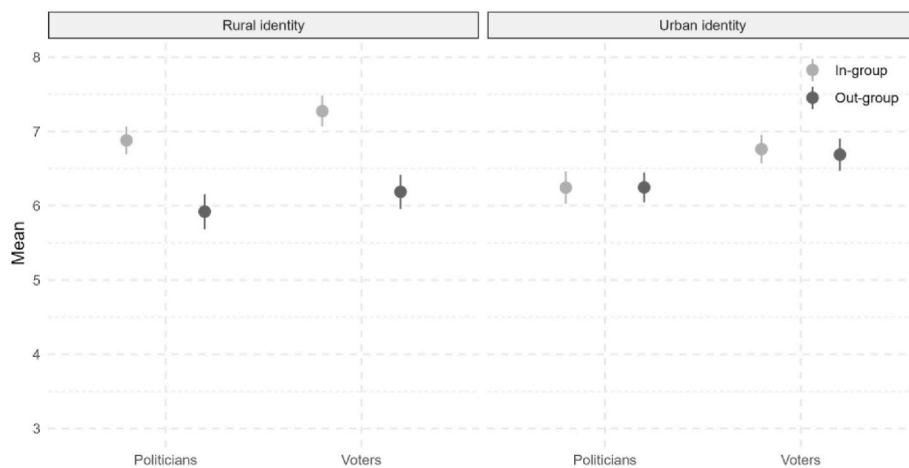


Fig. 3. Trust resentment.

greater resentment.<sup>8</sup> Since the trust items were measured on a 10-point scale, trust resentment thus ranges from -10 to 10, with positive values indicating higher resentment.

Our strategy to test H1 has two steps. First, we examine the mean values of the six resentment items by in-group and out-group for rural and urban identifiers. Second, we use regression analysis to examine the determinants (place identity, location, and other demographic covariates) of this resentment. To test H2, the effect of resentment on vote choice, we combine the four grievance resentment items into a latent variable to represent overall resentment (see Appendix B.3 for further details), in addition to testing the separate effect of each grievance.

#### 4.3. Additional variables

To test how resentment affects voting, we include the respondent's vote choice in the most recent parliamentary election. Vote choice was asked in Wave 22 of the NCP (November 2021) following the election in September 2021. We employ a multinomial logistic regression to contrast voting for the Center Party with voting for the mainstream left (Labor Party), mainstream right (Conservative Party), the radical left

(Red Party and Socialist Left Party), radical right (Progress Party), and "others" (Liberal Party, Christian Democrats, and Green party, as each gained less than 5% of total votes).<sup>9</sup> Our analysis in the following section also incorporates covariates that have been found to affect resentment and voting (Borwein & Lucas, 2023; Munis, 2020). We include gender, age, education, income, and left-right self-placement. Appendix B.5 contains descriptive statistics for all variables.

## 5. Results

### 5.1. Asymmetric place resentment

Fig. 2 shows the weighted means for the grievance resentment items (Appendix B.6 includes further details).<sup>10</sup> The results are in line with the idea of asymmetric place-based resentment. For rural respondents, the differences between in-group and out-group sentiment are statistically significant in the expected directions. The cultural lifestyle grievance engenders less net resentment than the other grievances. Resentment

<sup>8</sup> We recoded the scale so that higher values indicate greater resentment.

<sup>9</sup> See Appendix Table A1 for election results, and Table A.10 for distribution of vote choice in the sample. In addition, we present the mean level of resentment for all voter groups in Appendix B.7.

<sup>10</sup> Survey weights are used to compensate for bias in the sample and are based on age, gender, education, and location. More details are available in the NCP methodological reports.

**Table 5**  
Determinants of Grievance Resentment (weighted and robust std.err.).

	Lifestyle	Lifestyle	Selfish	Selfish	Reso.	Reso.	Repr.	Repr.
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Rural ID		0.80*** (0.13)		2.21*** (0.14)		2.51*** (0.14)		1.51*** (0.12)
\Place ID-strength		0.18 (0.10)		0.30** (0.11)		0.21* (0.09)		0.12 (0.07)
Rural x ID-strength		0.23 (0.16)		0.52*** (0.16)		0.45** (0.14)		0.50*** (0.12)
Location 1: Most urban	ref	ref	ref	ref	ref	ref	ref	ref
2	-0.31 (0.16)	-0.43** (0.16)	-0.15 (0.21)	-0.47* (0.18)	-0.16 (0.21)	-0.53** (0.18)	-0.12 (0.14)	-0.35** (0.13)
3	-0.23 (0.17)	-0.43* (0.17)	-0.14 (0.21)	-0.69*** (0.19)	-0.20 (0.21)	-0.84*** (0.18)	-0.18 (0.16)	-0.58*** (0.15)
4	0.22 (0.19)	-0.32 (0.21)	1.09*** (0.23)	-0.33 (0.21)	1.12*** (0.23)	-0.44* (0.21)	0.80*** (0.18)	-0.20 (0.18)
5: Most rural	0.26 (0.23)	-0.54* (0.25)	2.00*** (0.25)	-0.02 (0.25)	1.86*** (0.24)	-0.27 (0.25)	1.38*** (0.20)	-0.05 (0.22)
Female	0.07 (0.13)	0.06 (0.12)	-0.26 (0.16)	-0.27* (0.13)	-0.25 (0.16)	-0.24 (0.13)	-0.03 (0.12)	-0.03 (0.11)
Higher edu	-0.29* (0.12)	-0.17 (0.12)	-0.26 (0.16)	0.02 (0.14)	-0.21 (0.16)	0.08 (0.13)	-0.26* (0.12)	-0.07 (0.10)
Born 1959 and earlier	ref	ref	ref	ref	ref	ref	ref	ref
1960 to 1979	0.17 (0.13)	0.20 (0.12)	0.26 (0.17)	0.30* (0.14)	0.11 (0.17)	0.12 (0.13)	-0.02 (0.14)	-0.00 (0.12)
1980 and younger	0.07 (0.16)	0.23 (0.15)	-0.19 (0.20)	0.16 (0.15)	-0.26 (0.21)	0.05 (0.16)	-0.29 (0.16)	-0.07 (0.14)
Income	0.01 (0.04)	0.02 (0.03)	0.07 (0.05)	0.07 (0.04)	0.03 (0.05)	0.03 (0.03)	0.04 (0.03)	0.04 (0.03)
Left-right	-0.02 (0.03)	-0.02 (0.02)	0.03 (0.03)	0.02 (0.03)	0.03 (0.04)	0.02 (0.03)	0.02 (0.03)	0.01 (0.02)
Intercept	0.46 (0.34)	0.22 (0.31)	0.24 (0.39)	-0.38 (0.33)	0.44 (0.44)	-0.25 (0.36)	0.23 (0.31)	-0.19 (0.28)
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0.02	0.11	0.13	0.41	0.12	0.43	0.11	0.33
Num. obs.	1244	1244	1244	1244	1244	1244	1244	1244

\*\*\**p* < 0.001; \*\**p* < 0.01; \**p* < 0.05.

over unfair resource distribution is associated with the greatest resentment among rural respondents. Rural identifiers agree more to the perception that they are disrespectful towards lifestyle than the sentiment that they receive more resources than they deserve. On average, rural identifiers rate their out-group 1.46 (out of 6) points higher than the in-group. Urban respondents display a strikingly different pattern. The difference between in-group and out-group sentiment is not significant for the cultural lifestyle item. For the other items, urbanites are actually more hostile towards their in-group compared to their out-group, and these differences are statistically significant. There seems to be a certain level of recognition of the rural grievances among urban identifiers.

Trust-based resentment follows a similar pattern as grievance resentment but is more moderate. Rural voters are significantly less trusting of urban politicians and voters. Druckman and Levendusky (2019) found greater affective partisan polarization in the U.S. when the object was trust in politicians compared to voters. We do not find that rural voters are less trusting towards their out-group voters compared to their out-group politicians. Our results indicate that trust-based place resentment in Norway is weaker than grievance-based resentment. Overall, the results so far support H1; place-resentment is asymmetric and driven by rural individuals.

### 5.2. Determinants of place resentment

To test H1 further, we examine the extent to which place identities and objective location affect resentment, with the inclusion of other relevant covariates. Table 5 displays eight models in which each of the four grievance items is first regressed on objective location and ideology, and other demographic covariates. In separate models, we add place identity (rural/urban), identity strength, and an interaction term to unpack the effect of rural versus urban identities. In the models without

place identity, we observe that respondents living in increasingly rural areas (categories 4 and 5) are more resentful (although the coefficients are not significant for the lifestyle item). However, in the models that include place identity and identity strength, the effect of living in rural areas dissipates, as coefficient estimates of the most rural areas are no longer significant and positive. Instead, place identity is consistently significant and confirms that rural identifiers are more resentful than urban identifiers across all four items. For the selfishness and fair resources items (models 4 and 6), self-identifying as rural instead of urban increases resentment by over two points on a ten-point range. Place identity thus appears to be more influential than objective location.

Moving to the interaction term, does the effect of place identity strength vary across rural and urban groups? The answer is yes. Fig. 4 depicts the marginal effects of identity strength on resentment, holding the other covariates constant. On average, rural and urban respondents with the weakest identities are less resentful and these place groups do not differ from each other. As identity strength increases, however, rural individuals become more resentful than urbanites at the same level of identity strength. This is yet another testament to the asymmetric nature of place-based resentment. It also supports the notion of an identity-driven resentment, as stronger identities are associated with stronger resentment, at least for rural identifiers. If place-based identities did not matter, resentment would not change with the level of identity strength. The gap between rural and urban resentment in regard to group selfishness and unfair resource allocation is largest, whereas respecting each other's lifestyles is the smallest.

Looking at trust-based resentment, we also find that individuals living in rural areas are resentful of urban voters, but not urban politicians (Table 6). Further, when we add place identity to the models (Models 2 and 4), the positive effect of objective location dissipates, while rural identifiers are more resentful than urban identifiers by approximately 1 point on a 20-point scale. The interaction term between

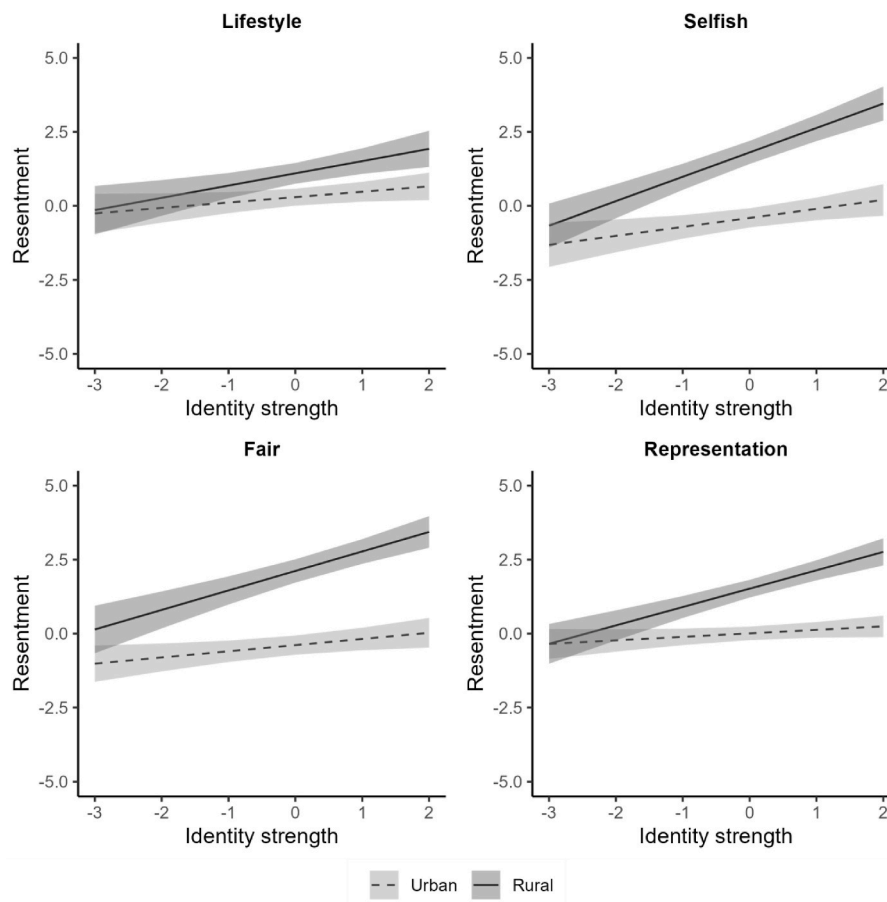


Fig. 4. Place grievance resentment over identity strength.

place identity and identity strength is not significant. Fig. 5 illustrates that at higher levels of identity strength, voter resentment does not significantly differ between urban and rural identifiers. There is, however, a small but significant difference in resentment between the two place groups at the highest levels of identity strength in regard to trust in politicians.

The other covariates are not significantly associated with grievance-based or trust-based resentment in a consistent way. Respondents with a rural identity are thus more resentful, even as we control for their location, gender, education, age, income, and ideology. In contrast to findings from other countries (Borwein & Lucas, 2023; Trujillo & Crowley, 2022) left-right self-placement has no effect on grievance resentment and only a miniscule effect on trust resentment (Models 1 and 2).

In sum, the findings strongly support H1, stating that rural identity is associated with greater place-based resentment than the urban identity. They also suggest that place-based resentment is driven by subjective perceptions more than actual location. What is more, rural voters seem to be most resentful about not getting their fair share of resources despite extensive and targeted redistribution of public resources to rural areas.

### 5.3. Vote choice

Following H2, we conduct a multinomial regression which regresses party vote choice on our latent measure of overall place-based resentment (combining all four grievance items)(See regression table in

Appendix C).<sup>11</sup> Fig. 6 displays predicted probabilities of voting for different parties (Y-axis) over the range of grievance resentment (X-axis). A striking result appears in the top-left panel. Holding all other variables constant, when resentment is zero, the probability for rural voters to vote for the Center Party is 9%. This probability jumps to 46% when rural resentment reaches its maximum level of 8. There is no similar pattern for the other parties, although we see a steep decline in the likelihood of voting for the mainstream left as rural resentment increases. In contrast to other countries, rural resentment in Norway is not associated with right or radical right voting (Jacobs & Munis, 2022; Rodriguez-Pose, 2018; Trujillo & Crowley, 2022). Urban resentment is not strongly associated with vote choice for any party.

The findings demonstrate the salience of rural resentment on voting behavior and support H2. In 2021, The Center Party seems to have effectively linked rural identity and resentment to partisanship, greatly contributing to its electoral performance. By contrast, urban resentment does not affect vote choice. Although previous studies from other countries have linked urban voters to left-wing parties, our findings suggest that these preferences are unrelated to urban resentment vis-a-vis rural voters.

#### 5.3.1. Voting agrarian and types of grievances

Taking into account the asymmetric effect of place resentment on vote choice (i.e., place resentment affects rural vote choice but not urban voting), and the possibility that there are differences between types of resentment, we unpack rural voting in more detail. Table 7 includes only rural voters in the sample and separates the effect of each grievance

<sup>11</sup> The model explains 35% of the variation in vote choice.

**Table 6**  
Determinants of Trust Resentment (weighted and robust std.err.).

	Trust voters (1)	Trust voters (2)	Trust politicians (3)	Trust politicians (4)
Rural ID		0.88*** (0.18)		0.96*** (0.14)
Place ID-strength		0.41 (0.22)		0.27* (0.13)
Rural x ID-strength		0.16 (0.27)		0.31 (0.18)
Location 1: Most urban	ref	ref	ref	ref
2	-0.10 (0.19)	-0.19 (0.21)	-0.06 (0.18)	-0.19 (0.18)
3	-0.04 (0.19)	-0.22 (0.18)	-0.04 (0.19)	-0.26 (0.19)
4	0.48* (0.21)	-0.12 (0.23)	0.19 (0.21)	-0.48* (0.22)
5: Most rural	0.73*** (0.22)	-0.20 (0.29)	0.40 (0.25)	-0.60* (0.29)
Female	0.10 (0.15)	0.07 (0.14)	0.02 (0.13)	-0.00 (0.12)
Higher edu	-0.21 (0.14)	-0.04 (0.13)	-0.25 (0.14)	-0.10 (0.13)
Born 1959 and earlier	ref	ref	ref	ref
1960 to 1979	0.22 (0.17)	0.29 (0.16)	0.29 (0.16)	0.33* (0.15)
1980 and younger	0.31 (0.21)	0.55* (0.24)	0.33* (0.16)	0.54** (0.17)
Income	-0.02 (0.04)	-0.01 (0.04)	-0.02 (0.03)	-0.01 (0.03)
Left-right	0.08* (0.03)	0.07* (0.03)	0.03 (0.03)	0.03 (0.03)
Intercept	-0.10 (0.35)	-0.38 (0.35)	0.19 (0.31)	-0.09 (0.28)
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0.03	0.14	0.01	0.13
Num. obs.	1244	1244	1244	1244

\*\*\* $p < 0.001$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \* $p < 0.05$ .

resentment item on voting for the Center Party. Models 2–5 show that greater resentment for each item positively affects voting for the Center Party. This contrasts with findings from the U.S. where the dimensions of place resentment may not scale together, and vote choice is predicted by respect or symbolic concerns only (Trujillo & Crowley, 2022). We find that all types of resentment are significantly associated with voting for the Center Party. If anything, the tendency is that resource resentment is more influential on voting for the agrarian Center Party than resentment over lifestyle. This finding is again striking, when we consider the substantial amount of resources that the Norwegian welfare

state redistributes to rural areas to compensate for their underdevelopment. Subjective perceptions about not receiving your fair share thus strongly drive vote choice for people who identify as rural, whereas objectively living in the most rural areas is less important. The only other covariates to be significantly associated with voting Center Party are gender, education, and age.

### 6. Discussion

This article has explored the nature and impact of place-based

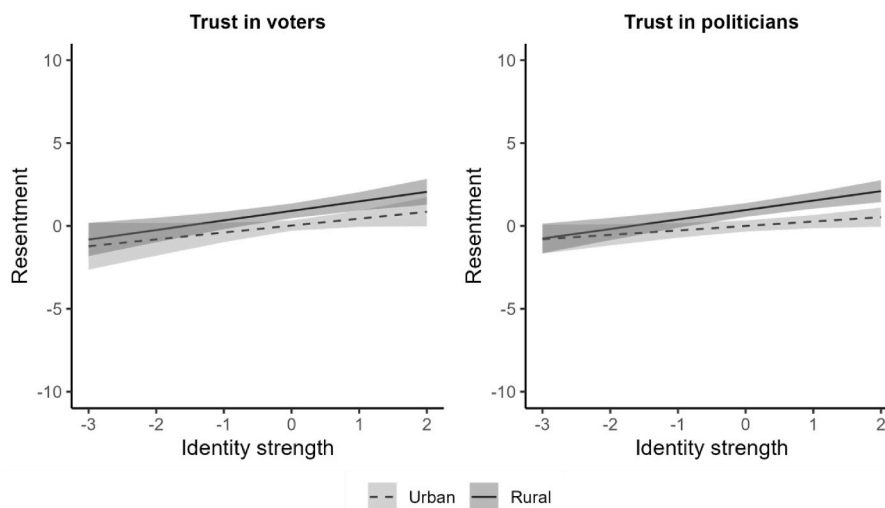


Fig. 5. Place resentment over identity strength.



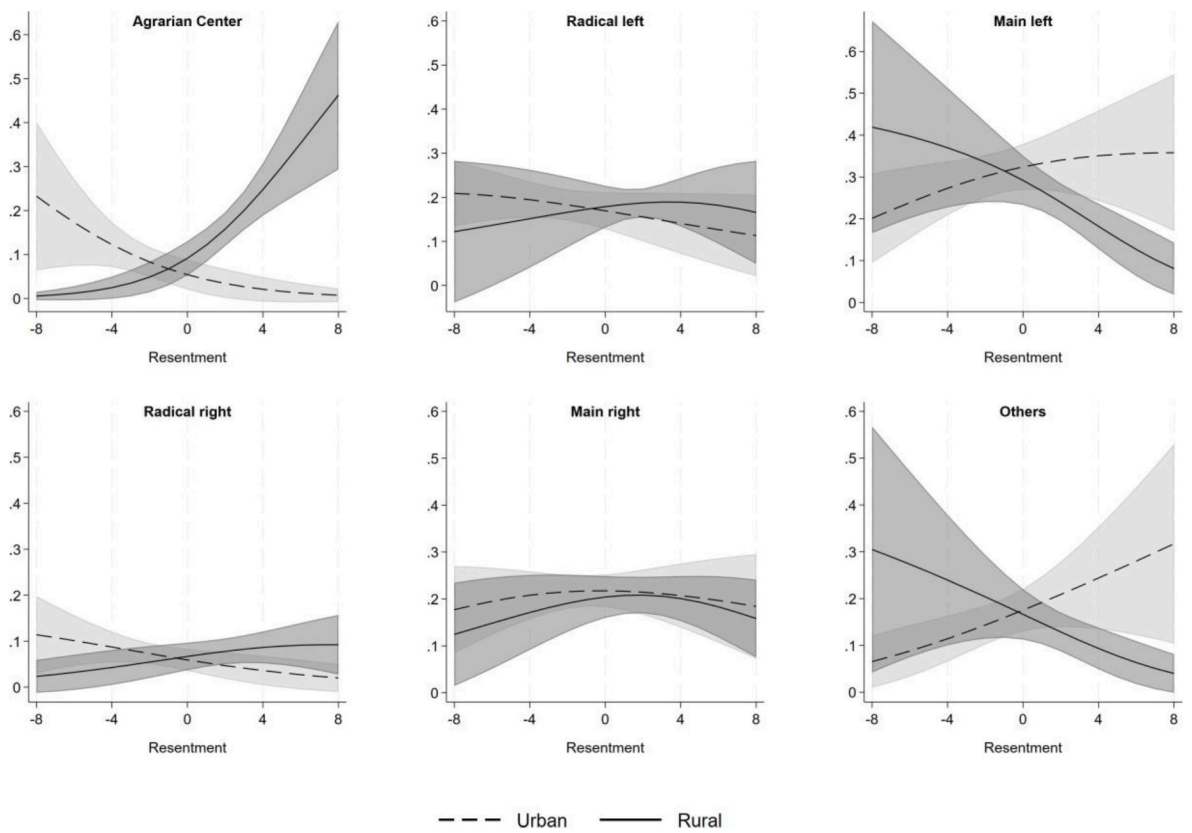


Fig. 6. Predicted probability of voting over place-based resentment.

**Table 7**  
Logistic regression: Predicting voting for the Center Party in the 2021 election.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	Vote Center	Vote Center	Vote Center	Vote Center	Vote Center
Rural resentment score	0.329*** (0.076)				
Respect		0.272* (0.110)			
Selfish			0.441*** (0.116)		
Resources				0.507*** (0.122)	
Representation					0.361** (0.112)
1: Most urban	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.
2	0.338 (0.656)	0.626 (0.675)	0.524 (0.685)	0.343 (0.638)	0.383 (0.724)
3	0.048 (0.613)	0.385 (0.654)	0.248 (0.641)	0.084 (0.594)	0.014 (0.700)
4	0.981 (0.611)	1.397* (0.636)	1.155 (0.636)	1.067 (0.591)	1.053 (0.715)
5: Most rural	0.239 (0.660)	0.892 (0.667)	0.399 (0.676)	0.361 (0.647)	0.356 (0.741)
Female	-0.654 (0.335)	-0.819* (0.323)	-0.627 (0.329)	-0.676* (0.341)	-0.590 (0.323)
Higher edu	-0.872* (0.368)	-0.972** (0.356)	-0.915* (0.357)	-0.986** (0.367)	-1.033** (0.375)
1959 and older	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.	ref.
1960 to 1979	0.366 (0.398)	0.487 (0.381)	0.369 (0.390)	0.376 (0.390)	0.523 (0.382)
1980 and younger	-1.575** (0.609)	-1.658* (0.716)	-1.615* (0.668)	-1.647* (0.664)	-1.298* (0.627)
Income	-0.118 (0.109)	-0.119 (0.103)	-0.145 (0.105)	-0.105 (0.109)	-0.117 (0.107)
Left-right placement	0.018 (0.068)	0.035 (0.062)	0.014 (0.065)	0.044 (0.067)	0.012 (0.063)
Constant	-1.026 (0.984)	-0.632 (1.015)	-1.122 (0.969)	-1.379 (1.029)	-0.879 (1.002)
Observations	425	425	425	425	425
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.209	0.151	0.191	0.197	0.171

Robust standard errors in parentheses.

Weighted results. Source: The Norwegian Citizen Panel.

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

resentment in a multi-party, egalitarian welfare state. Operationalizing this concept in six ways, the results show that place-based resentment is asymmetric. Rural voters harbor greater resentment towards urbanites, and this resentment increases with the strength of rural identity. Building on Cramer (2016) and Munis (2020) from the U.S. context, we similarly find rural resentment over cultural, economic, and political grievances in Norway. To a lesser degree, but still evident, we find that rural resentment manifests as lower political trust towards out-group voters and politicians. Further, place-based resentment influences rural vote choice, in ways not previously shown before. In Norway, this resentment benefited the agrarian Center Party in 2021.

In response to current debates in the American and West European scholarship, our findings show that rural resentment can develop in contexts where rural voters are not economically marginalized. Despite redistributive public policies that heavily compensate rural areas for their relative underdevelopment, a sense of unfair resource distribution remains a major source of resentment. While rural Norwegians have a safety net in the welfare state, demographic and industrial decline may still induce a sense of loss and alienation, especially as people watch cities benefit from rural brain-drain, the oil boom, and the strong service sector. If this is the case, then place-based resentment will endure, as these demographic and structural shifts are hard to counter-act

politically. Administrative reforms seeking to meet these challenges by centralizing public services and merging sub-national units, as the Norwegian state has undertaken, may instead reinforce the grievances of rural residents.

We also contribute to existing knowledge by demonstrating that rural resentment need not strengthen the right, which is contrary to what previous research has found (Arzheimer & Bernemann, 2024; Huijsmans, 2022; Jacobs & Munis, 2022; Rodriguez-Pose, 2018; Trujillo & Crowley, 2022). We showed that the center-left Center Party successfully mobilized rural voters in 2021 – a party that entered government with the mainstream left. The party campaigned on rural grievances, especially the resistance against structural reforms, initiated by the center-right government, that centralized public services. How the egalitarian welfare state redistributes resources between people and places might partly explain both why material concerns affect vote choice, and why this resentment is channeled towards voting for the center-left Center Party. In Norway, rural voters’ economic interests are tied to the existence of the welfare state, through the extensive schemes described, and could contribute to their support of a party that sees state intervention as part of the solution to improve the lives of rural people. The campaign referred to both rural voters having a voice about decisions that affect their everyday lives, and to material concerns such as having public services close to where they live. While on the surface it appears somewhat paradoxical that material grievances are influential in Norway and not the US, with this backdrop it is not necessarily surprising that both symbolic and material rural grievances predict voting for the Center Party in Norway. That material concerns did not affect vote choice in the U.S. (Trujillo & Crowley, 2022), could be a result of the way parties or candidates communicated about such grievances.

Our findings therefore highlight the value of employing several measures of resentment when examining its strength and influence across contexts. Yet, our understanding of place-based resentment might benefit from more theory development regarding the interpretation of these different measures. With our additional items which also capture in-group resentment, we discover that rural identifiers are more likely to believe the lifestyle resentment work both ways – they perceive that their in-group is less likely to recognize the culture of urban areas, while that is not the pattern when it comes to the other types of resentment. One interpretation is that resources and representation are considered as a zero-sum game, where the gain for urban areas leads to loss for the rural areas.

To what extent it is likely that we will find the same connection between rural resentment and voting for the center-left outside of Norway is debatable. Historically the Center Party has had issue ownership of rural issues, the mainstream left Labor Party has also been successful in some peripheries, while the right is more popular in semi-urban and urban areas. In many other contexts, this pattern, as mentioned, is reversed, as rural voters and rural resentment are aligned with the right. It is probable that both party history, party system, and party appeals influence how this resentment manifests presently and in the future. Further studies should investigate how parties convey rural grievances across contexts and clarify the role parties and party systems play in reinforcing place-identities and resentment.

While we find effects of rural resentment on voting for the Center Party in 2021 election, it is limited what we can say about other elections in Norway, meaning that we do not know how this has developed over time. Rural issues were particularly salient in the years leading up to this particular election and might have played out differently if other parties were able to take issue ownership of rural grievances. What the results do show is that it is not a general rule that rural resentment must benefit the populist radical right, and that rural or agrarian parties can be well-placed to mobilize this type of resentment or consciousness.

Lastly, the findings also speak to the broader literature on social identities by examining the difference between in-group and out-group group resentment among a subordinate and a dominant group. We find a striking pattern of unequal antagonism. This is broadly in line with the

literature on group consciousness which states that perceptions of group grievances are key for group mobilization (Huddy, 2013). Following our findings and previous literature on social identities, the consequent asymmetry in place-resentment likely relates to the strength and salience of the rural identity, and the dominant position of the urban group and lack of threat to their group's status (see also Haffert et al., 2023, for a similar argument). We also show that a dominant group, urbanites, in some cases are less resentful toward ruralites than their in-group, and recognize the out-group grievances. One possibility is that the urban identity is not a familiar concept to voters and other social identities are more salient for urbanites, that again leads to a low out-group animosity. Another possibility is that Norwegian culture reinforces sympathy for rural people because many urban voters still have rural roots, fostering more alignment with rural identifiers. Only further cross-national research measuring resentment towards both in-group and out-group can answer to what extent this pattern is widespread.

### CRedit authorship contribution statement

**Kiran Rose Auerbach:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Marta R. Eidheim:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Visualization, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Conceptualization. **Anne Lise Fimreite:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Conceptualization.

### Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that there is no competing interest.

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### Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2024.103161>.

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