



What does Suburbia Vote for? Changed Settlement Patterns and Political Preference in three European Countries

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Abstract

Suburbanisation has radically changed the European landscape in the 20th century: A significant share of the population now lives in places that could be defined as suburbs instead of inner cities, small towns and villages, or the countryside. However, when it comes to questions concerning the built environment and the political sphere, a large part of political research only distinguishes between urban and rural, even though metropolitan regions now include a multitude of different places with their own characteristics and associated political beliefs and interests. Urban-suburban divergences in political preference are examined considering the close relationship between the built environment and patterns of daily life. The dissertation incorporates the idea of the social construction of spaces into an explanation of suburban electoral preferences. The study demonstrates that urban-suburban divergences are substantially based on diverging patterns of daily use of spaces, as well as to different lifestyles in the middle class. First, family patterns are clearly related to the building density of the place of residence. It is postulated that in less densely constructed and populated municipalities, the organisation of daily life is easier in a breadwinner-housekeeper pattern, which is in turn linked to conservative political preferences. Second, urban inhabitants tend to rely more on public services than suburbanites, while right-wing conservative parties tend to favour the limitation of public services.

**Jury:**

Richard Rose (University of Strathclyde), Alexander H. Trechsel (EUI, Supervisor), Maarit Ströbele (Candidate), Martin Kohli (EUI), R. Alan Walks (University of Toronto, by videoconference)

Bio

Maarit Felicitas Ströbele (* 25 October 1980). Since April 2012: post-doctoral researcher at the Swiss Federal Institute for Snow, Forest and Landscape Research WSL, research project „Spatial demands of society“, examining the Swiss population’s residential and landscape preferences with both a survey and qualitative research. 2007-2012 Doctoral programme at the European University Institute EUI in Florence. 2001-2007: Studies of Political science, international law, and history of art and architecture at the University of Zurich (Switzerland) and the University of Turin (Italy). Master’s thesis (Lizentiatsarbeit) at the University of Zurich on governance and democracy in urban planning for former industrial areas in Zurich and Turin. Work experience at Swiss daily newspapers and a think tank working on communication and urban planning issues. Publications and presentations on suburbanisation and individual political preference, measurement of residence in social surveys, residential preferences, and citizen participation in the redevelopment of former industrial sites.