

# **A Cleavage Perspective on European Party Competition**

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## **Abstract**

The rise of a new transnational divide on immigration and Europe raises fundamental questions about the character of party competition and the causal bases of voting. Using eight waves of ESS data for 2002–2016, we find that those who vote for political parties established on the new cleavage—green and TAN parties—have more structured partisan preferences than supporters of mainstream political parties. The transnational divide has narrowed the political options for tackling Europe’s crises, and these crises, in turn, have accelerated the restructuring of party competition.

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Europe's politics and policy have been swept up in a deep divide about the meaning and implications of transnational community. This divide has its roots in institutional reforms beginning in the 1990s that opened up states to trade, immigration, and international authority. One side embraces open societies and international governance; the other favors strengthening national control over external forces. This conflict about transnationalism is cultural as well as economic.

The Eurocrisis, migration, and Brexit have made the political implications of the divide starkly transparent, but the conflict predates these crises. So we need to ask how the political conflict over transnationalism has come into being and whether it takes the form of a social as well as a political divide.

If conflict over transnationalism is a new dimension of conflict, is it more than just a series of issues on which individuals and political parties have transient preferences? Is the conflict evidence of dealignment, of diminishing association between party competition and social structure? Or is this a new cleavage that juxtaposes socially distinctive groups? The answer bears directly on our understanding of how political parties have responded to Europe's crises and how, in turn, these crises have affected the structure of political conflict.

Our point of departure is the classic cleavage model, and in the next section, we discuss alternative ways of explaining its decline. In the following sections, we argue how transnationalism has generated social conflict that escapes the old left-right divide, and we set out expectations for why and when political parties have socially distinct constituencies on the new divide. We then put our cleavage argument to the test: we compare the extent to which voters and parties are structured by higher education, occupation, rural/urban location, religion, and gender across the old and new divides, pooling cross-national data from eight waves of the European Social Survey. We find that conventional parties on the left-right have become much less socially structured. However, parties on the socio-cultural transnational divide – GAL (green, alternative, libertarian) and TAN (traditionalist, authoritarian, nationalist)— have sharply divergent social bases. In the conclusion, we reflect on how this transnational divide has narrowed the parameters for tackling Europe's crises, and in turn how Europe's crises have accelerated the restructuring of party competition in Europe.

## **Dealignment or a new divide?**

The point of departure for theorizing party competition is the decline of the historical cleavages described by Lipset and Rokkan in their 1967 paper. The decline appears to be over-determined (Dalton et al. 1984; Franklin et al. 1992; Knutsen 2006; van der Brug 2010). The closed social milieus that bonded voters to parties no longer exist. The decline of religion, the diversification of working life, and greater occupational and spatial mobility have weakened the social ties that bind individuals to traditional social strata. Individuals lead lives that are only tenuously encased by durable and homogenous social groupings. Trade unions have declined. Fewer people go to church. Economic transformation has muddied the class divide. Social change points in the same direction. Mass education has increased political sophistication, and this arguably loosens the

effect of social background while enhancing individual choice. Because these trends are time-bound, their effect appears to increase with each new generation of voters (van der Brug 2010; Walzcak et al. 2012).

There are two ways of making sense of this. One is to conceive the decline of traditional cleavages as part of an ongoing process of dealignment in which political choice becomes short-term and oriented to particular issues or personalities. Political preferences become a matter of *individual* choice (Franklin et al. 1992; Dalton 2007). Political parties compete to attract voters by strategically framing manifestos, making populist overtures, and having appealing candidates. In short, dealignment produces destructure in which political parties are no longer defined by the stable support of specific social groups, but instead fish for voters in a fluid political environment. Destructure should be particularly strong among educated voters, who possess greater cognitive resources to judge issue positions and leaders for themselves. It should also be strongest among younger generations, who have come of age in an era of loosening social moorings.

Another view is to conceive the weakening of traditional cleavages as a phase in the re-articulation of political conflict (Dalton 2018; Inglehart 1977; Kriesi 1998; Kriesi et al. 2006; Bornschieer 2010; Hooghe and Marks 2018). This literature emphasizes the growing salience of value conflict. Cultural issues—postmaterialism, individual lifestyle choice, multiculturalism, immigration—have produced a dimension of political conflict that is only loosely associated with traditional left-right competition. Inglehart (1971, p. 991) diagnoses a “transformation ... in the political cultures of advanced industrial societies, [which] seems to be altering the basic value priorities of given generations, as a result of changing conditions influencing their basic socialization.” Kitschelt (1988, 1995) relates these patterns of value change to the rise of green and radical right parties. Kriesi (1998, p. 180) highlights “the emergence of yet another new cleavage – the cleavage opposing the new middle-class winners of the transformation of Western European societies to the group of losers of the very same process.” Inglehart and Norris (2016, p. 4) observe that “the silent revolution launched in the 1970s seems to have spawned a resentful counter-revolutionary backlash today.”

To say that a divide is cultural does not settle whether it has a basis in social structure. Values and social structure can be complementary explanations for political conflict. Cleavage theory theorizes an intimate connection between values and social structure. It conceives value conflict as structured by social divides that have a lasting impact on the formation of social movements and political parties (Bartolini and Mair 1990). These divides arise from large-scale processes that shape the lives and the livelihoods of those in a society. Lipset and Rokkan (1967) identify three: the building of national states across Europe from the sixteenth century, the emergence of Protestantism in Northern Europe from the seventeenth century, and the industrial revolution from the nineteenth century.

Old divides may lose the power to shape human relations as the socializing effect of prior institutions attenuates from generation to generation. As prior divides exhaust their shaping force, there is the ever-present possibility that a new cleavage arises to overlay the old. The organizations that reinforced the religious and class cleavage have declined, but there is reason

to suspect that political parties competing on the new cultural divide have distinct constituencies with recognizable social characteristics.

This is the basis for neo-cleavage theory (Hooghe and Marks 2018). The chief propositions of neo-cleavage theory are that the dynamism in party systems arises from exogenous social change; that the party-political response comes chiefly in the form of new political parties that rise on a new cleavage; and that processes of alignment and dealignment coexist as new divides become solidified among voters while old divides lose causal power. Neo-cleavage theory does not anticipate a wholesale restructuring of the electorate. A significant amount of volatility is likely to persist alongside structuration. This is because transnationalism concerns certain social categories more than others, and it is those most directly affected who are most likely to form intense, durable political allegiances.

## A transnational cleavage

At the core of the contemporary cultural divide is a sharp rise in transnationalism with profound social and economic consequences. Transnationalism advanced in a series of reforms following the Reagan-Thatcher years that opened up Western societies to immigration and trade. In the process, and particularly in Europe, the architecture of political life was transformed. The Single European Act and the Maastricht Treaty reconceived Europe as a political union with common citizenship and a single currency. Ten Eastern European countries joined the EU in the mid-2000s. The end of the Cold War released in Europe alone the westward migration of one hundred million people, and many more from the African continent. From the 1990s to the present, major indices of transnationalism, including foreign investment, trade, and immigration have grown at historically high rates. National borders have been perforated by immigration, international trade, and by the melding of states in a multilevel EU polity (Hooghe et al. 2019).

Transnationalism is combustible because immigration, trade, and European integration are *political* choices that profoundly affect people's lives (Hooghe et al. 2018; Zürn 2018). The intermixing of peoples with diverse beliefs, norms, and behavior holds the potential for intense conflict. To this one may add the economic consequences, because transnationalism tends to benefit those with human and financial capital, while those who lack capital experience greater competition for jobs and housing. From the perspective of cultural and economic losers, transnationalism has devalued national citizenship.

The divide pits those who defend national ways of life from external influence against those who conceive their identities as consistent with international governance and who welcome, rather than oppose, the dense interpenetration of societies (Hooghe and Marks 2018, p. 2). Public opinion is sharply divided on immigration, European integration, and transnationalism (De Vries 2018; van Elsas et al. 2016; Hooghe and Marks 2009; Rooduijn et al. 2017).

There are signs that this divide is producing new political parties with distinctive social constituencies (Aichholzer et al. 2014; Bornschier 2010; Hobolt and Tilley 2016; Häusermann and

Kriesi 2015; Hutter et al. 2016; Lubbers and Coenders 2017; Rohrschneider and Whitefield 2016). Radical nationalist parties, or TAN parties, mobilize stark opposition to immigration and European integration and drive one side of this divide. Green parties, or GAL parties, take the most pronounced transnationalist positions.<sup>1</sup>

Occupation and class were the chief social markers that sorted individuals on the left-right divide. What kind of social characteristics structure political choice on the transnational divide?

Education appears key on the new divide. Higher education is associated with attitudes sympathetic to transnationalism, including tolerance for ethno-cultural diversity and positive views on European integration (Ceobanu and Escandell 2010; Hakhverdian et al. 2013; Hainmueller and Hiscox 2006). Education is also a path to economic security in a transnational world. It is worth noting that education seems to be more a marker than a cause. Panel studies suggest that acquiring education has little effect on a person's political affinities over time (Kuhn et al. 2017; Lancee and Sarrasin 2015). Instead, education tells one about a person's parents, how a person was raised, and a person's station in life—in short, it tells us something important about a person's social and material background.

The role of education in the neo-cleavage model contrasts sharply with the expectation, central to dealignment theory, that education erodes social structuration. With the expansion of mass education, dealignment theorists suggest more and more voters have gained cognitive capacity to make their own choices, to act on their political preferences as individuals, rather than members of a group. Education, in short, releases a person from the chains of inherited social structure.

The two sides on the transnational divide appear also to be occupationally distinctive (Häusermann and Kriesi 2015). Professionals—e.g. managers, teachers, nurses, doctors, social workers—exercise discretion at work and are engaged in face to face relations with diverse others. Such people tend to have GAL values, whereas manual workers, low-grade service workers, and those whose work is chiefly technical tend to be more TAN.

This is reinforced by an economic logic. Production workers are precariously placed in the international division of labor where they produce traded goods in competition with former

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<sup>1</sup> The GALTAN concept was introduced by Hooghe et al. (2002) to characterize a second, non-economic or cultural, new politics dimension, which had been gaining strength since the 1970s. The concept was further developed by Marks et al. (2006, p. 157 and note 3): "This dimension summarizes several noneconomic issues—ecological, lifestyle, and communal—and is correspondingly more diverse than the Left/Right dimension. In some countries, it is oriented around environmental protection and sustainable growth; in others, it captures conflict about traditional values rooted in a secular-religious divide; and in yet others, it is pitched around immigration and defense of the national community. Therefore, we describe the poles of this dimension with composite terms: green/alternative/libertarian (GAL) and traditionalism/authority/nationalism (TAN) ... Gender and color connotations intended." The CHES surveys on party positioning have been estimating political parties' position on this dimension since 1999 with a question that is biased toward the libertarian element in green/alternative/libertarian and the authoritarian element in traditionalism/authority/nationalism (Steenbergen and Marks 2007; see also <https://chesdata.eu>). This imposes a useful conservatism because these elements are distant from the sovereignty aspects of European integration and immigration, which motivate the transnational cleavage.

peasants from developing countries. While mobile capital threatens to outsource jobs abroad, at home, the presence of recent immigrants increases domestic competition for blue-collar jobs. This puts TAN parties, which support less porous national borders, in direct competition with social democratic parties, which have been the traditional home base for production workers (Oesch and Rennwald 2018). For professionals who have financial or social capital, an internationalized market multiplies economic opportunities and immigration is a source of cheap labor.

Hence, our expectation is that the effect of the transnational cleavage cuts across the class divide. Lipset once noted that a signal attribute of socialist parties was to turn those towards the bottom of society in an internationalist cosmopolitan direction. Political parties have arisen on the new divide that do just the opposite, putting the coalition that has conventionally underpinned social democracy under strain.

Rural or urban location also sorts individuals on either side of the transnational cleavage (Maxwell 2019). Cities have always been known for trade, the flow of ideas, and cultural openness, and they tend to attract those who are comfortable with transnationalism. A nine-country comparative study concludes that “identical social groups living in metropolitan places with distinct interests and lifestyles behave in starkly different ways” (Sellers et al. 2013, p. 419; p. 448-9). TAN parties do well in small towns and suburbs that are ethnically less diverse and economically peripheral, while green parties do best in cities.

Gender and age, inert characteristics on the conventional left-right, are clear markers on the transnational cleavage (Dolezal 2010). Positive views on transnationalism tend to go together with positive views on gender and transgender equality, and younger people, on the whole, have been socialized under conditions of social diversity and multi-level politics that characterize the transnational world. The role of religiosity in the new divide is less clear-cut. On the one hand, secularism has been associated with the postmaterialist value change that underpins transnationalism (Inglehart 2008). On the other hand, church attendance still appears capable of nurturing loyalty to Christian parties, even while many religious voters support TAN positions on immigration or multiculturalism (Immerzeel et al. 2013; Minkenberg 2017).

Education, occupation, location, gender, religion are not transitory choices that a person makes. They shape a person’s life, who they work with, who their friends are, and in an increasing proportion of cases, who they marry. While the incidence of organizational membership has declined, the impact of social networks of friends, family or co-workers on political preferences may have grown (Fitzgerald 2011; Zuckerman et al. 2007).

Conflict between mainstream political parties has softened with the decline of the class cleavage, but conflict between green and radical-TAN parties is acute and has become sharper over time. The model we posit is not one of realignment in which new conflicts replace old ones. It is, instead, akin to a geological process in which cleavages are formed in succession and overlay each other so that the resulting structure of conflict reflects both emerging and eroding tensions. So neo-cleavage theory builds on classic cleavage theory but relaxes the assumption that cleavages are frozen. Instead, we expect destructure and restructure to coexist. This produces a diversified party landscape in which parties with socially distinctive electorates compete with socially generic parties.

## Data and Measurement

Neo-cleavage theory has different expectations from dealignment on three basic questions: 1) Are political parties competing on the transnational cleavage more or less socially distinctive than those competing on left/right? 2) To what extent does education sort voters on the transnational cleavage? 3) How does this play out over time with younger generations of voters?

To answer these questions, we pair individual-level data from the European Social Survey (ESS) (eight rounds, every two years between 2002 and 2016) with estimates on party positioning from the Chapel Expert Survey (five waves: 2002, 2006, 2010, 2014, 2017). We select those individuals who say that they voted in the last national election for a political party, provided that the party has at least 25 voters in one ESS round or a total of 75 across all ESS rounds.<sup>2</sup> This produces a dataset with 147,671 respondents who have voted for 169 parties in 24 European countries. We aggregate individual-level information on vote and social characteristics to the party family or, for the multivariate analysis, to the individual party.

The dependent variables are five structural characteristics hypothesized to predispose an individual to transnationalism: higher education, professional occupation, urban location, female, and secularism. *Higher education* encompasses individuals with post-secondary or tertiary education. *Professional*, derived from Oesch's ISCO categorization, consists of managers and socio-cultural professionals. *Urban* describes people in cities or suburban communities. *Secular* refers to those who never attend religious services or only on special occasions.

Party ideology is operationalized in two ways. Party family—TAN, conservative, liberal, Christian democratic, social democratic, radical left, and green—is a standard classification to “summarize the accumulated historical experience of cleavages” (Marks and Wilson 2000, p. 439). Our baseline is the categorization in the CHES dataset (Polk et al. 2017; Bakker et al. 2015; Hooghe and Marks 2018), which is highly correlated with Parlgo's classification (Döring and Manow 2016). We can then compare the distinctiveness of voters across party families and contrast twenty-one binary party family pairs.

Second, we estimate parties' ideological positions in a two-dimensional political space, consisting of a left-right dimension tapping the role of government and equality versus economic freedom, and a cultural GALTAN dimension, using the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (Hooghe et al. 2002; Marks et al. 2006).<sup>3</sup>

We control for party size on the intuition that smaller parties may find it easier to sustain a distinctive social base. *Vote share* is a party's average vote share in the national election of the

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<sup>2</sup> We restrict the sample to voters who were at least 21 years old at the time of the survey to avoid the confounding effect of people with incomplete education. We impose a minimum number of respondents to reduce the odds on drawing a biased sample of voters. The same concern for reducing sampling bias motivates us to pool party respondents across ESS rounds. The time span in the ESS—just fourteen years—is too short to pick up meaningful shifts in the social composition of parties' voters.

<sup>3</sup> CHES data are available for five time points between 2002 and 2017. We interpolate between rounds.

survey year or the nearest prior year. Country-fixed effects account for the fact that respondents and parties are nested within countries.

## Results

We begin by comparing party families. The expectations are that social characteristics are more powerful in differentiating political parties on the transnational cleavage than on the class cleavage, and that social structuration on the transnational cleavage is more pronounced for younger generations while it is the opposite on the left-right.

Table [\\_1](#) reports the overrepresentation or underrepresentation of a social group by party family.<sup>4</sup> The first column does this for the 34.1 percent of the ESS sample of respondents who have completed postsecondary or tertiary education. Each row shows the percentage difference in highly educated people relative to the mean for the sample. Hence, higher educated voters are 21.2 percent overrepresented in green political parties. In absolute terms, more than half (55.3 percent) of their voters are highly educated. The probability that this distribution would arise randomly is less than one in one hundred million. This contrasts with an underrepresentation of 12.4 percent for TAN parties. On average, just one in five (21.7 percent) of TAN voters are highly educated. The educational gap between green and TAN voters is 33.6 percent (the absolute difference between 21.2 and  $-12.4$ ). Education produces the largest difference among all social characteristics.

[Table [\\_1](#) about here]

These data are consistent with neo-cleavage theory. First, political parties that anchor the GALTAN dimension – green and TAN – are at the extremes in sorting highly educated persons, professionals and managers, females, and urban people.<sup>5</sup> The social distinctiveness of party families on the left-right cleavage is much weaker. The major party families on the left-right—social democrats, Christian democrats, liberals, conservatives—are much alike on education, occupation, gender, and (except for Christian democrats) on urbanization. This similarity extends even to the radical left. These party families reflect the social structure of the overall electorate, and deviations from the overall mean are, with one exception, smaller than eight percentage points. Hence, the old cleavage structure built on class and occupation is now only dimly evident in the party families that motivate Lipset and Rokkan’s analysis. Remarkably, green and TAN parties are more occupationally distinctive than parties that compete on the class cleavage. The gap between green (12.9) and TAN ( $-8.9$ ) parties in professionals and managers is 21.8 percent, compared to 8.3 percent between the next two most dissimilar parties, liberals (5.9) and social

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<sup>4</sup> Results are robust when using more narrowly focused categorizations for education (tertiary educated vs. all others) or occupation (socio-cultural professionals vs. others; production workers vs. others). We prefer more encompassing categories because they divide the population into more equivalently sized groups.

<sup>5</sup> TAN and green voters have the lowest and highest concentrations of the first three of these characteristics, and almost for the fourth: while green voters are the most urbanized party, TAN voters are the second-most rural group just behind Christian democratic voters.



democrats (-2.4). Conversely, TAN parties draw heavily from the traditional core constituency of left political parties. Production and service workers are overrepresented by 6.6 percent in TAN parties, compared to 5.5 percent for social democratic parties and 2.5 percent for radical left parties.

Religion has some bite on the transnational divide. Secular voters are strongly overrepresented in green parties (14.0 percent) and radical left parties (13.1 percent) and underrepresented in TAN parties (-1.6 percent). However, religiosity's greatest power lies in differentiating Christian democrats from other party families. In a predominantly secular Europe, religiosity remains a distinctive marker for partisan choice (van der Brug et al. 2009; Rovny and Polk 2017).

The sharp contrast between green and TAN parties goes hand in hand with relatively moderate stances on classic left-right issues. TAN parties tend to blur positions on the left/right (Rovny 2012, 2013).<sup>6</sup> Greens and TAN parties conceive their mission in relation to the transnational cleavage, taking polar positions on immigration and Europe. This is what sorts their voters in socio-structural camps. These findings are robust across subregions (northwest, south, and east), older and younger electorates, and when controlling for party size.

Fig. \_1 visualizes the difference between every paired combination of party families for four social characteristics. Black lines represent a difference of at least 30 percent, red lines a difference between 20 and 30 percent, yellow lines a difference between 10 and 20 percent, and green lines a difference of less than 10 percent. In every case, the largest contrast between party family dyads involves green or TAN parties, and for education, occupation, and gender the green & TAN dyad exhibits the greatest gap. While it is valid to say that a value divide has emerged alongside the conventional left-right cleavage, this does not imply a decline in the role of social structure in differentiating political parties. Education most sharply distinguishes green and TAN voters, and while class location is almost imperceptible in differentiating parties on the class cleavage, the gap is wide and significant across green and TAN parties.

Hence, the evidence presented here is consistent with the neo-cleavage expectations that 1) political parties competing on the transnational cleavage are more socially distinctive than those competing on left-right, 2) and that education is the strongest sorter of voters on the transnational cleavage.

[Fig. \_1 about here]

Does the social structuration of political parties increase or decrease from generation to generation? We split the sample in the ESS dataset into three roughly equally sized generational groups of voters: those born before 1950, those born between 1950 and 1970, and those born after 1970 in order to compare the distinctiveness of each group for each social characteristic in each party family. Fig. \_2 aggregates these comparisons for parties that compete on GALTAN (green and radical right) and for parties that compete on left-right (conservative, Christian democrat, liberal, social democrat, and radical left). The social distinctiveness of party families for the pre-1950 generation of voters is indicated by the light bar in each frame, and that for the

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<sup>6</sup> This is why we describe these parties as *TAN* rather than radical right.

post-1970 generation is dark. Each bar averages the extent (in percent) to which voters deviate from the population mean. Hence, the higher the bar, the more a generation of voters sorts itself on a social characteristic into different parties.

[Fig. \_2 about here]

Neo-cleavage theory shares with dealignment theory the expectation that social distinctiveness has declined for left-right political parties. We see mixed evidence for this. For left-right parties, the post-1970 generation of voters is less sharply sorted than the pre-1950 generation on higher education, gender, and religion, but more sharply on occupation and rural-urban location. However, in all but religion, the difference across generations is two percent or less. Hence, we see quite stable rates of social sorting for left-right parties across generations, with the exception of religion.

Other expectations are more clearly confirmed. One is that social differentiation is considerably greater among parties competing on GALTAN than among those competing on left-right. This is the case for education, occupation, rural-urban location, and gender. Left-right parties are more differentiated on religion than GALTAN parties, though the difference with GALTAN parties has almost disappeared for voters born from 1970.

Finally, and perhaps most decisively, neo-cleavage and dealignment theory have contrasting expectations regarding generational change. Dealignment theory expects the social distinctiveness of political parties to decline with successive generations, whereas neo-cleavage theory expects that a new cleavage will retain, or even increase, its distinctiveness. We find that social distinctiveness on the GALTAN divide is sharper for the post-1970 generation than for the pre-1950 generation on education, occupation, rural-urban location, and gender. Overall, these comparisons are in line with neo-cleavage theory and fit poorly with dealignment theory. The social distinctiveness of party families is much greater on the GALTAN side than on left-right, and while, in general, left-right distinctiveness has diminished across generations of voters, that on the GALTAN side has increased.

The analysis so far has taken the party family as the building bloc. The final step in the analysis is to disaggregate to individual political parties. Each of 169 political parties has its percentage of highly educated, socio-professional or managerial, urban, female, and secular voters. The dependent variable is party structuration, which is a factor of these five characteristics obtained through principal components analysis. The factor, *party structuration*, has an eigenvalue of 2.25 and explains 44.9 percent of the variance. Higher values reflect structuration on social characteristics associated with transnationalism, lower values reflect structuration on characteristics opposed to transnationalism, while middle values (0) reflect lack of structuration.<sup>7</sup>

We can now estimate the effect of the positioning of a political party on GAL vs. TAN and left vs. right for its social structuration. Neo-cleavage theory expects significant structure whereby GALTAN has a much greater effect than left-right, while dealignment theory would

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<sup>7</sup> The results are similar when the dependent variables are centered around the country mean or when using nonlinear modeling.

expect relatively limited structure. All model specifications include a variable tapping the percentage vote of a political party on the ground that smaller parties may be more structured.

The first model in Table 2 reveals the power of party family in accounting for variation in structuration at the individual party level. TAN parties are the reference category, and all other party families have a more transnational social profile, that is, their electorate tends to be more educated, urban, professional, female, and secular than that of a typical TAN party. Green parties as a family are most strongly different from TAN parties, and Christian democrats are least different. This model explains around two-thirds of the variance in party structuration.

[Table 2 about here]

Party families are telling shortcuts for the worldview that a political party claims to defend. However, we can tap this more directly through party ideology or an individual party's stance on dimensional issues, and by relating this to its structural distinctiveness.

We expect party ideology to explain a party's structural distinctiveness, and the remaining models in Table 2 test this. Across each of the models, the social structure of a party is strongly predicted by its GALTAN position. In Model 2 and Model 6, the left-right position of a party has a significant effect, but its causal power is about one third of that of GALTAN. This is what one would expect if the traditional class divide lost structural power and a new cultural divide sorts political parties and voters on social characteristics. When we consider party social structure for the entire electorate, the model explains around 74 percent of the variance. The substantive effect of GALTAN is large. Two political parties that differ by one standard deviation in their GALTAN position (i.e. 2.5 points on the 11-point GALTAN scale) will differ 24 percentage points in their proportions of highly educated voters or 19 percentage point in their proportions of professionals, keeping all other social characteristics at their mean.

If transnationalism is driving structuration, a party's stances on immigration and European integration should have a strong effect on a party's social structure. Model 3 replaces GALTAN and left-right position with party stances on immigration and European integration as estimated by Chapel Hill experts. The model is strongly predictive of the social character of the party. Political parties that are less restrictive on immigration and more supportive of European integration tend to have a distinctly more structured electorate. Model 4 repeats the exercise for redistribution, which is arguably the central issue on the classical left-right divide. Party stances on redistribution do not appear to be a systematic predictor of a party's social-structural make up. Model 5 then juxtaposes the transnationalism and left-right dimensions. This suggests that positioning on transnational issues (immigration in particular) is a much more powerful predictor of a party's social distinctiveness than redistribution. At the same time, once we control for immigration and European integration positions, a party's position on redistribution appears significantly related to structural distinctiveness. This is consistent with neo-cleavage theory, which anticipates that new cleavages overlay older ones rather than replace them. Party system formation is akin to a geological process whereby the structure of conflict reflects both emerging and eroding tensions.

Party size is significantly related to structuration, but the substantive effect is small, which gives us confidence that the results are not driven by the smaller size of green and radical TAN

parties relative to many mainstream parties. Model 6, which limits the sample of parties to those with a vote share greater than 5 percent and less than 15 percent, allows a direct test of the party size effect. Seventy-two parties are in this band of vote share, and their structuration is powerfully explained by their GALTAN position. Left-right position is much weaker.

Fig. 3 illustrates how GALTAN and social structuring go hand in hand, and it reveals that party families are rather coherent with respect to their structuration. TAN and green parties are bunched at opposite ends of the regression line. Liberal parties, as in other respects, are the most diverse party family, with the other party families falling in-between.

[Fig. 3 about here]

## Conclusion

The evidence presented here throws into doubt both the continued preeminence of the classic cleavages theorized by Lipset and Rokkan's frozen landscape thesis and the chief counter-claim, that individual party preferences are increasingly unstructured. We find plenty of support for the contention that the structural distinctiveness of the left-right divide has faded; that class location and education only weakly distinguish mainstream left versus right parties; and that these phenomena are particularly marked among younger generations of voters. However, we also find that voters for political parties on the transnational divide—green and TAN parties—are distinguished by their level of education, their occupation, where they live, and whether they are female or male. These differences do not appear to be diminishing over time. They are *more* pronounced among younger generations of voters than older generations.

Consequently, we are drawn to reassess the idea that socially structured political cleavages are a thing of the past. Among the implications of neo-cleavage theory are that the dynamism in party systems arises from exogenous social change; that the party-political response comes chiefly in the form of new political parties that rise on a new cleavage; that processes of alignment and dealignment coexist as new divides become solidified among voters while old divides lose causal power; and that the decline of social structure among parties on a prior cleavage can go hand in hand with considerable social structuration on a new cleavage.

The rise of a transnational cleavage suggests that, far from being frozen, party systems are subject to exogenous shocks that can produce durable divides. As Lipset and Rokkan stressed, cleavages overlay and interact with each other – and so prior cleavages constitute a prism that affects the incidence of a more recent cleavage. The chief intermediary institutions of Lipset and Rokkan's era—churches and unions—have lost much of their socializing force, but this does not mean that voters behave as atomized individuals. Research on social networks—family, friends, neighborhood, and work, alongside the digital sources of information into which people self-select—is vital in probing how sociality shapes political preferences and behavior.

A premise that neo-cleavage theory shares with classic cleavage theory is that change comes in response to major exogenous shocks. The shocks that Lipset and Rokkan observe are the rise of the national state which produced a center-periphery cleavage and a religious cleavage; and the industrial revolution which produced an urban-rural and a class cleavage. We

suspect that the perforation of national states is producing a transnational cleavage. The first cleavage arose with the breakdown of a supranational order and the establishment of strong territorial bureaucracies imposing national religions and languages. The most recent cleavage is, at its core, a conflict over the role of the national state and national community in an era of transnationalism.

The rise of the transnational cleavage narrowed options for responses to Europe's crises. This is most transparent with respect to the migration crisis which "touched a nerve of national identity because it asked Europe's populations to harbor culturally dissimilar people" (Hooghe and Marks 2019, p. 8-9). Börzel and Risse (2018, p. 17–18) argue that the mobilization of these identities by TAN parties explains to a large extent why elites failed to coordinate when the Dublin system collapsed under the weight of the refugee flows. TAN parties, using tabloid and social media as willing mediums, compelled governments to introduce restrictions, not only in the Visegrad countries but also in Germany, Austria, and Sweden where the public response was initially positive. Countermobilization—on the part of the GAL side—was meek. Exclusive nationalism also delayed and limited the response to the Eurocrisis. TAN parties took the initiative by framing the crisis as a contest among nations and a fight against Brussels. Northern governments were acting as party coalitions acutely sensitive to public opinion, and largely ignored the advice of the World Bank and the IMF to increase domestic consumption in order to rebalance the Eurozone. European-wide solidarity in the shape of bailouts, a stimulus package, or even Eurobonds was not on the cards. The Euro came close to collapse, but—contrary to the migration crisis—coordination failure was averted. A cocktail of partial and technical fixes was agreed mostly outside the limelight of party politics. A long-term solution, including fiscal union, seems off the table.

GAL mobilization has been much less pronounced than TAN mobilization. But this is not written in stone. The 2019 European Parliamentary elections have seen the green vote rise sharply in several European countries. Partisanship in Europe has become decidedly more polarized around the transnational cleavage. Our analysis of voters and political parties suggests that the new cleavage is structured and durable.

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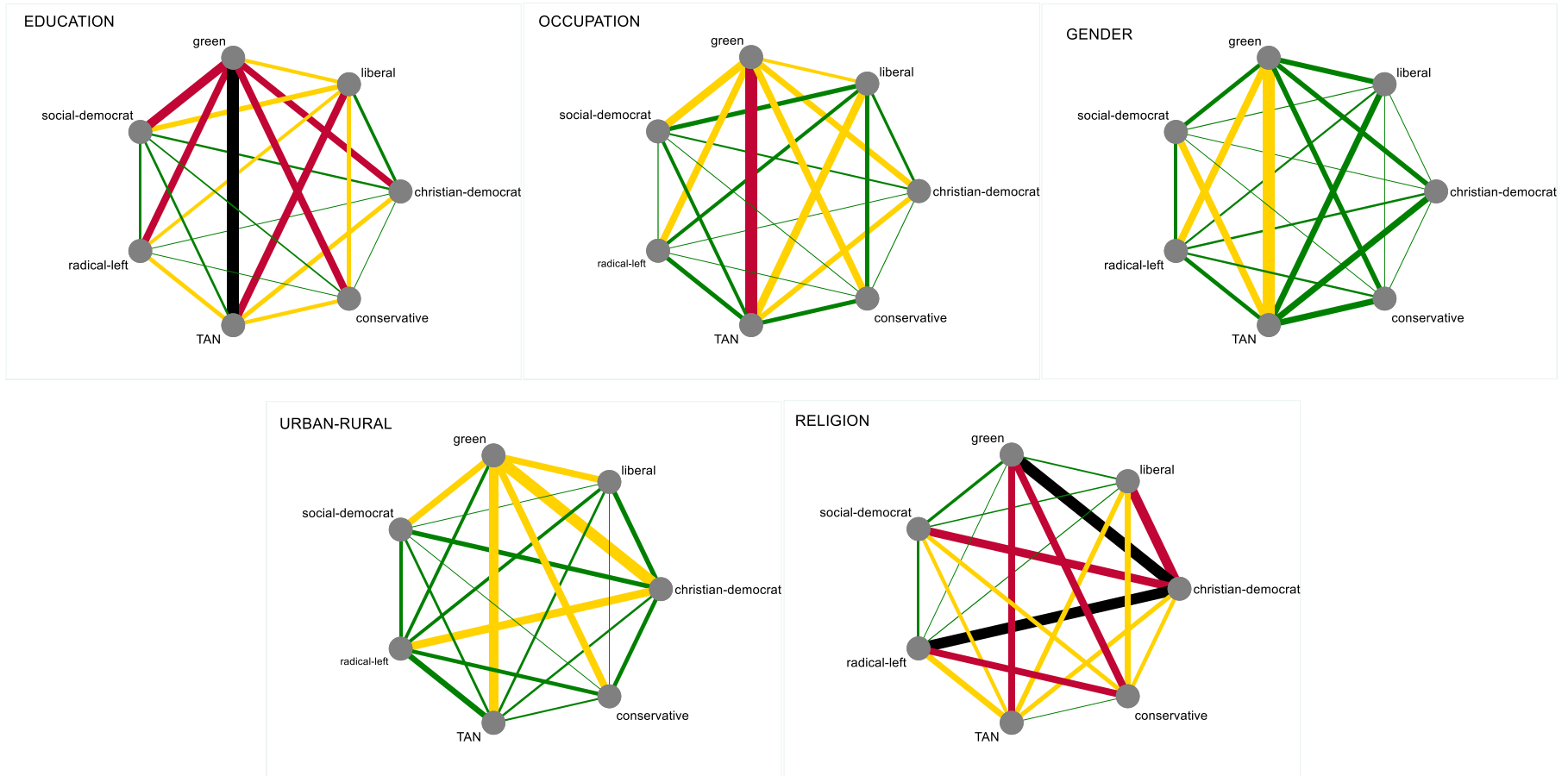


**Table \_1: Socio-structural biases by party family (all countries)**

	<b>Education</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Urban-rural</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Religion</b>
	<i>Higher</i>	<i>Socio-professional or manager</i>	<i>Urban</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Secular</i>
<b>Greens</b>	+21.20	+12.86	+11.56	+7.18	+13.99
<b>Liberals</b>	+9.24	+5.91	+1.43	-0.17	+8.55
<b>Radical left</b>	2.69	-0.33	+7.36	-1.72	+13.15
<b>Social democrats</b>	-5.17	-2.43	+1.38	+1.15	+5.68
<b>Christian democrats</b>	+0.80	+1.96	-6.49	0.02	-23.38
<b>Conservatives</b>	-0.48	-1.20	0.98	0.09	-6.07
<b>Radical Tan</b>	-12.38	-8.91	-4.49	-9.55	-1.61
<b><i>Overall electorate</i></b>	<i>34.12%</i>	<i>26.26%</i>	<i>31.32%</i>	<i>52.69%</i>	<i>73.20%</i>

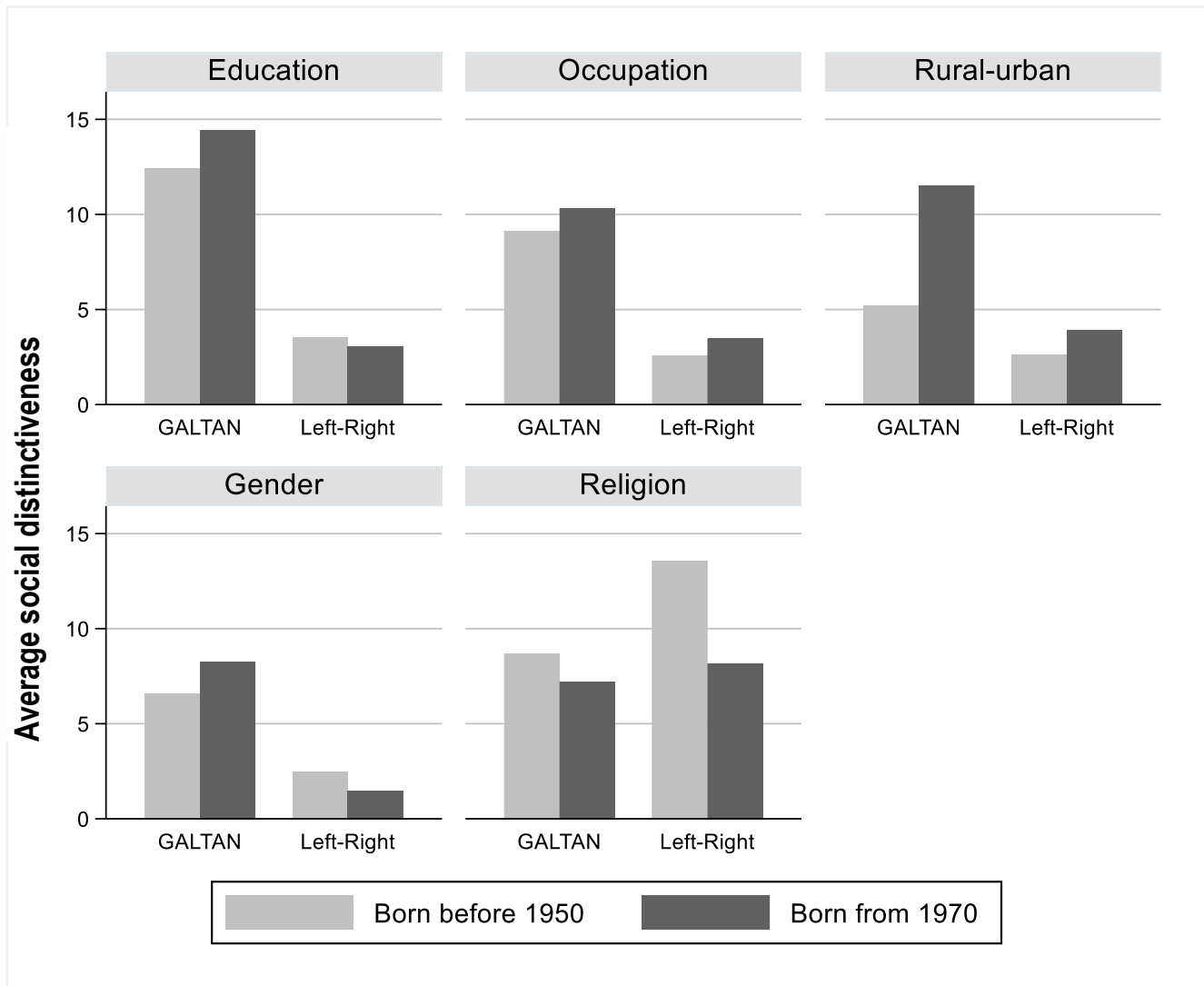
Note: Each cell shows the overrepresentation (+) or underrepresentation (-) of a group having this characteristic in a party family compared to the overall population (21 years or older). Source: ESS (2002-2016) for 18 countries.

Fig. \_1: Socio-structural differences between party families



Note: data from 2002-2016 ESS. The thickness and color of the lines reflects the extent to which the electorate of two party families is distinctive on a social characteristic. **Black** = >30% difference; **Red** = 20–30% difference; **Yellow** = 10–20% difference; **Green** = <10% difference

**Fig. \_2: Social distinctiveness among younger and older voters:  
the GALTAN vs. Left-Right divide**



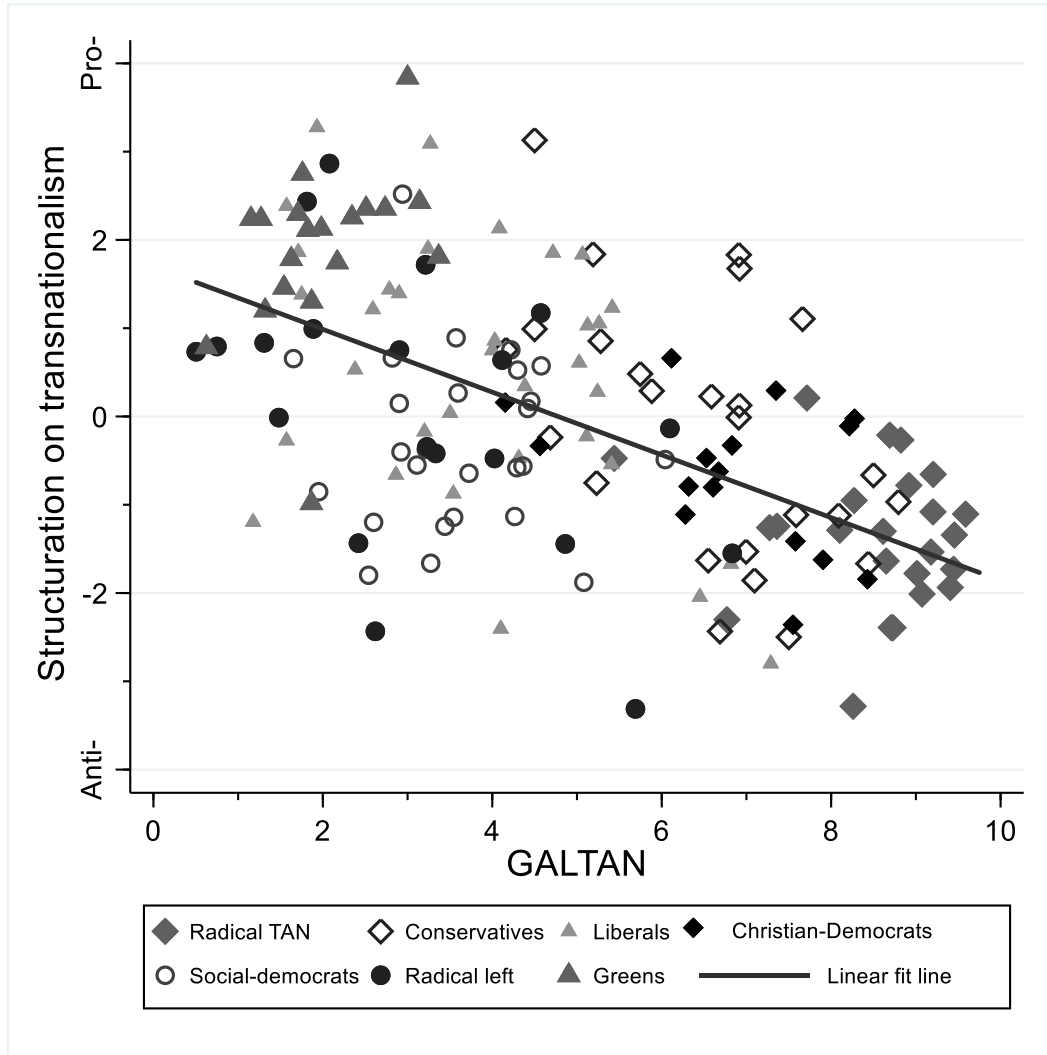
Note: 2002-2016 ESS voting data aggregated to the party family. Structural distinctiveness is estimated by averaging the percentage deviation from the population mean on a given social characteristic for each GALTAN party family resp. each Left-Right party family. For example, for the post-1970 generation, the share of green and radical TAN voters with higher education is on average 14.44 percent different from the percentage in the population (that is, the average of a 11.01% overrepresentation among greens and a 17.8% underrepresentation among radical TAN).

**Table \_2: Party Structuration and party ideology**

	Model 1 PARTY FAMILY MODEL	Model 2 IDEOLOGY MODEL	Model 3 TRANS- NATIONALISM MODEL	Model 4 CLASSIC LEFT- RIGHT MODEL	Model 5 TRANS- NATIONALISM VS. LEFT-RIGHT	Model 6 IDEOLOGY MODEL FOR PARTIES WITH 5–15% vote
<b>Party family (ref=Radical Tan)</b>						
<i>Conservatives</i>	1.608*** (.297)					
<i>Liberals</i>	1.843*** (.255)					
<i>Christian democrats</i>	0.782* (.313)					
<i>Social democrats</i>	1.584*** (.299)					
<i>Radical left</i>	1.302*** (.301)					
<i>Greens</i>	2.720*** (.304)					
<b>GALTAN</b>		-0.371*** (.030)				-0.397*** (.046)
<b>Left–right</b>		0.138*** (.033)				0.155** (.053)
<b>Immigration</b>			0.239*** (.036)		0.377 (.046)***	
<b>European integration</b>			0.190** (.055)		0.071 (.061)	
<b>Redistribution</b>				0.034 (.049)	-0.183 (.046)***	
<b>Vote</b>	-0.032***(.009)	-0.026***(.006)	-0.035*** (.008)	-0.034***(.009)	-0.030 (.007)***	-0.138** (.047)
<b>Country dummies</b>	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.681	0.735	0.689	0.394	0.729	0.827
Number of parties	169	162	157	152	152	72

Note: OLS unstandardized coefficients with standard errors in brackets; \*\*\*sign<.001 \*\*sign<.01 \*sign<.05. Source: 2002-2016 ESS voting aggregated to the party for the dependent variable; CHES data for the independent variables.

Fig. \_3: Party ideology and party structuration



Note: 169 individual political parties by their GALTAN position (CHES) and their score on party structuration (ESS), whereby low scores indicate an overrepresentation of voters with social characteristics associated with anti-transnationalism and high scores indicate an overrepresentation of voters with social characteristics associated with transnationalism.