Abstract

We might think that our local identity is of second importance to our other geographic identities, like our attachment to our country. Yet, this is not the case: many voters consider it as important, if not more so, than these higher order identities. At the same time, we are as connected to place as ever. Most voters are highly geographically rooted, and a nativist populist politics which claims to them is in ascendancy. This work argues that we should consider the 'neighbourhood' as our most important geographic identity and see it primarily as a social identity, just as important as our other social identities. Many quantitative studies which look at geographic identity ignore this most local level. Many more attempt to measure identity using non-survey based measures, and politics research generally focuses only on radical right voting. Over seven chapters, this work studies its effects on three areas: political participation, affective partisan polarisation, and voting for candidates. It finds that it drives us towards some participatory behaviours, though not all: mostly those which are low-cost, such as voting. While the effect of neighbourhood political 'echo chambers'—in which we live in places that vote like us—on affective polarisation is contested, this work also finds that attachment to neighbourhood clearly moderates this effect, in cases where we interact with more with our in-group. And, while many studies have claimed that voters choose local candidates because of their local identity, this work for the first time demonstrates experimentally that they do so, innovatively embedding two different experimental designs to show it. To do all this, it brings together a range of data: household panel studies, large cross-national surveys, micro-level census and neighbourhood data, novel national-level surveys and a survey experiment, building models on very small geographic units. It raises important questions for how we understand place-based identity, the units and the data we use, and the political effects we study. Our neighbourhood is important to us, physically and socially. We should also see it, now more than ever, as a vital part of political expression.

Chapter 1

Place and identity

> The ache for home lives in all of us, the safe place where we can go as we are and not be questioned. It impels mighty ambitions and dangerous capers. We amass great fortunes at the cost of our souls, or risk our lives in drug dens from London's Soho, to San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury. We shout in Baptist churches, wear yarmulkes and wigs and argue even the tiniest points in the Torah, or worship the sun and refuse to kill cows for the starving. Hoping that by doing these things, home will find us acceptable or failing that, that we will forget our awful yearning for it.
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> Maya Angelou [1]

In the long Summer of 2021, I moved into a large housing community based in an old warehouse district in North London. It was the kind of place with its own oat milk café, and where you never had to walk more than 100 metres to find brunch. The whole area, a former garment factory, had previously been a squat, but had become home to graphic designers, musicians, artists, students and, ever more so, white collar workers. Many friends from university had just moved in; I knew of many more who

[1] *All God's Children Need Travelling Shoes*, p. 196

were trying to get viewings for the cheap rooms. It seemed like a place where you could easily have fun, which had a lot of people like me, which was rather unworried by the world. It was a place where people held regular chemically charged parties; it was also the base from which the environmental action group Extinction Rebellion launched their assaults on the industrial world, and was unsurprisingly therefore raided monthly by the police.

This was the Summer before I began my PhD, and I moved there looking for a measure of freedom, and a measure of fun, after the captivity of pandemic lockdown. I expected that I, like everyone else, would really just be passing through. I thought that I would find mostly independence and rootlessness. But I didn't find it. Instead, I found a deep and vibrant community. A community who had their fun, of course, but one that cared greatly about the place they lived, cared greatly to uphold and maintain it, cared greatly to see that others were welcomed into it. They ran community events, watched films all together, held regular meetings to co-ordinate neighbourhood activities, ran a bar, a performance space, and made dinner every other night for their neighbours. You could walk down the street and not be able to go 5 minutes without running into half a dozen people you knew. People had many and deep friendships right across the area, and kept active social lives. A lot of them even worked locally. Many people had lived there 10 or 20 years, but many had also, like me, just moved and, whether they wanted

to stay for 10 years or 10 months, seemed to dedicate themselves to the place just as much. This sense of community was perhaps not as obvious to me: I was 23 and had just left university after all, and had in any case moved house metronomically every four or so years throughout my childhood; attachment to somewhere in this way felt slightly alien. But it was also, I believed, something which belied the impression many people have of places like this. In particular, it goes against a stereotype we often have of the rootless, atomised city, and of the rootless young. Clearly, how we feel about place, how we relate emotionally to it, has more to it than a simplistic binary definition between places which look like this and those perhaps more traditional, between city and rural, or young and old. And, I thought, if such a strong attachment existed here, in the most liberal corner of the most unattached, itinerant city in Europe, then how widespread could it be?

And so it's partly from this experience that I chose to study this identity. I knew that it had to begin in a way that was true to places like this, as well as true to places that were not like it. It has to begin with the knowledge that the way in which we perceive and study place, and place-based identity, too often is constrained. Understanding place-based identity requires first an understanding that where we live is an indispensable part of how we define ourselves. It contours our home, and often working, lives; it defines our position in society, our health, who we spend our time

with and who we date. It is something into which our sense of self and outlook upon the world so often are tightly bound. It is also something intimately connected to the many other identities we hold: to our class, our education, our age, our race. Place functions both as a social category itself and a marker signalling group membership. Among the first questions we will be asked in any social setting is simply 'where are you from?' Where we live is not just a collection of people who consider themselves members of that group, but a complex cross-cutting assembly of identities. While it is a piece of our identity, it also helps to define all of our other identities. Place is a useful shorthand for so many other social categories, strata and life stages which we use to judge ourselves and with which we judge others.

Perhaps this seems strange. It certainly may seem strange if the impression you have of contemporary society is one is more cosmopolitan, which is not parochial, which is ever more interconnected with ever more places, global not local. We so often imagine ourselves, and our politics, as moving above these atavistic influences: the pull of fundamental social categories, of communal identity, and small social networks. As Claude Fischer remarked in his study of personal networks in 1970s Californian neighbourhoods, 'few ideas saturate Western thought as does the conviction that modern life has destroyed "community"' (1982, p. 1). Though where we live is hugely influential on nearly all our lives, most who read this—as urban professionals and

intellectuals who may have moved great distances to study or for work—will probably be unaware of the extent to which place defines our lives. Most people have a very strong connection to where they live. Geographic rootedness is overwhelmingly the norm, even in Western democracies. Only a third of Americans own a valid passport (Yougov 2021); nearly two-thirds live in the state in which they were born (US Census Bureau 2019). In Europe, though the Schengen Area has existed for three decades, 190 million people—37 per cent of the population of the Area or of those due to join—have never been abroad (EU 2014). Nearly 60 per cent of people born in Britain live within 20 miles of where they lived when they were 14 (ISER et al. 2023). Almost a quarter live within two miles.

This question of 'place-based' identity has been the subject of great study in political science, including from Kathy Cramer (2012; 2016), Ryan Enos (2017), Jonathan Rodden (2019) and Jennifer Fitzgerald (2018), among many others. These authors have all approached this in different ways, be it rural resentment, the way physical space structures social space, or how we might mistrust outsiders. It has drawn political implications too. Some of these studies, as well as many popular accounts have also attempted from this to sketch a distinction between a class of people who truly understand place-based identity—older, more rural—and those who don't, memorably summarised by David Goodhart as the 'anywheres' and the 'somewheres' (Goodhart

2017). All this is highly salient too. As I write this in 2025, Western democracies are still experiencing political upheavals—right wing nationalism, the immigration backlash and cultural polarisation—which can be partly attributed to a reassertion of this identity. Indeed, many of these studies have linked this identity to specific political effects, in particular radical right voting (Bolet 2021; Cramer 2016; Fitzgerald 2018; Lyons and Utych 2021; Munis 2022), and how we choose 'local' candidates (Arzheimer and Evans 2014; Evans and Menon 2017; Kal Munis 2021; Schulte-Cloos and Bauer 2021).

But this work leaves much to be desired. Most of all, I argue, we have been neglecting a study of the most local—of the 'neighbourhood', as other measures of our immediate social environment—and neglecting to study the wider effects this identity may have on political behaviour. Many quantitative studies look only at the macro level, such as regions, cities or towns, ignoring variation on smaller units. The dynamics which shape identity, and its effects, are likely very different here and therefore worthy of a separate study. In trying to measure it, these studies may also use awkward proxies—distance from birthplace for instance, or variation in regional dialects or residency, for instance—which don't really get at what this identity, this emotional attachment to place, really is, and preclude a more fine-tuned measure which may capture it more accurately. Studies which attempt capture it using survey

questions are generally qualitative, and so lack external validity. These are the central issues that I set out to address. I try to make the claim that, in studying this identity, we should be focusing on our immediate social environment—the people and groups whom we live around—first and foremost, and therefore defining it primarily as a social identity, rather than an attachment to the physical space, or to culture or history. To do this, I collect and analyse high-quality data from a range of sources: panel studies, micro-level census data, cross-national surveys, a novel observational survey and data from another never before published, and a survey experiment. Where I can, I model on very small units: neighbourhoods of only a few thousand people. I measure people's attachment to their neighbourhood directly using a variety of question measurement approaches, and I look at several political effects: political participation, affective partisan polarisation, and attitudes towards political candidates. In doing all this, I bring to the fore in a more robust and empirical way an identity which we think we might already know much about, but which in reality we know too little.

It is important to say what this thesis is not too. It is not an exploration of a 'local identity' or 'character' in the sense that I am exploring what it means to be a New Yorker or a Londoner or someone from a specific named region, connected to the history, the culture, the character or the landmarks. Rather, I am exploring what it means to be someone who feels attached to their neighbourhood, as they might feel

attached to any neighbourhood, for whom their neighbourhood identity is part of their self-identity, just as if they also feel belonging to other social categories: their class, race or gender perhaps. In doing this, as you will see, I am saying that our attachment to a place should be defined primarily in terms of the social groups we associate with that place. Of course, one's identity as a New Yorker, or of a neighbourhood in New York, may be this, but I am exploring what it means to be attached to neighbourhood shorn of any cultural connotations, and therefore developing a theory of neighbourhood which is far more generalisable, far more applicable to any comparable case. Finally, this is also not a study of political 'localism' in the sense that I am specifically studying municipal politics, for instance. These are, again, fascinating, and necessary, but sacrifice external validity for specificity.

1.1 The importance of place

It's good to start by considering what we mean when we talk about place. Different geographies naturally hold different meanings to people. We attach very different meaning to the city as to the neighbourhood, or o the country. We might assume that the nation is always our primary place-based identity, or at least that it is far more

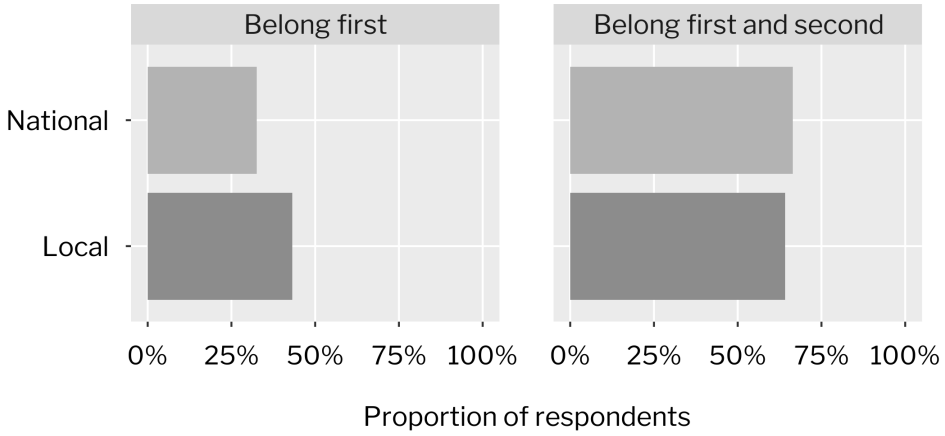

Figure 1.1: How people rank attachment to country and 'locality' in Europe (European Values Study)

important than our other geographic identities. We would be wrong to do so. When asking Europeans to rank their attachment to 'locality', or country, among several options which include regional, European, and global identities, over 10 per cent more choose their locality over their country in first place (Figure 1.1). Even when adding in second preferences, the two identities are roughly equal, and almost two thirds of people have strong local attachment. It is also, in Europe at least, not a constrained phenomenon; it is fairly uniformly spread across the continent (Table A1 in Appendix I). It is also a consistent identity across time. As I said earlier, we might imagine that we are increasingly connected across space, less rooted, less attached to where

we live than 20 or even 10 years ago. This is also not the case. As Figure 1.2 shows, attachment to locality across many Western democracies is remarkably consistent over the last 40 years; and, though attachment is slightly lower in younger age groups, the difference is tiny. The story is the same for income. Though higher earners are on average less attached than those who earn less, the gap is negligible.

I make an argument throughout this work that we should be thinking of place-based identity on the neighbourhood level primarily as a social identity, and that we should see it as just as important as those other social identities—class, race, gender for instance—which we take to be pre-eminant in politics. Indeed, despite the weight of research in political science falling on the effects of these other identities, more people see their local identity as important to their sense of political self than almost any other social identity: above race, class and religion, and behind only gender (Table 1.1). Place is arguably just as sweeping in scope, and has the potential to be shaped by, some of the same factors as these other identities. And this sense of place as social identity is arguably intuitively how we see the world. For those people living in the old warehouses in London, their emotional attachment to where they lived, and the identity this formed were defined not just by the physical place itself but by the people who lived there. Think of where you live too. A large part of your impression of a place is made up of the people who live in it. In doing this, we should be thinking in terms

Figure 1.2: Attachment to locality across Europe over time by age and income (EVS). Income based on household income. Categories vary by country so that each contains approximately one third of the country's sample

of where we are now, rather than an emotional attachment to another place, perhaps our birthplace if we have moved for instance. These other geographic identities are

Table 1.1: Which social groups people see themselves as belonging to

Gender	62%
Area	55%
Ethnicity	52%
Class	52%
Share views/vote like me	52%
Education	51%
Political party	34%
Religion	29%

Asking 'in politics... do you think think of yourself as part of' each group.
From a nationally-representative survey of adults in Great Britain conducted in December 2020 (Bunting et al. 2025). N = 817

important, but they are shaped, and influence the world, very differently to those places where we live in and where we interact with people on daily basis.

1.1.1 Social identity

We have long been interested in the question of how geography structures human behaviour. Attachment to place has been a focus of modern empirical study since at least Ferdinand Tönnies in the 19th Century, and Louis Wirth and George Herbert Mead five decades later. The study of place is broad and multidisciplinary; geographic identity has long been the concern of sociology and environmental psychology in par-

ticular. Political science has also concerned itself with this study of place, going back to V.O. Key's seminal midcentury work on neighbour voting patterns in the Southern United States (Key 1949). Over the last seven decades, many scholars have occupied themselves with how geography influences political behaviour, how space shapes human interaction and affect (Biggs and Knauss 2012; Blok and Meer 2018; Butler and Stokes 1971; Cox 1969; Dahl and Tufte 1973; Enos 2017; Johnston et al. 2000; Johnston et al. 2005). But while political science has long understood group identity to be a strong motivator of political behaviour—we know much about how our attachment to social groups, such as class or race, influences politics for instance (Conover 1984; Cramer 2016; Huddy 2013; Huddy et al. 2015; Miller et al. 1981)—we know far less about the role of affect towards place. While this is changing (see Borwein and Lucas (2021), Bühlman (2012), Fitzgerald (2018), Kal Munis (2021), or Cara Wong (2010) for instance), it is still rather limited.

Most ways of defining social identity involve establishing psychological links between the our personal identity and our group identities or social strata. Throughout this work, I primarily rely on social identity theory, first developed by Henry Tajfel, John Turner and their colleagues in the 1970s and 1980s (Hogg and Abrams 1988; Tajfel 1978; Tajfel and Turner 1979; Turner 1981), perhaps the most influential approach to defining intergroup relations. Social identity theory is helpful for several

reasons. Firstly, its conclusions have been widely reproduced, and therefore there is a large body of literature to work from. Secondly, it speaks to an understanding of social identity which is necessary to understand neighbourhood attachment uniquely, emphasising the importance of group-based affiliations and the psychological processes which shape group identification. Thirdly, its observation that group categorisation can happen without conflict or competing goals is also helpful to this. As I show throughout this work, this is an identity that does not necessarily come hostility towards an out-group, as can happen with other social identities.

As I said before therefore, I am arguing here that we become attached to place because we are attached to a definition of it based primarily on the people and groups who make it up. Why define it in this way? Well, first of all, the people who make up a place—our neighbours—are among the most important factors which determine our relationship with that place. When we think of where we live, we think first of all in terms of the people there. When we are talking about political behaviour and our engagement in politics, this is an inherently social action, strongly socially determined. It is therefore, strongly determined by our emotional relation to social groups and our role within them. This does not mean that such an identity is without connotation, however. It is from this identity that we might later come to assign values, culture and tradition. I argue that, because this does not necessarily come with denigration

of an out-group, therefore the political science literature's overt focus on radical right voting is misplaced.

I use the term 'neighbourhood attachment' throughout this work because I want to emphasise this focus on the most local, and because I argue that the 'neighbourhood' itself is the unit most worthy of study. But I also choose this name because the way we are attached to place works differently on this level. While attachment to neighbourhood is like attachment to country, and other higher order identities, in that they are both place-based identities, and social identities, there is more which separates them than connects them. Nations, for example, are groups of people bound primarily by culture, language and history; people who will never know each other. They are 'imagined' in Benedict Anderson's famous phrase (Anderson 1983). Our immediate social environment is, of course, also partly imagined. We are unlikely to be familiar with, let alone even recognise, all our neighbours. The neighbourhood is therefore like other higher order identities: somewhere social groups operate, of which we have some idea but which we don't know in its entirety. However, unlike most of these other identities, we do at least have some chance of knowing them, perhaps a fairly good chance, and we are also able to have an idea of its physical form and position in space. We may also have a good sense of the types of groups who live there. At the same time, it is not a connection to a category or group of people like any other

social identity, other than that which is conveyed by residence. It is therefore unique, both as a place-based identity, and a social identity.

But any theory must have a strong grounding. Chapter 2 presents my theoretical framework. I draw from a literature which includes influences from sociology, and social and environmental psychology, as we as political science. It is here that I attempt to establish attachment to neighbourhood as an identity distinct from other important social identities—many of which may be linked to place—like our national identity, race or class. In this chapter, I also propose a measurement approach and question phrasing to measure this identity, based on the concept of 'belonging' to a place, and justify in greater depth a focus on the 'neighbourhood'. What causes us to develop this identity in the first place though? Chapter 3, the first empirical chapter, sets out to answer this, focusing on small neighbourhoods of only a few thousand residents, and studying neighbourhood attachment directly using measures answered by respondents to nationally-representative surveys: those areas where we are often methodologically let down. Combining census data with the European Values Study and UK Household Longitudinal Study (UKHLS), a large high-quality British panel study, it examines what predicts attachment using random effects and panel models. I focus on neighbourhood contextual homogeneity—whether our neighbourhood looks like us socially—and those factors which affect our ability to develop strong social relations. It's in this chapter

that we find out what the average voter who exhibits neighbourhood attachment looks like. They are broadly older, though not by much; they are slightly more likely to be women; they have large, local family networks, haven't moved far or often in their lives, and generally live in neighbourhoods which look like them racially and socio-economically. All this is not constrained to rural areas, however: they are about as likely to live in cities as rural areas, though slightly in favour of the latter.

1.1.2 Why the neighbourhood?

Why focus on the neighbourhood in all this though? Throughout this work, I centre on this term or, to a lesser extent where this isn't possible, the 'local area' and similar, as the primary unit of analysis. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, from a social identity perspective, this granular an identity makes most sense. If our behaviour is shaped by our attitudes towards the groups which make up an area, then the places where we have greater knowledge of, and greater interaction with, are likely the places where we will find these dynamics to be strongest, or at least significantly different. As we will see in Chapter 2, the idea of the 'neighbourhood' also captures for many people one's social environment. The neighbourhood is somewhere we live out much of our free time; in most people's conception probably large enough to contain within

it amenities for that time: places to shop, to socialise, see friends and neighbours, to exercise and to relax. At the same time, it is small enough for us to have some realistic sense of its inhabitants. Secondly, 'neighbourhood' is a term most people are familiar with, and may use in their everyday lives. At the same time, it is a relatively specific unit, with clear boundaries, one which allows us to imagine specific and concrete features: streets, blocks, roads, parks. Partly, we also do not want to enforce too rigid a definition on people, and allow for some difference in interpretation of what neighbourhood means so that, when people are asked, they can apply their own vision. Defining something so granularly also means any spillover effects are not particularly concerning.

This is not a new approach in political science: 'neighbourhood' or related framing has been used in similar research (Chan and Kawalerowicz 2021; Fitzgerald 2018; Ward et al. 2025). It is, however, relatively unusual. Most previous work has focused on a named area—a city, district or region perhaps—or a specific urban form—your 'town', 'village' or 'municipality'. In focusing on such granular, unnamed units here we are gaining external validity: it allows us to extrapolate to any such similar units in other cases. It also allows us to avoid instances where we are attached to places we do not live. With larger, more recognisable units or categories of units—'rural areas' for instance, or a famous city—there is some evidence that those not living

there can feel belonging towards it, as well as confusion regarding whether the place you live now constitutes part of that category (Trujillo 2022a; Trujillo 2022b). Instead, with this identity residency is essential. There is also evidence that this is how people actually think. Taking data from Wave 3 of the British Election Study Internet Panel (Fieldhouse et al. 2019), conducted in 2014, we can see that over three quarters of voters see the 'neighbourhood' as the object which represents their local community, far above any of the, typically more concrete, options such as local stores, common contacts, and friends (Table 1.2). People also have a rough idea of what this means in terms of their neighbours. Taken from that same survey, the median number of people respondents claim to know by name in their local area is 25, although much claim to know many more (Figure A2).

1.1.3 Political effects

Many political studies of place-based identity are limited in looking only at voting for the radical right. In studying its effects, I look at a broader range of effects, studying three areas: political participation, affective partisan polarisation, and candidate preferences. Chapter 4 first considers that most fundamental aspect of political behaviour: whether we engage in politics at all, and how we do so when we do. I use

Table 1.2: What people think of as their local community

Your neighbourhood	75%
Your grocery store, library, post office, church, or other places you visit on a regular basis	47%
People you see on a regular basis	38%
Family and friends	33%
People like you	20%
Your workplace or school	18%
People or places you think about when you may vote in an election	16%
What you see in newspapers, on television, or on the internet	7%

Proportion of respondents answering. Respondents choose as many answers as they wish (British Election Study IP, wave 3, 2014). N = 28,574

three waves of the UKHLS, as well as the European Social Survey, to test a range of activities, such as voting, protesting and campaigning. To this, I match micro-level census data and a collated dataset of neighbourhood-level election results in Britain going back two decades. I use this to explore variation based on contextual political homogeneity—whether a respondent's partisan identity matches that of their neighbourhood. What I find is that attachment to neighbourhoods consistently causes us to turn up and vote. This appears to be driven both by a desire to channel resources to our area, and defend our social group, motivated in part by threat: prevalent only in neighbourhoods where we are surrounded by our political enemies. This is limited

mostly to relatively low-cost activities however. While we may vote more, we are not really motivated to do anything as involved as protesting or campaigning.

How we think about our political identity as a social identity is also important, and so Chapter 5 turns to affective polarisation: polarisation based on social groups. Many voters increasingly live in neighbourhoods which vote similarly to them; this increasing homogeneity is often suggested as a key influence on increasing political polarisation in Western democracies. The evidence for the effect of neighbourhood partisan homogeneity on affective polarisation in the literature is inconsistent, however, and often nonexistent. In this chapter, I argue that this is because we are not considering our affective attachment to neighbourhood, and that this in fact serves to moderate the effect of political echo chambers on polarisation. To show this, I use a nationally-representative survey run by Yougov in the UK, combined with bespoke small-area estimates of vote intention, and real-world micro data on social relations, as well as UKHLS panel data. I find that attachment to neighbourhood does indeed moderate this effect, and a relationship that had previously been null suddenly becomes positive. It does so, however, only in the presence of a third factor: when we are forced to interact more with our in-group, in neighbourhoods which are relatively poorly socially integrated into adjoining ones.

Of course, as fundamental in representative democracy as whether we participate is who represents us. Chapter 6 looks at preferences towards these candidates. Previous experimental studies of voters' preferences for localism in candidates have omitted to evaluate the effect of this most decisive factor: voters' own place-based identity. Many more studies hint at this effect but do not test it experimentally. Here, I address this, using a unique experimental design to both induce voters to feel attached to their neighbourhood, and then to test robustly how this affects how they evaluate political candidates. I show both that it is possible to manipulate this identity, and that doing so clearly induces voters to choose the local candidate. I also address a second shortcoming in the experimental candidate evaluation literature: the conflating of some candidate localism cues, and a lack of variation in cues—typically focusing only on birthplace, distance of residence, and where the candidate studied—compared to other traits, such as education. Here, I show that disentangling these cues reveals significant heterogeneity, both across the profiles in general, and in what primed voters select.

1.2 The data

To test all this, I use a wide range of data: high-quality household panel data, large cross-national surveys, national-level surveys, micro-level census data, and a survey experiment conducted in the United States. My data covers democracies in Britain, Europe and North America. The survey which I make most use of across a number of chapters, the UK Household Longitudinal Study (UKHLS, also known as *Understanding Society*), is relatively underused in political science. My panel covers nearly a decade, employing highly-specified variables regarding social networks, geographic mobility, life events, neighbours and neighbourhood, and allows me to overcome somewhat the causal limitations of other studies. Because it is a household study, in which information is collected on all members of randomly-sampled households, I can also construct detailed variables on the relationships of different household members. Furthermore, I use a restricted version of the data which gives me participants' real addresses, allowing me to model highly granular neighbourhoods.

To these surveys, I match real-world data. This includes high-quality census data; Chapters 4 and 5 also use micro-level data on voting in local elections and the 2016 Brexit referendum in the UK. I use all this to construct unique measures of neighbourhood political and social context. Chapter 5 also uses a unique dataset of voters'

Facebook friendships to model the social connectedness of neighbourhoods. In most cases, I model neighbourhoods the same across much of my data, using very small units of only a few thousand residents.

There is experimental evidence too. Chapter 6 uses a unique mixed vignette and conjoint survey experiment fielded in the United States on candidate preferences. For the first time, I embed a conjoint designed to test individuals' preferences for different characteristics in political candidates—their birthplace or age, for instance—in a vignette designed to prime respondent's attachment to their neighbourhood. This allows me to study experimentally the effect of identity on candidate preferences. This contains two innovations: the combining of the prime and conjoint, which allows me to study the manipulation of the identity, rather than variation on it—something which many other studies have hinted at but never tested experimentally— and the vignette itself: priming a highly-localised place-based identity in itself, which has not been attempted before.

Throughout this work, I am trying to make three points: why we should care about this identity; how we should define it; and what its effects are on political behaviour. In Chapter 2, I argue that it is the neighbourhood, more than any other unit, that we should talk about when talking about place-based identity. In Chapter 3, it is the 'who': who are the voters who evince attachment, and what causes them to be so?

The next three empirical chapters look at the 'how': how can we observe the effect of this identity on political behaviour? Chapter 4 on political participation; Chapter 5 on affective polarisation; and Chapter 6 on political candidates. Each chapter takes a slightly different approach to its question, though they share data.

Place is an essential piece of our identity, and our relationship with it is one of the defining anchors of many of our lives. At the same time, it has not always been top of mind in our studies; we have often been thinking about it in the wrong way, certainly often studying it in the wrong way, and have neglected the full range of its potential political effects. Most of all, we have not been thinking, in quantitative studies, of the neighbourhood. We have not thought in politics how we might define it if we are to study it, how it might change how we think about place-based identity if we do so, and how it might therefore structure political behaviour differently. Hopefully, by the end of this work you will be persuaded of its importance. Hopefully you will also be persuaded of the pervasiveness of its effects on our politics, that it is these effects to which we should be looking when studying it in future, rather than our previous rather narrow focus; that it is, fundamentally, impossible to ignore.

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Appendix I

Figure A1: Proportion of respondents expressing belonging to 'locality' in Europe, all countries available (EVS)

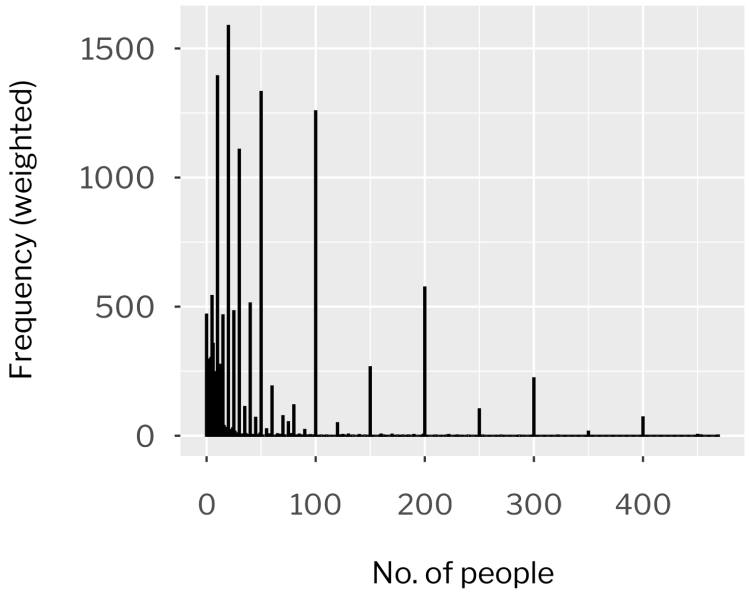

Figure A2: How many people voters claim they can name in their local area (British Election Study IP, wave 3). Note: Outliers above 500 removed

A1.1 BES questions (Wave 3)

Perceptions of local community

We'd like you to picture in your mind what you think of as our local community. This can be as large or small an area as you like, and you can imagine one or multiple areas that make up your local community.

The next questions refer to this local community. What were you thinking about as you were imagining your local community? Please tick all that apply.

- Family and friends
- People you see on a regular basis
- Your neighbourhood
- Your workplace or school
- Your grocery store, library, post office, church, or other places you visit on a regular basis
- People like you
- People or places you think about when you may vote in an election
- What you see in newspapers, on television, or on the internet

Size of local community

Roughly how many people would you say you know by name in your local community? Please enter the number of people (using numbers not words) in the box. It does not have to be exact.

A1.2 TrustGov questions

In politics, to what extent, if at all, do you think of yourself as part of each the following groups?

- Share views/vote like me
- Class
- Ethnicity
- Gender
- Area
- Education
- Political party
- Religion

Responses to each given on a five-item Likert scale.