The evolution of cleavage voting – Structural, behavioural or political dealignment?

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Abstract

Since the heyday of cleavage voting in the 1960s/70s developments such as societal modernisation and the resulting individualisation of politics have been said to weaken cleavage voting. This weakening might be due to structural dealignment (shrinking group size) or behavioural dealignment (change in partisan alignment). A rather modern phenomenon is collective voting abstention by certain social groups (e.g. lower classes), here referred to political dealignment, opening a new type of cleavage in terms of voting vs. abstention. The purpose of this paper is to examine first the evolution of cleavage voting and subsequently check which of the underlying mechanisms are responsible for that. Regarding longitudinal data from Switzerland the statistical results show an overall declining influence of cleavages. However, contrary to the expectations, in most cases this decreasing impact is due to behavioural changes only, leaving little influence to structural developments. Evidence for a new type of cleavage in terms of voting vs. abstention is equally presented.

Introduction

In the 1960s/70s cleavages like social class, religion or rural vs. urban have been prominent determinants of voting behaviour. Since the heyday of cleavage voting, though, several scholars have reported a declining influence of cleavages. This pessimistic view is fuelled by developments such as societal modernisation, globalisation and the resulting individualisation of politics. Increasing media coverage and cognitive mobilization (rising levels of education) led to better informed citizens, who are able to decide voting for a party based on their own knowledge without help from traditional mediating actors such as unions or the church. The latter actors became less important sources for political decision-making. Typical links between e.g. the unions representing the working class and giving advice to vote Socialist parties thus weakened. This weakening of cleavages might be due to structural dealignment (shrinking group sizes) or behavioural dealignment (change in partisan alignment). A third development, in contrast, could lead to growing importance of cleavage voting, although in a different way as before. The relatively modern phenomenon of collective voting abstention by certain social groups (e.g. lower classes), here referred to political dealignment, might lead to a new type of cleavage in terms of (non-)voting in contrast to differences in party choice.

The paper aims to examine the evolution of cleavage voting in a longitudinal perspective with time representing contextual variation. Whereas formerly individual determinants worked strongly in terms of group properties (belonging to same denomination, social class etc.), in the last two or three decades these variables might have become less important as individuals use different sources of information and base their decisions on other factors (e.g. issues, candidate characteristics, etc.). This behavioural dealignment, however, could be also followed by a realignment in the sense that parties adopt their strategies to meet the changing demands by the electorate, but also to represent changing social structures (structural dealignment). An unintended effect of such changes in party strategy could be the non-representation of certain parts of the population leading to abstention.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. The next section discusses the theory of cleavage voting. This includes a definition of the concept, a discussion about the longitudinal development and existence of cleavages in Switzerland. Afterwards, the data and method used to test the expected relationships is presented . The statistical results are shown in the analytical part. To conclude, the main findings and shortcomings of the paper are summarized.

Theory of cleavage voting

Today the concept of cleavage voting is sometimes used in inappropriate ways. It is therefore important to exactly define the concept of cleavage when analysing its concrete impact.

Definition

The concept of cleavage is strongly connected to the works of Lipset and Rokkan (1967b) and Rokkan (1970). Although these studies represent the starting point for cleavage theory, the authors did not provide an explicit definition of the term. Rae and Taylor (1970) provide one of the first real definitions, which is still rather general:

> "Cleavages are the criteria which divide members of a community or subcommunity into groups, and the relevant cleavages are those which divide members into groups with important political differences at specific times and places" (ibid.: 1).

The authors classify three types of cleavages, which are important to study: (1) ascriptive or 'trait' cleavages like race or caste; (2) attitudinal or 'opinion' cleavages like ideology and preference; and (3) behavioral or 'act' cleavages elicited through voting and/or organizational membership (ibid.: 1). A problem of this early typology is the very broad focus. As a cleavage has to fit into only one of the three categories, the concept comprises practically every social or political division. Instead of regarding the three aspects of a cleavage as mutually exclusive, Bartolini and Mair (1990) consider them as *constitutive* aspects of *every* cleavage. They label the three levels of a cleavage slightly different and speak of an *empirical*, a *normative* and an *organisational/behavioural* element (ibid.: 199).[1]

The first, *empirical* element is defined in social-structural terms. It separates the population along certain social characteristics like religion, social class or ethnicity. Typical rivalling groups would be Catholics vs. Protestants or workers vs. employers. Simple divisions like that, however, are not sufficient. They only offer the potential for developing into a full-grown cleavage.

The second, *normative* element adds a sense of collective identity, which must be present among the social groups. A common set of values and beliefs is the basis for the developed identity and also reflects the self-consciousness of the group(s). Each cleavage can consist of only one normative dimension, but there can be also several values/beliefs, which separate the involved groups. In addition to the awareness of their collective identity, the members of a given group must be also willing to act on their common base.

The last, *organisational/behavioural* element comprises the articulation of the group's interest through institutions or organizations. Typical examples are the church, unions or political parties. The resulting organized groups' interests lead to an institutionalization of the normative conflict(s). Especially this third element is often mentioned to be decisive when it comes to define a cleavage (e.g. Kriesi 2010; Zuckerman 1975). In Kriesi's (2010: 673) words "a structural division is transformed into a cleavage, if a political actor gives coherence and organized political

[1] For the following description of the three elements see also Gallagher et al. (1992: 90-91)

expression to what otherwise are inchoate and fragmentary beliefs, values and experiences among members of some social group". Accordingly, only when all three elements are present, one can speak of a "cleavage" in the sense of Bartolini and Mair (1990).

Using this widely acknowledged definition, it becomes clear that the later discussed persistence or decline of cleavages can happen at three different levels. The most obvious change can occur in the social divisions. Certain groups like workers or Catholics might become smaller over time and thus lead to a weakening importance of the respective cleavages. Such a reduction in size of certain social groups, however, does not need to equal a diminishing influence of the other two levels. The normative dimension may become even more important in the sense of a stronger collective identity. This can be the case when some groups see their current (minority) status and power in danger against growing opposing groups. The same could be true on the organisational level. Parties might still focus on the electorate of the declining group. Another possible and more likely reaction of parties, though, is an opening up to a broader electorate, which could then further reduce the impact of the given cleavage. The following analysis will regard in how far all three or just one or two levels are responsible for a change in the impact of cleavages.

Longitudinal development

The evolution of cleavage voting may equal three different developments: dealignment, realignment or a (stable) fluctuation. The approach of dealignment assumes a weakening relationship between social characteristics and voting behaviour. This development might be due to two different processes. The first one assumes that formerly strong alliances between social groups and political parties have softened. The underlying change in partisan alignment of certain groups is referred to "*behavioral dealignment*" (Lachat 2007a: 68).[2] When social groups of a cleavage vote less homogeneously for the same parties, this will lead to a weakening of the cleavage. The second effect that might have led to the current trend of increasing volatility observed in electoral results is a change in the relative size of the social group. This phenomenon is called "*structural dealignment*" (Bornschier and Helbling 2005: 29; Brooks et al. 2006: 91; Lachat 2007: 68). It is possible that strong ties from the past have weakened simply due to the reduction or even "extinction" of a social group and not because the linking issue or subject, if present, has lost its effect on vote choice.

[2] Although the expression behavioural dealignment most often refers to a proactive changing of the electorate's preferences, it might be also just a reaction to changing party orientations. Ladner (2004: 308) mentions the possibility that parties nowadays mobilize less around the same socio-structural differences and thus many former voters change their voting behaviour. In addition, the parties get more votes from former opposing social groups. In total, such a process driven by changing parties leads to the same weakening of formerly strong ties between parties and social groups.

The second concept, the so-called "*realignment*" thesis, is especially linked to class voting. Authors such as Oesch and Rennwald (2010a) or Achterberg (2006) assume that old cleavages are replaced by new or at least transformed cleavages instead of a simple dealignment. An example of such a new alignment is the contemporary division in the new middle-class. Instead of being represented by one single party, in the middle class socio-cultural professionals are opposed to managers and administrators. The socio-cultural professionals are linked to the libertarian left and the managers and administrators to the liberal right.

A third alternative is a *fluctuation* of the impact without a clear tendency, but with a possible stable influence over time (Oesch and Rennwald 2010a). Consequently, a reported decline of traditional cleavages is not to be equalised with the end of political structuring by social divisions. It might also be the case that outdated classifications and operationalizations are simply not able to display the current social realities and potential conflicts. When discussing the different possible developments, dealignment, realignment or trendless fluctuation, it is important to use consistent operationalizations. In his discussion of the possible developments, Kriesi (2010) argues that some of the evidence speaking for a dealignment is only due to outdated subjective class categories. However, when using the adequate recent re-conceptualized objective categories, many studies rather find evidence for a realignment process.

The literature offers different reasons for the declining or at least changing importance of traditional cleavages. One of the most prominent arguments assumes that the rising levels of economic security led to a de-emphasis of material values, which have been very prominent among older generations (van Deth 1995; Elff 2007; Inglehart 1977, 1989; Inglehart and Baker 2000). Other important developments include the expansion of the welfare state, diversity of mass media, secularization and the rising levels of education. The latter is often mentioned under the concept of cognitive mobilization, which assumes that traditional sources of information, like labour unions or the church, become less important leading to voting choices independent of the belonging to a social group (Dalton 1984; Enyedi 2008; Manza and Brooks 1999). Further influential factors are the tertiarization, social and geographical mobility, growing multiculturalism or increasing complexity of modern issues, such as globalisation and international terrorism, which do not fit into traditional patterns of party competition (Norris and Inglehart 2004; Oesch and Rennwald 2010b).[3] All the named aspects result in increasing heterogeneity of individual life and fragmentation of the social structure (Kriesi 2010). This translates into political life in terms of an "individualization of politics" (Dalton 2007: 346; Thomassen 2005: 16). A sense of closure among parts of the electorate is becoming difficult to identify and people rather be-

[3]The mentioned developments are especially harmful for parties representing traditional cleavages. However, it is not a unique problem for those parties, as it also influences the support for (more modern) parties representing other/new ideologies. As Clark et al. (1993) argue, parties in general suffered by increased education, mass media and growing strength of issue-specific groups.

have as free individuals instead of members of a social group or community (Dogan 1995; Kriesi 2010).[4]

Besides the just presented developments, which mainly have a direct effect on the electorate, there is a second approach. Instead of arguing "bottom-up", the decline/change in cleavage voting might be also due to the behaviour of parties. This so-called "top-down" approach argues that party strategies can strongly influence the strength and importance of cleavages. As previously mentioned in the definition of cleavage, parties can either reinforce or weaken differences and divisions linked to a cleavage. Ladner (2004: 308) argues along the same line. He suggests that it might be the parties, which represent just a different part of the society due to changing orientations of the party. If this holds, it is no surprise that a certain decline of cleavages is observable. Bellucci and Heath (2012) thus suggest that both approaches, top-down and bottom-up, are important for the consideration of a change in cleavage voting, as both have independent effects on the significance of cleavages.

In the social class cleavage Weakliem and Heath (1999) argue that one also has to consider the level of non-voting. As a significant part of the eligible population does not vote, a general influence of class should consider both party choice and non-voting. This argument makes sense as in general turnout is lower among the working class than among the middle class. Originally the idea is linked to the US, where some research suggests an unusually small class influence on party choice, but a particularly strong influence on electoral participation. The explanation, however, is not restricted to the US, as it argues that changing party strategies (e.g. the decreasing representation of the working class by Social Democrat parties) may lead to non-voting for certain social groups (see also Verba et al. 1978). An alternative explanation states that people from lower classes posses less political knowledge and interest and thus consider voting less as an obligation of citizenship (cf. Weakliem and Heath 1999). As a result class differences do not express themselves only in a certain party vote, but a new class-vote cleavage differentiates citizens by having voted or not (cf. Evans 2000). If such a development is observable in Switzerland will be answered in the subsequent analysis.

Cleavages in Switzerland

All of the four traditional cleavages according to Lipset and Rokkan (1967a) are or have been present in Switzerland. Till the late 1960s Switzerland was characterised as a classic example of the "freezing hypothesis", as the party system remained unchanged since the 1920s (Kriesi et al. 2005: 3). Like in most other European countries, the religious and the class cleavage were highly important during this time. Both cleavages continue to show considerable effects

[4]Due to this individualisation and societal modernisation in general, theoretically the thesis of dealignment is more convincing than that of realignment (Ladner 2004: 309).

nowadays, although accompanied by a certain decline since the 1970s (Lijphart 1979; Linder and Steffen 2006; Trechsel 1995). Earlier studies showed that in comparison to the other important cleavages of class and also language, religion was the main determinant of electoral behaviour in Switzerland (Lijphart 1979; Kerr 1987). The class cleavage was traditionally of secondary importance not least due to the strength of the religious cleavage, which cuts across class lines (Kerr 1987; Lijphart 1979). Kerr (1987: 150) even goes as far as to say that the religious cleavage and specifically the strong Catholicism had the "effect of muting class alignments". This is surely exaggerated, as other scholars assign social class a very important structuring force for the party system in Switzerland (Kriesi and Trechsel 2008: 87).

The rural-urban cleavage is especially prominent in popular votes (e.g. Nef 1980; Seitz 2014). These are said to be strongly affected by differences between the electorate living in the countryside and in the cities. Regarding the present influence of the cleavage for party choice, though, several studies speak of a rather limited effect of rural-urban divisions (Bornschier and Helbling 2005; Hug and Trechsel 2002; Sciarini 2002). In contrast, several studies count the linguistic conflict to the most important cleavages in Switzerland (Kerr 1987; Lijphart 1979; Trechsel 1995).[5] From an empirical point of view regarding different voting behaviour between the three linguistic regions, they might be right to do so. As Kerr (1987) remarks, language should theoretically be running deeper as a cultural factor than religion does. In contrast to switching religion, it is much harder to change his/her language community. However, the linguistic division cannot fully be classified as a cleavage, as no national party exists to represent the differences (Lachat 2007a, 2008). For the present paper I still treat it as a cleavage since several smaller and regional parties only compete in certain linguistic regions, which justifies this approach.

Hypotheses

Without going into too much theoretical detail for each cleavage, some basic hypotheses shall be mentioned. Trends like modernisation and especially secularisation do not favour an increasing impact of religion. A declining impact is thus expected, however, basically due to structural dealignment (declining groups of believing/belonging people) (H1a). The religious effect itself, though, should remain rather stable, especially the one of religiosity (church attendance) (H1b).

Social class transformed from a pure economically based cleavage to a combination between economic and cultural influences both linked to social stratification. Some evidence points to a decreasing impact of the economic class aspect (e.g. the structural dealignment of workers from the left) and a growing influence of the cultural factor (behavioural dealignment of workers

[5] In the historical four cleavages according to Lipset and Rokkan (1967a) language is subsumed with ethnicity and religion under the centre-periphery cleavage. In the Swiss case the centre-periphery cleavage appears mainly in the form of a division between the majority of German-speakers vs. the other language communities.

with the right). In total these two opposing trends might balance each other out, which results in a rather stable influence over time (H2a). In the context of disenchantment with politics a second development might open a new type of class cleavage between voters and non-voters. As disenchanted citizens mainly belong to lower social classes, a homogeneous abstention in this group is expected (H2b).

Based on the theory of rural-urban differences, both a growing or decreasing influence is possible. A decreasing influence due to modernisation, higher mobility and new media technologies which brings both lifestyles closer together. Continuing globalization and its effects, however, might sharpen the divergent views on economic, ecological and especially foreign policy issues. Based on the weak party representation and the very strong alternative political channels to express the cleavage (popular votes) I expect a decreasing influence of the rural-urban cleavage (H3).

For language I expect an impact which is relatively volatile, depending on which developments gained the upper hand in the time preceding a specific election. Strong economic rivalries and differences played a big role in the 1990s, however, cooled down in the last years due to a general good economic situation. In contrast, the separate media in the language regions are still observable and might intensify somehow with respect to increasing social media usage. Independent of these fluctuations the strength of the linguistic impact should remain stable on a moderate or even high level (H4).

Data and Method

The data basis is the Swiss electoral studies cumulative file.[6] This dataset includes ten election surveys from 1971 till 2011. The last five elections have been conducted under the actual Swiss electoral studies project SELECTS. To cover the whole period from 1971, five additional earlier national surveys are taken. Data for the 1983 national election was unfortunately lost, so that this data point will be missing throughout all following analyses. The merged individual SELECTS datasets comprise between 3000 and 7500 cases and the additional earlier surveys between 1000 and 2000 cases per election year. In total, the resulting cumulative data file comprises 31 668 cases. Due to missings on the dependent and independent variables, the actual used number is smaller, but still sufficiently big for the statistical analyses.

Due to missing questions in specific years (e.g. regarding church attendance) or too less detailed answer categories (e.g. social class), most of the variables can not be used in all of the ten election years. In some cases, though, it was possible to recode or merge information using the separate data files or external sources to add information for years with missing data. This

[6] http://forsdata.unil.ch/fw_query_fors/jd-result-2-det.fwx?htm.sel0=8862&lang=e

concerns mostly the variables of social class and rural-urban. The following section regarding operationalisations will provide more information about the specific recodings.

Measurement

Dependent variables

The study considers two aspects of electoral behaviour. Whereas most of the analysis will focus on differences in party voting, the part considering a possible emerging difference in terms of voting or abstention uses electoral participation as the dependent variable.

Party choice

The respective question asks respondents about their party choice for the National Council in the last federal election. For the analysis I will consider the five major parties in Switzerland (SP, SVP, FDP, CVP and GP)[7]. These parties taken together received always around 80% of the votes, in some occasions even more than 90%. The four parties SP, SVP, CVP and FDP are a logical choice for a long-term analyses, since these parties have been the major players in the Swiss political system representing not only the majority in the parliament, but also forming the government. Since the 1980s the Green party (GP) also gained substantial electoral support, so that this party is included as well. The remaining respondents, those who voted for another smaller party, for single candidates only, or who did not vote at all, are excluded from the analyses regarding party choice.

Electoral participation

The second variable used as dependent variable is electoral participation. The measure is straightforward in asking respondents if they participated in the last federal election or not.

Independent variables

In the religious cleavage I rely on three different variables. The first two consider denomination and church attendance separately, whereas a third variable combines the two aspects.

Denomination

The cumulative data file comprises four different answer categories for denominational belonging. Besides the two major Christian groups of Protestants and Catholics, a third category represents all other denominations like Jews or Muslims. A final category contains all respondents without a specific denomination. I combined the two smaller categories of "other" and "no denomination",

[7] Sozialdemokratische Partei (*Social Democrats*), Schweizerische Volkspartei (*Swiss People's Party*), Freisinnig-Demokratische Partei (*Liberals*), Christlichdemokratische Volkspartei (*Christian Democrats*) and Grüne Partei (*Greens*)

so that the analysis distinguishes between *Protestants*, *Catholics* and respondents with *a different or no denomination*.

Church attendance

The answer categories measuring church attendance are stable from 1995 onwards, however, different for the earlier studies. Instead of the original seven and five answer categories, the cumulative file reduces the answers to four comprising respondents going to church *often, sometimes, rarely or never*. In several years, respondents having indicated to not belong to any denomination have not been asked about their church attendance and were thus coded as missings. If this coding would be maintained almost 15% of all cases would be lost. I thus coded respondents with no denomination, who were not asked about their church attendance, as people never attending church services. For the years 1987 and 1991 no information about church attendance is available.

Combined religion

A third variable combines the just presented two aspects of religion. All Catholics and Protestants are separated by either being active (attending church often or sometimes) or not (rarely or never attending church). The resulting four categories of *active Catholics, inactive Catholics, active Protestants* and *inactive Protestants* are completed with a fifth group comprising *respondents with another or no denomination*. Again, due to the lack of data for church attendance the variable is missing for 1987 and 1991.

Social class

The eight class scheme according to Oesch (2006) distinguishes social class in a vertical and horizontal way. The four vertically higher classes contain *socio-cultural specialists, technical specialists, managers and administrators* and *liberal professions and large employers*. The four lower classes comprise *service workers, production workers, clerks* and *small business owners*. Depending on applicability the classification indicates the social class of the respondent himself, his/her partner or the head of household (in that order). The eight class scheme variable is already included in the cumulative file from 1995 onwards. Based on variables measuring the profession in 1971 and 1975 (ISCO values), I could add the class scheme for these two additional years.[8] In 1979, 1987 and 1991, however, no detailed measure for class is available.

Language region

The cumulative file includes a variable distinguishing between the three main language regions

[8]To do so I merged the variables containing the ISCO coding from the individual files 1971 and 1975 with the cumulative file. For the recoding I followed Rennwald (2014) and thank her for providing me with the corresponding syntaxes.

of *German, French* and *Italian*. Except of 1991 and 2011 (based on municipalities), the coding of the language region is based on the canton where the respondent has the right to vote, meaning that all cantons are treated as if they were monolingual. For the cantons Bern, Fribourg, Graubünden and Valais this monolingual coding is empirically not true. In the four mentioned cantons I thus recode the language region based on the interview language. In 1987 no information about the interview language is available, so that the original coding based on the canton of the right to vote is kept. Data from the 1979 election survey contains only respondents from the Swiss German part, so that the language variable is omitted for this year.

Rural-Urban

Only from 1999 onwards a comparable indicator is available in the data set. The corresponding variable displays the differences between city and countryside based on a definition from the Federal Statistical Office (BfS). This definition is a dynamic one adapting every ten years to current developments. The latest definition used is from 2000 and defines the urban environment as *isolated citie*s (> 10 000 inhabitants) and *agglomerations*. An agglomeration is an area of connected communities with at least 20 000 inhabitants.[9] All remaining communities belong to the rural area. For survey data earlier than 1999 no coding into the BfS definition is available. However, for the years 1971, 1975 and 1995 I could identify all communities and code them according to the valid coding of the respective time. Consequently, the rural-urban dummy is available for all years except 1979, 1987 and 1991.

Control variables

As control variables I include *sex, age* and *education*. Sex is a dummy and age a continuous variable which ranges from 18 to 98 years. The original variable measuring education consists of nine categories, which are not used in all years. I thus combined them into three levels of education: low, middle and high.

Method

For the measure of cleavage strength I use the lambda index. This index is a modified version of the kappa index, which measures differences in voting behaviour between social groups. The kappa index was originally designed for binary dependent variables (see Hout et al. 1995). Lachat (2007a,b) extended it to a multinomial setting with more than two parties. In addition, the lambda index takes into account the size of the corresponding groups and parties. This is crucial if one is interested in the electoral strength of a given cleavage.

The first step to calculate the lambda index is a separate multinomial logistic regression model

[9]The exact definition contains some more conditions and can be retrieved from the BfS homepage (`http://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/portal/de/index/regionen/11/geo/analyse_regionen/04.html`).

for each election year. The dependent variable in these models is party choice. For instance, regarding religious denomination I include three dummies representing Catholics, Protestants and respondents with a different or no denomination. Based on the regression coefficients of the multinomial models, predicted probabilities of party choice are estimated for each (social) group.[10] In such a multinomial setting, the absolute lambda index is then defined as follows:

$$\lambda_{absolute} = \sqrt{\sum_{j=1}^{J}\sum_{s=1}^{S} \omega_j \omega_s \left(\pi_s^j - \overline{\pi}_s^j\right)^2}$$

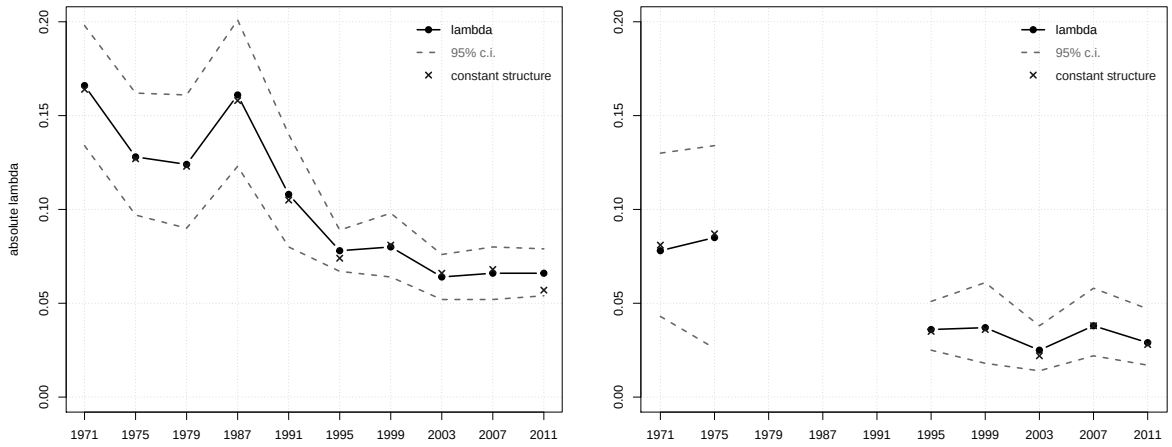
with j representing the five main parties and s being the social groups (e.g. the three denominational groups). The probability that a member of social group s votes party j is represented by π_s^j and the average voting probability $\overline{\pi}_s^j$ is defined as $\sum_{s=1}^{S} \omega_s \pi_s^j$. The ω_s represents the proportion of voters belonging to group s and ω_j the estimated vote share of party j.

In other words, the lambda index summarizes weighted deviations from the average distribution of votes per group and party. The resulting index ranges between 0 and 0.5, with higher values indicating a homogeneous voting behaviour in the social groups, i.e. each social group votes for its own party. In the present case with five parties, a value close to the maximum can be reached when only two parties each receive half of the total votes. As this is empirically not the case, the resulting figures are (much) smaller than the theoretical maximum of 0.5.

The use of the lambda index has several advantages for the present purpose (cf. Lachat 2007b). First, the lambda index allows for a comparison over time. One can thus use the resulting values to analyse the development of a given cleavage strength. Similar as in the kappa index, one can also control for additional variables. Consequently, a calculation of a net cleavage strength is possible while controlling for the other present cleavages. The second major advantage of the lambda index is the possible distinction between structural and behavioural dealignment. For doing so, the calculated voting probabilities $(\pi_s^j - \overline{\pi}_s^j)$ can be weighted with a stable distribution in the structure of the social groups (ω_s). By holding the size of the corresponding social groups constant, the resulting values represent only changes in terms of behavioural de- or realignment. In the following analyses the reference category for holding the social stratification constant is the average of the two first election years 1971 and 1975. These two years are taken together to have a more solid and reliable basis and to accommodate possible particularities of the earliest data point used.

[10] For the calculation I use the Stata program *cindex* written by Lachat (`http://www.romain-lachat.ch/software.html`).

Figure 1: Lambda index for denomination



(a) basic controls

(b) all controls

Analysis

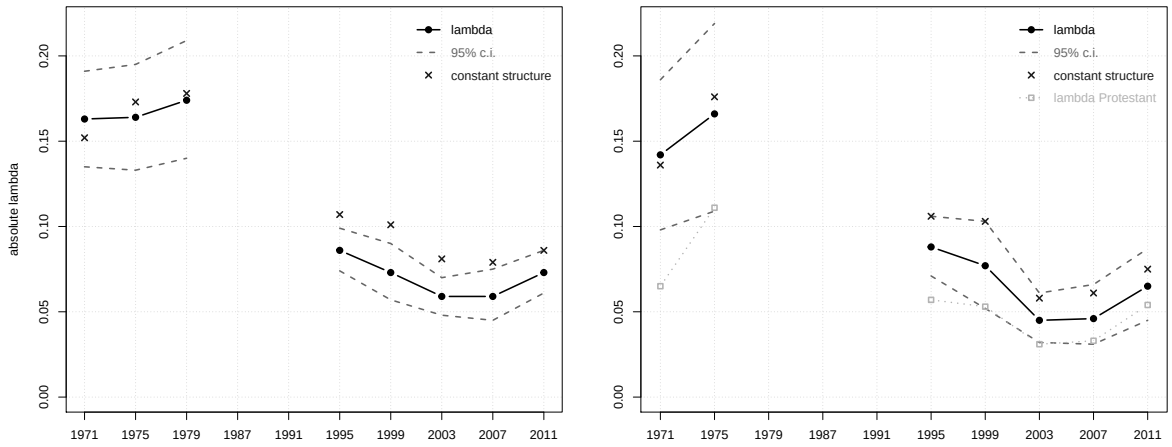
Regarding the presentation of cleavage strength I decided to show two graphs per cleavage variable. A first model analyses the strength by including the actual interesting variable plus the three control variables sex, age and education. This allows to examine all election years where the respective variable is available and thus to have a maximal long observation over time. A second model additionally includes control variables for all the other cleavages. By adding these variables, it is possible to display a sort of "net effect" of the presented variable. However, as several variables are missing in some years, the calculation of the second "full" model is not possible for the years 1979, 1987 and 1991. A substantive time frame is thus missing, a comparison between the early 1970s and the most recent elections, though, is still feasible.[11]

The cleavage according to denomination in figure 1 shows a clear downwards trend (black circles). Starting with the basic model in the left graph, denomination played a strong role till 1987 before a sharp decrease began. In 1995 the lambda value had decreased by around 50%. Since then the denominational influence has stabilized. The pattern is thus split into two halves with a strong impact of denomination in the first four election years and a stable, but much lower impact in the last five elections.

The full model in the right graph confirms this pattern. The available values in the 1970s

[11]The control variables and used reference categories for all lambda indices are the following: sex (man), age (49), education (middle) for all models and denomination (Catholic), church attendance (rarely), Social class (production worker), language region (German) and rural-urban (urban) for the full models. The respective variable analysed is omitted as a control variable. Further particularities are mentioned at the respective passage in the text.

Figure 2: Lambda index for church attendance



(a) basic controls

(b) all controls

are twice as strong as the more recent ones. In general the lambda values are lower, which is especially due to the controlling for church attendance. The last five election years show a trendless fluctuation, meaning that denomination did not lose further in importance in the last 20 years. However, as the values are already very low, denomination does not play a significant role for party choice involving all main parties. Looking only at specific parties, though, denomination still might show some influence (Christian Democrats).

Additionally, the graphs contain lambda values for a constant social structure based on the size of denominational groups in 1971 and 1975. The resulting values show the development of cleavage strength with a non-changing social structure (black x). As the values are very similar to the ones with a changing structure, the discussed developments are mainly due to behavioural dealignment affecting all groups in the same way. Even in case that the church would not have lost so many members, the cleavage strength would not be different. It is thus really a change in voting behaviour, which led to the decreasing impact.

Figure 2 provides rather surprising results based on the lambda index for church attendance. The decline of cleavage strength is not overly surprising, however the magnitude of the decline is. The pattern strongly resembles the one for denomination. In the 1970s the lambda is somewhere around 0.16/0.17 and till 1995 has lost half of its strength. Afterwards the decline even continues till 2003. In contrast to denomination, church attendance was expected to show a more stable effect over time. When regarding the values based on the constant structure, this more stable effect is partly present. The decline is still quite strong, but significantly weaker (x values above upper c.i. line for all five recent elections except 2011). This means that the groups who became smaller over time, including respondents often attending church, became more polarized in their voting behaviour. Party choice among non-attenders, in contrast, is less

systematic. However, the difference between the "normal" lambda value and the one controlling for a constant structure becomes more similar over time. Structural dealignment thus had a particularly strong negative influence during the elections in the 1990s and early 2000s.[12]

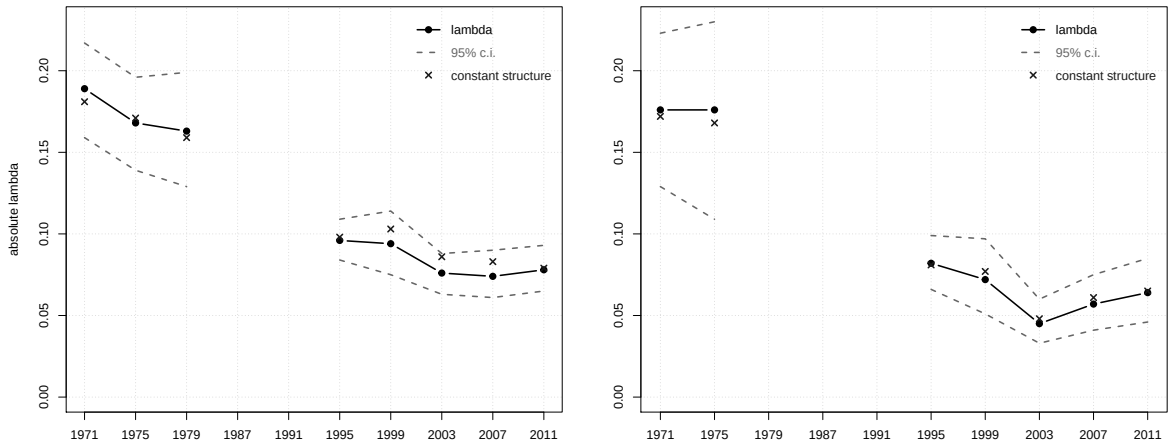
Controlling for the other cleavages leads to very similar results displayed in the right graph. Because of a higher number of independent variables in the model the confidence intervals increase, so that the values with and without controlling for structural change do not differ in a significant way. The pattern, though, stays the same. So far the presented values stand for a 49 old male Catholic respondent. Concerning church attendance, it makes also sense to check the values for a Protestant. Thus, in the full model I included an additional line (dotted grey line) representing Protestants. At first sight, the pattern looks quite similar to the Catholic one. However, three aspects are interesting. First, church attendance plays a (significantly) stronger role in electoral decision-making for Catholics than for Protestants. Second, the formerly very strong difference between Catholics and Protestants has vanished almost completely over time. Whereas the values in the 1970s differed by more than 0.05 points, the latest difference in 2011 is only 0.01. Third, when considering only the values for Protestants and specifically only the two extreme values 1971 and 2011, one could speak of a very stable influence over time. Admittedly, the data quality in the early elections is less reliable than the more modern survey data (for instance the huge difference between the Protestant values in 1971 and 1975). Nonetheless, without the 1975 outlier the pattern strongly resembles a trendless fluctuation. In consequence, the decline of religious voting according to church attendance is much stronger for Catholics, whereas for Protestants the impact did not change dramatically over the last 40 years.

The different patterns for Catholics and Protestants have shown the strong connection between both aspects of religion. In a final step I therefore use a combination of denomination and church attendance to present an overall impact of the religious cleavage. Figure 3 displays the lambda values. Unsurprisingly, the patterns are very similar to the ones regarding denomination and church attendance separately. In both the basic and full model the religious cleavage loses much of its strength from the 1970s. Similar as for denomination, this decline is basically due to behavioural dealignment, as the values controlling for constant group sizes do not differ significantly.

Both graphs of social class influence in figure 4 show a very similar pattern. The lambda values controlling for the effects of other cleavages are surprisingly a bit higher than in the basic model on the left. Apart of that, both models show higher values of the class cleavage in the 1970s,

[12] A reading example to separate the effects due to behavioural or structural changes in the graphs is the following: Regarding only the values for the constant social structure (x-marks) display changes based solely on the behaviour of social groups (as their size is fixed). The comparison between the values based on the actual structure and the constant one in each single election year display structural changes. Whenever the x-marks are above the circles, this stands for structural dealignment compared to the reference years. X-marks below the circles stand for a positive effect of structural changes which might be accordingly labelled structural realignment.

Figure 3: Lambda index for combined religious variable



(a) basic controls

(b) all controls

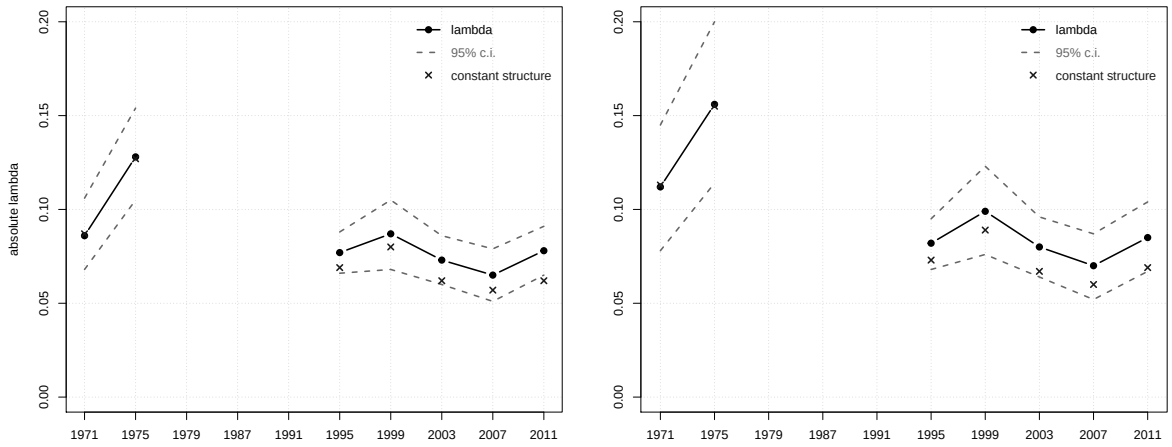
especially in the 1975 election. The latter is quite an unusual case with values almost as high as the ones for religion. Unfortunately, the data does not allow an analysis for the subsequent years, so that it cannot be examined in how far this case is really special.[13] Since 1995 the lambda values do not display a clear trend. After a second little peak in 1999 it seemed that the class cleavage loses constantly in strength, but in the latest election this trend was reversed. 2011 shows quite similar values to 1995, the exact numbers are even slightly higher. One can thus clearly say that class lost in importance between the elections of 1975 and 1995, but since then shows a pattern of trendless fluctuations. In case the upwards trend from the last election continues, the strength could also resemble the one found in 1971. In such a scenario then one definitely could speak of a stable influence over time with potentially unusual high values in 1975. The future elections will provide answers to that.[14]

Looking at the lambda values based on a constant social structure reveals an interesting development. Once the structure would be unchanged to the 1970s, the class cleavage would

[13] A parallel analysis using a less detailed class scheme covering the whole period, though, proved that 1975 was the peak of class voting. Afterwards the influence declined linearly till 1995.

[14] An interesting finding, which is not displayed in the graphs, is the different strength of the class cleavage according to denomination. The presented values using all controls show the effects for a Catholic respondent (figure 4b). Calculating the values for a Protestant leads to the same pattern, however on a different absolute level as the respective values are between one to three points higher. Except for 1995, though, the lambda for Protestants is still inside the 95% confidence interval for Catholics. The difference is thus not statistically significant. The most likely explanation for the denominational difference is that religion (church attendance) is less important for Protestants. Consequently, the inclusion of the religious controls has a smaller dampening effect among Protestants leading to the constantly higher values and thus to a higher importance of social class for the voting decision.

Figure 4: Lambda index for social class (Oesch scheme)



(a) basic controls

(b) all controls

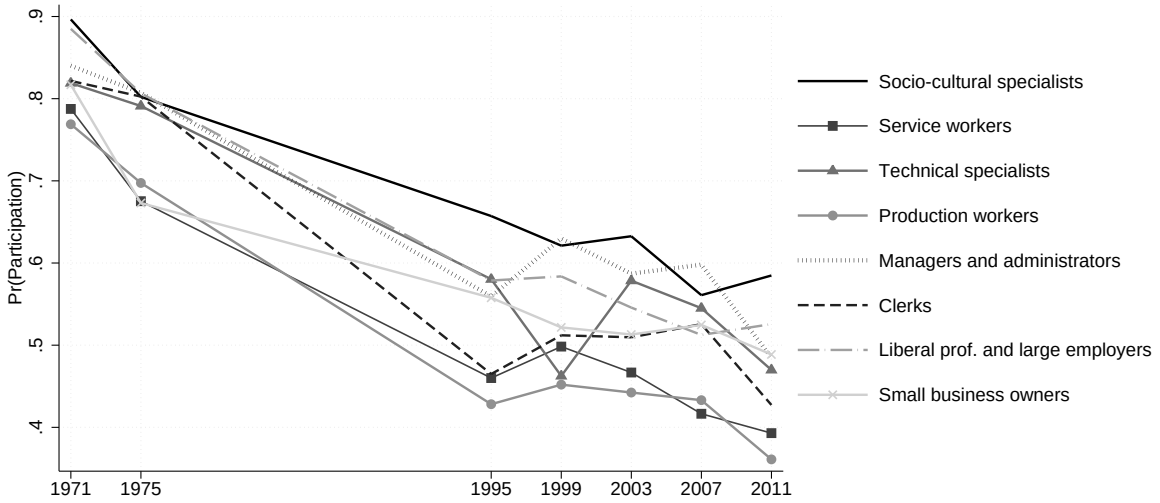
be weaker compared to the actual developments in the social structure.[15] This means that the (strong) change in social structure had a positive effect on the influence of class voting. The social groups growing larger over time, e.g. socio-cultural and technical specialists or managers and administrators, became more polarized than shrinking groups. This in turn may be due to changing party strategies as certain parties adapted their programmes to attract exactly these growing social groups, e.g. the Green Party attracting both categories of specialists. Considering the rather stable gap between the normal values and the ones based on a constant social structure since 1995 suggest that the changing social structure played an especially important role in the earlier elections. In the latest elections, the trendless fluctuations are mostly due to behavioural changes in voting behaviour (similar pattern regarding values based on normal or fixed social structure).[16]

In addition to influence on electoral choice, differences in class location might also show effects for the participation in elections. To test this I ran a logistic model with electoral participation as dependent variable (dummy) and social class plus the basic controls as independent variables. The regression results are displayed in table 2 in the appendix. Based on this model I calculated predicted probabilities of participation for all eight social classes, which are presented in figure 5. The calculation includes a correction for overrepresentation of voters in the surveys (selection bias). As the main interest is relative differences between certain social classes over time, a

[15]Except for the 2011 election in the basic model, however, the differences are not statistically significant.

[16]Between 2007 and 2011, though, the gap widened comparatively strong indicating that ongoing changes in social structure continue to strengthen the cleavage based on class.

Figure 5: Electoral participation by social class (Oesch scheme)



Note: Predicted probabilities of participation are based on results from regression model displayed in table 2 in the appendix. The values represent a male respondent with age 45-54 and medium education.

correction of the selection bias is necessary to derive valid results.[17]

As a first general result the participation among all classes has strongly decreased. A second general results suggests that the differences in participation between (all) classes seem to be stronger in the last five elections compared to the 1970s, where all classes have been in a range of around 10% difference. Social classes thus became more diverse in their voting behaviour. Regarding only the extreme categories of socio-cultural specialists (black solid line) and production workers (grey solid line with circle markers) emphasizes the widening gap over time. The longitudinal trend speaks of (significant) growing differences in participation since the 1970s. In order to illustrate the amount of change table 1 shows the ratios between both social classes in electoral participation. The numbers convey a clear message, although they not provide a strict positive trend. However, if one compares the ratio in the 1970s with the average ratio in the elections since 1995 ($\sim$1.45), an average increase in the participation ratios of around 30% emerges. In addition, none of the values since 1995 are as low as the one found for 1971. The growing differences in participation are thus quite substantial and particularly due to a strong decrease in electoral participation among production workers, which halved their participation rate. The socio-cultural specialists, in contrast, show a comparatively stable participation, however still with a decrease of around 30%.

[17]Since the selection bias has grown over time and is more problematic for recent elections, without a correction the participation would always be overestimated, but even more so in the latest elections. This would strongly bias the results of the following calculation of participation ratios.

Table 1: Participation gap between socio-cultural specialists and production workers

1971	1975	1995	1999	2003	2007	2011
1.17	1.14	1.53	1.38	1.43	1.30	1.61

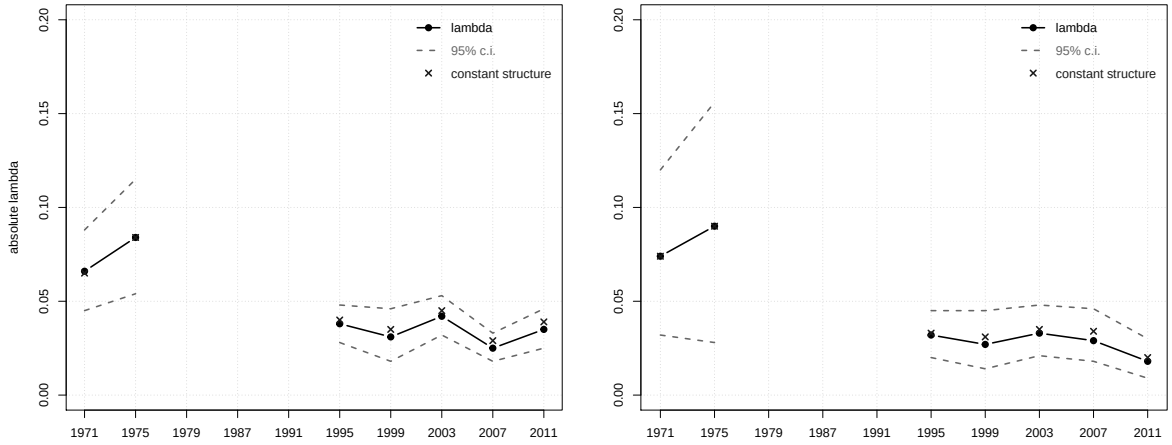
Note: The values are calculated by dividing the predicted probability of socio-cultural specialists by the one of production workers. A value of 1.15 in 1971 thus equals a participation of socio-cultural specialists which is 1.15 times higher as the one for production workers.

The second type of working class, the service workers, show a similar pattern as the production workers. This further strengthens the evidence, which points to a significant increase in the differences of electoral participation. The representation of lower classes (working class) indeed became weaker over the last forty years and thus points to an emerging cleavage in terms of (non-)voting. Often, the low participation of social classes is explained by lower levels of education or political knowledge. However, as the used regression model controls for the level of education, the found patterns are at least no artefact of different education levels. There might still be some other (omitted) factors explaining the lower participation rate of the working class. The shown evidence, though, indicates that the differences are really due to class location and the (missing) representation of them by political parties.

After this different approach to tackle cleavage voting two more cleavages remain to be discussed in terms of party choice. The strength of the rural-urban cleavage is shown in figure 6. Both, the basic and full model lead to pretty similar results. In both graphs the influence of the cleavage lost around half of its strength from the 1970s till the recent elections. The loss is even higher when regarding only the right-hand graph comparing the most recent value from 2011 with the 1970s. The lambda score for 2011 is the absolute lowest for all analysed cleavages and with a value of not even 0.02 the cleavage does actually have no influence on party choice for the five main parties. This almost non-impact, though, is already present since 1995, as the corresponding values of around 0.03 also indicate a very weak influence. In contrast to the religious cleavage according to denomination, which displays similar low values (see figure 1), there is also not a single party for which the rural-urban cleavage still plays an important role despite the overall weak influence for all five parties (as it is the case for the CVP regarding denomination). In a last step controlling for a constant social structure leads to very similar results. Consequently, the found decrease is not just an artefact of a general increasing urban population which today represents almost 75% of all respondents. In the 1970s the distribution was more equal with around 55% respondents living in cities. The nowadays skewed distribution towards urban citizens does certainly not help to strengthen the cleavage, but as the data shows the low and decreasing influence is basically due to behavioural changes.

A rather surprising result is the lambda index of language in figure 7. In both graphs language does not lose in cleavage strength, but even slightly gain in strength compared to the 1970s. As

Figure 6: Lambda index for rural-urban



(a) basic controls

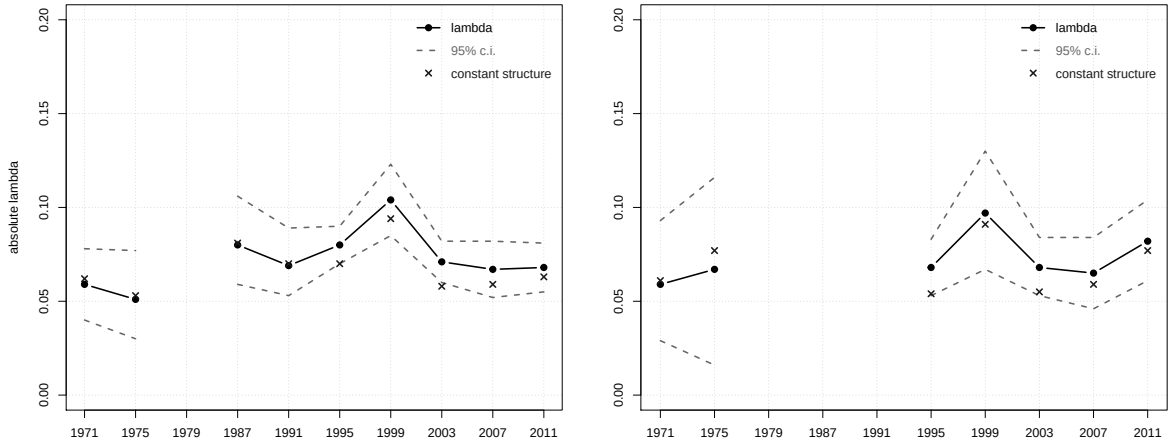
(b) all controls

expected, the impact fluctuates over time with a significant peak in 1999, at least partly due to the growth of the SVP in the German-speaking cantons. Afterwards the cleavage strength decreased, but regained again in strength in the 2011 elections when looking at the right-hand graph representing the full model controlling for all other cleavages. This stable and lately increasing influence is even more surprising as the analysis only includes the five main parties, of whom none does really accentuate linguistic issues. Once the smaller regional parties or some new nation-wide parties with so far only regional strongholds would be included in the measure as well, the impact of language should be even higher.

The control for changes in social structure does not make too much sense in terms of language as no major changes occurred over time. However, the different surveys often have over-sampling for a linguistic region included, especially for Ticino. As the calculation of the lambda index does not allow for a control in terms of weighting these sampling differences, the indicated values based on the constant social structure as in the 1970s are a kind of control in how far the results are robust and not influenced by over-sampling of a specific linguistic group. Indeed, there are some differences when looking at the values for the constant structure, the overall pattern, though, remains the same. The displayed and discussed development is thus not significantly biased by different group sizes in each election study.

Recapitulating the developments of all four cleavages in a broader perspective leads to some interesting findings. Except of the linguistic cleavage, all other cleavages have lost in importance in the last forty years. This decreasing trend is especially strong for religion and rural-urban, leaving common variables like denomination or the distinction between urban and rural residence with a very low impact on party choice. Social class (Oesch scheme) has also lost in influence since the 1970s, but not as dramatically as religion and especially since 1995 shows a pretty

Figure 7: Lambda index for language



(a) basic controls

(b) all controls

stable moderate impact on voting behaviour. The most surprising finding, though, is the stable impact of language with an even slightly increasing impact since the 1970s. Although language often does not count as a full cleavage, its impact shows the highest stability and is today the cleavage with the second highest impact after social class. As Lijphart (1979) already stated, the full potential of language could have been suppressed by religion. Since the latter lost in importance for electoral behaviour, language can now show more of its full potential.

If one groups the analysed variables in terms of (internal) stability for a respondent, an interesting pattern emerges. Language is definitely the most stable aspect of a person, which is almost impossible to change. Sure, one can learn other languages, but it will almost never be the same as one's mother tongue. A second rather stable factor is social class. Although social mobility has increased in the last decades, many people still end up in similar class locations as their parents and remain there for the rest of their (working) life. Religious factors, in contrast, are easier to change in the sense of leaving/joining the church or fluctuations in attending church services. The same is true for rural-urban residence, which is probable to change (several times) during life. As the analysis has shown, the rather stable factors of language and social class also show a more stable impact on party voting. In that sense it might be that it is not only important to belong to a certain socio-structural group, but also to belong to that group for a certain time. Based on language a person will always be somehow connected to a linguistic region/community, whereas moving from the countryside to the city does not immediately lead to a change in political preferences. If a person experiences both living conditions, knows people from both social groups and their problems, a party decision based on such volatile factors might be harder to make than based on factors, which have been stable for a long time.

Conclusion

The aim of the study was to examine the evolution of cleavage voting and to analyse which underlying behavioural or structural changes are responsible for that. Using longitudinal data from Switzerland covering forty years allowed to check in how far developments such as societal modernisation, globalisation and resulting individualisation of politics affected cleavage voting. Three of the tested cleavages showed (dramatic) decreases in impact on electoral voting behaviour. Especially the traditionally strong impact of religion decreased. A similar strong decrease was found for the rural-urban cleavage with practically no influence on party choice today. Social class also lost in importance, but still shows a moderate and rather stable impact in the last elections. The only cleavage which kept its strength and even increased it since the 1970s is language.

Contrary to the expectations, the losing influence is basically due to changes in electoral behaviour and not due to structural changes (declining group sizes). For social class, the structural developments even had a positive impact on cleavage strength. A specific development linked to social class was the assumption of an emerging cleavage in terms of voting vs. abstention for certain social classes. This could indeed be proven in the sense of an opening gap in electoral participation between lower (working class) and middle/upper classes (socio-structural specialists).

Limitations of the study are first the sole focus on Switzerland, which does not allow a generalisation of the results. The specific characteristics of the country in terms of cultural and economic heterogeneity and a strong cantonally defined political system ("laboratory of Europe") may have strong influence on the presented results. Second, for some cleavages better/alternative operationalisations exist. For instance, religion is said to have a strong non-institutional component of believing without belonging (Davie 1994; Nicolet and Tresch 2009) and rural-urban can also be measured using more detailed schemes. Due to data constraints, though, it is not possible to check these alternative measures in the longitudinal perspective.

Appendix

Table 2: Electoral participation among social classes (logistic regression model for figure 5)

		beta	s.e.
Social class	socio-cultural specialists (ref. category)		
	service workers	-0.85***	(0.27)
	technical specialists	-0.65	(0.41)
	production workers	-0.96***	(0.27)
	managers and administrators	-0.50*	(0.29)
	clerks	-0.63**	(0.27)
	liberal prof. and large employers	-0.12	(0.43)
	small business owners	-0.66**	(0.28)
Sex	male (ref. category)		
	female	-1.02***	(0.11)
Age	18-24	-1.37***	(0.21)
	25-34	-0.45***	(0.17)
	35-44	-0.18	(0.17)
	45-54 (ref. category)		
	55-64	-0.05	(0.18)
	65-74	-0.14	(0.19)
	75+	-0.83***	(0.27)
Education	low education	-0.52***	(0.12)
	middle education (ref. category)		
	high education	0.10	(0.17)
Election year	1971 (ref. category)		
	1975	-0.76*	(0.45)
	1995	-1.51***	(0.33)
	1999	-1.66***	(0.36)
	2003	-1.62***	(0.33)
	2007	-1.91***	(0.35)
	2011	-1.82***	(0.34)
Interaction terms	service workers*1975	0.18	(0.45)
	service workers*1995	0.04	(0.31)
	service workers*1999	0.35	(0.34)
	service workers*2003	0.17	(0.32)
	service workers*2007	0.27	(0.33)
	service workers*2011	0.07	(0.33)
	technical specialists*1975	0.58	(0.55)
	technical specialists*1995	0.32	(0.44)
	technical specialists*1999	0.00	(0.47)
	technical specialists*2003	0.42	(0.45)
	technical specialists*2007	0.59	(0.46)
	technical specialists*2011	0.19	(0.45)
	production workers*1975	0.39	(0.41)
	production workers*1995	0.02	(0.31)
	production workers*1999	0.27	(0.33)
	production workers*2003	0.18	(0.32)
	production workers*2007	0.44	(0.33)

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Table 2 – Continued

	beta	s.e.
production workers*2011	0.04	(0.33)
managers and administrators*1975	0.53	(0.44)
managers and administrators*1995	0.09	(0.32)
managers and administrators*1999	0.54	(0.35)
managers and administrators*2003	0.31	(0.33)
managers and administrators*2007	0.65*	(0.34)
managers and administrators*2011	0.10	(0.34)
clerks*1975	0.63	(0.43)
clerks*1995	-0.16	(0.31)
clerks*1999	0.18	(0.33)
clerks*2003	0.13	(0.31)
clerks*2007	0.49	(0.33)
clerks*2011	-0.00	(0.33)
liberal prof. and large employers*1975	0.15	(0.60)
liberal prof. and large employers*1995	-0.22	(0.49)
liberal prof. and large employers*1999	-0.04	(0.52)
liberal prof. and large employers*2003	-0.24	(0.49)
liberal prof. and large employers*2007	-0.08	(0.50)
liberal prof. and large employers*2011	-0.12	(0.53)
small business owners*1975	-0.02	(0.43)
small business owners*1995	0.24	(0.32)
small business owners*1999	0.25	(0.35)
small business owners*2003	0.17	(0.33)
small business owners*2007	0.52	(0.34)
small business owners*2011	0.27	(0.35)
female*1975	0.29	(0.18)
female*1995	0.75***	(0.14)
female*1999	0.45***	(0.16)
female*2003	0.54***	(0.15)
female*2007	0.58***	(0.15)
female*2011	0.81***	(0.15)
18-24*1975	-0.09	(0.34)
18-24*1995	-0.03	(0.26)
18-24*1999	0.45	(0.30)
18-24*2003	0.74***	(0.28)
18-24*2007	0.67**	(0.29)
18-24*2011	0.79***	(0.27)
25-34*1975	-0.32	(0.27)
25-34*1995	-0.57***	(0.20)
25-34*1999	-0.57**	(0.23)
25-34*2003	-0.45**	(0.21)
25-34*2007	-0.40*	(0.23)
25-34*2011	-0.18	(0.23)
35-44*1975	-0.34	(0.28)
35-44*1995	-0.25	(0.20)
35-44*1999	-0.33	(0.23)
35-44*2003	-0.43**	(0.21)
35-44*2007	-0.33	(0.22)

continued on next page...

Table 2 – Continued

		beta	**s.e.**
	35-44*2011	-0.06	(0.22)
	55-64*1975	0.10	(0.29)
	55-64*1995	0.10	(0.23)
	55-64*1999	0.18	(0.25)
	55-64*2003	0.34	(0.23)
	55-64*2007	0.48**	(0.23)
	55-64*2011	0.49**	(0.23)
	65-74*1975	0.02	(0.31)
	65-74*1995	0.57**	(0.25)
	65-74*1999	0.76***	(0.28)
	65-74*2003	0.84***	(0.24)
	65-74*2007	0.60**	(0.26)
	65-74*2011	0.69***	(0.25)
	75+*1975	-0.09	(0.45)
	75+*1995	1.44***	(0.33)
	75+*1999	1.71***	(0.36)
	75+*2003	1.45***	(0.32)
	75+*2007	1.68***	(0.34)
	75+*2011	1.82***	(0.35)
	low education*1975	0.01	(0.19)
	low education*1995	0.51***	(0.17)
	low education*1999	0.06	(0.19)
	low education*2003	0.05	(0.18)
	low education*2007	0.34*	(0.19)
	low education*2011	0.25	(0.20)
	high education*1975	0.39	(0.25)
	high education*1995	0.27	(0.19)
	high education*1999	0.58***	(0.21)
	high education*2003	0.33*	(0.20)
	high education*2007	0.60***	(0.21)
	high education*2011	0.38*	(0.20)
	constant	2.16***	(0.29)
	N	26090	
	Pseudo R^2	0.092	

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

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