Housing, Place, and Populism

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INTRODUCTION

The recent success of populist parties and campaigns has led to a cottage industry of academic analyses seeking to understand these developments. Most scholars have tended to pit economic and cultural factors against each other as explanations for why the so-called `left-behind' are attracted to populist causes. For example, scholars have examined individual economic situations (Lubbers et al 2002) or intrinsic cultural differences in attitudes towards globalization and immigration (Gidron and Hall 2017, Mutz 2018, Norris and Inglehart 2017). More nuanced studies have pushed to look at local economic conditions, such as the impact of 'China shocks' to manufacturing employment (Dorn et al 2016, Colantone and Stanig, 2018). Although not necessarily made explicit in these latter accounts, such arguments all presume that individuals are politically embedded in their local geographies and that these geographies somehow condition voting. Yet there has been relatively little development, in this recent literature and in political science more generally, of theoretical arguments about exactly how local geographies ought to matter, or indeed how local they would have to be to matter. We believe that doing so would allow for a more helpful bridging of the economics and cultural identity divide while likely better accounting for the pattern of political transformations occurring.

More specifically, political scientists often distinguish between individual or pocket-book effects on citizens' attitudes and views about the world and *sociotropic* effects on preferences and behaviour that are presumed to descend to an individual's preference from characteristics of a geographic scale larger than themselves. But we have spent rather less time thinking about exactly what sociotropic is, what it means, how sociotropic effects might vary, in kind and by

geographic level, and what the mechanism is connecting these aggregate, geographically defined forces to individuals and important political outcomes. In particular, the notion of sociotropic has often been used with little attention to its inherent rooting of causality in both material economic factors and cultural dynamics, a task that has become critical to understanding the disruptive politics of our time. We argue, in contrast, that one critical way pocketbook economic issues play out is through their geographic characteristics, as different economic geographies generate different lived experiences, and thus contrasting identities, that may fundamentally shape how people see their interests and how they understand politics.

This paper therefore is an effort at conceptual brush clearing around the notion of sociotropic effects, with a particular focus on explaining support for populist causes. We develop a set of alternative theories as to how people formulate their notion of self-interest within various geographic contexts, one that integrates economic and cultural dynamics. Geography is about the 'where' and how that matters, in our case for political outcomes such as preferences, polarization, and voting. Our understanding of political geography takes care to separate out two different conceptualizations: geography as 'space' and geography as 'place'. The former reflects objective, often more easily measurable, distributions of economic or demographic statistics at various geographic levels. The latter reflects subjectively experienced but geographically bounded communities, which shape political self-understanding. Distinguishing 'space' from 'place' allows us to revisit the contemporary debate about populism and highlights the implications of differing empirical operationalizations of political geography that prevail in the current literature.

We then turn to examine housing as an example of a geographic context that brings 'space' and 'place' considerations together. Housing prices and ownership rates can be viewed as economic aggregates that shape wealth and inequality at various geographic levels – this is the 'spatial' lens. Housing can also be viewed through the lens of 'place'. Houses carry sentiment and meaning – they are the core means of 'belonging' to a location. Moreover, house prices lock people into – or out of – various locations by shaping the possibility of mobility between geographies. Thus, local housing markets also embody a subjective understanding of belonging to a particular community and thereby shape political attitudes more broadly.

We provide an exploratory set of empirical examinations of local communities as conditioning the vote to leave the European Union during the Brexit Referendum of 2016. We begin with an analysis of housing as a 'space' - showing that house prices at the local authority and (more disaggregated) ward level shaped support for Leave or Remain. We then move to analysing how Britons viewed their local community itself - as a self-defined 'place' – and show how subjective understandings of the local community also shaped vote choice. Our contention is that this economic geography generates a profoundly different lived experience that helps shape the broader cultural dynamics and identities of voters in ways consequential for Brexit. The paper concludes by suggesting a research agenda for pushing forward a more complete understanding of the ways in which sociotropic mechanisms are at work in the context of geography's space and place, and how this may be shaping politics today.

GEOGRAPHY AND SOCIOTROPIC LOGICS

The longstanding tradition in political science of straightforwardly locating voters' preferences in their individual income and wealth characteristics has struggled to explain populist outcomes (Weyland 2003, Iversflaten 2008). In response to the failure of these pocketbook accounts, other scholars have flipped to culture and identity, as if they are completely separate from the pocketbook effects—e.g. they argue it is simply inherent and intrinsic racism or authoritarian values or a felt loss of status that is motivating people (Gidron and Hall 2017, Mutz 2018).

Sociotropic accounts seem to offer a way to move beyond this deadlock by looking to shared communities of interest to generate a fuller account of how people make sense of their interests. Sociotropic accounts seek to link individual voters preferences not simply to their own sense of atomistic, individual or egotropic interests, but to a broader sociotropic spheres of membership, be it national, regional, or local (Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier 2013). Yet sociotropic dynamics, which purport to capture some of this larger than the individual pocketbook story, have yet to be fully conceptualized or theorized, despite being the subject of much empirical study. To fully exploit the explanatory potential of sociotropic approaches in accounting for the wave of disruptive politics unfolding across the US and Europe today, we argue that we need to tease out the ways in which the pocketbook economic issues play out through their geographic characteristics. We look to the ways economic and demographic geography generate lived experiences and identities that shape how people understand politics and how they see their interests.

The earliest work on sociotropic politics posited that instead of "emphasizing the citizens' own economic predicaments," we might look to "the political importance of citizens' assessments of the nation's economic predicament" to explain political preferences (Kinder and Kiewiet 1981,129-130). What Kinder and Kiewiet called sociotropically motivated voters "support candidates that appear to have furthered the nation's economic well-being and oppose candidates and parties that seem to threaten it," using rough and ready "evaluations of national economic conditions, and then credit or blame the incumbent party accordingly" (Kinder and Kiewiet 1981, 132). Rather than seeing these voters as necessarily altruistically motivated or making claims about motivation, Kinder and Kiewiet were agnostic, and claimed only capturing a larger set of data about national economic performance may be a better predictor of citizen's political preferences.

Other scholars have taken up the idea of a sociotropic source for voting preferences, linked to the national level economy, on the one hand, or family finances, on the other (Kayser and Peress 2012). A few scholars have explored other sources of group based specifications of economic well being, such as class (Mutz and Mondak 1997). This emphasis on sociotropic causality has extended also to assessments of foreign economic policy. For example, Mansfield and Mutz (2009), "find strong evidence that trade attitudes are guided less by material self-interest than by perceptions of how the U.S. economy as a whole is affected by trade," or what they term sociotropic aggregate views, noting that ethnonationalism and views regarding foreign policy isolationism also impact views on trade. Other scholars have noted the importance of local demographic

geographies in shaping views both about race and public goods provision (Oliver and Mendelberg 2000, Yancy 2018).

To leverage the potential usefulness of the sociotropic perspective, we suggest a different strategy, turning to the concept and study of geography as it provides a ready way to situate individuals in a larger setting. This is a conversation that has already begun, notably with Reeves and Gimpel's 2012 article, which introduced the idea of "geotropic" to capture the role that geography may play in shaping how people make sense of what their interests are. They argue that "voters' judgments of national economic conditions are heavily informed by their workaday experience of the economies to which they are exposed" and go on to label "these local factors as "geotropic" considerations and distinguish them from sociotropic and egotropic concerns" (Reeves and Gimpel 2012, 508, see also Ansolabehere et al 2014). But how can we theorize about what processes are occurring to root voters' sense-making in specific geographic contexts so as to generate testable hypotheses about what is going on?

GEOGRAPHY AS SPACE AND PLACE

As we have seen, scholarship investigating how sociotropic and geographic factors might condition political behaviour has been growing over the past decade. Yet, the literature has broadly lacked a coherent overview of when we might expect different types of geography to matter more. In part, this is because scholars have matched the geographical unit of analysis to the independent or dependent variable at hand – for example, to examine school funding preferences in the United States one would ideally use geographic

information about the school district, whereas to examine media framing one would use the relevant local media market. This type of decision rule is quite functional on a one-off basis but it faces two major problems.

The first dilemma is the well known modifiable areal unit problem (MAUP) (Openshaw, 1984). This concern relates to the fact that the choice of the size of the geographic unit and the particular borders among geographic units of a given size, alter the types of statistical conclusions that one can draw. For example, broadly speaking, larger units tend to produce stronger correlations across variables of interest. Moreover, conclusions can vary dramatically depending on how one shifts the bounds of similarly-sized units under analysis in a manner similar to that produced when Congressional Districts are redistricted according to various schemes. The MAUP means that claims about the effects of geography on individual behaviour are extremely context-dependent - changes in the level of aggregation or shuffling of boundaries can dramatically alter results. The conclusion we should draw is that claims that 'geography matters' to, for example, populist voting need to be followed by the question, 'which geography?'

The second dilemma facing our analysis of the effects of geography on political behaviour is the absence of any overarching theoretical schema to adjudicate which type of geography *ought* to be relevant to political questions at hand. In a sense, this second dilemma worsens the first. We might be able to respond to the MAUP with more certainty if we knew the appropriate size of geographical units and that their boundaries were not arbitrary. Yet, if we lack clear theoretical priors as to which geographic units should matter then we have no such solution (Branch 2016).

Our view, then, is that is imperative for political scientists to think more seriously about which geographies should matter, and how, for political life. And in doing so it becomes important to consider how 'objective' factors – distributions of observable economic, political or demographic characteristics at some geographic level – may generate 'subjective' understandings of geographic communities. We refer to these 'objective' geographic characteristics as 'space' and the 'subjective' depictions of geographic communities as 'place'. Both can be cast at equivalent geographic sizes. For example, we can think both of the absolute size of the national economy (GDP) and the 'nation' as an imagined community. We can also look at house prices along a particular street and the street's level of inter-subjective 'community.' But 'space' and 'place' are ontologically quite distinct concepts and have correspondingly different suitability for various theoretical claims one might wish to make about the determinants of populism and other political questions.

How Space and Place Matters for Politics

We begin by thinking about 'space.' Space can be thought of as an abstract grid, the distribution of something across a generalized field of activity. For example, typically we think of economic resources as being distributed non-uniformly across space – some locations - countries, regions, cities – have higher, or more valuable at global prices, economic activity than others. We can extend this analysis to political or demographic factors – the distribution of Republican voters across Congressional Districts in a given US state or the number of individuals of Asian descent across English counties. Spatial analysis tends to be universalized and abstract – a given resource is uniformly defined (all economic activity is treated the same way) but nonuniformly distributed

spatially. Its particular manifestation in various locations is defined only by its relative quantity not by other contextual matters (i.e. a dollar of production or a Republican voter is treated as similarly meaningful in different locations).

A focus on 'space' also tends to presume the existence of general, underlying structural trends – economic, demographic, regulatory, and so on - at work in producing that particular spatial pattern. The role for individual actors in analyses that focus on political geography through the lens of 'space' is to be buffeted by the local manifestation of these structural trends. For example, per the famous contact hypothesis, individuals' racial attitudes are defined by the proportion of ethnic minorities in a given shared location (be it city, region, country), with only this particular proportion shaping the geographic understanding of race and politics (Goodwin and Kaufman 2018).

'Place' as a concept, in contrast, is unique, and not substitutable in the way a point in space might be. This is not to deny that place also exists in the context of space. However, whereas space is nomothetic or generalized, place should be seen as idiographic or particularistic (Agnew 2011, 324). This contrast between space and place neatly mirrors the division in much of political science between those that stress material and economic interest based accounts, and those that look to more contingent, historically specific and socially constructed factors such as culture and identity to explain outcomes. It also maps onto the difference between structural accounts of political behaviour and those that focus on local agency and contingency.

In the academic field of geography, John Agnew has written, this difference has resulted in "disputes between that abstract spatial analysis which tends to view places as nodes in space simply reflective of the spatial imprint of

universal physical, social or economic processes and that concrete environmental analysis which conceives of places as milieu that exercise a mediating role on physical, social and economic processes and thus affect how such processes operate " (Agnew 2011, 317). But disputes need not be the way to adjudicate these issues, instead, we propose thinking about the ways in which space and place interact as a better strategy for understanding important outcomes of politics, such as populism.

We can start by noting that space and place are intrinsically connected because 'places' can typically be viewed spatially as locations situated within a specific set of larger causal processes. However, place might itself be causal in shaping people's sense of their own identity beyond these spatial distributions. Indeed, 'place' does not have to be attached to fixed spatial locations. People are corporal, they have a specific individual rooted existence, even if that rooted reality is a business class airport club lounge, not a local pub. Thus, cosmopolitan elites have sense of place, even as it is a highly mobile one that may cross national borders. But it is useful to start with the abstract, generalizable grid of spatial characteristics, and then move to consider how place and identity might be generated within that grid.

Geographic Spaces

We begin by setting out the core geographic units used in political science. As noted above, choosing unthinkingly to move between one unit and another opens empirical analysis up to the modifiable areal unit problem. With that caveat, many political science theories have a clear conceptual justification for choosing particular geographic units of analysis (in extremis, the focus in

international relations on nation states as unit). For example, central to most modern political science, the nation-state has unthinking pride of place in terms of analysis: as the "natural" geographic unit of social life. As Agnew writes, "Territory, therefore, in the sense of a spatial block of sovereign control and authority, has been the main way in which the various social sciences (sociology, political science, in particular) have tended to conceive of and privilege space over place" (Agnew 2011, 323; Hirst 2005). For generations scholars have noted the arbitrariness in many cases of a focus on the nation-state – even in areas that might appear Weberian in nature, such as internal order and external security (Spruyt, Lessing)

National economic growth is classic sociotropic measure in economic voting. More recently Kayser and Peress (2012) have argued that people benchmark their nation's growth against that of other nations. Shayo (2009) argues that nationalism may be conditioning force in large or powerful nations. National level inequality might affect redistributive preferences (Meltzer and Richard, 1984).

At a subnational level, regions could be a consequential unit for both space and place, with regional political forces (e.g. state level legislatures and governors) and regional economies and their industrial structure playing a role. Regional level demographics and linguistic differences could be important. Sometimes regions can span borders, as with Catalonia or the Basque regions straddling France and Spain. Moving down the geographic scale, cities, and towns can embody locales that might matter for a sociotropic story, with a plethora of potentially important characteristics, be it demographics, political institutions, cultural practices and schooling. Finally, at the level of

neighborhoods, we can see important variations that might be shaping political views. These could be related to local house prices, the racial demography of a given neighbourhood or street, or local political representation.

What is crucial in all these cases is that the political geography is defined over a fixed space with more or less objectively measurable characteristics. Such characteristics are not defined ad hoc by intersubjective agreement but are long-standing clearly-defined agreements about what constitutes a measure of territory and what social objects can be observed. Once we know an individual's precise location we then assume that they are influenced in some fashion by the particular distribution of geographically diverse variables we care about. Space is universal but location is specific.

Geographic Places

While political scientists have explored the various levels of geographic spatial units described above, they have not thought as systematically about the role of place, and how space and place are linked. The spatially distributed set of material structures such as demography or industrial structure generate very different lived experiences that depart from the abstracted grid of regularity described above. We can think about this as "interactions of everyday life that help people create a sense of place, themselves and others" (Perkins and Thorn 2012, 13). This sense of place involves a complex series of processes from the very local to the national to the transnational that are likely to have important effects on political preferences (McNamara 2018).

Most fundamentally, the lived experiences produced by a particular place can be thought of as culture, in the sense that culture is a dynamic process of

meaning making, shared among some particular group of people. We can think about meaning making as a "a social process through which people reproduce together the conditions of intelligibility that enable them to make sense of their worlds" (Wedeen 2002, 717). Clifford Geertz's famous quote is helpful here: "Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spin, I take culture to be those webs" (Geertz 1973, 5). Indeed, although it is very difficult to see culture when it is all around us, it is vital to recognize that such routinized and widely shared sets of understandings are crucial in stabilizing our social, economic and political institutions (Meyers et al 1987). In this, culture becomes a social structure, dynamic and subject to change by the agents or people within it, but structural just the same (Sewell 1992).

Meaning is not only created through our thinking, our cognitive engagement with the world, in images and words and thoughts. It is also created through practice. Practice—our day-to-day experiences and actions as humans--is what solidifies and makes real those constructions, or contradicts and inverts them (Wedeen 2002, Pouliot 2008). Sociology has recently taken a "practice turn" that can provide a very helpful set of mechanisms for understanding how place might come to matter for divergent political views over the attractiveness of populism. Culture can be thought of as arising from the ongoing, repeated and patterned actions of actors. The touchstone for work on practice is Pierre Bourdieu's *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977). Here, culture is conceived of "not as a set of rules, but as deeply internalized habits, styles, and skills (the "habitus") that allow human beings to continually produce innovative actions that are nonetheless meaningful to others around them" (Swindler 2002, 314).

The practice turn has also come to the constructivist approach in international relations, as different theorists have taken up various and sometimes competing arguments about how practice matter. Pouliot argues that we should spend more time considering what people do, emphasizing the routines that become a "way of life", and cause actors to be thinking "from" a certain situation rather than thinking "about" it (Pouliot 2008, 257).

Viewed through this lens, place matters as it creates culture through practices of daily life (McNamara 2018). These are concrete, embodied experiences such as your daily commute to work, rhythmic routines of morning at the dog park or a drink at the pub on Fridays, weekly shopping at Waitrose or Tesco, and the built or natural landscape you move through and the various communities of social interaction you experience in so doing (Sztompka 2008). A sense of place inevitably and usually unconsciously develops as people "work, play, spend time with their families and friends, travel in their neighbourhoods" and ascribe meaning of these places, to themselves and to the people they interact with (Perkins and Thorns 2012, 14-15).

Similar to the scholarly work on practice, we can think about this process as engaging both social interactions and the physicality of practices, of the material world that is rooted in the particular geography of place. It helps generate culture, which gives people make sense of who they are, what is in their interest, who their tribe is, who it isn't, what they care about, and what they fear. While the digital and virtual world has meant that sometimes, place is not physically expressed, the notion that space is conquering place is not borne out. Agnew notes that "previous rounds in the diffusion of technological innovation, even though often touted as likely to do much the same thing (roads, railways,

telegraphy, ship canals, etc.), had no such effect. What they did do was help reconstitute and reorganize spatial relations such that places were remade and reconfigured" (Agnew 2011, 318).

Core then to thinking about the political geography of 'place' is that is defined by the inhabitants of the place themselves. How far a local community spreads is not determined by pre-existing codified territorial boundaries but by shared understandings of what that community looks like, who belongs to it and where it exists. Empirically, this is far more of a challenge then simply matching individuals to their geolocation and then applying an objectively defined criteria about the relevant unit of space. For place we need to ask people what they believe the relevant local community actually is.

SPACE, PLACE, AND THE POLITICS OF BREXIT

The politically consequential dynamics at work in the interaction between space and place are evident in the role of political geography in the Brexit vote. We argue that housing is a particularly important way of understanding how space and place produce support for populist causes. Houses and homes are at the heart of the everyday lived experience of all of us, and they are also crucially important parts of our economic portfolios and are fundamentally shaped by the structural economy we live in. Housing is therefore a perfect fulcrum for investigating the role of space and place in generating geotropic outcomes. Here, we sketch out some of the conceptual issues before turning to analysis of housing and the Brexit referendum.

It is important to first note that the idea of 'home' can expand far beyond the specific material conditions of where you lay your head at night, but here, we

focus more narrowly on the notion of home as connected to place, land and buildings in terms of housing (Perkins and Thorns 2012). Homes can be publically owned, or private rentals, or privately owned housing. The latter category of homes can be understood as spatially anchored commodities that change hands and can constitute a form of stored wealth, open to market speculation and a crucial part of any local economy. These private ownership dynamics fundamentally shape the ways in which rental and public housing markets work as well. This market based role, of course, is shaped by other structures besides simple supply and demand, such as government regulations and laws, or dynamics of social exclusion based on race and other attributes.

But beyond these larger structural issues, which produce spatial patterns of housing values and demographics across political units, housing is also about the social dynamics of place. As discussed above, place matters as it creates culture through practices of daily life, and arguably, housing and home are inescapably at the very centre of our everyday lived experiences. One strand of research has focused on the notion of "ontological security" (Giddens 1991), where the characteristics of specific locations and people's relationship to their homes can create either a sense of stability and confidence in the future, or alternatively, a fragility and fear (Dupuis and Thorns 1998, Perkins and Thorne 2012). The impact of rising or falling home prices on such a sense of security, or insecurity is a potentially important link between space, place and understanding Brexit voters views about remain and leave as the product of the interaction between economic circumstances and cultural forces. Put simply, in spatial terms, areas with stagnating or declining house prices, where citizens felt more insecure or less favoured by the European project supported Brexit,

whereas those in areas with rising prices supported remaining in the EU. When we turn to place, citizens who felt their self-defined local communities were not listened to, economically declining, or becoming demographically diverse in ways with which they felt uncomfortable were also more likely to support Brexit. Those individuals who owned homes and had lived for a long time in their self-defined local community were also more likely to vote Leave.

What does the existing literature tell us about space and place in the Brexit referendum? Many scholars have used spatial measures such as local trade shocks (Colantone and Stanig, 2018) or exposure to austerity (Fetzer, 2018) to predict support for Leaving the European Union. However, these variables tend to be proxies for *something else* other than local community – in particular, they are measures of unevenly distributed economic shocks, where the authors' (understandable) main interest is in 'effects of causes' – how do shocks alter voting patterns. There is less direct focus in this work on long-run attributes of different British localities, net of such exogenous shocks. While it is true that other locally distributed variation across British communities 'suffers' from endogeneity – for predictive purposes – that is explaining 'causes of effects' such as 'why did various British areas vote for Brexit?' – other indicators of regional fortune may be more helpful. We argued above that house prices are an especially good measure of the desirability of living in particular communities – they are, after all, the market value of such communities. And as we shall show, they are also an excellent predictor of spatial patterns of voting for populist causes, even at a very micro-level.

A number of other scholars have argued that Brexit can be better understood as reflecting cultural concerns, in particular a distaste for

cosmopolitanism and diversity, especially in areas where social change is progressing rapidly (Kaufman, 2016; Goodwin and Milazzo, 2017). Certainly, at the individual level, such attitudes are likely to shape support for populist agendas. Moreover, Goodwin and Milazzo (2017) show that local changes in immigration helped shape vote choice. Still, such changes are spatially defined, abstract, and objective. What also matters is how they are viewed subjectively as impacting local communities, regardless of whether such opinions are in fact accurate. Using novel data from the British Election Study Panel, we show that self-defined communities mattered greatly in terms of Brexit support, even net of actual measurable changes in diversity 'on the ground.' Hence self-understood 'place' matters as much as the spatial distribution of the economy or demography.

We begin with our 'spatial' analysis of house prices and the Brexit vote. Ansell (2017) provides a comprehensive statistical analysis of the connection between both house price levels and house price changes at the local authority level and support for Brexit in England and Wales. In the following we demonstrate the pattern graphically and refer the interested reader to that paper. The brief summary of this analysis is that local authorities with higher house prices, or which had experienced higher levels of relative house price growth since 1996, were more likely to vote for Remain. Both levels of and changes in house prices appear to matter when entered in statistical analyses simultaneously. Moreover, these findings hold even when controlling for broader geographical region and for local demographic and economic factors including unemployment rate, weekly wages, class structure, age profile, the level of and change in foreign born population, and the size of the population. House prices,

both statically and dynamically, do appear strong predictors of supporting remaining in the European Union. Why might this be the case? To the degree that Brexit was a vote of the disaffected – as Colantone and Stanig (2018) for example argue – house prices are an excellent indicator of precisely how well different communities in Britain had done recently and over the long term. What is perhaps most surprising about this pattern is that it holds at quite different levels of geographic analysis, as we shall now see.

Figures One (a) through (d) delve into smaller and smaller levels of geographic analysis. Figure One (a) begins at the regional level in England and Wales (we omit Scotland and Northern Ireland, which lack comparable housing data). The bottom axis shows for each region, the weighted (by population) average of median house prices for the local authorities in that region. That is, this is not the 'true' regional median but one produced by weighting medians calculated at the local authority level by the UK Land Registry, which calculates median house prices at the local authority and ward levels using every purchase made in the United Kingdom in a given year. Despite this mild caveat, this provides a useful estimate of regional median house prices in 2015 (i.e. the year before Brexit). We calculate regional average support for Remain similarly (in this case, we are taking a simple weighted mean so there are no difficulties of interpretation). The figure shows a striking positive pattern. Those regions with higher 'median' house prices had substantially higher support for Remain. This is in part, but not fully, driven by London with its high property values and Remain support. The pattern can also be seen more generally.

Figure One (a): Regional House Prices and Brexit

Perhaps the result in Figure One (a) is no surprise. It reflects general stereotypes about the economics and politics of various British regions. So the question is, is there anything else going on. Figures One (b) and One (c) show emphatically that there is. The relationship between house prices and support for Remain is, if anything, more convincing at lower levels of analysis. Figure One (b) shows the relationship between (logged) house prices and Remain support at the local authority level, *within* each region. Figure One (c) displays all local authorities in one figure, with some well-known local authorities labelled. In both cases we see that positive relationship between housing cost and Remain support (which is also there for house price changes – see Ansell (2017)). In every region in the country, the relationship holds up at the local authority level, even at the extremes of London and the North-East. It appears that having higher house

prices relative to other local authorities *near you* makes you more likely to vote Remain.

Figure One (b): Local Authorities within Regions

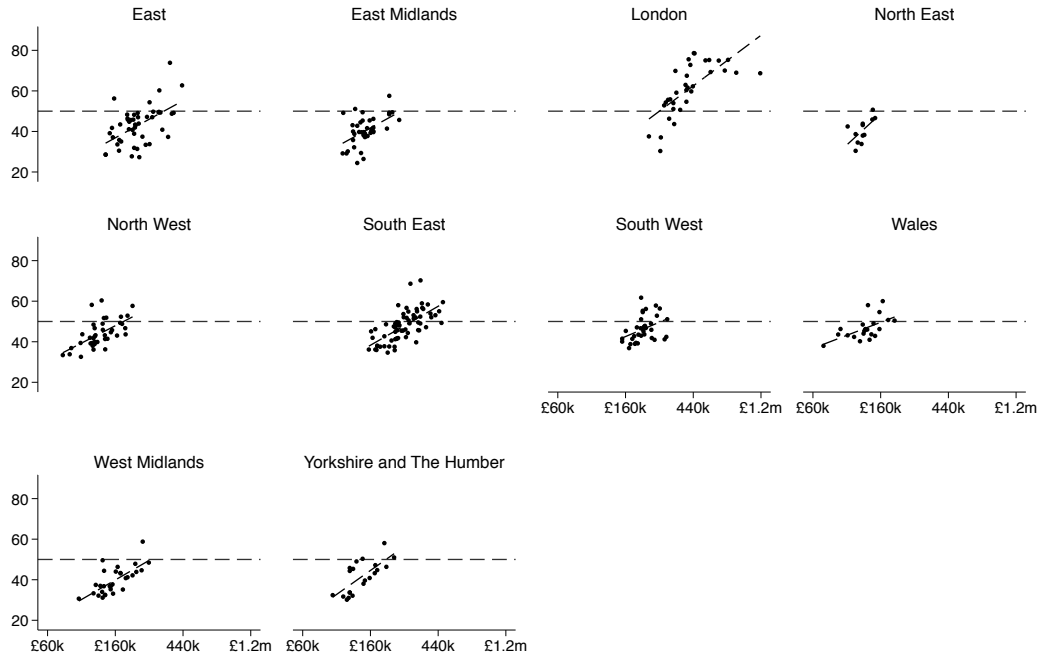
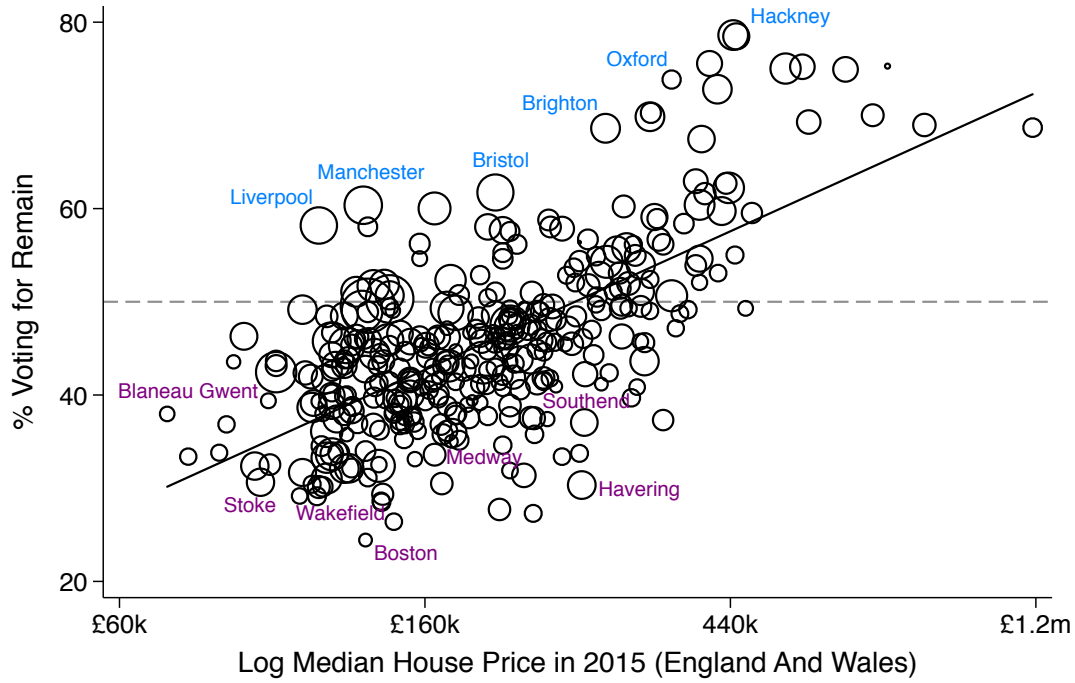


Figure One (c): Local Authorities and Support for Remain



Most surprising of all is that this relationship holds up even when we move to the ward level – local communities of just a couple of thousand people within local authorities. Unfortunately, here we only have a subset of voting data, collected by the BBC (data only had to be held at the local authority level so some wards failed to store or disseminate their vote patterns). Figure One (d) shows the relationship between (logged) ward median house prices - also collected by the Land Registry – and ward vote for Remain, for three local authorities that span the whole range of Brexit support and house prices: Wakefield, Stockport, and Cambridge. What is most striking is how even *within* local authorities, wards with higher house prices were systematically more likely to cast their collective vote for Remain. This holds in both pro-Leave and pro-Remain local authorities. Indeed, as Ansell (2017) shows, it holds up even when adding dummies for local authority.

Figure One (d): Wards and Support for Remain

What are we to make of this pattern? We view this 'spatial' relationship, which appears to hold at highly aggregated (regions with many millions) and disaggregated (wards with just a few thousand) levels a *fractal* pattern. It implies that spatially distributed patterns such as house prices matter *relative* to their local distribution as much as their national one. A poor ward in Wakefield is more likely to vote for Brexit because it is poor relative to other wards in Wakefield, *and* because Wakefield is poor relative to other local authorities in Yorkshire, *and* because Yorkshire is poor relative to regions such as London and the South-East. Each form of geographical inequality matters for voting. This provides one important riposte to the MUAP – when the same pattern holds despite changing the geographic unit of analysis, we ought to me more convinced that local geographic contexts really *do* matter. Spatial politics are often relative to many comparators.

British Election Survey 2014: Thinking about Local Communities

We now turn from spatial analysis to examine 'place' in the Brexit referendum. Here we take advantage of an innovative series of questions asked in the third Wave of the British Election Study Panel, which was conducted in October 2014, hence before the Conservative party had won the 2015 Election and thereby committed Parliament to legislate for the holding of a referendum on EU membership. Nonetheless, the debate over EU membership was heated at the time and a number of questions were asked about the EU, including support for remaining or leaving in a future referendum (even in 2014 support for Leave was quite high, at 46% - by 2016 the BES was one of few surveys to get close to the final result). The third wave of the panel had a module devoted to understanding how people described and viewed their local community, which means it provides an almost unique insight into how self-understood 'place' connects to political attitudes. Because the BES is a panel we can also connect respondents to their retrospective reported vote a few waves later (wave 9) following the referendum. Hence, we are able to examine the connection between how people think about their local communities and both vote intention and retrospective vote reports.

The module on local community asked people to enter their postcode and then use Google Maps to identify geographically the borders of 'their personal local community' and then are asked a series of questions about what they were thinking of as they drew the area and a wide range of perceptions and attitudes towards that community. The particular innovation of this technique is that it allows the respondent to subjectively define their own community and use that

to structure questions about economic, political, or demographic characteristics of that community. In other words, this does not rely on any defined objective spatial unit but rather on an imagined community of place.

We analyse how various questions asked about the local community connect to support for Brexit in 2014 and retrospective vote report in the weeks following the Referendum in 2016. In both cases we use a simple binary choice dependent variable, with Leave coded as one and Remain coded as zero (we code don't knows to missing). We control for age, gender, education level, homeownership, party ID, left-right self-placement, and ethnicity, and we use the survey sample weights and cluster standard errors by local authority district (creating 375 clusters). In our analyses we also controlled for personal (or household) income – however, this leads to losing around twenty percent of the data and leaves key results fairly similar, so we omit it below. We ran both logit and linear probability models, which produce very similar results. Below we report linear probability models for ease of interpretation (since coefficients can be interpreted as percent points and very few predicted probabilities lie outside the zero/one interval).

We divide the local community variables into three types: community identity, community economy, and community diversity. In the following tables we examine the relationship between these variables and Brexit support twice, first for vote intention in 2014 and second for vote report in 2016. Since the panel has a number of dropouts, the number of people remaining for the second question is about two-thirds of those answering the first question.

Tables One (a) and (b) examine what we call community identity- a series of questions about how well people know their community and how they

feel it is represented. The first question is a four-point question asking how strongly they feel they belong to their local community (as they defined it). The second question is also four points and asks how much they feel their local community's views are listened to. The third question asks how many people in their local community they know by name. The fourth question asks how long they have lived in their community, a four-point scale from less than a year to more than ten years. For this latter question we also split the sample into homeowners and non-homeowners to examine whether being physically locked into a community through owning a house heightens the effect of length of residence. In both tables we report only the coefficients for the relevant variables, omitting the various demographic controls mentioned above.

Beginning with a sense of belonging, perhaps surprisingly in neither vote intention or vote report is there any connection visible. Contra the writing of David Goodhart (2017) it is not the case that people who feel more attached to 'Somewheres' were actually more likely to support Brexit. But when we turn to the second question – about whether their local community feels listened to, we see a very strong negative relationship. People who felt their community had been ignored were much more likely to vote for Brexit. Of course, we do not know whether this relates to feeling ignored by Westminster or by Brussels, but we do see a similarity to the finding in Kathy Cramer's (2016) work about rural Wisconsin. When people feel that their self-defined communities are left out of political decision-making, they are more likely to support populist causes.

As we move to questions about how well people *know* their local community we see that knowing more local people by name has no relationship to Brexit support and for the whole sample there is no clear relationship

between length of residence and Brexit support. However, once we break the sample into renters and homeowners we see that among homeowners there is a clear positive relationship between length of residence and supporting Brexit. Those people most deeply embedded in their communities both in time *and* in ownership did support Brexit. This provides some potential support then for the Goodhart hypothesis, though it relies on time of stay not strength of feeling.

Table One(a) : Community Identity and Brexit Intention

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5) Renters	(6) Owners
Belonging	0.00					
	(0.01)					
Representation		-0.07				
		(0.01)				
Names Known			-0.00			
			(0.00)			
Time Resident				0.01	-0.00	0.02
				(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.01)
N	7214	6998	7349	7090	1591	5499

LAD-clustered standard errors in parentheses

Table One(b) Community Identity and Brexit Retrospective Vote

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Belonging	-0.00					
	(0.01)					
Representation		-0.06				
		(0.01)				
Names Known			0.00			
			(0.00)			
Time Resident				0.01	-0.00	0.02
				(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.01)
N	4926	4759	5017	4865	983	3882

LAD-clustered standard errors in parentheses

Tables Two (a) and (b) move us to examining the economic self-understanding of the local community. The first question asks whether the economy in the local community has got worse or better (a five-point scale). The second question asks about perceptions of income inequality in the local community (a seven-point scale from small differences in income to large differences). The third and fourth questions ask individuals to guess the percentage of people in their local community from working or middle-class backgrounds. The fifth question asks them to estimate unemployment in their local community.

Broadly speaking, these perceptions of the local economy are strong predictors of Brexit support. Where the economy has weakened or unemployment is perceived to be high there is much stronger support for Brexit. Similarly where people believe they live in a working class community they are more likely to intend to vote for, or claim to have voted for, Brexit. Perceptions of the middle-class nature of the community are the reverse. Only local inequality

does not appear to correlate with Brexit attitudes. This provides an interesting companion to the findings in Colantone and Stanig (2018) and Wetzer (2018). It appears objectively measurable negative exogenous economic shocks produced higher support for Brexit. So too, from this data, did subjective self-understandings of local economic decline. Whether both effects exist controlling for the other is an interesting potential extension of these findings. The null result for inequality is perhaps not surprising, since it reflects the distribution of the economy *within* the community, as opposed to how the community compares to other localities (or richer regions more generally).

Table Two (a) Community Economy and Brexit Intention

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Econ Change	-0.05				
	(0.01)				
Local Inequality		-0.01			
		(0.01)			
% Working Class			0.15		
			(0.04)		
% Middle Class				-0.14	
				(0.03)	
Unemployment					0.19
					(0.04)
N	6920	6228	6949	6900	7333

LAD-clustered standard errors in parentheses

Table Two (b) Community Economy and Brexit Retrospective Vote

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Econ Change	-0.05				
	(0.01)				
Local Inequality		-0.00			
		(0.01)			
% Working Class			0.16		
			(0.04)		
% Middle Class				-0.15	
				(0.04)	
Unemployment					0.09
					(0.06)
N	4727	4211	4735	4707	5011

LAD-clustered standard errors in parentheses

We conclude by examining the connection between understandings of local demographic diversity and support for Brexit. As noted Kaufman (2016) and Goodwin and Milazzo (2017) have shown, respectively, that individual attitudes to diversity and objectively measurable spatial variation in demography mattered for the Brexit vote. The question is whether subjective understandings of *local* ethnic diversity also mattered. Tables Three (a) and (b) show strong evidence that they did. Respondents were asked to estimate the proportion of the local community who were white, black, Asian, and not born in the UK (the latter presumably not being entirely determined by the others). Respondents were also asked if they felt their local community had become less or more diverse (a five point scale). For the latter question we are able to accompany it with data from the Office of National Statistics on levels of and (absolute and

relative) changes in the non-UK born population in the respondent's local authority.

Both tables show strong relationships between self-understood local demography and attitudes towards Brexit. The weakest relationship, perhaps unsurprisingly, is with local estimates of the White population and Brexit support. Since this likely includes Eastern Europeans, whose presence may have aggravated some anti-cosmopolitan voters, we might expect this variable to have mixed impact. Overall it appears to be negatively related to Brexit support, albeit at borderline levels of statistical significance. Much stronger, and perhaps surprisingly so, are the results for self-estimates of local black and Asian populations. In both cases, higher estimates strongly correlate with supporting Leave – a standard deviation increase in estimates is associated with being two or three percent points more likely to support Leave. There is also a positive relationship between the estimated non-UK born local population although the effect is a little smaller in substantive magnitude. While the latter result is not surprising, given what we know from Goodwin and Milazzo (2017), the former is since most blacks or Asians are unlikely to have immigrated to the UK from the European Union through Freedom of Movement. Leaving the EU would have little effect on immigration from South Asia, the Caribbean, or Africa. This leads to the rather depressing conclusion that people were acting out of displaced sense of estrangement with the ethnic composition of their community and lashing out at an entity that produced a different set of immigrants.

The results on perceived changes in local diversity continue along the same lines. Moving from people who perceive much less to much more diversity is associated with an enormous twenty percent point probability in support for

Brexit. A more reasonable one point shift (the interquartile range) is still associated with five percent points greater support for Brexit. Local perceptions of change really did matter in Brexit. And as Models 6 and 7 show this is true even controlling for *actual* changes in the composition of the population at the local authority level. Both models contain a control for the level of non-UK born population and this does not appear related to Brexit support but objective local changes certainly do, whether they are captured in absolute terms (as a proportion of the population) or in relative terms (as a proportion of the pre-existing foreign born population in that local authority). In both cases, there is strong evidence that this is associated with higher support for Brexit. However, it is notable that the 'effect' of *subjective* perceptions on Brexit is entirely unaltered by the introduction of these demographic statistics. Or to put in the language of this paper - both 'space' and 'place' matter in the political geography of diversity.

Table Three (a) Community Diversity and Brexit Intention

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
% White	-0.09						
	(0.05)						
% Black		0.12					
		(0.05)					
% Asian			0.11				
			(0.04)				
% Not Born UK				0.06			
				(0.03)			
Δ Diversity					0.05	0.05	0.05
					(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
LAD % Non UK						0.06	-0.10
						(0.10)	(0.10)
Non UK Rel Δ						0.03	
						(0.01)	
Non UK Abs Δ							0.84
							(0.30)
N	7117	6879	6934	6247	6750	5518	5518

LAD-clustered standard errors in parentheses

Table Three(b): Community Diversity and Brexit Retrospective Vote

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
% White	-0.08						
	(0.06)						
% Black		0.09					
		(0.06)					
% Asian			0.05				
			(0.05)				
% Not Born UK				0.06			
				(0.03)			
Δ Diversity					0.03	0.03	0.03
					(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
LAD % Non UK						0.04	0.11
						(0.11)	(0.12)
Non UK Rel Δ						-0.00	
						(0.02)	
Non UK Abs Δ							-0.38
							(0.36)
N	4855	4693	4726	4238	4637	3861	3861

LAD-clustered standard errors in parentheses

V. CONCLUSION

This paper has argued that scholars ought to adopt a broader view of how political geography and context affects populist voting. We have distinguished between 'space' explanations that emphasize how individuals are emebedded in fixed, clearly defined territories with objectively measurable characteristics that then shape the vote. As we saw with the distribution of house prices and Brexit support, clearly such spatial measures can tell us a good deal about what determines behaviour. They are also more amenable to the standard array of causal inference techniques used by contemporary social scientists seeking to understand political behaviour. Yet such analyses are also prone to the modifiable areal unit problem and are 'disembedded' from subjective understanding of the boundaries of local communities.

By re-emphasizing the study of 'place', as well as 'space', we argued that people's lived experiences, their 'practices' fundamentally shape how they view political opportunities and challenges. In our analysis of the Brexit vote we were able to examine not only space but place as a relevant context by using novel data asking respondents to define their own local communities. We found that highlighting the self-conception of community provided new insight into the underpinnings of the Brexit vote above and beyond measurable spatial characteristics of people's environment. In short both space and place need to be included in our understanding of the basis of populism.

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