A Social Democratic Conundrum;

A quantitative study on the role of Brexit, and high issue salience, in the fall of the Red Wall in the 2019 UK general election

Henrik Gornitzka Abelson

Master Thesis in Political Science

Institute of Political Science

University of Oslo

Autumn 2021

Word Count: 18132

Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

Abstract

The loss of many of Labour's core constituencies in the North East Wales, the Midlands and Northern part of England to the Conservative party in 2019 UK general election has been dubbed the fall of the Red Wall. I believe that Brexit as an issue was important in explaining party choice in this election. To test this, a theory from Spies (2013) is employed. It explains how an issue on the non-economic GAL-TAN dimension has a high salience, it causes working class voters to cast their votes based on this dimension rather than the traditional left-right economic dimension - leading to electoral gains for extreme-right parties. I apply this theory to the context of 2019 general election by making the Conservative Party a "functioning equivalence" of a Populist radical right party in the UK and categorise Brexit as an issue on the non-economic GAN-TAN dimension of party competition. High salience is measured through the use of "most important issue" question.

The thesis analyses respondents in the Red Wall constituencies with data from the 2019 British Election Study. From the results in the binomial logistic regression, there is evidence to support to claim that high salience of Brexit lead to voters switching parties in 2019 from Labour to Conservative. Working class voters in these constituencies were also more likely to change party than those who were not working class.

Acknowledgements

1 Introduction

British politics has seen a turbulent period since the country voted to leave the European Union in the 2016 referendum and the subsequent withdrawal process. In 2017, Prime Minister Theresa May called a snap election with the aim of increasing the Conservative Party's majority in parliament, strengthening their hand in Brexit negotiations and making government's withdrawal agreement pass through the country's parliament in Westminster with less opposition. The Prime Minister's plan backfired, resulting in a loss of the parliamentary majority, and forcing the Conservative Party into a minority government with the support of the Democratic Unionist Party of Northern Ireland (DUP).

The 2019 UK general election followed in the wake in the 2017 election and a lengthy withdrawal process. Like May, the new Tory Prime Minister Boris Johnson sought to regain a majority in parliament to pass a revised withdrawal agreement. However, based on the Fixed-term Parliaments Act of 2011, the Prime Minister would need a parliamentary majority to call a new election. After pressure from the opposition, Johnson was forced to postponed the withdrawal from 31st of October to 31st of January. From this, an election bill was passed through Westminster with opposition support. A new general election, where Brexit and the future UK-EU-relationship would be determined, was to be held on the 12th of December 2019.

This election was a massive success for the incumbent Johnson and the Conservative Party. Their share of the vote was highest for any single party since Margaret Thatcher lead the Conservatives to 43.9% in 1979 (Baker et al., 2020, p. 6). Across the aisle, the election represented a significant setback for the Labour party. The party gained 32.2% of the votes nationally, resulting in the loss of 59 seats – their lowest proportion of seats since 1935 (Baker et al., 2020, p. 12).The losses were specially prevalent in Northern England, parts of Wales and the Midlands, where Labour lost 41 of their most stable and long held constituencies to the Conservative party. These regions have historically been Labour-stronghold and identified by pollster James Kanagasooriam as "the Red Wall" on Twitter in June 2019, which forms a near continuous belt of Labour constituencies across parts of Northern and Central England. The electoral decline of Labour in these constituencies has been dubbed by various authors and the press as "the fall of the Red Wall".

What occurred in England and the Red Wall in the 2019 election is largely related to the British politics and the specific issues, candidates and parties that fit within that political context. Yet, Labour's weak electoral result is not unique in a broader European context. Social democratic parties across Europe have experienced significant declines in electoral power and reduced support from their former core electorate. Benedetto et al. (2020) has constructed a new data set which describes the electoral success of social democratic parties in 31 European countries from 1918 to 2017. Starting in the early 2000s, there is a noticeable decline in support for these parties. The authors comment:

"Between 2000 and 2017, most social democratic parties secured the lowest levels of support that they had had since 1918 (or 1945 for the postwar democracies and 1989 for the new democracies in Central and Eastern Europe)" (Ibid, 2020:931).

This electoral decline in 2019 is especially puzzling considering Labour's relative success in the prior general election only two years earlier, where they increased both their national share of votes and their share of seats in Parliament. In fact, the result was the closest between the two main parties since the 70s (Bate et al., 2019). For the first time since the late 90s, Labour had gained votes in a general election. However, despite the relative success of the Labour party in 2017, the decline of the party in these areas were part of a larger trend. Cracknell and Pilling (2021) finds that, except for 2017, Labour's percentage of vote had steadily fallen since 1997.

Rayson (2020), in his book on the fall of the Red Wall, discusses the 2019 election within a long-term trend of changing political narratives among the working class in these areas and how Labour failed to understand and respond to this. He points to how since the 80's, the area experienced a decline in industry and jobs, while Labour's economic and social policies became more centrist under New Labour; alienating their former voters and leaving them feeling left behind. A demographic shift occurred, where younger, more liberal and educated voters left for larger urban areas to seek opportunities, while older, more socially conservative and less educated voters remained. The symptoms of the electoral shock was visible already in the 2017 election, with all time high level of Labour to Conservative vote switching.(Rayson, 2020, p. 6). As Cutts et al. (2020, p. 21) put it; the 2019 election might have been the decisive breach of the Red wall, its foundations were already crumbling.

So while the 2019 election were a part of a larger trend, I will argue that the massive voter switch of the 2019 election is caused by something else than the simple culmination of a long-term electoral trend; a trigger factor was present – a match in the powder keg.

Brexit was the most polarising and the central issue of the 2019 election. Compared to the 2017 general election where Brexit was less prominent as an issue(Davies, 2020, p. 147), it can be argued that the withdrawal process were drawing to a close in 2019, with Labour and the Tories offering different directions for the road ahead. I believe this led to a high salience around the issue and structured voters party choice.

This leads to the research question:

"What can explain Labour's loss of constituencies in the Red Wall in the 2019 UK general election?"

This thesis builds on the work of Spies (2013). In his article, he finds evidence that extreme-right parties increase their share of working-class votes when issues on the GAL-TAN dimension have high salience. When economic issues have lower salience, and the salience of non-economic issues increases, parties with ownership over these issues gain support in the electorate. To test this assumption of Spies in the Red Wall, The Conservative will represent a populist radical right party and Brexit represents an issue on the cultural party competition dimension of GAL-TAN. I argue that Brexit can be placed within the context of this GAL-TAN dimension, as a considerable part of the issue itself revolves around immigration, globalisation and nationalism. To measure issue salience, a survey question regarding what respondents finds to be to the "most important issue" is employed.

Through a binomial logistic regression, drawing from data from the 2019 general election collected by the British Election Study (BES), and analysing the respondents from the Red Wall constituencies, the thesis aims to provide an additional explanation of the cause behind the fall of the Red Wall: Labour's loss of its core working class constituencies and the subsequent Conservative success in seizing them.

The remainder of the thesis is structured as follows: First, a literature review outlining the main dimensions of party competition, the traditional left-right economic dimension and the GAL-TAN dimension, and its relevance and effects on party choice. From there, a discussion on the concept issue ownership and issue salience will be discussed. In addition, a distinction between extreme-right parties and populist radical right parties (PRRP) will be clarified. In this literature review, both a general

perspective and a British perspective will be discussed. Second, the main theoretical perspective from Spies will be analysed. In addition, the assumptions necessary to employ this theory in an English context will be discussed; the role of the Conservative party as an PRRP and Brexit as a GAL-TAN issue. Third, the research design will be presented and the dataset, method and operationalisation of variables will be discussed. Finally follows an analysis to test the hypothesis, and a discussion of the results and its relevance, limitations of the thesis and analysis, and notes on further research and a conclusion.

2 Literature review

There are many different approaches to conceptualising the broad concept of party competition. Franzmann (2011, p. 320) define party competition as '...an institution in which parties strategically cooperate or contest as political actors to gain political power.' This requires the parties to both choose which parties to cooperate with and what strategy to employ in competition against other parties. Although this fundamental goal of political power as the end result of party competition has remained constant, the terms of how this goal is achieved has not. The electorate changes and with it; new values, attitudes and issues arise. This literature review will explore the realignment of party competition from a left-right economic dimension, relating to class voting, to the emergence of a GAL-TAN dimension with issue voting; and its effects on the decline of social democratic parties.

2.1 The left-right economic dimension

2.1.1 Class voting

In the late 19th and early 20th century, social structures largely dictated voters party choice. In the seminal work of Lipset and Rokkan, *Cleavage structures, party systems and voter alignments* 1967, the authors identified how these structural variables manifest themselves as different cleavages which split and identify different parts of electorate. These cleavages sprung out from two distinct revolutions. The first historic and national revolution gave way for two political and social cleavages; *centre vs. periphery* and *state vs. the church.* The other two cleavages Lipset and Rokkan identified, originated from the Industrial Revolution; *owner vs. worker* and *land vs. industry.* These cleavages had stayed "frozen" for decades and structured voters around relevant issues.

Especially the cleavage owner vs. worker was important as the classic class struggle in Western Europe. For social democratic parties, this cleavage represented one of the most common assumptions in political science; party competition and voter alignment based on an economic left-right dimension (Downs, 1957; Mair, 2007). This "super-dimension" provides voters with an intuitive scale for voters to place themselves on ideologically and gives '...a general orientation toward a society's political leaders, ideologies and parties' (Inglehart, 1977, p. 225). It remains an effective tool for generalisations and comparisons between countries, different time periods and modelling party competition and voter behaviour (Mair, 2007), but also as an intuitive scale for voters to place themselves on ideologically.The owner-worker cleavage largely coincide with this dimension, where political issues and voter attitudes

5

can be ranked and placed. In many Western European countries, class was historically the most important factor in explaining party choice. Different classes do not of course vote as one single entity, but a working-class voter would be more likely to cast their ballot in favour of a left-wing party than middle-class voter. Rennwald and Oesch (2018, p. 786) defines class voting as'... the presence of systematic links between voters' class location – their position in the labour market – and the parties they support'.

When class identity weakens, it also weakens class as a mobilising political factor. Social democratic parties arose from labour movements and have historically been unanimous with the working class. When these parties cannot shape class as a vote-defining identity, they lose their appeal amongst the working class, which traditionally represent their core constituency (Przeworski & Sprague, 1988). There are several aspects that can explain this. Evans and Tilley (2012, p. 138) point to the emergence of a less structured society. They emphasise how increasing affluence in post-industrial societies lead to a higher living standard and increasingly diverse composition of occupations in terms of gender, increased rates of home ownership, new alternative social bases of interests, the expansion of mass higher education and increased social mobility. This is factors that Clark and Lipset (1991) also point to when arguing how class had become an outdated concept. Sometimes, according to Evans and Tilley (2012), this shift in identity and class structure is a reflection of a general individualisation in modern societies which weakens not only class identity, but also other group-based identities and political preferences. As for class identity, it is no longer a distinctive source of identity and interests, cross-cut by other interests and sources of identity. Thus, class identity becomes increasingly less important in explaining party choice. Evans and Tilley describe this as 'class heterogeneity' (2012, p. 138.). The authors does not subscribe to the notion class heterogeneity. They explain how the classes have not changed significantly, but is in fact the political parties that have changed. Therefore, class voting appears to be have been reduced.

Although the traditional class voting is not as prominent as before, it does not imply that class voting no longer exists. Oesch and Rennwald (2018) argue that class voting may still affect voters economic and cultural attitudes through their work experience and occupation structure, although individuals' identities are not only shaped by occupation and class. With the introduction of the radical right, electoral competition has become a tripolar political space; with the radical right, the left and the centre-right. Rennwald and Oesch then distinguish three links from class to these party poles in order

to map class voting. These links explain that: (1) some classes are the preserve of one particular pole; (2) some classes are the contested stronghold of two different poles; and (3) all three poles are in open competition over some classes.
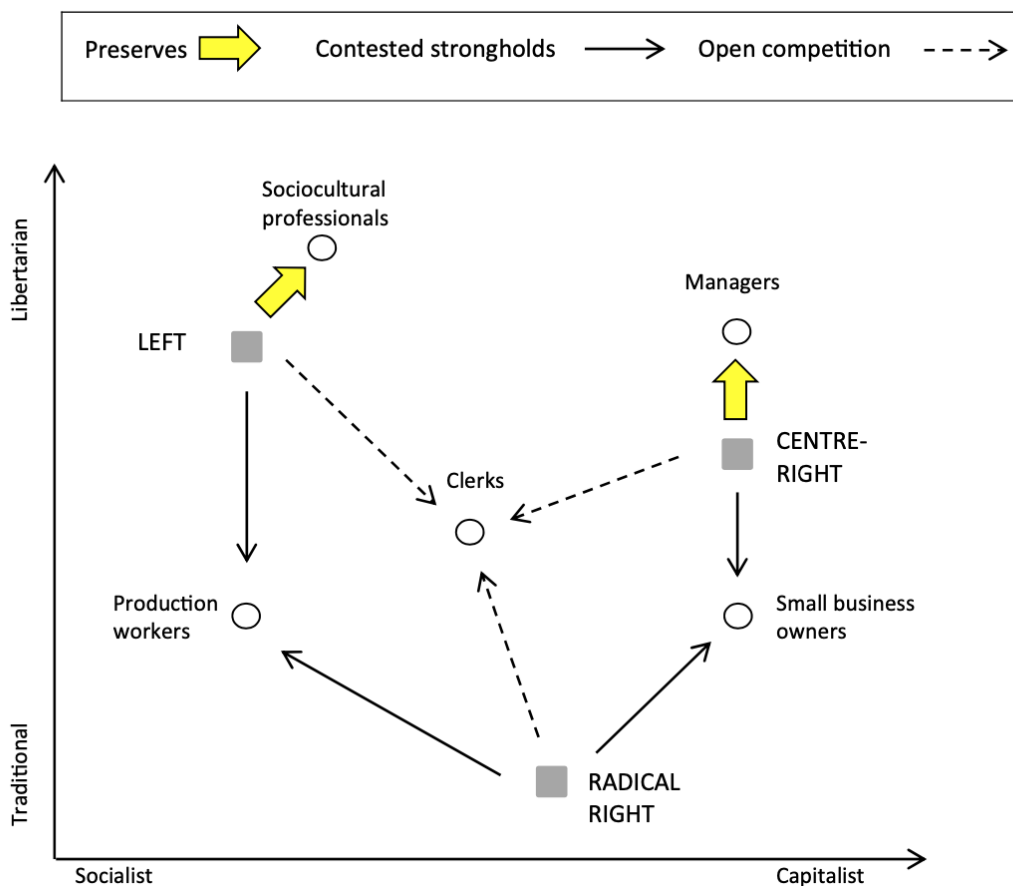
Figure 1: A model of party poles and class-party links in a two-dimensional political space. Source: Oesch and Rennwald, 2018

Oesch and Rennwald explain figure 1:

> 'the two traditional party blocs of the left and the centre-right each keep one class as its preserve: the left is the uncontested champion among professionals in health care, education, social welfare and the media (henceforth: sociocultural professionals), whereas the centre-right benefits from the strong endorsement of large employers, managers and liberal professionals. The two mainstream poles are challenged by the radical right over

two of their traditional strongholds: the left faces strong competition over the working class, whereas the centre-right struggles to keep the votes of the old middle class of small business owners. Finally, there is open competition between the three poles for the votes of two classes, technical professionals and technicians (henceforth: technical specialists) as well as office clerks (such as secretaries and receptionists).Finally, there is open competition between the three poles for the votes of two classes, technical professionals and technicians (henceforth: technical specialists) as well as office clerks (such as secretaries and receptionists)'.

To further examine the different occupations and its classification in different classes, see Oesch's (2006) class schema in appendix.

Figure 1 provides a useful illustration for understanding how modern class voting might look; the classic left-right party blocs competing with the radical right, which is challenging the two-party blocs on their traditional classes. An interesting observation is how production workers, which relates to the traditional working-class, is quite traditional on the second dimension while also being quite socialist (i.e. leftist) on the economic dimension. This has been documented thoroughly, and as early as 1959 by Lipset, who described "...in some countries working class groups have proved to be the most nationalistic and jingoistic sectors of the population" (1959, p.483). Working-class voters are caught in a cross-pressure between the economically left values of social democratic parties and the authoritarian values of the radical right, split between these two parties. This puts social democratic parties in a position where, if they stay left on economic issues while maintaining a liberal stance on dimension issues, will results in a lower appeal and less electoral support from the working class. Evans and Langsæter explain how social democratic parties are becoming more removed from the working class, suggesting '...an increasing dissonance between working class voters' preferences and left party platforms.(2021, p. 13). Does the left's increasing loss of voters from their traditional working class voters matter? On one side, the number of traditional working class voters is shrinking, and with increasing class heterogeneity, this part of the electorate might not be as important as a political faction as previously. Overall, Social democratic parties and other parties on the left does well with urban, highly educated voters and perhaps this can counter the loss of working class voters. This might be the case. However,in de-industrialised key regions with high unemployment, low wages where the voters feels "alienated, the left may be still depend on their former core electorate in order

to achieve electoral gains.

2.1.2   Class voting in the UK

Party competition in Europe based on the traditional left-right axis, as previously mentioned in the section above, is very much relevant in the UK. Class has historically been the most important mobilising political factor in the UK. P.G.J Pulzer asserted in 1967 how "class is the basis of British party politics; all else is embellishment and detail". With the development of universal suffrage in the early 20th century, in which the formerly disfranchised working-class gained the right to vote, party choice became intrinsically connected to class identity. The Labour party sprung out of the labour union movement the late 19th century when various socialist and co-operative bodies met at the Trades Union Congress (TUC) to form a new organisation named Labour Representation Committee (LRC) to increase labour representation, changing its name to the current one after the 1906 election((Thorpe, 2015, p. 8). It is also worth mentioning that although the party has been strongly associated the working class, it does not imply that all these voters cast their ballot in favour of Labour. The Conservative Party has traditionally had the middle class as their core electorate, but a significant number of working class voters also votes for the Tories. Parkin (1967) discussed how 1/3 of the working class voters regularly voted conservative.

From the overall class disparity in voting, especially in the post-war era, there has been a class dealignment in the UK. Already in 1978, Franklin and Mughan (1978) argued the declining ability of class, measured in terms of occupation, to structure party choice. Fieldhouse et al. (2019, p. 58) discusses how the evidence of this dealignment became more apparent with the rise of New Labour under Tony Blair in the mid-1990s. The party adopted new policies with a larger emphasis on market economy combined with social justice (Gamble, 2010, p. 648), retaining left-wing social policies and a more rightist economic policies. These new centrist policies caused Labour to become a "catch-all" party, broadening their appeal among centrist voters and the middle class. Evans and Tilley (2012, p. 140) discusses how this may have led to the ideological distinctiveness of Labour among the electorate and "... may have in turn weakened the link between social class and party choice". In the book *Class Voting and Social and Political Representation: The Political Exclusion of the British Working Class* by Evans and Tilley (2017), the authors argue that with the ideological convergence of Labour, the bond between the working class and the party weakened. The party was no longer perceived as working class, not only in policy, but also in the representatives, the rhetoric and by

the press (*Ibid*: 164).With the lack of political choices, the authors also discussed how the working class chose not to vote at all; abstaining from voting in general elections from the early 2000s. As in an earlier article (Evans & Tilley, 2012), they argue that the decline of class voting also can be contributed to a top-down perspective; the parties strategic manoeuvring in ideology and policies to accommodate an increased middle class, leading to a further decline of the association between party and class.

Although the traditional class voting in the UK has declined, the divide between the social classes still exist. Evans and Tilley (2017, p. 191) argues that "Britain remains a class-divided society". Examining the class identity in the electorate of the Red Wall in table 1 shows how 50% of the respondents consider themselves working class and 18% think of themselves as middle class.

Do you ever think of yourself as belonging to any particular class?	Percentage
Yes, working class	50.6%
No	26.0%
Yes, middle class	18.0%
Don't know	4.5%

Table 1: Subjective feeling of social class among the electorate in the Red Wall

This question is subjective and does not take into account factors that are typically used to measure social class, such as occupation, education level and income. Therefore, this does not accurately measure the composition of social class in the Red Wall. However, it does exemplify how class identity is still alive in certain ways in modern Britain and how parts of the electorate perceive themselves as belonging to a particular social class.

An important component of class voting in the UK is related to geography. In England in particular, a line is usually drawn between the South-East and the North; representing a class divide with economic, social and political differences characterising the population on each side of the line. Old industrial towns in the North, such as many of the constituencies in the Red Wall, has experienced a long-term trend of de-industrialisation and economic decline. With increased globalisation, the cost of manufacturing are lower abroad, leading to a loss of jobs in manufacturing and the increased importance of business service, retail and financial services (Rayson, 2020, p. 45). The jobs in this new sector moved South, in favour of more urban locations and away from the old industrial towns. The effects of this are largely economic; Overall, the North has a lower economic output per person, higher unemployment, lower property prices, lower life expectancy and a lower household income compared to the South-East (BBC, 2015; Buchan et al., 2017; McCurdy, 2019). The cultural and political implications in these areas are visible. The population feels "left behind" and many voters frequently blame the Labour council for the decline of their town; reducing the link between Labour and their former core electorate and further declining class voting(Rayson, 2020, p. 50).

As Oesch and Rennwald (2018) pointed out in the previous section, social class can affect voting behaviour through economic and cultural attitudes through occupation structure and work experience, although individuals' identity is not only the sum of these two variables. Several contributions discuss how economic, social and cultural capital outlines part of the new class divisions of modern Britain.Savage et al. (2013)employs data from the BBC's 2011 British Class Survey to derive seven distinct classes with varying degrees of social capital (i.e. respondents interactions with different occupation), cultural capital (i.e. consumption of "high brow" culture and emerging new culture) and economic capital (i.e. household income, household savings and house price). One noticeable find from the authors is the discovery of a distinct elite, separated from the traditional upper middle class, with the highest score an all the various forms of capital. Accordingly, they also detect a group called the "precariat", consisting of 15% of the population "which is marked by the lack of any significant

amount of economic, cultural, or social capital." (Savage et al., 2013, p. 245). The relation between economic, social and cultural capital and social class can imply that the concept of class voting is getting less structured than in the past. The working-class vote is perhaps no longer as connected to the working class identity, but rather encompasses a group of voters with low income in service professions. As Rayson (2020) discussed, this group largely feels "left behind" and alienated in relation to urban, highly educated liberal voters. The message of Brexit in "taking back control", implying new opportunities and winds of change, largely resonated with this unprivileged group.

2.2 The rise of second dimension politics - The GAL-TAN dimension

Inglehart (1977) in *The Silent Revolution* identified a wave of new value orientations, different from those that had defined much of the 20th century. As the modern Western industrial societies had prospered, the post-war generation felt their material security and needs were fulfilled. This led to a shift in individual attitudes, from materialist and economic values to new individual values which emphasised personal freedom and self-expression. The stable alignment of voters, discussed by Rokkan and Lipset, persisted well into the 1960s, but was succeeded by a dealignment and then realignment towards a new cleavage. Post-materialist values stood in contrast to modernist values of the old party system; manifesting themselves as new political issues. Materialist or hard issues, such as economic growth and national security, were challenged by new post-materialistic or soft issues, often environmental protection, equality, and multiculturalism. In general, the socio-structural variables that had affected party choice, "unfroze" the system and lay the foundation for new cleavages. *New politics* signifies a change from a first dimension, an economic left-right dimension, to a second dimension, characterised by a cultural libertarian-authoritarian divide (Kitschelt, 1994). As Albright (2010, p. 713) argues, a single left-right dimension is 'steadily diminishing in its ability to summarize party behaviour'. With the introduction of a second dimension which cuts across the old economic left-right dimension, party competition becomes two-dimensional. An example of how the GAL-TAN-axis is employed can be seen in figure 2 from Bakker et al. (2017, p. 4), where the authors outline Western European party families.
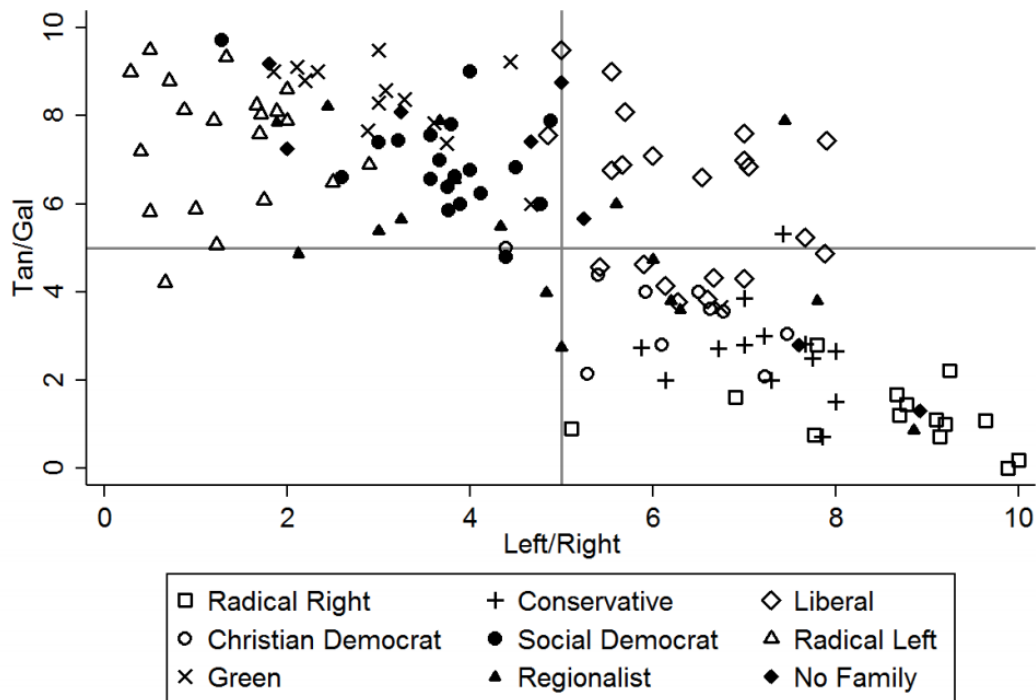
Figure 2: A model of Western European Party families on the GAL-TAN-axis. Source: Bakker et.al. 2017

Bornschier (2010) discusses how economic modernisation and globalisation created new political issues based on values and lifestyle rather than traditional, distributional conflicts – leading to the establishment of ecologist and reformed social democratic parties. He exemplifies how certain political actors opposed to the rise of these cultural changes and how the New Left would counter this by finding issues to form a common identity which voters could mobilise around. With this, European populist right-wing parties managed to promote new issues and new political discourses, such as immigration and globalisation, which disrupted older collective identities based around religion or class. This resulted in the New Left and the populist right being at opposite poles on these new issues.

Relating to this is the theory of 'Cultural backlash' from Norris and Inglehart 2019. They seek to explain the rise of the populist authoritarian parties. Similar to Evans and Tilley, they also point

to the structural changes in modern societies, such as urbanisation and mass education, and how differences in materialist/post-materialist values between generations lead to conflict and increasing polarisation on this value dimension from left to right. Older and more conservative generations feel alienated and somewhat of a minority in a new, more liberal society. This leads to an uproar and counter-movement, which manifests in increased electoral support for populist right-wing parties.

This shift in values and the emergence of new issues has been labelled differently, both as materialist/post-materialist or *new politics* vs *old politics*. In this thesis, I will employ the label GAL-TAN dimension to refer to this phenomenon. Here, GAL captures Green, Alternative, Libertarian, whereas TAN captures Traditional, Authoritarian, Nationalist. The range of issues that falls under this term is wide, relating to post-materialist values and attitudes. Bakker et al. (2015, p. 144) in the Chapel Hill Expert Survey includes several parameters to classify parties on the GAL-TAN dimension based on their views on democratic freedoms and rights. They contend that '... "libertarian" or "postmaterialist" parties favor expanded personal freedoms... "Traditional" or "authoritarian" parties often reject these ideas; they value order, tradition, and stability, and believe that the government should be a firm moral authority on social and cultural issues.'. Specific issues that are usually included within this dimension are environmental protection, minority rights, immigration, European integration and globalisation.

2.2.1 The GAL-TAN dimension in the UK

The emergence and increasing traction of post-materialist values in Western Europe has also occurred in Britain. With a shift in values, new issues emerge which voters emphasise when they cast their ballot. To illustrate this, I will reference Davies (2020), who points to how a new alignment in UK politics occurred already in the 1970s in the context of the GAL-TAN dimension. He discusses how a secondary axis emerged in British politics, where social liberalism clashed with traditional moral norms and rules: tolerance for or legalisation on matters such as abortion, homosexuality and free speech . Labour largely adopted the liberalisation, while the Tories would lean towards the other side as a champion of traditional values. Davies (2020, p. 33) comments how extraordinary this liberal shift really was for Labour as "[it] was in many respects as socially and culturally conservative as the Tory Party, if not more so". In table 2, an outline is provided of how voters could be placed within four main blocs. The horizontal axis represents the traditional left-right economic dimension, while the vertical axis represents the GAL-TAN dimension.

Social democrat	Libertarians
Economics - interventionist	Economics - free market
Welfare - redistributionist	Welfare - welfare sceptics
Social politics - liberal	Social politics - liberal
Cultural politics - indiviualist	Cultural politics - indiviualist
Traditional collectivists	**Free market conservatives**
Economics - collectivist	Economics - free market
Welfare - egalitarian & contributory	Welfare - moderately sceptical
Social politics - conservative	Social politics - conservative
Cultural politics - traditionalist	Cultural politics - traditionalist

Table 2: The alignment of politics 1970 to 2010s. *Source: Davies (2020, p. 36)*

The upper left and lower right quadrants represent the majority of Labour and Conservative voters. With New Labour in the 1990's, as discussed in the previous section, Labours economic policies became more liberal while also retaining social liberalism. At the same time, the Conservatives were becoming increasingly liberal, especially after David Cameron became the party leader Davies (2020). A convergence between both parties on both axes of party competition were in effect. Thus, both parties would mainly compete for voters in the upper right quadrant, while largely not targeting the ones in the lower left quadrant; socially conservative and economic-left voters. As Davies argues, this led to a temporary triumph of liberalism on both axes. 2020, p. 37.

With Labour adopting more liberal social policies, parts of its socially conservative electorate were in many ways neglected. Rayson (2020, p. 71) discusses how Labour's social and cultural values have become disconnected from the cultural and social values of its working class electorate in the areas of the Red Wall. Surridge (2018a) labelled these "cross-pressured voters": voters which are left on the economic issues and favour TAN-values on the second dimension, causing them to be torn between Labour and The Conservative Party. With the economic policy largely converging between the two parties, economic left-right dimension loses its relevance, and the GAL-TAN dimension with its asso-

ciated issues becomes increasingly important for these voters in explaining party choice. Voters on the economic left are increasing divided on cultural issues Surridge (2018b). As will be discussed later in this thesis, the Tories have moved further right on the GAL-TAN dimension and subsequently broadened their appeal to this voter group, similar to what was described by Norris and Inglehart (2019). In general, there is consensus among researchers of the increased importance of the GAL-TAN dimension and the declining role of the economic left-right dimension. However, they are connected "in the UK, thus, post material standpoints seem embedded in the old political disputes" ()lindell$_s$omething$_2$020.

2.3 Issue voting theory

Issue voting theory constitutes a large literature which aims to explain behaviour on both the supply and demand side of politics; how issues affect the strategy and behaviour of political parties and individual voters. As discussed in the previous section, new issues follow the emergence and increasing importance of a GAL-TAN dimension. These new issues, along with more traditional political issues, are structuring the political actors and forming the basis on which many voters cast their ballot.

-

2.3.1 Issue ownership

As Banda (2016) points out, voters draw information from several different sources when forming attitudes towards candidates in an election. To reduce the complexity of the political landscape, voters rely on their expectations regarding which issues are associated with members of a party and the corresponding stereotype of that same party. Party labels and various political cues from parties and politicians provide the voters with information on the party affiliation of each candidate (Downs, 1957). Thereby, the voters rank the different parties on policy preferences and they cast their vote accordingly to their policy preference. Initially based on their policy stance and political constituency ownership, each party possesses an issue reputation. (Bélanger & Meguid, 2008). The reputation of political parties varies across different countries and political contexts, but in many cases, party reputation follows the traditional left-right dimension. For instance, the Democratic Party and the Labour Party in the US and UK shared a reputation for competence on issues such as welfare and education, while the Republican Party and the Conservative Party shared a reputation for competence on issues regarding defence and crimes. (Budge & Farlie, 1983; Petrocik, 1996)

Building further on this, the theory of issue ownership has been discussed by several authors (Budge & Farlie, 1983; Egan, 2013; Green-Pedersen, 2007; Petrocik, 1996). Generally, the theory argues that political party can win elections by advocating the issues that the electorate associates with the party and which the party is perceived to be best at handling. There are two aims of the theory, according to Bélanger and Meguid (2008). The first part deals with the supply side of politics: the objective is to explain the behaviour of political parties and candidates; how these actors focus on issues in election campaigns and how they shape their image according to the electorate's perception. The second part deals with the voter behaviour in regards to issue ownership and how voters cast their ballot according to which party has the most competence in handling a particular issue.

Petrocik (1996) definition focuses on the a party's ability to handle "problems facing the country", where handling implies '.... the ability to resolve a problem of concern to voters. It is a reputation for policy and program interests, produced by a history of attention, initiative and innovation toward these problems, which leads voters to believe that one of the parties (and its candidates) is *more sincere and committed to doing something about them.*' He also focuses on two sources of ownership of problems: stemming from the record of the incumbent and the party constituencies, with the former being less stable over time than the latter. Egan (2013, p. 156) mainly builds on the work of Petrocik, but characterises issue ownership as "positive associations" between a political party and a particular consensus issue. In addition, he also emphasises that these "positive associations" are long-term, contrary to the short-term component proposed by Petrocik. Stubager (2018, p. 349) further develops the theory where he defines issue ownership as '... the perception in a voter's mind that a specific party over the long term is most competent at handling—in the sense of delivering desired outputs on—a given issue.' He incorporates both the parties' handling of issues, the long-term perspective and how the voters' perception on parties handling is positive. In addition, Stubager argues that issue ownership should not be limited to consensus or valence issues, contrary to Egan (2013), as it causes unnecessary restriction of the concept.

2.3.2 Issue salience

Several studies has focused on the effect of issue ownership, such as (Bellucci, 2006; Nadeau et al., 2001), which found evidence suggesting that perception of party competence had an direct effect on voter choice in various Western democracies. However, as Bélanger and Meguid (2008) points out, parts of the literature do not properly account for or ignores an important factor when discussing issue ownership: issue salience. That concept is important in this thesis in explaining the fall of the Red Wall.

One can assume that issue ownership is conditioned by issue salience and that the two concepts are closely linked – if the voters do not find an issue sufficiently important, it would not affect their voting decision and party ownership becomes more irrelevant. Dennison (2019, p. 437) comments that the various definitions of issue salience are similar, but he identifies a divergence in terms of how it affects the actor. More specifically, some define issue salience in psychological terms i.e. how important a person believes an issue to be. Others define issue salience in terms of more retaining to behaviour; how much an issue affects a person's behavioural choices (electorally in this context). Krosnick (1990, p. 60) defines salience as 'the degree to which a person is passionately concerned about and personally invested in an attitude', which falls under a definition on psychological terms.Opperman (2010, p. 3) largely follow this type of definition, describing salience as 'the relative importance and significance that an actor ascribes to a given issue on the political agenda'.

Here, the classification of Steenbergen and Scott (2004) is relevant again. This classification is especially useful to understand how parties navigate and compete within the political space through issue salience and how it can exist as either endogenous or exogenous. Does it evolve among the voters or the parties themselves? Elias et al. (2015, p. 842)) discusses how issue salience can be both be endogenous or exogenous simultaneously without being contradictory by separating the parties individual strategies at the micro level and the structure of the political space at the macro level. They sum up their argument through Rovny and Edwards (2012, p. 53): '[w]hile citizen preferences underlie the issue composition of political space, it is political parties that partially and strategically translate these issues into political conflict.'. In terms of Brexit, the underlying preferences of the citizens was stated through the 2016 referendum, where a majority of voters voted in favour of leaving the union. However, the subsequent discussion of how this withdrawal should be carried out and the implications were translated into political conflict by the parties. Here, Brexit became largely an overreaching

issue on the GAL-TAN dimension, with different stances from the two major parties on what Brexit should mean in terms of other issues such as globalisation, immigration and national sovereignty.

The behaviour of both individual voters and political parties is affected by issue salience in terms of behaviour, and not only directly in terms of results in the ballot-box. Miller et al. (2017, p. 131) found the behavioural effects of increased salience may 'activate and engage a person's emotion systems'. With increased salience, voters may be expected to become more politically engaged and mobilise around the issue to a larger extent than if the issue were not salient. This is an important point. An obscure or very local issue, perhaps also some valence issues, can be assumed to have low salience, and therefore voters would not put much emphasis on said issue when they vote. An issue high on the national agenda and clear divergent party stances would be of more importance for the electorate when casting their ballot in favour of two opposing parties.

Weaver (1991, p. 68) argues that increased issue salience is 'accompanied by increased knowledge of its possible causes and solutions, stronger opinions, less likelihood of taking a neutral position, and more likelihood of participating in politics through such behavior as signing petitions, voting, attending meetings, and writing letters'. However, Boninger et al. (1995)) argues that such effects only occur and is observable at the highest level of salience. When issue salience increases, party competition also changes, and it becomes more important for the political parties to review their positions to appeal to the electorate (Bélanger & Meguid, 2008). Thus, changes in salience will likely cause the parties to modify and change their policy position in relation to the specific issue. Dennison (2020, p. 402) points out that parties do not seek to alter the policy attitudes of the electorate, but rather try to increase the salience of the issues that they are considered best to deal with. When there is high issue salience, voters do not only cast their vote in favour of the party that is closest to their political values or ideologically. One can assume that voters also choose party based on their competence on a certain issue and their ability to govern. The distinction between values and competence, and its effects on issue voting, can be challenging to define. With valence issues, we can assume that voters emphasise competence as this type of issue . When the issue is more value-oriented and positional, coinciding values between the voter and the party might triumph competence.

Changing position on an issue will imply a balancing of potential electoral gains of moving toward the stance of the median voter, against the potential cost of becoming ideologically inconsistent and alienating their core electorate and party activists(Abou-Chadi et al., 2020). Another strategy parties can employ in order lessen the effects of issue salience is to downplay certain issues or employ a constructive ambiguity over their policy position. (Somer-Topcu, 2015). With the changes in issue salience, alongside the increasing importance of GAL-TAN issues, parties adapt their strategy to appeal to voters or try to increase the salience of a particular issue; the latter strategy has largely been employed Extreme-right parties (ERPs) e.g. by highlighting immigration as an issue.

3 Main theoretical perspective

3.1 Spies and working-class support for Extreme-Right Parties

An interesting contribution that discusses the electoral effects of issue salience is Spies' 2013 article on working-class support for Extreme Right Parties (ERP). This article explores largely the same topics and theories as previously discussed in above sections, such as class-voting, the dimensions of party competition and issue salience. Spies wishes to answer the general question:

"Why do voters, who are traditionally considered as holding left-wing-oriented political preferences, vote for parties of the extreme right?"(2017:297)

He initially introduces two general answers this question. First, some authors argue that changed voting behaviour of the working class is due to increased international competition which in turn has led to new political preferences on economic policy and issues. More specifically: the working class now tend to favour more market-liberal policies. Second, other authors argue with the diminishing importance of social class, political preferences and attitudes are more useful to examine, such as anti-immigration attitudes and political dissatisfaction.

The article explains how the working class and the petty*bourgeoisie*(which includes artisans, small shop-owners and independents) are over-represented in ERPs' electorate in several empirical studies. The ERPs electoral support from the petty *bourgeoisie* is not surprising, considering this social class traditionally has been more right-wing, but it is more contradictory that the same parties gather significant support from the working-class as well (Spies, 2017).

To answer this, Spies employs three different explanations, put forth by (Ivarsflaten, 2005) by reviewing previous literature, arguments and empirical evidence: the realignment, the policy and economic-division theses. (Spies, 2017: 297). Both the realignment and policy theses are the same as the two general answers that Spies introduced earlier in the article. The realignment thesis argues that increased international competition has caused a realignment among the working class on economic issues towards a more market-liberal view for blue-collar workers in industry (Spies, 2013, pp. 298–299). The policy thesis argues that social class has become less important in determining voting, and by rather examining the distinct policy preferences of those who vote for ERPs, advocates of this thesis concludes that the high levels of support for ERPs amongst the working-class and the petty

bourgeoisie is due to a shared authoritarian non-economic policy preferences (Spies, 2013, p. 299). The last thesis, the economic-division, is similar to the previous thesis, but has a few distinctions. Ivarsflaten (2005) argues that the two social classes do not share the same views on economic issues, but is united in common non-economic preferences, e.g. anti-EU sentiments, anti-immigration and political disillusionment (Spies, 2013, p. 299).

After presenting the different theses, Spies then explores the empirical evidence for each thesis. The realignment thesis, and thus the realignment of social groups on common economic issues, is not supported by data. For the two other theses, the policy and economic-division thesis, there are many studies with empirical evidence to support them.These two theses reach nearly the same conclusion: the working-class electorate does not vote on the basis of their economic preferences on the left, but rather on the basis of their non-economic preferences on the right. This explanation is not satisfactory to Spies and he poses the question:

"[But now]... why do people with economic left and non-economic right policy preferences decide to let their vote decisions be guided exclusively by the latter?"

The author notes that blue-collar workers have always leaned towards left economic and right non-economic stances (Lipset, 1981; Spies, 2017). The working-class still casts its vote based on left economic preferences, and thus ignores its right non-economic preferences. However, since the rise of ERPs in the 80s, it seems that the trend has reversed with the working-class now voting based on their right non-economic preferences. Through the use of two variables*Eurobarometer Trend File*, Spies is able to measure the political preferences of the working class on two dimensions. The first is respondents' left-right self assessment and a materalist-postmaterialist index developed by Inglehart (1977, 1997). Spies, through two figures, concludes that the working-class left-right self placement has remained relatively stable since the 1980s. However, the working-class now ranks political issues differently than in the past: meaning cultural issues are given a higher priority than the traditional economic issues. (Spies, 2017:304).

Spies argues that this conclusion implies that the changing priorities of political preferences might have caused the increased working-class support for ERPs. To expand on this, the author discusses the dimensions of party competition. The shift towards prioritising and ranking cultural issues over economic issues is due to a changing pattern of party competition. While some authors argue that

party competition in Europe still can be described in terms of left and right, Spies finds it necessary to distinguish between two distinct party competition to explain the change in working-class voting behaviour in favour of ERPs (Spies, 2017).

From this, Spies reaches a conclusion. He argues that the combination of lower salience of the economic, class-based dimension, combined with a convergence on economic policy by European parties, has led to a similar increase in the salience of cultural issues (Spies, 2017:306). This is combined with a more divergent policy positions among the political parties on this dimension. High salience on cultural issues has already been discussed and empirically tested in several studies. In addition, Spies also finds it necessary to account for the various policy alternatives available to the voters, represented by polarisation of the party system. He uses an example from a two-party system to illustrate this. If both parties based most of their policy on economic issues and a small amount of policy dedicated to non-economic issues, the working-class voters would be incentivised to vote based on their left-leaning economic preferences. Likewise, if both parties offer similar policy on economic issues, but base their policy largely on non-economic issues, the incentive for the working-class to base their vote on non-economic issues would be higher (Spies, 2017). Higher polarisation on the non-economic dimension implies that voting based on economic issues would have little effect in terms of political outcome since both parties policies are similar, while "....voting on the basis of non-economic preferences offers much more distinct alternatives in outcome" (Spies, 2017:307).

Spies summarises these arguments as two hypotheses:

1) In countries where the economic dimension of party competition has decreased in both salience and polarization, the support for ERPs among the working class is considerably higher than in countries that do not show such a trend.

2) Accordingly, in elections with both a high salience of cultural issues and a high polarization of parties along these issues, working-class voters have strong incentives to cast their vote decisions on the basis of their authoritarian, non- economic preferences, which cause them to vote for parties of the extreme right.

Spies employs a data set from the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP) to test these hypotheses. This data set was collected from 1980-2005, coinciding with the emergence and rise of ERPs. It includes parties from 13 different Western European countries and includes party positions on var-

ious issues. This enables Spies to describe the salience of economic and non-economic issues. For the economic dimension, he included only categories related to economic issues, while ERP core issues of authoritarianism, law-and-order and immigration were used for the non-economic dimension (2017:308). Spies specifies that the salience of both economic and non-economic issues is not related to the policy options that is offered to voters on these dimensions. He therefore includes a polarisation index for each of the dimension. The measure places party position based on a calculated value, on a scale from 0 (extreme left) to 10 (extreme right). It utilises an approach proposed by Franzmann and Kaiser (2006) which ".... accounts for time- and country-specific meanings of left and right – respectively, of liberal and authoritarian." (Spies, 2013, p. 309)

Spies finds empirical evidence for both hypotheses in this article. He finds that "... in contexts where the economic dimension is more polarized than the non-economic dimension, the positive impact of being a member of the working class on the voting decision for an ERP is strongly reduced." This is followed by a deeper explanation "the decline in polarization of the economic dimension of party competition nonetheless has influenced the electoral fortunes of ERPs by providing these parties with a favorable political opportunity structure to mobilize voters on their non-material core issues." (Spies, 2013, p. 317)

3.1.1   Distinction between extreme- and radical-right

Before discussing Spies in an English context, I wish to discuss the labels to use for these similar parties. The distinction between ERPs and PRRPs is perhaps not intuitive. Spies employs the term ERP for many parties which other scholars would label as PRRP and the two terms share many similar characteristics. Several of the parties considered as ERPs by Spies and employed in his article might rather be considered as populist radical-right: e.g. 'Fremskrittspartiet' (Norway), 'Dansk Folkeparti' (Denmark) and 'Lega Nord' (Italy). The term 'radical-right' was initially used as a catch-all term for all political parties and organisations to the far-right on the political spectrum when research on these actors started in the post-war era, but was replaced by the term "extreme-right" in the 70s and 80s (Mudde, 2007). There is a discussion on the distinction between the two terms. Some argue the radical right is illiberal but not anti-democratic , while the extreme right legitimates violence and is anti-democratic.(Bötticher, 2017; Minkenberg, 2003; Mudde, 2007). Mudde (2007) explains how PRRPs share three common features; nativism, authoritarianism, and populism. Nativism refers to a combination of xenophobia and nationalism where a nation should be exclusive for the native

social and immigrants are threatening the homogeneity of the nation. Authoritarianism advocates a strong state, a strictly ordered society where authority is fundamental and a infringing on this authority should be punished severely (Mudde, 2016). emphasises how PRRPs are democratic, in comparison with many ERPs, in that they accept popular sovereignty and majority rule and tend to accept the rules of parliamentary democracy. PRRPs also includes elements of populist ideology and rhetoric. This can be defined as 'a ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups: "the pure people" and "the corrupt elite," and argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people (Mudde, 2004)

I wish to employ the term PRRPs rather than ERPs, which Spies does, when examining these parties in the UK and analysing their electoral success in the analysis.

3.2   Spies in an English context

In this section, I will argue that Spies' theory can be applied to explain the fall of the Red Wall. More specifically, how the Conservatives in the 2019 UK general elections behaved as a "functional equivalent" of a PRRP and that the increased salience of Brexit can be viewed as an increased salience of "cultural, non-economic" or GAL-TAN issues. This section will also explore the right-wing political scene in the UK and its electoral significance and how the Conservative Party can be placed within this context.

Some differences and similarities must be addressed. Perhaps the most obvious difference between the two is that Spies' article deals with the increased electoral support from the working-class towards ERPs, the increased electoral success of the Conservative Party: a traditional conservative party. It is apparent that the Conservative Party is not an ERP, but I wish to argue that the party rather could adopt the role of an PRRP in the UK for this thesis and be a functioning equivalence in order to test Spies' theory. Based on the previous discussion in regards to the distinction between ERPs and PRRPs, I believe the latter is better suited at capturing the policies and ideological profile of the Tories in this particular election.

The electorate in the 13 countries examined by Spies are Western European countries such as the UK. Therefore, we can assume that the attitudes and values, together with the long term political trends and issues amongst the electorate, are somewhat similar. In addition, there is also reason to assume

similar characteristics in the electorate in terms of i.e. age and education level. Both UK and the rest of Western Europe has transitioned from industrial to post-industrial societies: experiencing a rise in post-modern values and corresponding changes in attitudes among certain social classes. As discussed in the previous chapters, the constituencies that constitutes the Red Wall has significant percentage working-class voters and this is the same social class which forms the basis of Spies' analysis.

3.2.1 Main assumptions

How can this modified version of Spies' theory be relevant in an English context? I have identified two main assumptions that would have to be fulfilled in order for the theory to be applicable in this thesis:

1) The Conservative party as a "functioning equivalence" to an PRRP in England

2) Brexit as a GAL-TAN dimension issue

3.2.2 1) The Conservative Party as a functioning equivalence to an PRRP in England

The theory Spies puts forward in his article aims to explain ERPs increased electoral success among working-class voters, whereas I take the same approach with PRRPs, and the Tories take on this role. Before discussing how the Conservative Party can be a functioning equivalence of an PRRP when applying Spies' theory to case of the Red Wall, this subsection will explore PRRPs in the UK in general.

Populist Radical Right Parties in the UK

There are several PRPPs in the UK which have achieved certain electoral success in the last few decades.

With the new Blair government and "New Labour" in 1997, immigration from non-EU countries doubled between 1997 and 2004, and combined with the 2004 EU Eastern enlargement, it became the most salient issue among British voters in 2006 (M. J. Goodwin, 2011, p. 58). The BNP reorganised and updated their ideological profile, e.g. advocating an anti-establishment populism, and turned away from anti-Semitism and rather focusing on islamophobia. By this, the party achieved relative electoral success in the late 2000s (M. J. Goodwin & Dennison, 2018). In the 2010 General election, the BNP won over half a million votes (1,9 % of total votes) and in the 2009 EP-election, they won

close to 950000 votes (6,2 % of total votes) (Braouezec, 2012, p. 6). A majority of their electorate consisted of "skilled working-class" men in the northern parts of England, who were pessimistic in regards to future economic opportunities, strongly dissatisfied with the established political parties and considered immigration to be the most salient issue. (Ford & Goodwin, 2010) From 2010 onwards, the BNP disintegrated due to several factors, notably their inability to secure a parliamentary seat, financial troubles and the leadership style of their party leader. (M. J. Goodwin & Dennison, 2018).

In the vacuum left by the BNP followed The United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP). UKIP was founded by a left-wing economics professor from the London School of Economics in the late 90s as a 'hard' eurosceptic party - a single-issue party wishing to bring the UK out the EU. Initially, the party struggled to make any noticeable electoral impact as the Conservative party and its leader William Hague was outspoken against the new European monetary union. But as with the BNP, the 2004 Eastern enlargement of the EU provided UKIP with a political opportunity to cement their position as the primary anti-EU party in Britain, and laid the grounds for their rise in popularity among voters (Evans & Mellon, 2019). Together with the enlargement, the newly elected more liberal party leader David Cameron wanted less focus on the EU. This opportunity was seized by Nigel Farage, the new leader of UKIP, which '... committed the party to social conservatism, laissez-faire economics, and populist swipes at the British and European political elites. (Kitschelt, 2018, p. 12). As Ford and Goodwin explains in *Revolt on the right* 2010, the party appealed to the "left-behind" losers of globalisation, and would eventually target many of the similar demographics as BNP: older, less-educated and more working-class voters which were not supportive of the social changes in the UK since the late 90's (M. J. Goodwin & Dennison, 2018, p. 13). With a clear anti-EU profile and strict on immigration, and with a popular party leader in Nigel Farage, UKIP managed to become the largest party in the 2014 European Parliament (EP) election with 26,6% of the votes, and surpassing Labour and the Conservatives as the biggest British party in the European Parliament. With euro-scepticism growing, the 2015 general election was a great electoral success for the party, becoming the third largest party and receiving 12,6% of the vote, although only gaining one MP in Westminster. (M. J. Goodwin & Dennison, 2018). This strong result would not repeat itself only two years later. In the post-referendum general election of 2017, UKIP saw a sharp decline in its share of votes, winning only 1,8 % of the popular vote, a change of 10,8 percentage points.

Spies does not include any British PRRPs in his analysis as they are not coded in the data from

Eurobarometer Trend File (Spies, 2013, pp. 311–312). The electoral decline of both parties in recent years has been apparent. In the 2019 elections, both the BNP and UKIP won a marginal number of votes; 510 votes for the former (0,0% share of the votes) and 22,817 (0,07% share of the votes) for the latter(Baker et al., 2020, p. 8). Nigel Farage's new political party, The Brexit Party (from January 6th, 2021 known as the Reform party), might explain some of the fragmentation among the right-wing populist and extreme parties, and especially the low share of votes for UKIP. The Brexit Party secured 2.0% of the votes in the election as a strong advocate for a clean-break Brexit (Baker et al., 2020, p. 8), did not come close to their 30,52% in the EP-elections in early 2019.

The decline of PRRPs and the Tories' shift towards its policies

So why not use UKIP as the PRRP in this thesis? One implication of the unexpected outcome of the 2016 EU referendum was that it removed UKIP as the focal point of this issue and its associated dimension, and a return to two-party politics (at least temporarily) (Evans & Mellon, 2019, p. 77). As Brexit was now underway, UKIP lost ownership to its main issue, its *raison d'être*. It would appear that from the political vacuum after the referendum was held, the Tories managed to take ownership of the both Brexit and immigration, becoming the party to champion Brexit through, thus becoming the best alternative for former UKIP and Brexit party voters and effectively taking on the role of an PRRP in an English context.

If we employ the minimal definition given by Mudde (2007) of PRRPs, many of the characteristics match the current policies of the Conservative party. The Tories have increasingly the last part of the decade taken a firmer stance against immigration, politicising the issue further (Bale, 2021). Kitschelt (1996) explained the weak electoral performances of radical right parties in the UK partly due to the ability of the Tories to block out rival parties by taking ownership of radical policies, particularly regarding immigration, authoritarianism, and traditionalism. This explanation was not relevant from 2005 to 2015 due to the electoral success of both the BNP and UKIP, and the move toward a more social liberalism under David Cameron (M. J. Goodwin & Dennison, 2018, p. 23). Leading up and in the wake of the referendum, however, the explanation would become relevant again. David Cameron, under pressure to regain ownership of the salient issue of immigration from backbenchers in his own party, voters, a growing UKIP and the media, was convinced to call a referendum on the British membership in the EU in 2015 should the Conservatives win the election. (Bale, 2021). Post-referendum, Theresa May represented a more hard-line approach in policies and

putting 'anti-immigration, anti-cosmopolitan, populist, nationalist, and even statist sentiment at the heart of her rhetoric after becoming prime minister.' (M. J. Goodwin & Dennison, 2018, p. 24). Goodwin and Dennison also draw lines back the era of Margaret Thatcher, where the Tories adopted similar radical right, anti-immigration rhetoric to counter the growth of ERPs such as National Front.

Kitschelt (1996)) pointed to the UK's majoritarian electoral system as an explanation for the weak electoral performance of PRRPs. The electoral system employed by the UK in their general elections is a plurality electoral system; more specifically as single-member plurality voting (SMP). With only one member elected in each constituency, it would be logical to assume it would be more difficult for new and smaller parties to achieve a majority in competition with large and established parties.M. J. Goodwin and Dennison (2018, p. 24) argue that while the majoritarian electoral system of the UK may make it difficult for PRRPs to make electoral gains, the more powerful, indirect effect is that those in power would more readily adapt radical right policies to gain voters and to block PRRPs chances of winning elections - meaning PRRPs can push the policies further towards the TAN side of the dimension.

Exploring the Conservative's 2019 manifesto, many of the key pledges are similar to that of UKIP and the Brexit party (Conservatives, 2019). Boris Johnson guarantees to "Get Brexit done", expand the police force together with tougher sentencing for crimes and controlling immigration to a larger extent. This has largely given the Conservative party the issue ownership over Brexit and other GAL-TAN issues. In fact, when respondents in which party were best at handling the most important issue facing the country in the BES 2019, a clear majority of them responded the Conservative party (See table 3).The MII here is in relation to the previous question where responds answered what they believe was the most important issue facing the country (in free text)

Political party	Percentage of respondents
Conservative	45.6 %
Labour	16.8 %
No party is best able to handle this issue	15.6 %
Brexit Party	2.7%
Liberal Democrat	2.4%
UKIP	0.7%

Table 3: What party is best at handling the most important issue?

Experts on British politics placed the Conservative party on a liberal-authoritarian scale in the 2019 BES expert study, and in figure 3, we can observe how the party is in close proximity to the Brexit Party (and UKIP in 2017) on the dimension.
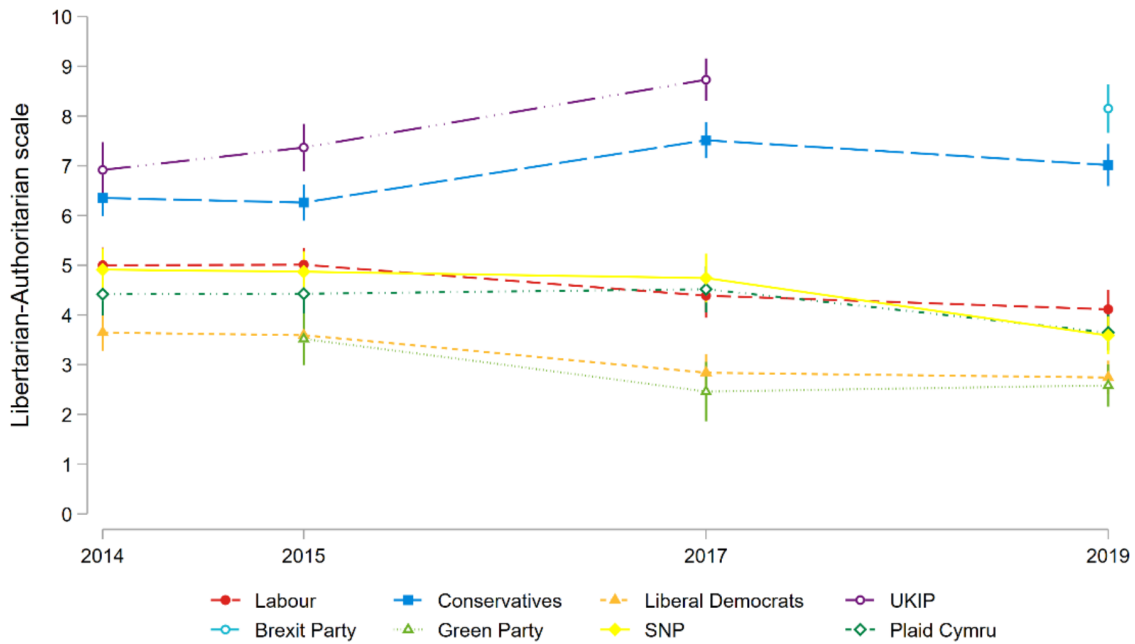
Figure 3: UK parties placed on a liberal-authoritarian scale. *Source: The BES 2019 Expert Survey*

By employing Mair and Mudde (1998)) work on the classification of political parties into party families, we can examine the Conservative Party's origin and sociology. The authors argue by using Lipset and Rokkan's (1967) four main cleavages, which spawned from a national and industrial revolution, we can identify which parties mobilised under similar historical circumstances to represent similar interests. (Gallagher & Mair, 1995, p. 181). Here, the Conservatives largely share the same origin as similar conservative parties in Western Europe, arisen from the cleavages of owners vs workers and subject vs dominant, usually an advocate for the middle-class, business owners and land owners. However, even if the Conservative Party is not a PRRP in terms of origin, the ideological shift in politics and policy towards the TAN end of the dimension discussed in the paragraphs above, it would suggest the party can be classified as an "functioning equivalence" of a PRRP in the 2019 election.

3.2.3 2) Brexit as an measure of the GAL-TAN dimension in the UK

In his article, Spies (2013) argue how increased salience of issues on the GAL-TAN dimension increase the working-class vote for PRRPs. There are several approaches to measure this dimension and different issues are included by different researchers. In this thesis, however, I wish to measure it through the issue of Brexit. At first glance, this might appear to somewhat of a simple measure for such a complex and large dimension as GAL-TAN. Employing an index with multiple indicators could also be a good alternative. However, I would argue that Brexit in itself captures many of the key issues associated with this dimension. Immigration and European integration were important in explaining Brexit, and they are important issues within the GAL-TAN dimension.

Brexit as an issue and the subsequent withdrawal process is complex and represents different issues for voters. Clarke et al. (2017, p. 146) outline two of the main motivations of the voting leave in the referendum. Was the vote based on a cost and benefits approach in the UKs membership in terms of economic effects or in terms by feeling of national identity over perceived threats of immigration from the free movement of workers from other EU countries? They find that economics, international influence and immigration, terrorism, and benefit–cost variables had the strongest effects on referendum voting.

The authors employed different issues to measure these predictor variables, such as personal finance, immigration and terrorism; providing voters opinions of the cost and benefits of staying or leaving the EU. In figure 6, we can observe that most people perceive a high cost of leaving the EU in terms of personal finances and economy, but 51% perceive it would lead to less immigration.
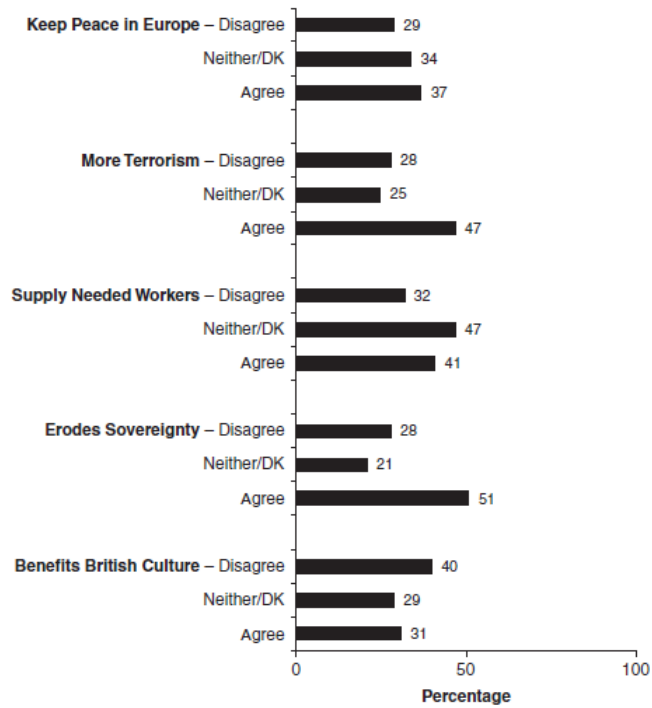
Figure 4: Perceived benefits and costs of continued EU membership. *(Clarke et al., 2017=)*

In figure 7, 51% perceive that remaining in the EU erodes sovereignty, and a majority agree that EU membership would lead to more terrorism and believe it not to benefit British culture.
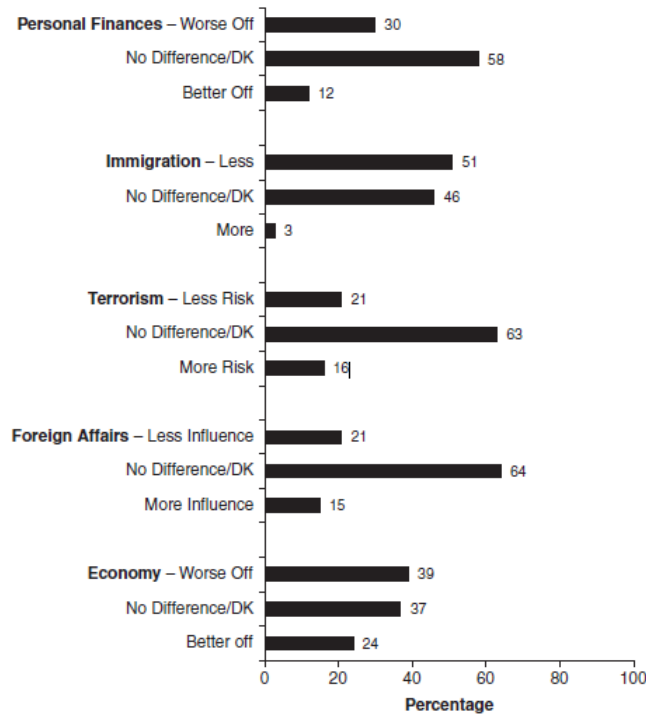
Figure 5: Perceived benefits and costs of leaving the EU. *(Clarke et al., 2017)*

Clarke et al. (2017, p. 157) summarise the perceived costs and benefits of remaining or leaving as "people tended to feel that a Brexit would be bad for the national economy and their own finances, but would also help the country to reduce immigration and reclaim national sovereignty, although many were unsure of the consequences or thought it would make no difference." I believe that this emphasises how economic issues were important for the voters, but sidelined over concerns over GAL-TAN issues and its salience.

Especially the role of immigration in the Brexit vote is important. Dennison and Geddes (2018) discusses how immigration and free movement within the EU were essential in the UKs decision to leave the EU. The same conclusions are also drawn by M. Goodwin and Milazzo (2017). As previously discussed in the former section on the Conservative Party as a PRRP, immigration has been a highly salient issue since the enlargement of the EU in 2004, and brought further up on the public agenda by parties as UKIP. Bale (2021) discusses immigration and its great effect the Brexit vote, pointing to the increased politicisation over the issue in the years prior and how both political elite and the media shaped the public opinion on immigration. He also points to a poll done by IpsosMORI a

week before the referendum, where the immigration overtook economy as the most important issue for voters in helping them deciding to vote (IpsosMORI, 2016). When analysing some of the posters from the Vote Leave campaign (see appendix, figure 8), they concern different issues such as the NHS, national sovereignty and the economy. However, many of them emphasise immigration and the potential increase in immigration if the UK remained in the EU. As M. Goodwin and Milazzo (2017, p. 462) point out, anti-immigration messages had a strong resonance emotionally with voters already concerned about immigration.

Based on the arguments above, it is reasonable to assume immigration played a key role in explaining the Brexit vote. In addition, other GAL-TAN issues were also involved, such as globalisation (in terms of national sovereignty) and national identity. As previously mentioned, it is important to emphasise that issues on the economic left-right dimension were also important, but had lower salience. Therefore, it would be possible to assume that Brexit is an issue on the GAL-TAN dimension.

After the discussion in this section, we can now assumed the Conservative Party to be a functioning equivalence of an PRRP in the UK and Brexit to be a GAL-TAN issue.

3.2.4 Hypotheses

To test Spies' (2013) theory in a British context and to answer the research question, I have outlined a main hypothesis:

H1: "2017 Labour voters who placed Brexit as their most important issue in the 2019 general election were more likely to shift from Labour to Conservatives"

H2: Working class voters were more likely than middle class voters to change their vote from Labour in 2017 to Conservative in 2019 general election

Here, high issue salience is represented as most important issue and the GAL-TAN issue is represented by Brexit. Class is measured as either working class or not. The voters being analysed are confined to the constituencies of the Red Wall.

4 Research design

This section will present the research design in this thesis. By employing the theoretical framework previously discussed, this section will lay the groundwork for the empirical analysis that follows.

Firstly, I will lay out the structure of the data material in this thesis and its general characteristics. Secondly, I will explore operationalisation of the various concepts and present the key variables applied in the analyses, in addition to the control variables. Finally, I will discuss the analytical tools which will be employed, both research design and statistical models.

4.1 The Scope

The data I will be employing in this thesis has been collected by The British Election Study (BES). The BES dataset contains a large number of variables covering a wide variety of themes relating to political attitudes of the British electorate, from party identification, value orientations and general characteristics of the respondents such as age and education level. The dataset comprises responses collected from an internet-panel survey conducted by YouGov over several weeks between the 13th and the 23rd of December in 2019. It is sent to a representative sample of eligible UK voters from all the nations within the union: England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. There is a subset of questions in the dataset exclusive for each nation regarding topics such as the devolved parliaments, national identity and national politicians.

The BES is a large election study conducted at regular intervals both after, before and in between UK general elections. For nearly sixty years it has been the main study on British electoral behaviour, and an important resource in understanding the political attitudes of the electorate. In addition to the internet-panel survey, the BES also conducts face-to-face post-election surveys and expert surveys available to the public.

As the scope of this thesis is to explain the electoral behaviour of the voters in the constituencies of the Red Wall, the respondents from Northern Ireland and Scotland are disregarded. From the 32177 respondents whom participated in the 2019 post-election internet-panel survey, 1880 respondents remains when filtering the data based on constituencies. This is a rather large reduction in N, but is necessary in order to examine the relevant areas which make up the Red Wall.The original number of constituencies was 650, so the reduction of respondents is fairly proportionate to the reduction to 41

constituencies. The average number of respondents from each constituency is approximately 50. The 41 constituencies of relevance are located primarily in the regions of Midlands, Yorkshire and Northern England in England, but the South-East of Wales is also included. Because the constituencies are primarily English, I have used the term to describe these voters, although they are in part Welsh as well. I believe English is more of fitting term to describe a majority of these voters, and that any strong Welsh identity or characteristics might not be of great relevance to this thesis as the political attitudes and values should be similar in the region and in the different constituencies on both sides of the border.

The dataset provided by the BES contains a large amount of useful variables and a relative large number of respondents when filtering out respondents outside the Red Wall constituencies, far exceeding any other data set available on British electoral behaviour. Collecting the data myself would prove nearly impossible with the limitations in time and resources of this thesis.

4.1.1 Wave 19 of the British election study

The dataset in this thesis in wave 19 of the BES panel study. The study follows the same survey respondents over time in each 'wave' and allows us to explore change in electoral behaviour and political trends between different points in time. Wave 19 were taken by 32,177 respondents. Of the respondents from wave 19, 26,227 of these also took wave 18 - an overall wave on wave retention rate of 69.3%. As the BES-teams explains in the codebook, each wave can be used as a cross-sectional study. This is how I will employ the data.

4.2   Method

4.2.1   Research design

There are several ways to categorise social research. One of the main distinctions is between qualitative and quantitative research strategies, which differ in both approach and the end goal. Bryman (2016, p. 32) discusses how the principal orientation of theory differs between these two research strategies. Quantitative research is deductive; aiming to test theory by analysing numerical data, describing, predicting and controlling different variables. The goals are to test the causal relationship between these variables and generalising these results to a wider population. Qualitative research is inductive; aiming to generate theory by analysing non-numerical data through analysing various types documents or conducting interviews. The goals are to gain a deep understanding of specific contexts and how individuals perceive this context from a social perspective.

Based on the discussions above, the structure and overall theme of this thesis, it is clearly a thesis with quantitative research strategy. However, this is still only part of a complete research method. It is also necessary to employ a research design which provides a framework when collecting and analysing the data. This framework gives us a clearer direction in how to approach the data and how to process them and what dimensions of research are being prioritised. Different research design caters to different forms of research based on types of data, the characteristics of data and the goal of the research. A study of the economic development of countries within a region requires a different research design than an intensive study of a cultural phenomenon within a city.

The quantitative data and variables are collected from a single point in time; a survey conducted post-election in 2019. However, the survey is conducted as a panel study by the BES.This calls for some further clarification. The BES retains respondents from wave to wave in order to able to examine the developments and trends in their political attitudes and values over time. The variables I employ in my analysis are only collected in the wave 19 post-election of the 2019 GE, and not any variables collected from the previous waves. Thus, the research design will characteristic of a cross-sectional design and data set will employed as cross-sectional data set in this context.

However, a sample of cases is not present in this thesis. I only explore voting behaviour in the 2019 GE in the UK, more specifically of voters within the Red Wall and not any other countries, meaning I have a low degree of variation in cases, exploring a single case. Stake (1995) in (Bryman, 2016, pp. 60–61)

emphasise how a case study research design is concerned with the complexity and particular nature of the case in question. Gerring (2017, p. 27) defines a case study as a 'intensive study of a single unit or a small number of units (the cases), for the purpose of understanding a larger class of similar units (a population of cases)'. This fits the characteristics of this thesis as I study a single unit, but aims to place it within in a broader European context.Bryman (2016) points to how a case study is distinguished from other research design by the researcher wishing to reveal unique features of the case - a so called *idiographic* approach. This is very much in line with the intention of this thesis.

4.2.2 Statistical model

Thesis fits the characteristics of a quantitative case study which entails choosing a statistical model to analyse the data. Many factors, such as the scale of measurement and characteristics of the dependent variable, affects which statistical models one can employ. As the dependent variable in this thesis is dichotomous, and not e.g. continuous, it puts certain restrictions on our choice of statistical model. Based on this, the best fit for this thesis appears to be a binomial logistical regression as opposed to a linear regression and estimation models such as OLS. This type of statistical regression is well suited to analyse a dichotomous variable (Christophersen, 2013, p. 130). Skog 1998 discusses two conditions which change when using this type of variable.

Firstly, the regression curve will no longer be linear. When the dependent variable has the value 0 or 1, the regression curve will rather be S-shaped due to the units only having this dichotomous value (Ibid, p. 117). Producing a linear regression curve requires us to re-code to *logits* scale by calculating the which observational units posses certain trait and which does not. This re code, performed in a statistics program such as R, makes the *logits* scale linear and enabling us the interpret the interaction between the dependent and independent variable. This scale ranges from 0 to 1 where if the observational units are nearing these outer perimeters, *logits* grows infinitely positive or negative.

Secondly, the residuals are no longer normally distributed and homeostatic. These are condition to run an OLS-regression, but not in a binomial logistic regression. In a logistic regression, we employ maximum likelihood as a method for estimation instead of OLS. (Ibid, p.122)

4.3 Operationalisation

Operationalisation of a concept is necessary in order to be able to measure the concept accurately. This is usually done by using an indicator or several indicators which is thought to represent the concept we want to measure (Bryman, 2016). The goal of opertionalisation is to go from a theoretical variable to operationalised variables which can can be employed in the analysis.

4.3.1 Measuring the dependent variable: Labour to Conservative

The dependent variable of this thesis is a dichotomous variable which measures whether Labour voters in 2017 switched to the Conservative party or voted for Labour again in the 2019 election. We need to construct a new variable which captures whether the respondents changed their votes between the two elections.

Two variables were used to construct this new variable. The first variable asked respondents:

'Which party did you vote for in 2017?'

The second variable asked respondents:

'Which party did you vote for at the General Election in December 2019?'

Voters that voted for Labour in 2017 were given the value 0 and Conservative voters were given the value 1. Similarly, voters in 2019 were given the value 0 if they voted Labour and Conservative voters were given the value 1. In the new variable, After this, I recoded these two variables into a single new dichotomous variable. To capture whether the Labour voters in 2017 changed their vote to Conservative in 2019, Labour voters in both 2017 and 2019 were given the value 0 and Labour voters which changed their vote in 2019 were given the value 1.

4.3.2 Measuring the independent variables

Most important issue

One of the most important variables in answering the research question of this thesis is the most important issue (MII). Asking respondents what they consider to be the MII facing the country is a common approach to measure issue salience, and used by not only the BES, but similar Canadian, German and Italian election studies, as well as the Eurobarometer from the EU(Bartle & Laycock, 2012, p. 679).

The question is posed as an open question where the respondents can type in their answer in their own words, not limited by any categories or ranking scales. The MII question is posed as follows:

'As far as you're concerned, what is the SINGLE MOST important issue facing the country at the present time?'

1. *(Open MII-text)*

2. None

3. Don't know

There has been discussions in relation to possible disadvantages of employing MII-questions to measure issue salience.Johns (2010), drawing from Wlezien (2005), discuss how the question can be interpreted either an a personal level (important personally to the respondent) and on a contextual level (perceived as topping the political agenda of the country). Analysing the 2005 BES data, he states "MII does not work well as a measure of personal issue salience, and appears more often to elicit respondents' belief about the issue that tops the national political agenda." (2010, p. 155). However, Bartle and Laycock (2012, p. 29) argues that overall, aggregate MII seems to largely reflect what actually matters to the median voter. This discussion of using MII to measure issue salience is validated, and other methods might yield a different result. I still believe it is the best method of capturing voters perceived importance of issues, and thus its salience, in the data I have available in this thesis. Especially in an election where Brexit has dominated the public opinion and entrenched voters on different sides.

In the previous waves of the BES, the team has coded the open ended responses into different categories, both as broad and general categories, but also in smaller and more specific categories. For wave 19, however, this auto coded variable with MII-categories is not available. Therefore, I had to code the responses myself by sorting the open ended text in various categories, which I believe covers a majority of the issues. The categories are similar to the ones the BES uses in their waves, although slightly altered. The categories are:

- Brexit

- The NHS

- Partisan politics

- Environment

- Immigration

- Crime

- Terrorism

- Inequality

- Austerity/spending

- Economy

- General politics

- Scottish matters

- Education

- The UK/ the Union

- Defense

- Ideology and religion

As we observe in table 2 below, a large majority of the respondents viewed Brexit as the MII in the 2019 election. The NHS (National Health Service) is also an important issue for many respondents, followed by immigration and partisan politics. Apart from these first few categories, the rest does not have a particularly high percentage. Six of the issues are emphasised by less than 1% of the voters. It is worth noting 10% of responses were coded as NA due to no answer or as the respondent chose the alternative 'Don't know' or 'None'. Table 2 therefore only includes the valid percentages which will be used in the analysis.

Issue categories	Percentage of respondents
Brexit	48.8 %
NHS	16.8 %
Immigration	5.3 %
Partisan politics	5.0%
Other	4.8 %
Environment	4.0%
Crime	3.9%
Economy	3.6%
Inequality	2.9%
Austerity/spending	1.7%
General politics	0.8%
Terrorism	0.8%
The UK / the Union	0.7%
Ideology and religion	0.5%
Education	0.3%
Scottish matters	0.1%
Defense	0.1%

Table 4: Most Important Issue distribution

Coding the open text into defined categories comes with several challenges which needs to be addressed.

The scope of the issue categories is not immediately apparent, as politics is always changing and new issues will need to analysed and placed within a category; How broad or specific should the issue categories be? Brexit and the NHS are the categories which is related to a single issue, although e.g. the term Brexit might encompass more political and institutional issues than the NHS. Brexit might represent national sovereignty for some voters, while others might Brexit be an issue regarding immigration. Relating to this, it is worth mentioning the direction of attitude towards the category. Whether the respondent is positive or negative towards Brexit, or any other nuance in response, they will be combined into the same category. However, as the respondents believe this to be the MII, the direction of the attitude does not affect the variable. Most of the issue categories are broader and incorporate a large number issues than e.g. Brexit and the NHS. As previously mentioned, the issues categories are based on the ones the BES-team employs.

As the categories and its scope has been discussed, which approach and tools should be used to process each response? There were nearly 2000 open text responses to analyse and processing all these manually would be laborious and time consuming. Therefore, I wanted to find an approach where the responses could be mapped into different issues categories by using key words. The Python programming language (Van Rossum & Drake, 2010) proved to be a useful tool in order to perform

this mapping. The dataset was read into a dataframe using Pandas library (Reback et al., 2021). The data was sorted by 'id' column i.e the individual respondents, and all respondents with no text in the MII column were filtered out. After this, several steps of text preprocessing was performed.The open text of the MII variable were stripped of all non alphanumeric or non white space characters, and then converted to lowercase letters. There is a probability of spelling errors as the responses are in open text. To eliminate common spelling errors, the autocorrect library (Sondej, 2021) was used. A Python dictionary, consisting of a set of categories as keys and list of key words were created so that the contents of the open text could be mapped to a single category.

For each respondent, the following was applied. Each word in the open text of the MII variable was lemmatised by using the NLTK library (Bird et al., 2009) so that only the dictionary form or root of the word (*lemma*) remained. Then, by looping through the mapping dictionary (see table 4 in appendix), each key word was compared to the lemmatised words in the open text. If a match was found, the was labelled to the category of the matched word. The processing started with the key words associated with the first category and continues to the next category and its associated key words. Thus, the initial key words are prioritised over the later key words. For instance, one respondent wrote that the most important issue was 'For Boris Johnson to fulfil his promises on the NHS'. The response will not be categorised under partisan politics (under the key words 'Boris' or 'Johnson', but under the NHS since this key words appears before the partisan politics category in the mapping dictionary. This might lead to some miscategorisation of the answers, but I would argue that this should not have any substantial effect on the overall accuracy of the categorisation. Firstly, most of the responses only contain one key word, which means the answer only corresponded to one key word and one single category. Secondly, the order of the categories was chosen by prioritising the most concrete issues first. With the example provided above, I would argue that the respondent does not imply that Boris Johnson's policy on the NHS is the most important issue, but rather that the NHS itself is the most important issue for this respondent. Therefore, it is categorised as 'NHS'. These answers which combines several key words can be difficult to perfectly categorise correctly and the semantics of the respondents' answers can be challenging to fully decipher, but as discussed above, I believe the overall accuracy of the categorisation is satisfactory. A random sample drawn, which compared the open text to the categorisation, showed most of the answers were correctly labelled.

If no match was found in the open text in any key words, it was labelled in the 'other' category. These

responses were typically either not serious or extremely specific, and was not identified by any of the key words. The processed dataset was exported to a CSV file and merged with original dataset of BES wave 19 for further analysis.

Class

Class is included as an independent variable to explore the effect of class and Labour voters from 2017 changing their vote in 2019. Social class, as discussed in previous section on class voting, can be expected to still affect cultural attitudes through their work experience and occupation structure (Oesch & Rennwald, 2018). To construct a class variable, I employed a variable in the data set which places respondents in different social classes based on employment situation and occupation. These categories are based on the UK's National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification (NS-SEC), which divides the population into seven different social classes based on occupation and employment status. These range from higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations to routine occupations and long-term unemployed workers. To operationalise social class, I recoded the different social class into two different categories: working-class or not. This means there is no separation between different occupations in the traditional middle class. This is done in accordance with a suggested classification from a report from the Library of House of Commons (2014). The following occupation were given the value 0, in addition to unemployed workers:

- Semi-routine occupations

- Routine occupations

The remaining occupations were given the value 1 and represent the middle class.

Social class is complex to define. However, occupation provides an adequate measure of social class as it affects cultural and economic attitudes. As Evans and Tilley (2017, p. 3) point out, occupation is important as it determines people's earnings, both currently and in the future. Earnings and the security of having a job might affect party choice.

4.3.3 Control variables

In the analysis, two control variables are also included to control for effects that might affect whether or not voters switched their vote from Labour to Conservative between the 2017 and 2019 general election.

Age and education

Age is included due to its assumed effects on values and the likelihood of voting for a PRRP. As discussed by Norris and Inglehart (2019), older voters tend to be more socially conservative than younger voters. In the data, the variable is coded as a continuous variable. The mean age of the respondents is 55 years; the youngest respondents are 18 years old, while the oldest respondent is 92 years old.

Similarly, education level is also included as an control variable. As Ford and Goodwin (2010) discussed, PRRPs tend to have a larger appeal to less-educated and more working-class voters which disliked the social changes in the UK since the late 90's. Labour generally performed better among the highly educated than the Conservatives in the 2019 general election(Curtis & McDonnell, 2019). To operationalise and measure higher education, a new dichotomous variable was created. Employing the variable *p_edlevel*, respondents with either an undergraduate or postgraduate degree were assigned the value 1, while the other levels (see below) were given the value 0.

- No qualifications
- Below GCSE
- GCSE

- A-level
- Undergraduate
- Postgraduate

Although there are programs for Further Education (FE) in the UK, such as tertiary colleges and apprenticeships, this thesis will define higher education as university education.

5   Analysis

After discussing the method, the structure of the data and coding of both the independent and dependent variable, in addition to the control variables, this section will present the results of the analysis. First, the main model introduces new variables step by step; employing a logistic regression with a *logits* link function and a plot of predicted probability will be presented. Second, the fitness of model will be discussed.

5.1   Results

Table 4 provides the results from the logistic regression and analyse if respondents which considered Brexit as MII were more likely to change their vote from Labour to Conservative in 2019(H1) and if working class voters were more likely to change their vote from Labour in the 2017 general election to the Conservative Party in the 2019 general election (H2). (Hlavac, 2018) Stargazer is used to print the table. The link function employed in the models are "logit", where probabilities are converted to log odds.

In model 1, class is introduced as a variable. This is to observe the effects of class on the switching of party. Here, the positive coefficient is also statistically significant at a 5 % level. As the value of the coefficient is below 1, it would appear that middle class voters were less likely to change their vote from Labour to Conservative in the 2019 general election compared to working class voters. Similarly, the working class would be more likely to change their vote between the General Elections in 2017 and 2019. The class coefficient remains positively correlated and statistically significant, but the strength of the correlation is slightly reduced. This would imply that the Brexit as MII can be expected to affect party choice.

In model 2, the Brexit as MII is introduced as a variable. The coefficient is positive, and statistically significant at a 5 % level. This indicates a fairy strong correlation between the two variables; Voters with Brexit as MII were more likely to switch to Labour to Conservative in the 2019 general election than those who had responded with another MII. Class remains positively correlated and statistically significant, but the strength of the correlation is slightly reduced. This would imply that Brexit as MII can be expected to have an effect

	Dependent variable:			
	LabToCon			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Class	0.475***	0.467***	0.569***	0.421**
	(0.163)	(0.174)	(0.194)	(0.201)
Brexit as MII		1.066***	1.048***	1.167***
		(0.132)	(0.145)	(0.152)
Higher education			−0.674***	−0.447***
			(0.154)	(0.161)
Age				0.040***
				(0.006)
Constant	−0.671***	−1.198***	−1.053***	−3.376***
	(0.148)	(0.175)	(0.185)	(0.406)
Observations	1,095	1,020	862	862
Log Likelihood	-743.871	-659.989	-546.395	-521.968
Akaike Inf. Crit.	1,491.742	1,325.978	1,100.791	1,053.935

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 5: Logistic regression with logits - Switching from Labour 2017 to Conservative 2019

In model 3, the variable measuring whether or not respondents have higher education is introduced, which controls for the effect of education on class and Brexit as MII on party choice. It is statistically significant at a% level. As the coefficient is negative, this would suggest that respondents with higher education are less likely to switch from Labour to Conservative in the 2019 election. When including this variable, the two previous coefficients remain statistically significant and the positive correlations of both variable remain. However, the effects of class increase in strength from model 2 to model 3. The effects of Brexit as MII on party choice is reduced.

In model 4, age is introduced to control for the effects of class and Brexit as MII on party choice. As previously mentioned, its a continuous variable which measures the age of the respondents. The coefficient is positive and statistically significant at a 5% level. This would imply that the older respondent is, the more likely the respondent is to switch from Labour to Conservative in the 2019 GE. The effects of class and higher education on party choice weakens when accounting for age, and class is no longer statistically significant at a 5% level. The Brexit as MII coefficient increases in this model.

An aspect of using log odds and logit as a model as opposed to other types of models such as OLS, is the logit model and the coefficients is inherently less intuitive and more difficult to interpret in a meaningful way. While a OLS regression usually has a linear form, a logit model has an non-linear form. (Long & Freese, 2014). One can say something about the direction and strength of the relation between the dependent and independent variables, but not simply one increase in x and the corresponding effect on y as with a continuous variable.

5.1.1 Fitness of model

The different models estimated in table 4 provide different measures of model fitness in which how well each model describe the data. From model 1 where there is only a single variable, one should expect to better describe the data in model 2, 3 4 and 5 where all variables are present, in addition to an interaction variable. There are several different measurements to use when examining the fitness of model. Log likelihood is one of these.To employ log likelihood, the models need to be hierarchical, in the sense that model apart from model 1 and 2, each following model includes the previous variable in addition to a new model. (Christophersen, 2013, p. 139). If log likelihood moves closer to zero when additional independent variables are added, it indicates that the model improves (*ibid, p. 139*). In table 4, log likelihood decreases from -784.9 in model 1 to -521.9 in model 6, indicating that model 4 better describes the data.

Akaike information criterion (AIC) can be employ to test how well the model fits the data. AIC Similarly to the log likelihood values, a lower value indicates a better fit of model. The decreases from 1,573 to 1,055 indicate a better fit. It is also possible to estimate how other models compare to the the main model which employs logits as link function. The estimation method is still bounded by the binary dependent variable, and therefore it would require a binomial logistic regression. Table 5 displays the same models as in table 4, but estimated with probits as link function rather than logits. Probit and logits are largely similar, but does differ slightly from the previous model. As we can observe in table 5, the coefficients are lower in the probit models compared to the logits model, but the direction and statistical significance of the coefficients remain. The AIC score is close to identical; only a few decimals separate the logits and probit models. A lower AIC would indicate that the logit model might better fit the data and I will still employ the logits models as the main models due to the largely same findings and a more intuitive interpretation.

Table 6: Logistic regression with probits - Switching from Labour 2017 to Conservative 2019

	Dependent variable:			
	LabToCon			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Class	0.295***	0.287***	0.350***	0.256**
	(0.100)	(0.106)	(0.118)	(0.122)
Brexit as MII		0.661***	0.645***	0.715***
		(0.081)	(0.089)	(0.091)
Higher education			−0.414***	−0.268***
			(0.094)	(0.098)
Age				0.024***
				(0.003)
Constant	−0.417***	−0.739***	−0.648***	−2.053***
	(0.091)	(0.105)	(0.112)	(0.237)
Observations	1,095	1,020	862	862
Log Likelihood	-743.871	-659.989	-546.394	-521.972
Akaike Inf. Crit.	1,491.742	1,325.969	1,100.788	1,053.941

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

6 Discussion

This chapter will discuss the results more in depth, reviewing whether or not the hypotheses were confirmed and analyse them in light of the theory. After this, I will explore the limitations of the analysis and the thesis.

6.1 Findings in relation to theory

In regards to the main theoretical perspective, the contribution from Spies (2013), how does the analysis of this thesis compare?

When exploring the results of the models in the logistic regression in table 4, the Labour voters in 2017 GE, which deflected to the Tories in 2019, were more likely to place Brexit as their most important issue. This is in line with the expectation outlined in H1; where in this case Brexit represents a GAL-TAN issue and MII represent high salience. This would indicate that high issue salience is a factor in explaining party choice for voters. This, this hypothesis was confirmed. This would be in line with the findings of Spies at well. It could also be argued that combined with the high salience of this GAL-TAN issue, which weakens the incentives for voters to base their vote on the more traditional economic dimension, the issue ownership largely belonged to the Conservative party and Boris Johnson. As Stubager (2018) discussed, parties perceived competence by voters in handling a given issue and delivering a desired output is important. If Labour had a more firm stance or larger ownership over the issue, the high issue salience could potentially work in their favour in terms of a higher numbers of voters.

The working class Labour voters were more likely than middle class voters to switch to the Conservatives in 2019. The coefficient is statistically significant, but this correlation was weaker when comparing to Brexit as MII. This is in line the expectations outlined in H2; where it was expected that working class voters would be more likely than non-working class voters to change their between the two elections. This is also in line with the findings of Spies. Higher education can be linked to social class and therefore this variable could potentially be seen in relation to class. As this is is a statistically significant coefficient, the effects of class might be partly observed trough the educational level of the respondents.

As for age, the effects on the party choice in 2019 in present, and in line with the findings in the

literature. Younger voters tend to hold more liberal values, while older voters tend to be more conservative. The older the respondent is, the more likely the respondent is to change their vote from Labour to Conservative.

6.2 Limitations

The question of to best how to measure MII is not agreed upon. Johns (2010) believes that the question rather measures what voters *perceive* to be the MII on the national political agenda, and does not very accurately measure the personal salience an issue has for the voters when casting their ballot. This thesis has employed MII as a measure of issue salience, however another approach could also be to measure issue salience through the coverage media provides on different issues. This is done by *e.g.* Epstein and Segal (2000). This could have provided a comparison of how different measures would affect party choice in the 2019 election. However, the data employed did not include any variables necessary to construct such a measure.

Class as a variable is as previously discussed. I chose to create a dichotomous variable which measured whether or not a voter were working class. Based on the results of the logistic regression, there is an effect of class on party choice. However, due to the operationalisation of the variable, it is perhaps the effect of traditional class voting. Only employing occupational status might not give a nuanced view of of modern class voting. An ordinal variable with more nuanced categories of employment would also be suited to capture the the modern class effect on party choice, perhaps combined with respondents income. Another approach to best operationalise class could have been to included some measures of economic, social and cultural capital, as was done in the previously mentioned BBC's Class Survey from 2011. However, I still believe the operationalisation and use of the variable in the logistic regression is relevant and provides a measure which enables us to analyse the party choice of the working class.

The focus of this thesis has been the UK, more specifically the Northern parts of England and Labour voters in these constituencies.The results from the analysis and the thesis itself must be viewed in light of this specific case. The political issue, region and voter demographic is perhaps not directly comparable to other European countries and perhaps even other regions in the UK. This must be recognised when attempting to generalise the result to other cases.

6.3 Further research

With this in mind, I still believe the findings of this thesis and the contribution from Spies can be relevant in other cases as well. Especially the relation between high issue salience of GAL-TAN issues and increased support of PRRPs. GAL-TAN issues could be expected to increase in salience with a corresponding the traditional left-right in many European countries. European integration, immigration and environment are issues already present in European politics and how PRRPs will navigate within political context in the future would be interesting to further pursue. In addition, how will the social democratic parties of Europe be able to compete with PRRPs to capture their former core electorate in the future?

As for the political situation the Red Wall; will Labour regain their lost constituencies or will the Conservative Party further increase their share of votes in this region in the future? Krosnick (1990) discussed in the literature review how salience is thought to be deeply embedded in each voter and rather immune to change. However, Brexit as an political issue might not possess the same high salience in the future as in 2019 as the country has formally withdraw from the EU. When the "dust settles", other issues than Brexit might have higher salience for voters in this region. But Brexit remains high on the political agenda, and other issues have already spawned in the wake of the UK withdrawal, such as the UK-Northern Ireland customs border, battle over fishing right in the English channel and strained supply chain of goods countrywide.

If Brexit remains high in salience, another interesting perspective could also be pursued in terms of issue ownership. The Tories largely has the issue ownership over Brexit, and as this thesis discussed, it help them to gain constituencies in the Red Wall. If the party continues to be associated with Brexit, the potential challenges it spawns and the party's ability to handle them , the negative connotations might affect their share of votes. Voters in the Red Wall might come back to Labour if the Conservatives do not deliver on issues that matter in this region.

PRRP parties might also challenge the Conservative party on GAL-TAN issues. As previously discussed, UKIP managed to secure 12.6% in the 2015 general election. Higher salience on new issues on this dimension could see The former Brexit Party (Now the Reform Party) gaining voters from the Tories. Similar to what M. J. Goodwin and Dennison (2018, p. 24) pointed out, the Conservative could potentially adopt more radical right policies to block the growth of the Reform Party, which

can indirectly push the policies towards the TAN side of the dimension and allow the Reform Party to set the agenda. How far the Tories, as the ruling party, could hold this PRRP in check and how far they can go in terms of adopting policy? This could also be interesting scenario to explore further.

The long term trend in the Red Wall constituencies can be difficult to stagger for Labour, although in the 2017 GE, the party managed to mobilise voters. The 2019 GE would represent when the long trend manifested itself and became visible for the electorate. How can Labour regain these constituencies? If issues on the economic left-right dimension increase in salience, the party might able to attract more working class voters as these voters usually are left on this dimension. However, after New Labour, the differences in economic policies between the two major parties is not as far apart as previously. In terms of the issue voting on GAL-TAN dimension, Labour appears to be in a squeeze. The working class voters are usually on the TAN-side of the dimension, and Labours liberal social values does not coincide with the voters values. The party could become more socially conservative in GAL-TAN issues to capture these voters, but this would surely lead to a backlash among the liberal, urban Labour-voters.

The next general election in the UK is scheduled to be held in 2024. Already in 2021, there might have been some indications to the future of the Red Wall. The by-election in Hartlepool 6th of May this year resulted in a win for the Conservative party - the first time another party than Labour held the constituency. From 2019, Labor loss 9% of the voters share and the Tories gained 23%. However, Labour managed to successfully defend their seat in the constituency of Batley and Spen this year, with a slim majority of 35.3% share of the votes against the Tory candidates 34.4% share of the votes. The future of the Red Wall is uncertain, but I believe that the battle over its voters will be hard fought regardless.

7 Conclusion

The fall of the Red Wall has been discussed by both the media and scholars since 2019. Labour's loss of many of its core constituencies to the Conservative party were part of a longer trend, but significant change in 2019 would point to an important factor at play to which accelerated this trend. This thesis has tried to point to the high salience of Brexit as an issue in the 2019 general election turned Labour voters in 2017 over to the Tories in 2019,as the research question is formulated;

"What can explain Labour's loss of constituencies in the Red Wall in the 2019 UK general election?"

First, the thesis presented a literature review of the left-right economic dimension with its class voting and the rise of second-dimension politics through the GAL-TAN dimension. From there, issue ownership and issue were discussed, in addition ERPs and PRRPs. Second, the main theoretical perspective from Spies was presented. From here, the main assumptions for applying his theory to the case of the Red Wall was presented; the Conservative party as a PRRP and Brexit as a GAL-TAN issue. After these assumptions were fulfilled, the hypotheses were presented. Third , the research design was discussed. The scope of the thesis, how both the dependent and independent variables were operationalised and coded. Finally, the results were presented and discussed in the subsequently chapter.

High issue salience affected the electoral outcome of the election the Red Wall through structuring voters around this issue. In compliance with Spies, when an issue on the GAL-TAN dimension has a high salience and how causes the voters to cast their votes based on this dimension rather than the traditional left-right economic dimension. The Conservative Party had issue ownership over Brexit and a more clear policy on the matter compared to Labour, making voters choosing the former over the latter. The effects of class is also present. Working class voters were more likely to change their vote from Labour to Conservative in 2019 compared to non-working class voters.

8 Bibliography

References

Abou-Chadi, T., Green-Pedersen, C., & Mortensen, P. B. (2020). Parties' policy adjustments in response to changes in issue saliency. *West European Politics*, *43*(4), 749–771. https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2019.1609296

Baker, C., Uberoi, E., Cracknell, R., Allen, G., Roberts, N., Barton, C., & Watson, C. (2020). General Election 2019: Full results and analysis. Retrieved May 4, 2021, from https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-8749/

Bakker, R., Brigevich, A., & Smith, W. (2017). Unpacking the social (GAL/TAN) dimension of party politics: Euroscepticism and party positioning on Europe's "other".

Bakker, R., de Vries, C., Edwards, E., Hooghe, L., Jolly, S., Marks, G., Polk, J., Rovny, J., Steenbergen, M., & Vachudova, M. A. (2015). Measuring party positions in Europe: The Chapel Hill expert survey trend file, 1999–2010. *Party Politics*, *21*(1), 143–152. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068812462931

Bale, T. (2021). Policy, office, votes – and integrity. The British Conservative Party, Brexit, and immigration. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 1–20. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2020.1853909

Banda, K. K. (2016). Issue Ownership, Issue Positions, and Candidate Assessment. *Political Communication*, *33*(4), 651–666. https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2016.1192569

Bartle, J., & Laycock, S. (2012). Telling more than they can know? Does the most important issue really reveal what is most important to voters? *Electoral Studies*, *31*(4), 679–688. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2012.07.005

Bate, A., Baker, C., Uberoi, E., Audickas, L., Dempsey, N., Hawkins, O., Cracknell, R., McInnes, R., Rutherford, T., & Apostolova, V. (2019). General Election 2017: Full results and analysis. Retrieved September 10, 2021, from https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-7979/

BBC. (2015). The north/south divide in the UK - How the UK economy is changing in the 21st century - OCR - GCSE Geography Revision - OCR. Retrieved September 13, 2021, from https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zqhvmnb/revision/2

Bélanger, É., & Meguid, B. M. (2008). Issue salience, issue ownership, and issue-based vote choice. *Electoral Studies*, *27*(3), 477–491. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2008.01.001

Bellucci, P. (2006). Tracing the Cognitive and Affective Roots of "Party Competence": Italy and Britain, 2001. *Electoral Studies - ELECT STUD*, *25*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2005.06.014

Benedetto, G., Hix, S., & Mastrorocco, N. (2020). The Rise and Fall of Social Democracy, 1918–2017. *American Political Science Review*, *114*(3), 928–939. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055420000234

Bird, S., Klein, E., & Loper, E. (2009). *Natural language processing with Python* (1st ed). O'Reilly.

Boninger, D. S., Krosnick, J. A., Berent, M. K., & Fabrigar, L. R. (1995). The causes and consequences of attitude importance. *Attitude strength: Antecedents and consequences.* (pp. 159–189). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

Bornschier, S. (2010). The New Cultural Divide and the Two-Dimensional Political Space in Western Europe. *West European Politics*, *33*(3), 419–444. https://doi.org/10.1080/01402381003654387

Bötticher, A. (2017). Towards Academic Consensus Definitions of Radicalism and Extremism. *Perspectives on Terrorism*, *11*(4). Retrieved May 5, 2021, from http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/623

Braouezec, K. (2012). L'extrême droite au Royaume-Uni : Une réelle imprégnation idéologique dans l'espace politique et public au cours de la dernière décennie. *Hérodote*, *144*(1), 182. https://doi.org/10.3917/her.144.0182

Bryman, A. (2016). *Social research methods* (Fifth Edition). Oxford University Press.

Buchan, I. E., Kontopantelis, E., Sperrin, M., Chandola, T., & Doran, T. (2017). North-South disparities in English mortality1965–2015: Longitudinal population study. *J Epidemiol Community Health*, *71*(9), 928–936. https://doi.org/10.1136/jech-2017-209195

Budge, I., & Farlie, D. (1983). *Explaining and predicting elections: Issue effects and party strategies in twenty-three democracies*. Allen & Unwin.

Christophersen, K.-A. (2013). *Introduksjon til statistisk analyse* (1st ed.). Gyldendal.

Clark, T. N., & Lipset, S. M. (1991). ARE SOCIAL CLASSES DYING? *International Sociology*, *6*(4), 397–410. https://doi.org/10.1177/026858091006004002

Clarke, H. D., Goodwin, M., & Whiteley, P. (2017). *Brexit: Why Britain Voted to Leave the European Union*. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316584408

Conservatives. (2019). Conservative Manifesto 2019 — Conservatives. Retrieved May 21, 2021, from https://www.conservatives.com/our-plan

Cracknell, R., & Pilling, S. (2021). UK Election Statistics: 1918-2021: A century of elections. Retrieved November 12, 2021, from https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-7529/

Curtis, C., & McDonnell, A. (2019). *How Britain voted in the 2019 general election — YouGov* (tech. rep.). YouGov. Retrieved November 7, 2021, from https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/articles-reports/2019/12/17/how-britain-voted-2019-general-election?utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=website_article&utm_campaign=how_britain_voted_2019

Cutts, D., Goodwin, M., Heath, O., & Surridge, P. (2020). Brexit, the 2019 General Election and the Realignment of British Politics. *The Political Quarterly*, *91*(1), 7–23. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-923X.12815

Davies, S. (2020). *The Economics and Politics of Brexit: The Realignment of British Public Life.* American Institute For Economic Research.

Dennison, J. (2019). A Review of Public Issue Salience: Concepts, Determinants and Effects on Voting. *Political Studies Review*, *17*(4), 436–446. https://doi.org/10.1177/1478929918819264

Dennison, J. (2020). How Issue Salience Explains the Rise of the Populist Right in Western Europe. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, *32*(3), 397–420. https://doi.org/10.1093/ijpor/edz022

Dennison, J., & Geddes, A. (2018). Brexit and the perils of 'Europeanised' migration. *Journal of European Public Policy*, *25*(8), 1137–1153. https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2018.1467953

Downs, A. (1957). An Economic Theory of Political Action in a Democracy. *Journal of Political Economy*, *65*(2), 135–150. Retrieved May 2, 2021, from http://www.jstor.org/stable/1827369

Egan, P. J. (2013). *Partisan Priorities: How Issue Ownership Drives and Distorts American Politics.* Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107337138

Elias, A., Szöcsik, E., & Zuber, C. I. (2015). Position, selective emphasis and framing: How parties deal with a second dimension in competition. *Party Politics*, *21*(6), 839–850. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068815597572

Epstein, L., & Segal, J. A. (2000). Measuring Issue Salience. *American Journal of Political Science*, *44*(1), 66. https://doi.org/10.2307/2669293

Evans, G., & Mellon, J. (2019). Immigration, Euroscepticism, and the rise and fall of UKIP. *Party Politics*, *25*(1), 76–87. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068818816969

Evans, G., & Tilley, J. (2012). How Parties Shape Class Politics: Explaining the Decline of the Class Basis of Party Support. *British Journal of Political Science*, *42*(1), 137–161. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123411000202

Evans, G., & Tilley, J. (2017). *The new politics of class: The political exclusion of the British working class* (First Edition). Oxford University Press.

Fieldhouse, E., Green, J., Evans, G., Mellon, J., Prosser, C., Schmitt, H., & van der Eijk, C. (2019). *Electoral Shocks: The Volatile Voter in a Turbulent World*. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198800583.001.0001

Ford, R., & Goodwin, M. J. (2010). Angry White Men: Individual and Contextual Predictors of Support for the British National Party. *Political Studies*, *58*(1), 1–25. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9248.2009.00829.x

Franklin, M. N., & Mughan, A. (1978). The Decline of Class Voting in Britain: Problems of Analysis and Interpretation. *The American Political Science Review*, *72*(2), 523–534. https://doi.org/10.2307/1954108

Franzmann, S. T. (2011). Competition, contest, and cooperation: The analytic framework of the issue market. *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, *23*(3), 317–343. https://doi.org/10.1177/0951629811411747

Gallagher, M., & Mair, P. (1995). Representative Government in Modern Europe (Second Edition). Retrieved May 21, 2021, from https://nyuscholars.nyu.edu/en/publications/representative-government-in-modern-europe-second-edition

Gamble, A. (2010). New Labour and Political Change. *Parliamentary Affairs*, *63*(4), 639–652. https://doi.org/10.1093/pa/gsq031

Gerring, J. (2017). *Case study research: Principles and practices* (Second edition). Cambridge University Press.

Goodwin, M., & Milazzo, C. (2017). Taking back control? Investigating the role of immigration in the 2016 vote for Brexit. *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, *19*(3), 450–464. https://doi.org/10.1177/1369148117710799

Goodwin, M. J. (2011). *New British fascism: Rise of the British National Party*. Routledge.

Goodwin, M. J., & Dennison, J. (2018). *The Radical Right in the United Kingdom* (J. Rydgren, Ed.; Vol. 1). Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190274559.013.26

Green-Pedersen, C. (2007). The Growing Importance of Issue Competition: The Changing Nature of Party Competition in Western Europe. *Political Studies*, *55*(3), 607–628. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9248.2007.00686.x

Hlavac, M. (2018). Hlavac, Marek (2018). stargazer: Well-Formatted Regression and Summary Statistics Tables. R package version 5.2.2. https://CRAN.R-project.org/package=stargazer. https://CRAN.R-project.org/package=stargazer

Inglehart, R. (1977). *The silent revolution: Changing values and political styles among Western publics*. Princeton University Press.

IpsosMORI. (2016). Immigration is now the top issue for voters in the EU referendum. Retrieved September 8, 2021, from https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/immigration-now-top-issue-voters-eu-referendum

Ivarsflaten, E. (2005). The vulnerable populist right parties: No economic realignment fuelling their electoral success. *European Journal of Political Research*, *44*(3), 465–492. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6765.2005.00235.x

Johns, R. (2010). Measuring Issue Salience in British Elections: Competing Interpretations of "Most Important Issue". *Political Research Quarterly*, *63*(1), 143–158. https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912908325254

Kitschelt, H. (1994). *The Transformation of European Social Democracy* (1st ed.). Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511622014

Kitschelt, H. (1996). *The Radical Right in Western Europe: A Comparative Analysis*. University of Michigan Press. https://doi.org/10.3998/mpub.14501

Kitschelt, H. (2018). *Party Systems and Radical Right-Wing Parties* (J. Rydgren, Ed.; Vol. 1). Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190274559.013.9

Krosnick, J. A. (1990). Government policy and citizen passion: A study of issue publics in contemporary America. *Political Behavior*, *12*(1), 59–92. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00992332

Langsæther, P. E., Evans, G., & O'Grady, T. (2021). Explaining the Relationship Between Class Position and Political Preferences: A Long-Term Panel Analysis of Intra-Generational Class Mobility. *British Journal of Political Science*, 1–10. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123420000599

Lipset, S., & Rokkan, S. (1967). Cleavage Structures, Party Systems and Voter Alignments: An Introduction. *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross-National Perspectives.* Free Press.

Long, J. S., & Freese, J. (2014). *Regression models for categorical dependent variables using stata.* Stata Press.

Mair, P. (2007). Left–Right Orientations. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199270125.003.0011

Mair, P., & Mudde, C. (1998). The party family and its study. *Annual Review of Political Science,* *1*(1), 211–229. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.1.1.211

McCurdy, C. (2019). Election 2019: How Britain's North-South divide is changing • Resolution Foundation. Retrieved September 13, 2021, from https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/comment/election-2019-how-britains-north-south-divide-is-changing/

Miller, J. M., Krosnick, J. A., & Fabrigar, L. R. (2017). The origins of policy issue salience: Personal and national importance impact on behavioral, cognitive, and emotional issue engagement. *Political psychology: New explorations.* (pp. 125–171). Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group.

Minkenberg, M. (2003). The West European Radical Right as a Collective Actor: Modeling the Impact of Cultural and Structural Variables on Party Formation and Movement Mobilization. *Comparative European Politics,* *1*(2), 149–170. https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.cep.6110017

Mudde, C. (2004). The Populist Zeitgeist. *Government and Opposition,* *39*(4), 541–563. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1477-7053.2004.00135.x

Mudde, C. (2007). *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe.* Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511492037

Mudde, C. (2016). *Transformations of Populism in Europe and the Americas : History and Recent Tendencies.* Bloomsbury Academic. https://doi.org/10.5040/9781474225243

Nadeau, R., Blais, A., Gidengil, E., & Nevitte, N. (2001). Perceptions of party competence in the 1997 election. *Party Politics in Canada,* 413–430.

Norris, P., & Inglehart, R. (2019). *Cultural Backlash: Trump, Brexit, and Authoritarian Populism* (1st ed.). Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108595841

Oesch, D., & Rennwald, L. (2018). Electoral competition in Europe's new tripolar political space: Class voting for the left, centre-right and radical right: ELECTORAL COMPETITION IN EUROPE'S NEW TRIPOLAR POLITICAL SPACE. *European Journal of Political Research,* *57*(4), 783–807. https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.12259

of Commons, H. (2014). House of Commons - Underachievement in Education by White Working Class Children - Education Committee. Retrieved November 7, 2021, from https://publications. parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmselect/cmeduc/142/14204.htm

of Commons, H. (2019). Vote Leave 50 Million Ads.

Opperman, K. (2010). Opperman K (2010) The concept of issue salience in foreign policy analysis: Delineating the scope conditions of theoretical approaches in the field.

Parkin, F. (1967). Working-Class Conservatives: A Theory of Political Deviance. *The British Journal of Sociology*, *18*, 278–290. https://doi.org/10.2307/588640

Petrocik, J. R. (1996). Issue Ownership in Presidential Elections, with a 1980 Case Study. *American Journal of Political Science*, *40*(3), 825–850. https://doi.org/10.2307/2111797

Przeworski, A., & Sprague, J. (1988). *Paper Stones: A History of Electoral Socialism*. Univ of Chicago Pr.

Rayson, S. (2020). *The fall of the red wall: 'The Labour Party no longer represents people like us'*.

Reback, J., McKinney, W., Jbrockmendel, Van Den Bossche, J., Augspurger, T., Cloud, P., Hawkins, S., Gfyoung, Sinhrks, Roeschke, M., Klein, A., Petersen, T., Tratner, J., She, C., Ayd, W., Naveh, S., Patrick, Garcia, M., Schendel, J., ... H-Vetinari. (2021). Pandas-dev/pandas: Pandas 1.2.4. https://doi.org/10.5281/ZENODO.3509134

Rovny, J., & Edwards, E. E. (2012). Struggle over Dimensionality: Party Competition in Western and Eastern Europe. *East European Politics and Societies: and Cultures*, *26*(1), 56–74. https://doi.org/10.1177/0888325410387635

Savage, M., Devine, F., Cunningham, N., Taylor, M., Li, Y., Hjellbrekke, J., Le Roux, B., Friedman, S., & Miles, A. (2013). A New Model of Social Class? Findings from the BBC's Great British Class Survey Experiment. *Sociology*, *47*(2), 219–250. https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038513481128

Skog, O.-J. (1998). *forklare sosiale fenomener - En regresjonsbaserttilnærming*. Gyldendal Akademisk. Retrieved May 27, 2021, from https://www.haugenbok.no/forklare-sosiale-fenomener/skog-ole-jorgen/9788241709371

Somer-Topcu, Z. (2015). Everything to Everyone: The Electoral Consequences of the Broad-Appeal Strategy in Europe. *American Journal of Political Science*, *59*(4), 841–854. https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12165

Sondej, F. (2021). Fsondej/autocorrect. Retrieved May 27, 2021, from https://github.com/fsondej/autocorrect

Spies, D. (2013). Explaining working-class support for extreme right parties: A party competition approach. *Acta Politica*, *48*(3), 296–325. https://doi.org/10.1057/ap.2012.37

Steenbergen, M. R., & Scott, D. J. (2004). Contesting Europe? The salience of European integration as a party issue. In G. Marks & M. R. Steenbergen (Eds.), *European Integration and Political Conflict* (1st ed., pp. 165–192). Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511492013.010

Stubager, R. (2018). What is Issue Ownership and How Should We Measure It? *Political Behavior*, *40*(2), 345–370. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-017-9403-y

Surridge, P. (2018a). The 'cross-pressured clans' of British politics: A quarter of the electorate and their values. Retrieved September 7, 2021, from https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/cross-pressured-clans/

Surridge, P. (2018b). The fragmentation of the electoral left since 2010. *Renewal: A Journal of Social Democracy*, *26*(4), 69–78.

Thorpe, A. (2015). *A history of the British Labour Party* (4th edition). Palgrave Macmillan.

Van Rossum, G., & Drake, F. L. (2010). *The Python language reference* (Release 3.0.1 [Repr.]). Python Software Foundation.

Weaver, D. (1991). ISSUE SALIENCE AND PUBLIC OPINION: ARE THERE CONSEQUENCES OF AGENDA-SETTING? *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, *3*(1), 53–68. https://doi.org/10.1093/ijpor/3.1.53

Wlezien, C. (2005). On the salience of political issues: The problem with 'most important problem'. *Electoral Studies*, *24*(4), 555–579. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2005.01.009

9 Appendix

The R-script for this thesis can be provided if requested.

MII category	Key words
Brexit	brexit, eu, europe, european
NHS	nhs, national health service, hospital, health, healthcare, care
Partisan politics	conservative, labour, tory, boris, johnson, corbyn, government, governmental, pm, prime, minister
Environment	climate, environment, environmental, warming, pollution, animal
Immigration	immigrant, immigration, foreigner, migrant, migration, xenophobia
Crime	crime, knife, safe, safety, security, violence, drug, order, security, police, border
Terrorism	terrorism, terror, terrorist
Inequality	inequality, poor, rich, poverty, homelessness, homeless, wealth, living
Austerity/spending	austerity, spending, cuts, welfare, housing, house
Economy	economy, jobs, economic, job, wage, trade, finance, employment, money, debt, unemployment, tax
General politics	democracy, crisis, parliament, population, dishonesty, politician, corrupt, corruption
Scottish matters	snp, independence, scotland, scottish, indyref2, sturgeon
Education	education, educational, university, school
The UK	unify, unity, disunity, division, uk, union, kingdom
Defense	defense, defence, military, nato
Ideology and religion	nationalism, right, capitalism, god, religion, politics, justice, fascism, islam, islamic, muslim, wing, value

Table 7: Categories for most important issues and related key words

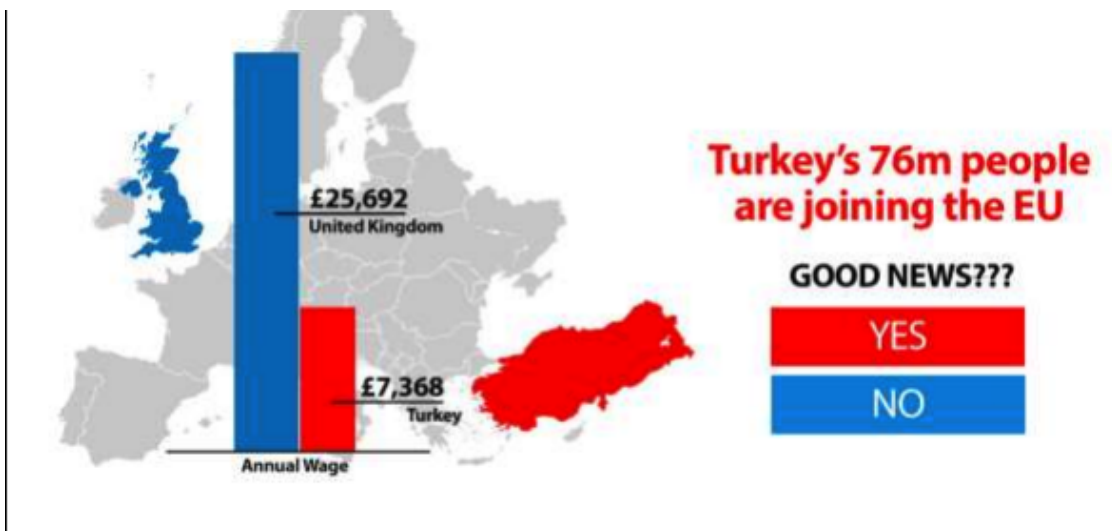| Self-employed		Employees			
Independent work logic		Technical work logic	Organizational work logic	Interpersonal service work logic	
Large employers (>9) Firm owners Salesmen	**Self-employed professionals** Lawyers Accountants	**Technical experts** Mechanical engineers Computing professionals	**Higher-grade managers and administrators** Business administrators Financial managers	**Sociocultural professionals** University teachers Journalists	Professional/ managerial
Petite bourgeoisie with employees (<9) Restaurant owners Farmers		**Technicians** Electrical technicians Safety inspectors	**Associate managers and administrators** Managers in small firms Tax officials	**Sociocultural semi-professionals** Primary school teachers Social workers	Associate professional/ managerial
Petite bourgeoisie without employees Shopkeepers Hairdressers		**Skilled crafts** Machinery mechanics Carpenters	**Skilled office** Secretaries Bank tellers	**Skilled service** Children's nurses Cooks	Generally/ vocationally
		Routine operatives Assemblers Machine operators	**Routine agriculture** Farm hands Loggers	**Routine office** Mail sorting clerks Call centre employees	**Routine service** Shop assistants Home helpers	Low/ unskilled

Marketable skills:

Solid lines indicate how classes are to be collapsed into the eight-class version.

Figure 6: Oesch Class Schema. *Source: Oesch, 2006*

The following posters are from an report from the UK House of Commons, Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee2019 on disinformation and "fake news". They are posters from the Vote-leave campaign in 2016:

Figure 7: Posters from the Vote leave campaign 2016. *Source: UK House of Commons, Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee*

5.23 MILLION MORE IMMIGRANTS ARE MOVING TO THE UK!

GOOD NEWS???

YES

NO

2991.jpg

5.23 MILLION more EU immigrants coming to the UK by 2030

It's time for us to TAKE BACK CONTROL!