

The Persistence of Confessional Political Cultures in Switzerland: Some Puzzling Empirical Evidence from Local Parties

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Abstract

A comprehensive comparative study of Swiss local parties (1990) shows that ideological positions and attitudes toward political issues still differ considerably in catholic and protestant settings. Catholic parties are more likely to define themselves as "centrist", while protestant groupings show more dispersion on the right as well as the left wing of the ideological spectrum. Among catholic parties, positions on the left-right scale and attitudes toward specific political issues are weakly associated, while in protestant settings, the coupling between ideology and concrete issues is rather strong. In protestant populations, it is found that specific occupational and class segments differ significantly by their selective preferences for either leftist or rightist parties, while in catholic settings, such differences are attenuated. Astonishingly, most of these regularities persist or get even more pronounced in communities with a highly modernized occupational structure and in groupings with a younger membership. Following Greeley (1989), It is speculated that confessional traditions survive in the "sedimented" form of implicit folks traditions and habitualizations, and that they function as "semantic codes" which find additional ways of expression in the course of societal development.

Theoretical Considerations

While it is still quite "unfashionable" to treat religious affiliation as a major explanatory variable in comparative empirical studies, there is nevertheless increasing empirical evidence that catholicism and protestantism are still breeding grounds for divergent political cultures. On the level of cross-national comparative studies, Esping-Anderson concluded that from the point of view of social welfare systems, the catholic "core European coun-

tries" (Italy, France, Germany, Belgium and Austria) show a consistently more "conservative" profile than the "liberal" Anglo-Saxon nations on the one hand and the more "socialist" Scandinavian countries on the other.

This conservative bias is manifest:

- in a high degree of *social corporatism*: defined in terms of the substantial number of occupation-specific social insurance schemes;
- in a high *"etatism"* in the sense that the welfare system privileges state employees as opposed to the private working force;
- in the principle of *subsidiarity* which demands that social welfare is based on private contributions (by employers and employees alike) more than on governmental subsidies. (Esping-Anderson 1990).

It is evident that at least the corporatist and subsidiary features can be related to the official social doctrine of the Catholic Church (stated authoritatively in the papal encyclicals "Rerum novarum" (1891) and "Quatrosimo Anno" (1931). The etatist bias is more akin to the seminal historical analysis of Guy E. Swanson (1967) who found that catholic countries tend to see the government as an authority representing society as a whole (rather than as an arena of countervailing particularistic interests) (Swanson 1967: passim). Similarly, Francis G. Castles finds considerable empirical support for his hypothesis that within the western hemisphere, the "catholic family of nations" forms a distinctive subculture with particular characteristics in the realm of social and educational policy on the one hand and in the sphere of gender roles and the labour market on the other. Most interestingly, he finds that when controlling the income per capita level, catholic nations commit a higher percentage of their GDP to social security expenditures, and that this divergence became even more pronounced between 1960 and 1990. (Castles 1994).¹

Comparing the value orientations of different national populations, Andrew Greeley found that catholics give significantly higher priority to communal norms and values (like solidarity, loyalty, obedience, patience), while protestants prefer virtues associated with individual autonomy and self reliance (like industriousness, creativity, thriftiness, personal integrity etc.) (Greeley 1989). Again, it is easy to interpret such regularities by relating them to the theological background of the two confessions: to the catholic "communalism" ("Gemeinwohlprinzip") vividly manifest in the official social doctrines (Messner 1956), and to the endemic protestant "individualism" so often made responsible for suicidal behavior (Durkheim), for capitalist striving (Max Weber) or for propensities toward extra institutional ideological and movements (Schmidtchen 1973). Like Castle, Greeley also con-

¹ Bivariate correlations show no consistent relationships because the association is hidden by the lower absolute income level of catholic countries.

cludes that such confessional divergences seem to persist in modernized societal settings, because they are not at diminishing even among younger and/or more highly educated sections of the population. Thus, he flatly contradicts popular theories of "secularization" which predict that confessional cultures are vanishing residues of a more religious past which – if at all – may only be found among older, rural or less educated segments of the population.

Finally, party systems and voting patterns are still heavily shaped by confessional cleavages in many countries despite the fact that the historical conflicts which gave rise to them are no longer salient (Lipset and Rokkan 1985; Lijphart 1979). In Germany for example, the preference of catholics for the CDU and of protestants for the SPD did not decline in the period between 1953 and 1983 (Schmitt 1984). Surprisingly, Schmitt's results show that confessional impacts have remained particularly strong among the *less religious* (!) segments of the respective confessional populations. This strongly indicates the existence of implicit confessional socialization patterns which survive even in periods of declining religious belief and practice (Schmitt 1984: 39).² Consistent with this interpretation, Detlev Pollack reports that within the population of the former GDR, similar differences in the voting behaviour of catholics and protestants can still be observed, like in the western parts of the country (Pollack 1994). If it is true that at least some elements of confessional political cultures have survived even within the very adverse climate of a communist dictatorship, it may be assumed that their chances of survival are even much better within liberal western democracies. Ronald Inglehart argues that the decline of traditional "class voting" and the change from interest-based "materialist" politics to value-based "post materialist" issues offer a favorable environment for religious factors to reappear (or at least to gain a higher *relative* salience because other -e.g. structural – cleavages have become blurred) (Inglehart 1989: 377ff.). While these developments certainly help to bring attitudinal divergences between religious and non religious population segments into sharper relief (e.g. in the abortion issue), they may also favour the survival (or even the strengthening) of interconfessional divergences if certain facilitating conditions are fulfilled.

Searching for such conditions, we can profit from various historical studies which consistently show that the genesis of confessional culture is not a deterministic effect of confessional belief patterns or religious practices, but is heavily dependent on the structural position of the confessional population segment within the respective society. Thus, it can be demonstrated that

² He explains this by saying that withdrawal from active church participation most often takes place in a rather "silent", unobtrusive fashion (not by explicit conversion): so that marginalized church members are likely to maintain "subconsciously" many confessional habits and mentalities they acquired in their earlier socialization (Schmitt 1984: 49).

when catholics are in the overwhelming majority, they lack the incentive to form a specific confessional culture. Coalescing with the highest political authorities, the Church and its affiliated forces, they often lean toward very rightist political stances and give support to nationalist or even blatantly fascist regimes (e.g. in Italy, Spain, Portugal, Austria and Croatia) (Martin 1978: 120ff.) When they are in a minority position however, they are prone to defend their religious identity by creating their own collective organizations, by integrating their believers into an encompassing catholic subculture or ("subsociety" in terms of Urs Altermatt's terms, Altermatt 1989: passim), or by aspiring to get autonomous jurisdiction at least within specific territories (Nell-Breuning 1980: 24; Martin 1978: 20). For reasons not very easy to understand, this tendency toward a segregative "closed catholicism" was far more profound and enduring in continental Europe than in the Anglo-Saxon countries, where an integrative "open catholicism" prevailed (Whyte 1981: passim).

In the time between 1945 and 1960 when "closed catholicism" reached its peak, there were reasons to assume that the contrast between the individualistic and apolitical protestant mentality and the "collectivistic" and politicized catholic culture had become more profound than in any other epoch of history (Schmitt 1984: 33). In other words: the modern liberal state had catalyzed a growing divergence between the two confessions because protestants were more prone to make use of the new liberties accruing to *individuals* (e.g. in the realm of economic action), while catholics were more inclined to exploit their rights for free *collective association*.

By integrating believers in confessional institutions and associations of various sorts, minority catholicism was able to defend and even strengthen its confessional identity within a more and more "modernist" and a religious societal environment, to integrate even their lower strata and rural populations into a homogeneous religious framework guided by the clergy and the Pope, to socialize many believers (even those of quite humble social origins) into roles of public action and responsibility; and finally, to propagate and reinforce specific social and political doctrines of the Church which advocated a "third way" between individualistic liberalism on the one hand and atheistic socialism on the other. The seminal encyclical "Rerum Novarum" (edited by Leo XIII in 1891) opened a way for catholics to fight for improved conditions of workers and to advocate strong governmental intervention in favour of the poor without defining themselves as "leftists" in classical socialist terms. In similar terms, more recent encyclicals (like "Octogesimo adveniat" by Paul VI in 1972) paved the way for catholic understanding of ecological policy by stating that mankind had a responsibility to take care of the natural order created by God. Thus, minority catholic populations are more prone to assimilate progressive stances because they oc-

cupy a relatively marginal political position and because they are often dominated by economically more successful protestant strata (Martin 1978: 121). In the case of Germany for instance, it was argued that the political guidance and social integration offered by the "Zentrumspartei" and many other confessional organizations explained why, in comparison to protestants, catholics showed much less responsiveness to Hitler and the NSDAP (Schmitt 1984: 26).³ Thus, the same subcultural structures conceived to make catholics immune against socialism and communism were also functional in preventing their drift toward totalitarian ideologies of the extreme right.

By contrast, protestantism has not produced collective political positions able to compete with bourgeois liberalism on the one hand and leftist socialism and ecologism on the other, so that these two countervailing political forces have been left free to occupy the entire political arena. On a more general level, Troeltsch has contended that protestants differ from catholics by being more disposed to adopt new political fashions and ideologies of all kinds, because they are exposed to them as lonesome individuals not integrated into a protective communal or institutional structure (Troeltsch 1928: 307ff.). Thus, protestants were most prone to firmly acknowledge the superiority of the absolute state emerging after the Middle Ages (Troeltsch 1928: 314f.); to identify with the ideas of economic individualism and political liberalism during the 18th and 19th centuries; and to adopt the ideas of political totalitarianism in the period after World War I.

In a similar vein, Schmidtchen argues that the protestants have continued to be the "political trend-setters" in very recent times, e.g. by their prominent participation in ecological, pacifist and feminist movements and their propagation of unconventional forms of political participation (Schmidtchen 1984: 17). As a consequence of a multitude of independent individualistic choices and personal developments, protestants articulate the whole spectrum of political attitudes and ideologies coexisting at any given point of time, so that dissensus and polarization prevails and intergroup conflict (e.g. between classes, races or the sexes) is considered to be inevitable.

Catholics on the other hand will show more convergence because they acknowledge a common system of values and moral norms which strongly demand that solidarity and consensus be maintained (on the social as well as on the political level) (Schmitt 1984: 30).

³ The same was evidently not true in Italy and Austria where the catholics predominantly supported fascist regimes. This accords with White's contention that in countries where catholics are too dominant (in terms of numbers and political power), they have no need to strengthen their identity by means of "defensive organizations" (White 1981).

Switzerland as a Fertile Breeding Ground for Confessional Cultures

In Switzerland, the following conditions were particularly favourable to the formation of specific confessional subcultures in the political realm:

- Initiated by Zwingli and Calvin, parts of Switzerland (particularly Zurich, Bern and Geneva) became affected by a particularly radical brand of protestant reformism which clashed violently with the orthodox catholicism of the more traditional cantons (e.g. in central Switzerland, Im Hof 1991). Thus, it is significant that religious wars lasted longer than in most other European regions (until the second "Villmergen-Krieg" of 1712 where the protestants finally prevailed).
- The foundation of the Swiss Confederation in the middle of the 19th century was heavily loaded with inter confessional tensions, because the catholics – still rather rural, but quite significant in numbers – felt dominated by the more industrialized protestant cantons. As a consequence, a secessionist war ("Sonderbundskrieg") broke out which could only be ended by granting the catholics far-reaching political and administrative autonomy within their traditional strongholds. As a consequence, a highly decentralized federalist system was instituted which gave the catholic cantons significant opportunities to preserve their catholic identity and to reinforce their confessional patterns in the realm of culture and general education (Stadler 1984; Trechsel 1995: 7).
- Given the quite equilibrated socio-economic development of different geographical regions, intranational migration between catholic and protestant settings was always quite low, so that most communities are still quite homogeneous in terms of religious confession. This residential stability has certainly facilitated the maintenance of distinct local political cultures. As the intensity of class-related conflicts was quite low in Switzerland, religious cleavages could remain more salient than in many other European countries. Thus, the party system is still shaped by confessional cleavages and voting behaviour is still highly affected by religious factors (Lijphart 1979; Kerr 1989: 150ff.).

All these factors contributed to the emergence of a highly elaborated catholic "subsociety" not only based on church-related groups and voluntary associations, but also on political parties and influential newspapers (Altermatt 1973: 496; Gruner 1977: 103ff.).

For these reasons, we expect that in Switzerland catholic and protestant regions still show rather strong differences in political culture which are – among other manifestations – reflected in the political ideologies and attitudes of local political parties.

In particular, the following empirical regularities may hold:

1: Catholic parties are more likely to define themselves as "centrist", while protestant groupings show more dispersion on the right as well as the left wing of the ideological spectrum.

Comparable to their counterparts in Germany, the Netherlands and the United States, Swiss catholics have always been in the position of a "substantial minority" which never had the chance to dominate fully the political and the economic system. As a consequence, they have never produced a very rightist (or even fascist) political orientation like in many predominantly catholic countries . They have rather tended to cultivate a kind of "centrist opposition" by distancing themselves from the ruling bourgeois elites on the one hand, without identifying with socialist parties on the other. This tendency to cluster in the middle of the scale may either result from the fact that catholics are less accustomed to think in terms of "left" and "right", or from an explicit identification with the catholic social doctrines which define a "third way" by keeping distance to conservative liberalism on the one side and to socialism and communism on the other. This centrism is particularly explicit in Pius XI encyclical "Quadrogesimo Anno" which advocates an encompassing "corporatist" social order in which all classes and occupational groupings are called upon to reconcile their antagonistic positions.

2: Among catholic parties, positions on the left-right scale and attitudes toward specific political issues are weakly associated, while in protestant settings, the coupling between ideology and concrete issues is rather strong.

In particular, it may be found that many catholic parties articulate "progressive" attitudes even when they locate themselves at the center or on the right side on the ideological scale, because such standings can be legitimated on the basis of the catholic social doctrine – without referring to the rhetoric of leftist socialism.

3: In protestant populations, it is found that specific occupational and class segments differ significantly by their selective preferences for either leftist or rightist parties, while in catholic settings, such differences are attenuated.

This accords with the higher capacity of catholic parties to integrate all kinds of social strata (e.g. workers as well as employers), because the catholic social doctrines

- define a moderate political middle position on which adherents from very different social backgrounds can agree;
- stress values of solidarity and concordance: thus encouraging antagonistic groups to congregate within the same political parties in order to reconcile their interests and opinions (Schmitt 1984: 30).

This is particularly seen in Switzerland where the Catholic Party has always acted as an integrative link between the progressive unionized workers

on the one hand and the conservative wings of farmers and employers on the other (Altermatt 1989: passim).

4: All these empirical regularities are more likely to emerge within traditional social settings, while they may be weaker (but not inexistent) within modern catholic populations.

This last hypothesis accords with the evident fact that the catholic subculture has been decaying since the early sixties, and that this erosion has been more rapid and more complete in urban and suburban settings than in less modernized (e.g. rural) communities (Whyte 1981: passim; Altermatt 1989: passim). In fact, it may be assumed that confessional differences in political culture are mainly to be seen as residual remains of a past epoch which are not even likely to be maintained (and certainly not amplified) in the future, because the socializing influences of the official church as well as the numerous voluntary associations have very much declined. In accordance with this assumption, Trechsel found that the confessional cleavage has considerably declined since 1971 within the Swiss electorate. On the other hand, it is still strong enough to compete with class-related or linguistic divisions (Trechsel 1995: 32ff.).

The Study

Local Parties as Units of Comparative Analysis

The concept of "political culture" implies the existence of stable collective values, norms and cognitive patterns governing the political behaviour of individuals, groups and organizations and transmitted by regular processes of socialization.

In general average citizens are rather poor informants of "culture" because their thinking is heavily shaped by idiosyncratic psychological factors. By studying *groups and organizations*, more justice can be done to the basic fact that culture is primarily expressed in the outcome of collective action: e.g. in the explicit results of discussions, negotiations and deliberation procedures, in formally stated decisions and action programs or at least in mutually recognized "majority opinions". *Political parties* have particularly strong links to political culture because it is their job to contribute to the aggregation and articulation of collectively shared opinions, values and goals. *Local party sections* have the additional virtue of being so numerous that rigorous multivariate methods of comparative analysis can be applied. Switzerland is outstanding by the fact that formalized part groupings are astonishingly widespread even among very tiny communities (of 500 or less inhabitants), and that they control to a high degree all major political processes on the communal level.

The Survey

The data presented in this study are based on an extensive survey including all formalized party groupings regularly active in one of the 3'022 Swiss communities existing in 1989. Based on information stemming from community officials and from the secretariats of cantonal parties, a list of about 5'800 groups fulfilling these criteria was established. In fall 1989, a questionnaire was mailed to the actual chairpersons ("presidents") of all these groupings in which they were asked to provide standardized information about the membership composition, the internal structure, external activities and political goals and preferences of their section. Within a period of four months, 2'637 usable responses had been received. On the basis of a multi-dimensional analysis (by type of party, geographic region and size of community), it was concluded that the statistical universe was mirrored in the sample without major biases, so that descriptive empirical results could safely be extrapolated to the entire Swiss local party system.

The Dependent Variables

The *general ideological standing* of the party was assessed by asking the president to locate his grouping on a scale from 1 (extreme left) to 10 (extreme right).

For assessing the standings of party sections on the three ideological dimensions, the presidents were asked to answer the following question:

"Political parties differ in the way they relate to salient political issues of our time. We would like to know which opinion prevails among the active adherents of your grouping on the following issues (majority supporting (1), majority opposed (-1), divided opinions (0)).

1. Socialist attitudes

- 1.1 Workers should get more influence in society.
- 1.2 Improving the rights of tenants is a high political priority.
- 1.3 The general tax burden should be lowered. (-)
- 1.4 There should be less governmental intervention in society. (-)
- 1.5 Governmental spending for social welfare should be increased.(+)
- 1.6 Governmental spending for cultural matters should be increased.(+)

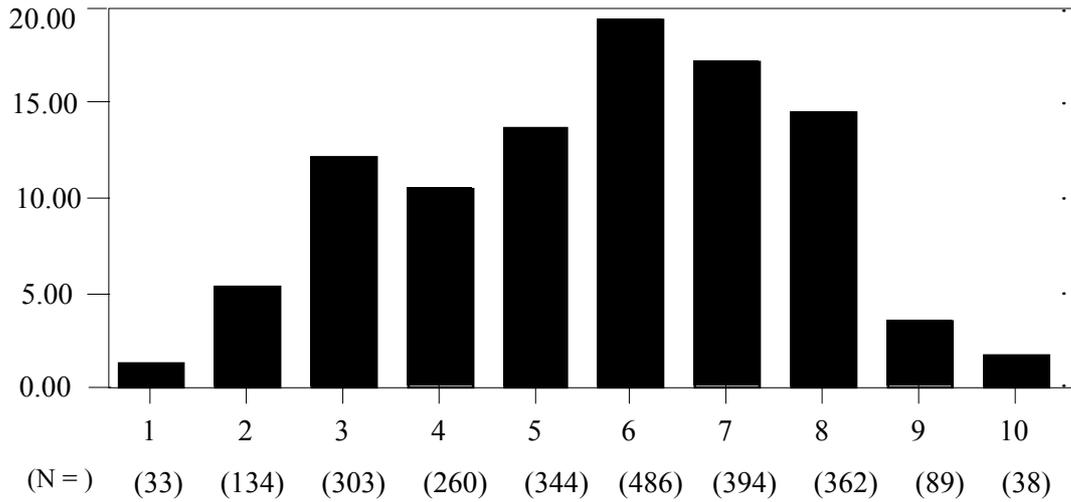
2. Ecologism

- 2.1 There should be no environmental protection measures which are harmful to further socio-economic development (+)
- 2.2 Nuclear power plants should be shut down (+)
- 2.3 More should be done for the protection of natural landscapes and historical buildings (+)

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- 2.4 Traffic speed should be reduced in residential areas (+)
 2.5 Public transportation services should be improved
 2.6 Garbage bags should be charged with a public fee (+)

Figure 1 and Table 1 show the frequency distributions of the local parties on all these variables.

Figure 1: *Frequency distribution of Swiss Local Parties on the Left-Right -Scale (1- 10)**



* Rating by their presidents.

Table 1: Issue Positions of Swiss Local Parties

Majority opinion of active members (% of sections)				
	<i>support</i>	<i>divided opinions</i>	<i>opposition</i>	(N=)
1. Socialism				
<i>1.1 More influence for workers</i>	43.6	40.8	15.6	(2386)
<i>1.2 More rights for tenants</i>	51.6	33.2	15.2	(2407)
<i>1.3 Tax burden should be lowered</i>	62.9	27.3	9.8	(2448)
<i>1.4 Less governmental intervention in society</i>	63.7	26.1	10.1	(2468)
<i>1.5 More public spending for social welfare</i>	51.9	33.1	15.0	(2480)
<i>1.6 More public spending for cultural mat- ters</i>	49.5	38.3	12.2	(2455)
2. Ecologism				
<i>2.1 Avoiding obstacles to economic growth</i>	36.2	44.6	19.2	(2426)
<i>2.2 Shut down nuclear power plants</i>	24.4	40.7	34.9	(2459)
<i>3.3 More protection of landscapes and historic buildings</i>	60.1	31.9	8.0	(2536)
<i>2.4 More traffic restrictions</i>	65.5	26.0	9.0	(2423)
<i>2.5 Better public transportation</i>	81.5	15.5	3.0	(2424)
<i>2.6 Charges for garbage bags</i>	46.7	30.0	23.3	(2373)

About 80% of all presidents were able to answer completely the whole set of questions (1'599 in German Switzerland and 417 in French- and Italian-speaking regions) As the percentage refusing self-placement on the left-right scale was particularly low (less than 3%), it may be safely concluded that concepts of "left" and "right" are widely used and understood by most active partisans in the Swiss political system.

The Independent Variables

The *confessional culture of the community* was operationalized by the percentage of total population belonging to either the Roman Catholic or the (official) Protestant Church (not counting atheists or any adherents to minor sects or non-Christian religions). These data were drawn from the official Swiss census of 1990. It was found that out of the whole universe of 3'013 Swiss communities, 891 (=29.6%) could be characterized as dominantly protestant and 1'062 (=35.2%) as dominantly catholic, because at least 70% of the inhabitants belonged to one of the two respective confessions. By implication, 1'060 communities (35.1%) had to be defined as "confessionally mixed".

Table 2: Number of local parties stemming from Swiss communities with different confessional cultures and different levels of socio-economic modernization

<i>Socio-economic level</i>	<i>Dominant confession (percentage of population)</i>		
	<i>protestant (> 70%)</i>	<i>mixed</i>	<i>catholic (> 70%)</i>
<i>traditional*</i>	222	418	407
<i>modern**</i>	233	934	421

* less than 30% of working population in modern services.

** more than 30% of working population in modern services.

The *level of socio-economic modernization* was operationalized by the percentage of the working population being employed in the "modern service sector" (including banking and insurance, telecommunication and the expansive services in the social, educational, medical and cultural sector). A threshold level of 30% was defined as dividing more "modern" from more "traditional" communities. These data were also drawn from the Swiss national census of 1990.

It was found that confessional culture and modernization were very weakly correlated, so that the analysis could be based on a quite equilibrated frequency distribution (Table 2).

Nevertheless, it has to be remarked that the percentage of (responding) parties stemming from "confessionally pure" communities is astonishingly low. This is mainly caused by the empirical regularity that confessionally homogeneous communities are frequently rather small – thus possessing only a limited number of local political parties. In other words: most of the more sizeable communities (and particularly the big cities) will be excluded from the following empirical analysis, because the main focus will be on the comparison of the two "pure types".

Finally, the *occupational composition of party membership* was measured by a survey question in which the informants were asked to indicate how many active party adherents belonged to each of 12 different occupational categories.

Empirical Results

Self-placement on the left-right scale

In accordance with the first hypothesis stated above, it is found that in catholic settings, local parties are more likely to place themselves in the centre of the left-right scale, while protestant groupings rather prefer positions on the moderate right or the moderate left (Figure 2). Concerning extremist parties, the theoretical expectations are borne out only partially, as

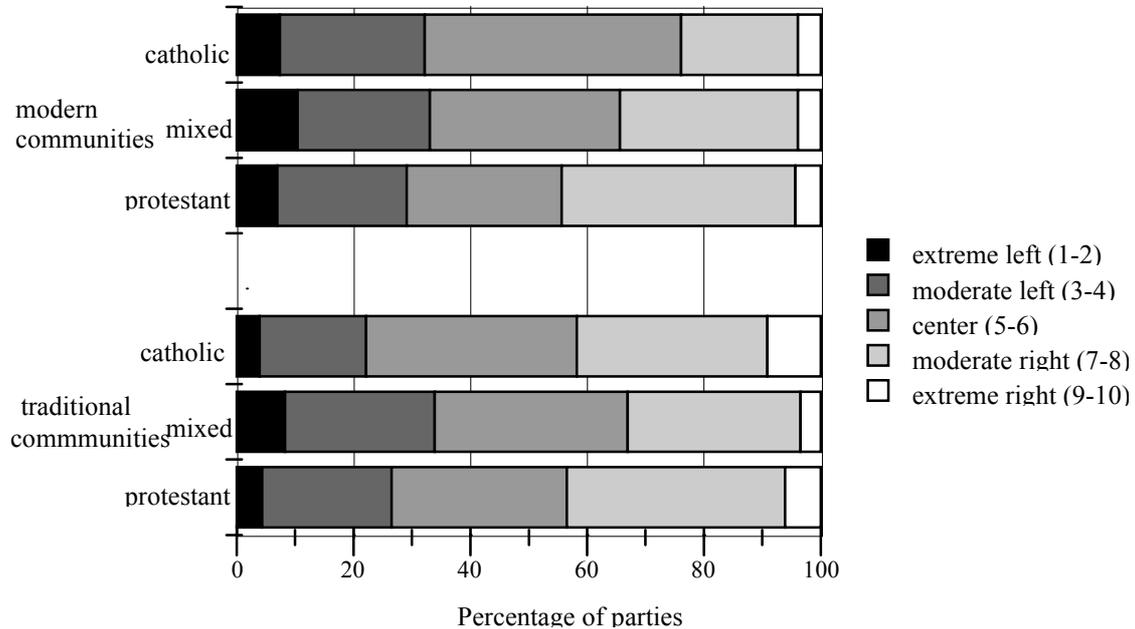
catholic communities show higher frequencies of very rightist parties in traditional settings and larger percentages of very leftist groupings in more modern communities.

Most astonishingly, confessional differences are far more pronounced in modernized communities than in traditional ones.

In protestant settings, changes induced by modernization are restricted to shifts from rightism to leftism, while the percentage of centrist groups remains about the same. In catholic communities, a similar growth of leftist parties can be observed, but in addition, the percentage of centrist groupings is much increased. As a cumulative consequence of both regularities, it can be concluded that modern catholic populations are least likely to support parties on the (moderate or extremist) right. Thus, the fourth hypothesis (asserting that confessional influence on political culture is declining) is clearly not supported, because it would predict that divergences related to religion are attenuated in highly modernized settings.

Clearly, these results are at variance with the findings of other countries like contemporary Germany, where catholics are more likely to endorse rightist positions than protestants (Lukatis und Lukatis 1989: 41).

Figure 2: Distribution of local parties on the left-right scale



Linkages between ideology and issue positions

It has been hypothesized that parties in protestant communities will show tighter "vertical" linkages between their general political ideology and their opinions on specific issue positions. Operationally, this should be manifested in higher statistical associations between their placement on the left-right scale and their attitudes towards specific socialist and ecologist demands. The results reported in Table 3 lend considerable support to this hypothesis, because in 22 out of 24 possible cases, consistent differences between the correlation coefficients are found which accord with our theoretical expectations. It is no surprise that the "old" socialist items are more affected by such confessional impacts than the new ecologist issues, because they are more ingrained in the official catholic doctrine and have been subject to more intensive propagation and socialization in the decades where catholic "subsociety" was very strong. Nevertheless, we may safely conclude that socialist as well as ecologist issues are less "ideologized" in catholic settings, in the sense of being less rigidly coupled to the traditional polar dimension of "left" vs. "right".

Table 3: Correlations between various political opinions of local parties and their self-placement on the left-right scale. (Goodman & Kruskal Tau, with issue positions as dependent variable)

	<i>traditional communities</i>			<i>modern communities</i>		
	<i>prote- stant</i>	<i>mixed</i>	<i>catho- lic</i>	<i>prote- stant</i>	<i>mixed</i>	<i>catholic</i>
1. Socialist Issues						
1.1 More influence for workers	.30**	.28**	.17**	.33**	.31**	.23**
1.2 More rights for tenants	.28**	.28**	.13**	.34**	.27**	.14**
1.3 Tax burden should be lowered	.09**	.13**	.07*	.26**	.18**	.04*
1.4 Less governmental intervention	.27**	.20**	.12**	.32**	.28**	.10**
1.5 More spending for social wel- fare	.22**	-.23**	.10**	.25**	.26**	.13**
1.6 More spending for cult. matters	.09**	-.10**	.06*	.15**	.16**	.09**
2. Ecologist Issues						
2.1 Avoiding obstacles to econ. growth	.10**	.09**	.04*	.16**	.15**	.11**
2.2 Shut down nuclear power plants	.18**	.24**	.14**	.25**	.30**	.22**
3.3 More protection of landscapes	.09**	.11**	.05**	.10**	.14**	.06*
2.4 Lower traffic speed	.09**	.11**	.05*	.16**	.16**	.09**
2.5 Better public transportation	.08**	.09**	.03	.17**	.11**	.07
2.6 Charges for garbage bags	.07**	.04*	.05	.15**	.10**	.05
(N=)	(464)	(590)	(515)	(200)	(381)	(214)

* p < .01, ** p < .001.

On the other hand, there are again no clear hints that confessional influences are vanishing in the course of societal modernization. Within both religious settings, modernizing communities seem to be affected by a growing degree of political ideologization. In catholic communities, this trend is particularly strong for socialist issues: with the effect that interconfessional differences are *attenuated*. In protestant regions, the ecologist items are more affected, so that *higher* interconfessional divergences are found within modernized communities.

In mixed communities (including all major cities), the correlations are quite similar to those found in homogeneous protestant settings. This supports the hypothesis that only catholic milieus are shaped by a distinctive confessional political culture, while protestant communities share with mixed (=confessionally neutralized) settings the characteristic that religious factors are less effective to modify secular ideological polarizations.

We speculated that these lower covariances between ideology and issue attitudes in catholic settings are mainly due to the fact that centrist and even rightist parties are more open to adopt progressive positions. Of course, the same empirical results could theoretically also be caused by a drift of leftist parties toward centrist or rightist positions. To decide between these alternative interpretations, it seems useful to inspect more closely the standings of leftist, centrist and rightist groupings toward different issues. Figures 3, 4, 5 and 6 offer interesting insights into these additional complexities.

Figure 3: "Workers should get more influence in society". Average attitudes of leftist, centrist and rightist local parties

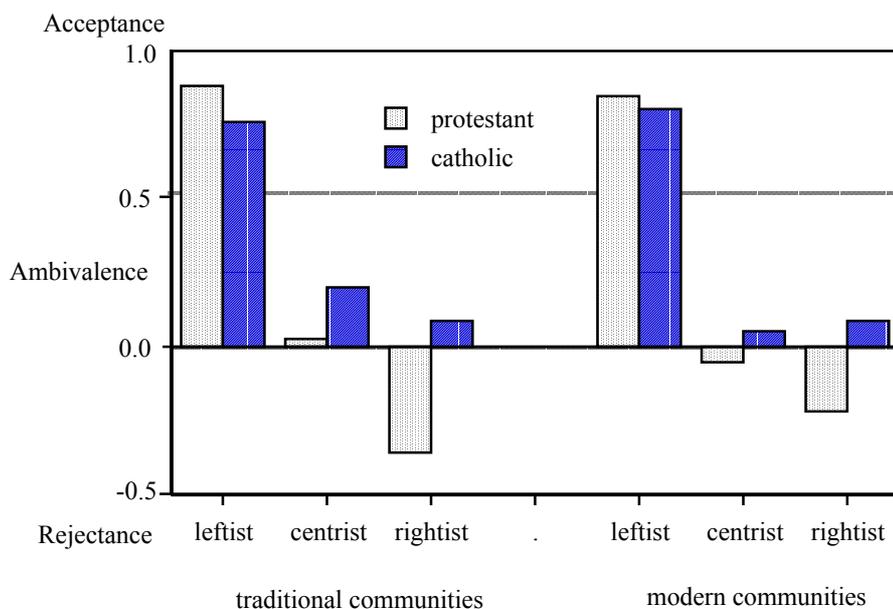


Figure 4: "Improving the rights of tenants is a high political priority". Average attitudes of leftist, centrist and rightist local parties

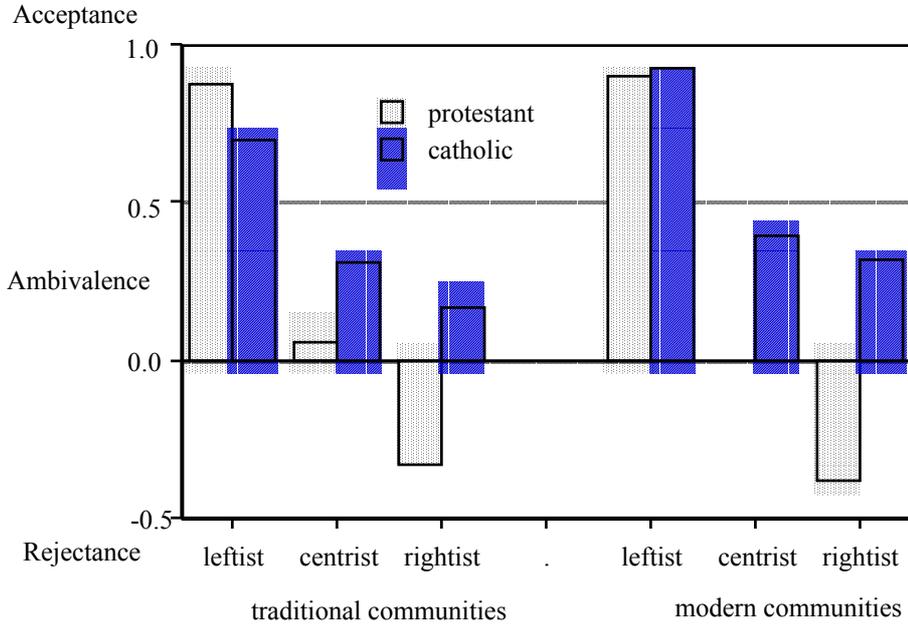


Figure 5: "Government spending for cultural purposes should be increased". Average attitudes of leftist, centrist and rightist local parties

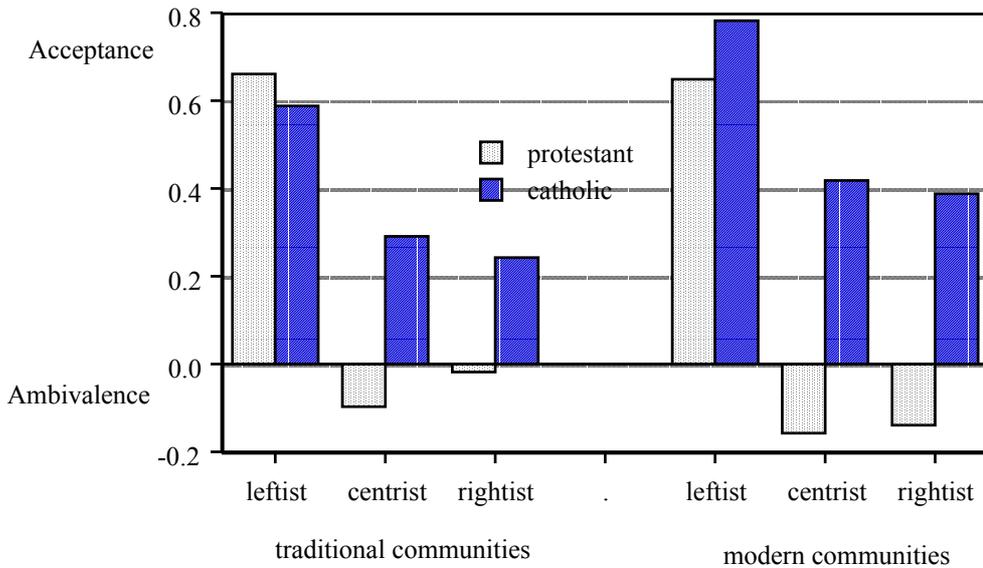
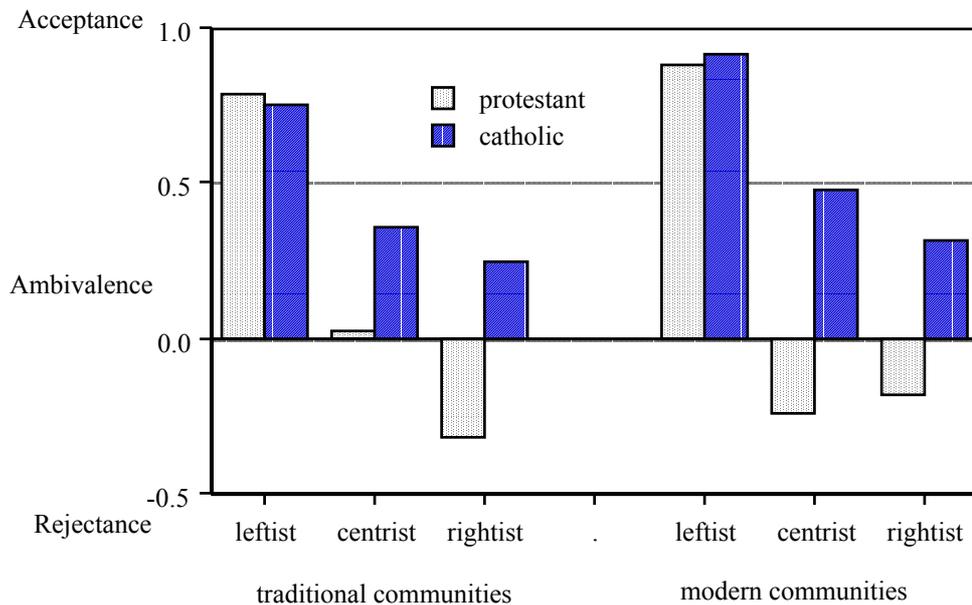


Figure 6: "Government spending for social purposes should be increased". Average attitudes of leftist, centrist and rightist local parties



With respect to all four socialist issues, we find the centrist and particularly the rightist parties to be most divergent between the two religious settings, while the differences between leftist groupings are not consistent. With the exception of "governmental spending for social purposes" (where general acceptance prevails), we find that in protestant settings, polarized pro- and con-attitudes exist between left-wing and right-wing parties, while in catholic regions, such groupings differ mainly in the *degree* of acceptance. Only with respect to the workers issue are these religious impacts more pronounced in traditional than in modernized settings. In all other cases, catholic and protestant right-wing parties diverge more in communities with a highly modernized occupational structure.

Thus, it seems that only protestant regions experience the rise of a "new right" which articulates an even more pronounced antiprogressivism than traditional conservative groupings. In catholic regions, a countervailing trend toward a "new centrism" seems to prevail. This makes right-wing groups even more open for liberal issues than in less modernized settings. In particular, catholic right-wing parties seem to become more affirmative toward tenants' rights and governmental cultural spending, while their attitudes toward workers' rights and social welfare expenses remains about the same.

An inspection of various ecologist issues leads to quite similar conclusions. In protestant regions, rightist as well as centrist parties differ considerably from leftist groupings by giving much less support to environmental preservation, to

garbage charges and to speed limits in residential areas (Figure 7,8,9). By contrast, catholic parties all over the left-right spectrum show quite affirmative attitudes towards such ecologist measures. Again, these regularities are far more pronounced in modernized than in traditional communal settings.

Figure 7: "More should be done to preserve natural landscapes and historic buildings." Average attitudes of leftist, centrist and rightist local parties

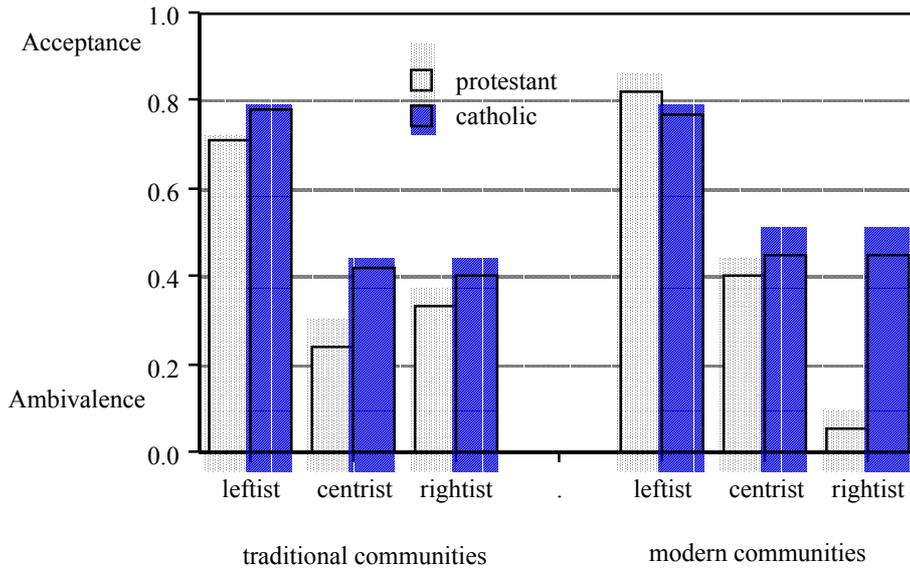


Figure 8: "Traffic speed in residential areas should be slowed down". Average attitudes of leftist, centrist and rightist local parties

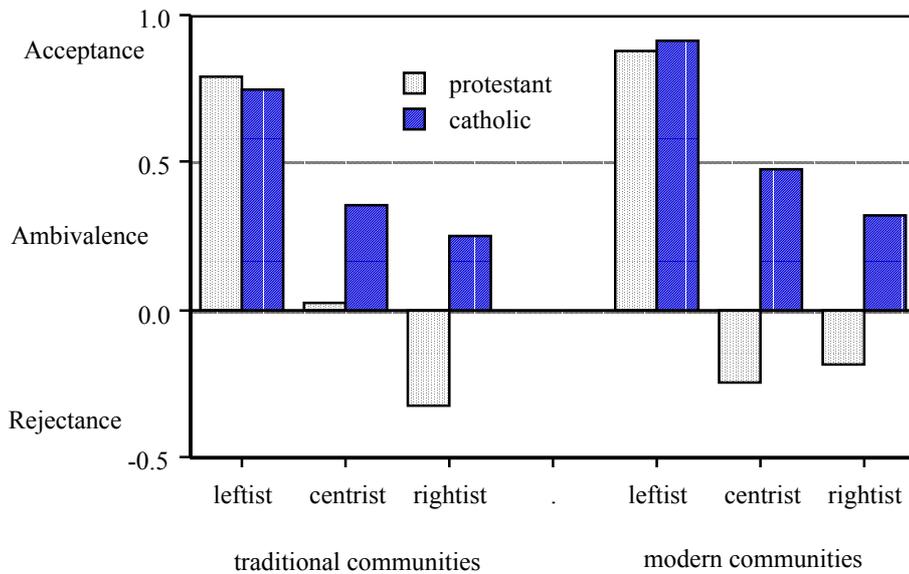
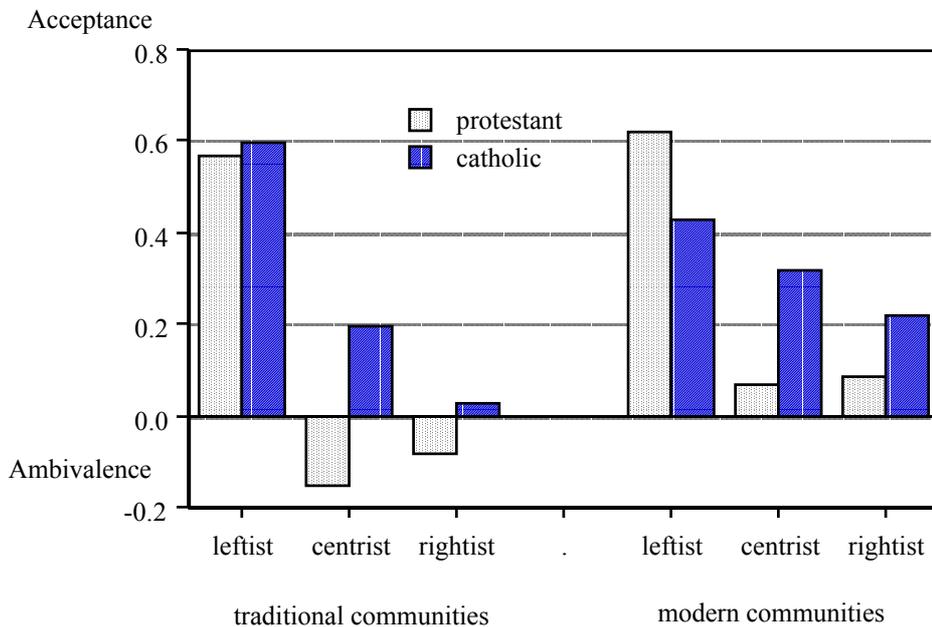


Figure 9: "There should be a fee charged on each garbage bag". Average attitudes of leftist, centrist and rightist local parties



As a consequence, we may conclude that in more modernized settings, catholic parties adopt quite homogeneous (liberal and ecologist) value orientations irrespective of their general ideological position, while in protestant regions, the diffusion of such "new values" seem to be much more restricted to left-wing parties. To the contrary, modern protestant right-wing parties seem to become even more resistant against ecologist issues in some respects: being least likely to agree with measures for environmental protection.

Table 4 summarizes all the results concerning the impact of religious confession on different party groupings and political issues. It is clearly seen that rightist parties in modern communities are most exposed to religious influences, because such groupings show the largest number of (highly significant) correlations. In traditional communities, the ecologist issues in particular are unaffected by religious factors. Thus, it may be concluded that in the course of modernization, the rise of ecologist issues offers new opportunities for confessionally-shaped value cultures to become salient in the political arena. Like in the time of classical socialism, catholicism again seems to be asserting itself as a system of values and doctrines which counteracts "egoistic economic liberalism" by appeals for communal solidarity and common efforts to preserve an encompassing God-given social (and natural) order.

Table 4: Correlations between confession and various political opinions for leftist, centrist and rightist local parties (Godman & Kruskall's Tau, with issue position as the dependent variable)

	<i>leftist</i>		<i>centrist</i>		<i>rightist</i>	
	<i>trad. comm.</i>	<i>mod. comm.</i>	<i>trad. comm.</i>	<i>mod. comm.</i>	<i>trad. comm.</i>	<i>mod. comm.</i>
1. Socialist Issues						
1.1 More influence for workers	.02	.05	.00	.05	.05**	.06**
1.2 More rights for tenants	.03	.03	.01	.03	.06**	.11**
1.3 Tax burden should be lowered	.05*	.09**	.03	.03	.02	.05
1.4 Less governmental intervention	.03	.03	.09	.06**	.11	.08**
1.5 More spending for social welfare	.01	.03	.04*	.05	.05**	.07*
1.6 More spending for cult. matters	.03	.05*	.03	.05	.02	.05
2. Ecologist Issues						
2.1 Avoiding obstacles to econ. growth	.02	.06*	.02	.04	.02	.05
2.2 Shut down nuclear power plants	.01	.09**	.14	.10	.05**	.08**
3.3 More protection of landscapes	.02	.05	.01	.02	.01	.04*
2.4 Lower traffic speed	.04	.06	.00	.03	.03	.08*
2.5 Improved public transportation	.15	.05	.07	.11	.06	.10
2.6 Charges for garbage bags	.03	.02	.01	.06	.02	.04*
(N =)	(429)	(248)	(472)	(296)	(588)	(272)

* $p < .01$, ** $p < .001$.

Of course, the findings presented do not prove beyond doubt that there is no secular decline in the political impact of catholic culture. Only diachronic panel studies would have the potential of providing convincing evidence on this point. On the other hand, it seems nevertheless evident that confessional divergences are surviving – or even becoming more pronounced – among rather modernized tertiary middle-class populations which will become even more numerous in the future. While it could still be true that there is a parallel waning of religious influences in all social strata, there are at least no hints that modernized strata are accelerating this process, or that traditional groupings would be "strongholds" of traditional confessional cleavages.

Ideological Preferences of Different Social Classes and Occupational Groups

We have hypothesized that in protestant settings, different population segments tend to choose different political parties in accordance with their class-based ideological preferences, because no consistent religious doctrine

and institutional framework is active to overcome such structural influences on personal political standings.

In catholic regions, we expect the incumbents of different status positions and occupational roles to congregate within the same party groupings, insofar as they adhere to a common value system which neutralizes class divisions (and maybe other structural cleavages as well). In operational terms, this would mean that in protestant regions, higher correlations are found between the composition of party membership and

- the party's self-placement on the left-right scale
- the party's attitude on specific political issues.

Inspecting Table 5, we see that the first of these contentions indeed holds for most, but not all, occupational segments measured in the study.

Evidently, protestant *employers* and *managerial employees* are more consistent in choosing rather rightist parties than their counterparts in catholic regions, particularly in *modernized* communities. Symmetrically, *workers and lower private employees* show a more pronounced preference for leftist groupings in protestant settings than in catholic ones – particularly in more *traditional* communities. On the other hand, no consistent confessional differences are found among school teachers and public officials.

Again, the mixed communities are much more similar to the protestant than to the catholic settings. This accords with the general assumption that protestantism doesn't give rise to a specific socio-political norms (or ideologies) different from those reigning in confessionally neutralized contexts.

Table 5: Correlations between the parties' position on the left-right scale and the occupational composition of their active membership

Percentage of member category	traditional communities			modern communities		
	<i>protestant</i>	<i>mixed</i>	<i>catholic</i>	<i>protestant</i>	<i>mixed</i>	<i>catholic</i>
<i>Farmers</i>	.31**	.32**	.33**	.29**	.26**	.12
<i>Employers</i>	.37**	.51**	.23**	.42**	.42**	.18
<i>Managerial employees</i>	.12	-.25**	.03	.25*	.31**	.17
<i>Lower employees</i>	-.15*	-.15**	-.15*	-.22*	-.23**	-.10
<i>Workers</i>	-.26**	-.09**	-.06	-.27*	-.30**	-.11
<i>Public officials</i>	-.14*	-.21**	-.17*	-.11	-.11	-.09
<i>Teachers</i>	-.26**	-.41**	-.30**	-.34**	-.34**	-.35**
(N =)	(343)	(451)	(372)	(154)	(277)	(181)

* p < .01, ** p < .001.

Figure 10 confirms that the behaviour of private employers is increasingly affected by religious cultures with advancing modernization. In protestant regions, they focus their political activity more consistently on right-wing

parties, being almost completely absent in groupings with scale-values lower than five. In catholic settings, they become less likely to choose very rightist parties, while they maintain a certain presence even in extremist groupings on the political left.

Figure 10: *Percentage of employers among the active party adherents*

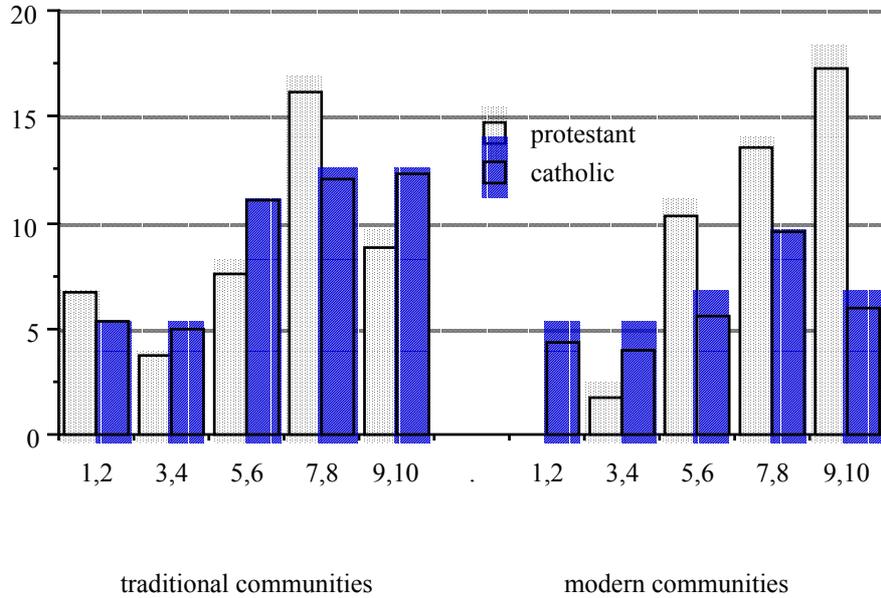
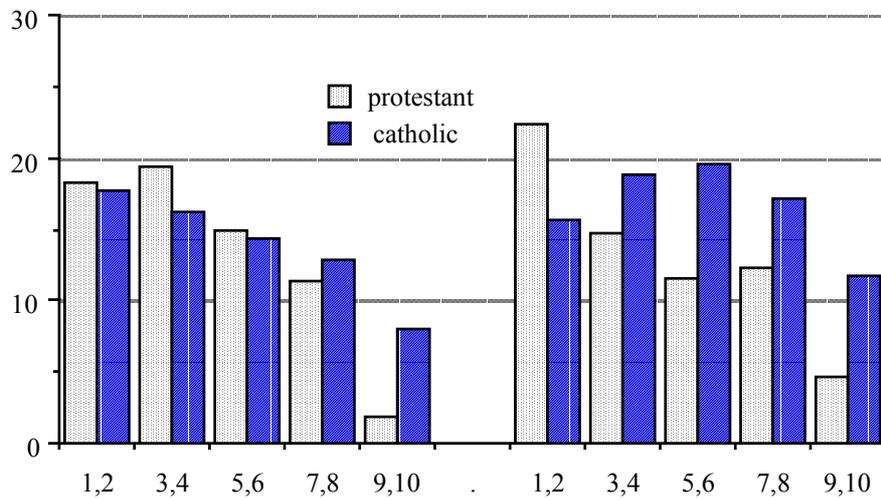


Figure 11: *Percentage of lower employees among the active party adherents*



In Figure 11, we see that similar changes are taking place on the level of lower (private) employees. In protestant regions, modernization seems to make them more likely to prefer very leftist groupings; in catholic settings, they lose their leftist leaning and adopt a more centrist position.

It may be argued that this unselective spread of catholic employers, workers and employees over the ideological spectrum only mirrors the fact that categories of "left" vs. "right" are less salient than in protestant regions, because they are less linked to specific political issue positions. In other words: catholic workers and employees may find centrist or even rightist parties more acceptable because – as has been shown above – these are more likely to support progressive issues. Empirically, this would imply that confessional impacts on the percentage of workers and employees disappear when parties with the same specific issue positions are compared.

In order to test this hypothesis, parties were characterized by two global variables:

- an index of "socialism": based on the degree to which they agreed or disagreed on the six socialist issues included in the analysis (see Table 1: top);
- an index of "ecologism": summarizing their attitudes toward the six ecological issues likewise measured in the survey (see above Table 1: bottom).

Contrary to the assumptions stated above, the results clearly show that with minor modifications, the same regularities seen on the level of the general left-right orientations are also present on the level of specific issue positions (Table 6). Compared with their protestant counterparts, catholic farmers and employees are evidently somewhat less consistent in join groupings

Table 6: *Correlations between the parties' position on six socialist issues¹ and the occupational composition of their active membership*

<i>Percentage of member category</i>	<i>traditional communities</i>			<i>modern communities</i>		
	<i>prote- stant</i>	<i>mixed</i>	<i>catholic</i>	<i>prote- stant</i>	<i>mixed</i>	<i>catholic</i>
<i>Farmers</i>	-.37**	-.35**	-.31*	-.33**	-.19*	-.23*
<i>Employers</i>	-.43**	-.56**	-.35**	-.45**	-.45**	-.39**
<i>Managerial employees</i>	-.13	-.23**	-.15*	-.22	-.34**	-.26*
<i>Lower employees</i>	.19*	.15*	.12	.20	.25**	.03
<i>Workers</i>	.24**	.19**	.16*	.24*	.25**	.07
<i>Public officials</i>	.15	.20**	.15*	.09	.08	-.02
<i>Teachers</i>	.27**	.40**	.23**	.36**	.30**	.19
<i>(N =)</i>	(282)	(398)	(295)	(131)	(256)	(141)

* $p < .01$, ** $p < .001$.

¹ the scale aggregating six issues ranges from -6 (=extreme rightism) to +6 (extreme leftism).

Table 7: Correlations between the parties' aggregated position on six ecologist issues¹ and the occupational composition of their active membership

<i>Percentage of member category</i>	<i>traditional communities</i>			<i>modern communities</i>		
	<i>prote- stant</i>	<i>mixed</i>	<i>catholic</i>	<i>prote- stant</i>	<i>mixed</i>	<i>catholic</i>
<i>Farmers</i>	-.31**	-.31**	-.26**	-.26**	-.24**	-.07*
<i>Employers</i>	-.33**	-.49**	-.24**	-.40**	-.39**	-.17**
<i>Managerial employees</i>	--.01	-.21**	-.15*	-.16	-.33**	-.20
<i>Lower employees</i>	.07	.08	.06	.10	.20**	.03
<i>Workers</i>	.21**	.07*	.07	.12	.13	.07
<i>Public officials</i>	.12	.16**	.05	.18	.04	.01
<i>Teachers</i>	.31**	.38**	.22	.38**	.34**	.28**
<i>(N =)</i>	(280)	(389)	(300)	(150)	(244)	(147)

* p < .01, ** p < .001.

¹ The scale aggregating six issues ranges from -6 (=extreme rightism) to +6 (extreme leftism).

with conservative issue positions. Symmetrically, catholic workers and lower employees keep less distance from groupings with rather conservative issue standings, while public officials again show no consistent preferences irrespective of their religious confession.

On the other hand, rather pronounced differences are now found among the school teachers who share the tendency of workers and low employees to be more consistently leftist in protestant settings than in catholic ones. Again, the protestant employers stand out as the only group which adopts more consistent political preferences in the course of modernization. Finally, practically identical relationships are found with respect to the parties' degree of ecologism (Table 7). Again, employers in modern settings seem to be most affected by differences in religious culture; but this time, they are nearly matched by the protestant school teachers who manifest a much stronger preference for "green" parties than their counterparts in catholic communities.

Conclusions

Reviewing all the reported empirical findings, the conclusion seems warranted that in the case of Swiss communities, impacts of confessional culture on political ideology and issue positions are surprisingly strong, consistent and not considerably affected by socio-economic modernization.

Evidently, the reported results collide with any crude "secularization theory" which would predict that such influences – if any – are weak, inconsistent and restricted to more traditional settings. They accord much better with the numerous empirical findings which have shown that

- national party systems remain shaped by religious factors long after the manifest confessional conflicts responsible for the genesis have vanished (Lipset and Rokkan 1985; Lijphart 1979);
- confessional impacts on political attitudes and behaviour are still visible even among individuals with very low levels of religious practice (Schmidtchen 1973 and 1984; Schmitt 1984; Pollack 1994);
- catholic and protestant countries show stable or even increasing divergences in their value orientations as well as in their political and economic systems (Greeley 1989; Castles 1994 etc.).

Our results also conform with the finding that Swiss parties (particularly the CVP and the SVP) are still astonishingly homogeneous in terms of the confessional composition of their elites, despite the fact that they aspire to draw their membership from all religious affiliations (Sciarini et. al. 42ff.)

Why are confessional political cultures surviving and even showing signs of increasing strength? While it may not be denied that these religious cultures originated in the formal church and its affiliated institutions and associations, we may assume that since their inception, they have "sedimented" to become implicit folk traditions and mental habitualizations which are transmitted and kept alive largely without the support of such institutions. In addition, we may speculate that these religious patterns constitute highly generalized dispositions for thinking, judgements and evaluations which find additional ways of expressing themselves in the course of societal development. For instance, the advent of ecologist issues offered new opportunities for catholics to advocate restraints on "unbounded economic individualism" in the name of social solidarity and the responsibility for the preservation of a Natural Order Instituted by God. Vice versa, protestant employers find additional motives for defending exactly these individualistic patterns against the ever-increasing scope of governmental intrusions.

Given the curvilinear development of "closed catholicism" during the time since 1850, it is evidently difficult to hypothesize about the actual and future changes of confessional political cultures – and even more difficult to point at the causal factor responsible for these trends. If it is generally acknowledged that after a peak in catholic subculture formation after World War II, a rather pronounced process of "secularization" has set in since the 60ies, this is a rather weak basis for concluding that this process will go on uninterruptedly in the future. Paradoxically, the 60s are seen to belong to a rather "modern" age in retrospect, while today, we are defining ourselves more as living in "postmodern times", characterized by many surprising signs of religious revitalization.

There are several reasons for assuming that confessional differences are more persistent in the realm of politics than in most other sectors of social life.

On the empirical level, this is confirmed by Schmidtchen who found that the most pronounced divergences between German catholics and German

protestants are found in the sphere of political attitudes and political behavior (Schmidtchen 1973: 210). On the basis of a more recent encompassing study, Lukatis and Lukatis even conclude that nowadays, the two confessions differ only on the level of political attitudes, while all other divergences have vanished in the course of secularization (Lukatis and Lukatis 1989).

Theoretically, such findings may be explained by the rather high leeway the political sphere offers for the display of different values and behavioral norms. In the economic sphere, Max Weber may be justified in stating that religious factors have lost importance because the "objective forces" stemming from market competition and imperative standards of productive efficiency lead to homogeneous behavioral dispositions among adherents of all creeds (Weber 1978: 20 and 203). In politics, no comparable structural and environmental restrictions are operative. Thus, there is more room for the influence of cultural *factors* to determine whether citizens cast their ballot, join parties or support various issues, and to determine what kind of goals have priority in administrative action and in policy implementation.

Given the ever increasing range of political issues and decision alternatives, we may well safely expect that there is more and more *need* to invoke such cultural values for reaching decisions which options to choose.⁴ While the authority and exclusive validity of religious traditions may well experience an irreversible decline, the disposition to rely on such standards may nevertheless even increase because they are functional in providing orientation in an ever more complex and unreliable world.

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⁴ In particular, the shift from "materialist" to "postmaterialist" politics has increased the opportunities to express values because political behaviour is no longer "objectively" determined by class interests or other structural factors.

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Die Dauerhaftigkeit konfessionsgebundener politischer Kulturen

In einer umfassenden empirischen Studie über Schweizer Lokalparteien (1990) hat sich gezeigt, dass ideologische Positionen und sachpolitische Einstellungen immer noch stark durch das konfessionelle Milieu beeinflusst sind. So pflegen sich die Parteien katholischer Gemeinden häufiger im Zentrum, protestantische Parteien häufiger an den beiden Extrempolen des Links-Rechts - Spektrums zu verorten, und in protestantischen Gemeinden sind sachpolitische Einstellungen enger mit ideologischen Positionen korreliert. Ein weiterer Unterschied besteht darin, dass berufs- und klassenbedingte ideologische und sachpolitische Divergenzen im protestantischen Raum eine höhere Ausprägung besitzen. Erstaunlicherweise treten derartige Differenzen in Parteien modernerer Gemeinden und in Gruppierungen mit jüngerer Anhängerschaft nicht schwächer, sondern eher deutlicher hervor. In Übereinstimmung mit Greeley (1989) wird vermutet, dass konfessionelle Traditionen selbst bei abnehmender Kirchenbindung und Religiosität als implizite "semantische Codes" weiterexistieren, die im Zuge der gesellschaftlichen Modernisierung und des kulturellen Wandels immer wieder neue Ausdrucksformen finden.

La persistance des cultures politiques confessionnelles en Suisse

Une vaste recherche sur les partis politiques locaux en Suisse (1990) montre que les positions idéologiques et les attitudes face aux enjeux politiques varient toujours considérablement entre les contextes catholiques et protestants. Les partis politiques catholiques se définissent comme "centristes", tandis que les partis protestants présentent une dispersion plus large à gauche et à droite de l'échiquier politique. L'association entre les positions sur l'échelle gauche-droite et les attitudes envers des questions politiques concrètes est faible chez les catholiques et forte chez les protestants. L'effet de l'occupation et de la classe sur les préférences partisanes à gauche comme à droite est prononcé pour les populations protestantes et, au contraire, faible pour les catholiques. Ces différences persistent et paraissent même plus prononcées dans des communautés modernisées et jeunes. Il sera suggéré avec Greeley (1989) que les traditions confessionnelles survivent sous la forme implicite de codes sémantiques qui trouvent de nouvelles expressions dans le changements social et la modernisation.

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