



LUND UNIVERSITY

Euroscepticism and the Rural/Urban Divide

Does the use of media bridge the divide?

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Abstract:

Euroscepticism is an old, but nevertheless still dangerous, phenomena for the European Union and for further European integration. Now more than ever, in the wake of Brexit and other crises of the 2000th century, public Euroscepticism is on the rise throughout the European Union member states. Notably, it has been determined that the rise is particularly large within rural areas. The residents of rural areas are described as feeling both fundamentally different and “left behind” from their urban counterparts, making Euroscepticism more prevalent within these rural areas. Despite there being consensus around that description, there are gaps in the general understanding of how certain aspects affect urban and rural residents’ attitude towards the European Union. One of these aspects is the role different types of use of media plays. Can the attributes of modern media, especially the added ability to interact politically online, lessen the divide in Euroscepticism between rural and urban residents of the European Union? Or does it lead to the divide deepening? By conducting a multiple regression analysis, this thesis has proven that different usage of media affects urban and rural residents’ attitude towards Euroscepticism in opposite direction. The conclusion is that the individual’s attributes and how they use media indeed has an impact on whether they are more or less Eurosceptic.

Keywords: Euroscepticism, Rural/Urban divide, Media usage, Regression Analysis, European Social Survey

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1. Introduction:

The European Union (EU) has, for the last decade, had to withstand and handle numerous crises, amongst others the Great Recession and the migration crisis of 2015.¹ However, one of the most shocking crises from the last decade is undeniably the Brexit referendum of 2016.² For the first time in history, the public of a then European Union member state, the United Kingdom, voted to leave the Union. The event of Brexit left after it an increased sense of anxiety for European leaders, are we next? Would our citizens vote to leave the European Union if the opportunity presented itself?

Brexit came to showcase a phenomenon and attitude which had become ever more prevalent, and which poses a certain danger towards the European Union and further European integration, namely **Euroscepticism**. For almost as long as there has been an European Union, and a process of further European integration, it has been accompanied by this phenomenon.³ Nowadays it is no longer viewed as a phenomenon limited to certain political parties or to small segments of our societies, but as a more widespread phenomena and attitude more or less anyone could have.⁴ The event of Brexit is a concrete example of what can happen when Eurosceptic sentiments amongst the public increases, and the rise of Euroscepticism in Europe overall can also be viewed in the increasing support amongst the European public for right-wing Eurosceptic parties throughout Europe.⁵ Indeed, Euroscepticism is not a phenomenon which is going away any time soon, and is therefore still a cloud of worry for many, especially as Brexit showed the potential most extreme consequences of what could happen when the

¹ Taggart and Szczerbiak. Putting Brexit into perspective: the effect of the Eurozone and migration crises and Brexit on Euroscepticism in European states. p. 1194-1196

² Schoene, Matthew. "European Disintegration? Euroscepticism and Europe's Rural/Urban Divide." *European Politics & Society*, vol. 20, no. 3, 2019: 348-64. p. 348-349

³ Buturoiu Euroscepticism – a today's issue with tomorrow consequences. p. 42-43

⁴ De Vries. *Euroscepticism and the Future of European Integration*. 3-4

⁵ De Vries and Edwards. "Taking Europe to Its Extremes: Extremist Parties and Public Euroscepticism." p. 7-9

public Euroscepticism becomes widespread and hardens to the point where the citizens vote to leave the European Union completely.⁶

Beyond being the cautionary tale that it is, Brexit also came to provide a good starting point for further understanding of what impacts Eurosceptic attitudes amongst the public.⁷ Brexit, amongst other aspects, firmly showcased a divide between the people living in larger cities and urban areas, which predominantly voted to stay within the European Union, and the people living in the countryside and rural areas, which predominantly voted for the United Kingdom to leave the European Union.⁸ This strongly indicated that the geographical location of the voter had a significant effect on how they decided to vote in the Brexit EU-referendum, and also an effect upon their attitude towards the European Union and further European integration as a whole. This is a trend which also have been observed across Europe.⁹ But why is there such a stark contrast between the rural and urban residents regarding Euroscepticism? In an ever-globalized world, several researchers argue that the urban areas and its urban residents have and are moving further and further ahead of its rural counterparts, economically, politically, and culturally. Urban and rural residents are also understood to be fundamentally different from one another, having different ways of life and values as well as political viewpoints. The geographical location of the European Union citizen can therefore have a direct impact on their attitude towards the European Union. In addition to that, it has also been found that the citizens geographical

⁶ Goodwin and Heath. The 2016 Referendum, Brexit and the Left Behind: An Aggregate-level Analysis of the Result. p. 324-325

⁷ Schone. European disintegration? Euroscepticism and Europe's rural/urban divide, 348-349

⁸ Neal, Gawlewicz, Heley, and Jones. Rural Brexit? The ambivalent politics of rural community, migration and dependency p. 176-177.; Johnston, Jones, Manley, and Pattie. Geographies of Brexit and its aftermath: voting in England at the 2016 referendum and the 2017 general election. p. 162-163

⁹ De Dominics, Dijkstra, and Pontarollo. THE URBAN-RURAL DIVIDE IN ANTI-EU VOTE: Social, demographic, and economic factors affecting the vote for parties opposed to European integration.

location can affect the citizens stance on other issues, which then affects their attitude towards the European Union and further European integration. ¹⁰

While geographical location was shown as a divider regarding Euroscepticism in the Brexit vote, another aspect's impact can be argued as harder to grasp, namely the media's effect, and specifically how people in urban and rural areas respectively use and interact with it. While the role of media in promoting certain viewpoints had begun to be discussed within both the wider society and within academia, its effect on the public's opinion of the European Union became a bit clearer due to Brexit. Media, specifically social media, was shown to have a predominantly polarizing effect, as it did not allow for a deeper discussion about the complexity of an exit from the European Union. This showed that the media could influence a public vote about European Union membership, and more importantly directly affect the attitudes of the citizens. ¹¹ Recent researchers have explored this further by studying directly how interacting politically online can affect the political opinions of the individual, concluding that interacting politically on online can lead to the individual becoming more Eurosceptic. However, they also conclude that simply using media to get information, in other words consuming information through media, is positively correlated with the individuals being less Eurosceptic. ¹² This relationship between how people use media, is further complicated by other researchers arguing that media, especially new media, and social media, have the capability of bringing people closer together, both to other people, politicians, and political bodies. ¹³ This should potentially lessen the prevalence of Euroscepticism, not heighten it. Media, and the individuals' usage of it, is therefore an aspect which's effect upon the individual's level of Euroscepticism is debated and could be argued to go in either

¹⁰ Schone. European disintegration? Euroscepticism and Europe's rural/urban divide. p. 349, 350-351

¹¹ Dina, and Borges. "Should We Stay or Should We Go: EU Input Legitimacy under Threat? Social Media and Brexit. p. 339-340

¹² Forunato, and Pecoraro. "Social media, Education, and Euroscepticism". p. 18-19 and p. 13-14

¹³ Flew, and Iosifidis. Populism, Globalisation and Social Media. p. 10-11

direction, both positively and negatively. It is therefore an interesting and important aspect to further explore.

How then is a citizen's attitude towards the European Union and further European integration affected by using and interacting through media, for rural and urban residents respectively? Does it contribute to a rise in Eurosceptic attitudes, or does it rather make urban and/or rural residents less Eurosceptic? That is what this thesis intends to explore. As stated, the stark contrast between urban and rural residents regarding Euroscepticism is not entirely understood and is an area of academia which would benefit from further exploration. Especially when taking media, and how the European Union citizens use it to both consume news about politics and interact politically, into account.

2. Purpose and Research Questions:

2.1 Purpose

This thesis aims to further explore predictors behind public Euroscepticism, contributing to the understanding of the phenomena by analyzing and comparing European Union residents within urban and rural areas respectively. The focus will be on the addition that this thesis brings, namely the inclusion of predictors representing different usage of media, analyzing how it affects European Union citizens' attitude towards further European integration and the European Union. In short, whether it can be concluded to make them more Eurosceptic or if it can be said to help bridge the divide between the urban and rural residents in Euroscepticism, as theorized in previous research. Beyond that, this thesis will also be able to comment on how other, already established in previous research, predictors affect urban and rural residents' respective levels of Euroscepticism. This is possible using a quantitative statistical approach, the use of split cases and the method of multiple regression analysis, where several independent variables will be included in the model.

The main contribution this thesis provides to both the sphere of academia and the wider society is therefore a deeper understanding of Euroscepticism, the predictors behind it and how it affects differently depending on where the European Union citizen lives. Furthermore, as this thesis will be looking at the European Union public overall, meaning that a rather large sample will be deployed within the analysis, the result can easily be argued to be the general trend.

2.2 Research Question and Hypotheses

With the stated purpose from the previous section, the theoretical framework as well as the previous research in mind, a research question has been developed which encompasses what this thesis aims to answer.

- *What is the effect of different media usage, in rural and urban areas respectively, on individuals' attitude towards the European Union?*

With different media usage, I am referring to media consumption of news about politics and current affairs versus political interaction through media. With individuals' attitudes towards the European Union, I am referring to whether the different media usages are impacting the rural and urban residents' respective levels of Euroscepticism.

With the research question posed above in mind, as well as the results of previous research and the theoretical framework, a hypothesis have been developed. The hypothesis for this thesis is the following:

- *Political interaction through social media will have a bigger impact than just the consumption of news about politics and current affairs through media.*

- *The effect will be positive, meaning that a respondent is less likely to be Eurosceptic, in regards to urban residents,...*
- *... and the effect will be negative in regards to rural residents.*

In other words, I hypothesize that the consumption of news about politics and current affairs through media will not have any significant effect on whether either a rural or urban resident is less or more Eurosceptic. I do however hypothesize that interaction through media by posting about something political does have an effect. I hypothesize further that the effect will be positive, meaning that a respondent becomes less Eurosceptic by interacting politically online, for urban residents and negative, meaning that a respondent becomes more Eurosceptic by interacting politically online, for rural residents. I hypothesize as such due to previous research and the theoretical framework, which is presented further in chapter 3.

2.3 Disposition:

In the following third chapter, the theoretical framework as well as key previous research which make out the basis for this thesis and its inspiration will be presented. This includes a presentation of Euroscepticism and its definition as well as key predictors of public Euroscepticism. The first of these key predictors is the rural/urban divide, which is of focal importance for this thesis purpose. Connected to this predictor, three specific forces of Euroscepticism will be presented, as they are intrinsically linked to the rural/urban divide and are therefore important control variables to include within this thesis statistical model. Lastly, the focal potential predictor, different types of media usage, is presented.

In the fourth chapter, the chosen method of regression analysis and the chosen material from the European Social Survey will be presented, critically discussed, and argued for in regard to each's advantages and limitations. The conditions for using the chosen method of regression analysis is also shortly presented. Furthermore, the sampling process and the limitations for the overall thesis will

also be discussed. This is followed by a section explaining the operationalization of each variable which is included in this thesis statistical model. Lastly, the overall analytical strategy for the analysis is laid out, linking this chapter over to the next.

The results, analysis, and discussion chapters will each build upon the other. The fifth chapter will present the results of the univariate analysis as well as the results of the regression analysis. This will be accompanied with a table presenting the result of the regression analysis for rural and urban residents respectively. This is followed by two sections summarizing and explaining the results for each group. In the following sixth chapter, the results are discussed further in relation to the previously presented previous research and the theoretical framework. The thesis ends with the seventh chapter linking back to the research question and hypotheses and summarizing the conclusions which can be drawn. The thesis is then closed out with a closing discussion, reflecting on the results of the thesis and where future research could and should go from here.

3. Previous Research and Theoretical Framework:

At the center of this thesis is the concept and phenomenon of *Eurocepticism*. Therefore, a presentation of the concept's general definition as well as the more complex different interpretations and understandings of it will be provided. Thereafter, for the stated purpose of this thesis, the concept of Eurocepticism will be specified to the definition and usage that is of relevance for this study, namely *public Eurocepticism*. This will be followed with several sections presenting and explaining different predictors of public Eurocepticism, with basis in theories and previous research. The first predictor presented will be Eurocepticism in relation to the rural/urban divide, which is one of the aspects of focus for this thesis. With the rural/urban divide presented, three different types of predictors which are of

importance in relation to the rural/urban divide will also be presented. Lastly, the role of media and different media usage in regard to both Euroscepticism and the rural/urban divide will be presented and discussed, as it will be this thesis focal addition to the understanding of public Euroscepticism and its accompanying rural/urban divide.

3.1. Euroscepticism:

The concept and term *Euroscepticism* can be traced back to roughly the mid-1980s and to journalistic articles in the British press during this time.¹⁴ The term then took further root during the 1990s in several European countries, specifically surrounding the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty. Originally at this time, the term was used to describe how political parties faced the notion of further European integration and the term was used interchangeably in for example France with the word “souverainism”, or in other words, preserving state sovereignty.¹⁵ The term hence described an opposition towards European integration within European political parties. But over time, the concept of Euroscepticism has come to include and refer to opposition towards the European Union by several different actors, and on different dimensions, depending on the context in which the term is used. Researcher Leconte explains this and notes that Euroscepticism is always characterized by some form of discontent or dislike and resistance towards the European Union and European integration.¹⁶ The concept is hence no longer limited to referring to the opposition of a political party regarding further European integration. An individual, a group, or a political party for example can all have a Eurosceptic attitude towards the European Union and European integration as a whole or take issue with certain aspects of it and be positive towards other aspects. Leconte therefore argues that the terms

¹⁴ Vasilopoulou. *Varieties of Euroscepticism: The Case of the European Extreme Right*. p. 4

¹⁵ Buturoiu. *Euroscepticism – a today’s issue with tomorrow consequences*. p. 42-43;

Vasilopoulou. *Varieties of Euroscepticism: The Case of the European Extreme Right*. p. 4-5

¹⁶ Leconte. *Understanding Euroscepticism*. p. 3–8

Euroscepticism and *Eurosceptic* should be considered more general terms which can refer to a range of levels of Euroscepticism.¹⁷

Leconte is not the only researcher who has discussed the definitions of Euroscepticism. Fellow researchers Szczerbiak and Taggart were amongst the first to further distinguish between the different degrees of Euroscepticism that Leconte hinted towards. Szczerbiak and Taggart introduced the terms of *soft* and *hard* Euroscepticism.¹⁸ According to their definition, *soft Euroscepticism* is defined by an opposition to certain aspects of the European Union, like a subset of policies or a political direction.¹⁹ For example, an individual can be opposed to further political integration and more decisions being taken at the EU-level but be for further economic integration and the Eurozone. This duality of being skeptical towards certain aspects of the European Union but still generally positive towards the European Union as a whole have for example been viewed in previous research regarding Greece and the crisis of the Eurozone, where Eurosceptic attitudes towards the economic integration was raised, but the people of Greece were still generally positive towards the European Union overall.²⁰ *Hard Euroscepticism*, on the other hand, means that there is a principled opposition towards the European Union and further European integration, both political, social and economic. Hard Euroscepticism can for example be seen in persons or parties who are fundamentally opposed to the European Union and its integration as it stands today and who might even want their country to leave the European Union as a whole if the opportunity presented itself.²¹ While Taggart and Szczerbiak primarily argued these definitions in regard to political parties, soft and hard Euroscepticism can also be observed amongst the general public.

¹⁷ Leconte. *Understanding Euroscepticism*. p. 3–8

¹⁸ Taggart, and Szczerbiak. *The Party Politics of Euroscepticism in EU Member and Candidate States*. p. 2-3

¹⁹ *Ibid.* p. 4-6

²⁰ Clements, Nanou, and Verney. 'We No Longer Love You, But We Don't Want To Leave You': The Eurozone Crisis and Popular Euroscepticism in Greece.

²¹ Taggart, and Szczerbiak. *The Party Politics of Euroscepticism in EU Member and Candidate States*. p. 7-8

For the purposes of this thesis, specifically *public Euroscepticism* is of core interest. Public Euroscepticism, which refers to Euroscepticism amongst individuals and people, have been observed since as early as the late 1990s and early 2000s.²² The previously mentioned Brexit has become the latest event which has shown what can happen when public Euroscepticism is taken to its most extremes.²³ As such, the arguably most important question regarding public Euroscepticism is what aspects impacts or even causes it. This is a part of both academia and literature which has seen a significant development during the last decade.²⁴ However, the causes of public Euroscepticism, also called the predictors, is an intensely debated part of academia, as it can be understood and measured in many different ways. The previously mentioned hard and soft Euroscepticism definitions brought up by Szczerbiak and Taggart are one such understanding.²⁵ Another way to conceptualize public Euroscepticism is by defining it as, e.g. *political Euroscepticism* or *economic Euroscepticism*.²⁶ In other words, there are different aspects which can affect an individual's attitude towards the European Union, for example, if an individual is opposed towards further economic integration by the European Union, that individual exhibits what can be categorized as economic Euroscepticism.

As underlined in this section, the concept of Euroscepticism is incredibly complex. Nevertheless, as showcased in previous paragraphs, previous researchers have theorized and explored how to explain this phenomenon, and the predictors behind it. For this thesis, public Euroscepticism will be measured on a scale, which encompasses hard to soft Euroscepticism. This will be further presented in

²² Guerra. Understanding Public Euroscepticism. p. 45-46

²³ Goodwin and Heath. The 2016 Referendum, Brexit and the Left Behind: An Aggregate-level Analysis of the Result. p. 324-325

²⁴ Buturoiu. Euroscepticism – a today's issue with tomorrow consequences. p. 42-43

²⁵ Taggart, and Szczerbiak. The Party Politics of Euroscepticism in EU Member and Candidate States. p. 4-6

²⁶ Boomgaarden, Schuck, Elenbaas, and De Vreese. Mapping EU Attitudes: Conceptual and Empirical Dimensions of Euroscepticism and EU Support. p. 243-244

the methods chapter. Furthermore, the categorization of predictors as *economic*, *political* and *cultural* will be used, as well as the grouping of the rural/urban divide and different types of media usage. In the next section of this chapter, these key predictors behind Euroscepticism for this thesis will be presented.

3.2. Predictors of Public Euroscepticism:

As stated earlier, the research field focusing on public opinion towards the European Union, also known as public Euroscepticism, has seen a remarkable development during the past decade, which have led to further understanding of what influences the public's attitude towards the European Union, and ultimately what influences the rise of Euroscepticism.²⁷ In the following sections I will present the predictors of public Euroscepticism which will be relevant for my analysis and which have been previously analyzed within the academic sphere. It is therefore important to make clear that this is not all theorized predictors of Euroscepticism that is known of, but a chosen handful which I, with basis in previous research and theory, believe will be of importance for this thesis and its purpose. Firstly, I will present the predictor of Euroscepticism which will be in focus for this thesis, namely what is referred to as the *Rural/Urban Divide*, or as it is also called, geographical location. It is this predictor to which I will link all the other predictors also presented in the following sections.

3.2.1 The Rural/Urban Divide and Euroscepticism:

Researcher Schone argues that due to rapid globalization the differences between rural areas and urban areas have become increasingly acute. In spite of this, the geographical aspect, namely where an individual has their residence, is severely undertheorized in relation to Euroscepticism according to Schone, as the focus of previous academics often have been on just the economic differences between the two rather than the full picture, which Schone argues should also include political

²⁷ Buturoiu. Euroscepticism – a today's issue with tomorrow consequences. p. 42

and cultural differences.²⁸ However, some previous studies have found that anti-EU, also known as Eurosceptic opinions, are more prevalent within rural areas than in urban areas, with the most prominent example of this being the voting pattern observed after Brexit.²⁹ Why Euroscepticism seem to be more prevalent within rural areas have been theorized about, with the most common conclusion being that the residents of rural areas are increasingly feeling left behind, both due to the increased globalization and within European integration.³⁰

The difference between rural and urban residents, in regard to Euroscepticism and the prevalence of it, have also been discussed in relation to the concept of the “cosmopolitan cities” versus “nationalistic countrysides”.³¹ Cosmopolitan cities are cities within urban areas which have a culture that puts an emphasis on values such as autonomy, freedom, egalitarianism, and mutual respect. Furthermore, cosmopolitan cities are often ethnically diverse and racially tolerant, as well as centers for both innovation and financial networks, making them generally more prosperous.³² These cosmopolitan cities and their urban residents are therefore also argued to hold more positive attitudes towards the European Union as they are more open to a global and multicultural world and also gains a lot from further European integration. The nationalistic countryside can be described as quite the opposite, as it constitutes of rural areas which might be lagging behind the more prosperous urban areas. Huijsmans et al. explains that the nationalistic countryside generally does not have as favorable attitudes towards ethnical diversity, multiculturalism, and importantly further European integration as their urban counterparts do. The growing gap between the cosmopolitan urban and the more

²⁸ Schone. European disintegration? Euroscepticism and Europe’s rural/urban divide. p. 350

²⁹ De Dominics, Djikstra, and Pontarollo. “THE URBAN-RURAL DIVIDE IN ANTI-EU VOTE: Social, demographic and economic factors affecting the vote for parties opposed to European integration”. p. 10; Huijsmans et al. Are Cities Ever More Cosmopolitan? Studying Trends in Urban-Rural Divergence of Cultural Attitudes. p. 6-7

³⁰ Schone. European disintegration? Euroscepticism and Europe’s rural/urban divide. p. 350

³¹ Huijsmans et al. Are Cities Ever More Cosmopolitan? Studying Trends in Urban-Rural Divergence of Cultural Attitudes. p. 1-2

³² Sevincer, Kitayama, and Varnum. Cosmopolitan Cities: The Frontier in the 21st Century? p. 1-2

nationalistic urban can be especially viewed regarding their differing political views, as more conservative and nationalistic parties have more success in the rural areas and vice versa in the urban cities where they did not receive the same support.³³ This further points to the acute differences between urban and rural residents, both in living style, composition, and their political views because of it. Not only are they fundamentally different from each other, but that also affects how they then view and vote on political issues. This includes their view of the European Union, its policies, and further European integration.

It is therefore not just a sense of being left behind for the rural residents, it is also a notion of viewing themselves as different from their urban counterparts. Schone further note this, stating that rural residents and urban residents view themselves as fundamentally culturally different from each other. Moreover, Schone argues that rural and urban residents view the world differently, but also that there is a new sense of inequality rising, which goes beyond just economic inequality and also includes political and cultural dimensions. As mentioned previously, Schone warns that this risks the rise of a dual European society, where urban areas are for and working towards further integration, while the rural areas continue to become disillusioned and more Eurosceptic.³⁴

Whether the individual is located and living in a rural or urban area has hence been argued to be a predictor of Euroscepticism in itself, however, previous researcher Schone further argues that whether the individual is living in a rural or urban area also shows itself through other forces of Euroscepticism, namely political, economic and cultural. He specifically underlines:

³³ Huijsmans et al. Are Cities Ever More Cosmopolitan? Studying Trends in Urban-Rural Divergence of Cultural Attitudes. p. 1-3

³⁴ Schone. European disintegration? Euroscepticism and Europe's rural/urban divide. p. 350-351

“...it is my argument that the forces of economic, political and cultural Euroscepticism express themselves differently depending on one’s geographic status.”³⁵”

In other words, the effect of one’s geographical location upon one’s attitude towards the European Union can be seen through other forces of Euroscepticism. This is based in the understanding that urban and rural areas are fundamentally different from one another and as such also view certain aspects differently, leading to the assumption that geographical location directly affects other forces of Euroscepticism. In the following sections, I will present economic, political, and cultural Euroscepticism forces which can lead to further divergent levels of Euroscepticism in both urban and rural areas.

3.2.1.1 Economic Euroscepticism:

Economic Euroscepticism primarily has its roots in a cost-benefit analysis of the European Union membership, meaning that if the benefits of further European integration and deepening cooperation does not outweigh the monetary cost of being a member in the union for the individual, they are more likely to be Eurosceptic.³⁶ Certain economic integration efforts, such as the common currency block the Eurozone and a shared monetary policy have had mixed outcomes in regard to affecting Euroscepticism. Researcher Schone describes this, underlining that while it has helped European countries who were lagging behind economically to catch up, one singular monetary policy can’t satisfy all the diverse national economies within the European Union simultaneously.³⁷ The crises following this was something that prompted serious backlash from all across Europe, as particularly the economic crises of 2008 came to affect several countries’ economies for years.³⁸ Previous research found this to be true for example in the country of Greece, where the economic crisis with the Eurozone

³⁵ Schone. European disintegration? Euroscepticism and Europe’s rural/urban divide. p. 353

³⁶ Bunciu. A Taxonomy Of Euroscepticism. p. 49-50

³⁷ Schone. European disintegration? Euroscepticism and Europe’s rural/urban divide. p. 351

³⁸ Vassallo and Ding. Explaining Protest in the Aftermath of the Great Recession in Europe: The Relevance of Different Economic Indicators. p. 120-121

impacted the public opinion of the European Union, meaning that a spike in public Euroscepticism towards further integration could be observed as a consequence of the economic crisis.³⁹ Indeed, when national economies enter a crisis where citizens suddenly may struggle economically, for example to find jobs and pay their bills, and the economic stagnation can be connected to European integration, higher levels of Euroscepticism should be expected to be seen.⁴⁰ However, even if the individual was satisfied with the state of the national economy, it does not necessarily mean that they are going to be less Eurosceptic. Researcher De Vries found that individuals who were more satisfied with their national government were expected to actually be more Eurosceptic. DeVries argues that citizens of European member states do not necessarily attribute economic success to the European Union and the European integration it has brought, but rather expects it to be a product of the national governments work.⁴¹ To summarize, the individual can become more Eurosceptic both if they are unsatisfied and satisfied with the national economy according to previous research. DeVries however adds to her argumentation that the individual does not need to attribute the failures of the national economy to the European Union either, as the previous research in Greece presented, which means that dissatisfaction with the national economy does not automatically mean a rise in Euroscepticism either.⁴²

Another economic aspect, which a Eurosceptic attitude have been linked to, is the level of income the individual has. Researchers Boomgarden et al. argue that a citizen who has a higher income is less likely to be Eurosceptic, while a citizen with a lower income is more likely to be Eurosceptic.⁴³ This is further linked to the idea of the “winners and losers of globalization”, a concept brought forward

³⁹ Clements, Nanou, and Verney. ‘We No Longer Love You, But We Don’t Want To Leave You’: The Eurozone Crisis and Popular Euroscepticism in Greece. p. 247

⁴⁰ Schone. European disintegration? Euroscepticism and Europe’s rural/urban divide. p. 351

⁴¹ De Vries. *Euroscepticism and the Future of European integration*. p. 95-97

⁴² Ibid. p. 97-98

⁴³ Boomgaarden, Schuck, Elenbaas, and De Vreese. Mapping EU Attitudes: Conceptual and Empirical Dimensions of Euroscepticism and EU Support. p. 251

by researchers Kreisi et al. They argue that people with lower income, as well as lower education level and generally being older, are the losers of globalization who often belong to more traditional working sectors, except from the more modern, globalized working sectors who stand to gain from the globalized world, and also further European integration.⁴⁴ The feeling of being left behind and not gaining economically from the European Union and further European integration, while other individuals do, is hence linked to a higher level of Euroscepticism.

Regarding residents in rural and urban areas respectively, it is important to note that economic crises and austerity policies do not affect equally, on a country level nor on the individual level.⁴⁵ As dissatisfaction with the economy grows, rural areas and areas with less population have proven to be the most vulnerable regarding austerity policies and spending cuts during crises.⁴⁶ Meanwhile, urban areas and cities are moving further ahead. The feeling of losing out and being left behind while others are gaining economically can hence be argued to be a potential predictor of a rise in Euroscepticism amongst rural residents. In sum, economic conditions can produce very different views on further European integration and the European Union in urban and rural areas respectively. It can therefore also be concluded that one should expect there to be some notable differences regarding economic Euroscepticism between rural and urban residents.

3.2.1.2 Political Euroscepticism:

The European Union has undeniably increased its power throughout its history, increasing its policy-making power in numerous fields as well as expanding its domain, which have brought about the risk of creating a mismatch in power between the European Union and its supranational institutions, and the national

⁴⁴ Kriesi, Grande, Lachat, Dolezal, Bornschieer, and Frey. Globalization and the transformation of the national political space: Six European countries compared. p. 922-925

⁴⁵ Schone. European disintegration? Euroscepticism and Europe's rural/urban divide, 351

⁴⁶ Murphy and Scott. Household Vulnerability in Rural Areas: Results of an Index Applied during a Housing Crash, Economic Crisis and under Austerity Conditions. p. 76; Schone. European disintegration? Euroscepticism and Europe's rural/urban divide. p. 351

and local priorities.⁴⁷ The resistance to this process then is what is called *political Euroscepticism*.⁴⁸

Political Euroscepticism has its roots in several different aspects. Firstly, researchers Krouwel and Abts argue that Euroscepticism has some roots in general *political discontent*. Krouwel and Abts underlines that political Euroscepticism can emerge from both dissatisfaction with certain political targets, e.g., national government or European institutions, or certain aspects of further European integration.⁴⁹ Furthermore, they argue that distrust for the European Union and further European integration, or a higher level of Euroscepticism, is brought onward when the individual feels frequently disappointed or betrayed. If this is not checked, the individual risks becoming alienated and ceases to pay attention or participate in democratic institutions, such as voting, which only fuels the Euroscepticism further, as the individual becomes more and more alienated.⁵⁰ Schone adds to this, noting that an individual who is less satisfied with their national government might consider more radically different arrangements, such as Brexit in the case of the United Kingdom.⁵¹ However, as with satisfaction with the national economy, which was discussed in the previous section, researcher DeVries similarly argues that the people may not necessarily attribute the successes or failures of the national government to the European Union nor further European integration. Credit for a successful policy for example is rather given to the more proximate forces, namely the national government, regardless if the policy has origins or ties to the European Union. DeVries therefore concludes

⁴⁷ Lubbers and Scheepers. Political versus Instrumental Euro-Scepticism - Mapping Scepticism in European Countries and Regions. p. 225-226; European disintegration? Euroscepticism and Europe's rural/urban divide, p. 351-352

⁴⁸ Lubbers and Scheepers. Divergent Trends of Euroscepticism in Countries and Regions of the European Union. p. 787-788

⁴⁹ Krouwel and Abts. Varieties of Euroscepticism and Populist Mobilization: Transforming Attitudes from Mild Euroscepticism to Harsh Eurocynicism. p. 252-253

⁵⁰ Ibid. p. 259-260

⁵¹ Schone. European disintegration? Euroscepticism and Europe's rural/urban divide. p. 354

that an individual can be more Eurosceptic even if they are generally satisfied with their national government because of this.⁵²

Previous researchers have moreover also been able to connect political Euroscepticism to the rise of right-wing parties within the European Union.⁵³ It has continuously been found that Euroscepticism is particularly frequent within right-wing parties and its voters across Europe.⁵⁴ Based on this, it is theorized that right wing Eurosceptic parties mobilize feelings of national identity and the threat towards it as a consequence of further European integration, contributing to a rise in public Euroscepticism.⁵⁵ Right wing Eurosceptic parties are also linked ever closer to *populism*, the division of “the people” and “the elite” with previous researchers arguing that right wing Euroscepticism and radical right populism share many similarities, amongst them their adherence to nationalistic rhetoric.⁵⁶ Indeed, previous research has been able to determine that one should expect to find individuals with a higher level of Euroscepticism leaning more towards the right wing politics on the left-to-right political scale.

In conclusion, an individual who expresses political Euroscepticism can hence be said to be opposed to the overall EU-level and further joint-decision making on that level regarding one or more policies, as this also means an induced loss of national sovereignty as a result.⁵⁷ Furthermore, previous have also found that an individual who is already on the fence about the European Union's power in regards to one issue is also more likely to display Euroscepticism towards all European Union issues. The political Eurosceptic can therefore be described as

⁵² De Vries. *Euroscepticism and the Future of European integration*. p. 95-98

⁵³ Schone. European disintegration? Euroscepticism and Europe's rural/urban divide. p. 352

⁵⁴ Gifford. The Rise of Post-Imperial Populism: The Case of Right-Wing Euroscepticism in Britain. p. 852; Sørensen. Right-Wing Euroscepticism and Populism: Investigating the Concept of 'the People.'. p. 163-164

⁵⁵ De Vries and Edwards. Taking Europe to Its Extremes: Extremist Parties and Public Euroscepticism. p. 7-9

⁵⁶ Sørensen. Right-Wing Euroscepticism and Populism: Investigating the Concept of 'the People.'. p. 163-164

⁵⁷ Leconte. The EU Fundamental Rights Policy as a Source of Euroscepticism. p. 85

driven by a want for less supranational control by the European Union and its institutions.⁵⁸

Political Euroscepticism regarding the rural/urban divide manifests in different ways. Schone ties political Euroscepticism in rural areas back to the feeling of losing out and being isolated from the more prosperous cosmopolitan urban areas and cities. He underlines that the rural resident, due to the feeling of being left behind, will vote for like-minded regional representatives. In other words, generally more Eurosceptic rural residents would vote for similarly Eurosceptic representatives.⁵⁹ Previous research has found there to be a disproportionate rise of Eurosceptic right-winged parties within the European countryside, supporting this argument.⁶⁰ Moreover, in rural areas, the European Union may be viewed as a technocratic and elite project designed specifically for the benefit of the more cosmopolitan class of Europe, the people living in the urban areas.⁶¹

3.2.1.3 Cultural Euroscepticism:

While economic Euroscepticism refers to opposition against economic aspects of the European Union, and political Euroscepticism refers to opposition against political aspects, *cultural Euroscepticism* refers to the opposition of certain social aspects. Schone notes that cultural Euroscepticism may particularly go hand-in-hand with political Euroscepticism, as the disaffected individuals within society, who feel left behind and disregarded, often support right wing parties. These people who may feel themselves as victims of social change, are also more inclined to feel threatened by other social aspects.⁶²

⁵⁸ Gabel, and Anderson. *The Structure of Citizen Attitudes and the European Political Space*. p. 910-912; Schone. *European disintegration? Euroscepticism and Europe's rural/urban divide*. p. 352

⁵⁹ Schone. *European disintegration? Euroscepticism and Europe's rural/urban divide*. p. 352

⁶⁰ Mamonova and Franquesa. *Right-Wing Populism in Rural Europe*. Introduction to the Special Issue. p. 702-704

⁶¹ Steenbergen, Edwards, and De Vries. *Who's Cueing Whom?: Mass-Elite Linkages and the Future of European Integration*. p. 29-31

⁶² Schone. *European disintegration? Euroscepticism and Europe's rural/urban divide*, p. 352

There are few cultural groups who are as targeted, especially during times of political and/or economic upheaval, as immigrants.⁶³ Increased immigration can create a perception of an external threat, which researcher McLaren notes can affect a citizen's opinion about the European Union and further European integration negatively. This perception of the external threat can be perceived in relation to more than one aspect, as a heightened immigration can for example be thought of as damaging for the national economy and/or the national culture and way of life.⁶⁴ This point and explanatory predictor behind Euroscepticism has been further examined by fellow researchers Boomgarden and DeVreese who note that McLaren has highlighted an important factor in regards to Euroscepticism, but argue its further complexity over just the perception of an external threat. Boomgarden and DeVreese instead argue that there can be several reasons as to why someone would have a negative opinion about immigration, amongst them national identity and/or a sense of economical worry, which was discussed in a prior section.⁶⁵

The aspect of identity is something which some previous researchers argue is of certain importance when discussing Euroscepticism, for example by Huijismans et al., who directly note the differences in how urban and rural residents may identify themselves regarding values, composition, and way of life.⁶⁶ Previous researchers have concluded that individuals with an "exclusive" national identity that is closely linked to their country in place of a more cumulative, or European, identity are more likely to be Eurosceptic.⁶⁷ Furthermore, previous research in regards to Brexit found that individuals who more strongly identified as European were more likely to vote to remain within the European Union than the individuals

⁶³ Schone. European disintegration? Euroscepticism and Europe's rural/urban divide. p. 352–353

⁶⁴ McLaren. Public Support for the European Union: Cost/Benefit Analysis or Perceived Cultural Threat? p. 552-555

⁶⁵ De Vreese and Boomgaarden. Projecting EU Referendums Fear of Immigration and Support for European Integration. p. 64–65, 72–74

⁶⁶ Huijismans et al. Are Cities Ever More Cosmopolitan? Studying Trends in Urban-Rural Divergence of Cultural Attitudes. p. 1-2

⁶⁷ Schone. European disintegration? Euroscepticism and Europe's rural/urban divide. 352-353

who primarily identified with their national identity.⁶⁸ The issue of identity can hence be argued to influence a rise of Euroscepticism in other aspects, such as the attitude towards immigration which was discussed earlier, and even in the sense of *religiosity*.

The connection between religiosity and Euroscepticism is something which has not been deeply explored as of yet within the academic field, but there are some theories about how it may impact the individual's attitude towards the European Union. Boomgarden and Freire states that the individual's religious community affects the individual and consequently their political stance and political attitudes. Boomgarden and Freire explain that the theoretical argument behind this correlation between European integration and religiosity is based on the fact that the European integration project is based on Christian values, for example peace, charity, and social justice. But it is not just those who identify as Christian who are determined to be positively inclined towards the European Union and further European integration. Religious commitment overall is determined to foster support for the European integration project.⁶⁹ In other words, the higher level of religiosity, the more support for the European Union and its further European integration one can expect to see. However, this conclusion does not have the full consensus of the academic field. Schone, who includes religiosity as a measurement in his statistical study, argues that religiosity rather can be treated as a proxy for conservative and traditional beliefs.⁷⁰ This is further problematized by researcher Hobolt et al. who adds the dimension of religious intolerance. Intolerance refers to a certain opposition or unwillingness to put up with things that one objects to. When speaking about religious intolerance, this is often aimed at certain groups based on race, culture, or another religious group. This intolerance has then been further linked to an increased amount of

⁶⁸ Dennison, Davidov, and Seddig. Explaining Voting in the UK's 2016 EU Referendum: Values, Attitudes to Immigration, European Identity and Political Trust. p. 2-3

⁶⁹ Boomgaarden and Freire. "Religion and Euroscepticism: Direct, Indirect or No Effects?"p. 1242-1245

⁷⁰ Schone. European disintegration? Euroscepticism and Europe's rural/urban divide, 356

Euroscepticism. Hobolt et al. argue that positive in-group identifications versus negative out-group evaluations could be partly to blame for this, as general hostility towards “others” can contribute to an unwillingness to see further European integration.⁷¹ To summarize, the role of religiosity is debated, with researchers theorizing for it to impact Euroscepticism both positively and negatively.

Regarding the rural/urban divide, previous research has highlighted how people who live in rural areas can particularly feel that their culture is under threat from further integration.⁷² It is important to make clear that this is not just based on the notion of geographical location within a rural area, but also due to people living in rural areas also observing and living by different norms, taking part in different leisure activities, and working different jobs than people living in an urban area.⁷³ Furthermore, previous researchers Huijsmans et al. also put forward the argument that the more cosmopolitan urban residents are more open to both the global world as a whole, other cultures, and immigration than their rural counterparts who rather may view and feel like their way of life and identity is under threat from the outside forces, whether they be migrants or transnational institutions.⁷⁴ A prominent example of this can be found in the aftermath of the Brexit vote, where people who voted to leave the European Union hoped for a return of a society they had lost.⁷⁵

3.2.2 Media usage – can interaction through media bridge the divide?

How people use media and how that in turn affects us in different aspects of our lives have been central addition to much of the theoretical and empirical

⁷¹ Hobolt, van der Brug, De Vreese, Boomgaarden, and Hinrichsen. “Religious Intolerance and Euroscepticism.” p. 361-362

⁷² Schone. European disintegration? Euroscepticism and Europe’s rural/urban divide, 352-353

⁷³ Mischi. “Contested Rural Activities: Class, Politics and Shooting in the French Countryside.”

⁷⁴ Huijsmans et al. Are Cities Ever More Cosmopolitan? Studying Trends in Urban-Rural Divergence of Cultural Attitudes. p. 1-2

⁷⁵ Schone. European disintegration? Euroscepticism and Europe’s rural/urban divide, p. 353

discussions in regards to political life.⁷⁶ The turn of the millennium brought with it significant changes in regards to both media and political communication that has affected, and potentially altered, the process of opinion building in significant ways.⁷⁷ The introduction of a more interactive, world-spanning mass media can be argued to have fundamentally changed the rules of the game.

Researchers Flew and Iosifidis specifically note that this new form of mass media differs substantially from the prior traditional media.⁷⁸ The new forms of media attract more people than the traditional and it allows for interactivity, which is a huge difference from the one-to-many type of communication, characteristic of traditional media. Through mediums such as Twitter, people can connect, create communities and/or find alliances that do not necessarily have to adhere to their own geographical location.⁷⁹ In this regard, the new social and digital media tools of the new mass media have come to also play an important role when talking about political and civic participation and activism. This is further backed up by researcher Sebastião, who underlines that the new participatory dimension of what he refers to as the Web 2.0 has changed how political communication is conducted.⁸⁰ Online social movements and digital activism are but some of the new ways for the individual citizen to take part in political communication. Moreover, the improved reach and capabilities for communication also provides the opportunity for more issues to be brought-up, and for assembling supporters together from all backgrounds, as new media technologies make engagement possible on more than one level.⁸¹

⁷⁶Foos and Bischof. *Tabloid Media Campaigns and Public Opinion: Quasi-Experimental Evidence on Euroscepticism in England*. p. 19-20

⁷⁷ Fortunato, and Pecoraro. "Social media, Education, and Euroscepticism". p. 3-4

⁷⁸ Flew, and Iosifidis. *Populism, Globalisation and Social Media*. p. 15-16

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* p. 10-11

⁸⁰ Dina, and Borges. *Should We Stay or Should We Go: EU Input Legitimacy under Threat? Social Media and Brexit*. p. 338-339

⁸¹ Brändle, Galpin, and Trenz. *Brexit as 'Politics of Division': Social Media Campaigning after the Referendum*. p. 237-238

However, even with the improved reach, capabilities, and most importantly the opportunity to directly interact politically online, one should be aware that the media has become somewhat of a double-edged sword. While it absolutely has the capabilities to tie us closer to each other, our leaders, and the wider global communities, it can also be used for the purpose of sowing further distrust or feelings of insecurity. Researchers Fortunato and Pecoraro note that the availability of information and the interactivity of the new mass media also means that individuals are exposed to an increasing number of divisive messages.⁸² Flew and Iosfidis further discusses this regarding the Brexit referendum, noting that it was accompanied by strong populist online narratives which created social media echo-chambers, which served to further reinforce the Eurosceptic sentiments of the public.⁸³ Fellow researchers Brändle, Galpin, and Trenz also highlight this, describing how British citizens who leaned towards voting to leave the European Union, were assembled in their “filter-bubbles” with like-minded people and shared Eurosceptic content with each other without it being challenged.⁸⁴ “Filter-bubbles” is a term coined by researcher Levy, who found that the popular social media platform Facebook's popular content algorithm actually may limit its users' exposure to content which promotes an opinion different from their own, and therefore contributing to an increasing polarization.⁸⁵ The “filter-bubble” is hence where users can communicate in their own ideologically segregated communities.⁸⁶ This is particularly dangerous as partisan animosity has proven to include and even cause a diffusion of conspiracy theories and erosion of trust, both to elections and institutions.⁸⁷

⁸² Fortunato, and Pecoraro. “Social media, Education, and Euroscepticism”. p. 3-4

⁸³ Flew, and Iosfidis. *Populism, Globalisation and Social Media*. p. 17-18

⁸⁴ Brändle, Galpin, and Trenz. *Brexit as ‘Politics of Division’: Social Media Campaigning after the Referendum*. p. 238-239

⁸⁵ Levy. *Social Media, News Consumption, and Polarization: Evidence from a Field Experiment*. p. 867-868

⁸⁶ Brändle, Galpin, and Trenz. *Brexit as ‘Politics of Division’: Social Media Campaigning after the Referendum*. p. 238

⁸⁷ Fortunato, and Pecoraro. “Social media, Education, and Euroscepticism”. p. 5-6

Then, in regard to Euroscepticism amongst the citizens of the European Union, what role does media usage, consumption of media and interaction through media, play? This is a research area which has not been overly traversed as of yet, but findings by researchers Fortunato and Pecoraro showed mixed results. Individuals who were exposed to and interacted with politics online showed no statistically significant effect in regard to if it were to affect their trust in the European Parliament. Hence, in regard to the theoretical correlation between interacting politically online and trust towards the European Parliament, the correlation between them could not be determined to be significant. However, it was shown to be a statistically significant connection between interacting politically online and if the survey respondents would vote to leave the European Union. In other words, individuals who interacted in online politics were more prone to vote leave in a hypothetical referendum on the country's European Union membership.⁸⁸ This can be argued to be in line with the other previous researchers' theories and findings brought up in previous paragraphs, as new media, and particularly social media, can provide ample ground for polarization to take place.⁸⁹ However, Fortunato and Pecoraro's study further indicated that just consuming information from the internet did not necessarily lead to the individual becoming more Eurosceptic, which underlines that type of media usage and medium matters.⁹⁰ The role of media usage regarding Euroscepticism is hence still rather diffuse.

Lastly, for the purpose of this thesis, it is important to discuss how the research and theories presented above will be connected to the rural/urban divide. With media evolving, it has undeniably become an ever-larger part of the individual's daily life, both regarding consumption of it and interaction through it. As stated by Flew and Iosfidis, especially modern media have attracted a larger amount of people in comparison to the traditional media.⁹¹ However, just because media now

⁸⁸ Fortunato, and Pecoraro. "Social media, Education, and Euroscepticism". p. 9-10

⁸⁹ Levy. Social Media, News Consumption, and Polarization: Evidence from a Field Experiment. p. 867-868

⁹⁰ Fortunato, and Pecoraro. "Social media, Education, and Euroscepticism". p. 13-14

⁹¹ Flew, and Iosfidis. Populism, Globalisation and Social Media. p. 15-16

arguably is used by more or less everyone, it does not mean it affects everyone the same. As the previous researchers Flew and Iosifidis argued, the introduction of social media and the ability to interact within political communication online may have the effect of bringing individuals closer together around shared opinions, creating a greater sense of connectivity regardless of geographical location.⁹² But, as previously described, it could also lead to further polarization, as the individual get put into “filter-bubbles”.⁹³ How this affects rural and urban residents respectively is not entirely known, especially regarding European citizens, as there is not many previous studies asking this question. One study in the US however concluded that rural residents within the primarily right-wing positive rural Kentucky, became more politically polarized, as many of the rural residents either muted or removed acquaintances and other people who they were politically opposed towards.⁹⁴ Can the same relationship be theorized to be true regarding European Union rural citizens and their attitude towards the European Union, meaning that rural residents who have previously shown to be generally more Eurosceptic are subject to further polarization by interacting politically online? Or will the relationship between media usage and Euroscepticism look different for rural and urban residents within the European Union? As theory and previous research is divided on this topic, or even lacking, it makes it ever more important to explore further, as understanding whether political communication through media, particularly new media, is having a positive or negative effect is of importance if we wish to understand urban and rural residents respectively more deeply in regard to Euroscepticism. This is the main contribution that this thesis will provide to the academic field, hoping to bring further clarity to ho different types of media usage affects Euroscepticism, for urban and rural residents respectively.

⁹² Flew, and Iosifidis. *Populism, Globalisation and Social Media*. p. 10-11

⁹³ Levy. *Social Media, News Consumption, and Polarization: Evidence from a Field Experiment*. p. 867-868

⁹⁴ Wenzel. *Red state, purple town: Polarized communities and local journalism in rural and small-town Kentucky*. p. 565-566

4. Method and Material

In this chapter the choice of method and material will be presented and discussed. This will then be followed by a section in which the sampling and limitations of the thesis is presented and discussed respectively. The next sections will explain the operationalization of all the variables, namely dependent, independents and control variables with basis in the previously presented theoretical framework as well as previous research. The chapter will end with a presentation of the analytical strategy.

4.1. Choice of method:

To answer the posed research question and achieve the stated purpose, the method of *regression analysis* will be used. It is a method which can be chosen to answer a variety of research questions, such as the one posed in this thesis.⁹⁵ The method of regression analysis is used to closely examine how the independent variables have an effect upon the dependent variables and to map out each variable's effect strength as well as the statistical significance of said effect.⁹⁶ Using a quantitative statistical approach, and specifically regression analysis, is especially suitable for this thesis as it is ideal for the investigation of more complex, real-life aspects, such as attitudes like Euroscepticism.⁹⁷ Moreover, as this thesis has a stated purpose to look at more than one independent variable, and aims to also include control variables, the regression analysis will be multiple.⁹⁸ The advantage of including control variables through a multiple regression analysis is that it takes into account that the dependent variable can be affected by more variables than the independent variables, which means that the measured effects can be argued to be closer to reality than if they were not included. In other words, being able to

⁹⁵ Pallant. *SPSS Survival Manual*. p. 148-149

⁹⁶ Anders Sundell. SPSS-akuten, Guide: regressionsanalys, 2009-12-21.
<https://spssakuten.com/2009/12/21/regressionsanalys-1/> (Retrieved: 2022-04-03)

⁹⁷ Pallant. *SPSS Survival Manual*. p. 140

⁹⁸ Djurfeldt, Larsson and Stjärnhagen. *Statistisk verktyglåda 1: samhällsvetenskaplig orsaksanalys med kvantitativa metoder*. p. 314

include control variables allows me to test if the statistical correlation between the dependent and independent variables still exists when more variables are considered, therefore avoiding the potential issue of biased results and confounders, which otherwise could impact the dependent and independent variables as well as the results.⁹⁹ This makes the multiple regression analysis more preferable than a bivariate regression analysis. Moreover, the multiple regression analysis approach can also show *all* variables collected effect size upon the dependent variables as well as the control variables' singular effects upon the dependent variable. This is further fitting in regard to the research question and purpose of this thesis, as it allows for testing the focal relationship between different types of media usages and Euroscepticism and at the same time include control variables as to not overestimate the significance of the relationships nor producing biased results, as stated earlier.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, it also means that potentially interesting results for the control variables can be observed. Lastly, this method further allows for the inclusion of larger sample sizes, which allows for the results to be more generalizable. This method and the statistical model including multiple variables is hence the best method of choice for the stated purpose and research question.

However, as with any method, this one has certain limitations. A regression analysis assumes, for it to work, that the variables included all are quantitative variables that can be said to be interval scaled variables, meaning that they can be defined as quantitative variables which have an order and the distance between the points in the scale are the same.¹⁰¹ This is not always the case, but there are solutions to this, which I will further discuss in the section explaining the operationalization of the variables. Hence, while there exist a certain limitation in the method regarding which variables can be included, there exist solutions which

⁹⁹ Esaiasson, Gilljam, Oscarsson, Towns and Wängnerud. *Metodpraktikan: Konsten att studera samhälle, individ och marknad*. p. 393

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. p. 393

¹⁰¹ Djurfeldt, Larsson and Stjärnhagen. *Statistisk verktygslåda 1: samhällsvetenskaplig orsaksanalys med kvantitativa metoder*. p. 44–45

still makes this method the most suitable choice for the purpose of this thesis. However, multiple regression analysis can also be described as one of the fussier statistical techniques. As such it makes several assumptions in regard to the data used that needs to be met if to avoid any issues such as biased results.¹⁰² However, just as with the variable limitations, there are ways to reach the assumptions for example by recoding the data. These assumptions will be presented in the following sections, as well as how well the chosen data meets these assumptions.

As stated, before applying this method in the analysis, certain statistical assumptions must be met by the data.¹⁰³ There are a total of six assumptions: *multicollinearity and singularity, outliers, normality, linearity, homoscedasticity, and sample size*. In preparation for my analysis, I checked for all these assumptions, with both the description of the assumption and the result for this thesis data being presented in the following paragraphs.

The first assumption, regarding the issues of multicollinearity and singularity should be avoided in a regression analysis. These assumptions state that the independent variables should not be too highly correlated nor should one of the independent variables be a combination of other independent variables.¹⁰⁴ When testing for these assumptions, it showed no too high correlation between the independent variables, meaning that these assumptions are met by the data.

The second assumption, outliers, concerns extreme scores which can show up within a model, which is something that a regression analysis is especially sensitive to. This assumption, when tested for, detected no significant outliers,

¹⁰² Pallant. *SPSS Survival Manual*. p. 150-151

¹⁰³ Ibid. p 150-151

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. p. 151

either in the scatterplot where none surpassed the limits of -3.0 and 3.0, as well as none getting a problematic score of 1.0 on Cook's distance.¹⁰⁵

Assumptions three through five, normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity all refer to aspects regarding the distribution of scores as well as the nature of the underlying relationship between the variables. In sum, the residuals should all be normally distributed, there should be a linear relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable, and the variance in the residuals regarding predicted dependent variable scores should be the same for all the predicted scores. Firstly, the test for normality showed that the assumption was met as the produced scatterplot showed no major deviations. Secondly, linearity was checked for each of the independent variables, concluding there to exist a linear relationship between them and the dependent variable. Thirdly, the assumption of homoscedasticity was also proven to be met, both as the Durbin-Watson test landed between the preferred 1.5 and 2.5 with a score of 1.897. Moreover, the produced scatterplot further showed acceptable results, as there is no cone shape nor curve shape to the residuals.¹⁰⁶

Lastly, the sample needs to be a certain size, as a too small sample could be problematic in regard to the generalizability of the results, meaning that the results could potentially not be repeated with other samples. Problematically, there is no true consensus regarding what constitutes an adequate sample size amongst previous researchers. Some previous researchers argue for a sample size to be adequate when there is a total of 15 cases per independent variable included in the model. However, this is still argued to be too low, with more recent researchers arguing for there to be 40 cases per independent variable included in the model. As the sample size for this thesis, for urban residents and rural residents in the European Union, respectively consist of 9069 for rural residents and 15248 for

¹⁰⁵ ¹⁰⁵ Pallant. *SPSS Survival Manual*. p. 151

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. p. 151

urban residents, both sample sizes are sufficient for even the higher requirements for and adequate sample size.¹⁰⁷

4.2 Choice of material:

The material that will be used for this thesis will be gathered from the European Social Survey (ESS). The ESS is conducted within multiple European countries every two years which monitors the public attitudes and values in Europe.¹⁰⁸ Some of the prominent topics they cover include: socioeconomic factors, human values, social trust, and politics. Most importantly, in regard to the stated purpose for this thesis, is that it also covers questions regarding the European Union and the public's attitudes towards it, as well as questions regarding media and how the respondents use it.¹⁰⁹ The collection of survey answers is done through in person interviews conducted in the language of the survey respondent. The selection of survey respondents is done randomly and there is always a total of 3000 citizens from each participating country who is asked to participate.¹¹⁰ For the purposes of this thesis, the latest round conducted and produced by the ESS will be used, namely round 9 from 2018.¹¹¹ Now, this data can barely be called recent data anymore as it is almost four years old, but due to surrounding circumstances, namely the Covid-19 pandemic, new rounds have been delayed, making this round the latest available. This is a limitation I will further discuss in the section for Limitations and Sampling.

The material from the European Social Survey reaches a high level of reliability, meaning that the material is produced in a reliable way, as it primarily is gathered

¹⁰⁷ Pallant. *SPSS Survival Manual*. p. 150

¹⁰⁸ Fortunato, and Pecoraro. "Social media, Education, and Euroscepticism". p. 6

¹⁰⁹ European Social Survey. ESS9 2018 Data Download, europeansocialsurvey.org, 2021. [Data and Documentation by Round | European Social Survey \(ESS\)](#) (Retrieved: 2022-02-22)

¹¹⁰ European Social Survey. *Data collection*, europeansocialsurvey.org, [Data Collection | European Social Survey \(ESS\)](#) (Retrieved: 2022-04-26)

¹¹¹ European Social Survey. ESS9 2018 Data Download, europeansocialsurvey.org, 2021. [Data and Documentation by Round | European Social Survey \(ESS\)](#) (Retrieved: 2022-02-22)

through physical, in person, interviews in the language of the respondent.¹¹² The key advantage of in person interviews is that any mistakes in the collection of the material, e.g. a misunderstanding by a respondent, can be cleared and corrected on the spot.¹¹³ Moreover, the organization of the ESS is both well-known and established, easing the process of trusting their methods of data collection and the data itself, as some level of trust has to be given when using data collected by an external organization.¹¹⁴ The reliability of the material can further be argued to be good as it can be accessed by anyone in the ESS open database.¹¹⁵ Therefore, studies following this one can repeat the approach for this thesis and use the same material, making it possible to reproduce this thesis results as well as use this model on coming rounds of the ESS.¹¹⁶

4.3. Sampling and Limitations:

The sampling choices made are based upon what is available within the material from the ESS. All countries who participated in the ESS survey for the chosen round and who are member states of the European Union are included in my sample, meaning that all available European Union citizens are included within the population. This means that a total of 23 European Union member states is included within the sample used for this thesis.¹¹⁷ As the overall sample for this thesis consists of urban and rural residents from all across the European Union as well as it being more than an adequate sample in size, making generalizability of the results possible, it can also be stated to be representative of European Union

¹¹² European Social Survey. *Data collection*, europeansocialsurvey.org, [Data Collection | European Social Survey \(ESS\)](#) (Retrieved: 2022-04-26)

¹¹³ Esaiasson, Gilljam, Oscarsson, Towns and Wängnerud. *Metodpraktikan: Konsten att studera samhälle, individ och marknad*. p. 64

¹¹⁴ European Social Survey. About ESS, europeansocialsurvey.org, [About ESS | European Social Survey \(ESS\)](#) (Retrieved: 2022-04-27)

¹¹⁵ European Social Survey. ESS9 2018 Data Download, europeansocialsurvey.org, 2021. [Data and Documentation by Round | European Social Survey \(ESS\)](#) (Retrieved: 2022-02-22)

¹¹⁶ Esaiasson, Gilljam, Oscarsson, Towns and Wängnerud. *Metodpraktikan: Konsten att studera samhälle, individ och marknad*. p. 65

¹¹⁷ European Social Survey. ESS9 2018 Data Download, europeansocialsurvey.org, 2021. [Data and Documentation by Round | European Social Survey \(ESS\)](#) (Retrieved: 2022-02-22)

citizens overall. Furthermore, while Euroscepticism is a phenomenon which theoretically can be found everywhere, as it is not necessarily confined within the limits of the European Union, it is only of interest for this thesis to study citizens of the European Union as if they become Eurosceptic, it potentially poses a very real danger to the European Union. A second event like “Brexit” can only happen within a European Union member state, making it critically important to understand what specifically affects EU citizens' opinion of the European Union and further European integration.

As with any study, this one also faced certain limitations. The most prominent one might be the lack of data which can be argued to be “new” or “recent”. As this is an issue sparked by the recent Covid-19 pandemic, as well as the timing of writing this thesis, this is a limitation which can't be avoided, and the best available option is to use the most recent round from 2018. Furthermore, what can be argued to be a limitation is that this thesis utilizes only one dataset which is from a certain point in time, which means that the results can be argued to be a snapshot in time. However, this is not necessarily an issue, as future researchers can repeat the analysis carried out in this thesis and as such examine the trends over time, for example by utilizing the next available round of the ESS. Lastly, there are certain limitations to the sample. While the sample for the urban and rural group respectively are deemed adequate, the distribution of urban and rural residents on a country level is in multiple cases problematic. This limitation in the data available means that doing national controls for example is not statistically possible, as it would demand too much from my sample.

4.4 Operationalization of variables:

4.4.1 Dependent variable:

As this study aims to examine Euroscepticism amongst the citizens of the European Union, the dependent variable chosen must reflect that. Within the chosen datasets from ESS there are several potential variables that could be

chosen for this purpose.¹¹⁸ For example, one variable measures the public's trust in a specific institution within the European Union, whereas another asks if they would vote to leave the European Union if the opportunity presented itself. However, the most fitting variable to measure general public Euroscepticism, which moreover is often chosen to measure Euroscepticism within previous research, is the following variable from the ESS questionnaire:

- *Now thinking about the European Union, some say European unification should go further. Others say it has already gone too far. Using this card, what number on the scale best describes your position? (0-10)*¹¹⁹

This variable measures the citizens attitude and tolerance towards further European integration, an integral part of the European Union, making it, as said previously, a popular choice amongst previous researchers when measuring public Euroscepticism and the most fitting choice of dependent variable for this thesis as well.¹²⁰ ESS further clarifies what is meant by European unification by adding:

*“‘Unification’ refers to further integration rather than further enlargement.”*¹²¹

Due to this clarification which inherently refers to what Euroscepticism at a basic level adheres to, namely a resistance towards European integration, I conclude that this variable achieves a high *validity*, in other words, I conclude that it measures what I want it to measure.¹²² It measures Euroscepticism amongst the European public as a scale, with lower values indicating more opposition towards European integration, and higher indicating a stronger support for further

¹¹⁸ European Social Survey. Source Questionnaire Round 9, europeansocialsurvey.org, 2018 https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/docs/round9/fieldwork/source/ESS9_source_questionnaires.pdf (Retrieved: 2022-03-15)

¹¹⁹ European Social Survey. Source Questionnaire Round 9, europeansocialsurvey.org, 2018 https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/docs/round9/fieldwork/source/ESS9_source_questionnaires.pdf (Retrieved: 2022-03-15) p. 13

¹²⁰ Schone. European disintegration? Euroscepticism and Europe's rural/urban divide. p. 353-354

¹²¹ European Social Survey. Source Questionnaire Round 9, europeansocialsurvey.org, 2018 https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/docs/round9/fieldwork/source/ESS9_source_questionnaires.pdf (Retrieved: 2022-03-15) p. 13

¹²² Muijs. *Doing Quantitative Research in Education with SPSS*. p. 65-66

European integration.¹²³ It as such can be argued to both scale both hard and soft Euroscepticism within the same variable.¹²⁴ However, this question from the ESS questionnaire is furthermore a measurement of Euroscepticism in reverse, as 0 equals the answer that “European unification has already gone too far”, whereas 10 equals “European unification should go further”. As the scale goes from a negative viewpoint to a positive viewpoint, I will have to expect the results of the later analysis to measure Euroscepticism in the negative.

Another point that needs to be discussed is how I choose to categorize this dependent variable, which I have chosen to use as an *interval scale variable*. As explained in the previous choice of method section, the chosen method is multiple regression analysis. This method choice was motivated by the selection of dependent and independent variables which further fits the method. By defining and using this variable as an interval scale variable, in other words viewing the scale as *equidistance*, meaning that the distance between 5-6 is viewed as the same between 7-8 for example, the method of multiple regression analysis fits.¹²⁵ However, this is done with a certain reservation for the notion that the variables could also be argued to be ordinal scale variables. As it is a variable measuring an attitude, one could argue that one cannot be entirely 100% sure that the scale is just equidistance, even if the scale of 0-10 indicates it to be so. For this thesis, the dependent variable will be handled as a quantitative interval scale variable with reservation for the equidistance problematics discussed. However, this is a choice widely made within the social sciences if the scale is larger, as in this case 0-10.¹²⁶ This is moreover a decision taken by other researchers studying Euroscepticism

¹²³ European Social Survey. Source Questionnaire Round 9, europeansocialsurvey.org, 2018 https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/docs/round9/fieldwork/source/ESS9_source_questionnaires.pdf (Retrieved: 2022-03-15) p. 13

¹²⁴ Taggart, and Szczerbiak. The Party Politics of Euroscepticism in EU Member and Candidate States. p. 4-8

¹²⁵ Djurfeldt, Larsson and Stjärnhagen. *Statistisk verktyglåda 1: samhällsvetenskaplig orsaksanalys med kvantitativa metoder*. p. 42–43

¹²⁶ Esaiasson, Gilljam, Oscarsson, Towns and Wängnerud. *Metodpraktikan: Konsten att studera samhälle, individ och marknad*. p. 362

using this variable, further underlining this as an academic standard.¹²⁷ This further means that the variable does not need to be recoded for the purposes of this thesis.

4.4.2 Independent variables:

The independent variables used will be reflecting the concept of consumption of media and interaction through media. For the variables representing this, the following questions from ESS have been chosen:

- *On a typical day, about how much time do you spend watching, reading or listening to news about politics and current affairs?*¹²⁸
- *There are different ways of trying to improve things in [country] or help prevent things from going wrong. During the last 12 months, have you posted or shared anything about politics online, for example on blogs, via email or on social media such as Facebook or Twitter?*¹²⁹

The first of these two variables presented above is used to represent the more traditional consumption of media whereas the latter represents interaction through media, something intrinsically linked to what is known as new media. The variable representing consumption of media, is an interval scale variable which measures the consumption in minutes and therefore poses no problem with its inclusion in my model. However, the independent variable measuring interaction through media is in its original state a *categorical variable*, which poses problems. Categorical variables are variables which are characterized by having two or more possible categories but no intrinsic ordering of them.¹³⁰ This poses an issue as there is no “low to high” measurement, which the method of regression analysis relies on in theory, where it is expected that both dependent and

¹²⁷ Schone. European disintegration? Euroscepticism and Europe’s rural/urban divide. p. 353

¹²⁸ European Social Survey. Source Questionnaire Round 9, europeansocialsurvey.org, 2018 https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/docs/round9/fieldwork/source/ESS9_source_questionnaires.pdf (Retrieved: 2022-03-15) p. 4

¹²⁹ Ibid. p. 9

¹³⁰ Djurfeldt, Larsson and Stjärnhagen. *Statistisk verktygslåda 1: samhällsvetenskaplig orsaksanalys med kvantitativa metoder*. p. 41–43

independent variables are continuous.¹³¹ Categorical variables can be included in regression analysis, but then the results have to be interpreted differently. Due to this, and for the results to be interpreted the same, the categorical variable will be handled a bit differently and be recoded into a *dummy variable*.

A dummy-variable could also be called an “attribute-variable”, as it only includes two possibilities, either having the attribute or lacking it.¹³² Dummy-variables can be used in a regression analysis as it only includes 0 - the lack of the attribute, and 1 - having the attribute, making it an interval scale variable with equidistance between its two values. The second independent variable in this thesis model then is recoded as follows: 0=not having posted or shared anything political on media, and 1=having posted or shared anything political on media.

The rural/urban divide will not be handled as independent variables in this thesis, rather it will be represented through split cases. This is more fitting in regard to the thesis purpose and hypothesis, as it allows for easier comparisons between the groups. This will be presented thoroughly in the second to last section of this chapter, as well as how it will be used within the analysis within the Analytical Strategy section.

4.4.3 Control variables:

While the focus of the analysis will be in line with the previously stated purpose, it would be unwise to only include independent variables representing what I aim to examine, as it would risk producing biased results.¹³³ Therefore, a set of control variables will also be included in the model, chosen with previous research and the theoretical framework in mind, which will make the results more reliable. The control variables chosen can be viewed in table 1.

¹³¹ Muijs. *Doing Quantitative Research in Education with SPSS*. p. 169

¹³² Djurfeldt. Multipel regressionsanalys (MRA). I Statistik verktyglåda – multivariat analys. p. 110–111

¹³³ Pallant. *SPSS Survival Manual*. p. 150

Table 1: Control variables

Economic variables	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- <i>Middle income</i>- <i>Upper income</i>- <i>Satisfaction(Economy)</i>
Political variables	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- <i>Satisfaction(Government)</i>- <i>Left-Right Scale</i>- <i>Voted</i>
Cultural variables	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- <i>“Immigrants bad for the economy”</i>- <i>“Immigrants enrich culture”</i>- <i>Religiosity</i>
Individual controls	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- <i>Age</i>- <i>Sex</i>- <i>Education</i>- <i>Minority status</i>

The choice to use these specific control variables are inspired by Schone's model and his previous study of Euroscepticism and the rural/urban divide.¹³⁴ Schone used some of the above listed variables as independent, as he set out to examine if place of residence is a good predictor for Euroscepticism in relation to other already recognized predictors, namely economic, political, and cultural aspects. Schone also includes individual predictors and national variables as controls, which is an example I partly aim to follow. Individual control variables will be part of the model for this thesis, this includes age, sex, education, and minority status, however I have chosen to drop the national controls. The reasons for this are that the inclusion of an additional 22 country control variables is too demanding of my sample size.¹³⁵ I have as such opted, with the previous reasons in mind, for simplicity for this thesis model and as such not included national controls. Lastly, this thesis interests itself in exploring the differences between rural and urban residents overall, in regard to Euroscepticism and how media usage affects it. As such, national differences are not of prime interest and can therefore be excluded and potentially be of focus for future case studies instead. In

¹³⁴ Schone. *European disintegration? Euroscepticism and Europe's rural/urban divide*. p. 355

¹³⁵ Pallant. *SPSS Survival Manual*. p. 150

the following sections, the operationalization of each set of control variables are presented.

4.4.3.1 Economic variables:

Income, which is measured by both the first and second economic variables, is included as an individual's level of income is theorized to have an effect upon their attitude towards the European Union.¹³⁶ These two variables are derived from the same original variable, where the ESS survey respondents are asked to classify their income into deciles relative to other people's income in their country.¹³⁷ This original variable had to be recoded into two dummy variables, namely middle and upper income respectively. This because the original variable was not an interval scale variable and could hence not be included as it was.¹³⁸ For both middle and upper income, lower income is chosen as the reference group.

The third economic variable, the measurement of satisfaction with one's own national economy, is used as an individual's satisfaction with the state of the national economy can shape the individual's political opinions. However, as explained in the chapter covering the previous research and the theoretical framework, there is not a consensus about whether the effect will be positive or negative regarding Euroscepticism.¹³⁹ Because of this, it is important to include it in the model. This variable is coded 0-10, where a higher value indicates greater satisfaction with the state of the national economy.¹⁴⁰ The variable will be

¹³⁶ Boomgaarden, Schuck, Elenbaas, and De Vreese. Mapping EU Attitudes: Conceptual and Empirical Dimensions of Euroscepticism and EU Support. p. 251

¹³⁷ Schone. European disintegration? Euroscepticism and Europe's rural/urban divide. 354

¹³⁸ European Social Survey. Source Questionnaire Round 9, europeansocialsurvey.org, 2018 https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/docs/round9/fieldwork/source/ESS9_source_questionnaires.pdf (Retrieved: 2022-03-15) p. 60

¹³⁹ Schone. European disintegration? Euroscepticism and Europe's rural/urban divide. p. 351; de Vries. *Euroscepticism and the Future of European integration*. p. 95-97

¹⁴⁰ European Social Survey. Source Questionnaire Round 9, europeansocialsurvey.org, 2018 https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/docs/round9/fieldwork/source/ESS9_source_questionnaires.pdf (Retrieved 2022-03-15) p. 11

included as it is as it is an interval scale variable and as such does not pose any coding issues.

4.4.3.2. Political variables

Three control variables are included to represent political Euroscepticism. The first variable measuring satisfaction with one's national government is included because, as previous research and theory have argued, a person who is unsatisfied with the status quo is more inclined to go to extremes, with the most prominent example of this being Brexit.¹⁴¹ The argument is hence that an individual who is unsatisfied with their national government is also potentially more likely to be Eurosceptic. Or, as another researcher argued, being satisfied with the national government could also lead to the individual becoming more Eurosceptic.¹⁴² As there is not a clear consensus on the effect of this variable, it is important to account for it by including it in the model. This variable is an interval scale variable ranging from 0-10, with a higher value indicating greater satisfaction with the national government.¹⁴³ The variable can therefore be included in the analysis in its original coding.

The second political variable, placement on the left-right political scale, is included as it is theorized that a higher level of Euroscepticism is correlated with a placement further to the right on the scale.¹⁴⁴ This variable is also ranging from 0-10, where a higher value indicates further to the political right placement.¹⁴⁵ The variable is an interval scale variable and as such don't need to be recoded for it to be included in this thesis.

¹⁴¹ Schone. *European disintegration? Euroscepticism and Europe's rural/urban divide*. p. 354

¹⁴² De Vries. *Euroscepticism and the Future of European integration*. p. 95-97

¹⁴³ European Social Survey. Source Questionnaire Round 9, europeansocialsurvey.org, 2018 https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/docs/round9/fieldwork/source/ESS9_source_questionnaires.pdf (Retrieved 2022-03-15) p. 11

¹⁴⁴ Gifford. "The Rise of Post-Imperial Populism: The Case of Right-Wing Euroscepticism in Britain." p. 852; Sørensen. *Right-Wing Euroscepticism and Populism: Investigating the Concept of 'the People.'* p. 163-164

¹⁴⁵ European Social Survey. Source Questionnaire Round 9, europeansocialsurvey.org, 2018 https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/docs/round9/fieldwork/source/ESS9_source_questionnaires.pdf (Retrieved 2022-03-15) p. 11

The last political variable asks the ESS survey respondent if they voted in the last national election. This variable is included in the model because, as Schone argues regarding his model, this accounts for baseline political participation.¹⁴⁶ However, the variable must be recoded as it is not an interval scale variable in its original state.¹⁴⁷ It is recoded into a dummy variable with “Voted” being coded 1 and “Did not vote” being coded 0. Not having voted in the last national election is therefore the reference group for this dummy variable.

4.4.3.3 Cultural variables

Two of the included cultural variables are questions regarding the respondents opinion of immigration in regards to how they feel it impacts the national economy and culture respectively.¹⁴⁸ As stated in the chapter for previous research and theoretical framework, individuals can perceive an increased immigration as a threat, both to their culture and/or to their economic stability.¹⁴⁹ The first variable is coded 0-10 and asks the respondent if they think immigration is good or bad for the national economy.¹⁵⁰ A lower value on this variable indicates that the respondent believes that immigration is bad for the economy. The second variable is also coded 0-10 and asks the respondent if they believe that immigration enrich or undermines cultural life.¹⁵¹ A lower value for this variable indicates that the respondent believes that immigration undermine cultural life. Neither of these two variables must be recoded to be included in the analysis, as they are both interval scale variables.

¹⁴⁶ Schone. European disintegration? Euroscepticism and Europe’s rural/urban divide. p. 354

¹⁴⁷ European Social Survey. Source Questionnaire Round 9, europeansocialsurvey.org, 2018 https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/docs/round9/fieldwork/source/ESS9_source_questionnaires.pdf (Retrieved 2022-03-15) p. 8

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. p. 15

¹⁴⁹ McLaren. Public Support for the European Union: Cost/Benefit Analysis or Perceived Cultural Threat? p. 552-555

¹⁵⁰ European Social Survey. Source Questionnaire Round 9, europeansocialsurvey.org, 2018 https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/docs/round9/fieldwork/source/ESS9_source_questionnaires.pdf (Retrieved: 2022-03-15) p. 15

¹⁵¹ Ibid. p. 15

The third variable, measuring religiosity, asks the survey respondent how religious they would describe themselves as. As described previously, religiosity is a debated predictor of public Euroscepticism, as previous researchers have both found it to have a potential positive effect and negative effect.¹⁵² Moreover, previous researcher Schone argues that it can be used as a proxy for more conservative, traditional beliefs.¹⁵³ It is therefore of importance to include and check for this variable. This variable also has a range from 0-10, where a higher value indicates a higher level of religiosity.¹⁵⁴ It does not have to be recoded to be included in the analysis.

4.4.3.4 Individual variables

In this section, the coding of the individual control variables is presented. These variables are included in this model as they are usually included in studies such as this one as they could be of interest in any behavioral study.¹⁵⁵

Age is a continuous variable ranging from 15-90, as such it does not have to be recoded.¹⁵⁶ Gender however must be recoded as it in its original state is an ordinal variable, and hence problematic for the chosen method.¹⁵⁷ It is therefore recoded into a dummy variable where male=1 and female=0. Female is the reference group for the gender variable. Moving on to minority, this is also a variable which will have to be recoded into a dummy as its original state as an ordinal variable is

¹⁵² Boomgaarden and Freire. Religion and Euroscepticism: Direct, Indirect or No Effects? p. 1242-1245; Hobolt, van der Brug, De Vreese, Boomgaarden, and Hinrichsen. "Religious Intolerance and Euroscepticism." p. 361-362

¹⁵³ Schone. European disintegration? Euroscepticism and Europe's rural/urban divide. p. 356

¹⁵⁴ European Social Survey. Source Questionnaire Round 9, europeansocialsurvey.org, 2018 https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/docs/round9/fieldwork/source/ESS9_source_questionnaires.pdf (Retrieved: 2022-03-15) p. 20

¹⁵⁵ Schone. European disintegration? Euroscepticism and Europe's rural/urban divide. p. 365

¹⁵⁶ European Social Survey. Source Questionnaire Round 9, europeansocialsurvey.org, 2018 https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/docs/round9/fieldwork/source/ESS9_source_questionnaires.pdf (Retrieved: 2022-03-15) p. 46

¹⁵⁷ Ibid. p. 46

a problem.¹⁵⁸ The dummy variable is coded as 1=Minority and 0= Not minority, making not minority the reference group for this variable. Lastly, the variable representing education level is a continuous variable measured through years earned in education, meaning that it did not have to be recoded as it is an interval scale variable.¹⁵⁹

4.5 The operationalization of Rural/Urban - Split cases

The groups of rural and urban residents respectively will, as mentioned earlier, be handled differently from the other variables, as they will rather function as groups onto which the other variables, and the overall model, are tested. In other words, there will be one multiple regression analysis for the group representing rural residents and one multiple regression analysis for the group representing urban residents. This is done as I expect the results to vary across the two groups, with basis in previous research into the rural/urban divide.

The variable chosen from the ESS to represent rural and urban residents respectively is:

- *Which phrase on this card best describes the area where you live?*¹⁶⁰

The answers the survey respondent could give to this question are the following:

- *A big city*
- *The suburbs or outskirts of a big city*
- *A town or a small city*
- *A country village*
- *A farm or home in the countryside*

As I aim to test for the difference between people living in rural and urban areas respectively, the above five alternatives need to be divided into the two groups,

¹⁵⁸ European Social Survey. Source Questionnaire Round 9, europeansocialsurvey.org, 2018
https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/docs/round9/fieldwork/source/ESS9_source_questionnaires.pdf (Retrieved: 2022-03-15) p. 23

¹⁵⁹ Ibid. p. 52

¹⁶⁰ Ibid. p. 50

one group representing people living in urban areas and one group representing people living in rural areas. However, this task is easier said than done, as where the line between what constitutes an urban area and a rural area respectively is not quite clear.

Definitions of what constitutes rural and urban areas vary greatly as the criteria's laying the groundwork for definitions to be made differs both between nations and between researchers.¹⁶¹ This makes generalizations of definitions problematic. However, as this thesis will focus on and only include countries within both Europe and the European Union, it will use the definition set out in a working paper published by the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy within the European Commission. It defines urban areas as cities, suburbs, and towns. Rural areas on the other hand, are defined as all other areas which are more thinly populated.¹⁶² Based on these definitions, the first three answers of the original variable: a big city, the suburbs or outskirts of a big city, and a town or a small city are grouped into representing *urban residents*. The last two answers: a country village and a farm or home in the countryside, are grouped into representing *rural residents*.

4.6. Analytical Strategy

The first step, before starting the analysis, is to check for the assumptions that need to be met regarding the method choice. These assumptions were both explained and cleared in the previous section covering the choice of method. After all assumptions are cleared, the sample will be split into rural residents and urban residents, in accordance with the definition presented in the previous section. As stated earlier, this is the most fitting strategy and allows for easier comparisons between the two groups. By working with split cases, there will also naturally be two results, one for each of the groups.

¹⁶¹ Tacoli. Rural-Urban Interactions: A Guide to the Literature. p. 147-148

¹⁶² Dijkstra, and Poelman. A harmonised definition of cities and rural areas: the new degree of urbanization. p. 1-5

However, before diving headfirst into the multivariate regression analysis, for the rural and urban group respectively, it is important to conduct univariate analysis to get an overview of how urban and rural residents respectively have answered each of the variables included in the model. By conducting a univariate analysis, it is possible to directly see the differences between urban and rural residents' answers, which is particularly interesting regarding the mean of the answers to the dependent variable for each group. This is then followed by the multiple regression analysis, which will produce the statistical results that are of interest for this thesis. The results will then be shortly presented and analyzed as they are before they are then discussed in relation to both the previous research and the theoretical framework.

5. Results:

In this chapter, the previously described analytical strategy will be deployed and the results of the statistical analysis will be summarized and explained. The chapter will start by presenting the univariate analysis results and shortly comment on them, these results can be observed in table 2 and table 3 respectively. Following this is the results of the multiple regression analysis, which will be displayed in table 4. The results will then be shortly summarized and explained for rural and urban residents respectively in the last two sections of this chapter. Discussion regarding the results in relation to previous research and the theoretical framework will be done in the next chapter.

5.1 Univariate analysis:

As described in the section Analytical Strategy, the first step of the analysis for this thesis is presenting the descriptive statistics for all the variables included in the model I have constructed. The descriptive results for urban residents can be viewed in table 2, and the results for the rural residents can be viewed in table 3.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics for all dependent, independent, and control variables for urban residents, ESS round 9

Variable:	N	Mean	Std. Deviation.	Min	Max
European Unification: gone to far or needs to go further	15248	5.42	2.717	0	10
Media Consumption	15248	85.69	135.129	0	1440
Media Interaction	15248	0.1672	0.37313	0	1
Economic variables:					
Middle income	15248	0.4133	0.49243	0	1
Upper income	15248	0.2702	0.44408	0	1
Satisfaction with national economy	15248	5.28	2.418	0	10
Political variables:					
Voted	15248	0.7777	0.41579	0	1
Placement on left-right scale	15248	4.99	2.256	0	10
Satisfaction with national government	15248	4.40	2.461	0	10
Cultural variables:					
Immigrants bad/good for economy	15248	5.26	2.546	0	10
Immigrants undermine/enrich culture	15248	5.50	2.667	0	10
Religiousity	15248	4.36	3.143	0	10
Individual variables:					
Age	15248	50.60	18.750	15	90
Gender	15248	0.4542	0.49791	0	1
Minority	15248	0.0646	0.24582	0	1
Education level	15248	15.6848	7.59221	1	27

a: Reference group is lower-income residents.

b: Reference group is did not vote.

c: Reference group is female

d: Reference group is non-minority

Table 3: Descriptive statistics for all dependent, independent, and control variables for rural residents, ESS round 9

Variable:	N	Mean	Std. Deviation.	Min	Max
European Unification: gone to far or needs to go further	9069	5.17	2.687	0	10
Media Consumption	9069	86.61	146.549	0	1224
Media Interaction	9069	0.1176	0.32215	0	1
Economic variables:					
Middle income ^a	9069	0.4297	0.49505	0	1
Upper income ^a	9069	0.2301	0.42090	0	1
Satisfaction with national economy	9069	5.18	2.429	0	10
Political variables:					
Voted ^b	9069	0.7834	0.41195	0	1
Placement on left-right scale	9069	5.22	2.214	0	10
Satisfaction with national government	9069	4.39	2.482	0	10
Cultural variables:					
Immigrants bad/good for economy	9069	4.93	2.516	0	10
Immigrants undermine/enrich culture	9069	5.08	2.611	0	10
Religiosity	9069	4.84	3.102	0	10
Individual variables:					
Age	9069	52.24	18.550	15	90
Gender ^c	9069	0.4651	0.49880	0	1
Minority ^d	9069	0.0408	0.19777	0	1
Education level	9069	13.2003	7.41940	1	27

a: Reference group is lower-income residents.

b: Reference group is did not vote.

c: Reference group is female

d: Reference group is non-minority.

The result of interest from the descriptive results is the results for the dependent variable, namely the measurement of Euroscepticism. The mean for both groups are relatively even, with the result for rural residents only being slightly lower than for the urban residents. However, even if the difference between urban and rural residents are not large, it still indicates a higher amount of Euroscepticism amongst the rural residents, if even by a small margin.

5.2 Multivariate Regression analysis:

The results of both multiple regression analysis are presented in table 4 below.

The reference group for each of the dummy variables can be viewed at the bottom of the table as well as a description of the significance levels.

Table 4: Results of the multiple regression analysis with all independent and control variables included on European integration/Euroscepticism, ESS round 9.

Variable:	Urban residents	(s.e)	Rural residents:	(s.e)
Media Consumption	0,001***	0,000	1.675E-5	0,000
Media Interaction	-0,066	0,051	-0,182**	0,077
Economic variables:				
Middle income ^a	0.000	0.045	-0.161**	0.059
Upper income ^a	0.121*	0.053	-0.157*	0.074
Satisfaction with national economy	0.033**	0.010	0.067***	0.013
Political variables:				
Voted ^b	0.132*	0.046	0.086	0.060
Placement on left-right scale	-0.037***	0.009	-0.026*	0.011
Satisfaction with national government	0.050***	0.009	0.007	0.013
Cultural variables:				
Immigrants bad/good for economy	0.241***	0.010	0.210***	0.013
Immigrants undermine/enrich culture	0.202***	0.010	0.211***	0.013
Religiosity	0.023***	0.006	0.036***	0.008
Individual variables:				
Age	-0.005***	0.001	-0.007***	0.001
Gender ^c	0.060	0.038	0.042	0.049
Minority ^d	-0.195*	0.076	0.383**	0.122
Education level	0.004	0.003	0.011**	0.004
Constant	2.747		2.879	
N	15248		9069	
R ²	18.2		15.9	

Significance: *** = p <0,001 ** = p <0,01 * = p <0,05

a: Reference group is lower-income residents.

b: Reference group is did not vote.

c: Reference group is female

d: Reference group is non-minority.

5.2.1 Analysis of results for the urban group:

The consumption of news about politics and current affairs has a statistically significant effect, and a positive correlation at that for urban residents. The result means that for every one minute more that an urban resident spends consuming news about politics and current affairs, their attitude towards further European integration increases positively with 0.001 on the dependent Euroscepticism scale. Translated to hours, this means that for every hour more that the urban resident spends consuming news about politics and current affairs through media, their measured attitude towards European integration increases on average with 0.06. Political interaction through media, on the other hand, did not produce a statistically significant result. The lack of a statistically significant result means that the result can not be determined to not be because of chance. For urban residents, the correlation between political interaction online and Euroscepticism must be disregarded.

The variables connected to economic Euroscepticism showed mixed results for the urban residents. Middle income has no statistically significant effect, whereas upper income does have a significant effect. What showed the highest statistically significant result however was the variable measuring satisfaction with the national economy. The result can be understood as: the more satisfied the urban resident answers they are with their national economy, their attitude towards further European integration increases positively with 0.033.

Regarding the variables connected to political Euroscepticism, all of them proved to be statistically significant. Both satisfaction with the national government and whether the respondent voted in the last election proved to have a positive effect upon urban residents' attitude towards further European integration. However, regarding placement on the left to right scale, one can observe the first negative result. Meaning that the more right-wing politically an urban resident identifies themselves as, their attitude towards further European integration is affected negatively by -0.037.

The variables connected to cultural Euroscepticism however proved to provide the biggest results, at least regarding effect size. Moreover, all the variables provided statistically significant results. The variables referring to immigration and its effect on national economy and cultural life respectively had positive results. In other words, the more an urban resident believes that immigration is good for the economy, their attitude towards further European integration increases positively by 0.241. The same positive relationship is true about the second variable regarding immigration. Lastly, religiosity also has a positive effect for urban residents, although it is not nearly as large in effect size as the other cultural Euroscepticism variables.

Finally, the individual control variables produced mixed results. Only two of them showed statistically significant results, namely age and whether the respondent is a minority. Regarding age, the older the urban resident was, their attitude towards further European integration is affected negatively by -0.005. Belonging to a minority also has a negative effect, as the attitude towards further European integration is shown to be affected negatively by -0.195.

The average Eurosceptic urban resident within the European Union can hence be described as an individual who doesn't consume a lot of news about politics and current affairs through media, tend to have a lower income, is not overly satisfied with the state of the national economy nor the national government, did not vote in the recent election and places themselves more to the right on the left-to-right political scale. They also tend to have a negative view of immigration, are not overly religious and tends to be a bit older. Lastly, the urban Eurosceptic may also belong to an ethnic minority.

The last result that is of note is the R^2 . It indicates that the model, with all the variables together, can explain a total of 18,2% of the variation within the

dependent variable. It means that almost a fifth of the variation within the dependent variable can be explained by this selection of independent variables.

5.2.2 Analysis of results for the rural group:

The result of the multiple regression analysis for the group rural residents can also be viewed in table 4. The independent variable measuring consumption of news about politics and current affairs has no statistically significant effect for this group and can hence be disregarded. However, the variable measuring political interaction through media has provided a statistically significant result. The result can be summarized as follows: if a rural resident has posted about something political online, their attitude towards further European integration is affected negatively by -0.182.

The variables representing economic Euroscepticism all produced varied but statistically significant results. Both having middle income or upper income affect the rural residents' attitude towards further European integration negatively. However, the more satisfied the rural resident is with their national economy, their attitude towards further European integration is affected positively by 0.067.

Out of the political variables, the only one which produced a statistically significant result is placement on the political left to right scale. Both the satisfaction with the national government variable and the voted variable must hence be disregarded. The result for placement on the left to right scale variable showed that the further to the right a rural resident identified as, their attitude towards further European integration was affected negatively by -0.026.

The cultural Euroscepticism variables proved to provide the biggest effect sizes out of all the variables. Both variables concerning immigration, in relation to the national economy and culture respectively, affect the dependent variable positively. In other words, if a rural resident believes that immigration is good for the economy and/or immigration enriches cultural life, will also have a more

positive attitude towards further European integration. The last variable, religiosity, also had a positive effect upon the dependent variable.

Lastly, the individual control variables produced mixed results. Gender did not produce a statistically significant result, whereas the remaining three did. Education level and belonging to a minority have a positive effect upon the dependent variable. In other words, a higher level of education affects the rural residents' attitude towards further European integration positively by 0.011. And belonging to a minority group affects the rural residents' attitude towards further European integration positively by 0.383. However, age has a negative effect, meaning that the older a rural resident is, their attitude towards further European integration is affected negatively by -0.007.

The average Eurosceptic rural resident within the European Union can be summarized as an individual who interacts politically online and tends to have a middle or high income. They also tend to be dissatisfied with the state of the national economy and places themselves more to the right on the left-to-right political scale. They tend to have a negative view on immigration and are also less religious overall, regardless of religion. Lastly, they tend to be older and have a lower level of education.

The last result which is important to note is the R^2 . For this multiple regression analysis for the group rural residents, all the variables together explain a total of 15.9% of the variation within the dependent variable.

6. Analysis of the Results in relation to the Theoretical Framework:

In this chapter I will discuss the significance of the results summarized in the previous chapter and discuss it in relation to the theoretical framework and the

previous research. The chapter will start off with discussing the results of the media variables, as they are the focal ones for this thesis purpose. After that, the results of the control variables are presented and discussed in relation to their respective previous research and theoretical framework as well, as they also provided interesting results for both urban and rural residents.

6.1 The role of different types of media usage

The purpose of this thesis was to further explore Euroscepticism amongst urban and rural residents respectively, with a specific focus on the role different usages of media could play in affecting their respective attitude towards the European Union and further European integration. The results from the regression analysis provided the answers for that purpose, proving there to be differences between urban and rural residents regarding how different types of media usage affects their attitude towards the European Union and further European integration differently.

As summarized in the previous chapter, the result from the regression analysis for urban residents showed that consumption of news regarding politics and current affairs indeed affected their attitude towards further European integration, and in extension the European Union, and that it affected it positively. As previously described, the results indicate that the more time an urban citizen spends consuming news about politics and current affairs through media, the more positive their attitude towards the European Union and further European integration will be, meaning that they are less Eurosceptic. The results for interacting politically through social media however did not show a statistically significant result, meaning that a correlation between it and Euroscepticism could not be statistically concluded. In comparison, the result from the regression analysis for rural residents showed no statistically significant effect regarding consumption of media, meaning that a significant correlation could not be determined, hence the relationship between it and Euroscepticism should be

disregarded. But on the other hand, there is a significant effect by interaction through media. In other words, if a rural resident is interacting politically through e.g., social media, they are more likely to be more Eurosceptic, as the effect is negative. Indeed, for rural residents, the ability to interact politically through new mediums such as social media has proven to have a negative correlation with their attitude towards the European Union and further European integration.

Previous research has numerous times concluded that rural residents are expected to be more Eurosceptic than their urban counterpart.¹⁶³ This was also found to be true in the univariate analysis of this thesis, even if it is by a considerably small margin. The following results from the regression analysis have shown that different media usage mattered for urban and rural residents respectively, with media consumption having a significant effect for urban residents and political interaction through media for rural residents. Moreover, the effect of these were opposite to one another. This strongly indicates that different types of media usage affect Euroscepticism amongst residents differently, depending on geographical location.

Regarding urban residents, the result indicates that when they consume news about politics and current affairs through media, they become less Eurosceptic. This can be said to somewhat be in line with the findings from previous researchers Fortunato and Pecoraro, as they concluded that just consuming information from media is correlated with a more positive attitude towards the European Union and further European integration.¹⁶⁴ However, as explained, that correlation was not significant for rural residents, which indicates that it may not be true for all individuals. For rural residents, political interaction through media was proven to have the statistically significant effect upon their attitude towards

¹⁶³ Neal, Gawlewicz, Heley, and Jones. Rural Brexit? The ambivalent politics of rural community, migration and dependency p. 176-177.; Johnston, Jones, Manley, and Pattie. Geographies of Brexit and its aftermath: voting in England at the 2016 referendum and the 2017 general election. p. 162-163

¹⁶⁴ Fortunato, and Pecoraro. "Social media, Education, and Euroscepticism". p. 13-14

the European Union and further European integration, and moreover, it is proven to have a negative effect. In other words, political interaction online is correlated with the rural resident becoming more Eurosceptic. This result can be linked to the previous research from Flew and Iosifidis, Levy, as well as Brändle, Galpin, and Trenz who voiced how specifically social media echo-chambers and “filter-bubbles” become the ground for Eurosceptic sentiments to be not only spread, but discussed within ideologically segregated communities.¹⁶⁵ It indicates that rural residents who interact politically online can be more polarized due to the nature of new media, e.g. the previously described algorithm of Facebook which does not encourage critical debate.¹⁶⁶ This has further backing due, as stated in the beginning of this paragraph, to the result that showed that Euroscepticism was overall more prevalent within rural areas, hinting to the probability that they would be further polarized to be more Eurosceptic. How different individuals are using media can therefore be concluded to matter, as both consumption of media and interaction through media have been proved to have correlation with different groups attitude towards the European Union and further European integration.

6.2 The role of the control variables:

The control variables did also produce varied interesting results for both urban and rural residents alike. In the following sections, I will go over each group of control variables respectively, connecting back to the previous research and the theoretical framework, highlighting both the differences and the similarities between the urban and rural residents.

¹⁶⁵ Brändle, Galpin, and Trenz. Brexit as ‘Politics of Division’: Social Media Campaigning after the Referendum. p. 238-239; Levy. Social Media, News Consumption, and Polarization: Evidence from a Field Experiment. p. 867-868; Flew, and Iosifidis. Populism, Globalisation and Social Media. p. 17-18

¹⁶⁶ Levy. Social Media, News Consumption, and Polarization: Evidence from a Field Experiment. p. 867-868

6.2.1 Economic Euroscepticism:

The variables measuring economic Euroscepticism were indeed shown to be differently significant for each group. A higher income has been proven to have a positive effect upon the respondent's attitude towards the European Union, for urban residents. This result fits with previous researchers' findings and the theoretical framework.¹⁶⁷ However, for rural residents, both middle and upper income has a negative effect. This means that having either a middle or upper income as a rural resident will make them become more Eurosceptic. Moreover, as lower income is these variable's reference group, it also means that a lower income is correlated with a lower level of Euroscepticism. This result goes against what has previously been established in research and theory, making it a finding which should be further explored in future research.

Regarding the third economic variable, namely satisfaction with the national economy, the results proved to be statistically significant for both urban and rural residents. Moreover, the effect is positive, meaning that the more satisfied both the urban and rural resident is with the state of the national economy, the less Eurosceptic the respondent is expected to be. It should also be noted that the effect is marginally larger for rural residents. These results are interesting, as it goes against the arguments put forward by researcher De Vries, who argued that an individual who is generally satisfied with the national economy would be more Eurosceptic.¹⁶⁸ Does this result show that European Union citizens now attribute a successful national economy, at least partly, to the European Union and further European integration? The results might suggest this, but future research would have to further examine this.

¹⁶⁷ Boomgaarden, Schuck, Elenbaas, and De Vreese. Mapping EU Attitudes: Conceptual and Empirical Dimensions of Euroscepticism and EU Support. p. 251

¹⁶⁸ De Vries. *Euroscepticism and the Future of European integration*. p. 95-98

6.2.2 Political Euroscepticism:

The variables measuring political Euroscepticism were also shown to affect urban and rural groups differently and having different effect sizes as well. For residents in both urban and rural areas, placement on the left-right scale affected residents' level of Euroscepticism negatively. This is in line with the previous research which has linked placement more to the right on the left-right scale to being more Eurosceptic.¹⁶⁹ However, for rural residents, none of the other variables measuring political Euroscepticism proved to have a statistically significant correlation with whether they are less or more Eurosceptic. This result indicates that baseline political participation nor whether the rural resident is content with their own national government has any significant effect upon their attitude towards further European integration and the European Union. These results mean that both basic political participation, like voting in the national elections, and overall satisfaction with the national government, should be disregarded, as it has not shown to have any statistically significant effects.

For urban residents however, both having voted in the last national vote as well as being satisfied with one's own national government have significant effects upon the respondent's level of Euroscepticism, both positively. In other words, if a respondent voted in the last national election, they are expected to be more positive towards the European Union, and the same can be said about if they are satisfied with their national government. This result speaks to there being a link between European Union urban citizens satisfaction with their national government and their attitude towards the European Union and further European integration. However, this is not entirely in line with previous research, as researcher De Vries argued that an individual who is satisfied with their national government might be more Eurosceptic, not less.¹⁷⁰ As this result is only

¹⁶⁹ Schone. *European disintegration? Euroscepticism and Europe's rural/urban divide*. p. 352; De Vries and Edwards. "Taking Europe to Its Extremes: Extremist Parties and Public Euroscepticism." p. 7-9

¹⁷⁰ De Vries. *Euroscepticism and the Future of European integration*. p. 95-98

statistically significant for urban residents, and not for rural residents, it hints towards there being a difference in how urban and rural residents respectively view the European Union in relation to their own national government.

6.2.3 Cultural Euroscepticism:

The variables measuring cultural Euroscepticism were interestingly shown to be the strongest effectors in regard to both groups. In other words, cultural aspects have been proven to be very important for both urban and rural residents in relation to their attitude towards the European Union. Of the cultural Euroscepticism variables, the two which encompasses immigration were proven to affect the most, for both groups. The results showed that having a positive view of immigration and immigrants for both variables had a strong correlation with having a more positive attitude towards the European Union or being less Eurosceptic. By viewing these results the other way around, the result lines up with the theoretical framework, namely that if the respondent has a negative attitude towards immigration and immigrants for both questions, they are more likely to be Eurosceptic.¹⁷¹ This is hence a theory proven to be correct for both urban and rural residents alike.

Regarding the third cultural Euroscepticism variable, religiosity, the results were statistically significant and positive for both rural and urban residents. It can hence be concluded that a higher level of religiosity is correlated with a more positive attitude towards the European Union and further European integration. This therefore provides more support for the previous research and theory presented by researchers Boomgaarden and Freire, whereas the arguments brought forward by Schone can be disregarded.¹⁷²

¹⁷¹ McLaren. Public Support for the European Union: Cost/Benefit Analysis or Perceived Cultural Threat? p. 552-555

¹⁷² Boomgaarden and Freire. Religion and Euroscepticism: Direct, Indirect or No Effects? p. 1242-1245; Schone. European disintegration? Euroscepticism and Europe's rural/urban divide. p. 356

6.2.4 Individual controls:

Lastly, the individual controls also provided some varied results which should be shortly presented and reflected upon. The variable representing gender can be disregarded for both groups, meaning that there exists no statistically significant correlation between a certain gender and Euroscepticism. Education level proved to be of some importance in regard to rural residents, where a higher level of education is positively correlated with a more positive attitude towards the European Union. The variable measuring age proved to be statistically significant for both rural and urban residents, as a higher age is correlated with the respondent becoming more Eurosceptic. Lastly, the minority variable also proved to be statistically significant for both groups. Interestingly, being a minority in an urban area has a negative effect, meaning that belonging to a minority group in an urban area is correlated with being more Eurosceptic. In a rural area however, the effect is positive, making the relation opposite to the urban one. The results for the minority variable in both regression analysis is specifically interesting and an aspect which should be further studied in future research.

7. Conclusions and Closing discussion:

7.1 Conclusions:

Through the statistical analysis, the impact of different types of media usage on Euroscepticism amongst rural and urban residents respectively have been highlighted. The results proved to be interesting, but as I underlined, as always, there is with certainty more predictors to explore in the future. As the results have been presented and analyzed in relation to the theoretical framework in the previous chapter, I will now return to the research question posed in the beginning of this thesis.

- *What is the effect of different media usage, in rural and urban areas respectively, on individuals' attitude towards the European Union?*

The effect of different types of media usage in rural and urban areas respectively in relation to their attitude towards the European Union was indeed mixed, and moreover not entirely what was expected. Most importantly, it has been proven to affect urban and rural residents within the European Union differently. For urban residents, consuming news about politics and current affairs through different mediums have a positive effect upon their attitude towards the European Union, while the addition of political interaction through media could not be proven to have a significant effect. Whereas for rural residents, political interaction through media proved to be significant while consumption of news about politics and current affairs proved not to be.

Regarding the hypothesis that I stated and presented at the beginning of this thesis:

- *Political interaction through media will have a bigger impact than just the consumption of news about politics and current affairs through media.*
 - *The effect will be positive, meaning that a respondent is less likely to be Eurosceptic, in regards to urban residents,...*
 - *... and the effect will be negative in regards to rural residents.*

Political interaction through media has, in parts, been proven to play a significant role in regard to respondents' attitude towards the European Union and further European integration. However, the first part of the hypothesis cannot be said to be true in its entirety, as it has only been proven true in regard to rural residents. For urban residents, political interaction through media could not be proven to have a significant correlation and effect upon whether a respondent is less or more Eurosceptic. Hence, the first part of my stated hypothesis can be accepted as true for rural residents and disregarded for urban residents.

The second and third part of my hypothesis can be concluded as right in some parts and wrong in others. Political interaction through media has, as mentioned in

the prior paragraph, been proven to not have any significant correlation with whether an urban resident is less or more Eurosceptic. Therefore, “*The effect will be positive, meaning that a respondent is less likely to be Eurosceptic, in regards to urban residents,...*” has been proven to not be correct, and should hence be disregarded. However, interestingly, consumption of news about politics and current affairs through media did influence urban residents' attitude towards the European Union and further European integration. Moreover, the effect is positive. In that regard, a part of the hypothesis has been proven to be correct, namely that the effect of media usage would be proven to be positive for urban residents. But, as said, the hypothesis in its entirety should still be disregarded.

The third and last part of my hypothesis can however be accepted as true. Political interaction through media have been proven to have a significant effect on rural residents' attitude towards further European integration and the European Union. Furthermore, the effect was also proven to be negative, meaning that having interacted politically through media, makes the rural resident more Eurosceptic. Interacting politically on social media can therefore be concluded to have a polarizing effect for the rural residents, contributing to the more common Eurosceptic attitudes in the rural areas.

What can further also be concluded is that cultural aspects, especially aspects concerning matters of immigration and immigrants, had the largest effect upon an individual's attitude towards further European integration and the European Union, regardless of geographical location. Indeed, if an individual has the belief that immigration is bad for the national economy and undermine the country's cultural life, they can also be expected to be significantly more Eurosceptic. Regarding the political, economic and individual variables, the results were considerably more muted. However, there were proven to be considerable differences between the two groups in more than one control variable, further supporting that they are fundamentally different from one another and as such

view certain aspects differently, ultimately also impacting their attitude towards the European Union differently.

7.2 Closing Discussion:

This thesis set out with the goal of further exploring the rural and urban divide in relation to Euroscepticism, and if different types of media usage could bridge this divide. While this stated purpose has been fulfilled, the results were not entirely what was expected, with regards to both previous research and the theoretical framework. Media, and how we use it, have been proven to be a double-edged sword, both capable of affecting European Union's citizens levels of Euroscepticism positively and negatively. Furthermore, it has also been proven that media usage affects differently depending on whether the respondent lives in an urban or rural area. The result of this thesis points to it contributing to further polarization, affecting urban residents positively and rural residents negatively, deepening the divide between the two regarding levels of Euroscepticism.

However, while this thesis has showcased the importance of a handful of variables, in regard to both rural and urban residents, it is important to underline, as I did earlier, that there are more variables which affect their attitude towards the European Union and further European integration. The R^2 result, the measurement indicating the model's overall explaining power, was 18% for urban residents and 15,9% for rural residents. This indicates that there are still more predictors, which were not included in this thesis, which could help further explain the rise of Euroscepticism and the differences between rural residents and urban residents. Especially regarding rural residents, where this model proved to have a lower explaining power than for the urban residents, must be further explored in future research. Furthermore, the result of thesis is, as said before, the general trends within European Union member states. It does not necessarily mean that these exact results can be observed in each of the member states. Rather, it may vary. Therefore, while the result here points to there being certain differences in what

predictors lay behind a rise in Euroscepticism in urban and rural areas respectively, this should be further explored on a country-to-country basis as well.

Euroscepticism is a phenomenon which will most certainly follow the European Union throughout its existence, as it always has done. Amongst the European Union citizens, the predictors behind its prevalence are many and far from fully understood due to the phenomenon's inherent complexity. This thesis has contributed to unraveling the complexity, concluding that different types of media usage affect European Union citizens differently depending on their geographical location. The results indicate that how different people use media, for consumption of news and information or for political interaction, contribute to how the people's attitude towards the European Union and further European integration looks like. Moreover, the results can be said to provide some support for the argument that media, especially modern media, contribute to further political polarization, as the results for urban and rural residents respectively showed effects opposite to one another. Indeed, how we use and interact through media does impact our attitude towards the European Union, but differently depending on where we live. In other words, it is not media in of itself which makes us more or less Eurosceptic. It's the attributes and opinions of the individual combined with how they use media which might lead to potential further polarization to either be more Eurosceptic or more positive towards the European Union. *Why* different types of media usage make certain European residents more Eurosceptic needs to be further explored, as the divide between Europe's rural and urban residents regarding Euroscepticism only stands to be further deepened.

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