

3i SA. Current political trends and cleavages.

ARTICLE 1.

1. What are major points of and examples in the article?
2. How can it be connected to theory on political cleavages and voting behavior?

Why do they vote so strangely in Copenhagen? Link with audio reading (in Danish):

<https://www.zetland.dk/historie/sYP5z4Dl-aejQ9Dar-ad377>

Zetland. November 20, 2025. By Mads Olrik.

What on earth is going on in Copenhagen?

Is there something in the groundwater? Why are the voters in the country's largest city so much redder [more left-wing] than everywhere else? This has been one of the questions in Danish politics following the Social Democrats' major defeat and the left wing's major victory in Copenhagen at Tuesday's municipal elections. But in a way, that question is too small.

Or rather: It is just one question in a very long line of identical questions popping up all over the world these years.

What on earth is going on with the voters in New York? In Paris? What is going on with the voters in Milan, Istanbul, Cairo, and Bangkok?

All those big cities are part of the same story as Copenhagen: that those living in the big city vote radically differently than their compatriots in the provinces. And they are doing so to an increasingly extreme degree.

We know why they vote differently. Since ancient Greece, people have discussed the differences between country and city, because the city attracts and perhaps even creates some very specific types of people. But across the globe, the differences have now become so extreme that it has become almost impossible to be a party that gathers many votes in both the provinces and the big cities.

After at least 100 years where geography has meant less and less for how we vote, it has suddenly become important again. What will this new reality do to us?

If you were one of those who voted in the municipal election this Tuesday, look inside yourself and think about this: Why did you vote for the party you did? There can be a myriad of reasons, I know. Maybe your family has always voted for a certain party, so you do too. It could also be that you live in a place where a specific political perception more or less lies down there in the groundwater, and therefore also seeps into you. There is, of course, also the possibility that you, specifically, are a completely unique individual who rises above your heritage, your class, and your region, and thinks independently and critically when voting. Are you like that?

When I ask, it is because looking at the result from Tuesday's municipal election, it looks for all the world as if there is something in the groundwater around Denmark. Out west, in

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Jutland, the Denmark Democrats (*Danmarksdemokraterne*) have stormed into several city councils and even secured a mayoralty in Ringkøbing-Skjern. We have gotten ourselves a bona fide rural district party.

And out east, in Copenhagen, the Social Democrats have suffered a brutal defeat. 20 years ago, the Social Democrats could pull almost 40 percent of the votes in the city—they owned Copenhagen. This time: 12.7 percent. The Red-Green Alliance (*Enhedslisten*)—which is a bona fide big-city party—got almost 23 percent. When the parties had to form a constitution, the Social Democrats' Pernille Rosenkrantz-Theil stood looking forlorn on the cold floor of the City Hall, and instead, SF's [Socialist People's Party] Sisse Marie Wellin became Lord Mayor with broad support from both red and blue parties.

It is an overwhelming fall from the peaks in the city where the Social Democrats were founded, and from where the party began its almost total takeover of Danish politics three or four generations ago.

Throughout the election campaign and after Tuesday's election, there has been a very large conversation about why this is happening. And there may be a number of good, specifically Danish or Copenhagen-based reasons why things went the way they did in Copenhagen. But when you lift your gaze, you discover that something else, something bigger, is also at play. Copenhagen is just one example of really, really many across the world where big-city voters make completely different choices than voters elsewhere in their countries.

Paris has had a mayor from the Socialist Party since 2001, at the same time as the rest of France has become more and more conservative. When looking at an election map of Great Britain, you can see that the new, right-wing party Reform UK's light blue color lies like an ocean across all of England with some red Labour islands dotted around the big cities. Milan is a left-wing stronghold in the middle of an increasingly conservative Northern Italy.

And then perhaps the biggest, recent example: New York in the USA has just held a mayoral election, and here it was a man named Zohran Mamdani who won. He is Muslim, he is a socialist, and he is now set to run the biggest city in the country that made Donald Trump president last year.

And one might think this is a Western phenomenon, but no. This red thread stretches far across the entire world. In Turkey, President Erdogan's biggest problem is that the country's largest cities—Istanbul and Ankara—stage one rebellion after another. Cairo vs. Egypt fits into the story; Kuala Lumpur vs. Malaysia fits in. In Thailand, the entire political system is built around the dividing line between the rural north and the highly urban Bangkok, and here the conflict has been decidedly violent over the past ten years, as the middle class in Bangkok has largely supported the military dictatorship that fought against the democracy movement from the rural north.

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Every time I have told people about this trend, they have first been surprised—gosh, is this happening everywhere?—and then, almost a second later, they have said, well yes, of course. Because we know that the big city is a special place. It attracts people with longer educations, and people with longer educations tend to be more left-wing, more globally oriented, and fonder of immigration.

So, the dynamic is well-known, but the new thing is that it is moving really fast right now. The difference between voters in the big city and voters outside the big city seems to be widening and deepening in these years, and signs keep popping up that we are at a sort of turning point. A few years ago, when the Liberal Party (*Venstre*) broke apart, the party split precisely into a rural-*Venstre*—which became Inger Støjberg's Denmark Democrats—and a city-*Venstre* in Lars Løkke Rasmussen's Moderates, and then an old *Venstre* trying to figure out which leg to stand on.

On Tuesday, Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen said it very clearly: There is only one party left that is not limited by geography and is capable of gathering votes in equal amounts from the big city and the provinces, and which is truly present in the whole country, namely her party, the Social Democrats. But she said that before she knew the result of the municipal election, and the new political map of Denmark looks far, far more divided.

Now that the Social Democrats are also finding it extremely difficult to be a large party in both the provinces and the big cities, something is about to snap. When US President Trump sends the military into democratically run cities, it is a sign that something is about to snap. When Nigel Farage in the UK and Marine Le Pen in France build their surging political projects almost exclusively on people in the provinces and ignore the voter groups in the big cities, something is about to snap.

And what is about to snap is precisely what a party like the Social Democrats has benefited from for almost the party's entire history. In the last 100 years, geography and people's residence meant less and less in politics, and that made it easier to be a broad "people's party" (*folkeparti*). People drank more and more of the same groundwater. Now it has turned. Geography is back. So what now?

There are some doomsday prophecies about this phenomenon out there. In a column in the *Financial Times* a few weeks ago, one of the newspaper's editors wrote about the mayoral election in New York and how it precisely showed the deeper and deeper chasm between city and country in the USA. Janan Ganesh, as the editor is called, also rolled out several of the examples from other countries that we have also touched upon, and it all led him to a very uncomfortable conclusion. It is as if a vicious cycle is in motion. The big cities attract or retain very specific types of people, and the provinces attract or retain completely different ones. The population sorts itself. The two groups look at each other with increasing contempt and

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puzzlement; they push each other further and further away, reinforcing the differences and the polarization.

Ganesh asked: If this continues, and the cities and the rest of the country keep becoming more and more different, how can one avoid nations being torn apart?

Ganesh also asked if nation-states have ever experienced anything like this before, and that leads quite nicely to the other way one can view this development: This is, in a way, a return to how politics functioned a long time ago. In the 1800s and well into the 1900s, people's political orientation was largely determined by where they lived and what they did. *Venstre* and the Social Liberals (*Radikale Venstre*) were decidedly rural district parties, while the Social Democrats and the Conservative People's Party were city parties. Across the West, politics was heavily dominated by local special interests.

But slowly and surely, something began to happen. The Social Democrats were one of the first parties that, just over 100 years ago, broke through geography and became a party that could garner broad backing both in and outside the big cities. Slowly, the most important topics in politics went from being very local and concrete—unemployment, tariffs on wheat, bus routes—to being more abstract and nationwide—values politics, foreign policy.

And then began what researchers have called a de-territorialization of both society and politics—a slow slide towards the place you lived not being particularly decisive for how you voted. It was rather ideology or your class affiliation that played a part when you had to vote, and especially from the 1970s onwards, the connection between geography and politics became smaller and smaller across large parts of the West. Even in the USA, where polarization between political blocs began to pick up speed in the 1990s, there were for a long, long time examples of big cities governed by Republicans or conservatives, and provincial states governed by Democrats. In Denmark, *Venstre* could muster large support in both the provinces and the big cities throughout the 00s. Every party still had its strongholds, but the cards were quite shuffled.

Election researchers Kasper Møller Hansen and Rune Stubager have found that in Denmark, this development culminated at the general election in 2011, which was the election with the least political difference between country and city ever—meaning the least correlation between where you lived and how you voted.

But then it turned. Since 2011, geography has popped up more and more in both the political debate and as a factor when the X is to be marked. At the general election in 2015, which was dubbed the 'rebellion from the outskirts', the Danish People's Party took entire regions in the provinces and created what was called 'the Yellow Denmark'. The sense of geography's return was reinforced first by the Brexit vote in the UK in the summer of 2016 and later that same year by the election of Donald Trump as American president. In both those elections, there were

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quite extreme differences between how people living in different places voted, and one could use geography and population density to draw the dividing lines.

The trend hit the Social Democrats for the first time at the municipal election in 2021, and now, in 2025, it turned into a stinging slap in the face not just in Copenhagen, but also in the medium-sized municipalities around Copenhagen and in several of the medium-sized cities. Gladsaxe slipped away from the Social Democrats. Køge, Albertslund, Randers slipped too, and in Frederikshavn, the party lost half its votes.

Already four years ago, there was talk within the Social Democrats that this is a catastrophe for the party. There is a huge group of voters in Copenhagen, whom the party could once be almost sure of, who have disappeared from the party's ranks. There is something new here that we don't really understand yet.

The media coverage in Copenhagen leading up to the election has given me a quite wonderful flashback to exactly the media coverage leading up to and after the general election in 2015, where the Danish People's Party ended up becoming the largest party in several places in the provinces. It was places like Southern Jutland and Lolland-Falster that were dubbed 'the Yellow Denmark', and journalists made pilgrimages there to understand what on earth was going on. Who are these strange people living here? How do they think? Why do they vote the way they do? The same thing happened when Donald Trump became president in the USA, and when Brexit was voted through, where one immediately had to make a pilgrimage out to the provinces to talk to "ordinary people." During the campaign for the municipal election, exactly the same thing has happened, just in Copenhagen. Journalists go out into the streets looking for the deep-red voters who are breaking away from the rest of the nation's electorate, and they ask: What on earth is going on here? Who are you, you people sitting and drinking coffee at obscure cafés? what kind of life do you live, how can it be that you vote the way you do? What is in the groundwater?

Geography is back as an explanatory factor in Western politics. We are on our way toward having big-city parties and rural district parties, just as we had over 100 years ago.

In the last 100 years, several different parties have been able to be large, broad people's parties capable of straddling the differences between country and city. Now that geography's significance is returning, and rural dwellers and city dwellers are in the process of moving away from each other, the Social Democrats risk ending up in the same trap that *Venstre*, the Red-Green Alliance, the Denmark Democrats, Labour in the UK, Republicans and Democrats in the USA, the Christian Democrats in Germany, and all other parties in the West are ending up in: namely, that if you try to make politics for everyone, you can be overtaken by parties focusing on specific groups. And if you try to hit specific groups in the provinces, you risk alienating the big city.

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The Social Democrats still want to be a broad party, and we don't know if the return of geography is a new iron law or just a new challenge. Maybe one can still make politics for people as they are most. But one cannot really avoid the thought: Are there even any "people" left who are still "people as they are most"? Is it all just strange subgroups drinking their own groundwater and not understanding each other, who need to have their own separate parties?

Is there a people one can be a people's party for?

Her er en oversættelse af teksten til engelsk. Jeg har bevaret opsætningen med spørgsmålene først, efterfulgt af selve artiklen.

ARTICLE 2

1. What are major points of and examples in the article?
2. How can it be connected to theory on political cleavages and voting behavior?

Top researcher warns of historically deep political gap between women and men *December 22, 2024 | Berlingske | Section 1, Page 18 | Henrik Jensen, Mia Gleerup Fallentin | 1449 words*

In recent times, Danish men and women have never voted as differently in political elections as they do now, according to data from the last 19 general elections. A historically large distance between the genders has opened up over the years, and one of the explanations, in particular, worries a prominent researcher.

Although Kasper Møller Hansen suspected what was coming, he was somewhat surprised.

The seasoned professor has spent years scrutinizing how we behave as political animals, and when he set out to examine how the political convictions of men and women have developed over time, a chasm was revealed that he has never before seen so wide.

"It is simply something that came creeping up without us really talking about it being on the way, and now we can just see the record. It is actually frightening," says the election researcher.

And the development is significant.

Back in 1971, an almost equal share of men and women voted for the "red" parties [left-wing], and that was the picture more or less until the beginning of the 1990s. Then something happened.

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During the election in 2001, when Anders Fogh Rasmussen could enter the Prime Minister's Office for the first time, 41 percent of men voted for the red block, while the figure was nearly 48 percent for women.

And when Kasper Møller Hansen, together with his research colleagues, ran the numbers for the 2022 election through the machine, it spat out some remarkable figures.

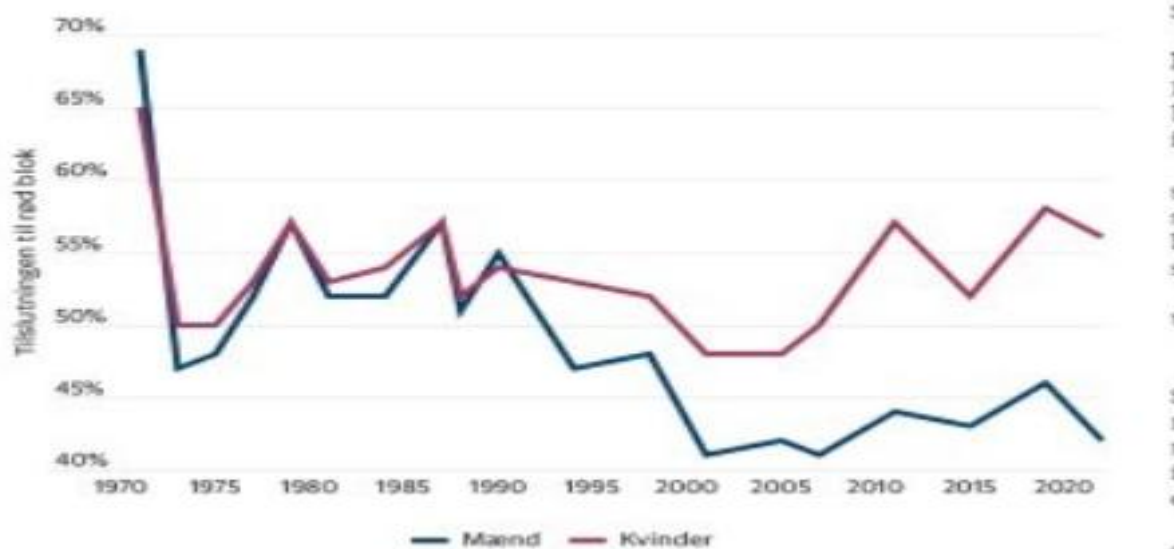
In total, 56 percent of women voted for parties in the red block, while only 42 percent of men placed their cross next to the red parties.

A significant and constantly growing gap between the genders, according to data from the 19 general elections since 1971, which election researchers Kasper Møller Hansen and Rune Stubager have extracted for Berlingske.

As Kasper Møller Hansen puts it himself: "It was only when we made these curves over time that we actually discovered what we had dreaded. The difference has simply grown from election to election." According to Kasper Møller Hansen, it is worrying that men and women vote differently to a much higher degree than before. It is an expression of the fact that the genders are moving more and more in different directions in a wide range of areas such as education, political opinions, gender politics, and place of residence.

"My biggest worry is what it means if we live increasingly divided lives, where young women live in the cities, go to university, and vote left-wing, while young men stay behind in the provinces and do the opposite," he says and notes: "The chasms in our society are becoming larger."

| Den politiske kløft mellem mænd og kvinder vokser



Kilde: Partiledernes kamp om midten, Folketingsvalget 2022 af Kasper Møller Hansen og Rune Stubager

There are several explanations for the development.

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It is a well-known fact that men more often vote for the "blue" parties [right-wing], while women more often vote red, but over the past 20 years, gender has gained far greater significance for where we place our cross in general elections. In other words, gender has become a clearer cleavage in politics: We are becoming more polarized.

We know, says a researcher like Associate Professor Ditte Shamshiri-Petersen from Aalborg University, that men and women are interested in politics to roughly the same extent, but they are interested in different parts of politics, different topics, and it has been that way for many years.

Men are most often more interested in the economy, defense, and foreign policy than women are, says Ditte Shamshiri-Petersen, explaining that there is some truth to the stereotypes: "Women most often care more about welfare issues than men, but also about climate and the environment." However, this is far from enough to explain the entire gap between the genders.

Liberation and equality "I want to say a few words to you young men," said Alex Vanopslagh, party leader of Liberal Alliance, when he stepped onto the stage at the party's latest national convention in the Tivoli Congress Center.

From the stage, he addressed—as DR [Danish Broadcasting Corporation] noted—that men live shorter lives, receive shorter educations, and will have a harder time finding a partner.

He issued a call to action: "Pull yourself together. Take responsibility. Don't fall for the narratives that your gender is a burden – and that the opposite gender must be fought," it sounded from the stage, where the party leader simultaneously renounced the phenomenon Andrew Tate, whom he described as "the fool."

It was hardly a coincidence that he addressed the young men.

For it is no secret that LA [Liberal Alliance] has a particularly good grip on young men, and this tells a larger story.

This is evident from the latest major election study of the general election in 2022, which turned into a book titled "The Party Leaders' Battle for the Center".

One of the co-authors of the book is Rune Stubager, a professor at Aarhus University.

"There has simply emerged a clearer difference that wasn't there before," he notes.

If we are to understand the development, we must rewind time, he believes. So we will.

In the 70s, women continued their entry into the labor market, and the left-wing Redstocking movement went to the streets demanding a break with the stereotypical female role.

Free abortion, equal pay, and better maternity leave were just some of the demands.

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"The movement was allied with parties on the left wing. In the generations that grew up then and onwards, a higher degree of connection to the left wing emerged," says Rune Stubager as part of the explanation for what is happening today: "It is certainly a possible explanation that the left-turn from the '68 generation breaks through from the beginning of the 1990s, where the differences begin to grow larger between the genders." Rune Stubager thinks the development will only continue. This is mainly due to the attitudes among the young.

"We can see that there is a group of younger men who are quite dismissive of increased equality and think that equality is perhaps not just achieved, it has perhaps gone too far."

Two generations Precisely the political attitudes of young voters seem worth dwelling on.

In the large election study, it was also mapped how the different age groups place themselves on what the researchers call a "gender-political attitude index."

And here, it is among the 18 to 29-year-olds that one finds the greatest difference.

On a scale where 100 is most left-wing in gender-political questions, young women scored 70, while young men scored 44 – the lowest score of all groups.

"The difference between men and women is greatest among young voters, where it is largely also gender equality policy that separates the genders," says Ditte Shamshiri-Petersen, who helped develop the index.

And the development is not only seen in Denmark.

Polls in the USA show, as the Financial Times has written, that 18 to 30-year-old women are now 30 percentage points more left-wing than the young men in the age group. Similar trends are seen in Germany and Great Britain.

As the newspaper noted: Generation Z is two generations, not one.

More than a vote It is about far more than a cross on a ballot paper, explains Kasper Møller Hansen over the phone from the University of Copenhagen, as he elaborates on their discoveries, which the professor mentions in rapid succession.

While value politics through the 00s was particularly synonymous with immigration policy, in recent years it has been about climate and gender in particular.

"The whole question of 'woke' and #MeToo and the rights of sexual and ethnic minorities has helped pull women to the left in the last five years," tells Kasper Møller. Additionally, men get shorter educations – as Alex Vanopslagh also explained to the young men – and women move to a higher degree towards the cities, while the men remain in the provinces, where "they cannot get the girlfriend or family they dream of," as Kasper Møller Hansen says.

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"There are a lot of these structures that help pull in the same direction: Men and women are politically more different today than they have ever been." It is not necessarily the case, Kasper Møller Hansen points out, that one votes to the left of the center because one attends higher education in the city.

But specifically on the question of equality, we know that people in the cities with long educations – men as well as women – are more inclined to have a left-wing standpoint, he points out.

But what does it mean then, that men and women vote differently? A study from 2015 gave some of the answer. The right-wing election defeats in 1998 and 2011 would have been turned into victories if only men voted. And Lars Løkke Rasmussen would not have become Prime Minister at all in 2015 if it had only been the women who had cast a ballot. [...]