

Urban conflict and voting pattern:  
some tentative generalizations from the last state  
election in Hamburg

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### I. Theoretical Considerations

The long-term accumulation of social problems in underprivileged urban areas causes economic and social insecurity which in turn breeds stereotypes and dissatisfaction. If these problems are politized, i.e. if the political authorities are considered responsible for the social hardship, the long-term development does not only produce political discontent but also gradually undermines the loyalties to the established political parties<sup>1</sup>. To the extent that these loyalties are destroyed political protest will become manifest either in exit or in voice<sup>2</sup>.

Both, exit and voice can take on many forms. For instance, voice includes acts of political violence as well as peaceful protest demonstrations or votes for non-established parties. Similarly, exit comprises emigration, the resignation from an established party, or internal withdrawal, i.e. political apathy (non-voting). Clearly, indicators of political apathy usually are ambiguous as is exemplified by the discussion on low voter turnout: while in particular some American authors consider low turnout rates as an indication of political satisfaction, other authors draw just the opposite conclusion. Regarding the formerly high turnout rates in Western Germany we are inclined to interpret the drop in voting participation as an indication of exit. Remember that in the old Bundesländer turnout rates in the national elections have shrunk from nearly 90% in 1983 to less than 80% in 1990. And in the new Bundesländer we have witnessed an even higher decline (by more than 15%) between 1990 and 1992. Furthermore, Falter and Schumann<sup>3</sup> empirically demonstrate a negative relationship between political dissatisfaction and voting participation.

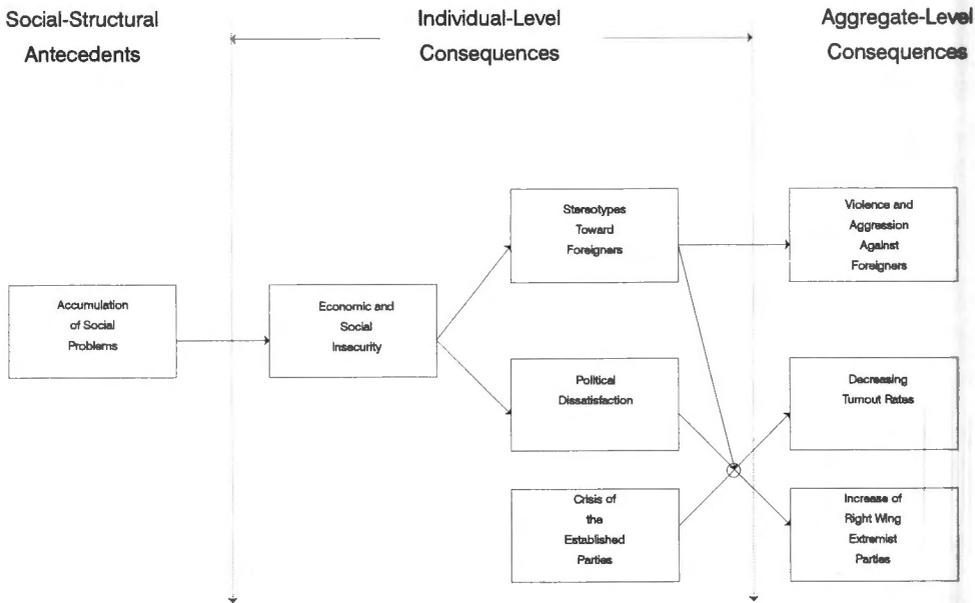
This nexus is depicted in Figure 1 which is much more a conceptual framework than a causal model. The arrows between different variable blocs represent rather a temporal sequence than a causal relationship. In this sense, stereotypes of foreigners precede acts of overt hostility against foreigners but they do not cause them. We all know that additional conditions have to be met before stereotypes become manifest in overt hostile behavior. Similarly, it depends on a bund-

1 For the causes and consequences of political right wing extremism see HEITMEYER W., 1993, *Gesellschaftliche Desintegrationsprozesse als Ursachen von fremdenfeindlicher Gewalt und politischer Paralyisierung*. Aus *Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, B 2-3/93, 3-13; ROTH D., 1990, *Die Republikaner. Schneller Aufstieg und tiefer Fall einer Protestpartei am rechten Rand*. Aus *Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, B 37-38/90, 27-39 and WILLEMS H., WURTZ, St. and ECKERT, R., 1993, *Fremdenfeindliche Gewalt: Eine Analyse von Täterstrukturen und Eskalationsprozessen*. Researchreport presented to the Bundesministerium für Frauen und Jugend and the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft.

2 HIRSCHMAN, A. O., 1970, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organisations, and States*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

3 FALTER J.W. and SCHUMANN S., 1993, "Nichtwahl und Protestwahl: Zwei Seiten einer Medaille". Aus *Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, B 11/93, 36-49.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



le of additional conditions whether political protest is expressed at all, whether exit or voice is chosen, and whether a particular action from the whole repertoire of available alternatives is selected. We cannot introduce these complexities into Figure 1.

#### A. *The economic and political situation before the state election in hamburg 1993*

It must be sufficient to show that the socio-economic and political situation before and during the last state election in Hamburg made abstention as a kind of exit and rightest votes as a mode of voice highly probable in the underprivileged groups. First, in several urban areas of Hamburg social problems have aggravated over the last years. Districts with high proportions of workers and a low levels of education had to suffer most from unemployment and cuts of social expenditures; and at the same time they have experienced an often dramatic increase of the percentage of foreigners. This situation is a breeding ground of social prejudices. Jagodzinski et al.<sup>4</sup> in an individual-level analysis have shown that attitudes towards guestworkers in West Germany are heavily influenced by education: the lower the education the higher the tendency to discriminate foreigners. Similar relationships have been empirically established with respect to other

<sup>4</sup> JAGODZINSKI W., KUHNEL, St. and SCHMIDT P., 1990, "Searching for Parsimony: are True-Score Models or Factor Models more Appropriate?". *Quality & Quantity*, 24, 447-470.

stereotypes. This is presumably not in the first place a matter of cognitive complexity, role-taking, or tolerance: highly educated are much less threatened by unemployment<sup>5</sup> and they do not compete with foreigners for scarce jobs and housing. Thus, in the present situation low education is almost equivalent to economic and social insecurity.

We cannot empirically investigate the extent of stereotypes and the political discontent in the underprivileged areas but we can safely assume them to exist. We also assume a decline of the party loyalties. It is true, the impact of unemployment on party identification is still at issue<sup>6</sup>. However, regarding the long-term decline of party identification at the national level and the massive fluctuation of party votes in the last state elections in Hamburg, stable party loyalties in the problem areas would be more than a surprise.

In the last state elections even identifiers of the established parties may have considered strategies of exit or voice. Adherents of the SPD, the party which traditionally has attracted voters from the underprivileged social stratum, encountered three difficulties. First of all, the SPD had been in government and had not been able to substantially improve the socio-economic conditions of the underprivileged. In spite of the economic boom after the re-unification the life-conditions of the disadvantaged groups did not appreciably improve. The unemployment rates dropped from 13.4% in 1988 to 7.9% in 1992; the number of persons on public assistance per 1000 inhabitants did not change at all<sup>7</sup>. Second, during the last decades the SPD has gradually lost the image to be the party of the underprivileged. By attempting to extend its electoral basis to the new middle classes the party has repeatedly frustrated its core clientel. The shrinking importance of the traditional SPD voter is fairly good reflected by the gradual decline of the Alford-index, i.e. the percentage of workers among the SPD voters. Not only has the SPD become eligible for middle class voters, the percentage of workers among the voters of conservative parties has also increased<sup>8</sup>. While formerly the latent interest conflicts between the old and the new SPD clientel may have been concealed by a vague, commonly accepted socialist utopia, this ideology has lost much of its appeal after the break-down of communist systems. Consequently, many underprivileged voters perceive the SPD as the party of the new middle class. The appearance of the SPD candidate Vorscherau who looks much more as an exponent of the hanseatic bourgeoisie than as a representative of the working class may have contributed to this impression. Finally, the criticism of the established

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5 We cannot report unemployment rates at different levels of education. However, the respective figures for workers are rather telling: while the proportion of workers among unemployed is nearly 60 %, it amounts to only 40% among the labor force (Statistisches Bundesamt 1992).

6 BUCHEL F. and FALTER J.W., 1994, *Der Einfluss der erwerbsbiographischen Situation auf die politische Einstellung. Eine Panel-Analyse mit Längsschnittdaten von Langzeitarbeitslosen*. In: RATTINGEN H., JAGODZINSKI, W. and GABRIEL O.W., (eds.), 1994, *Wahlen und politische Einstellungen im vereinigten Deutschland*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang.

7 In 1988 and 1992 the figure is the same: 85 per 1000 inhabitants receive constant support. See FRIEDRICHS and ALPHEIS (1991) for a detailed account of the problems of foreign labor immigrants.

8 From the postmaterialism theory (cf. INGLEHART, 1977; 1990) we can even infer that workers sooner or later will prefer conservative over socialist parties: If materialist orientations remain dominant in the working class and if conservative parties continue to focus on old politics, i.e. on the satisfaction of materialistic needs, the attachment of workers to these parties should gradually increase.

parties which in Germany is summarized under the heading *Parteienverdrossenheit*<sup>9</sup> also concerns the SPD: protectionism of SPD members in the public services, SPD politicians involved in corruption, scandals or the mismanagement in municipal enterprises are standard themes of public and scientific discussions<sup>10</sup>.

The CDU was in no better situation. It is true, as a conservative party the CDU has stressed the goals of the old politics, i.e. economic and political stability. However, in the present economic depression the party cannot be expected to quickly improve the fate of the disadvantaged groups. To the contrary, the rationalization of industries can be expected to produce further unemployment. And if we look at the so-called Aussiedler from Eastern Europe, the CDU successes in immigration politics are at least dubious. Finally, as far as corruption and mismanagement are concerned, the situation of the CDU was even worse than that of the SPD. The CDU ultimately caused a repetition of the last state election which had taken place only two years before. A number of CDU members had criticized the inner party bloc electoral system for the nomination of candidates as being undemocratic and had brought the whole issue to supreme court of Hamburg. The court sentenced the electoral system to be incompatible with the constitution and arranged new elections. The conflict led to a split within the CDU. Some members finally left the party and founded a new party, the so-called STATT party. Clearly, the dispute was suited to stir further discontent among the CDU adherents and to reduce the chances of an election victory.

Thus, with respect to voting participation and protest voting, three predictions can be made: (1) Discontent in the disadvantaged groups should lead to abstention and votes for right wing extremist parties. (2) Protest votes of students and young university graduates should increase the votes for the GREENS. (3) Protest votes of the bourgeois middle-class should favor the STATT party. We are predominantly interested in the first hypothesis. However, in order to perform comparisons we will also investigate the distributions of the votes for the STATT party and the GREENS.

## II. Empirical analysis

For time limitations, we have to confine ourselves to the fundamentals of our ecological analysis and report the details only in the appendix. We have (provisional) election results and census data for 98 urban districts<sup>11</sup> (Stadtteile) in Hamburg<sup>12</sup>. The census data from 1987 include:

- percentages of
- unemployed persons,
- workers,

9 The dimensions of *Parteiverdrossenheit* are discussed in RATTINGER (1993).

10 SCHEUCH E. K. and SCHEUCH U., 1992, *Cliquen, Klüngel und Karrieren: über den Verfall der politischen Parteien*. Reinbek: Rohwolt.

11 Since the size of the electorate in some districts is very small, they had to be collapsed into larger units. Thus, our empirical analysis is based not on 104 urban districts but on 98 units (cf. Statistisches Landesamt der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg 1993a). Since the overwhelming majority of these units are districts, we will stick to the label 'urban district'.

12 We are greatly indebted to the *Statistische Landesamt der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg* which has quickly made available these data (cf. 1989, 1990, 1993a, 1993b).

- persons with low education (*Hauptschule* or less), intermediate (*Realschule*), or high education (*Abitur*),
  - owners per house
  - persons who are sixty years old or older,
  - houses with one or two flats (residential area),
  - flats with five rooms or more (size of apartments);
- and, furthermore, the
- average number of members per household,
  - average rent per capita.

In addition, we had information about the *percentage of foreigners in each district in 1992*.

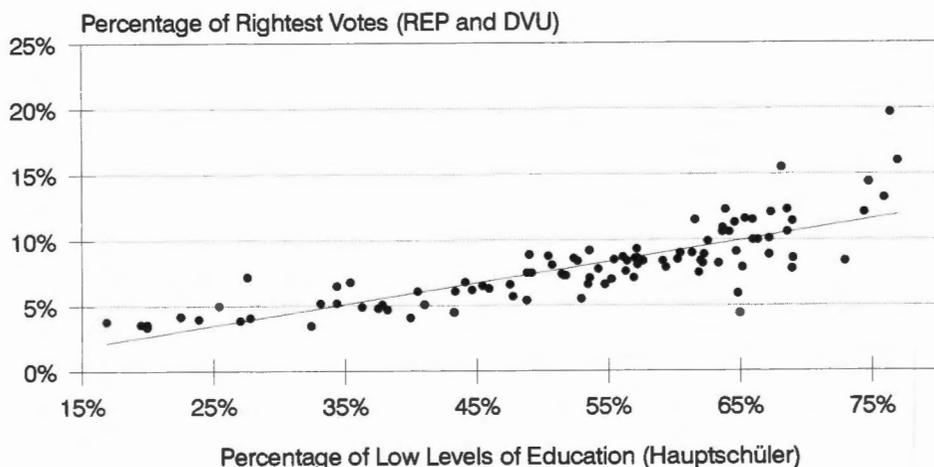
These are the socio-economic variables which we have used as independent variables in order to explain turnout rates and party choices. Most of the socio-economic indicators are highly correlated. For instance, the correlation between the *percentage of workers* in a district and the *percentage of persons with low education* is nearly 0.9. Each of these two variables correlate moderately high with the *percentage of unemployed in 1987* and the *percentage of foreigners in 1992*. Accordingly, if a district is characterized by a high percentage of workers, it usually also displays high percentages of unemployed, of foreigners, a large average number of members per household etc. It is for this reason that the effects of each variable on voter turnout and party choice cannot be separated. There are always several sets of independent variables which explain almost the same proportion of variance in these dependent variables. And there is a high amount of multicollinearity among the independent variables. For these reasons we have decided to use in all regression equations (a) only a small set of independent variables which (b) fits best our theoretical reasoning and which (c) explains approximately the same percentage of variance in the dependent variable as the linear combination of all independent variables. However, it has to be emphasized that other combinations of independent variables may produce the same or even a slightly higher coefficient of determination.

In the empirical analysis we will proceed in two steps. We will first present a simple bivariate scatterplot for each dependent variable and one of its best predictors. We will then estimate a more sophisticated ecological regression model. According to our theoretical explanation *low education* should have a strong positive impact on rightest votes because the poorly educated have bad chances on the labor market, suffer from competition with foreigners, and are more prone to stereotypes. In the empirical analysis, low education indeed displayed the highest correlation with the *percentage of right wing votes*. The scatterplot in Figure 2 reveals a strong relationship even between the untransformed variables: *The larger the percentage of persons with low secondary education (Hauptschulabschluss), the higher the percentage of right wing votes*<sup>13</sup>. The correlation amounts to 0.81. Thus the aggregate-level analysis is perfectly consistent with our theoretical explanation.

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<sup>13</sup> We have simply calculated the sum of votes for the DVU and the Republican Party and divided this sum by the number of valid votes.

**Figure 2: Rightest Votes and Low Education**  
 - State Election in Hamburg, 1993 (N=98 Urban Districts) -



Unweighted and untransformed variables:  $r=0.806$

Weighted and transformed variables:  $r=0.910$

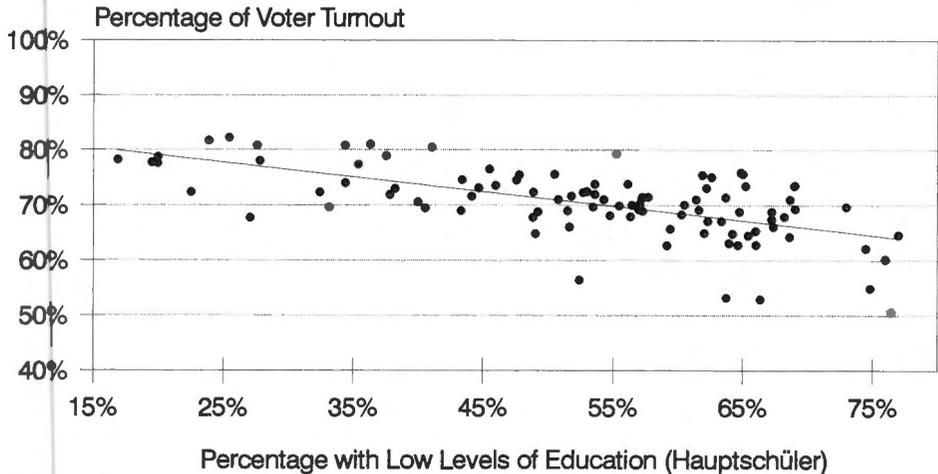
At the individual level, exit and voice are exclusive alternatives. You can either exit or you can protest but you cannot do both at the same time. However, we expect exit and voice, i.e. abstention and right wing votes, both to increase in disadvantaged districts because some underprivileged will become politically apathic and others will support extremist parties. Therefore, our ecological analysis should yield a positive correlation between abstention and right wing votes, and the former variable should also be dependent on education. This is exactly what we observe in Figure 3: the higher the percentage of poorly educated the lower the turnout rates. The correlation again is fairly strong <sup>14</sup>.

So far, our theoretical considerations have been confirmed. The next two Figures show that protest votes for the GREENS and the STATT party arose in different socio-economic environments. As we know from survey analysis, the GREEN party is most strongly supported by young and highly educated individuals. Accordingly, there should be a positive correlation between the percentage of graduates (Abiturienten) and the percentage of GREEN votes which indeed is displayed in Figure 4. By contrast, the STATT party has found its strongest support in the middle class which can be characterized by an intermediate level of education. Presumably, most votes have come from traditional CDU adherents. Accordingly, the percentage of the STATT party increases with the percentage of per-

<sup>14</sup> It becomes even stronger if the *percentage of persons at intermediate levels of education* (Realschule) is used as predictor. The norm 'a good citizen has the duty to vote' seems to be most accepted in the middle class.

### Figure 3: Voter Turnout and Low Education

- State Election in Hamburg, 1993 (N=98 Urban Districts) -



Unweighted and untransformed variables:  $r=-0.624$

Weighted and untransformed variables:  $r=-0.702$

sons at intermediate levels of education (see Figure 5). On balance, protest votes for the GREENS and STATT had an entirely different social base.

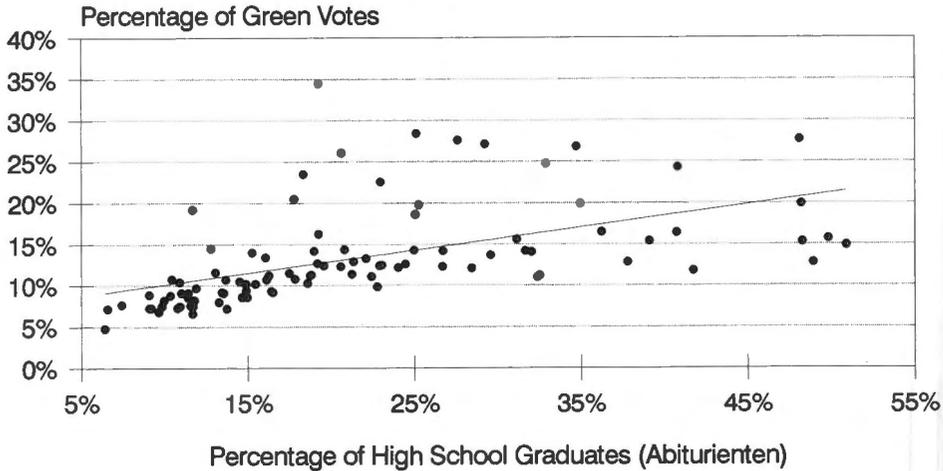
Let us now turn to the more sophisticated regression models. In order to smooth the skewness of some variables we have subjected them to a logarithmic transformation. In order to reduce the impact of small districts we have weighted the data by the number of persons which are entitled to vote. Our analyses are still based on the provisional election results and they have not been examined for autocorrelated residuals. Nevertheless we can expect them to lie quite close to the final solution.

In total, we report four regression analyses, one for *voter turnout* and three for the protest parties. Table 1 reports the coefficient of determination and the standardized regression coefficient. In the first row of each regression we have displayed the maximal  $R^2$ , i.e. the  $R^2$  that can be explained by all independent variables summarized in the Appendix. We have also attempted to keep the  $R^2$  of our models close to the maximal  $R^2$ .

As can be seen in the upper left column of Table 1 we can explain more than 85% of the variance of rightmost votes<sup>15</sup> by only three independent variables: (logarithmic transformed) *low education*, *average number of household members*, and *size of apartments*. Thus, the success of the right extremist parties is high in areas with low education, where a large number of individuals shares a few rooms.

15 The dependent variables always have been logarithmically transformed.

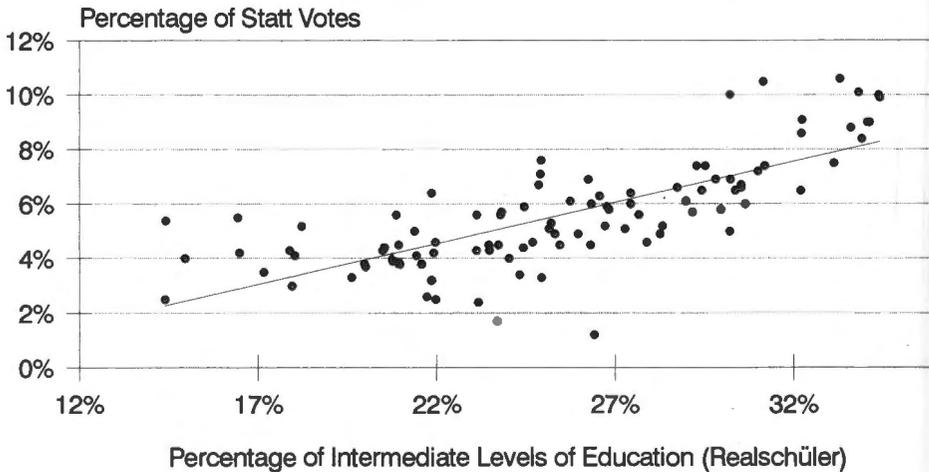
**Figure 4: Green Votes and High Education**  
 - State Elections in Hamburg, 1993 (N=98 Urban Districts) -



Unweighted and untransformed variables:  $r=0.525$

Weighted and transformed variables:  $r=0.646$

**Figure 5: Statt Votes and Intermediate Education**  
 - State Elections in Hamburg, 1993 (N=98 Urban Districts) -



Unweighted and untransformed variables:  $r=0.748$

Weighted and transformed variables:  $r=0.807$

TABLE 1

Socio-Economic Determinants of Protest Votes and Abstention in the State Election in Hamburg 1993 - Results of Weighted Regression Analysis  
Coefficients of Determination and Standardized Regression Coefficients

	RIGHTTEST VOTES <sup>+</sup> DVU + REPUBLICANS	VOTER TURNOUT
R2 (Max.)	90.3%	90.8%
R2	85.6%	89.1%
R2 adjusted	85.1%	88.6%
Intermediate and high Education <sup>+</sup>	-0.688	0.522
Members per Household	0.411	0.213
Number of Rooms	-0.415	
Unemployment <sup>+</sup>		-0.365
Foreigners <sup>+</sup>		-0.171 <sup>*</sup>
Durbin-Watson Test	2.912	3.165
Du (upper limit)	1.704	1.715
	STAIT <sup>+</sup>	GREENS <sup>+</sup>
R2 (Max.)	79.9%	90.3%
R2	79.1%	84.6%
R2 adjusted	78.4%	83.6%
Intermediate Education (Realschule)	0.317	
High School Graduates (Abiturienten) <sup>+</sup>		0.888
Rent per capita	0.442	-0.470
Residential Area	0.425	-0.453
Owners per house		0.573
Members per Household		-0.691
Sixty years and older		-0.453
Durbin-Watson Test	8.265	3.558
Du (upper limit)	1.704	1.735

Notes: 1. The data have been weighted by the number of persons entitled to vote.

2. All regression coefficients are significant at the 0.001 level. The exception is marked by asterisks; these coefficients are significant at the 5 % level.

<sup>+</sup> In order to smooth the skewed distribution, these variables have been logarithmically transformed.

Alternatively, these districts could also be characterized by a high proportion of workers and cramped housing conditions. These factors contribute to the success of the rightest parties. Since these areas on the average have a high *proportion of foreigners* and *unemployed*, the latter variables also influence right wing votes; however, the effects are completely concealed behind the effects of the other

three variables in the regression equation. By contrast, *unemployment* and *foreigners* both have a direct impact on the turnout rates: the higher the percentage of foreigners and unemployed, the lower the voting participation. The variables seem to have stronger effects on political apathy (low voting participation) than on right wing protest.

The social basis of right wing protest and abstention differs completely from that of the STATT party and the GREENS. Table 1 confirms our hypothesis that the members of the STATT party come from the conservative middle class. The percentage of votes does not only increase with intermediate levels of education but also with *rent per capita* and *houses with two or less flats (residential area)*. While STATT voters seem to live in wealthy residential areas, the adherents of the GREEN party seem to prefer the city to the suburbs<sup>16</sup>, are highly educated but pay lower rents<sup>17</sup>, live in small households<sup>18</sup> in houses with several flat owners<sup>19</sup>. Clearly this latter conclusion could be nothing but an ecological fallacy. However, similar properties of the GREENS can also be demonstrated in Survey analysis. In any case the ecological analysis suggest to strictly distinct between the various modes of protest voting. The right wing extremist political parties have quite a different social basis than both other protest parties.

### III. Conclusions

In Hamburg, districts with low levels of education, high percentages of workers, and bad housing conditions display the highest percentages of right wing votes in the last election. We are afraid that this result will not remain an exception but become a model of the future development in other German -- and maybe European -- cities. To begin with, there is little hope that politicians will be able to avoid unemployment and cuts in social benefits during the next years. They also will not succeed in severely restricting the influx of immigrants. And they will finally not be able to suspend the market mechanism which drives newcomers into the disadvantaged areas of the cities. However, as long as the groups which suffer most from the process of economic rationalization have also to carry a disproportionate large burden of immigration politics, stereotypes and political dissatisfaction will not only survive but increase.

Chances for a renewal of the established political parties may be somewhat higher. However, even if the old parties could regain credit, they will encounter increasing difficulties to attract voters from different social strata -- voters who largely differ not only in economic resources but also in social and cultural capital. Accordingly, at least at the local level, the numbers of parties and the size of coalitions may increase. As a result, cities may arrive at a vicious circle: unsolved economic and social problems increase the success of protest parties. Next, coalition formation and decision-making becomes more difficult. And, as a consequence, the socio-economic problems will not be solved but further aggravated. This certainly is a pessimistic scenario for the near future. Unfortunately, it seems to us at present the most likely path of development.

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16 Negative impact of *residential area*.

17 Negative impact of *rent per capita*.

18 Negative impact of *members per household*.

19 Positive impact of *owners per house*.

### **Summary: Urban conflict and voting pattern**

*During the last years immigration has aggravated the social problems in many disadvantaged urban districts. High proportions of foreigners are concentrating in those areas which suffer from unemployment and bad housing conditions. The accumulation of social problems has created a climate of insecurity, social prejudices, and political dissatisfaction. Since political discontent presently is not remedied by the established political parties, it results in low voting participation and increasing proportions of right wing votes. The close connection between the intensity of social problems on the one side, low voter turnout and high success of right extremist parties on the other side, is empirically established by an ecological analysis of the recent state elections in Hamburg.*

### **Appendix**

#### a) Election Results from 1993:

Urban Districts: Hamburg consists of 104 urban districts. In five instances an aggregation of two adjacent districts has been necessary in order to increase the N. From the resulting 99 cases the small North-See island Neuwerk had to be excluded. Thus, the analysis has been based on 98 districts.

Election Results: The available statistics of the State Election of Hamburg in 1993 are provisional results. Postal votes for each district are not included.

#### b) Data of the registration office of Hamburg, 1993:

Percentage of Foreigners: Proportion of foreigners under the inhabitants per district in 1992.

#### c) Census data from 1987:

Percentage of Unemployed Persons: Proportion of inhabitants with first dwelling-place in a district who earn most part of their livelihood by unemployment benefit (Arbeitslosengeld or Arbeitslosenhilfe) or other alimentation like public relief (Sozialhilfe), alimentation for students (BAFOEG), hire, or leasing district among all inhabitants with first dwelling-place in that area.

Percentage of Workers: Proportion of wage-earners among the persons gainfully employed independent of their qualification. Included are skilled and unskilled workers, and employed housekeepers.

Percentage of Persons with Low Education: Proportion of persons between 15 and 65 years of age with 10 or less years school education (Hauptschule or less).

Percentage of Persons with Intermediate Education: Proportion of persons between 15 and 65 years of age with 10 years school education (Realschule).

Percentage of Persons with High Education: Proportion of persons between 15 and 65 years of age with 13 years school education (Abitur).

Percentage of Persons who are Sixty Years or Older: Proportion of the inhabitants with first dwelling-place in a district older than 59 years among all inhabitants with first dwelling-place in that area.

Percentage of Houses with One or Two Flats (residential area): Proportion of dwelling-houses with one or two flats among all flats of a district.

Percentage of Flats with Five Rooms or More (size of apartments): Proportion of dwelling-houses with five or more rooms among all flats of a district.

Percentage of Owners per House: Proportion of house owners (Eigentümerhaushalte) among all households.

Average Number of Members per Household: Average number of persons living in private households.

Average Rent per Capita: Average rent (in DM) a person has to pay for his rented flat.