Social Democratic Parties and the Working Class
New Voting Patterns

Line Rennwald

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Praise for *Social Democratic Parties and the Working Class*

"This wide-ranging and thought-provoking book addresses a central issue that is both old and new in the politics of western democracies: the nature of the working class and its relationship to the political parties that typically provide its democratic representation. In her clearly-written, appealingly concise and none the less nuanced study of six countries over four decades Line Rennwald considers how best to understand the contemporary multi-faceted working class and the strategies of social democratic parties. She elaborates on the insights of the notion of class developed by Daniel Oesch and on the benefits for representation of seeing a working class that stretches beyond traditional manual workers and includes areas of the growing service sector. In the face of rising working class support for parties on the radical right in recent years, Rennwald argues that a broad working class alliance with social democratic parties that have integrated socio-economic and cultural programmes can instead provide a more appealing and effective role for the working class in contemporary politics."

—Geoffrey Evans, *University of Oxford, UK*

"If you have ever wondered why social democracy has lost working-class support, look no further than this book: Line Rennwald delves into four decades of electoral surveys and shows the reasons behind this dealignment. A tour de force of political analysis."

—Daniel Oesch, *University of Lausanne, Switzerland*

CONTENTS

Abbreviations

AfD   Alternative for Germany
CDA   Christian Democratic Appeal
CDU   Christian Democratic Union
CVP   Christian Democratic People's Party
FDP   Radical Democratic Party
FN   National Front
FPÖ   Freedom Party of Austria
ÖVP   Austrian People's Party
PS   French Socialist Party
PvdA   Dutch Labour Party
PVV   Party for Freedom
SP   Socialist Party
SPD   Social Democratic Party of Germany
SPÖ   Social Democratic Party of Austria
SPS   Social Democratic Party of Switzerland
SVP   Swiss People's Party
UKIP   United Kingdom Independence Party
VVD   People's Party for Freedom and Democracy

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Introduction

Abstract Against the backdrop of renewed attention to the working-class vote in both the scientific community and the political sphere, the ambition of this book is to provide a careful examination of the relationship between social democracy and its working-class electorate. The introduction first presents the context and the goals of the study. It then explains the conditions required for a detailed and precise analysis of the class basis of social democracy and outlines the approach used throughout the book. It also reminds the reader of the origins of social democracy and the broad transformation and crisis in this party family. It finally presents the choice of the six social democratic/labour/socialist parties at the centre of this research.

Keywords Social democracy · Labour movement · Elections · Social classes · Working-class vote

SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTIES AS CHILDREN OF THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

This book tells the story of transformations in the electorate for social democracy and of class conflict in electoral politics in Western Europe. The relationship between social democratic/socialist/labour parties[1] and their working-class electorates today no longer appears logical and straightforward. Something has been broken. For a long time, the defence of the working class constituted the raison d'être of social democratic parties. They emerged at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century as children of the revolutionary processes of industrialisation and democratisation. They were closely linked to trade unions—the same individuals were often leading activists in both parties and unions. While trade unions, as the economic arm of the labour movement, defended workers' interests in relation to the power of employers in factories, social democratic parties stood for workers' demands in the political sphere. On the one hand, labour movement organisations were the product of increasing social tensions that emerged from the industrial revolution. On the other hand, they also decisively shaped workers' class consciousness and contributed to them organising collectively (Moschonas 2002: 28–30; Sassoon 1996: 7–8). In no other continent has manufacturing employment been as dominant as in Europe (Therborn 1995). This unique configuration created specific linkages between parties and social classes and resulted in the importance of a class cleavage in European politics (Lipset and Rokkan 1967).

Nowadays, the fight for workers' interests and the definition of the working class as the natural constituency of social democracy seems to belong more to history books than to reflect practices in contemporary politics. Declining support among workers, a declining number of politicians with a working-class background, difficult relationships with trade unions; all these signals point in the same direction of a massive transformation in social democracy in recent decades. In this context, it is emblematic that politicians and leaders from social democratic parties often have trouble in simply addressing the working class. An episode from the electoral campaign for the 2002 French Presidential election illustrates the new relationship between social democracy and its historical constituency well. 'The word "worker" is not a dirty word,'[2] said the French socialist Pierre Mauroy—an important figure in the French

Socialist Party who was Prime Minister from 1981 to 1984 under the Mitterrand Presidency. In this statement, Pierre Mauroy advised Lionel Jospin, the candidate for the French Socialist Party, to campaign more explicitly for workers' interests—at a time where several industrial companies had announced massive restructuring—and criticised the absence of the word 'worker' from the PS election manifesto. This election was marked by a very low score for Lionel Jospin, which resulted in his exclusion from the second round. In contrast, the candidate for the National Front, Jean-Marie Le Pen, succeeded in qualifying for the second round. In his speech in the evening after the first round, Le Pen presented himself as the representative of the 'little people, the nobodies, the excluded' and the 'miners, steelworkers and workers in all these industries ruined by the "Euro-mondialism" of Maastricht' and called on them to keep their hopes and mobilise for the second round.[3] Undeniably, it was a strategic attempt to exploit the lack of appeals to workers by the socialist candidate.

We are now almost twenty years after this election. However, this episode seems to be the prelude to many similar stories where on the one hand social democracy has trouble in mobilising the working-class vote, while on the other hand radical right or even mainstream right parties present themselves as the true representatives of the 'people.' Several earthquakes have happened in recent years. In the 2019 British general election, the Conservative candidate Boris Johnson won a large majority—reaching scores unprecedented since Margaret Thatcher—and managed to gain constituencies held by the Labour Party for decades in the Midlands and northern England. In the 2016 US presidential election,[4] the victorious Republican candidate Donald Trump decisively won several states in the Rust Belt—the former manufacturing centre of the country. His gains in this region were particularly noteworthy in states such as Pennsylvania, Michigan and Wisconsin, which had continually chosen Democratic candidates at each election since 1992. When there are referendums on European integration—and the 2016 Brexit referendum is the most recent prominent example—opposition to the European Union is often strong in former manufacturing areas where left-wing parties have been historically successful.

Nowadays, on the evening after each election, pundits comment on the working-class vote and gains by right-wing parties among workers. At the centre of attention are also the potential strategies of left-wing parties to again win the workers' vote. There is therefore an interesting and somewhat paradoxical return of the working class in the media. In

recent decades, social classes have become increasingly absent from public discourse. Evans and Tilley (2017) document the impressive decline of class in both media and party messages in Great Britain in the period from 1945 to 2015. Having coded the editorials of three newspapers (*the Mirror, the Guardian* and *the Times*) in each election campaign, they observe a strong drop in mentions of class after 1997. References to the 'working class' have also largely disappeared over time (already in the mid-1960s and then again in the late 1980s). In contrast, newspapers have more often used the categories 'middle' and 'upper' classes since the mid-1980s. Changes in the media to some extent echo transformations in the parties' rhetoric. In the decades following the war, references to the working class were frequent in the Labour Party's manifestos and leaders' speeches at the annual party conferences. From the late 1980s onwards, the authors detect a strong decrease in mentions of the working class by the Labour Party.

Today, no one would contest the view that the close ties between the working class and social democratic parties have loosened. Despite this widespread impression of change, few studies propose a detailed empirical investigation of this phenomenon. The present book aims to fill this gap. More precisely, it has three goals. First and foremost, it aims to paint a nuanced picture of the transformation of the class basis of social democracy in a comparative perspective. Second, it aims to explore the mechanisms behind the weakening of the linkage between social democracy and workers. Third, the book also looks forward and discusses some new paths for the future of social democracy.

The transformation of the working-class vote has generated much discussion within social democratic parties, with much attention given to the topic of migration (see Mudde 2019). If social democracy has lost working-class support to the radical right, should it then endorse a more restrictive migration policy? In contrast, would it be easier to target middle-class voters who share a more liberal position on immigration? In the end, why should social democratic parties bother with their former working-class electorate if mainly middle-class voters support them? Social democracy currently faces significant electoral and ideological dilemmas. In this context, the book contributes by shedding light on the risks and opportunities of future strategies. Most importantly, it emphasises a need to precisely analyse the transformations in the working-class vote and the class profile of social democracy. Any thinking about the future of

social democracy should start with a rigorous understanding of what has happened to the electoral base of social democracy in recent decades.

Re-Examining the Class Base
of the Electorate for Social Democracy

I argue in this book that examination of the relationship between social democracy as a party family and the working class can benefit from three moves. First, I plead for a rethink of the definition and the boundaries of the working class using a class schema—the Oesch class schema (Oesch 2006)—which is sufficiently precise but at the same time flexible. In particular, it allows the growth of the new 'service proletariat' and the diversity of the salaried middle classes to be captured. Second, I propose that we should think more carefully about the definition of a working-class party in electoral sociology. Informed by historical contributions, I argue that a primary goal of social democracy has been a search for alliances. Being a working-class party does not per se exclude the mobilisation of other allied classes. Third, I argue that mobilisation by members of the political elite plays a crucial role in the transformation of the class base of social democracy. Ideological changes in the policy positions of social democratic parties and the way they have addressed voters have profoundly altered working-class mobilisation. Moreover, the rise of populist radical right parties has made issues of national identity and immigration more salient on the political agenda, with class-based mobilisation of workers becoming more difficult for social democratic parties.

Through these moves, I can add clarity and precision to the debate on the relationship between social democracy and the working-class electorate. Recent comparative contributions have been very informative on the loosening of the ties between social democracy and workers (see Best 2011; Gingrich and Häusermann 2015; Knutsen 2006; Moschonas 2002) but they have mostly relied on the classical division between manual workers (or the working class) and non-manual workers (or the middle class). They therefore face some difficulties in giving a precise evaluation of the changes in the class profile of social democracy and in assessing the new relationship with the heterogeneous non-manual segments of the electorate. This leads to a slight tendency to understand any evolution of social democracy as being a move from a working-class to a middle-class party. By using a sophisticated class schema and elaborating on different

types of electoral coalitions, I will present a more nuanced and diversified trajectory of social democracy.

A focus on a 'mainstream' party family is relevant in the light of the growing literature on 'niche' or 'challenger' parties and especially populist radical right parties. While the sociology of radical right voting has emphasised growing support among working-class voters (e.g. Arzheimer 2013; Oesch 2008; Rydgren 2013), we know relatively little about what has become of social democracy today. Deductions about the changing character of social democracy are often made in studies focused on the radical right without a careful examination of the sociology of social democracy's electorate and consideration of its specificities.

As previously mentioned, interest in the working-class vote has made a big return in the media since the 2016 Brexit referendum and the US election. The focus on the working class has sometimes been so intense that pundits have neglected the importance of middle- and high-income voters in these electoral outcomes (for a critical discussion on the American context, see Carnes and Lupu 2017). Above all, discussion has demonstrated a need for more scientific contributions on the working-class vote. Public debate has revealed significant weaknesses in the understanding of social class. First, definitions of the working class have often been imprecise. In some cases, small business owners—who have always had a predominantly conservative political orientation—have been conflated with the working class. In the American context, much of the public discussion has relied on exit polls, with social class being measured in terms of income or education, thus ignoring the long European tradition of occupation-based measures. Second, discussion around these events has revealed that old stereotypes regarding the working class have not disappeared but instead have become more prevalent and tended to become dominant. In particular, there is an increasingly current association of the working class with anger, violence and even stupidity (see Jones 2012 on the stigmatisation of the working class). In public discourse, 'working class' is increasingly becoming a synonym of what Marx called the '*Lumpenproletariat*'—a declassed group at the bottom of society (including thieves and beggars) that he clearly distinguished from the working class. The image of the proud class-conscious worker seems to definitively belong in the cemetery, or else is simply included in a broad conception of the 'middle class.' Third, the concept of working class in public discourse is increasingly associated with race—one speaks of

'white' working-class voters. Public discourse is contributing to a redefinition of social class as a cultural identity rather than an economic one, a redefinition influenced by American conservative circles (Peck 2019).[5]

Social Democracy in Crisis: Adding a Piece to the Puzzle of Understanding a Complex Transformation

This book claims that a better understanding of the class base of social democracy and of changes in it adds an important piece to the complex puzzle of the transformation of this party family. Since the 1980s, social democracy has been confronted with multiple challenges. The rise of neoliberalism, the end of the Cold War and economic globalisation have deeply shaken the social and ideological foundations of this party family (Cronin et al. 2011; Sassoon 1996). Moreover, changes in political economies have not only involved a sharp decline in manufacturing employment but also in the factors (e.g. plant size) that previously facilitated the collective organisation of workers (Pontusson 1995).

Social democracy (and also parties of the moderate right) has experienced a process of electoral decline in western Europe in recent decades (Martin 2018). This party family has lost vote shares in almost every European country since the 1990s (Rennwald and Pontusson 2020). It is nowadays common for social democracy to face new competition for its core voters from both the left and right of the political spectrum (Karreth et al. 2013). Previously, competition for the working-class vote was mainly limited to countries or regions with communist parties or Christian Democratic parties with a strong labour wing.

Traditionally, social democracy has fulfilled specific functions in the political system by giving voice and representation to disadvantaged socioeconomic groups. Redirecting attention to the role of this party family therefore serves our understanding of the crisis in political representation, and especially of the disconnection of specific social groups from the political system. Moreover, this book provides insights into the shape and intensity of class conflict. The mobilisation of the working class by social democracy reinforced labour interests and brought class conflict to the centre of politics. At the same time, it also contributed to the pacification of class conflict and its integration into democratic politics—scholars conceive class voting as a 'democratic class struggle' (Korpi 1983;

Lipset 1960). Therefore, the break in this class-party alignment suggests that class conflict might occur in a cruder and more violent way outside democratic politics and/or become more unbalanced by leaving collective mobilisation solely to the rich (Gilens 2012; Hacker and Pierson 2010).

Furthermore, the political mobilisation of the working class is crucial for various welfare state outcomes. According to the power resources theory (e.g. Korpi 1983, 1989)—an important explanation for cross-national variation in welfare state development—democratic politics provides workers with the opportunity to use their right to vote and right to organise in trade unions. If workers can use these political resources, they are able to compensate for their lack of power in the market sphere and can therefore reinforce labour interests relatively to capital interests. There is therefore a strong correspondence between the strength of the welfare state and the capacity of workers to organise as a class. In a kind of virtuous circle, working-class mobilisation reinforces the welfare state and the welfare state sustains workers' independency towards market forces (and at the same time their political rights). The changes in the working-class vote that are analysed in this book indicate therefore a major transformation of the political forces advocating strong social policies. By extension, the rise of neoliberal politics render workers more vulnerable and less likely to use their rights in democratic politics, which again reinforces the dominance of market forces.

This book focuses on six western European countries (Austria, France, Germany, Great Britain, the Netherlands and Switzerland) in which a social democratic (also called socialist or labour, depending on the country) party of importance is present. A decline in manufacturing employment over recent decades is a pervasive trend across all these countries. The decreasing weight of the industrial working class in the electorate therefore poses similar challenges to the social democratic parties. However, these parties have distinct histories and have evolved in different party systems. Political differences provide parties with incentives to turn to new segments of the electorate and to appeal to their voters in specific ways.

The German Social Democratic Party (SPD), the British Labour Party and the French Socialist Party (PS) have been leading representatives of the social democratic party family in Europe. However, they have distinct historical origins, different relationships to trade unions and rely on different ideological traditions. The French case is also particular because the Socialist Party was in fierce competition with the Communist Party

in the post-war decades. The Dutch Labour Party (PvdA) and the Swiss Social Democratic Party (SPS) represent minor players in the international Socialist Party family. Although they are among the strongest parties in the context of their fragmented party systems, they have never been able to reach a majority either by themselves or by forming a coalition with smaller left and centre-left parties. By contrast, the Austrian Social Democratic Party (SPÖ) has reached strong levels of votes, being helped by the bipartisan tendency of the Austrian party system.[6]

Plan of the Book

Chapter 2 proposes a reflection on classes, on parties and on the relationship between the two. It clarifies the concept of social class used throughout the book and also stresses the need to complement sociological approaches with political approaches. Individuals are more likely to rely on their social class to form political preferences when political actors engage in class-based mobilisation. The chapter then discusses the contours of a 'working-class party.' Building on historical contributions, it emphasises the continual attempts by social democracy to look for support among allied classes. The chapter closes with a description of the Oesch class schema, which allows study of social democracy's electorate with precision and flexibility.

Chapter 3 further discusses the concept of a 'working-class party' and proposes a distinction between four types of social democratic electoral coalitions. The chapter then turns to an analysis of the class basis of social democracy. The goal is to provide a baseline for the strength of social democracy's working-class character in the decades following the Second World War. The demonstration focuses on the 1970s, a period in which manufacturing employment was still dominant. The analysis finds a strong working-class basis of social democracy in this period, and also an intermediate level of support among various classes.

Chapter 4 is dedicated to an empirical analysis of the class basis of social democracy at the beginning of the twenty-first century. It shows a strong tendency of social democratic parties towards becoming 'cross-class parties,' mobilising no specific social class in particular. Despite a widespread assumption, only a minority of social democratic parties have become 'new class parties' strongly mobilising specific segments of the salaried middle classes. The chapter also demonstrates that the

working-class vote has become much more fragmented. Social democracy now competes with radical left parties, populist radical right parties and abstention for the working-class vote.

Chapter 5 reviews possible explanations of workers' new voting patterns. In a first step, it reviews the changes that social democracy has opted for in recent decades: on the one hand, it has de-mobilised workers on the socio-economic dimension; on the other hand, it has increased the saliency of the socio-cultural dimension. The chapter then examines the political attitudes of workers to redistribution and immigration. The results indicate an important continuity in the policy preferences of classes. This suggests that changes in the political supply are critical to understand the new relationship between social democracy and its working-class electorate.

Finally, Chapter 6 concludes by summarising the main results of the book. It closes with a discussion on the renewal of social democracy. With this aim, it evaluates the role of the working class in social democracy's future electoral strategies. It discusses the risks for social democracy in abandoning the workers' vote and examines some factors that might facilitate the electoral mobilisation of workers in the future. It also reviews current experiences of various social democratic parties and proposals to reorient their ideology and implement new strategies.

Notes

1. Throughout this book, I use the labels 'social democracy' and 'social democratic' to refer to the parties (and the party family) that have historically adhered to the project for democratic socialism. Note that I use the terms 'labour,' 'socialist' and 'social democratic' interchangeably. I use the term 'social democratic' more often as it is more familiar in continental and northern Europe, where the powerful Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) at the end of the nineteenth century served as a model for the creation of similar parties in other countries (Sassoon 1996: 9–11).
2. Pierre Mauroy's statement is quoted in Lefebvre and Sawicki (2006: 233). Own translation. The complete original statement is the following: 'Nous devons parler plus fort aux travailleurs. Lionel, il faut que tu adresses un message à la France qui travaille. Le mot 'ouvrier' n'est pas un gros mot.'
3. Le Pen's speech is quoted in Gougou (2015: 323). Own translation. The complete original statement is the following: 'N'ayez pas peur, chers compatriotes! Rentrez dans l'espérance! L'événement, c'est le 5 mai. En attendant, n'ayez pas peur de rêver, vous les petits, les sans-grade, les exclus.

Ne vous laissez pas enfermer dans les vieilles distinctions de la gauche et de la droite, vous qui avez supporté depuis vingt ans toutes les erreurs et les malversations des politiciens. Vous les mineurs, les métallos, les ouvrières et les ouvriers de toutes ces industries ruinées par l'euro-mondialisme de Maastricht.'

4. The Democratic Party in the US is not a social democratic party. However, since the New Deal of the 1930s, American labour has normally perceived the Democratic Party as its political home.

5. The category of the 'white' working class has also made its way into academic contributions (see, for example, Gest 2016).

6. The vote shares obtained by those parties in parliamentary elections since 1945 are available in the Appendix.

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A Reflection on Classes; a Reflection on Parties

Abstract This chapter proposes a reflection on classes, on parties and on the relationship between the two. In order to analyse the class basis of social democracy, the first step is to take sociology seriously. The challenge is to define social class and work with a class schema that captures important divisions in the labour market. The second step is to take politics seriously. Social class becomes a useful category for political analysis when one includes the crucial role of political actors in class mobilisation. The third step involves taking history seriously in order to precisely draw the contours of a working-class party. The challenge is to avoid the serious pitfalls of over-estimating or under-estimating the working-class character of social democracy. After having taken these three steps, the chapter concludes with a description of the Oesch class schema used in this book.

Keywords Social class · Working-class party · Labour movement

Taking Sociology Seriously: Social Class to Capture Important Differences in the Labour Market

The existence of various definitions of the working class and controversies about the concept of social class itself represent substantial challenges in an analysis of the class basis of social democracy. Moreover, there is a tendency among large parts of the scientific community (and also among the broader public) to reject the concept of social class on the ground that it belongs to a Marxist framework of analysis—which today is often rejected in mainstream social science research. Scholars increasingly use income categories or discuss differences in education levels. However, it must be clarified that one does not need to be a Marxist to use social class and to analyse social stratification. Not only Karl Marx but also his bourgeois critic Max Weber widely used social class in their writings. Quantitative empirical research is also relatively pragmatic. Erikson and Goldthorpe (1992: 35ff), who developed one of the most important class schemata used in empirical research, consider their schema an '*instrument de travail*' and rely on elements from both Marx and Weber. Moreover, occupation represents a central indicator in all class schemata.

This book chooses to talk about social classes in order to analyse the relationship between social democracy and workers. In the European context, the dominance of the industrial sector has created unique configurations of linkages between political parties and social classes (Therborn 1995: 68). Parties have developed around specific classes, and not around specific income groups or education levels (even if the two are, of course, related). Liberal and conservative parties were created to represent the interests of the bourgeoisie, and the socialist parties emerged to represent the interests of the working class in the political arena. Needless to say, perhaps, a focus on income would ignore one of the most important dividing lines in history, the one between workers and employers/the self-employed.

I belong to a tradition in sociology that stresses the 'objective' component of social class (class in itself). In practice, it is possible to allocate a class position to individuals on the basis of their positions in the labour market and to empirically analyse the effects of inequalities among the positions of individuals. Class is a way to capture important differences in material conditions and economic interests. Sociologists have developed complex class schemata where individuals are allocated a class position

based on their occupation and their employment status (e.g. Erikson and Goldthorpe 1992; Oesch 2006). The theoretical bases of class schemata vary, but common categories include workers, employers and the self-employed together with finer distinctions within middle-class employees (managers, professionals, etc.).

Crucially, sociologists can demonstrate that differences among occupational classes do matter. A class schema—if it correctly captures important divisions in the labour market—determines a large range of outcomes, such as the risk of unemployment, income, promotion prospects and social protection (e.g. Goldthorpe and McKnight 2006; Evans and Mills 2000; Oesch 2006). The crux of this tradition is studying the differences among 'occupational' classes. But are occupational classes really social classes? Certainly not. They only build the economic basis on top of which similar interests can be developed. It is certainly more precise to talk of 'economic classes' rather than 'social classes', where individuals also share a collective identity and may ultimately become political actors (e.g. Kocka 1980).

Class schemata propose a representation of social stratification that go well beyond the widespread dichotomy between blue-collar and white-collar occupations. This distinction is above all telling in the context of a manufacturing company where it differentiates between the shop floor where production workers are active and the office area where clerks, technicians and the management work. Outside the manufacturing world, implementing the dichotomy is less straightforward. The category of blue-collar workers is strongly associated with factory workers; other occupations characterised by harsh working conditions such as domestic service—once a widespread occupation among female workers—are more difficult to classify. There are also occupations that are neither blue-collar nor white-collar. One can think, for example, of workers in the transport sector, for example railway employees or tramway drivers. They do not perform their work in an office but are also not active in a production process. Precise definitions are often lacking and render the classification of occupations difficult. One should also mention that social security schemata are based on this dichotomy in some countries—especially in Germany. Variations in definitions may also reflect the development of social protection and struggles around it.

Complex class schemata—which require detailed lists of occupations based on open-format questions—are widespread in the literature. In political science, their use has been advocated since many years to study

voting behaviour (e.g. Evans 1999a, 2000). However, it is astonishing how influential the blue-collar vs. white-collar distinction remains. It is not unusual for surveys to include closed-format questions where individuals are asked to place themselves in a categorisation derived from this dichotomy. Quite common is also to find data where pollsters have recoded respondents' occupations into a limited number of categories based on this distinction. This often occurs in surveys conducted in German-speaking countries, but it is also the case in some cross-national surveys (e.g. Eurobarometer surveys). These data render the prospect of using a sophisticated class schema difficult or imprecise (but see a careful attempt to construct the Erikson and Goldthorpe class schema using Eurobarometer data in Knutsen 2006: 17–23).

Taking Politics Seriously: The Role of Political Parties in Class Mobilisation

If one adopts a sociological perspective, one can analyse the extent to which classes display homogeneity in their political behaviour. If a class schema captures pertinent differences among classes, it is quite likely that classes will display some variation in their political preferences. Voting behaviour is therefore the product of the social divisions existing in a society. This approach was emphasised at the macro-level by Lipset and Rokkan (1967) in their analysis of the formation of party systems. They stressed that party systems in the 1960s reflected the social divisions at the time of the development of party systems in the early twentieth century. At the micro-level, the first explanations of voting behaviour emphasised the close connection between an individual's social position and his political preferences. Lazarsfeld and his team, who were pioneers in electoral research, stressed that 'a person thinks, politically, as he is, socially' (1944: 27). There is surely some determinism in this approach. Above all, it leaves little room for political actors or in any case does not primarily stress the role of politics. In this section, I would like to stress the importance of political actors who reinforce the salience of social class. We can only understand the transformation of social democracy if we try to integrate into the framework the extent to which parties mobilise their voters with a class-based appeal.

Political scientists have brought interesting distinctions to the fore and have proposed to complement the sociological approach in various ways. Peter Mair (1999) suggests a useful distinction between 'class voting'

and 'class politics'. He makes this distinction in a volume dedicated to the study of class voting (Evans 1999b). According to Mair, class voting is a sociological approach to voting where the goal is to assess whether classes differ overall in their voting behaviour. The focus lies on the cohesiveness of classes, but less on the specific parties that classes choose and the reasons behind these choices. By contrast, class politics implies entering the realm of politics. The term refers more broadly to the various processes through which parties and interest organisations translate social conflicts into political conflicts. In order to understand the links between classes and parties, one needs, therefore, to get a sense of the representation of class interests by political parties.

The concept of 'cleavage' represents a useful tool to make a connection between sociological and political approaches. Mair again, together with Bartolini (1990), discusses this concept that links social structure to political order in detail. According to these authors, a cleavage is much more than a pure social division (a 'social cleavage'), which has no organisation at the political level, or a pure political division (a 'political cleavage'), which lacks a connection to the social structure. Bartolini and Mair articulate three components of a cleavage: (1) an empirical element that refers to social structure; (2) a normative element that refers to the values and beliefs shared by a group; (3) an organisational/behavioural component that refers to the interactions, institutions and organisations that develop as part of the cleavage (e.g. political parties or trade unions) (Bartolini and Mair 1990: 215–216). They propose limiting the use of the cleavage concept to divisions that include these three elements, which often reinforce each other. A purely socio-structural approach is therefore not enough to analyse the changes in class-based cleavages that are at the centre of this book. The research agenda outlined here consists in systematically investigating the interaction between social divisions and political actors.

A similar research agenda can be identified in other contributions. Przeworski and Sprague (1986) underline the importance of party strategies and actions in voting. They are particularly interested in social class and the development of class voting. The extent to which social class constitutes a defining element of voting must be thought of in close connection with political actors. Political parties are not passive actors but they actively shape the support they receive among social groups, according to these authors. The extent to which individuals vote on the basis of their social class not only depends on class structure but is also the

result of the actions of political parties. The authors are therefore interested in social class in relation to the process of class formation (Sainsbury 1990).

The influence of political parties has not been at centre stage in research for a long time. It was seen as relatively natural that left-wing parties should articulate class interests. Workers would find a party supporting (at least to some extent) working-class interests in the political sphere. The idea that parties mobilise class was somehow implicit in the literature dedicated to class voting. However, the significant ideological mutations of social democracy over recent decades have shown that class-based appeal from the left cannot be taken for granted. When scholars started to engage in more depth with explanations of the decline in class-based voting behaviour, explanations involving political parties gained attraction (see Elff 2009).

The most recent attempt to think carefully about the role of political actors in class voting can be found in a book edited by Evans and De Graaf (2013). The authors propose a distinction between 'bottom-up' and 'top-down' explanations of the decline in class voting. The underlying idea of the 'bottom-up' approach is that if class voting declines it is because classes have become more heterogeneous as a result of processes of individualisation and fragmentation. This perspective, which has been dominant in the literature on the decline in class voting, for the authors represents only one side of the coin. It is also necessary to take into account how class differences are articulated by political actors and the political elite. Changes in class voting can therefore be driven by transformations of social classes themselves or by transformations of parties and the political elite who mobilise class differences. When adopting this view, class voting takes on a new light. Class voting is also likely to increase if political parties mobilise social classes more explicitly—the trend of class voting decline can be reversed (see also Evans and Tilley 2012).

An interesting empirical test of this new framework was conducted in Great Britain.[1] Working on a new dataset on the period 1959–2006, Evans and Tilley (2012) show that most of the decline in class voting occurs at the end of the period under study. They identify a strong decline in class differences in the support for the Labour Party since the mid-1990s. They also observe a considerable decrease in the 1960s and a smaller one between the 1970s and the beginning of the 1990s. The authors demonstrate that the growing heterogeneity of social classes (in terms of education, gender, income, etc.) does not explain their increasing

proximity in party choice. It is only when the authors include the changes in the left-right positioning of political parties (and especially the move to the centre by the Labour Party in the 1990s) that they can explain the changes in class-party relationships.[2]

This perspective suggests that social democracy can lose its working-class support due to political choices. At the same time, the approach also emphasises the capacity of social democracy to renew its appeal to its working-class electorate if it adopts a pertinent political strategy. My emphasis on 'politics' in this section reminds us of the capacity of parties to generate support among specific groups.

Taking History Seriously: Social Democracy as a Workers' Party, But Not Only as Such

The literature on class voting focuses on the existence of divisions in voting behaviour. However, instead of emphasising differences in voting behaviour between the working class and the middle class, it is possible to take a different perspective and emphasise proximities between some 'intermediate' classes and the working class. This section does not aim to deny the working-class character of social democracy or to deny the important differences in voting between social classes. Instead, the aim is to demonstrate that social democracy has not only sought to attract industrial workers but has simultaneously sought support among potentially allied groups. The aim is to reconcile the study of class voting with historical evidence pointing to the existence of complex class coalitions. In order to do this, one needs to depart from the dominant binary distinction between white-collar work and blue-collar work that surrounds much of the literature on social democracy.

From a historical perspective, it would be wrong to understand social democracy as a purely factory workers' movement. Certainly, social democracy benefited from the increasing concentration of the workforce in larger workplaces—a decisive element in the electoral strength of socialist parties (see Bartolini 2000; Pontusson 1995)—and the strong similarity in its working and living conditions in the heyday of industrialisation. However, social history accounts draw our attention to a strong diversity in terms of occupations, skills and origins among workers and attempts by the labour movement to build unity in this diversity (e.g. Thompson 1979; Noiriel 1986). In the nineteenth century, craft workers

played a key role in the development of the labour movement and particularly in the formation of trade unions (Mommsen and Husung 1985). There were also intellectuals present in social democratic parties from the beginning. The leaders of social democratic parties themselves did not always have a working-class background, but often came from families from the petty or even the haute bourgeoisie.

It is also clear that several groups of lower-rank white-collar workers, or workers that were not easily classifiable as blue-collar or white-collar, already displayed sympathy for social democracy at the onset of the mobilisation of the labour movement. The proximity between the interests of factory workers and (often female) lower-level employees tends to be forgotten in studies that are based on the crude and imprecise blue-collar vs. white-collar distinction. Furthermore, public sector employees and especially workers in public infrastructure and services (railway workers and post office workers) have been prominent supporters of social democracy in many countries, notably thanks to a strong union density. Membership figures indicate an important presence of these workers and employees in the ranks of social democratic parties (e.g. Reynard 2013; Sühl 1988; Wicki 2007). Generally, rail unions have played a significant role in the labour movement and have critically contributed to the development of social democratic and labour parties in many countries (see Crompton 2009 on Great Britain; Bauer [1930] 1979 on Austria).

Furthermore, social democratic parties themselves had the ambition early on to appeal to other allied classes. In this respect, it is very interesting to read a text by Friedrich Engels from 1895. In the introduction to Karl Marx's *The Class Struggles in France*, Engels ([1895] 1977) is euphoric, enthusiastic about the strong electoral progression of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) following the introduction of male universal suffrage. He saw the utilisation of universal suffrage by German workers as an example for the labour movements in other countries. He also estimated that by the end of the nineteenth century the SPD would be able to convince large parts of the middle class, including the petty bourgeoisie and small farmers. Of course, this thesis is strongly influenced by the idea that large parts of the middle class would become proletarianised. However, this shows very well the agenda of convincing segments beyond the industrial working class.

Political science accounts consider the relationship of social democracy with other potentially allied classes. In the 1960s, Kirchheimer (1966)

observed the beginning of a radical transformation of social democracy. He considered the context of the post-war period to have created strong pressures on the functioning and principles of social democratic parties (and also of Christian Democratic parties). Trends towards a secularisation of society, the development of mass consumption and the weakening of divisions between social classes were leading parties to transform themselves into what he termed 'catch-all "people's" parties' (1966: 184). In his view, this new model of party organisation was supplanting that of the 'class-mass integration party' that had characterised social democracy throughout the first half of the twentieth century. Kirchheimer was interested not only in the electorate, but more largely in the ideological and organisational transformations parties were undergoing. Next to a de-emphasis of the party's core clientele and a willingness to recruit voters from all segments of the population, he also analysed the transformation of social democracy as a weakening of party ideology, a strengthening of the top leadership, a downgrading of individual membership and access to various interest groups (Kirchheimer 1966: 20).

Kirchheimer's analysis is based on observations on several West European countries (including France, Italy and Great Britain), but the transformation of the German Social Democratic Party probably had an important influence on the development of the catch-all party thesis (see also Safran 2009). The SPD adopted a new manifesto in 1959 which marked a substantial ideological rupture. The Bad Godesberg Programme was no longer structured along a Marxist view of society and described the SPD as a people's party (Volkspartei) and no longer as a class-based party. Although Kirchheimer does not refer explicitly to the Bad Godesberg Programme in his essay, it is clear that the catch-all party thesis must be thought to be closely connected to it.

From the point of view of the demand side of voters, one can read the catch-all party model as successful recruitment of voters from all segments of the population. Instead of being heavily biased towards working-class voters, 'catch-all' social democracy thus represents a sort of mirror of the entire electorate. However, Kirchheimer's argument is more nuanced (Müller 1992: 190–191). Social democratic parties would not seek to convince all voters, but only those 'whose interests do not adamantly conflict' (Kirchheimer 1966: 186). He mentions the example of white-collar workers and civil servants, two groups that could be targeted simultaneously with blue-collar workers without losing credibility. While Kirchheimer is known for having put forward the concept of the catch-all

party, his idea of enlarging the electoral targets of social democracy is still to some extent compatible with the idea of social democracy as a working-class movement. Later on, I will advance the term 'hybrid working-class party' to characterise the situation in which social democracy mobilises the working class and also allied classes.

In their well-known book *Paper Stones* on the history of electoral socialism, Przeworski and Sprague (1986) adopt a position diametrically opposed to that of Kirchheimer. A hybrid working-class party is not sustainable in the long run. Their argument is that an opening to other segments transforms the class character of social democracy and marks an end to its working-class character. More precisely, the two authors focus on the history of socialist parties. They observe a similar scenario in every country. Socialist parties grew larger, but their electoral progress stopped after a certain time. According to these authors, the main reason is that the expected proletarianisation of large segments of the population did not happen and workers never became a majority of the electorate. This element is of central importance in Przeworski and Sprague's work. The fact that workers do not constitute more than 50% of the electorate constrains socialist parties to look for allies outside the working class. This leads the authors to articulate the existence of an electoral dilemma for socialist parties. Socialist parties can either remain parties of the working class without reaching any parliamentary majority or obtain electoral majorities but with the risk of losing their working-class electorate with an appeal extended to other classes. Socialist parties as working-class parties are undeniably condemned to fail: either they remain small or they lose their working-class character.

A Note: A 'Working-Class Party' Is More Than a Working-Class Electorate

This book focuses on studying the electorate of social democracy. At this stage, it is essential to note that the idea of a 'working-class party' goes well beyond a working-class electorate. Historically, social democracy relies on a close connection among the electorate, the ideology and the movement. A working-class party means not only a party supported by workers but also a party that tries to improve the living conditions of workers. The ultimate goal is to achieve an emancipation of the working class that abolishes their dependency on the interests of capitalists. Moreover, historical contributions also note the existence of a close connection

between social democracy and labour unions as part of a larger social movement, the labour movement.

The analysis in this book is focused primarily on the electorate, but there is a constant effort to put the transformation of the electorate in close connection with ideology and labour unions throughout the book. It is also important to emphasise this element given the new competition that social democracy faces among workers. From a demand-side perspective, one can observe that new parties attract votes from workers. However, if one follows the encompassing definition of a working-class party, it is difficult to put radical right parties in this category. Following the criteria of ideology and movement, radical right parties cannot be described as working-class parties. Their ideology is clearly opposite to the socialist ideology based on the emancipation of the working class. They also constantly attack the legitimacy of trade unions (see Mosimann et al. 2019).

Using the Oesch Class Schema to Study the Transformation of Social Democracy

It is necessary to have a class schema that is precise enough to capture the core electorate of social democracy—the industrial working class— but flexible enough to analyse the creation of various class coalitions that are likely to change over time. The new class schema developed by Oesch (2006) perfectly fits these two criteria. It allows a precise operationalisation of lower non-manual classes and also for diverse segments of the salaried middle classes to be taken into account—a new and growing potential for social democracy.

The Oesch class schema represents an alternative to the Erikson and Goldthorpe (1992) class schema—also known under the abbreviation EGP—which is predominantly used in the class voting literature. EGP was conceived for societies in which employment in the manufacturing sector still constitutes an important share of total employment. By contrast, the Oesch class schema represents the most ambitious attempt to take into account changes in employment structure that have occurred in recent decades, such as the decrease in manual employment and occupational upgrading.

In a similar vein to the EGP class schema, the Oesch class schema (represented in Table 2.1) includes a vertical dimension that distinguishes more or less advantageous positions in the labour market. Additionally,

Table 2.1 Oesch's 8-class schema with representative occupations and the average size of classes in the 1970s and in 2010–2015

Interpersonal service logic	Technical work logic	Organisational work logic	Independent work logic
Socio-cultural (semi-) professionals 8% → 13%	Technical (semi-) professionals 4% → 7%	(Junior) managers 11% → 17%	Large employers and self-empl. professionals 2% → 3%
Medical doctors Teachers Social workers	Engineers Architects IT-specialists	Administrators Consultants Accountants	Entrepreneurs Lawyers (self-empl.)
Service workers 14% → 20%	Production workers 31% → 16%	Clerks 17% → 13%	Small business owners 13% → 11%
Waiters Nursing aids Shop assistants	Mechanics Carpenters Assemblers	Secretaries Receptionists Mail clerks	Shop owners Independent artisans Farmers

Source Own calculations based on the Political Action Survey and the European Social Survey (see Chapters 3 and 4 for the detailed sources). Averages for six countries (Austria, France, Germany, Great Britain, the Netherlands and Switzerland). Based on respondents' class positions

and this is where it departs most from the EGP class schema, it also includes a horizontal dimension which is based on different 'work logics'. Starting with the importance of daily work experiences in shaping interests and loyalties, Oesch distinguishes between three different work logics for employees: the 'organisational work logic', the 'technical work logic' and the 'interpersonal work logic'. A fourth work logic, the 'independent work logic' applies to employers and the self-employed. Within the salaried middle classes, the horizontal dimension permits a distinction among managers (included in the 'organisational work logic'), socio-cultural professionals (included in the 'interpersonal work logic') and technical professionals (included in the 'technical work logic'). Managers are the group that is closest to the interests of employers, while socio-cultural professionals are the most remote (see Kriesi 1998).

The horizontal distinctions are not limited to the salaried middle classes but apply to all positions in the labour market. This allows the contours of the working class to be enlarged to the 'new proletariat' in the service

sector. In this schema, the production workers included in the 'technical work logic' form the core of the manual working class. The service workers included in the 'interpersonal work logic' represent most clearly the 'new proletariat' in the services. An additional category is composed of office workers, which take the lower positions in the 'organisational work logic'. Unlike the EGP class schema, all these classes have a similar hierarchical position.

The most sophisticated version of the Oesch class schema includes 17 classes that can be merged in order to form more parsimonious class schemas. In this book, the 8-class version is used, which groups together the two classes with the lowest skill level and the two classes with the highest level. This means that unskilled workers are grouped together with skilled workers (at the bottom) and that associate professionals are grouped together with professionals (at the top). This merging is useful from a practical point of view. Since occupational classifications change over time, it is easier to find conversions when dealing with a smaller number of categories. Crucially, it is meaningful from a theoretical point of view. Access to higher education becomes the decisive criteria on the vertical dimension. The disadvantage of this merging is that class differences appear to be more flat on the vertical dimension, in comparison with other class schemata.

Table 2.1 indicates the average size of the eight classes in the 1970s and the 2000s–2010s in six Western European countries. Production workers represented almost a third of the population eligible to vote and were by far the largest group in the 1970s. In the more recent period, they only form 16% of the population, a proportion equivalent to that of managers and slightly smaller than that of service workers.

Three variables are needed to construct the Oesch' class schema (the 8-class version): occupation; status of employment; and number of employees, in order to distinguish large employers from small business owners. Information is derived from the current position of an individual in the labour market and from the past position if the respondent is retired or unemployed. Concerning occupation, the schema is based on the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) developed by the International Labour Organisation (ILO). More precisely, the schema was initially developed on the basis of the 1988 classification (ISCO-88) at its most detailed level (4-digits). It is possible to find translations with the older version of the classification (ISCO-68) and the newer version (ISCO-08). These are sometimes present in the surveys used in this book.

In some cases, instead of the international classification, national classifications of occupations are available in surveys. Again, it is possible to translate them into ISCO codes or directly into the eight classes.

Notes

1. Next to the chapters included in the edited volume by Evans and De Graaf (2013), several other studies have tested some top-down or supply-side hypotheses (e.g. Arès 2017; Langsæther 2019; Rennwald and Evans 2014; Vestin 2019).
2. Relatively similar effects on the move to the centre by social democratic parties can be found in a study by Arndt (2013). The author focuses on Third Way welfare state reforms conducted by social democratic governments at the end of the 1990s in four West European countries. He also demonstrates a negative impact of these reforms on working-class support in Denmark, Germany and Great Britain.

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Were Social Democratic Parties Really More Working Class in the Past?

Abstract The goal of this chapter is to establish a baseline for the strength of the working-class character of social democracy in the decades following the Second World War in order to avoid any over- or under-estimation. The chapter develops criteria to analyse the class profile of social democracy and define a working-class party. The leading idea is that social democracy as a working-class party does not per se exclude support from other allied classes. I therefore propose a distinction between hybrid and pure working-class parties. The chapter demonstrates the relatively strong working-class character of social democracy in six Western European countries. The analysis focuses on the 1970s because this period still featured the 'Keynesian class compromise' (although it started to be in serious crisis) and comparative survey data are available.

Conceptualising the Relationship Between Social Democracy and Social Classes

In order to determine the class profile of social democracy, it is necessary to capture the relation of social democracy to its core electorate of the working class, as well as to other potentially allied classes. As discussed in the previous chapter, the search for alliances has been a primary goal of social democracy. One must therefore consider the possibility that social democracy as working-class parties[1] does not per se exclude the mobilisation of other classes but is to some extent compatible with the support of other allied classes. At the same time, the specific relationship of social democracy to the working class needs to be emphasised, especially with respect to other parties. If social democracy strongly mobilises the working-class vote, other parties will have difficulty in benefiting from the working-class vote. Hence, social democracy as working-class parties suggests that this party family enjoys a kind of monopoly over the working-class vote.

I propose to think of four ideal types of social democratic party electorates. They combine the support that social democratic parties receive from their core electorate of the working class (first dimension) with the support they receive from allied classes (second dimension). The four types are schematically represented in Fig. 3.1. They rely on different combinations of class support: (1) a *pure working-class party* relies on strong electoral support from the working class but weak electoral support from allied classes; (2) a *hybrid working-class party* relies on strong electoral support from both the working class and allied classes; (3) a *new class party* relies on strong electoral support from allied classes but weak support from the working class; (4) a *cross-class party* is one with no social group dominant in its electorate.

The combination of these two dimensions allows conceptualisation of the electoral basis of social democracy in a finer way than the previous literature permits. In particular, it makes a more flexible interpretation of working-class parties possible by recognising social democracy's continual search for allies. This is important to establish a baseline for the working-class character of social democracy as we do in this chapter before turning to the transformations over time. Introducing the hybrid working-class party type includes the possibility that social democracy might mobilise both its core electorate and allied classes. A pure working-class party operates in a situation in which the voting choice is strongly polarised so social
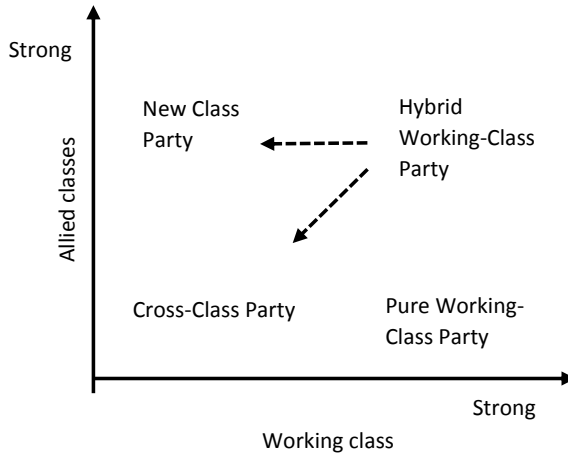
Fig. 3.1 Types of parties according to their support from the working class and allied classes

democracy relies almost entirely on mobilisation of the working class. This situation excludes cases where social democracy can benefit from even intermediate support from other allied classes. I therefore expect social democratic parties in the decades following the war to have been more often closer to the hybrid type of working-class party than to the pure type.

Furthermore, the conceptualisation allows a large range of options in the transformations of the class profile of social democracy to be taken into account. I propose envisaging two options (see the arrows in Fig. 3.1), where social democracy becomes cross-class parties with class no longer relevant in their social base, or it becomes new class parties with a different class replacing the long-term dominance of the working class. Several comparative studies have convincingly demonstrated a decline in manual workers' support for social democracy (e.g. Best 2011; Gingrich and Häusermann 2015; Knutsen 2006; Moschonas 2002) but have not reached a precise conclusion on the new class profile of social democracy. This is partly due to the classical division between manual workers and non-manual workers they use. The work conducted by Moschonas (2002: 83–119) illustrates some of the difficulties met well. Based on a careful compilation of secondary literature, he identifies a reinforcement of a

second pillar of social democracy voters made up of the salaried middle classes. According to him, the salaried middle classes have the potential to become the new '*centre* of the social democratic coalition' as was previously the case for the working class (Moschonas 2002: 113). However, he points to a strong variation in national situations and the important heterogeneity in the salaried middle classes—an element he cannot fully examine with the broad groupings of occupations he uses.

Moreover, there is a slight tendency to subsume social democracy's contemporary profile under the 'middle-class parties' heading, given the general rise of middle-class occupations relative to blue-collar occupations in the employment structure. Gingrich and Häusermann (2015) carefully inspect the decline in the working-class vote from the 1980s to the 2010s (and as its consequences for the elaboration of social policies). The authors are able to show a process in which parties of the left[2] can compensate for the decline in working-class support with new support from middle-class constituencies. Their results for the class composition of left-wing party supporters indicate that middle-class voters represent an increasing part of social democracy's electoral base—and manual workers a decreasing part. More precisely, they show that since the 1990s middle-class voters have represented a larger part of the electoral base than manual workers.[3] Their analysis on the transformation of the class composition is extremely interesting but it does not really take into consideration changes in class structure. Similar results may be found for all political parties given the general decline in blue-collar occupations and the concomitant rise in middle-class occupations.

What makes a cross-class party distinctive is its absence of support from specific social classes—but not an absence of support as such. The working class does not have a dominant position for this type. Support from the working class is no longer distinct from that from other classes, including traditionally opposed classes. There is a strong proximity between the cross-class party type and the catch-all party model (see the previous chapter). I preferred the label 'cross-class party' to the more encompassing concept of 'catch-all party', which not only refers to the electorate but also to the ideology of parties. Furthermore, as I argued in the preceding chapter, the initial idea of the electorate formulated by Kirchheimer (1966) refers more to a restrictive opening to other classes than to a broad opening of socialist parties to all social classes. Hence, Kirchheimer's formulation refers more to the hybrid working-class party type,

which has a combination of strong support from the working class and intermediate support from allied classes.

The 'new class' type is intimately related to the close proximity between specific segments of the salaried middle classes and left-wing parties. The idea of a *new* class refers to the expansion of the new middle classes in social structure.[4] Several scholars have emphasised the strong left-wing potential among professionals in social and cultural services, the 'socio-cultural professionals' in the Oesch class schema (e.g. Kitschelt 1994; Kriesi 1998). Indeed, research has shown differences in party preferences, with socio-cultural professionals leaning to the left (and especially towards the Greens) and managers—the salaried arm of owners and employers—leaning to the right (e.g. Dolezal 2010; Güveli et al. 2007; Müller 1999; Oesch 2008). Hence, in the recent period, the allied classes have typically included socio-cultural professionals. In previous periods, lower-rank white-collar workers (service workers and clerks in the Oesch class schema) formed the backbone of allied classes (see the previous chapter). Instead of collapsing all white-collar workers into a unique category, the Oesch class schema allows us to capture these classes with precision while also offering flexibility to deal with the rise of new allies over time.

What does strong electoral support from a class mean? It is possible to consider the question from two different angles. First, it is possible to think about the distinctiveness of a specific social class in its vote choice. The extent to which a social class gives support to a political party that is different from the average vote choice indicates a close affinity between a specific social class and a specific party. This factor has been at the centre of research on cleavages (and the decline in cleavages), where attention has been given to the "partisan alignments of specific groups comprising cleavages" (Brooks et al. 2006: 91). However, scholarly research has also pointed to the importance of changes in the size of the groups comprising cleavages, most notably to the reduction in the size of the industrial working class. In this perspective, cleavages become weaker, not only or simply because groups change their political preferences ('behavioural dealignment') but simply because they lose their prominence in the social structure ('structural dealignment') (e.g. Best 2011; Goldberg 2017, 2019; Lachat 2007; Manza and Brooks 1999). One must therefore also consider the electoral relevance of a specific social class for a party. The extent to which a social class represents a large share of a party's voters indicates the dependency of the party on that specific social class for its electoral results. This factor depends on the size of

the group in the social structure—it is more likely that a social class is important to a party's score if the class represents a strong proportion of the total potential electorate. It also depends on the specific group's turnout—it is more likely that a social class is important to a party's score if the class displays a strong turnout.[5]

In order to tap into the electoral support from social classes, I therefore propose to use two indicators: the vote of workers (and allied classes) in relation to the average party score and the contribution of workers (and allied classes) to the electoral score of social democratic parties in relation to their weight in the social structure. For each element, I will not only consider the *absolute* level of support for social democracy but will also consider the *relative* level by means of ratios relating the level of support from a given class to a party's average level of support. This will allow me to take into account variations in parties' electoral popularity, as is emphasised in class voting research (Evans 1999: 13–14).

Social Democracy as Hybrid Working-Class Parties in the 1970s

I focus on one election in the first half of the 1970s and use the cross-national 'Political Action: An Eight Nation Study, 1973–1976' survey. This survey included a question on the party voted for in the last national parliamentary election and detailed information on the respondents' occupations. Since France was not included in this survey, I use the post-electoral survey for the 1978 legislative election (first round). Manufacturing was still predominant during the decade in question— employment in the industrial sector peaked in 1970 in Europe (Therborn 1995: 71) and large demographic earthquakes did not affect the industrial working class until the 1980s (Hobsbawm 1994). Moreover, in the period of economic expansion that started after the Second World War and lasted until the recession of 1973–1975, social democratic parties reached a peak in terms of ideological influence, public policies and electoral performances[6] (Escalona 2018: 27). Focusing on the 1970s makes possible to study the electoral base of social democracy during this successful period. There are also pragmatic reasons for making a comparison with this decade. If one puts aside the British case, this is when surveys emerged.

Let us start with the extent to which social democracy reached a high score among workers. Figure 3.2 displays support for social democratic parties by social class, with the parties' average score on the vertical

a) AT: SPÖ 1971 (mean: 55.9%)

Small	15%
Lar/self	30%
Manag	61%
Tech	60%
Socio	46%
Clerk	52%
Prod	72%
Serv	75%

b) GB: Labour 1970 (mean: 46.5%)

Small	16%
Lar/self	18%
Manag	24%
Tech	28%
Socio	46%
Clerk	40%
Prod	61%
Serv	56%

c) DE: SPD 1971 (mean: 42.9%)

Small	16%
Lar/self	22%
Manag	36%
Tech	44%
Socio	38%
Clerk	39%
Prod	58%
Serv	49%

d) FR: PS 1978 (mean: 24.9%)

Small	17%
Lar/self	5%
Manag	25%
Tech	28%
Socio	28%
Clerk	28%
Prod	28%
Serv	25%

e) NL: PvdA 1972 (mean: 35.9%)

Small	10%
Lar/self	13%
Manag	35%
Tech	47%
Socio	27%
Clerk	38%
Prod	47%
Serv	41%

f) CH: SPS 1975 (mean: 31.3%)

Small	10%
Lar/self	13%
Manag	21%
Tech	35%
Socio	36%
Clerk	41%
Prod	45%
Serv	39%

Fig. 3.2 Support for social democratic parties by social class in six countries in the 1970s

Notes The election year is given in the headings. Numbers of cases: AT: 1018, GB: 682, DE: 1480, FR: 3456, NL: 713, CH: 447. *Source* Political Action: An Eight Nation Study, 1973–1976, distributed by GESIS www.gesis.org (ZA0765). For France: Enquête post-électorale française 1978, CEVIPOF, distributed by the Centre de Données Socio-politiques, http://cdsp.sciences-po.fr

Names of classes: Small = small business owners, Lar/self = large employers and self-employed professionals, Manag = managers, Tech = technical professionals, Socio = socio-cultural professionals, Clerk = clerks, Prod = production workers, Serv = service workers

axis.[7] In all the countries examined with the exception of France, production workers were the strongest supporters of social democracy/labour and the difference vis-à-vis the average supporter reached around 15 percentage points. In absolute terms, social democratic parties received between 60 and 70% of the working-class vote in Austria, Great Britain and Germany and slightly under half the working-class vote in the Netherlands and Switzerland. In relative terms, production workers' support for social democratic parties exceeded average support by a factor of 1.28 in Austria, 1.32 in Great Britain, 1.36 in Germany, 1.30 in the Netherlands and 1.44 in Switzerland. The conclusion is the same if one uses either absolute or relative support. Without any doubt, social democracy received strong support from the working class in the 1970s.

Social democratic parties obtained weak scores among small business owners, large employers and self-employed professionals. However, they benefited from an intermediate level of support from various other classes. Most distinctively, they were particularly successful among service workers—a relatively small group at the time, as we will see later—in several countries. They also enjoyed intermediate to above-average support from clerks, socio-cultural professionals and in some countries technical professionals and managers. This suggests that already in the 1970s social democracy could not be described as a purely working-class movement.

The French Socialist Party had a different class profile in 1978. Its penetration among production workers was much smaller (a ratio of 1.13). Moreover, production workers did not outdistance various other groups of wage earners. The cross-class (or 'interclassist') character of the French Socialist Party is often emphasised in the literature (e.g. Rey 2004; Lefebvre and Sawicki 2006). The main reason for this was the presence of the Communist Party (see Michelat and Simon 2004; Mischi 2010; Moschonas 2002), which was the first party chosen by production workers in France according to our results. On average, the Communist Party received 21% of the vote but it gathered 36% of production workers' votes (a ratio of 1.71). Together, the Socialist Party and the Communist Party obtained 64% of production workers' votes, a level no different from elsewhere. The Communist Party also received intermediate support from service workers, clerks and technical professionals (19–21%) but reached lower levels among socio-cultural professionals (17%), managers (14%) and especially small business owners and large employers/self-employed professionals (7%). Even the Communist Party could not be described as a

pure working-class party in the 1970s because it reached an intermediate level of support from a mix of classes.

The analysis has so far been restricted to workers who participated in the election. We must now analyse the basic question of the levels of participation of the different social classes. It is striking to observe from Table 3.1 that production worker participation did not differ very much from the average level in several of the countries. This was especially the case in Austria and France. In Austria, for example, they were almost as likely to turn out as large employers and self-employed professionals. There were more inequalities in other countries. In Great Britain and the Netherlands, production workers were the group that participated the least in elections, and they were the group that participated second-least after service workers in Germany and Switzerland. By contrast, the salaried middle classes and large employers generally displayed the highest levels of participation.

The importance of production workers in the employment structure in the 1970s made social democratic support logically composed of production workers to a large extent. It is therefore necessary to observe, in relative terms, the extent to which social democratic party electorates were more working class than the total electorate. Again using the 8-class schema, Table 3.2 presents the composition of social democratic party electorates and for comparison purposes the composition of the total electorates (including the people who did not vote).

Austria and Great Britain were the two countries where social democracy obtained the highest shares of production workers' votes (see Figure 3.2) and production workers contributed the most to this party

Table 3.1 Participation by social class in the 1970s (in %)

	Prod	Serv	Clerk	Socio	Tech	Manag	Lar/self	Small	Mean
AT	91	89	89	96	88	92	92	96	92
GB	68	80	74	76	87	73	72	81	73
DE	89	88	94	98	96	99	100	96	93
FR	93	92	93	92	90	95	100	95	94
NL	72	78	80	90	84	89	89	86	80
CH	51	38	59	67	65	75	74	54	57

Notes Number of cases: AT: 1256, GB: 992, DE: 1751, FR: 3809, NL: 921, CH: 920. See the information under Fig. 3.2 for sources and names of classes

Table 3.2 Composition of social democratic party electorates and total electorates in the 1970s (in %)

		Prod	Serv	Clerk	Socio	Tech	Manag	Lar/self	Small
AT	SPÖ	46	19	12	5	2	11	1	5
	Total	35	14	13	5	2	11	1	19
GB	Labour	49	18	16	7	2	5	1	3
	Total	39	14	18	7	3	9	3	7
DE	SPD	38	17	18	7	6	10	1	4
	Total	30	15	19	7	5	12	1	11
FR	PS	31	13	18	12	4	12	1	12
	Total	27	13	16	11	4	11	2	18
NL	PvdA	29	20	22	9	6	11	1	2
	Total	25	19	21	11	4	9	2	8
CH	SPS	36	9	19	9	9	11	2	5
	Total	31	11	14	7	7	13	4	15

Notes See the information under Fig. 3.2 for sources, names of classes and numbers of cases (see also Table 3.1). The total electorate includes non-voters and therefore refers to the population entitled to vote

family's electoral results. They represented almost one in two social democratic voters in these countries—this was also the case of the Communist Party in France, with 47% of its votes coming from production workers. They made up more than a third of the social democratic electorates in Germany and Switzerland but less than a third in France and the Netherlands. Social democratic parties were clearly helped by the class structure of the time but their supporters were, in relative terms, much more working class than the total electorate, especially in Austria (ratio: 1.31), Germany (ratio: 1.27) and Great Britain (ratio: 1.26). The contrast with the mainstream right-wing parties is also instructive. Production workers represented a non-negligible share of the centre-right parties' electorates but they never constituted more than approximately a quarter of them in all the countries of our sample.

While the importance of production workers in the social democratic electorate is evident, it does not go beyond the 50% threshold. Social democratic/socialist/labour parties were therefore dependent on mobilising allied classes to some extent, in particular lower white-collar workers. This again suggests that social democratic parties were not pure working-class parties in the 1970s. Service workers and clerks together represented around a third of the social democratic electorate at the time—less than a

third in Austria (27%) and Switzerland (28%) to be more precise. The proportion even reached 42% in the Netherlands. The Dutch Labour Party could clearly compensate for the relatively small size of production workers in the Netherlands.

By contrast, the salaried middle classes represented less than a fifth of the social democratic electorates in Austria and Great Britain (18 and 14% if one adds the shares of socio-cultural professionals, technical professionals and managers) and around a quarter in the other countries. The proportion reached 29% in Switzerland and thus equalled the level of lower white-collar workers. The proportion is also relatively high for the cross-class French Socialist Party (28%). The stronger role of lower white-collar workers relatively to that of the salaried middle classes is also a product of the class structure. The salaried middle classes represented small groups in the total electorate at the time.

The analyses focusing on the distinctiveness of the working class in its vote and the contribution of the working class to social democracy's electoral score point to similar logics. This party family mobilised production workers relatively strongly. However, no social democratic party came close to the ideal type of pure working-class (or production workers') party. Service workers were often as distinctive in their support for social democracy as production workers and contributed to its electoral scores. One must therefore think of social democratic parties in the 1970s as alliances between blue-collar workers and lower white-collar workers, who together represented a significant share of the total eligible electorate. It is therefore more appropriate to use the concept of hybrid working-class parties. The observations made by Kirchheimer in 1966 that social democracy could successfully open to other segments of the electorate seem to be correct. Social democracy strongly mobilised production workers but at the same time managed to mobilise lower white-collar workers.

However, the analysis has also demonstrated some considerable cross-national variation. The British Labour Party and the Austrian Social Democratic Party were the parties going the most in the direction of pure working-class parties because they mobilised production workers' votes the most strongly. By contrast, the French Socialist Party mobilised production workers and allied classes at similar levels and therefore had affinities with the cross-class type. The Dutch Labour Party reached stronger mobilisation among lower non-manual workers than among production workers. The Swiss Social Democratic Party mobilised

production workers relatively well but at the same time already had a more diverse profile than in other countries.

The finding that social democratic parties are not pure working-class parties is not dramatically new. Indeed, it is in line with several studies that have emphasised diversity in social democracy's electoral support in the decades following the war. For example, in her analysis of Eurobarometer survey data, Best (2011) underlines the importance of the non-manual population in social democratic vote shares in the mid-1970s. Moschonas (2002: 50–51) characterises social democracy in the 1950s and 1960s as an 'enlarged coalition of the working class'. According to him, there was a strong predominance of the working-class electorate in its social basis but at the same time social democracy could benefit from some support from the salaried middle classes. Bergounioux (1989) also insisted on the early transformation of the class composition of social democratic parties (before 1914) and their opening towards other groups of wage earners. However, in the context of recent discussions about the transformations of social democracy, it is essential to remember the hybrid character of social democracy and to carefully consider the baseline, as we do in this chapter.

Finally, one might also wonder whether the combination of production workers' support with that of other classes observed already signals an important transformation in the class profile of social democracy. One can read the results in two different directions: as representative of social democracy's original ambition to appeal to allied classes or as indicating a transformation of social democracy in which there is a trade-off between working-class and middle-class support (Przeworski and Sprague 1986). It is not clear which direction is the more accurate. Nonetheless, it is interesting to observe that the mobilisation of production workers remained at a relatively high level in the 1970s—which is different from what we will observe in the next chapter for the more recent period.

Dominance Over the Working-Class Vote

Logically, strong working-class mobilisation by social democracy also prevents other parties from penetrating this segment of the electorate. I now consider the competition that social democracy faces for its core electorate. Three scenarios are possible. First, a social democratic party may be the only party that captures most of the working-class vote and there is no other serious competitor. Second, a social democratic party may

compete with another party for the working-class vote. Third, there can be open competition among several (or all) parties for the working-class vote. Analogously to the typology developed by Oesch and Rennwald (2018), the working class forms the *party preserve* of social democracy in the first scenario. In the second case, the working class is the *contested stronghold* of two parties, and in the third case, there is *open competition* between parties. One can therefore analyse the type of competition by considering the number of parties which receive above-average electoral support from the working class.

Next to communist parties, Christian Democratic parties were potential competitors for the working-class vote in the 1970s. Their cross-class appeal and support represent an important characteristic of this party family (Duncan 2015; Kalyvas and van Kersbergen 2010; Knutsen 2006). However, as we will see, in most cases, Christian Democratic parties did not receive above-average support from production workers. Social democracy therefore enjoyed a sort of monopoly over the representation of production workers in most of the countries. Thus, production workers constituted the *party preserve* of social democracy.

In Austria, a quarter of the production workers' votes went to the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP), which obtained an average of 39% of the vote share—the ratio is therefore 0.64. In Great Britain, the Conservatives gathered 31% of production workers' votes, against 46% of the total electorate's (a ratio of 0.67). In Germany, the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) enjoyed 35% of the production workers' votes, compared with an overall average of 43% (a ratio of 0.81). In Switzerland, the party second-best supported by production workers was the Christian Democratic People's Party (CVP) (18% of production workers' votes against 20% overall, a ratio of 0.9), and the Radical Democratic Party (FDP) was only the third party, with 13% of the workers' votes (against 22% overall, a ratio of 0.59). Around 20% of production workers' votes went to other smaller parties in the fragmented Swiss party system.

The cross-class character of Christian democracy was more visible in Switzerland and Germany than in Austria. However, it was most pronounced in the case of the Netherlands. The three confessional parties merging in 1977 in the Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA) received 36% of production workers' votes, against an average of 32% (a ratio of 1.12). This was the only case in our sample where two parties received above-average electoral support from production workers. The People's

Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD) received only 2.5% of production workers' votes but it gathered 14% of the votes on average (a ratio of 0.18). Production workers were therefore the *contested strongholds* of both social democracy and Christian democracy in this country. The Netherlands therefore represented an exception to the monopoly of social democracy.

Finally, the importance of competition with the Communist Party in France has already been mentioned. It should be added that the Gaullist and non-Gaullist centre-right parties both received around 14% of production workers' votes and each gathered an average of 20–21% of the overall vote (a ratio of 0.67). Production workers were therefore the *contested strongholds* for both social democracy and communism in France.

Summing Up

The results presented in this chapter indicate that in the 1970s social democracy relied on strong support from production workers, who generally had a relatively high level of participation in elections. However, several elements indicate that social democracy also relied on the mobilisation of other allied classes. It reached a medium level of support among various segments of wage earners and especially among service workers. Lower non-manual classes also brought a non-negligible contribution to the electoral results of social democratic parties. Social democracy in the 1970s therefore cannot be described as a pure working-class movement. This party family came closer to the ideal type of hybrid working-class party. However, there was also some considerable cross-national variation. Some social democratic parties were clearly less hybrid than others, in particular when they faced no competition from Christian Democrats. When social democracy faced significant competition from communists, it also had a tendency to display affinities with the cross-class party type, as in the case in France.

Notes

1. I leave aside here the question of the representation of interests and focus purely on the sociology of the electorate.
2. Gingrich and Häusermann consider the combined support for social democratic, communist and green parties. However, they mention that their

results are similar if they only focus on social democratic parties (see also Häusermann 2018).

3. It should be added that their empirical analysis is based on data from the Eurobarometer, where respondents' occupations are classified according to the blue-collar vs. white-collar distinction. Constrained by the data, the authors group an important part of lower white-collar workers (skilled service workers) with the middle class. This produces an over-large segment of middle-class voters, or at least a larger segment than I use in this study.

4. The term 'new class' was originally used by American social scientists (e.g. Gouldner 1979; see also Brint 1985) and conservative thinkers to grasp the rise of liberalism and dissent among American professionals in the late 1960s.

5. In an analysis of Republican and Democrat voters, Axelrod (1972) proposed that the contribution of a given group to a party's score must be seen as a combination of the loyalty of the group to the political party, its turnout and its size (for recent applications, see Best 2011; Bürgisser and Kurer 2019).

6. The detailed vote shares obtained by social democratic parties are available in Appendix.

7. The average vote shares are derived from the survey. The data have not been weighted to adjust for the official election results.

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The Class Basis of Social Democracy at the Beginning of the Twenty-First Century

Abstract This chapter is dedicated to an empirical analysis of the class basis of social democracy at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The analyses presented rely on data from the European Social Survey 2010–2015. They show a strong tendency of social democratic parties towards becoming *cross-class parties*, mobilising no specific social class in particular. Despite the widespread assumption, only a minority of social democratic parties have become *new class parties* strongly mobilising specific segments of the salaried middle classes. The chapter also demonstrates that the working-class vote has become much more fragmented. In this group, social democracy now competes with radical left parties, populist radical right parties and abstention.

Keywords Voting · Abstention · Social democracy · Radical left parties · Radical right parties · Middle classes

Small and Large Breaks with the Working Class

Political science research has pointed towards an increase in abstention from voting in Western countries since the end of the 1980s (Blais 2007; Wattenberg 2000). I therefore start by considering the extent to which abstention has increased among working-class voters. This is a crucial first

step before analysing their party choice and drawing conclusions on the class profile of social democracy. When abstention is high, the decision to support social democracy is made among a relatively smaller group of citizens. The most important decision for an increasing share of workers in this context simply becomes the choice between participating and not participating.

The analyses presented in this chapter focus on the beginning of the twenty-first century. They are based on data from the European Social Survey (ESS), which offers detailed information about the respondents' occupations. More precisely, the analyses focus on the first five years of the 2010s decade for pragmatic reasons of data availability.[1] For each country, I first list all the elections that took place during this time period (this means the 2012 French election, the 2013 Austrian and German elections, the 2010 and 2012 Dutch elections, the 2011 and 2015 Swiss elections and the 2010 and 2015 British elections) and then select the ESS survey round closest to the election.[2] Of course, the results are to some extent influenced by the specificities of these particular elections and the electoral performance of Social Democrats and their competitors in these elections. However, apart from some specific features, all these elections are representative of a new environment in which social democracy faces new competitors in the party systems and copes with low turnouts. In all these elections, social democracy displays a weak electoral performance (see Appendix)—only the French Socialist Party managed to secure a relatively good result in the 2012 election, before a strong electoral defeat in 2017. The electoral decline of social democracy has been particularly strong since 2008 (see Bremer and Rennwald 2019), accelerating a continual decline since electoral peaks in the 1960s and 1970s (see Rennwald and Pontusson 2020).

Table 4.1 displays participation percentages in elections by social class in the period between 2010 and 2015. The electoral participation of workers does not go beyond 76%. This value—for Germany—is the highest in our sample. In contrast, in three countries, the participation of managers is higher than 90%. In four countries, this is also the case for the category of large employers and the self-employed. In the 1970s, the participation of workers reached more than 90% in two countries. At that time, workers were almost as likely to participate in elections as the average citizen in several countries. For example, in Austria, worker

Table 4.1 Participation by social class in 2010–2015 (in %)

	Prod	*Serv*	*Clerk*	*Socio*	*Tech*	*Manag*	*Lar/self*	*Small*	*Mean*
AT	72	67	77	87	87	91	91	88	78
GB	65	65	80	87	83	82	86	77	75
DE	76	74	85	89	88	93	92	85	84
FR	70	79	79	86	84	85	100	82	80
NL	74	76	82	91	88	92	97	85	84
CH	57	54	66	79	70	77	86	74	69

Notes Number of cases: AT: 1546, GB: 3960, DE: 2652, FR: 1695, NL: 3358, CH: 2305. *Source*: European Social Survey (ESS), Norwegian Centre for Research Data, https://www.europeansocials urvey.org. Different ESS rounds are selected for each country: rounds 5–6 (2010–2012) for the Netherlands, round 6 (2012) for France, round 7 (2014) for Austria and Germany, rounds 6 (2012) and 8 (2016) for Britain and Switzerland. The data are weighted by design weights
Names of classes: Prod = production workers, Serv = service workers, Clerk = clerks, Socio = socio-cultural professionals, Tech = technical professionals, Manag = managers, Lar/self = large employers and self-employed professionals, Small = small business owners

participation almost reached the average overall participation rate (a ratio of 0.99).

In contrast, in the 2010s, the ratio of worker electoral participation to the overall average in Austria was 0.92. Indeed, in all countries, this ratio became smaller: from 0.92 to 0.86 in Great Britain, from 0.96 to 0.91 in Germany, from 1 to 0.88 in France, from 0.90 to 0.88 in the Netherlands and from 0.89 to 0.82 in Switzerland. In contrast, in many countries, participation by the group of large employers and self-employed professionals increased relatively to the average: from 1 to 1.16 in Austria, from 0.98 to 1.14 in Great Britain, from 1.08 to 1.10 in Germany, from 1.07 to 1.25 in France and from 1.11 to 1.14 in the Netherlands. Inequalities in participation therefore clearly increased over time[3] and social democratic parties were less able to bring workers to the ballot box in the 2010s.

Therefore, workers participate in elections much less than in the past. To what extent can social democratic political parties benefit from the support of this smaller group of workers who effectively participate in elections? Figure 4.1 presents the shares of votes obtained by social democratic parties from different social classes in 2010–2015, with parties' average scores on the vertical axis.[4] In the 2010s, production workers were only the strongest supporters of social democracy/labour in Austria and Great Britain. In absolute terms, social democratic parties received
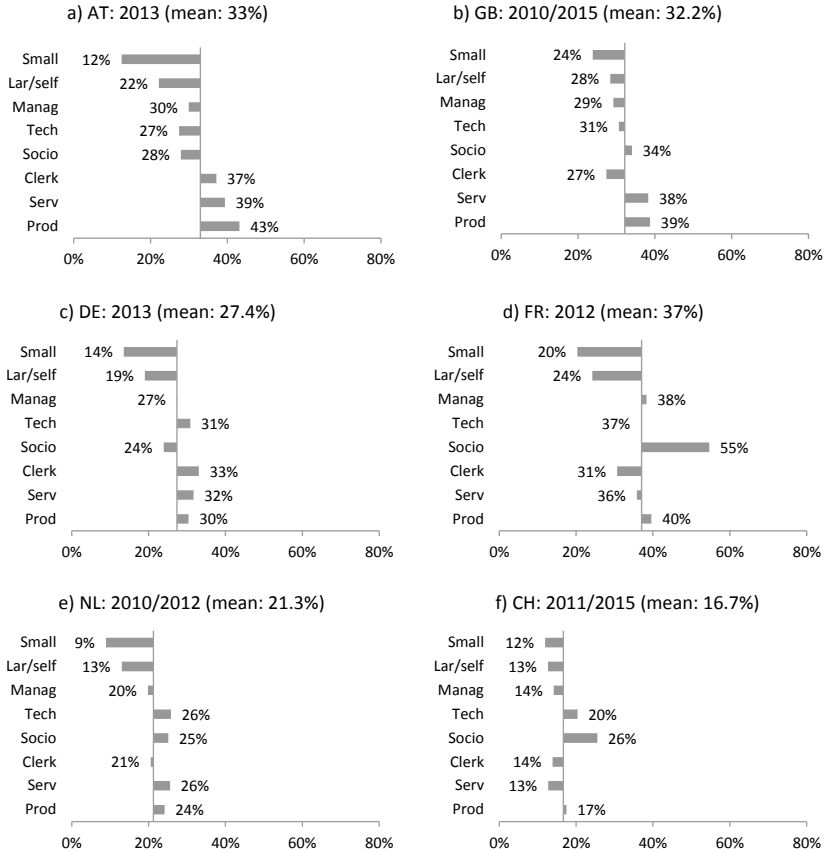
a) AT: 2013 (mean: 33%)

Small	12%
Lar/self	22%
Manag	30%
Tech	27%
Socio	28%
Clerk	37%
Serv	39%
Prod	43%

0%   20%   40%   60%   80%

b) GB: 2010/2015 (mean: 32.2%)

Small	24%
Lar/self	28%
Manag	29%
Tech	31%
Socio	34%
Clerk	27%
Serv	38%
Prod	39%

0%   20%   40%   60%   80%

c) DE: 2013 (mean: 27.4%)

Small	14%
Lar/self	19%
Manag	27%
Tech	31%
Socio	24%
Clerk	33%
Serv	32%
Prod	30%

0%   20%   40%   60%   80%

d) FR: 2012 (mean: 37%)

Small	20%
Lar/self	24%
Manag	38%
Tech	37%
Socio	55%
Clerk	31%
Serv	36%
Prod	40%

0%   20%   40%   60%   80%

e) NL: 2010/2012 (mean: 21.3%)

Small	9%
Lar/self	13%
Manag	20%
Tech	26%
Socio	25%
Clerk	21%
Serv	26%
Prod	24%

0%   20%   40%   60%   80%

f) CH: 2011/2015 (mean: 16.7%)

Small	12%
Lar/self	13%
Manag	14%
Tech	20%
Socio	26%
Clerk	14%
Serv	13%
Prod	17%

0%   20%   40%   60%   80%

Fig. 4.1 Support for social democratic parties in 2010–2015 in six countries by social class

Notes The election year is given in the headings. Number of cases: AT: 1023, GB: 2789, DE: 1997, FR: 1205, NL: 2713, CH: 1434. See the information under Table 4.1 for sources and names of classes

around 40% of production workers' votes in Austria, Great Britain and France, 30% in Germany and less than a quarter in the Netherlands and Switzerland. Clearly, average support for social democracy/labour generally decreased since the 1970s, but even in relative terms production worker support for social democracy was not greatly different to average

support. In relative terms, production worker support for social democracy exceeded average support by a factor of 1.31 in Austria (against 1.28 in the 1970s), 1.20 in Great Britain (1.32), 1.13 in the Netherlands (1.30), 1.11 in Germany (1.36), 1.07 in France (1.13) and 1.05 in Switzerland (1.44). Relative support for social democracy therefore shrank in all countries except Austria.[5] Among those fewer workers who took part in electoral contests, there was still an over-representation of social democratic voting, albeit of much weaker intensity (see also Knutsen 2006).

The same is also true for service workers—a category that displayed a consistently high level of support for social democracy in the 1970s. They too became less distinct supporters of social democracy over time. Generally, differences across classes in their degree of sympathy for social democracy were generally smaller in the 2010s than in the 1970s. The case of small business owners illustrates this well. While this group continued to remain the least likely to support social democracy, its aversion to this party family reduced in almost all countries.[6]

Already in the 1970s, several classes displayed intermediate support for social democracy. Clerks, socio-cultural professionals and technical professionals continued to present intermediate to above-average support for social democracy in the 2010s, with some variation across countries. Managers, who were in some countries relatively strong opponents of social democracy in the 1970s, displayed intermediate support for social democracy in the 2010s. However, none of the classes presented particularly strong above-average support for social democracy, at least in Austria, Great Britain, Germany and the Netherlands. When the distinctiveness of service and production workers in their support for social democracy weakened, no other class took a prominent role and served as the leading social democrat supporters. Social democratic parties were therefore more likely to have become *cross-class parties* with an intermediate level of support among various classes, including among the former strongholds of production and service workers.

France and Switzerland represent exceptions to this general pattern. In these countries, a specific segment of the salaried middle classes displayed a strong affinity with the socialist parties in the 2010s. In both countries, socio-cultural professionals were the strongest supporters of socialist parties. The support from this class exceeded average support by a factor of 1.53 in Switzerland and 1.48 in France. They clearly outdistanced production workers, who displayed only average support for the French

Socialist Party and the Swiss Social Democratic Party. In these two cases, socialist/social democratic parties therefore came closer to being *new class parties*.

In the recent period, production workers did not make a massive contribution to social democracy's electoral scores. As for the 1970s, Table 4.2 indicates the class composition of the social democratic electorate. It also reports the class composition of the total electorate, which includes non-voters here. Not only was production workers' support for social democracy not very different to that of the average voter (see above), but the importance of workers in the electorate also dramatically reduced. If we only consider production workers, their contribution to social democracy's electoral results was therefore relatively limited. In five of the six countries, production workers represented less than 20% of the social democracy electorate. In relative terms too, social democratic parties were no more working class than the total electorate. One must not forget that the widespread abstention among workers—which is taken into account in this analysis—contributed to depressing the working-class character of social democracy. However, Austria represents an exception to this pattern, with production workers still constituting a quarter of the social democratic electorate.

Table 4.2 Composition of social democratic party electorates and total electorates in 2010–2015 (in %)

		Prod	Serv	Clerk	Socio	Tech	Manag	Lar/self	Small
AT	SPÖ	25	24	17	11	6	12	2	4
	Total	22	23	15	11	7	11	2	10
GB	Labour	15	26	11	14	6	16	3	9
	Total	15	25	12	11	6	16	2	12
DE	SPD	18	15	18	13	11	17	3	5
	Total	18	15	15	14	9	16	4	10
FR	PS	18	21	8	17	10	19	1	6
	Total	19	22	10	11	10	17	1	10
NL	PvdA	12	22	11	20	7	21	2	5
	Total	12	20	12	16	5	21	3	11
CH	SPS	12	10	8	26	14	18	4	9
	Total	14	16	10	15	11	19	4	11

Notes See the information under Table 4.1 for sources, names of classes and numbers of cases (see also Fig. 4.1). The total electorate includes non-voters and therefore refers to the population entitled to vote

If we consider service workers as part of the working class, the working-class contribution to social democracy's electoral score becomes more important. Interestingly, it approximates to the scores found in the 1970s for production workers. In the 2010s, production and service workers represented almost half of the SPÖ electorate, around 40% of the Labour and the Socialist Party electorates, a third of the PvdA and the SPD electorates, but only a quarter of the SPS electorate in Switzerland. Hence, the definition of 'working class' is crucial in any evaluation of the contemporary class character of social democracy. Incorporating the new service proletariat into a broad 'middle-class' category would clearly change the conclusions of such an exercise and tilt social democratic parties towards being middle class. However, it should again be noticed that the importance of the enlarged working-class electorate to social democracy is more the product of the class structure—production and service workers together represent non-negligible segments of the electorate—than the product of a strong over-representation of workers among voters for this party family.

We noticed before the prominent level of support by socio-cultural professionals in Switzerland and France. However, their contribution to the electoral score of social democracy remained relatively modest, as is shown in Table 4.2. They represented a quarter of the Swiss Social Democratic Party's electorate and a fifth of the French Socialist Party's. In relative terms, this is already a significant contribution since socio-cultural professionals represented only 11% of the French electorate and 15% of the Swiss electorate. This segment of the new middle classes was simply too small to have the same importance in the social democratic electorate as production workers in the past: they never exceeded 16% of the total electorate in all countries. While the analysis above of the distinctiveness of classes pointed in the direction of new class parties in France and Switzerland, this second indicator of class contribution puts this conclusion into perspective.

In a few countries, managers made up a sizeable proportion of the social democratic electorate in the 2010s (up to one in five social democratic voters). The reason is that in almost all the countries they represented an important group in the total electorate, even larger than the group of socio-cultural professionals in most of the countries. However, this class has no particular affinity with social democracy. Its sizeable contribution to social democracy's electoral score was therefore more a product of the class structure. Hence, the social democratic electorate

was to some extent a mirror of the composition of the total electorate. This again suggests a proximity to a cross-class type.

The New Fragmentation
of the Working-Class Vote

Were there other parties which competed for the working-class vote? As the previous chapter showed, in the 1970s production workers constituted the *party preserve* of social democracy in most countries. Hence, social democracy enjoyed a sort of monopoly over the representation of production workers. The dominance of the socialist/Labour Party was only contested in France and the Netherlands, by the Communist Party in France and by the Christian Democratic Party in the Netherlands. In the 2010s, competition for the working-class vote was fiercer, since several parties received above-average electoral support from production workers.

Table 4.3 lists the parties which were in competition with social democracy for the working-class vote in the 2010s. It only includes parties that received above-average support from production workers. The table indicates the parties' vote shares among production workers next to the parties' names. It is important to remember here that radical right voters

Table 4.3 Competitors for production workers' votes, 2010–2015

	Radical Right	*Radical Left*
AT	FPÖ 22.2% (14%, ratio 1.59)	–
GB	UKIP 6.7% (3.6%, ratio 1.86)	–
CH	SVP 28.9% (18.6%, ratio 1.55)	–
DE	AfD 6.6% (4.5%, ratio 1.47)	Linke 8.3% (7.5%, ratio 1.11)
FR	FN 22.7% (11.6%, ratio 1.96)	Left Front 6.7% (5%, ratio 1.34)
NL	PVV 22.3% (10%, ratio 2.23)	SP 14.9% (10%, ratio 1.49)

Notes The table lists the parties which receive above-average electoral support from production workers (after social democracy) with indications of their vote share among production workers. The parties' average vote share is shown in parentheses, together with the ratio of the two numbers. See the information under Table 4.1 for sources

are generally under-represented in surveys, and the ESS is no exception to this. Interestingly, only parties from the radical right and the radical left[7] enjoyed above-average electoral support from production workers, after social democracy. This was never the case for mainstream right parties or Green parties. In three of the countries (Austria, Great Britain and Switzerland), social democratic parties were in competition with the radical right. In the other three countries (Germany, France and the Netherlands), social democratic parties competed with both the radical right and the radical left. Therefore, in some instances, the working class was the *contested stronghold* of social democracy and the radical right, while in others there was *open competition* among three parties for the working-class vote. Social democracy's monopoly over the working-class vote had therefore clearly ended.

Relative electoral support by production workers was generally more pronounced in the case of radical right parties than in the case of radical left parties. This means that production workers differed more from the average voter in their support for radical right parties than in their support for radical left parties. The ratios are particularly high for the National Front (FN) in France and the Party for Freedom (PVV) in the Netherlands. Production workers' support for these parties was twice as strong as that of the total electorate. In the elections analysed in this table, the Alternative for Germany (AfD) was only at the beginning of its electoral progression (it later gathered 12.6% of the votes in 2017). However, it already received more than average support from production workers.

Of course, one should remember that, being large parties, mainstream right parties often gather a sizeable share of production workers' votes in absolute terms. By extension, they are also in competition for the working-class vote. This was especially the case in Germany, where in this period the Conservatives (CDU) obtained 37% of production workers' votes, against an average of 38% from the overall electorate. The results are less impressive in the other countries, but the British Conservatives still received 28% of production workers' votes (against 37% on average) and the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) obtained 20% (against 27% on average). In the other cases, the share of production workers' votes going to mainstream parties of the right was more limited (between 10 and 16%). However, in none of the countries studied did mainstream right parties received above-average electoral support from production workers, not even in the Netherlands, where the Christian Democrats (CDA) competed most clearly for the working-class vote in the 1970s.

As it became a smaller party, the CDA increased its 'bourgeois' character. By contrast, in Austria, Great Britain and Germany, production workers became less reluctant to support the mainstream right in the 2010s compared to the 1970s. The most important change concerns the CDU, whose level of support among production workers was almost as strong as that among the entire electorate.[8]

The new working-class profile of radical right parties has attracted much attention in recent years. Therefore, our results can now be complemented by turning to the class composition of radical right parties. It is not an entire surprise that workers make up a sizeable proportion of the radical right electorate. If we again count production and service workers together, they represented almost half (48%) of the PVV's electorate in the Netherlands (but only 34 and 37% of those of the Dutch Labour Party and the Socialist Party, respectively), over half (57%) of the FN's electorate in France (but only 39% of the French Socialists' and 38% of the Front de Gauche's) and much more than half (62%) of the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) (but only 49% of the Austrian Social Democrats'). The share of the working class in the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) electorate was slightly lower (44% against 41% of the Labour Party's). This was also the case of AfD (42% against 33% of the German Social Democrats' and 30% of Die Linke's). The Swiss People's Party's (SVP) share (33% against 22% for the Swiss Social Democrats) was clearly smaller in Switzerland, where farmers and small business owners—the traditional constituency of the former agrarian party—still constitute an important electoral base (e.g. Rennwald 2014).

Undeniably, at the aggregate level, social democracy and radical right parties share commonalities in the class profile of their supporters. However, recognising this does not mean that there were direct transfers of votes between the radical right and social democracy. Studies show that the numbers of direct transfers were relatively limited. In an article analysing the electoral decline of social democracy, Rennwald and Pontusson (2020) show that only 8% of former social democratic party voters switched to the radical right in the next election in the period 2001–2015 in sixteen industrialised countries. The most common option was to choose mainstream parties of the right (45%), followed by the radical left (16%), abstention (16%) and the Greens (15%). In a detailed study of voter transitions in the British context, Evans and Mellon (2016) find that in 2015 UKIP primarily mobilised 2010 Conservative voters, obtaining its strongest result in all general elections with 12.6% of the

vote. However, these same conservative voters were former non-voters or 2005 Labour voters. In a time of high electoral volatility, indirect transitions from social democracy to the radical right, transitioning via the centre-right or abstention, are well plausible.

Interestingly, many studies suggest that social democratic parties and radical right parties recruit from different social milieus. Radical right parties draw strong support from non-unionised voters, while social democracy still performs better among unionised voters (Mosimann et al. 2019). Workers who vote for social democracy do so based on economic considerations, while those supporting radical right parties do so for cultural reasons (Bornschier and Kriesi 2013; Oesch and Rennwald 2018). Instead of emphasising (indirect) transitions from social democracy to the radical right, one can therefore adopt a different focus and emphasise the existence of different working-class milieus (see also Vester 2001). From this perspective, social democracy fails to mobilise a more 'leftist' and 'conscious' working-class milieu (which prefers abstention or radical left parties), while radical right parties succeed in mobilising a non-organised and more 'rightist' working-class milieu. This analysis challenges a widespread perception of the presence of a common pool of supporters who switch from the left to the radical right.

Finally, it should also be emphasised that changes in workers' voting patterns are slow in coming and take place over several elections (e.g. Rennwald and Evans 2014). The workers who nowadays vote for the radical right are simply not the same persons as those who voted for parties of the left a few decades ago. Therefore, generational replacement may be another and complementary way to interpret the new competition from the radical right (Gougou and Mayer 2013; Gougou 2012).

It is not possible to give a definitive response about transitions of the working-class vote at the individual level in the framework of this book. However, we can deliver a precise account of the fragmentation of the working-class vote at the aggregate level. In order to get a global view of workers' votes today, it is possible to combine information on abstention and party choice.[9] Fig. 4.2 presents the complete set of options available, first for production workers only and second for the average citizen (indicated as 'total' in the figure). The information about party choice is restricted to the largest parties competing in the given country. These parties are classified in the usual European party families, while smaller parties are included in the 'other' category. Again, the vote shares
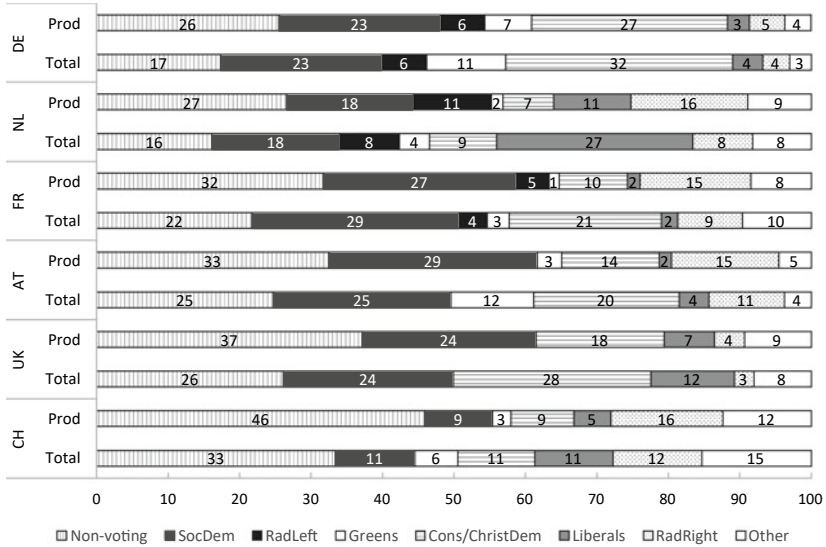
Fig. 4.2 Choices of abstention and voting for major parties (in %) among production workers and average citizens, 2010–2015

Notes Number of cases: AT: 1360, GB: 3769, DE: 2426, FR: 1555, NL: 3251, CH: 2153. See the information under Table 4.1 for sources

Party classifications: Social Democrats: SPD [DE], PvdA [NL], PS [FR], SPÖ [AT], Labour [UK], SP [CH]; Greens: Greens [DE, AT, CH], GreenLeft [NL], EELV [FR]; Radical left: Linke [DE], SP [NL], Left Front [FR]; Conservative/Christian Democrats: CDU/CSU [DE], CDA [NL], UMP [FR], ÖVP [AT], Conservatives [UK], CVP [CH]; Liberals: FDP [DE], VVD + D66 [NL], MoDem [FR], NEOS [AT], Liberal Democrats [UK], FDP [CH]; Radical right: AfD [DE], PVV [NL], FN [FR], FPÖ [AT], UKIP [UK], SVP [CH]

for populist radical right parties are smaller than their actual proportion according to official election results.

Figure 4.2 reminds us of the importance of not voting among the options available to production workers. While we analysed not voting separately at the beginning of this chapter, this direct comparison shows the scope of workers not voting very well. Abstention went from a quarter of production workers (in Germany) to a small half (in Switzerland). With the exception of Germany, it was production workers' first choice. Among the options available to those who effectively voted, social democracy was still the most common one in many countries—although it never

exceeded a third of all options. It should be noticed that among those who effectively went to the ballot box in Germany the first option for production workers was a conservative vote (even before abstention), while in Switzerland it was a vote for the Swiss People's Party. These results suggest that in all the countries, social democracy competed for the workers' vote on many fronts. Choosing to vote for social democracy therefore represented just one possible option among many. Social democracy's monopoly over production workers' votes is definitely a story of the past.

Mobilising the Working Class and Allied Classes

Let us finally make a systematic comparison of the mobilisation of production workers and allied classes at the two time points that we have analysed in this and previous chapters. For this purpose, we can use the indicators of distinctiveness (whether workers voted more than the average for social democracy) and the absolute contribution (the proportion of workers in the social democratic electorate). It is possible to group the values of these indicators by distinguishing between strong, medium and weak mobilisations (for more details, see the note below Table 4.4). Of course, the thresholds are always somewhat arbitrary but they allow a synthetic view of changes over time.

Table 4.4 Mobilisation of production workers

	1970s			2010s		
	Distinct.	Contribution	N. compet.	Distinct.	Contribution	N. compet.
AT	Medium (1.28)	**Strong** (46%)	0	**Strong** (1.31)	Medium (25%)	1
GB	**Strong** (1.32)	**Strong** (49%)	0	Medium (1.20)	Weak (15%)	1
DE	**Strong** (1.36)	Medium (38%)	0	Weak (1.11)	Weak (18%)	2
FR	Weak (1.13)	Medium (31%)	1	Weak (1.07)	Weak (18%)	2
NL	**Strong** (1.30)	Medium (29%)	1	Weak (1.13)	Weak (12%)	2
CH	**Strong** (1.44)	Medium (36%)	0	Weak (1.05)	Weak (12%)	1

Notes The first column indicates the distinctiveness of support by production workers, the second column shows the contribution of production workers to the party's electoral score and the third provides the number of parties with whom social democracy competes for the production workers' vote. For distinctiveness, the values are grouped in four categories: > 1.30 = strong, 1.15–1.29 = medium, 1–1.14 = weak, < 0.99 = absent. For the contribution, > 45% = strong, 25–44% = medium, 0–24% = weak. The 'strong' category is highlighted in bold

As Table 4.4 shows, the distinctiveness and contribution indicators show a relatively large mobilisation of production workers in the 1970s. This helped social democracy to beat the competition from other parties—the third column indicates an absence of competition in many countries. Social democracy could therefore enjoy a kind of monopoly over the working-class vote. Due to the importance of the size of the working class among the population eligible to vote, achieving some degree of mobilisation among production workers was the key to relative success for social democracy at this time.

In the more recent period, social democracy was less able to mobilise production workers' votes, as is indicated by the distinctiveness and contribution indicators. It therefore faced greater competition for workers' votes. With the exceptions of Austria and Great Britain, there were simultaneously weak distinctiveness and a weak contribution of production workers.

Allied classes are also important for social democracy. In the 1970s, mobilisation among the lower white-collar classes contributed strongly to social democracy's electoral results. In the 2010s, socio-cultural professionals had a significant new role for social democracy in some countries. It is therefore interesting to understand the relationship of social democracy to allied classes by comparing the mobilisation of these two classes. Table 4.5 shows the mobilisation of service workers in the 1970s and that of socio-cultural professionals in the 2010s.

In terms of contribution, the positions of service workers in the 1970s and socio-cultural professionals in the 2010s are relatively similar. Their contribution was weak in most cases—it did not go beyond a 20% threshold. The only exception is Switzerland in the 2010s, where the contribution of socio-cultural professionals reached a medium level. For

Table 4.5 Mobilisation of allied classes

	Service workers (1970s)		*Socio-cultural professionals (2010s)*	
	Distinctiveness	Contribution	Distinctiveness	Contribution
AT	**Strong** (1.33)	Weak (19%)	Absent (0.85)	Weak (11%)
GB	Medium (1.20)	Weak (18%)	Weak (1.06)	Weak (14%)
DE	Weak (1.14)	Weak (17%)	Absent (0.87)	Weak (13%)
FR	Weak (1.01)	Weak (13%)	**Strong** (1.48)	Weak (17%)
NL	Weak (1.13)	Weak (20%)	Medium (1.18)	Weak (20%)
CH	Medium (1.24)	Weak (9%)	**Strong** (1.53)	Medium (26%)

Notes For explanations and legends, see Table 4.4

the indicator of distinctiveness, there was greater divergence across countries in the 2010s than in the 1970s. The mobilisation of service workers was weak to medium in most of the countries in the 1970s. In the 2010s, the mobilisation of socio-cultural professionals was either absent or weak in three countries and strong in two other countries.

Overall, in the 2010s, some social democratic parties combined a weak mobilisation of production workers with a strong mobilisation of socio-cultural professionals. This was the case of the Swiss Social Democratic Party and the French Socialist Party. In these cases, the direction of modernisation adopted by these parties was towards being *new class parties*. To some extent, this was also the road of the Dutch Labour Party, which showed a medium mobilisation of socio-cultural professionals. In the other cases, there was a combination of weak to medium mobilisation of production workers and no mobilisation of socio-cultural professionals. This suggests that social democracy took the direction of becoming a *cross-class party*. Perhaps one should add an *unsuccessful cross-class party*. The original intuition of enlarging its support to various classes included the idea that this would be a new 'winning formula' for social democracy.

Summing Up

This chapter has shown a growing distance between production workers and social democratic parties in the recent period. Not only were production and service workers less likely to participate in elections in the 2010s but when they did they were also less likely to support social democracy than in the past. It is striking to observe a rapprochement between production workers and other classes in their levels of support for social democracy.

In the 2010s, social democratic parties more strictly represented the class composition of the population eligible to vote than in the past. Certainly, given the importance of the (new) middle classes in social structures, it is logical for social democratic parties to also become more middle class. However, there is not a particular affinity, as expressed by the indicator of distinctiveness, between the new middle classes and social democracy, although Switzerland and France are exceptions. It is therefore more accurate to think of social democratic parties as evolving in the direction of *cross-class parties* than as simply middle-class parties.

In the 2010s, social democracy was in competition with many parties for the working-class vote. While the focus is often on the radical right in the public discourse, the new voting choices of the working class are much more complicated. Not only radical right parties but also radical left parties received above-average support from the working class, while abstention was also a very prominent choice among workers. Last but not least, parties from the mainstream right also captured a non-negligible share of the working-class vote, even if it was below average. All observations point in the same direction: the dominance of social democracy over the working-class vote is definitively over.

Notes

1. The most recent period for which data from the European Social Survey were available at the time of writing.
2. The selection of survey rounds is the following: round 7 for Austria and Germany, round 6 for France, rounds 5 and 6 for the Netherlands, rounds 6 and 8 for Switzerland and Britain. When there are two rounds, pooled results are presented.
3. Our results are in line with several recent studies that have examined class (or income) differences in electoral participation (e.g. Evans and Tilley 2017; Goldberg 2019; Heath 2016; Schäfer 2015).
4. The average vote share is derived from the survey. The data are not weighted to adjust for the official election results.
5. Examining the political alignments of unskilled workers in six democracies, Brooks et al. (2006) also observed a relative stability in their support for left parties in Austria from the mid-1970s to the mid-1990s. In contrast, the authors noted declining attachments to left parties in Great Britain, Germany and the Netherlands.
6. Studies examining the general association between social class and vote also demonstrated a decline in class-based voting behaviour in numerous countries (for recent comparative studies, see Jansen et al. 2013; Goldberg 2019).
7. One must notice here that the table does not include the small radical left parties that can be found in Austria and Switzerland.
8. Elff and Roßteutscher (2017) also reported that the support for the CDU at the 2013 German elections was stronger than the one for the SPD among some groups of workers, this especially in East Germany.

9. The number of cases in each country is slightly smaller than in Table 4.1. Some individuals declare they participated in the election (in the information presented in Table 4.1) but then do not give any information on the party they chose (refusing to answer or responding 'don't know').

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Parties' Changing Political Projects and Workers' Political Attitudes

Abstract This chapter reviews possible explanations of workers' new voting patterns. It focuses on the contrast between changes in the way parties mobilise (or do not mobilise) workers' social class and changes in workers' political attitudes. In a first step, it discusses significant transformations in social democracy's political project and attempts by new political parties to mobilise the votes of workers. In a second step, it examines the political attitudes of workers on issues of redistribution and immigration. Workers display a particular combination of political attitudes: they support redistribution and at the same time they are opposed to immigration. Importantly, the chapter shows a strong continuity over time of this particular combination of attitudes. This suggests, therefore, that a transformation in the political supply of parties is more decisive to understand new voting patterns than changes in workers' demands.

Keywords Social democracy · Third way · Attitudes · Immigration · Redistribution · Radical right

Bringing Parties Back In

The extent to which people vote on the basis of their social class (and hence the extent to which workers support parties of the left) depends on mobilisation by political parties themselves, as was outlined in Chapter 2. In this chapter, I will in a first step review major trends in parties' political projects and their attempts to mobilise workers. In a second step, I will turn to an examination of worker's political attitudes. The logic of the chapter is to contrast changes in the way parties mobilise (or do not mobilise) the social class of workers with changes in workers' political attitudes. I use a two-dimensional conceptualisation of the political space (e.g. Kitschelt 1994; Kriesi et al. 2006, 2008), in which a socio-economic dimension (relating to state intervention in the economy and the distribution of resources) is complemented by a socio-cultural dimension (relating to the definition of the community and moral issues).

In the decades following the Second World War, the ambition to reduce the disadvantaged position of workers stood at the core of the political project of social democratic parties. Of course, social democratic parties were active in different political and institutional contexts that shaped their policy positions and strategic decisions. However, it is possible to identify the contours of a relatively coherent political project across European countries, the concrete translation of which into policies could vary from one context to another. One central pillar consisted in developing a universal welfare state—best achieved in Scandinavian countries—that would reduce the dependence of workers on market forces or, put differently, reduce the commodification of workers (Esping-Andersen 1990). Another central pillar concerned the development of collective bargaining, which would allow the (wage) bargaining position of workers relative to that of employers in the corporate arena to be enhanced. Trade unions were the decisive actors in this arena, not parties, but close ties between unions and social democratic parties (Ebbinghaus 1995; Allern and Bale 2017) ensured the coherence of this political project.

Since the 1980s and 1990s, the development of 'third way' ideas and policies marked a crucial change in this political project. Instead of seeking a reformist way to enhance the power of labour relative to the power of capital, third-way social democracy was more accommodative of global market forces. It believed that 'old-style social democracy' could not face various challenges such as those of globalisation and the influence of free market ideas (Giddens 1998). Hence, the social democratic ambition no

longer consisted in developing counter-forces to the power of capital. The ambition was instead to find a new path between social democracy and neoliberalism, thus definitively abandoning the long-term goal of a transition to socialism—Giddens evokes the 'death of socialism' (1998: 3). The 'social investment state' was at the core of this new programme. Priority was given to investment in human capital and less to the compensation of income loss, thus implying a shift from redistribution to the 'redistribution of possibilities' (Giddens 1998: 99–100).

The turn towards third-way social democracy was personified the most by the figures of Tony Blair in Great Britain ('New Labour') and Gerhard Schröder in Germany ('Neue Mitte'). As prime ministers of their respective countries at the turn of the 2000s, they implemented policies that matched this new ideational framework (e.g. Arndt 2013; Merkel et al. 2008; Nachtwey 2009). They also attempted to theorise their new approach in a document (see Blair and Schröder 1999) that, next to Giddens' book, is considered a major text of the third way (Nachtwey 2009: 10). However, transformations in the core ideas of social democracy largely touched the social democratic party family over the entire continent (e.g. Escalona 2018; Green-Pedersen et al. 2001; Huo 2009; Keman 2011). It came as no surprise that many social democratic parties endorsed and implemented austerity in the context of the 2008 economic crisis (Bremer 2018; Bremer and McDaniel 2019; Escalona and Viera 2014).

It would be wrong to understand social democracy's political project as a purely socio-economic project. Socialist ideas have also involved an important component of cultural emancipation, where freedom constitutes a key value. The struggle for full democratisation of political life was at the core of the agenda of socialist parties when they were created at the end of the nineteenth century. They were also the first parties to work for women's voting rights. In countries with a significant church-state cleavage, they generally adopted a clear secular position on issues relating to the role of the church in society. There is no doubt that social democracy has always adopted a clearer position in favour of cultural liberalism as compared to Conservatives, Christian Democrats or even mainstream liberal parties. However, these issues played a somewhat secondary role in the social democratic political project, since the ambition was first of all to reduce socio-economic inequalities.

The transformation of social democracy's project towards more accommodation to market forces gave a new importance to 'cultural' issues. If

social democracy was less willing or able to deliver results on the socio-economic dimension, it became increasingly critical to achieve results on the socio-cultural dimension—a dimension that is generally of increasing salience in political competition (Kitschelt 1994; Kriesi et al. 2006, 2008). On the basis of detailed case studies on four West European countries (Germany, Great Britain, France and Sweden), Escalona (2018: 409) demonstrates that new cultural issues (such as the promotion of women's rights and the elimination of discrimination against minorities) have played a crucial role in the transformation of social democracy's political project since the mid-1970s. He observes a common trend towards an increasing salience of these issues in the manifestos and policies of social democratic parties in the post-1968 context—and not so much a change in their positions. If one follows Escalona's analysis, one cannot really capture social democracy's transformation by focusing solely on the third-way turn. With the same logic, Rennwald and Evans (2014) underline the importance of new cultural issues in the transformation of the political offer of some social democratic parties. Martin (2018: 169) suggests even taking a step further in the relation between the socio-economic and socio-cultural components of social democracy's new project. He argues that the promotion of cultural liberalism had the function of 'compensating' for a lack of social democratic achievements while at the same time allowing social democracy to respond to the aspirations of the new middle classes.

Overall, the third-way turn of social democracy and the rise of new issues on its political agenda weakened the possibility of a class-based mobilisation of workers. One must not forget that social class is only one possible source of identity, alongside gender, religion and ethnicity (see Heerma van Voss and van der Linden 2002). Class was always in competition with other cleavages for votes (Lipset and Rokkan 1967). A worker was therefore particularly likely to be mobilised on the basis of 'cultural' identities if he/she was not mobilised on the basis of social class. This was the argument developed by Przeworski and Sprague (1986), who emphasised the importance of the mobilisation of class relative to other identities. In their view, the weakening of a class-based appeal would leave room open for competing appeals based on religious, ethnic or regional identity (Przeworski and Sprague 1986: 45–46). As a result, workers may not cast a class-based vote (and support social democratic parties) but instead a vote based on religious or ethnic loyalties.

During the post-war decades in Europe, religion was in strong competition with social class for votes (Knutsen 2004; Rose and Urwin 1969). Christian Democratic trade unions and parties aimed to mobilise workers on the basis of religious loyalty (Kalyvas and van Kersbergen 2010). In contrast, no major party explicitly mobilised workers on an ethnic or nationalist basis in this period. Extreme right-wing parties, which were often the direct heirs of the fascist regimes, remained at the margins of politics for a long period after the Second World War. No party really dared to exploit anti-migrant resentment. It is as if there was an agreement among the political elite. This changed in the 1970s and 1980s, when extreme right-wing parties turned to an anti-immigration strategy and tried to demonstrate a clear distance from the fascist legacy (Carter 2005; Ignazi 1992; Mudde 2007).

One can therefore conceptualise today's competition for the workers' vote in the following way. Workers can be mobilised on the basis of their social class by left-wing parties to improve redistribution (on this issue social democratic parties are in competition with radical left parties) or they can be mobilised by far right parties on the basis of their nationality to restrict immigration. Clearly, parties' political projects have changed in recent decades and this has massively affected the political choices available to workers (see Evans and De Graaf 2013). However, on the 'demand-side' it is not clear whether the political attitudes of workers have also undergone important changes. In the next sections, I therefore analyse the distribution of preferences by social class.

BETWEEN PRO-REDISTRIBUTIVE AND ANTI-IMMIGRATION WORKER PREFERENCES IN THE 1970S

One can expect that social classes diverge on the extent to which they prefer redistribution and state intervention in the economy. Workers are more in favour of redistribution, because this is a way of reducing their more disadvantaged position in the labour market (see Evans and De Graaf 2013). There is also a clear connexion between social class and attitudes towards immigration. Workers, and particularly lower-skilled workers, are likely to be the most affected by an increase in labour supply. Hence, they should be more likely to be in favour of restricting an increase in the supply of labour. Workers are therefore expected to combine pro-redistributive preferences with anti-immigration preferences.

In order to analyse the preferences of workers and social classes, I select one question on redistribution and one question on immigration. I first present findings for the mid-1970s[1] and then for the early 2010s. I assess whether the configuration of attitudes by social class is relatively stable over time. In the Political Action Survey conducted in the mid-1970s, respondents were asked how much responsibility the government has to reduce wealth differences between people.[2] They had to choose an answer on a four-point Likert scale ranging from 'an essential responsibility' to 'no responsibility at all'. I standardise the answers to the range from 0 to 1, where 1 means the strongest government responsibility. Figure 5.1 shows the preferences of workers relative to a few other classes on what I name the 'pro-redistribution scale'. I select production workers, service workers, socio-cultural professionals and managers. I also present the overall score for the total electorate (including non-voters). The choice of these groups—with diverse segments of the working and (salaried) middle classes—makes it possible to put the preferences of production workers into perspective and to get an overall view of class configurations.

Overall, the respondents were in favour of redistribution. As expected, production workers were always (slightly) more in favour of redistribution than the average respondent. As we can observe for social democratic
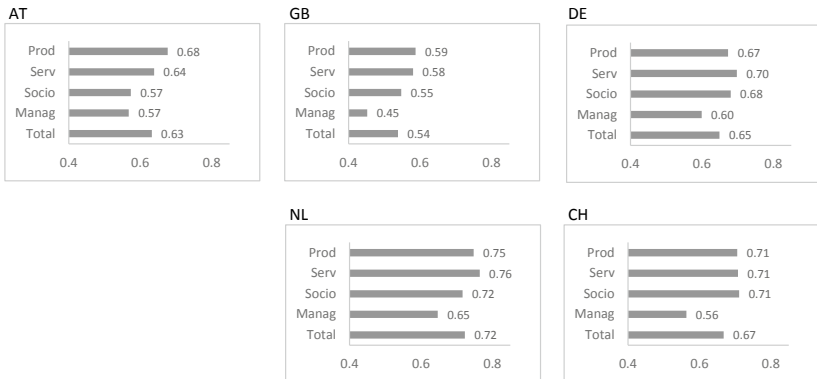
Fig. 5.1 Average position of selected classes on the pro-redistribution scale—1970s

Notes Number of cases: AT: 1248, GB: 968, DE: 1746, NL: 896, CH: 920. *Source* Political Action: An Eight Nation Study, 1973–1976, distributed by GESIS www.gesis.org [ZA0765].

Names of classes: Prod = production workers, Serv = service workers, Socio = socio-cultural professionals, Manag = managers

voting in the 1970s, service workers were relatively close to the position of production workers. Managers were the least in favour of redistribution in comparison with the other classes. Interestingly, socio-cultural professionals were in all the countries located closer to the position of production workers than to that of managers, with the exception of Austria. However, one should notice that class differences are relatively small. The largest class differences can be found between managers and production workers in Great Britain and Switzerland: differences of 0.14 points and 0.15 points respectively on the pro-redistribution scale.

Turning now to immigration, I start with a cross-national analysis and then limit the analysis to Switzerland, where the issue of migration came onto the political agenda very early. Starting with the cross-national perspective, in the Political Action Survey, respondents were asked their position on the provision of equal rights for guest workers (Gastarbeiter)[3]—the question referred to coloured immigrants in Great Britain. One should notice that the question does not tackle attitudes towards immigration per se (towards the admission of immigrants or the benefits of immigration, for example) but instead captures attitudes towards the integration of immigrants. These are indeed two different dimensions of migration preferences (Afonso 2013; Tichenor 2002). It is well possible to combine a restrictive attitude towards the admission of migrants with an allocation of equal rights to migrants (in terms of access to the labour market, to the welfare state, to citizenship, etc.), while the contrary is also possible. However, in the absence of any other question, I consider this a viable proxy.

Figure 5.2 indicates that the respondents were on average relatively open to immigration (with the exception of Austria). In most of the countries, production workers were slightly more restrictive towards migration (or slightly more against the idea of according equal rights to immigrants) than the average respondent. However, the differences are not always significant. As for redistribution, service workers were located close to production workers. Managers were also located close to the position of production workers and to that of the average respondent. The largest difference between production workers and managers was 0.08 points in Germany. Socio-cultural professionals were clearly different to all the other classes. They were clearly more pro-immigration than the other classes.
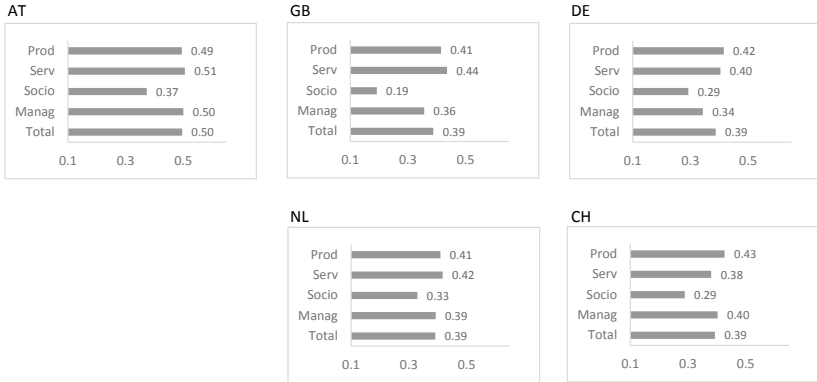
Fig. 5.2 Average position of selected classes on the anti-immigration scale—1970s

Notes Number of cases: AT: 1252, GB: 971, DE: 1752, NL: 890, CH: 923. Source and names of classes: see the information under Fig. 5.1

Switzerland offers a unique opportunity to further study attitudes towards immigration in the 1970s. The movement against 'over-foreignization' (*Überfremdung*) that emerged in this country in the 1960s can be considered a forerunner of anti-migrant movements in Europe (Skenderovic 2009). Since the 1960s, newly formed radical right parties mobilised on the issue of immigration, playing on resentment against guest workers, who had been massively recruited in the Swiss economy in the post-war years. These parties launched several popular initiatives against 'over-foreignization' demanding a drastic change in immigration policy and several initiatives on foreign policy (Skenderovic 2009: 68). Between 1970 and 1977, no less than four anti-immigrant initiatives were submitted to the vote and provoked heated public debates. The first one launched the most intensive discussions in the public sphere. It was entitled 'Initiative against "over-foreignization"' (*gegen 'Überfremdung'*), but it is sometimes known as the Schwarzenbach initiative after the name of the leader of the National Action Party, James Schwarzenbach. It demanded restriction of the number of foreign residents to 10% of the population in each canton. It was rejected in 1970 with a small majority of the votes (54%), while the later initiatives were more firmly rejected—support did not exceed 35% (Skenderovic 2009: 65–68).

The Swiss component of the Political Action Study included some specific questions, among them was one on the vote choice on the second anti-immigrant initiative in 1974 (which was accepted by only 34.2% of the electorate). A post-electoral survey related to the Swiss national election of 1971 also included the vote choice on the 1970 Schwarzenbach initiative. Only men were allowed to vote at the federal level until 1971 in Switzerland. Figure 5.3 presents the preferences of classes in these two popular votes. Higher values indicate stronger support for the initiatives.

Preferences on immigration measured using support for these popular initiatives indicate a stronger polarisation of classes than preferences on immigration measured using answers on the provision of equal rights to migrants. Production workers were now much more in favour of restrictive migration policies. In contrast, socio-cultural professionals and managers were more opposed to restrictive immigration policies (they were twice or more than twice as opposed to restrictive migration policies as production workers were). Practically, this meant that on average production workers supported the popular initiatives, while the salaried middle classes voted against the initiative on average. In 1974, the level of support for the initiative dropped, but the relative support of production workers remained relatively similar (a ratio of 1.36 in 1970 and of 1.38 in 1974).

If one isolates the social democratic electorate, it can be observed that, on average, social democratic voters gave the initiative in 1970 slightly stronger support (0.45) than the total electorate (0.41) but still rejected
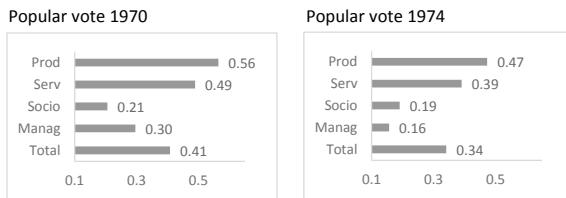
Fig. 5.3 Support for anti-immigration initiatives in Switzerland—1970s

Notes Number of cases: 1970: 652, 1974: 572. *Sources* Attitudes et comportements politiques en Suisse—1972, Henry Kerr et al., Université de Genève/Universität Zürich; Attitudes politiques 1975 (Political Action: An Eight Nation Study, 1973–1976), Université de Genève. Datasets distributed by FORS, https://forscenter.ch/

it. This was in line with the party's recommendation to reject the initiative. It is possible to further differentiate within the social democratic electorate by social class. However, the number of cases becomes relatively small and one should remain cautious about the results. Among the social democratic electorate, production workers accepted the initiative (0.53), although the degree of support was smaller than among all workers irrespective of their party choice (0.56). In 1974, support for the anti-immigration initiative was this time slightly lower among the social democratic electorate (0.31). However, support for the initiative was still relatively strong among social democratic production workers (0.52).

Working-class support for the initiatives was in line with analyses based on aggregate results that showed that support was strong in working-class neighbourhoods (Gilg 1972). Moreover, the initiatives provoked heated debates in the ranks of Swiss trade unions (Steinauer and von Allmen 2000). Trade unions fought against the initiative submitted to the popular vote in 1970 (and all other anti-immigrant initiatives) but large segments of the rank and file disagreed with this position. This indicates that the anti-immigration initiatives aroused sympathy, or at least contributed to spreading confusion among organised workers. However, it is interesting to note that at this time an important share of production workers voted for the Swiss Social Democratic Party. There was therefore a unique combination of anti-immigration attitudes (and support for anti-migration initiatives) and social democratic voting in national elections. In the arena of direct democracy, the small radical right parties that launched the anti-migrant initiatives were major players at the time but they remained fringe forces in the electoral arena (Skenderovic 2009). They reached an electoral peak in the 1971 national election (7.5%) but then experienced losses in later elections (Skenderovic 2009: 60). It was only from the 1990s onwards that the Swiss People's Party managed to obtain strong electoral successes in national elections and definitively transformed the Swiss party system.

Continuity in Class Preferences in the 2010s

Reproducing the same exercise for the first half of the 2010s leads to similar conclusions about combinations of preferences by social class. Workers combined a pro-redistributive position with an anti-immigration position. For redistribution, I use a similar question on the role of the government in income inequality. In the ESS, respondents were asked if

they agreed or disagreed with the following statement: 'the government should reduce differences in income levels' on a five-point Likert scale (from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'). I standardise the answers to the range from 0 to 1. On immigration, respondents were asked to take a position on various dimensions of immigration. I use three questions where respondents were asked to take a position on an eleven-point scale: 'the country's cultural life is generally undermined or enriched by immigrants', 'it is bad or good for the country's economy that people come to live here from other countries', and 'the country is made a worse or better place to live by people coming to live here from other countries'. I standardise the responses between 0 and 1 and calculate the average value for these three items. I recode both items so that 1 means a pro-redistributive position on redistribution and an anti-immigration position on immigration. I use the same selection of elections and survey rounds as in the previous chapter.

Figure 5.4 presents the position on redistribution for the first half of the 2010s. Overall, there was high support for redistribution in all countries—a result that very often appears in contemporary work on redistributive attitudes (e.g. Mosimann and Pontusson 2017). Although there

Fig. 5.4 Average position of selected classes on the pro-redistribution scale—2010–2015

Notes Number of cases: AT: 1524, GB: 3894, DE: 2646, FR: 1694, NL: 3348, CH: 2317. *Source* European Social Survey [ESS], Norwegian Centre for Research Data, https://www.europeansocials urvey.org. Rounds 5–8 [see Chapter 4 for the selection of rounds for each country]. The data are weighted by design weights

was not strong polarisation among social classes, production workers and service workers were systematically more in favour of redistribution than the average respondent. Managers were consistently less in favour of redistribution than the average respondent and socio-cultural professionals were located between. Their position was generally close to that of the average respondent. In Germany and Switzerland, they even displayed a more pro-redistributive attitude than the average respondent and came close to the position of production and service workers.

Hence, the same structuration of classes on redistribution attitudes as in the 1970s can be observed. On average, respondents wanted more redistribution in the 2010s than in the 1970s, but the class differences remained relatively stable. The case of Switzerland provides an interesting comparison with the 1970s. Support for redistribution among the total electorate reached exactly the same level. Support among workers and socio-cultural professionals was almost identical. This is not the case in all the countries. In Austria, production workers had become less distinct from the average citizen in their redistribution attitudes over time. In contrast, in the Netherlands, production workers had become more distinct from the average citizen.

On immigration, production and service workers were systematically more against immigration than the average respondent (see Fig. 5.5). In

Fig. 5.5 Average position of selected classes on the anti-immigration scale—2010–2015

Notes Number of cases: AT: 1441, GB: 3785, DE: 2596, FR: 1675, NL: 3222, CH: 2241. *Source* see the information under Fig. 5.4

contrast, socio-cultural professionals and managers were consistently less against immigration than the average respondent. Socio-cultural professionals generally displayed the most favourable position on immigration.

When focusing the cross-time comparison on popular votes on immigration in Switzerland, production workers had not become more anti-immigrant over time. The class structure that we could observe for the 1970s—with socio-cultural professionals and production workers occupying two distinct positions on this axis—had not changed. More systematically, using ratios to check changes in the average position on immigration, we can even conclude that class differences in immigration had become smaller over time.

For the other countries, the comparison leads to another conclusion. Relative to the average citizen, production workers had become more distinctively opposed to immigration over time. If one compares production workers to managers, there is an increasing divergence between the two classes on immigration issues. However, there is more stability if one compares production workers to socio-cultural professionals, as the latter had also become less strongly pro-immigration over time.

This divergence in cross-time comparisons between Switzerland and the other countries is not entirely surprising. The survey questions are different, as is the degree of politicisation of migration issues. The popular votes in Switzerland were the early outcome of agenda-setting strategies by radical right parties. In the other countries, migration was less an issue on the political agenda at the time, although one should not forget early attempts to deploy an anti-immigration discourse in several countries, such as in Great Britain around the Conservative shadow cabinet member Enoch Powell (see Schofield 2012).

Finally, it is possible to gain a finer view by examining different subgroups (see Table 5.1). Restricting the sample to those who voted for a social democratic/socialist/Labour Party in the last election generally decreases the opposition to immigration. The same is also true if we restrict the sample to social democratic supporters who were production workers—this is important to underline. However, within the social democratic electorate, class differences remained and production workers continued to display a relatively stronger anti-immigration position than the average social democratic voter. Again, if we consider workers who had not participated in the last election (and thus who might at some point again vote for social democracy), we observe that they were relatively more opposed to immigration than the average non-voter in all

Table 5.1 Average position of workers by party choice on the anti-immigration scale—2010–2015

		AT	GB	DE	FR	NL	CH
Social democratic voters	Workers	**0.58**	**0.55**	**0.44**	**0.57**	**0.45**	**0.46**
	Total	0.51	0.45	0.38	0.46	0.39	0.33
Radical Right voters	Workers	0.67	0.61	0.51	**0.79**	0.60	0.55
	Total	0.67	0.59	0.53	0.73	0.59	0.55
Non-voters	Workers	**0.67**	**0.59**	**0.55**	**0.62**	0.50	0.47
	Total	0.61	0.54	0.50	0.54	0.48	0.45

Note Scores in bold indicate a difference equal to or higher than 0.05 between workers and the electorate of the given party. Number of cases: AT: 145-310, GB: 99-915, DE: 95-519, FR: 123-438, NL: 257-568, CH: 233-678. *Source* see the information under Fig. 5.4

the countries—but the difference was small for the Netherlands and Switzerland. Finally, if one isolates voters for radical right parties,[4] class differences were almost absent. Production workers who voted for radical right parties were very much aligned with the position of the average radical right voter, with the exception of France.

Summing Up

In a first step, this chapter has reviewed major trends in social democracy's political project. In recent decades, one can observe both an increasing accommodation to market forces by social democratic parties and an increasing salience of new issues on their political agenda. By substantially revising their original political project, social democratic parties therefore contributed to a demobilisation of workers on the socio-economic dimension of the political space. At the same time, social democratic parties faced a more difficult context to develop class-based mobilisation. Populist radical right parties started to mobilise workers for a political project with a restriction of immigration at its core.

In a second step, the chapter has analysed attitudes among social classes on redistribution and immigration issues. It has demonstrated that workers display a particular combination of political attitudes: on the one hand, they support redistribution more than average; on the other hand, they are more than average opponents of immigration. Most importantly, the chapter has demonstrated that this combination of attitudes

was already present in the 1970s. This was especially the case in Switzerland, where immigration issues were present on the political agenda very early.

The contrast between changes in parties' political supply and voters' demands that has been at the centre of this chapter indicates that transformations in the former are more important than transformations in the latter. Hence, the ways in which parties propose political choices to workers are crucial to understand workers' new voting patterns. The demobilisation of class by social democracy went along with a new mobilisation of nationality by populist radical right parties. Hence, these two changes constitute two sides of the same coin. The result is that social class became less relevant for voting behaviour, but more relevant for abstention.

Notes

1. I restrict the analysis to four countries for this period because of a lack of data for France. The results for this country in the 1980s indicate a similar configuration of preferences.
2. In the survey, respondents are confronted with political issues and then for each political issue asked the importance of the problem, the government's responsibility for dealing with the problem and the performance of the government in handling the problem. One political issue concerns wealth differences.
3. I select the question on the importance of the problem of according the same rights to migrants. Using the question on government responsibility leads to similar conclusions about class differences.
4. One should be cautious in the interpretation of the findings for Great Britain and Germany since the number of radical right voters in the survey is particularly low.

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Renewing Social Democracy by Re-mobilising the Working Class?

Abstract This chapter concludes by summarising the main results of the book. It closes with a discussion on the renewal of social democracy and reviews current proposals and experiences. With this aim, it evaluates the role of the working class in social democracy's future electoral strategies. It discusses the risks for social democracy in abandoning the workers' vote and examines some factors that would facilitate the electoral mobilisation of workers in the future. Based on current debates on the future of social democracy, it then reviews possible ideological reorientations of social democracy and evaluates their chances of success among its (potential) supporters.

Keywords Social democracy · Electoral strategies · Trade unions · Service workers · Mobilisation · Immigration

Fragmentation in the Working-Class Vote and the De-proletarianisation of Social Democracy

The empirical analyses conducted in Chapters 3 and 4 examined the class basis of social democratic parties at two different time points, the first one in the 1970s and the second one in the 2010s. The two time

points are representative of two different periods for social democracy, one in which social democracy achieved strong electoral successes and one in which it suffered electoral defeats. The book has shown how the relationship between social democratic parties and their working-class constituency has strongly changed between the two periods. The analysis on the 1970s conducted in Chapter 3 showed the existence of a relatively strong proximity between production workers and social democratic parties in electoral contests. Production workers voted clearly more than average for social democratic parties and they represented a large share of their electorate. In Chapter 4, all the indicators pointed towards a decomposition of this specific relationship. In the 2010s, production workers were much less distinctive in their support for social democracy and they clearly represented a smaller share of its electorate. Moreover, production workers were much more likely to abstain from voting in the 2010s. Importantly, the transformation of social democracy's relationship with the working class was not only a question of structural change with workers representing a smaller share of the total electorate. The effect of structural change on social democracy was clearly reinforced by a weakening support on the part of workers.

As a result, the working-class vote has become more complex and above all more fragmented. While they enjoyed some kind of monopoly over the working-class vote in the 1970s, social democratic parties now face competition on multiple fronts. One cannot reduce the new voting patterns to a choice between social democratic and radical right parties, as is often suggested in public discourse. Abstention is nowadays a fundamental characteristic of working-class voting behaviour. The decision for workers nowadays is not only a choice between different parties but first and foremost a choice between abstention and voting. Then, social democracy competes with both the radical left and the radical right, while mainstream right parties also capture an important share of the working-class vote. However, workers are not more likely than the average voter to support the mainstream right, while the opposite is clearly the case for radical left and radical right parties. The contest from the left of social democracy for the workers' vote is not something new. However, the presence of challengers to the left of social democracy has expanded in several countries in recent decades. Among the countries studied, only the French party system in the 1970s was distinctive in this respect, with a relatively strong Communist Party. In the 2010s, next to France, radical left parties in Germany and the Netherlands also attracted some shares of

the workers' vote. Moreover, competition from the centre or the right for the working-class vote is also not really new. However, the rivalry has significantly expanded to more countries. In the 1970s, Christian Democratic parties constituted sizeable challengers for the working-class vote in just a few countries. Nowadays, the capture of working-class vote shares by radical right parties concerns all countries. Hence, social democracy only faced competition for the working-class vote in specific contexts in the 1970s but nowadays fighting on multiple fronts represents the normal case for it.

The consequence of the new voting patterns is clearly a weakening of the status of social democracy as working-class parties. However, the book has conceived the trajectory of social democracy in a more refined way than previous research. First, as Chapter 3 showed, even if there was a strong connexion between workers and social democracy, it would be wrong to understand social democracy in the 1970s as a purely working-class movement. Instead of conceptualising social democratic parties as 'pure working-class parties', the book has shown that social democratic parties are closer to the ideal type of 'hybrid working-class parties', with a strong mobilisation of production workers co-existing with an intermediate mobilisation of lower white-collar workers. Second, as was discussed in Chapter 4, it would be imprecise to characterise social democratic/socialist/labour parties in the 2010s as parties of the (new) middle classes. In many countries, social democratic parties are closer to cross-class parties, where no social class presents a particularly high level of support and where the composition of their electorate mirrors the composition of the eligible population. Hence, instead of emphasising a shift from the working class to the middle class, the trajectory implies a transformation from hybrid working-class parties to cross-class parties.

Examination of the changing voting patterns has also revealed strong cross-national variation. In countries where the class cleavage was more dominant and no serious competitor for the working-class vote was present, the mobilisation of workers was more important in the 1970s than in countries with competition for the working-class vote. One can observe that social democracy/labour in Austria and Great Britain mobilised the working-class vote the most and relied less on other classes in the 1970s, while in Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland, the mobilisation was less strong and social democracy relied more on other classes. France was clearly an exception, with a strong cross-class profile of the French Socialist Party's electorate, and the party faced competition

from the Communist Party. There is important path dependency in the working-class mobilisation of social democracy. In countries that relied more heavily on the working-class vote, the demobilisation of workers led them to become more clearly cross-class parties in the 2010s. In countries that already relied more on the vote from other segments, there was a higher proximity to the ideal type of new class parties in the 2010s. There was again some opposition between Austria and Great Britain on the one hand, and Switzerland and the Netherlands on the other hand.

Historically smaller social democratic parties have therefore followed a different path than historically larger social democratic parties. They have regenerated their electorate—either strategically or unintentionally—by turning more explicitly to the new middle classes, which were already closer to social democracy. It is also no coincidence that the structure of the electorate is less predominantly working class in these countries. To some extent, social democratic parties have been responsive to the structure of the electorate. However, this does not mean that they have been more successful at the ballot box. In the 1970s, the Swiss Social Democratic Party received almost 25% of the vote, but in the 2010s it did not achieve more than 19% (and even reached a historical low of 16.8% in the 2019 election). The scores of the Dutch Labour Party oscillated between a quarter and a third of the votes in the 1970s decade. In the 2010s, it never reached more than a quarter of the vote (with a disastrous score of 5.7% in 2017). This suggests that there is not a winning formula whereby 'new class parties' find an easier way to electoral success than 'cross-class parties'. This suggests that the remedies are different from one case to the next. Importantly, one should take this cross-national variation into account when one thinks about the potential ways for social democracy to renew its electoral success. The composition of the electorate can be relatively different from one case to the next, and renewing the confidence of the working class does not mean the same (and does not have the same implications) in each context.

Continuity in Preferences; Changes in Parties' Political Offers

Chapter 5 examined possible explanations of the growing distance between workers and social democratic/labour parties. It contrasted explanations that focus on the demand side of politics with ones that concentrate on the supply side. On the one hand, it investigated the

political attitudes of workers and social classes; on the other hand, it considered major trends in parties' political projects in recent decades. The results suggest that changes in the way parties mobilise their electorates are more important than changes in workers' political attitudes. Transformations in parties' political offers have produced a smaller likelihood of workers being mobilised on the basis of their social class, and by extension, a greater likelihood of them being mobilised on competing cleavages. Social democratic parties have contributed to a demobilisation of social class by revising their original political project and adopting a more friendly position towards the market in most European countries. They also responded to societal demands in the domain of cultural liberalism in the aftermath of the post-1968 social movements. This contributed again to mobilising other identities, for example gender, but not social class in a strict sense. Meanwhile, other actors have entered the political arena and sought to mobilise workers on the basis of competing identities. This is particularly the case of radical right parties, which have put forward an anti-immigration agenda aimed at creating new divisions among workers based on nationality. This political agenda stands, therefore, in strong contrast to the idea of international class solidarity that is historically at the core of the labour movement.

Examination of workers' and social classes' political attitudes has shown a pattern of stability over time, at least in comparison with what can be considered a major reversal in the way parties appeal to social classes or other identities. First, on socio-economic issues, workers have consistently demanded more redistribution than the average respondent, both in the 1970s and in the 2010s. Although the differences between classes are not always very strong, there is a clear class pattern with (production or service) workers being more in favour of redistribution and managers being less in favour of redistribution. This continuity in the preferences of workers suggests that a lower position in the social structure translates more or less directly into a demand for redistribution. However, one must also notice the pro-redistributive attitudes of socio-cultural professionals. Being a member of the salaried middle classes (and hence being located in a higher position in the social structure in comparison with workers) does not imply by definition an opposition to redistribution. Instead, the results indicate divisions within the broad category of the salaried middle classes. This also suggests a real potential to develop new coalitions between workers and segments of the salaried middle classes on redistribution issues.

Second, on socio-cultural issues, workers display a more critical stance towards immigration than the salaried middle classes. The results on the Swiss case, where immigration was strongly debated in the arena of direct democracy in the 1970s, indicate a strong continuity in the sceptical stance of workers towards immigration. Interestingly, anti-immigration positions (in the arena of direct democracy) were compatible with support for social democracy (in the electoral arena) at the time in this country. The results for the other countries indicate that workers have become more sceptical towards immigration over time. However, one should remain cautious about this finding, given that the questions available referred more to the integration of migrants in the 1970s and less to a general evaluation of migration, as in the 2010s.

Overall, our results suggest that the ways parties have transformed their political projects (and therefore their appeals to the different preferences of workers and social classes) are important to understand changes in voting patterns. Analysis of political attitudes indicates that demands from social classes display a strong continuity over time. The preferences of workers still tilt towards social democratic policies in the socio-economic realm. However, social democracy has been less concerned with the goal of redistribution in recent decades. Moreover, the preferences of workers tilt towards the agenda of radical right parties in the domain of immigration policies. Given the high salience of migration issues in contemporary politics, social democratic parties objectively face more difficulties in mobilising workers on the socio-economic dimension—independently of their own transformations on these issues.

After having presented the main results of this book, the rest of this conclusion turns to possible attempts to re-mobilise the working class for a social democratic project. It also reviews different ideological reorientations and their effects on working-class mobilisation. More generally, the rest of the conclusion questions the future of social democracy and the different paths it can choose.

Should Workers Be Mobilised at All?

Disagreements about social democracy's future electoral strategies often concern the emphasis that should be placed on the (re-)mobilisation of the working-class vote. Based on the observed transformation of its voters' class composition, it may be tempting to argue that regaining the working-class vote is not a worthwhile project for social democracy. In

this perspective, winning again the workers' vote is a task too difficult, and above all is not likely to contribute decisively to social democracy's vote share. A better strategy would therefore be to concentrate efforts fully on the new middle classes, which represent growing segments of the electorate. From this point of view, the advantage would also be in avoiding dilemmas that originate from the divergent preferences of social democracy's electorate on socio-cultural issues (e.g. on immigration, as was shown in Chapter 5). Giving priority to mobilising the new middle classes, which have a (uniform) liberal position on cultural issues, eliminates the difficulties for social democracy in finding policy positions that are suitable for different constituencies.

The book has demonstrated, however, the continuing importance of the working class—if one is willing to enlarge its contours. This presupposes a disposition to observe transformations in political economies and to adjust the representation of the working class to occupations such as shop assistants, hairdressers and delivery drivers. Clearly, production workers have become a smaller segment of the population entitled to vote, but if one defines both production and service workers as being part of the working class, the picture changes dramatically. The enlarged working class represents a noticeable share of the entire electorate. As was shown in Chapter 4 of this book, the enlarged working class represents between 40 and 45% of the entire electorate in three countries in our sample (Austria, France and Great Britain) and between 30 and 35% in three other countries (Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland). It is only in these latter countries that the new middle classes represent a larger proportion of the eligible electorate.

Of course, the new service proletariat represents a difficult constituency to mobilise. Social democratic parties can rely less on trade union allies to reach this electoral segment. It must be remembered here that union members are more likely to take part in elections (e.g. Flavin and Radcliff 2011) and when then do they are more likely to support left-wing parties (e.g. Arndt and Rennwald 2016; Mosimann et al. 2019). Union density in low-end private services remains lower than in the manufacturing sector in advanced industrial countries at the end of the 2010s (Pontusson 2013: 802–803). On average, service workers are active in establishments of smaller size and there is a large diffusion of atypical employment. These two factors are strongly associated with a lower propensity to unionise (Pontusson 2013). Isolation at work, which is widespread among certain

categories of service workers (e.g. in cleaning or security), also depresses electoral participation (Peugny 2015).

Among production workers, the prospects are also bleak with respect to unionisation. In the same study, Pontusson observes significant declines in the manufacturing sector in almost all countries from the 1980s to the end of the 2000s. These relate to the decentralisation of production and the spread of atypical employment in manufacturing (2013: 802–803). This explains partly, at least, why social democratic parties nowadays face more problems in mobilising their traditional constituencies.

A look at history is probably useful here. We may be too much informed by the decades following the Second World War, when the organisations of the labour movement were relatively powerful and when it was relatively easy or normal to mobilise workers. The comparison should instead switch to the turn of the nineteenth century, a time in which labour movement organisations were in their early days, and workers were hesitant about socialist ideas and divided across skills and origins. It was therefore one of the main achievements of the labour movement to develop some degree of unity and class awareness among very diverse segments of the workforce through the diffusion of socialist ideas and the development of a broad network of organisations (see Moschonas 2002: 28–30; Sassoon 1996: 7–8). In recent years, new attempts to forge unity among the fragmented working class can be observed, reminding us of the early days of the labour movement. Trade unions have intensified their efforts to organise the new service proletariat and, more generally, to become more inclusive towards workers with atypical employment contracts (e.g. Benassi and Vlandas 2016; Doellgast et al. 2018, Rathgeb 2018; Rieger et al. 2012). However, these new attempts to forge unity will require numerous years of work—a calendar that is different to that of party strategists focusing on maximising vote shares in a brief period of time.

How Should Workers Be Mobilised?

As Cas Mudde (2019) emphasises, several politicians and leaders from social democratic parties have advocated for stricter immigration policies when their parties have been confronted with electoral decline. The reason that is invoked is often similar from one social democratic party to the next. As Mudde explains, social democratic parties perceive the loss of the working class to the radical right as the main cause of their

electoral decline, and the remedy is a defence of a more restrictive immigration agenda. However, this book has clearly demonstrated that voting for radical right parties represents only one option among others for workers in contemporary politics. Hence, as Mudde argues in the same article, it would be wrong to assume that the electoral rise of radical right parties is caused by working-class voters abandoning social democratic parties. The book has shown an important diversity in the new voting choices of workers—and therefore an important fragmentation of the working-class vote. Of course, a significant de-proletarianisation of the electorate for social democracy has occured. Simultaneously, there is an undeniable process of proletarianisation of the electorate for the radical right. However, other transformations have been underlined. First and foremost, there is a large proletarianisation of the group of abstainers. Second, radical left parties and, to some extent, mainstream right parties also attract shares of the working-class vote.

Interestingly, when considering how to re-capture the working-class vote, being tougher on immigration is often represented as the only solution by pundits or politicians from social democracy. Such a position goes hand in hand with the flourishing of stereotypes about the working class and the growing association of it in public discourse with a group of angry and uneducated citizens. It is interesting to note that aspirations for redistribution—in Chapter 5 we observed the support for redistribution among workers—are entirely absent from the discussions. In this respect, it appears necessary to reframe the terms of the debate. One must remember the broader transformation of social democracy on socio-economic issues with extensive revisions of its political project. One must also remember that social democracy was always more liberal on the socio-cultural dimension than Conservatives, Christian Democrats and even mainstream liberal parties. Even if one focuses on the position of social democracy on cultural liberalism and immigration, one should not forget the transformation at the core of social democracy's political project. This means on issues related to the role of the state in the economy and redistribution. If the traditional functions of social democracy on the socio-economic dimension are neglected, it becomes difficult to convince voters to support this party family on the basis of cultural issues. Isolating the cultural positions of social democracy from its economic positions therefore misses an essential part of the story.

Having made this clarification, one must nonetheless observe that issues related to immigration and European integration represent an

important challenge for social democracy—and generally for mainstream parties (e.g. Hooghe and Marks 2018), especially when they are very salient on the political agenda. One must therefore think about the best ways for social democracy to face the saliency of these issues. In an article published in 2010, Tim Bale and other co-authors (Bale et al. 2010) discussed several options for social democratic parties when they are confronted with the rise of radical right parties in the policy domain of immigration. They can try to stick to a strong pro-immigrant view, they can try to advocate stricter immigration policies, or they can try to avoid the issue of immigration and contribute to decreasing the salience of immigration overall. The last two options have been the most discussed and (partially) implemented by social democratic parties in recent years.

Adopting a stricter immigration policy poses several problems for social democracy. First, it is in contrast to the ideological core of social democracy based on internationalism and class solidarity. A move towards the defence of the 'white' working class would represent an enormous shift in the history of the labour movement—of similar magnitude to the third-way turn of social democracy. Second, this would pose some electoral problems. Advocating more restrictive policies would contain the risk of alienating segments of the middle classes that are in favour of pro-immigration policies (see Abou-Chadi and Wagner 2020). Moreover, one should also not forget that the working class often has a migration background—reducing the working class to the white working class would therefore be an important mistake.

Among the various social democratic parties (or leaders) in Europe that have either considered or endorsed a stricter position on immigration (see Mudde 2019), the Danish Social Democrats campaigned the most explicitly on an anti-migration position in the recent 2019 election, following a new paper adopted in 2018 (see Nedergaard 2018). The Social Democrats led by Mette Frederiksen were the clear winners of this election and returned to office with a minority government. The harsh line defended by the party on immigration was prominently discussed in the media as a major reason for its electoral success. However, there are two reasons to remain cautious about Danish Social Democracy being a new model for its sister parties. First, the Social Democrats did not achieve a particularly high vote share—instead they slightly dropped from 26.3% in the last election to 25.9%.[1] Second, it is difficult to isolate the effect of migration, since the Social Democrats under the new leadership also kept

their distance from the third way and emphasised a more classical social democratic agenda on socio-economic issues (e.g. Møller Stahl 2019).

Another strategy could be to avoid talking about immigration (this could also apply to European integration) and instead increase the saliency of socio-economic issues. This strategy clearly speaks to the commonalities of workers and segments of the salaried middle classes on redistributive issues, as was shown in Chapter 5 of this book. In contrast, these groups have more diverging preferences on immigration issues. It is therefore relatively wise to concentrate party statements on issues where there is agreement between the diverse segments of the (potential) electoral base and to try to decrease the attention on issues where there is a strong disagreement. To some extent, this was the strategy adopted by Jeremy Corbyn after the 2016 Brexit referendum. Given the divergent positions on Brexit within the Labour Party voter base, it was logical to focus attention on issues where constituencies share similar views. Moreover, Corbyn's project was to reorient the Labour Party towards a more classical left-wing economic policy agenda. Hence, giving priority to the fight against austerity and the rebuilding of the National Health Service over discussions about Britain's relationship with the EU appeared relatively consequential from this point of view. When Brexit was not at the centre of the electoral campaign, as was the case in 2017, this strategy offered Labour a relatively high score (40% of the vote share, the highest score since the 2001 general election). However, when Brexit dominated the electoral campaign and was in the mind of many voters, as was the case in 2019, the approach led to a strong Labour defeat, above all in terms of seats—the weakest score since 1935. Hence, such a strategy is relatively risky and its success depends on the capacity of social democracy to focus the attention in the entire electoral campaign on economic issues.

None of these solutions therefore appear ideal for social democracy. One should therefore think whether the future of social democracy is closely connected to another option: integrating the economic and cultural dimensions better in its political project. Instead of emphasising socio-economic issues to the detriment of socio-cultural issues, instead of a strong disentanglement of the two dimensions, the most important task for social democracy would be to better show how the two are strongly connected. This would allow the different preferences of its heterogeneous electorate to be respected. Hence, to some extent, Social Democrats need to reframe the new cultural issues in their own ideology. They must therefore propose a socio-economic translation of

cultural problems, as the radical right has been able to offer a socio-cultural translation of economic conflict in recent decades. In doing so, social democracy can aim to again fulfil its historical role of integrating the working class into democratic politics and hence to increase its representation in the party system overall.

NOTE

1. They could count on important gains by the Danish Social Liberal Party and the Socialist People's Party to receive support for their minority government.

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APPENDIX

Vote shares of social democratic/socialist/labour parties in parliamentary elections since 1945 (in %)

Source: Döring, Holger and Philip Manow. 2019. Parliaments and governments database (ParlGov): Information on parties, elections and cabinets in modern democracies.

Social Democratic Party of Austria	
1945	44.6
1949	38.7
1953	42.1
1956	43
1959	44.8
1962	44.0
1966	42.6
1970	48.4
1971	50.0
1975	50.4
1979	51.0
1983	47.6
1986	43.1
1990	42.8

(continued)

(continued)

Social Democratic Party of Austria	
1994	34.9
1995	38.1
1999	33.2
2002	36.5
2006	35.3
2008	29.3
2013	26.8
2017	26.9
2019	21.2

Labour Party (Great Britain)	
1945	48.0
1950	46.1
1951	48.8
1955	46.4
1959	43.8
1964	44.1
1966	48.0
1970	43.1
1974 (February)	37.2
1974 (October)	39.2
1979	36.9
1983	27.6
1987	30.8
1992	34.9
1997	43.2
2001	40.7
2005	35.2
2010	29.0
2015	30.5
2017	40
2019	32.2

Social Democratic Party of Germany	
1949	29.2
1953	28.8
1957	31.8
1961	36.2
1965	39.3
1969	42.7
1972	45.8
1976	42.6
1980	42.9
1983	38.2
1987	37.2
1990	33.5
1994	36.4
1998	40.9
2002	38.5
2005	34.2
2009	23.0
2013	25.7
2017	20.5

French Socialist Party

First round of legislative elections	
1945	23.8
1946	21.1
1946	17.9
1951	14.5
1956	15.2
1958	15.5
1962	12.4
1967	18.9
1968	16.5
1973	19.1
1978	22.8
1981	36.0
1986	30.8
1988	34.9
1993	17.6
1997	23.5
2002	24.1
2007	24.7
2012	29.4
2017	7.4

First round of presidential elections (since 1969)

1969 (Defferre)	5.0 (SFIO)
1974 (Mitterand)	43.2
1981 (Mitterand)	25.8
1988 (Mitterand)	34.1
1995 (Jospin)	23.2
2002 (Jospin)	16.2
2007 (Royal)	25.9
2012 (Hollande)	28.6
2017 (Hamon)	6.4

Dutch Labour Party

1946	28.3
1948	25.6
1952	29
1956	32.7
1959	30.4
1963	28.0
1967	23.6
1971	24.6
1972	27.3
1977	33.8
1981	28.3
1982	30.4
1986	33.3
1989	31.9
1994	24.0
1998	29.0
2002	15.1
2003	27.3
2006	21.2
2010	19.6
2012	24.8
2017	5.7

Social Democratic Party of Switzerland

1947	26.2
1951	26.0
1955	27.0
1959	26.4
1963	26.6
1967	23.5
1971	22.9
1975	24.9
1979	24.4
1983	22.8
1987	18.4
1991	18.5
1995	21.8
1999	22.5
2003	23.3
2007	19.5
2011	18.7
2015	18.8
2019	16.8

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