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The Working Class and Support for the Radical Right

A Critical Perspective

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The Working Class and Support for the Radical Right: A Critical Perspective

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Résumé

La littérature attribue habituellement à la classe ouvrière un rôle central, si ce n'est exclusif, dans la progression de la droite radicale ces dernières années en Europe. Cet article discute du lien entre la classe ouvrière et la droite radicale en s'appuyant sur le cas de l'Union démocratique du centre (UDC), et plus particulièrement sur son soutien électoral et militant. En utilisant des données d'enquêtes post-électorales et des entretiens approfondis avec des militants, il développe deux arguments critiques. Le premier est que le soutien à la droite radicale est interclassiste et basé sur différents types de logiques sociales et politiques. Le second argument est qu'une proportion significative de la classe ouvrière ne soutient pas l'UDC. Par conséquent, la position de classe n'est pas le seul déterminant du soutien à la droite radicale. L'article soutient qu'il est nécessaire de prendre en compte une pluralité de facteurs susceptibles de peser sur le comportement politique. Ces facteurs peuvent être endogènes (par exemple, la socialisation politique et les trajectoires sociales des acteurs) ou exogènes (tels que les réseaux de sociabilité mobilisateurs, l'offre politique et le contexte). Les études sur la droite radicale gagneraient à intégrer ces différents déterminants du comportement politique. Cela nécessite de dépasser les explications monocausales du soutien à la droite radicale, et permet de relativiser les explications du soutien à l'UDC en termes de frustration et de privation économique souvent présentes dans les travaux de recherche.

Mots-clefs : droite radicale ; classe ouvrière ; comportement politique ; Suisse

Abstract

Scholarship in political science usually attributes a pivotal, or even exclusive, role to the working class in the progress of the radical right in Europe in recent years. This paper discusses the link between working class and radical right bearing on the case of the Swiss People's Party (SVP) with a focus on its electorate and activists' support. Using post-electoral survey data and in-depth interviews with activists, it develops two critical arguments. The first is that support for the radical right is interclassist and based on various types of social and political rationales. The second argument is that a significant proportion of the working class does not support the SVP. Consequently class position is not the key determinant of support for the radical right. The paper argues that it is necessary to take into account a plurality of factors liable to bear on political behaviour. These factors can be endogenous (e.g. the political socialization and social trajectories of the actors) or exogenous (such as mobilizing sociability networks, political offer, and context). Studies on the radical right would gain by incorporating these various determinants of political behaviour. This requires going beyond monocausal explanations of support for the radical right, and allows to put into perspective explanations for support of the SVP in terms of frustration and economic deprivation often present in scholarship.

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Keywords : radical right ; working class ; political behaviour ; Switzerland

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Table des Matières/Contents

RÉSUMÉ 3
ABSTRACT 3
INTRODUCTION 6
CONFUSING A PART WITH THE WHOLE 7
SOME SUPPORT COMES FROM THE WORKING CLASS... BUT WHAT ABOUT THE OTHERS ? 7
BUT WHICH MEMBERS OF THE WORKING CLASS SUPPORT THE RADICAL RIGHT? 8
A MULTIDETERMINANT RELATIONSHIP TO POLITICS 10
POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION AND SOCIAL TRAJECTORY 10
NETWORKS AND THE POLITICAL OFFER 11
DATA AND METHODOLOGY 12
THE VARIOUS TYPES OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL RATIONALES BEHIND THE SUPPORT FOR THE SWP 13
BEYOND THE WORKING CLASS... THE OTHER CLASSES 13
THE VARIOUS FACTORS OF WORKING CLASS SUPPORT 14
CONCLUSION 16
BIBLIOGRAPHIE 19

Introduction

Scholarship usually attributes to the working class a pivotal, or even exclusive, role in the progress of the radical right in Europe in recent years. This article critiques this point of view. Two arguments guide our remarks: (1) the characterization of support for these parties tends to confuse a part (the working class) with the whole (the entire interclassist electorate); and (2) class position is not the sole determinant of support for the radical right[2]. It is necessary to incorporate supplementary factors too often neglected in the literature into the analysis. These include both endogenous factors (actors' political socialization and social trajectories) and exogenous factors (mobilizing sociability networks, the political offer, and context). We will validate our contentions by focussing on a particular case, the 'neoliberal xenophobic' (Art, 2011, p.19) Swiss People's Party (SVP)[3], analyzing its electorate and its activists' support.

The recent momentum of the radical right in Europe has given rise to numerous social science analyses (Betz, 1994; Kitschelt and Mc Gann, 1995; Mudde, 2007; Oesch, 2008; Rydgren, 2013, etc.). Kitschelt and Mc Gann (1995) have proposed the concept of a 'winning formula' to explain how these parties attract a composite public, on the basis of a discourse both neo-liberal (the rejection of the welfare state) and authoritarian (anti-immigration, and for law and order). One of the major theses (Minkenberg, 2000, p.182; Rydgren, 2007, p.248) of the literature attributes the success of these parties to the support of 'modernization losers' threatened by ongoing socio-economic transformations (Betz, 1994; Kriesi et al., 2005; Kriesi et al., 2008). Researchers hesitate over the definition of these 'modernization losers', who may be losing economically, subjectively or culturally. In the first case, certain classes, primarily 'workers and small business owners' are objectively losing (Oesch and Rennwald, 2010, p.346). In the second case, the focus is on the subjective feeling of being losers (Kriesi, 1999; Minkenberg, 2000). Finally, in the last case, the losers are conservatives, hostile to the post-materialistic values and tolerance characteristic of cultural liberalism (Bornschier and Kriesi, 2013). These explanations are often combined with a theory of social cleavages (Bartolini and Mair, 1990; Bornschier, 2010).

Despite their differences and reservations, these scholars implicitly agree on two points: (1) a significant proportion of the radical right stems from the working class; and (2) the working class is particularly attracted to the radical right. First, we will discuss these two aspects, based on the specialised literature on the radical right. Then, we will draw upon the literature on political behaviour to list factors explaining the latter. We suggest that these factors are at play, regardless of political orientation, in other words, for the radical right as well. Then, we will present the data and methodology employed, in addition to the specific characteristics of the case under study, the SVP. Next, we will empirically demonstrate the interclassist nature of the SVP's electoral support and, on the basis of a qualitative investigation of activists, the diverse social and political logics underlying various social groups' support for the SVP. Finally, we will identify factors other than social class leading working-class members to support this party.

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[2] For convenience, we include under this heading all the political forces which the literature characterizes by varying labels: right-wing populism, extreme right, far right, radical right, etc

[3] In German, *Schweizerischen* Volkspartei, SVP, and Union démocratique du centre (UDC) in French.

Confusing a Part with the Whole

Some Support comes from the Working Class… but what about the Others ?

The literature suggests that the radical right *principally* draws upon the working class. Thus, the working class constitutes the *core* of its electorate; it represents the bulk of its electoral *basis;* and, to refer to a particular empirical case, typical voters for the British National Party are 'angry white men' from a relatively uneducated working class (Ford and Goodwin, 2010). Depending on the country, studies observe that either: (1) working class voters constitute the *majority* in these parties' electoral basis; or (2) they are *overrepresented* relative to their weight in the total electorate; or (3) these parties are expanding primarily amongst these social categories. In the latter case, Gougou and Mayer (2013, p.156) affirm: 'Yesterday, the working class was the core clientele of the left. Today, all over Europe, it is increasingly giving support to the radical right.'

This varied reasoning neglects the support coming from other social categories. Nonetheless, the social composition of this vote shows the existence of support from other social classes. In a comparative study of four countries, support not coming from the working class (production and service workers, and clerks) varies from a minimum of 32 per cent in Denmark to 56 per cent in Switzerland (Oesch, 2013). Now, the support of other categories has been insufficiently analyzed. Focussing primarily, if not exclusively, on the working class is, thus, equivalent to taking the part for the whole.

If we look more closely, what does the literature teach us about this diversity? It sometimes indicates that another category, that of small business owners, supports these parties. Along with the working class, they share the situation of 'losers' in the process of modernization (McGann and Kitschelt, 2005, p.149; Oesch, 2013; Oesch and Rennwald, 2010). For his part, Kriesi interpreted the concept of a 'winning formula' (Kitschelt and McGann, 1995), initially stemming from an analysis of the political offer, to evoke the socially different supporters of these parties : 'not only the losers, but also part of the winners of the removal of national boundaries' (Kriesi, 2003, p.202). In the following analyses, he no longer speaks of 'winners.' A comparative study (Flecker, 2007) of eight European countries concludes that support is diversified, encompassing 'winners' and 'losers,' blue-collar workers and managers. The reasons for this attraction are described as varied: fear of loss of status, welfare chauvinism, and the shared 'ideology of success', found amongst those ascending the social ladder, 'legitimating inequality and domination of some groups over others and leading to chauvinism and authoritarianism.' (Flecker, 2007, p.240)

Nonna Mayer's work on the vote for the Front National in France confirms the importance of the working class (workers and employees) in its bank of voters, and stresses their recently expanding weight (Gougou and Mayer, 2013). However, Mayer (2012) also reminds us of the existence, since the electoral advance of this party in 1984, of support provided by 'all categories of the population, varying depending on the specific election considered'. These variations in electoral composition are partially related to the political configuration and the political offer (Mayer, 2005; 2007).

Support for the radical right comes not only from electors but also from activists, who are more committed than those who merely vote. More rarely does the literature on activists in these parties underscore their heterogeneity. Usually it is more interested in ideological diversity or the political trajectory rather than social class. A

comparative study of five European countries (Klandermans and Mayer, 2006; Linden and Klandermans, 2007) distinguishes activists according to their political past (revolutionaries, wanderers, converts, and compliants) and their motivation to become involved (instrumentality, identity, or ideology). Field research on the British National Party referred to the diversity of activists' 'political background' (old guard, wanderers, and new recruits), but concludes with a 'social profile' of 'grassroots members' similar to that of voters coming from the working class (Goodwin, 2011, p.137)[4], without mention of recruitment in other social categories. Another comparative study reveals the variety in the recruitment of activists 'on the basis of their ideological motivations, their socioeconomic status, and their political experience' (Art, 2011, p.40), but without providing detailed results on these socioeconomic differences. Finally, the existing literature on activists has been little interested in supporters' social characteristics, and is even less so in their potential class diversity.

But which Members of the Working Class Support the Radical Right?

Thus, studies have devoted little attention to support for the radical right from actors not belonging to the working class. On the other hand, they state that the working class is *first attracted* by the radical right. A recent overview bringing together recognised scholars in the field highlighted this research question: 'Why is it that the working class tends to be especially attracted by the radical right parties?' (Rydgren, 2013, p.1). Now, this type of reasoning does not take abstention into account (Gottraux, and Péchu 2011 and 2012). This is unequally distributed and hits these social categories the hardest (Verba, and Nie, 1972; Verba, Scholzman and Brady, 1995). However, recently, Bornschier and Kriesi (2013) mentioned abstention. For them, it was not a matter of putting working class support for the radical right into perspective (Bornschier and Kriesi, 2013, p.26), but rather of tracking the subcategories most attracted by it. Now, abstention amongst the working class is often greater than the votes accorded to the radical right. If we incorporate abstention into the analysis and if we consider the entire potential electorate,[5] we observe that it is only a minority of the working class who vote for the radical right. The majority do not do so. Most vote for other parties or seek refuge in abstention. Thus, in France, during the presidential election of 2002, 18 per cent of registered workers voted for the Radical right, while 31 per cent abstained (Mayer, 2005). Then, what are the characteristics of members of the working class who vote for the radical right, rather than abstain or vote for another party? The literature provides four contrasting answers to this question.

First, studies inspired by the *objective* version of the 'globalization losers' thesis' are little interested in subdivisions within the working class. Yet they stress the link between being left out of social modernization and experiencing less security, on one hand and, on the other, discontent leading to a vote for the radical right (for Switzerland: Kriesi *et al.,* 2005; Oesch and Rennwald, 2010). This approach seems to depict the most impoverished working class individuals as voters for the radical right. Betz (1994; 1998) states this explicitly: it is the unemployed and the unskilled

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[4] See also Ford and Goodwin (2010).

[5] This potential electoral body corresponds to those registered when registration on the electoral lists is automatic. In countries such as France or the United States where this is not the case, this electoral body corresponds to the voting age population. In France, research shows that the working class is less likely to be registered than other social categories (Braconnier and Dormagen, 2007).

workers, at the bottom of the social hierarchy and, therefore, the most destabilised by globalization, who join the radical right.

In the *subjective* version of the globalization loser's thesis, it is not, or not only, the most deprived amongst the working class who vote for the radical right, but, above all, 'those who have a little' and who fear losing it (Minkenberg, 2000). Research has shown that it is members of the working class with an average level of education, and not those with a low level of education, who support the radical right (Evans, 2005; Arzheimer and Carter, 2006; Girard, 2013), the least educated and the most unskilled tending to take refuge in abstention (Bornschier and Kriesi, 2013). Other scholars no longer stress only the economic loss, but also highlight the fear of loss of status, which is present in those who are 'fragile' and seek to distinguish themselves from the lowest in society (Collovald and Schwartz, 2006; Cartier *et al.,* 2008). Without making reference to this, this literature comes close to the already old explanation for support of the radical right in terms of status politics (Lipset,1963; Brandmeyer and Denisoff, 1969).

A third line of reasoning stresses the role of specific *values* to explain the vote for the radical right. In this cultural version of globalization losers' thesis, support for the radical right is found amongst members of the working class sharing certain cultural world views hostile to the post-materialistic values spread by globalization (Bornschier and Kriesi, 2013). Yet this work does not look to the origin of these values in individuals' socialization, which are presented as independent explanatory variables. A French ethnographic study reveals that it is the sections of the working class who value economic capital (rather than cultural capital) who are most likely to vote for the radical right. This appreciation of economic capital stems from their family socialization and from their personal employment trajectory (Girard, 2013).

Finally, some research refutes the theoreticians of mass society who explain the appeal of the radical right by the isolation of individuals (Kornhauser, 1959). On the contrary, it is integration into cohesive local contexts which encourages identification with the radical right (Fitzgerald and Lawrence, 2011). Similarly, integration into communities that remain strong can have the same effect (Hamilton, 1982; Rydgren, 2007). Yet some affinities protect the individual against voting for the radical right; these include networks favouring the left, such as, for example, those of unions (Bornschier and Kriesi, 2013[6]). Gougou and Mayer (2013) also show that younger working class generations affected by the economic crisis, the loss of leftist political points of reference and the alienation from trade-unions are more likely to support the radical right than earlier generations.

Thus, the support for the radical right does not stem exclusively from the working class, and when it does arise from the working class, this is not by chance. Class belonging is not the sole explanation for support for the radical right. Despite their points of disagreement, studies reveal a single explanatory factor, sometimes the objective socio-professional position, sometimes the subjective feeling of being a loser, sometimes an orientation of values, and sometimes belonging to certain networks. Each of these explanations highlights an interesting factor, yet, as Flecker (2007, p.239) suggests, 'there is no such thing as *the* reason for the rise of right-wing populism and extremism'. Beyond the literature on the radical right, consultation of research on political behaviour is essential to clarify all the factors explaining the latter. Therefore, we propose to theoretically and methodologically standardise the approach to the radical right (Roussel, 2003), and to decompartmentalise the analysis of voting behaviour and activism.

[6] They talk about skilled workers but not about routine operatives.

A Multideterminant Relationship to Politics

Voting and activist involvement are, indeed, two forms of political participation (Teorell *et al.,* 2006; Dalton, 2014). In this way, the various principal categories of determinants explaining the support of voters or activists are basically the same. The recent literature on political behaviour is inclined towards this decompartmentalization. It reveals the existence of two broad categories of determinants which explain political participation and orientation, whether voting or 'high intensity forms of participation' (Whiteley and Seyd, 2002). On one hand, these are endogenous determinants stemming from individual characteristics (demand side) and, on the other, exogenous determinants (offer side).[7] With this in mind, we will distinguish, on one side, political socialization and the social trajectory and, on the other, social networks and the political offer. These two sets of determinants interact. For example, networks and the political offer also have socializing effects. Of course, when it is a matter of understanding activist commitment, additional factors of the cost of the latter and selective incentives to participate (Olson, 1965; Whiteley and Seyd, 2002, pp.52-53; Gaxie, 2005[8]) must also be taken into account. Due to its cost, activism often involves people who are higher in the social hierarchy than those who merely vote (Marien and Quintelier, 2011). As a general rule, the literature on the radical right does not fully incorporate these multiple determining factors, which are, nonetheless, present in the general literature on political behavior (Flecker, 2007 is an exception).

Political Socialization and Social Trajectory

Individuals are socialised throughout their lives; that is, they acquire 'dispositions to act, feel, evaluate, think, appreciate in such and such a way' (Lahire, 2011, p.50)[9]. These dispositions are both general dispositions and specifically political dispositions, articulated amongst themselves: general propensities may have political effects. For example, the general disposition to value order, intervening in various types of activities, may also translate politically into a partisan choice. The importance of political socialization is recognised in the study of political behaviour (e.g. Jennings, 2007) which particularly underscores the role of family transmission (Muxel, 2001; Jaspers *et al.,* 2008; Jennings *et al.,* 2009; Abendschön, 2013). Yet curiously, the literature on the radical right is too often uninterested in effects of socialization on orientation with respect to this political trend. However, based on quantitative data from the 'Swiss Household Panel', one study shows that having parents favourable to the radical right and/or hostile to immigration encourages a vote for the SVP (Coffé and Voorspotel, 2010). And qualitative studies of activists reveal the importance of family traditions (Laffont, 2001; Klandermans and Mayer, 2006).

Political orientations are also acquired via secondary socialization (Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Sigel, 1989), whether in the work environment, in other significant groups to which an actor belongs (religious or associational groups, etc.) or during key life experiences. For example, the experience of decolonization and the return to one's home country, as well as membership in associations of returnees, inculcate dispositions favouring a vote for the radical right (Veugelers, 2005; 2012).

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[7] We find the joint consideration of offer and demand in Verba *et al.* (1995), when they explain nonparticipation by the fact that individuals "can't, don't want to or were not asked".
[8] In French, we refer to 'rétributions militantes,' which may be material or symbolic.
[9] See also Bourdieu (1984).

The *social slope* of electors or activists (reproductive, ascending, or descending), measured relative to the position of parents (intergenerational mobility) or that of actors during their lifetimes (intragenerational mobility), also matters. This slope changes the relationship of the actor to the world and, under certain conditions, may produce specific political outcomes (Bourdieu, 1984). In equivalent social positions, an heir, a parvenu or someone who has moved down the social ladder do not tend to share the same value systems because they are not exposed to the same environments throughout their lives.

Networks and the Political Offer

Membership in social networks has effects on participation and voting direction, as well as party membership. A classic work on electoral choice showed that group affiliation was likely to affect the vote and mentioned the influence of the most politicised members of these groups (Lazarsfeld *et al.,* 1944). In the wake of this tradition, Miller (1977) refers to the weight of the 'local social environment ' on votes. Huckfeldt's early research pursued this line of inquiry, proposing a 'contextual' approach to electoral choices (Huckfeldt, 1986; Huckfeldt and Sprague, 1995), as has, more recently, the collective work edited by Zuckerman (2005)[10]. Despite their differences, these works show that individuals' characteristics (social and political) alone do not explain their political behaviour. The latter also depends on the groups in which they participate, in addition to mobilizing processes at this level. For its part, the study of social movements has also signalled the effect of networks on the propensity to become involved, in parallel with that of activists' social attributes (Guigni and Passy, 2001; Diani and Mac Adam, 2003; Krinsky and Crossley, 2014). Networks take root in informal primary groups (family and friends, neighbourhoods, and work groups), or constitute more formal structures, such as associational groups (Sawicki, 1997).

To summarise, future electors or activists primarily encounter the party through *immediate* interactions. The propensity to vote for a party or to become an activist often evolves through specific intermediary factors: solicitation to vote or to appear on an electoral list, proactive recruitment practices or meeting with a member or an acquaintance who is already involved, and so on (Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993; Verba et al., 1995; Scarrow, 1996; Whiteley and Seyd, 2002).

Beyond networks, another exogenous element influences individuals' political orientation. This is the partisan offer which depends on the state of the political world: the structure of the political field, the strategies of the parties to position themselves in that environment, and the salience of certain issues in the public space (Petrocik, 1996; Van der Brug, 2004). Thus, the political offer acts upon political behaviour. In order to grasp the specificity of the party offer and its meaning to the actor, it is necessary to consider the competing discourses, electoral power relations and the specific positioning of the party in the political field. All of these elements together determine the party's public image. This image will increase a party's desirability and the possibility of voting for or becoming active within a particular party, as compared to other possibilities.[11] For example, a party's electoral success will increase its symbolic value; for voters or activists, it is valuable to be associated with a winning organization.

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[10] See also Braconnier (2010).

[11] For similar reasoning on social movements, see Fillieule (2010).

Data and Methodology

Our data relate to the electoral support and activist base of the Swiss People's Party (SVP), a particular case amongst parties of the radical right. The SVP does not have an anti-democratic or fascist past, but has its historic roots in the conservative right. Since the 90s, it has experienced a dramatic shift to the right (with nationalist rhetoric against foreigners and hostility to European integration), along with a significant rise in national election support, from 9.9 per cent in the lower house in 1975 to 26.6 per cent in 2011, with a peak of 28.9 per cent in 2007. Furthermore, for decades it has participated in the Swiss coalition government of consensus, which makes its supporters less stigmatised, and allows it to play both the integration and the protest cards in the political system (Mazzoleni *et al.,* 2007; Mazzoleni, 2008; Skenderovic, 2009, pp.123-172).[12] Finally, the Swiss economic context in which the SVP operates is quite favourable compared to other countries in the world, with a relatively low rate of unemployment (less than 4 per cent since 2000).

Our study is based on a secondary analysis of a 2011 national election survey.[13] Our own data stem from an in-depth qualitative study of interviews with 40 activists from cantons of Geneva and Zurich, two distinct linguistic and cultural regions with different political contexts. Additional data (documents, and direct observation of sessions) were also used. We employed snow-ball sampling with a diversification strategy: activists differed in terms of gender, age, profession and activist history; investment in the party ranged from being card-carrying members to holding elective office. The study's objective was twofold: to grasp the various determinants of support for the SVP and to identify types of activists (Gottraux and Péchu 2009; 2011).

In our qualitative section, our approach differs from that of most research on the radical right, which is survey-based. To date, the latter has failed to provide sufficient empirical elements to cover the multiple factors affecting this political trend. Furthermore, their data analysis proceeds factor by factor, rather than considering their interaction. In contrast, qualitative interviews allow us to account for (1) the multiple variables which differ according to the actor and which impact their relation to politics; (2) the objective determinants (endogenous and exogenous) of behaviour, as well as the subjective manner in which activists perceive their lives; (3) the processual construction of the relation to politics, through successive and simultaneous socializations; and (4) the manner in which the individual deals with the political offer and re-appropriates the party's platform. That a qualitative approach is effective should not mean that quantitative methods are not also important in analyzing this type of support: what is crucial is not the specific methodology employed but rather the inclusion of the diverse variables highlighted above.

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[12] This political radicalization has led social scientists, despite their differences in characterization, to locate the SVP in the family of 'the right of the right-wing' parties, here referred to as the radical right.

[13] The Swiss Election Study (Selects) is a post-electoral survey, under the supervision of Swiss political science departments (see Lutz, 2012). More information on the survey can be found here:https://www.swissubase.ch/en/catalogue/studies/10890/14986/overview

The Various Types of Social and Political Rationales behind the Support for the SWP

Beyond the Working Class… The other Classes

The quantitative data reveal the existence of interclassist support for the SVP. Beyond the data of the European Social Survey, previously cited (Oesch, 2013), the interclassism of the SVP vote is still more obvious in working with the data from the SELECTS 2011 election survey.[14] If we consider the social composition of the vote for the SVP in 2011, the working class (production and service workers, and clerks) represents 39.4 per cent of its voter base.[15] Thus, 60.6 per cent, in other words, three out of five of its voters, come from other social categories. Therefore, one out of four (24.4 per cent) SVP voters belongs to the category of managers and administrators, which the literature classifies as winners in the context of globalization. Even if only considering the votes cast and not taking abstention into account, it is incorrect to present the working class as the 'core' of the SVP electorate, based on the SELECTS surveys.

Table 1: Social Composition of the SVP Vote

Social classes	Vote for the UDC (%)	Weight of classes (%)
Liberal professions and large employers	3.5	4.1
Managers and administrators	24.4	23.6
Small business owners	17.5	10.6
Technical specialists	7.3	10.6
Socio-cultural specialists	8.0	20.1
Clerks	12.2	11.3
Production workers	14.7	10.4
Service workers	12.5	9.4
Total	100	100

Source: SELECTS 2011, N weighted according to the size of cantons = 572.

Our qualitative investigation of activists allows us to better grasp the social diversity of SVP support. Amongst those interviewed, we discerned six different activist profiles (see the characteristics of these types in Table 2) (Gottraux and Péchu 2011), without being able to statistically evaluate their importance, something which only a quantitative study would permit. The construction of these types followed a back and forth movement, classic in qualitative research, between deduction and induction, and between theoretical knowledge of political behaviour and analysis of the interviews. We began by looking at the social diversity of the activists encountered (the volume and types of capital, and the social slope during their trajectory, as well

[14] The survey was here only weighted to ensure the representativeness of the sample according to the size of the cantons (Lutz, 2012, pp.86-87).
[15] Here we base ourselves on the social classification developed by Daniel Oesch (2006) which is most commonly used in Switzerland today, to demonstrate the validity of the globalization losers' thesis.

as the social position of their parents). In one case, that of the 'young Europeans', we added the criterion of belonging to the same generation. Then, we constructed subtypes to take account of political differences (in terms of values) and of varying selective incentives derived from commitment. These differences stem either from more subtle social characteristics observed (for example, whether the individual was salaried or self-employed), or political elements (their former political path or political competence (Bourdieu, 1984; Reichert, 2010).

It is not surprising, once again, to find some activists at the heart of the SVP not coming from a working-class background, given that the literature stresses the importance of resources in political engagement. However, analysis of their involvement clarifies the different forms of social and political rationales behind their support for the SVP. This may include, for example, the feeling of being self-made (the 'deserving'), an intransigent defense of economic liberalism (the 'liberals') or the defense of a very traditional, indeed, extreme right-wing vision of society (the 'ideologues').

The Various Factors of Working Class Support

Nevertheless, in the SVP we find a membership and activist base corresponding to what the literature refers to as working class. These are, of course, those we refer to as 'the lower classes' *('les populaires')* (Table 2, appendix), which are activists reproducing the lowly social position of their parents, and those who, amongst those who have moved down the social scale (the 'downgraded') are part of the working class because they have lower skilled jobs and hold menial positions in the working world (sales, temporary positions, etc.). However, their disadvantaged economic status is not the sole determinant of their commitment to the SVP; there are additional contributing factors leading these activists to value what the radical right has to offer within a specific context.

Thus, the effect of *prior socialization* to become involved and of *social trajectories* is particularly important; dispositions acquired within these contexts encounter a specific political offer and they are translated into a partisan choice. We often find in working class activists a primary socialization within the family, characterised by an authoritarian model of upbringing, and in certain cases by religious conservative forms. Moreover, these families are usually oriented to the right, and when this is not the case, an orientation to the left is not reflected in a less authoritarian upbringing. From the point of view of secondary socialization, working experiences also play a role in this identification with the radical right. Thus, a number of our activists are in jobs related to maintaining order (Gaxie, 2006), such as customs officials, janitors or sailors. Others have worked in Swiss sectors traditionally characterised as right-wing, such as the banking sector, and collective transport in the private sector. In addition to the working world, belonging to certain subcultures may bring people closer to the SVP. These include the biker subculture, which includes people who have a romantic attachment to South America, as well as the Protestant evangelical subculture.

As a function of earlier socialization and trajectories, individuals do not all accord the same value to *selective incentives* for becoming involved. For the 'lower classes', the main selective incentive for political engagement is to be associated with a 'winning party', which is symbolic compensation for their social position which is denigrated. For the 'downgraded' who see the SVP as a vehicle to launch a political career, this serves to compensate for their loss of social position. Politics is a consistently present and highly valued subject within their families; political activism is, thus, a chance to prove oneself to significant people in one's circle of family and friends, the 'significant others' (Berger and Luckmann, 1966), especially one's father. Interestingly, among

those who showed no political career ambitions, we found no evidence of the same type of appreciation for either politics or activism in the familial realm. Yet their current situation leads them to value the social integration (the quest for sociability and social capital) that the SVP offers.

Joining *networks* also matters in encouraging a political orientation, and soliciting or maintaining a commitment. For some of those interviewed, retirement reconfigures their sociability networks. Leaving a working environment, in other words, a union environment, leads 'lower class' individuals to lose the network which kept them on the left. This new configuration has even more of an effect if their identification with the left was quite weak, and if it coexisted with the more right-wing elements of socialization mentioned earlier. In addition, we encounter situations where turning to the SVP stems from a contact in the context of volunteer activities for a school board. For one individual who had dropped in social position and was seeking social integration, it was the explicit advice of a 'significant other' (a superior in the army) to join the SVP which was decisive. Unclear on his ideological orientations at that time, this activist recognised in the interview that he could have just as easily followed the suggestion to join another party, even at the other extreme of the political spectrum.

The political offer, an exogenous determinant, matters too. For the 'lower classes' subgroup, the SVP constitutes the sole possible encounter with the right. Other parties are seen as responsible for the deteriorating conditions in the country, particularly in Geneva, where they have long been involved 'in business', whereas this is not the case for the SVP. The SVP is also seen to be the only right-wing party that speaks to the working class; its protest discourse criticizing the political landscape meets the expectations of activists of these social groups. Moreover, one of the 'marginalised' respondents defines himself as extreme right and attributes the same label to the SVP, for it is at the farthest end of the right wing among the major parties. This political orientation prevents him from joining traditional right wing forces. Some 'downgraded' activists are also enticed by what they perceive as a popular party with a far from liberal orientation, which is objectively false, if we refer to the party's official line and to its actions. For others, this criterion does not figure into their choices; for them to join, it suffices that the SVP is a right wing party. Finally, for all these working class activists, it is also crucial that the SVP is on an upward trajectory. Indeed, this endows them with the symbolic reward (Gaxie, 2005) of being part of a watershed moment in Swiss political history.

Conclusion

We first recalled the existence of an interclassist electoral support for the SVP. That which could be seen as empirical evidence has not been viewed as such in the literature on the radical right, literature which neglects the other social categories than the working class. This is especially problematic with regards to the SVP, as these other categories are more present there than in the other European parties of the radical right.

Qualitative analysis of SVP activists clarifies the various kinds of social and political rationales behind the commitment of members of the working class, as well as those of other social categories. These kinds of rationales put the sordid explanations ('misérabiliste', Grignon and Passeron, 1989) for support of the SVP, in terms of frustration and economic deprivation, into perspective. Our results concerning working class activists take note of the diversity of their class positions. Amongst the 'downgraded', we met those with few qualifications and a very degraded socio-professional situation, who had dropped in social status compared to their parents and who were extremely socially isolated, but also people experiencing a drop in social status that was inter and intra-generational, who were relegated to menial jobs, despite being university graduates. Amongst the 'lower classes', which are in social reproduction, we find people integrated in society, skilled employees (or retired individuals) whose employment is neither objectively threatened nor felt to be so, but also employees who are unskilled and whose employment trajectory is erratic, bringing them closer to social marginality at certain points of their lives. These initial results on activists do not support the black and white interpretations of the voters proposed in the literature, seeking within the working class distinct and opposing categories (qualified-unqualified; threatened- unthreatened; integrated-excluded; and closed-opened) to determine which fractions support the radical right.

Factors pushing working class individuals to get involved are complex. They include socialization which is sometimes contradictory, causing tension; selective incentives offered for those who commit to the cause; networks with which they are in touch, which may shift over the course of a lifetime; and the selective and contextual appropriation of political offer. Thus, instead of a monocausal interpretation, we have favoured an explanation considering both endogenous and exogenous determinants. Consequently, support for the SVP (and, more broadly, for the radical right) is multidetermined, whether coming from the working class or other social categories. In this way, there is nothing particularly distinctive in working class support mechanisms for the radical right. For all our types and subtypes, similar mechanisms are at play, reflecting various socializations, social trajectories, selective incentives, networks and political offer.

Voting, the least demanding form of political involvement, is also subject to general mechanisms determining political behaviour. Its explanation requires taking into account individual characteristics (demand side) and the contexts which surround them (offer side). This is why empirical findings provided here with respect to activists of the SVP are a call to re-examine the explanation for electoral support for the radical right. Renewed quantitative investigative protocols could highlight this complex intertwining of endogenous and exogenous factors. Such an innovation would allow us to move beyond monocausal, reductive explanations of working class support for the radical right.

Appendix: Table 2: Different Activist Profiles in the SVP

	The "lower classes" ("les populaires")	The downgraded ("les déclassés")	The young anti-Europeans ("les jeunes anti-européens")	The deserving ("les méritants")	The liberals[16] ("les libéraux")	The ideologues and the moralists ("les ideologues et les moralistes")
Reasoning behind the construction of the type	• Coming from and belonging to working class categories (workers, and employees) • In social reproduction	• Lower rank or middle-ranking employees, and technical specialists • Lower in status than their family of origin and, in addition, for some, with respect to their training	• Young people interested, as adolescents, in the controversy surrounding the refusal of Switzerland to integrate into the EU •Socially undetermined (potentially ascending social slope)	•Coming from working class categories or from the traditional petty bourgeoisie • Small and medium-sized employers; employees dramatically rising up the social ladder; checkered professional trajectories	• Coming from higher categories with substantial economic capital • In social reproduction • Securing their inheritance through the acquisition of graduate degrees	• Coming from higher categories with substantial economic and cultural capital • In social reproduction
Characterization	• Distance or disagreement with the party's economic liberalism • Distinction with respect to "smaller than oneself" (asylum seekers, and the unemployed)	• Activism as compensation for a drop in status	• Membership around 18 years of age. •Absence of family tradition of activism in the SVP • Investment in politics and ambitions for a career as an elected official	• Feeling of being self-made through work and sacrifice. • Hostile to the draining of the fruit of their efforts through taxes, and hostile to the beneficiaries of the welfare state • Appreciation of economic	• Defence of economic liberalism in ideological terms • Moderate discourse on immigration (contribution of foreigners to the national economy); but fear of a drop in education level as a result of too great a	• Distance from economic liberalism; not worried about defending immediate economic interests • Attachment to the party: defending some ideas • Traditional vision of society (male-

[16] In the European sense.

	The "lower classes" ("les populaires")	The downgraded ("les déclassés")	The young anti-Europeans ("les jeunes anti-européens")	The deserving ("les méritants")	The liberals[16] ("les libéraux")	The ideologues and the moralists ("les ideologues et les moralistes")
	• Swiss identity and nationality as a refuge • SVP viewed as a working class party		• Some openings to cultural liberalism (for example, homosexual rights). • Traditional conception of male-female relationships	liberalism, starting with their own experience	proportion of immigrants in schools	female relationships, and homophobia).
Reasoning behind the construction of the subtype	Past political trajectory	Type of selective incentives sought	Political trajectory in comparison to parents	Social slope	Social category	Political competence
Subtypes	• *Long structured to the right*: conservative dispositions and feeling that Switzerland dropped in status • *Former leftists*: earlier presence of dispositions enabling them to lean to the right; loss of networks keeping them on the left • *Lower class marginality*: distance from politics and regular abstention	• *The political career as compensation*: politicized families; search for electoral mandates • *Political engagement as a means of social integration*:quest for sociability and social capital	• *Breaking with family tradition:* secondary socialization and desired profession encourage rightist tendencies • *In continuity with family tradition*: coming from families who vote SVP	•*Rising through effort*: coming from families on the right or the radical right They themselves have always been on the right. • *Making an effort to fight against a drop in social status*: may also come from families on the left or might have themselves been leftists	• *Middle-ranked employers*: members of employer associations in their domain • *Higher salaried officials and members of the liberal professions:* Deploring the loss of the right leaning of traditional liberal parties	• *Ideologues*: interest in strategy, political coups and ideological debate; for some, a history with the extreme right before joining the SVP • *Moralists*: Some women; little political competence and positions adopted based on moral and religious categories

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