

## **The transformation of cleavage politics The 1997 Stein Rokkan lecture**

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**Abstract.** In this lecture I discuss the development of the social divisions in Western Europe and their translation into politics. I successively take up the three aspects embraced by the notion of ‘cleavages’ – their structural base, the political values of the groups involved, and their political articulation. My main argument is that the decline of traditional cleavages does not necessarily signify the end of structuration of politics by social divisions. There is ample empirical evidence for the existence of a new social division between two segments of the new middle class, which has important consequences for politics. This new social division is shown to be closely linked to the new ‘value cleavage’ although it is not able to fully account for the enormous political implications which contrasting value-orientations have today. Finally, I suggest that the political articulation of both the transformed class structure and the new configuration of values is strongly shaped by the political legacy of traditional cleavages.

### **Introduction**

It is a great honor for me to present this year’s Stein Rokkan lecture. I would like to take this opportunity to discuss one particular aspect of the great Norwegian political scientist’s work which has given rise to a flurry of recent publications and which has preoccupied me in my own work, too. I am referring to the role of cleavages in contemporary Western European politics. Rokkan’s basic argument about the conflict structures in Western European societies and their translation into party systems was laid out in the famous essay on ‘Cleavage structures, party systems, and voter alignments’, which he coauthored with Seymour M. Lipset (see Lipset and Rokkan 1967). His idea was to link the configurations of contemporary European party systems to the social and cultural divisions which marked European societies at the time of the formation of the party systems in the second half of the 19th century. When democratic politics emerged, these traditional divisions mainly opposed social groups defined in terms of religion, class, region and ethnicity. As is well known, Lipset and Rokkan maintained that these traditional divisions had been ‘frozen’ in political terms and that, at the time of their writing (1967), European party systems still reflected the structure of societal divisions which

had existed in the early twenties when the popular masses had made their final entry into democratic politics.

The question of the development of the Western European conflict structure and its translation into politics has recently been the subject of a rather intensive debate among European political scientists, a debate which has largely been conducted on the basis of comparative empirical analyses. The results drawn from these analyses diverge considerably, depending on the conceptualization of the fundamental theoretical terms, their operationalizations for the empirical analysis, the types of data used, and the methods applied in the analysis of the data. For some authors, such as Bartolini and Mair (1990), who have studied the long-term development of the class cleavage in particular, the freezing hypothesis, albeit in a somewhat modified version, still applies. Others, such as Franklin, Mackie, Valen and their collaborators (1992), claim that in almost all of the countries they studied an important decline in the ability of social divisions to structure individual voting choice has taken place. They suggest that there is a universal process of decline in cleavage politics, which has gone more or less far in the different Western European and Northern American countries. Moreover, Franklin (1992: 886) maintains that the decline in the structuring capacities of traditional cleavages is nowhere balanced by increases in the structuring properties of new cleavages. The origins of this long drawn out process of decline are, according to this group of researchers, to be sought in the successful resolution of the social conflicts which had been embodied in the traditional cleavages.

A third group of authors – the proponents of the ‘new politics’ approach – share the idea that traditional cleavages are weakening, but they suggest that the declining political significance of religion and class is accompanied by the emergence of a new cleavage. More specifically, they believe that there is a new ‘value cleavage’ rooted in the opposition between materialist and post-materialist orientations. Inglehart (1977, 1985, 1990) is not alone in claiming that postmaterialism is changing the face of mass politics as portrayed by the cleavage model, but he is more insistent on the notion that the ‘new politics’ constitute a ‘value cleavage’. This perspective points to a more fluid, volatile relationship between social groups, value orientations and party preferences.

In their imaginative empirical test of the extent to which cleavage politics still exists in Western European countries, Knutsen and Scarbrough (1995: 519) come to the conclusion that, generally, value orientations are more important for individual voting choices than structural variables and that, in some countries, the significance of value orientations has grown over the period 1973–1990. Moreover, they find that the impact of value orientations has increased most and is by now largest in the more advanced industrial societies. Yet their results do not exclusively support the ‘new politics’ interpretation

of the transformation of cleavage politics. They conclude that the structural basis of political conflict, rather than being eroded, appears quite resilient. It continues to have a considerable impact on political choices – either directly, or indirectly by affecting the value orientations which depend on it. In the absence of clear trends in any direction, they take an intermediary position. On the one hand, they conclude (p. 521) ‘that West European electorates seem to be short of the kind of shift in the basis of party choice suggested by “new politics”’. On the other hand, they suggest that these electorates appear to be less straightjacketed by social structures than implied by cleavage politics.

I would like to discuss these different interpretations of the contemporary state of cleavage politics in three steps – each one referring to one of the three aspects which are embraced by the notion of ‘cleavage’. ‘Cleavages’ have, of course, a structural basis in a division between opposite social groups. But the notion of a ‘cleavage’ cannot be reduced to structural terms. It includes two more elements:<sup>1</sup> the groups involved must be conscious of their collective identity – as workers, employers, catholics or protestants – and be willing to act on that basis. Moreover, a cleavage must be expressed in organizational terms. In other words, a structural division is transformed into a cleavage, if a political actor gives coherence and organized political expression to what otherwise are inchoate and fragmentary beliefs, values and experiences among members of some social group. Conceptualized in these terms, the notion of ‘cleavage’ constitutes an antidote to any kind of psychological or sociological reductionism which treats politics as a mere reflection of underlying social, cultural or psychological processes. It implies that social divisions are not translated into politics as a matter of course, but that they are decisively shaped by their political articulation.

This threefold notion of what constitutes a ‘cleavage’ makes the analysis of ‘cleavage politics’ tremendously difficult. If structure, culture and politics jointly determine the political outcome of social divisions, it will not suffice to look at any one of these aspects independently of the other two. A pragmatic way out for the empirical analysis may consist in a stepwise procedure, which, starting from the structural base, successively adds more complexity by introducing one after the other cultural and political elements. In my presentation, I shall follow such a procedure. First, I shall take a look at the structural base of contemporary politics and suggest that the observed ‘decline of cleavage politics’ may to some extent be attributable to the fact that the structural transformations of the traditional social divisions, and in particular the transformation of the class structure, have not been adequately taken into account by the conceptualizations used in the empirical analyses. As is argued by Müller (1997), it could well be that the declining impact of class turns out to be a result of the fact that the class structure has changed in

ways which have not been captured by the instruments traditionally used to measure its impact.

In my own work, I have suggested that the contemporary transformations of the class structure are giving rise to the emergence of two new social divisions which may constitute the structural bases for two new cleavages. I shall discuss one of them in the first part of this lecture. In a second part, I shall introduce the cultural aspect by trying to relate this hypothetical new social division to the new 'value cleavage'. Finally, I shall make an attempt to put both aspects – new class divisions and new values – into their political context. The context in question will be Switzerland: a small and little known political system, but one which has the advantage of providing us with a quasi-experimental setting for the study of today's topic. More specifically, I shall try to illustrate my argument at several points by data on the share of the vote for the left drawn from the Swiss national election studies 1995.

### **A new social division within the new middle class?**

The class structure in Western European societies has dramatically changed since World War II. The core groups of the major parties on the two sides of the traditional class divide – the working class and the old middle class – have become increasingly smaller. In their place, the development of the welfare state and the expansion of the service sector have given rise to the growth of the new middle class, which now constitutes by far the largest population segment in Western European countries. Locating this new middle class in class terms has turned out to be a difficult undertaking. Along neo-Weberian lines, Goldthorpe (1980, 1995) has defined the new middle class as a *service class*. He contrasts the service relationship with the labor contract typical of the routine non-manual or the working class. Service relationships tend to evolve 'where it is required of employees that they exercise delegated authority or specialized knowledge and expertise in the interest of their employing organization' (Erikson and Goldthorpe 1992: 42). Very similarly, the neo-Marxist approach of Wright (1985) defines the new middle class by its effective control over organizational assets or over skills and credentials.<sup>2</sup>

This new middle class or service class is, of course, quite a heterogeneous entity, as is already indicated by the combination of criteria which are used to define it – the exercise of delegated authority or control over organizational assets, on the one hand, and expertise, skills or credentials, on the other hand. The exercise of delegated authority is typical of *managers*, i.e., employees in administrative hierarchies who run an organization, make administrative decisions, command and survey the work of others. The exercise of specialized knowledge and expertise, by contrast, is typical of *professional services*. As

Müller (1997) points out, for the managers and other administrators, the work experience is largely determined by the sharing of power within the command structure of the employing organization. In general, it should imply an undividedly high level of *loyalty to the organization*. The professionals, on the contrary, will have at least one further point of reference: *their professional community*. It is common that professionals legitimate their claims for high levels of autonomy with reference to professional norms and the exercise of professional competence. Among them, an organizational orientation is, therefore, less likely. Compared to professionals with administrative or technical skills, identification with the organization is least likely among a specific group within the professional services – the *social and cultural specialists*. In addition to their professional orientation, the exchange with clients and the norms of care for them puts members of this group in a position in which they should be responsive to social rather than organizational concerns.

As a result, I expect a strong *antagonism about the control of work* between the two opposite segments within the new middle class – managers and sociocultural professionals, with administrative and technical experts – the ‘technocrats’ – taking an intermediary position (Kriesi 1989, 1993, 1998). I expect the value orientations of *the sociocultural professionals* to place a heavy emphasis on the defense of individual autonomy, and, by identification with their clients, on an egalitarian distribution of resources. In terms of Kitschelt’s (1994: 12; 1995: 15ff.) two-dimensional conceptualization of the political value space, I expect them to be ‘*left-libertarians*’, i.e., to prefer statist interventions over the market’s invisible hand, and to subscribe to a libertarian ideal of community, i.e., a community associated with the voluntary and equal participation of all citizens. In more conventional terms, the sociocultural professionals are, thus, supposed to have both a postmaterialist or socially liberal outlook and to support a classic social-democratic position with respect to economic policy and the welfare state. As far as their political preferences are concerned, they should favor the new social movements and the parties on the left. The *managers*, by contrast, are supposed to hold value orientations closer to those of the old middle class and the bourgeoisie, i.e., to prefer market solutions and free exchange and to have an idea of community which is more authoritarian, paternalistic and organization-centered. In Kitschelt’s terms, I expect them to be more ‘*right-authoritarian*’. Accordingly, their political preferences should resemble those of the old middle class, i.e., rather go to parties on the right, and they should not constitute a mobilization potential for new social movements. Middle class radicalism (Parkin 1968), in other words, is not expected to be a phenomenon of the entire middle class, but of one of its particular segments only.

Empirical analyses in various countries substantiate these claims. With respect to the *mobilization by new social movements*, two decades of research on activists in the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and environmental movements in Britain, for example, reveal a remarkably consistent pattern: as is summarized by Rootes (1995: 225f.), participants in these movements are disproportionately, indeed overwhelmingly, drawn from amongst the highly educated members of the new middle class, with a particular concentration among those employed in social and cultural services. For the USA, Jenkins and Wallace (1996) have shown that sociocultural specialists and public sector professionals have a greater protest potential for the students' and the women's movements and are also particularly supportive of them. My own analysis of the Dutch case indicates that the highly educated in general, and the professionals in sociocultural services in particular, are especially likely to mobilize in new social movements (Kriesi 1989; 1993: 195ff.). I might add that both the effects of education and of occupation turned out to be stronger in the cohorts which had come of age during or after the period of rapid depillarization.

*Election studies* in different countries also report findings which are entirely consistent with the idea that the sociocultural service professionals constitute a politically specific group: The best predictor of preference for the Labour Party over the Conservatives in the 1987 British Election Survey amongst the salariat is employment in the sociocultural service professions (see Heath et al. 1991: Table 6.10). For the USA, recent results (Brooks and Manza 1997) confirm that the American new middle class is by no means a homogenous political constituency. Indeed, the managers remain a solidly conservative segment of the electorate, while the professionals increasingly support the Democratic party, because of their socially liberal values. Müller's (1997) reanalysis of ten German surveys covering the period 1974–1994 is also consistent with the idea of a split within the new middle class. While the German management fraction has voting preferences most similar to those of the petite bourgeoisie, the voting choices of the technocrats and the sociocultural professionals increasingly favor the SPD. In the post World War II cohorts, the social service fraction is even closer to the SPD than the traditional working class. My own data from the Netherlands in 1987, and from the 1995 Swiss national election studies document the same patterns. In both countries, the sociocultural professionals are the group which by now votes most consistently for the left, while the managers more closely follow the voting pattern of the petty bourgeoisie, with the technocrats taking an intermediary position. Figure 1 compares the Swiss, Dutch and German data.<sup>3</sup>

Pursuing the Swiss case a little further, this pattern remains largely intact, if we control for employment sector (private or public), or for a more encom-

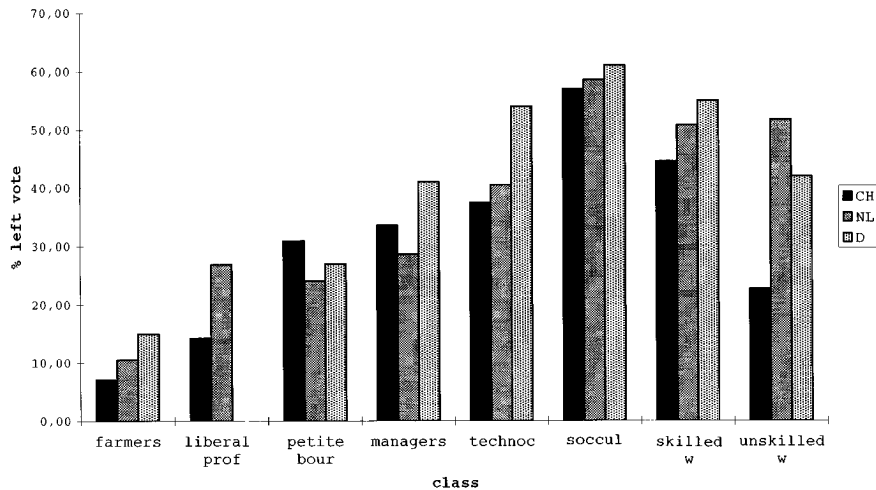


Figure 1. Percent left vote by class position (Switzerland, Netherlands, Germany).

passing list of social-demographic characteristics<sup>4</sup> a logistic regression which estimates the probability of voting for the left rather than for the three major bourgeois parties. Figure 2 presents the unstandardized regression coefficients for the dummy indicators of the different class positions – with farmers forming the base category. Controlling for the employment sector is particularly important in the present context, since it could be argued that the political preferences of sociocultural professionals are determined by the fact that they are primarily employed by the different branches of the welfare state. Although public employment significantly contributes to left-voting in Switzerland, it does not much attenuate the impact of class. Nor does the whole set of social-demographic variables. By contrast, controlling for value orientations in addition to social-demographic characteristics modifies the impact of class substantially (Figure 2). Thus, the vote of the sociocultural professional is no longer exceptional, if we control for their value orientations. From the point of view of an analysis in terms of cleavages, this attenuation of the direct effects of class is not an embarrassment, however, since the existence of a cleavage implies both, structural and cultural distinctiveness: accordingly, the sociocultural professionals are distinct for their structural location *and* for their value-orientations.

Based on data such as these, I would like to suggest that the split within the new middle class constitutes a possible structural foundation for the ‘value cleavage’ which this cleavage was lacking so far: on the one hand, there appears to be a particular segment within the new middle class – the social and cultural service professionals, who, on the basis of their daily experiences

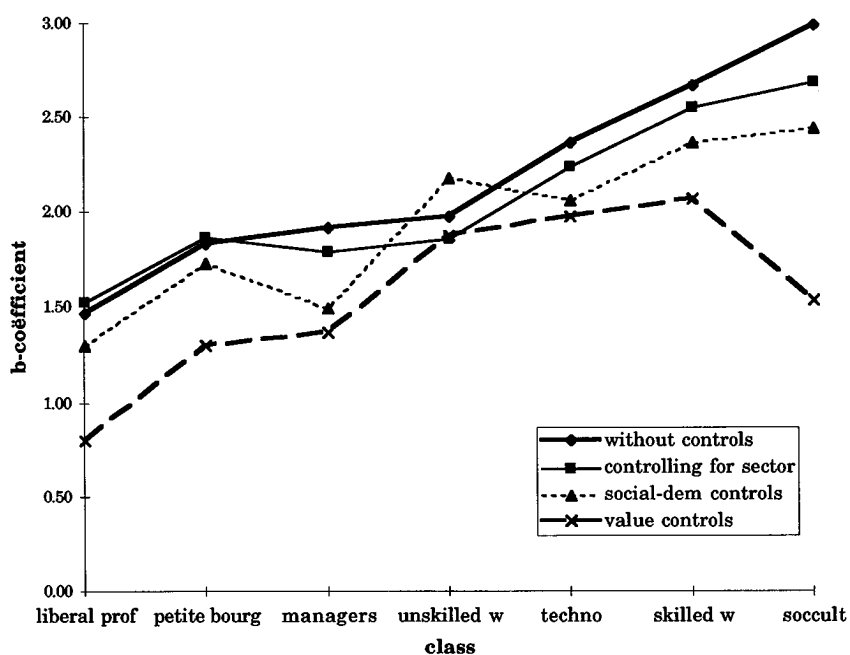


Figure 2. Class effect on left voting with and without controls.

at work, develop 'left-libertarian' values and come to constitute a potential for collective actors on the left, and who, as a result of their increasing involvement in collective actions organized by such actors, progressively reinforce their structural and cultural distinctiveness. On the other hand, there appears to exist another segment within the new middle class – the managers, who, on the basis of their daily work experiences come to be mobilized by the political adversaries of the sociocultural professionals and, by way of their identification with this opposite camp also reinforce their social and cultural distinctiveness.

### Structure and values

This argument meets with several counter-arguments which are not easily dispelled. In the second part of my presentation, I would like to discuss two objections dealing with the relationship between structural factors and value orientations. First, it has been argued that the different segments of the new middle class *did not develop their values and political preferences on the job*, but rather made their career choices on the basis of precisely those value orientations which I have just attributed to their work experiences.



Thus, Inglehart (1990: 67) makes the point that postmaterialist orientations are antecedent to, not consequent upon, occupation. Similarly, Rootes (1995: 229f.) suggests that these values have been inculcated in family socialization and in higher education, which remains, in his words, 'a relatively critical and enlightening process'. This is an argument against a class interpretation, only if the families that have been doing the socialization of the future members of a particular segment of the new middle class did not themselves belong to that segment.

Now, given the enormous expansion of the new middle class positions in the occupational structure during the post war period, it is quite apparent that most of the occupants of these new positions come from families which have not been part of this class themselves. In other words, it is very likely that the present day occupants of positions in particular segments of the new middle class chose these positions on the basis of value orientations which they had developed in other structural circumstances. This does not preclude, however, that once in a given position, the individuals may find out that these positions make it more difficult for them to put these values into action than they had expected. The creation and defense of opportunities to live up to their values at work may become a major interest motivating their participation in collective action as well as determining their electoral choices.

Moreover, given that the present day occupants of these positions are the first ones to occupy them, we cannot say much yet about the *degree of closure* of these groups. Future analyses of their social mobility patterns will tell us whether these segments attain a significant amount of closure or not. As the expansion of the new middle class comes to an end and the social structure starts to reproduce itself again in a more equilibrated way, the antagonism which I have identified may solidify and become a permanent structural feature of modern society. Following an idea elaborated by Eder (1995),<sup>5</sup> one may suggest that the mobilization by the new social movements *was the result of an 'exceptional' generation* – the generation that lived through the expansion of the new middle class. To the extent that the social structure settles into its new shape, the long-term effect of this mobilization could be the 'freezing' of a new kind of political cleavage within the new middle class.

The second objection against my argument about the existence of such a new cleavage maintains that even if the split in the new middle class were to provide some structural foundation for the 'value cleavage', it *does not suffice* to account for the political impact of value orientations today. According to this counter-argument, the value conflicts cannot be reduced to an opposition between the two segments of the new middle class, even if the opposition between these two segments constitutes one aspect of the value conflicts in contemporary society. Thus, as Knutsen and Scarbrough (1995) have shown

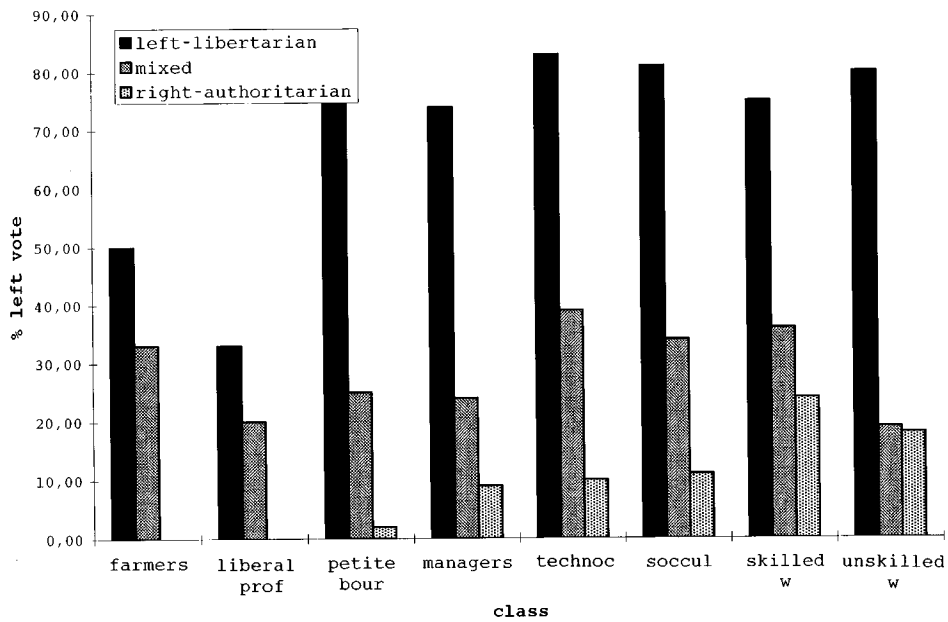


Figure 3. Percent left vote by class position and values.

for a series of Western European countries, the impact of values on voting remains very powerful, even if we control for religion and class. In the Swiss case at least, their result still holds, when class positions are operationalized more adequately, as I have tried to do for the Swiss national election studies 1995. Thus, left voting in Switzerland can be far better explained by values than by a set of social-demographic variables characterizing an individual's structural position.<sup>6</sup> As is shown by Figure 3, the 'left-libertarians' in all class segments – except for farmers and liberal professionals – overwhelmingly vote for the left, while 'right-authoritarians' overwhelmingly do not do so – except for the working class, where even 'right-authoritarians' have a certain, albeit limited penchant for the left. In other words, while the various class segments differ with respect to the composition of their members' values, and therefore with respect to their political preferences and behavior, individuals who happen to have similar values for whatever reason also tend to have similar political preferences, even if they are in structurally different class positions.

This means that *class cannot be the only structural basis for the 'value cleavage'*. Indeed, Ronald Inglehart (1977, 1985, 1990) has suggested another one: *generational experience*.<sup>7</sup> He has shown that successive generations turn out to be ever more post-materialist and that the generational differences

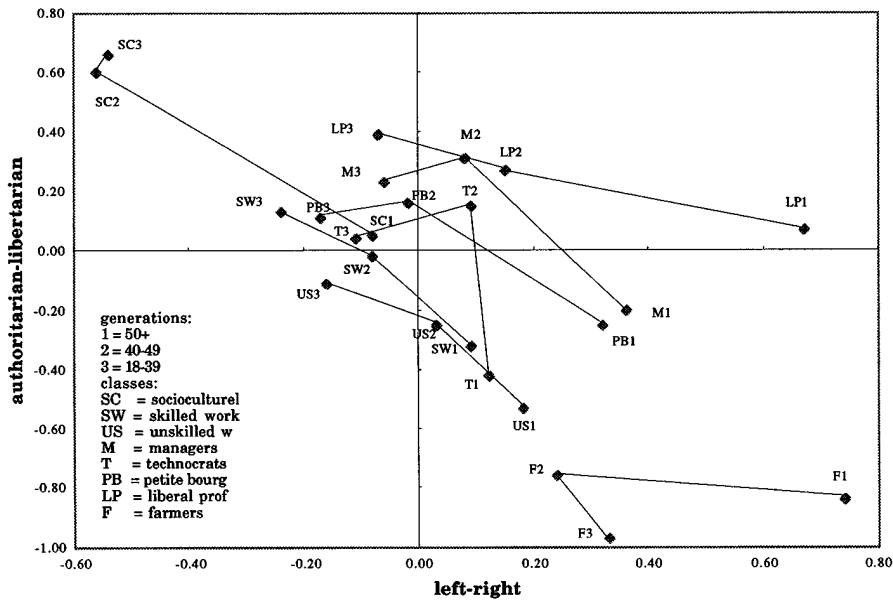


Figure 4. Values by class position and age cohort.

in value orientations are stable over time. We also find this to be true in the Swiss case, where we note a general tendency for the younger generations in each class segment to be more 'left-libertarian' (see Figure 4).<sup>8</sup> In this figure, I have distinguished between three generations within each class segment: the pre-war generation whose members are by now 50 or older, the immediate post war generation – the generation of '68 – whose members are now between forty and fifty, and the younger generations who are still younger than forty. As the figure shows, with the exception of farmers, the younger generations of all class segments have moved towards the 'left-libertarian' upper left hand corner of the graph. Note, however, that the younger socio-cultural professionals have moved much further in this direction than any other class segment. This implies that the cultural distinctiveness of the socio-cultural professionals is preserved, even if the whole population is on its way to become more 'left-libertarian'.

Following Inglehart, we may explain this generational shift in the value orientations by the *general increase in the level of affluence* in the Western democracies. Thus, van Deth (1995) argues that economic growth along with the expansion of welfare set the stage for the profound change of value orientations in Western Europe in the post-war period. Related macrostructural factors contributing to this shift include the general rise in the level of education, the expansion of transport and mass communication, as well

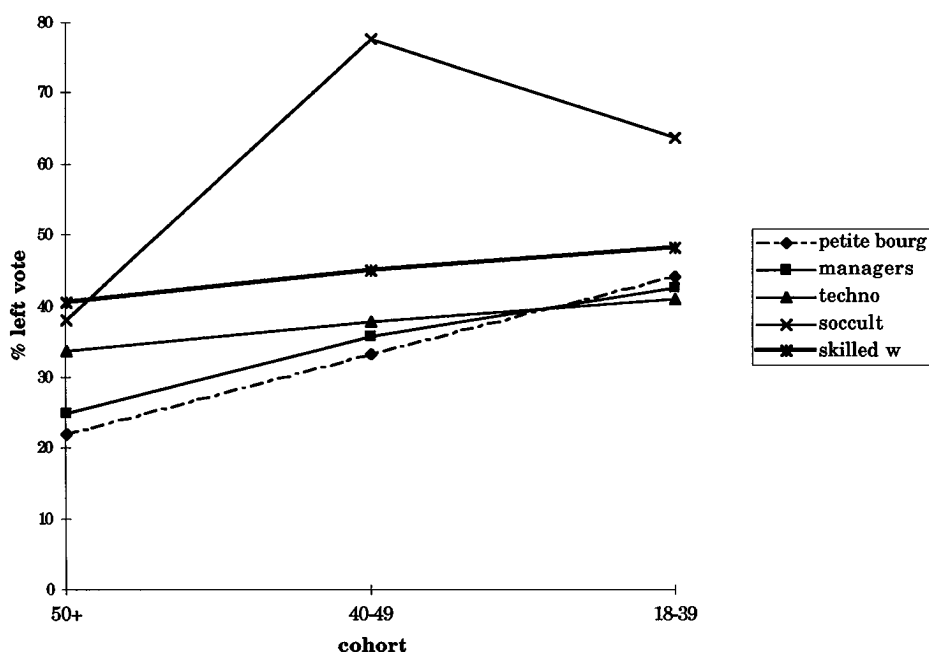


Figure 5. Percent left vote by class position and cohort.

as the expansion of the welfare state. Demographic factors may also have played a role: the unusually large age cohorts (Easterlin 1980, Wallimann and Zito 1984: 71) and the absence of the father (Mitscherlich 1963) may have rendered the intergenerational transmission of values more difficult in the post-war period.

In Switzerland, this generational shift in value orientations is associated with a shift towards the left of all the segments of the new middle class and of the *petite bourgeoisie*, the major segment of the old middle class (Figure 5). While this shift has led to a convergence between the overall voting patterns of the major segments of the middle class and the voting patterns of the skilled working class,<sup>9</sup> the sociocultural professionals, in line with the more pronounced shift in their value-orientations, have moved even closer to the left than the skilled working class. It is also interesting to note, that the youngest generation of these professionals is somewhat less enthusiastic about the left than their elders from the protest generation. The impact of the transitional period of the formation of the new middle class becomes clearly visible here. But there is also a more lasting structural effect: the difference between the voting patterns of managers and sociocultural professionals is greater in the youngest generation than in the oldest one.

*Class* and *generation* are two structural elements associated with the tremendous change in value orientations that has occurred over the post-war period. In Switzerland, *religion* is another one. In this country, believing catholics in particular are still rather resistant to the transformation of their values and its political implications. The *rural-urban cleavage* also has some impact on the value change and its political consequences, given that the process develops more slowly in the Swiss countryside. But even taken together, these four structural aspects are by no means sufficient to account for the impact of values. Moreover, the *political socialization* in one's family of origin – operationalized by one's father's political choice,<sup>10</sup> or at school – indicated by one's educational level, are not able to account for the profound consequences of value orientations on left voting either. Rather than conclude that structure and values have by now come to be largely disconnected, I would tentatively suggest that we have not yet been able to identify the structural correlates of the 'value cleavage' in a sufficient way. The conceptualization of the transformation of contemporary Western European societies needs to be further pursued.

### **Political context**

Moreover, and this brings me to the third and last part of my lecture, we should not lose sight of the fact that politics plays a major role in the formation of preferences, too. It is time to introduce this third element of the notion of 'cleavages'. Taking the three-fold conceptualization of cleavages seriously, preferences in general, and values in particular, are not just the reflection of underlying structural patterns, but they are shaped by collective political actors, who selectively reinforce some preferences and ignore others in the process of the translation of social divisions into politics. This process of political preference formation, in turn, is shaped by the legacy of past political struggles, which is sedimented in the multiple layers of traditional cleavages and in the configuration of political actors associated with them. I would like to suggest that the formation of new political preferences and, by implication, of new cleavages depends on the strength of traditional cleavages: the more salient and the less pacified traditional cleavages are, the less new cleavages will come to the fore in politics. This hypothesis takes up the idea of Franklin et al. (1992), which links the decline of traditional cleavages to the pacification of traditional conflicts. But it goes one step further than their hypothesis by pointing out the possibility for the 'vacuum' left by the resolution of traditional conflicts to be filled by new types of conflicts.

In his comparison of the cleavage structures of several pluralist countries – Belgium, Canada, South Africa and Switzerland – Lijphart (1979) had found

that the most important cleavages in Switzerland were religion, language and class, in that order. Trechsel (1995) has shown that since the seventies, when Lijphart had done his analysis, the relevance of religion and class has been declining in Switzerland, too, while the linguistic cleavage has rather gained in prominence.<sup>11</sup> In their treatment of the Swiss cleavage structure, both authors, however, did not sufficiently take into account that the political effects of religion and language in Switzerland to a large extent reflect differences between the cantonal political systems. In this country, the political articulation of social divisions varies from one canton to the other, because each canton constitutes a separate political system with a party system of its own.<sup>12</sup> This variation provides us with the unique opportunity to assess the role of politics in the articulation of social divisions in general, and of the class division in particular. For the federal elections 1995, this opportunity has for the first time been seized and interviews have been carried out with representative samples of 600 to 900 individuals in ten of the 26 Swiss cantons.

To keep complexity within manageable proportions, for the purposes of the present argument I only distinguish between three types of cantonal political systems. The first type concerns the political systems of the predominantly *Catholic* cantons. Here, the classic religious conflict between faithful Catholics and the secularized parts of society is still strong and politically articulated by the opposition between the dominant Christen-Democrats and their traditional adversaries – the Liberals. By contrast, the class conflict in these cantons has always been weak, given their limited degree of industrialization and given the integrative capacity of the interclassist strategies of the dominant Christen-Democrats. In addition, the rural-urban cleavage was traditionally superimposed on the religious one, with the countryside remaining solidly Catholic, while the urban areas secularized and became the fiefs of the Liberals and, later on, of the left.

As far as the originally Protestant and now *religiously mixed* cantons are concerned,<sup>13</sup> we need to distinguish between the two language regions: While both the religious and the traditional class cleavages have been largely pacified and are no longer salient in the religiously mixed *German-speaking* cantons, the traditional class cleavage is still relatively salient in the religiously mixed cantons of the *French-speaking* part of the country. In these cantons, it has been kept alive by a split left – the Communists are still a non-negligible political force here – and by the continued competition between the two major components of 19th century liberalism, the conservative Liberals and the more progressive Radicals. The more traditional make up of the party systems in this part of the country can to some extent be accounted for by institutional factors – the entry of new parties is more difficult here because of

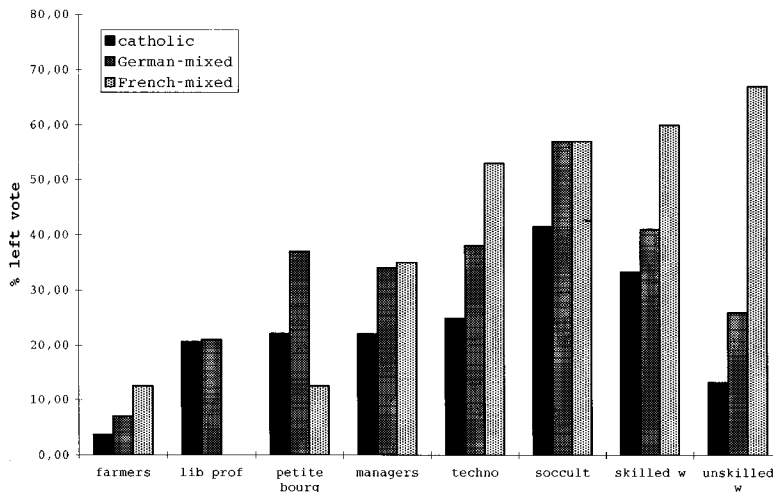


Figure 6. Percent left vote in different political contexts within Switzerland.

high electoral thresholds and restrictive direct-democratic institutions (Kriesi and Wisler 1996); to some extent it may reflect the cultural and political influences of neighboring France. In part, finally, it reflects different strategic choices by the cantonal parties belonging to the same party families.<sup>14</sup>

As a result of these differences, the share of the left vote for one and the same class segment varies considerably from one cantonal context to the other, as can be seen from Figure 6. As a matter of fact, the intercantal differences within Switzerland turn out to be much more substantial than the corresponding differences between Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland which I have presented above (Figure 1).<sup>15</sup> Among the segments of the working class and the new middle class, the left vote is generally weakest in the Catholic cantons and strongest in the religiously mixed French-speaking cantons, with mixed German-speaking cantons taking an intermediary position. In the old middle class, the pattern is reversed. In other words, the continued salience of the traditional class conflict in the religiously mixed French-speaking cantons makes itself felt in *the distinct voting patterns of the traditional class antagonists*. It becomes most visible, if we compare the left vote of the largest segment in the old middle class – the petite bourgeoisie – with that of the skilled working class (Figure 7). While these two segments still have remarkably different voting patterns in the religiously mixed French-speaking region, the same is not true in the other two types of cantonal systems, although for different reasons.

In *Catholic* cantons, in line with my hypothesis, the salience of the traditional religious conflict restricts the share of left voting in all segments of the

new middle class (Figure 6). This effect turns out to be most pronounced in the most traditional catholic cantons – Valais and Ticino. In the *religiously mixed cantons of German-speaking Switzerland*, by contrast, the pacification of both traditional cleavages implies that the electorate has become generally available for the formation of new cleavages. The impact of this availability appears to be greatest for the unskilled workers. A more detailed analysis of the electorate in the Canton of Zurich – the most important canton in this part of the country – shows that more than half of the unskilled workers (58%) in this canton have voted for *the radical right*.<sup>16</sup> I cannot go into the reasons for this drift towards the radical right among the unskilled workers in particular and of other parts of the electorate in German-speaking Switzerland in general, a drift which is explicitly promoted and articulated by the Swiss People's Party – one of the country's four major parties.<sup>17</sup> Suffice it to say that this drift points to *the emergence of yet another new cleavage* – the cleavage opposing the new middle class winners of the transformation of Western European societies to the group of losers of the very same process (see Kriesi 1998). These *losers* are first and foremost to be found among the unqualified members of the working class, who are about to constitute the core of a new underclass, which so far did not exist in Switzerland, or, to the extent that it did, was entirely composed of foreign immigrants.

In one respect, however, my hypothesis about a zero-sum relationship between the strength of traditional cleavages and the possibility of the emergence of a new cleavage is not confirmed. While the voting patterns of the managers and sociocultural professionals are quite distinct from each other in all cantonal contexts (Figure 7), their similarity in the two religiously mixed types of cantons (Figure 6) runs counter to my hypothesis: the continued salience of the traditional class conflict in religiously mixed French-speaking Switzerland does apparently not prevent the emergence of the cleavage between managers and professionals. Finally, we may observe that in the context of a undeveloped (catholic cantons) and/or pacified (mixed German-speaking cantons) traditional class conflict, the sociocultural professionals are by now closer to the left than the skilled and, above all, than the unskilled working class (Figure 7).

A more sophisticated analysis using logistic regressions confirms the impact of the traditional politicization in terms of religion, region and class: in the mixed French-speaking cantons, class continues to have a strong impact on left voting, while its impact is much weaker in the mixed German-speaking cantons, and almost entirely absent in all three Catholic regions, with or without controls for other social-demographic characteristics or value orientations. By contrast, the religious and the rural-urban cleavages continue to be particularly important in the Catholic cantons. The church-going Catholics



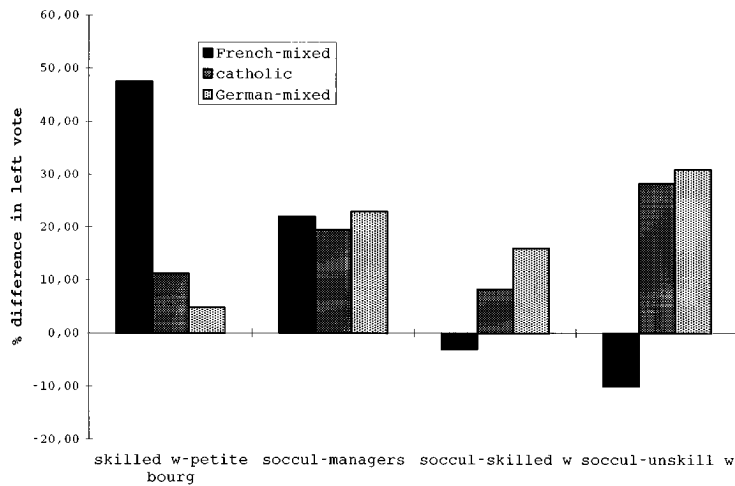


Figure 7. Differences in left voting for selected class positions, by cantonal context.

and the people living in the country-side are still rather resistant to the appeals by the left in these political contexts.

With respect to the origins of the value orientations, this analysis remains, however, rather inconclusive. Controlling for social-demographic characteristics in the logistic regression analysis, the impact of the basic value-orientations on left voting turns out to be very strong and more or less identical in all three types of cantons. This means that the political heritage of the different contexts as conceptualized here cannot account for the impact of value orientations on left voting either. In other words, the search for relevant political context characteristics needs to be further pursued, too.

## Conclusion

Let me come to the conclusion. I hope my discussion of the three aspects of cleavage politics has shown that the conceptualization of political action – whether conventionally electoral or unconventionally movement-oriented – in terms of cleavages may still be very fruitful. The decline of traditional cleavages does not necessarily signify the end of structuration of politics by social divisions. The crux is to identify theoretically and empirically the relevant social divisions in a world in flux, and to study their political formation. I have pointed out that there is ample evidence for the existence of a social division between two segments of the new middle class which not only have significantly different value orientations, but also make significantly different

political choices, independently of the political context – in Switzerland or elsewhere – in which they happen to live.

The emergence of a cleavage within the new middle class provides some structural basis for the current impact of values on political choices. But I have been at pains to point out that neither class, nor any other structural base which I know of is sufficient to account for the impact of values on left voting in Western Europe in general and in Switzerland in particular. Class, generations, religion, and region clearly play an important role in this context, but the search for structural and political mechanisms associated with the enormous impact of value orientations on the individual mobilization in new social movements and on individual electoral choices certainly should continue. One line to pursue may be the possible emergence of a cleavage between the new middle class winners and the underclass of losers in the current rat race to modernity.

Another line to be followed concerns the political context. As the comparative analyses of Knutsen and Scarbrough (1995) and of the third part of my presentation showed, the heritage of past political conflicts clearly has an important impact on the present day electoral behavior. The Swiss example indicates that the continued salience of traditional political cleavages does not necessarily prevent the emergence of new, related ones, although it also suggests that the decline of traditional structures opens the way for a more far-reaching translation of new types of social divisions into political cleavages. But the analysis here has not gone far enough. It has not allowed to account for the impact of value orientations by political factors. If institutions create individuals, as March and Olson (1995: 31) and other neo-institutionalists maintain, it may just be that value orientations are decisively shaped by some institutional aspects of political systems by ways which we have not been sufficiently aware of yet. More detailed comparative analyses using innovative conceptualizations of the profound structural transformations of contemporary Western democracies are needed, in order to give us a better understanding of this crucial aspect of cleavage politics.

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## Notes

1. See Bartolini and Mair (1990), Gallagher et al. (1992: 90ff.), Kitschelt (1994: 131) and Knutsen and Scarbrough (1995).
2. The level of control over such assets required for a position in the new middle class is a matter of debate. Following Wright, I define the amount of skills required in such a way that the new middle class includes not only professionals, but also semi-professionals – such as nurses or social assistants – and highly qualified craft workers. Similarly the level of organizational assets required is defined to include in the new middle class not only managers, but also middle level cadres and supervisors of all sorts (see Kriesi 1993: 28).
3. The Swiss data are drawn from the national election study 1995; the Dutch data are from a survey I have conducted in 1987 (see Kriesi 1993: 98); the German data refer to the year 1994 and have been graciously made available by Walter Müller.
4. This list includes sex, age, education, religion, language, region (urban-rural), and cantonal context.
5. I should point out that Eder does not share the idea of a split in the new middle class, but always considers it as unity.
6. Social structure alone explains no more than 12% of the variance of left voting (as opposed to voting for the three major bourgeois parties). Adding two summary indicators for the individual value orientations, one for each of Kitschelt's two dimensions, increases the share of the variance explained to 35 percent.
7. Pakulski (1995) also suggested the relevance of generational differences for the explanation of the rise of the new social movements. He gives priority to generational explanations over explanations based on class or status.
8. The data from the Swiss case are cross-sectional, which means that an interpretation in terms of life-cycles cannot be ruled out. However, these results are also in line with Inglehart's results based on longitudinal data, which tentatively suggests that a generational interpretation should not be too far off the mark.
9. The unskilled are another matter. In fact, they are quite distant from the left in Switzerland (see Figure 1), which has to do with their rather traditional value orientations.
10. More precisely, I added a dummy variable to the set of predictors of left voting referred to in note 4. This dummy takes the value of 1, if the father has voted for the left, and is 0 otherwise (including the many respondents who did not know anything about their father's partisan preferences).
11. On this point see Lehbruch (1993) and Kriesi et al. (1996).
12. Given the substantial variation between the cantonal party systems, and given that the cantons also constitute the constituencies in federal elections, we are hard pressed to speak of federal at all in the Swiss case. Instead it is more appropriate to speak of a series of parallel cantonal elections held at (more or less) the same date (see Kerr 1987: 123).
13. In the course of Swiss industrialization, large parts of the population from the originally Catholic cantons emigrated to the urban centers which were mostly located in the originally protestant regions of the Swiss midlands. As a result, the originally Protestant cantons are all religiously mixed today.
14. This aspect is especially stressed by Kitschelt (1994). An example is provided by the Swiss people's party, which has made a decisive turn to the right in the Canton of Zurich, while it still follows a center-right strategy in the Canton of Vaud, its only traditional fief in a religiously mixed French-speaking canton.
15. Differences between the Länder in Germany may, of course, also turn out to be substantial. But I have no information on such intra-German variation.
16. This percentage amounts to about twice as much as the corresponding share for the electorate as a whole (32%).
17. I should add that in the Canton of Zurich, I have counted the People's Party to the radical right. Traditionally, this party constituted the Swiss equivalent to the Scandinavian

farmers' parties. More recently, however, its Zurich branch has made a decisive shift to the right and joined some minor parties of the radical right in the mobilization of discontent from all quarters. In other cantons, especially in its traditional stronghold of Berne, this party has kept its more traditional mold (see note 12).

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