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# Class Voting in the New Political Culture

## *Economic, Cultural and Environmental Voting in 20 Western Countries*

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**abstract:** The purpose of this article is to investigate how the political cultures of 20 western countries have changed in the postwar period and how these changes are related to differences in class voting in these countries. To answer these questions, first political party manifestos are analysed in order to show that class issues have neither decreased nor increased in importance and that new – cultural and environmental – issues have risen in importance. Second, using data provided by the World Values Surveys (1990–2000), it is demonstrated that the observed changes in political cultures have led to lower levels of class voting. Third, it is demonstrated that the importance of old and new issues conditions individual voting motives. It is concluded that the rise of new issues undermines traditional class–party alignments. At the end of the article the implications of these findings for the realignment–dealignment debate are discussed.

**keywords:** death of class ♦ environmental concern ♦ old–new politics ♦ realignment–dealignment ♦ social and political change

### Introduction

The question whether the concept of ‘social class’ still has any relevance for sociology is central to the ‘death of class debate’. An important aspect in this debate is the alleged decline in class voting. According to some, the pattern of a left-voting working class and a right-voting middle class is disappearing. Although the discussion about the decline in class voting had been going on for some time, Clark and Lipset’s (1991) article ‘Are Social Classes Dying?’ revived the discussion and led to an extensive body of literature (see for an overview, Clark, 2001b).

Gradually, consensus has been reached on the question whether or not class voting has been declining in western countries in the postwar period.

Nieuwbeerta's publications (Nieuwbeerta, 1995, 1996, 2001) concerning class voting have been particularly important contributions to reaching this consensus (but see also Dalton, 1988; Dogan, 1995; Clark and Lipset, 1991; Franklin, 1985; Rose and McAllister, 1986). In both conventional and statistically advanced ways, Nieuwbeerta has demonstrated that in a substantial number of western countries class voting has indeed been declining. More recently, other sociologists have confirmed that in some particular countries the importance of class for explaining voting behaviour has declined. Evans et al. (1999: 93–4) concluded, for example, that there was both 'trendless fluctuation' and a decline in class voting in Great Britain during the period 1964–97. Weakliem and Heath found a decline in class voting both in Great Britain and in the US (Weakliem and Heath, 1999a, 1999b). These authors, who have been propagating 'trendless fluctuation' for some time, gradually seem to accept the fact that class voting is indeed in decline.

Of course, the acceptance of this fact raises the question of how this decline in class voting can be explained. Nieuwbeerta (1995; see also Nieuwbeerta and Ultee, 1999) tried to explain differences in class voting over time and between countries mainly with hypotheses derived from class analysis. For example, he studied the impact of the differences in the standard of living, the level of intergenerational class mobility, the proportion of manual workers, etc. But Nieuwbeerta failed to find confirmation for his class-hypotheses.

In 2001, he proposed to find politico-cultural explanations at the societal level for variations in class voting (Nieuwbeerta, 2001: 133). The idea that at a societal level the political culture is fundamentally changing and is causing the decline in class voting can also be found in the work of other authors (see, for example, Inglehart and Rabier, 1986; Clark, 1998, 2001a). In this article, I therefore first investigate whether or not the politics of western countries in the postwar period has indeed moved away from the old issues of class and whether or not so-called new issues have become more prominent in these countries. Second, I investigate whether differences in individual class voting can be explained by the salience of old and new issues. Third, I investigate whether ties between new values and voting behaviour are stronger in contexts where new issues are salient.

### **Is There a 'New Political Culture'?**

In most western industrialized or post-industrialized countries, the political culture has traditionally been dominated by class conflict. There are, however, some indications that since the 1960s and 1970s the political culture has centred less on class conflict and can increasingly be characterized as a 'postmodern' (Inglehart, 1997), 'postindustrial' (Rempel and

Clark, 1997) or simply 'new' (Clark, 1998, 2001a) because 'new' societal cleavages have become central. Important elements of this new political culture are the rise of new political parties, a change with respect to content of existing political parties, and a shift of issues or problems that are defined as important in the political domain. Thus, there is a shift from the salience of 'old' political issues, based on class-conflict, to the salience of 'new' political issues.

The questions of which issues are exactly new, and subsequently, what is the new political culture, are not easily answered, because of the many conceptualizations new politics entails (cf. Pakulski, 2001). In general, there seems to be a consensus that the new issues are characterized as non-economic, as opposed to the old issues, which can be characterized as economic or class issues (see, for example, Heath et al., 1990; Rempel and Clark, 1997; Clark, 1998, 2001a). However, such a broad definition of a concept leads to an acceptance of all sorts of issues as exponents of the new non-class politics, with the risk of not being able to say which elements are particularly related to a decline in class voting in retrospect. So, what issues are often mentioned as elements of new politics in the literature? I think there are roughly two 'kinds' of issues that may be considered as elements of new politics: environmental and cultural issues.

A first element that is generally accepted as an element of the new politics is the growing salience of environmental issues in political cultures (Heath et al., 1990; Inglehart, 1990; Bean and Kelley, 1995; Clark, 2001a). These environmental issues essentially incorporate environmental concerns, policies to protect the environment and problems of sustainable development. Along with the second type, i.e. cultural issues, environmental issues are often mentioned under the catch-all expression 'quality-of-life politics' (see, for example, Inglehart and Rabier, 1986; Heath et al., 1990; Inglehart, 1990). The idea underlying it is that people who do not experience any material scarcity will value quality-of-life enhancing goals such as environmental improvement and expanding individual liberty. The problem with this collapse of these two types of issues, however, is that with respect to content these two issues do not seem to be tapping the same dimension.<sup>1</sup>

There are roughly two conceptions of the second type of new cultural issues. The first and dominant conception of new political issues suggests that these issues are essentially left-libertarian issues, reducing new politics to left-wing politics (see, for example, McAllister and Studlar, 1995; Clark, 1998, 2001a). A clear example of this conception of new politics as left-wing politics can be found in the work of Inglehart (1997), which is dedicated to studying postmaterialism (i.e. the degree to which people prefer 'new' goals that go beyond material goals). The index for postmaterialism only generates left-wing postmaterialists and is unable

to generate any right-wing postmaterialists. So in this view, people who define new issues as important are by definition ideologically left-wing.

The second conception of cultural politics, on the other hand, holds that new cultural politics can be leftist but does not exclude the possibility of a new rightist flank. Flanagan has argued that in the measurement of post-materialism two indicators for different (unrelated) dimensions are collapsed (Flanagan, 1979, 1982, 1987). The first value dimension incorporated in the measurement of postmaterialism is the authoritarianism/libertarianism dimension. Flanagan argues that postmaterialism is essentially the same as libertarianism because (measurements of) both value types emphasize the importance of individual liberty. In the (most popular) four-item measure for postmaterialism, the two postmaterialist goals 'protecting freedom of speech' and 'giving people more say in important political decisions' can indeed be seen as good examples of libertarian goals. The opposite of this emphasis on individual freedom in postmaterialism/libertarianism – according to Flanagan – is authoritarianism, which accentuates social order. This emphasis on social order is highlighted in one of the key indicators (in the four-item measure) for materialism, which enables respondents to choose 'maintaining order in the nation' as a goal. In short, three out of four indicators in Inglehart's index for postmaterialism are also indicators for libertarian/authoritarian values (see also Middendorp, 1991: 262). Other research empirically corroborated Flanagan's conclusion, showing strong relationships between postmaterialism and libertarianism (see Steel et al. [1992] for samples of the cities of Detroit [US] and Toronto [Canada]; Dekker et al. [1999]; Houtman [2003] for the Netherlands).

The second dimension Flanagan refers to is that which tells us what issues are of particular importance to the respondent. Flanagan distinguishes materialism, an emphasis on 'old political' class concerns, from non-materialism, an emphasis on 'new political' cultural concerns (Flanagan, 1987). In other words, this dimension defines which problems are salient, but has no direct ideological meaning. Those who define old problems (class issues) as salient can either be economically leftist or economically rightist. Those who define new problems (cultural issues) as salient can either be culturally leftist (libertarian) or culturally rightist (authoritarian) (cf. Flanagan, 1987; Flanagan and Lee, 2003). Just as the old politics of class, new cultural politics is divided into a leftist or progressive and a rightist or conservative flank.

The dominance of the idea that new cultural politics is essentially new leftist politics, of course, is not that odd, considering the time in which new politics itself first emerged, namely the 1960s and 1970s. New politics back then was left-libertarian indeed. The new politics of the time went along with the rise of several left-libertarian new social movements (see

Kriesi, 1989; Kriesi and van Praag, 1987). But the new leftist movements of the 1960s, 1970s and later on – called the silent revolution by Inglehart (1977) – induced an authoritarian or right-wing countermovement that appeared some years later. This countermovement was called the ‘silent counter-revolution’ by Ignazi (1992; see also Veugeliers, 2000), who pointed at the emergence of new political parties at the right-wing end of the new political spectrum. Other research by authors like Lyons (1996) and Klatch (1999) shows that, on a modest scale, in the 1960s and 1970s (in the US) not only new leftist tendencies were present, but also new right tendencies were observable. They speak of an increased polarization on cultural issues. This is also central in the influential book by Hunter (1991), *Culture Wars*. Research indicates that new right-wing (or authoritarian) movements can indeed be found within the electorate (see Swyngedouw, 1992, 1994; Elchardus, 1996; Flanagan and Lee, 2003).

### **Economic, Cultural and Environmental Voting in the New Political Culture**

If I do indeed find that there are significant shifts in salience in these issues, the question must be resolved whether these types of old and new issues are related to the decline in class voting. The degree of class voting is determined by the degree to which members of the working class vote for a left-wing party and the degree to which members of the middle class vote for a right-wing party. In the event that orientations towards these new issues lead the working class to vote for left-wing parties and the middle class to vote for right-wing parties, the pattern of class voting remains in shape or is even strengthened.<sup>2</sup> If, however, members of the working class are voting for a right-wing party because of new political motives, and if the members of the middle class are voting for a left-wing party because of their new political motives, then this would logically result in lower degrees of class voting. In short, it is important to investigate how orientations towards old and new issues motivate working- and middle-class members to vote for a left-wing or a right-wing party.

The working class is traditionally assumed to vote for a left-wing party for economic reasons: to defend its class interests and improve its economic position by striving for economic redistribution. The middle class is assumed to vote right for economic reasons: to defend its class interests and to maintain its economically favourable position it strives for a laissez-faire policy. Research has shown that the working class is indeed economically progressive and that the middle class is economically conservative (Lipset, 1959; Weakliem and Heath, 1994; Achterberg and Houtman, 2006). Furthermore, these economic voting motives lead the working class to vote for left-wing parties and the middle class to vote

for right-wing parties (Weakliem and Heath, 1994; Knutsen, 1995; Achterberg and Houtman, 2006). On the old issues of class, the traditional pattern of a left-wing working class and a right-wing middle class is thus sustained. But how are the orientations over the new environmental and cultural issues distributed over the classes?

As Inglehart suggests, it appears that postmaterialism (or libertarianism) is a phenomenon that is deeply rooted in the middle class. Members of the middle class are more receptive to these orientations (cf. Inglehart, 1977, 1990; de Graaf, 1995). On the other hand, it appears that authoritarianism tends to be a working-class phenomenon (Lipset, 1959), which underscores that authoritarianism is indeed the opposite of postmaterialism. Research by Achterberg and Houtman (2006), Middendorp (1991), de Graaf (1995), Carmines and Layman (1997) and Evans et al. (1996) shows that these cultural orientations have implications for political behaviour. Libertarianism leads people to vote left, while authoritarianism leads people to vote right. This means – in the words of Lazarsfeld et al. (1972; see also Houtman, 2003) – that there is a cross-pressure mechanism at work, in which the conventional influence of class on political behaviour is undermined by the influence of cultural orientations. Based on their authoritarianism, working-class members will tend to vote for a right-wing party, while member of the middle class, based on their libertarianism, will tend to vote for a left-wing party.

For the distribution of environmental orientations over the classes, and their effects on voting behaviour, the same reasoning applies. Environmental concerns are prevalent in the middle class and appear less within the working class (Cotgrove and Duff, 1980, 1981; see also Eckersley, 1989). That environmental concerns are deeply rooted in the middle class is also demonstrated by research at the city level by Clark, showing that: 'Cities with younger, more educated, and more affluent residents in professional and technical occupations have more group activities like those of Sierra Club and anti-growth [environmental PA] groups' (Clark, 1996: 392). Environmental concerns also appear to determine voting behaviour: people who are more concerned with the environment tend to vote for left-wing parties (van Liere and Dunlap, 1980; Rohrschneider, 1993; Bean and Kelley, 1995). In this context, the way in which presidential candidate George Bush Sr, in the 1992 presidential campaign, tried to persuade a number of industrial workers to vote for him is illustrative. Reacting to Clinton's running mate, Al Gore, who had recently written a book about environmental policy, he said, 'Why do I call this guy a bozo? It is because if these bozos are elected we will be up to our necks in little owls and no one will have a job.'<sup>3</sup> By calling Gore a 'bozo', Bush tried to win votes by appealing to old workers' interests that are not in line with 'new' environmental interests. In this way, it is understandable that the working class

that would 'normally' vote for the Democrats, would now vote for the Republicans. In short, I conclude that middle-class members, because of their environmental concerns, will vote for a leftist party, while working-class members, because of their lack of environmental concerns, will vote for a right-wing party.

I have now distinguished several types of issue-salience and voting motives. Issue-salience is not a voting motive, since people can be old left or old right and new left or new right. Research by Dekker et al. (1999) and Flanagan (1982) has indeed shown that no predictions about party choice can be made from the knowledge whether a respondent defines cultural or class concerns as salient. But does this mean that there is no use for issue-salience whatsoever? No. Flanagan suggests that an authoritarian-libertarian value preferences scale will tell us whether the respondent is likely to support the New Right or New Left issue agenda. A materialist-non-materialist value priorities scale will tell us whether the New Politics kinds of value concerns or the Old Politics economic issues will be foremost in the voter's mind when he or she makes a choice (Flanagan, 1987: 1306-7).

The degree to which particular issues are perceived as salient indeed mediates the impact of policy preferences on voting behaviour (see Fournier et al., 2003; Layman and Carmines, 1997). In other words, issue-salience will serve as a condition: for those who define class problems as salient, class motives will be most important, for those who define environmental problems as salient, environmental motives will be decisive, and for those who define cultural problems as salient, cultural motives will be most important for their voting behaviour.

## Hypotheses

The foregoing leads me to expect that in most western countries the old issues of class have declined in salience (*Hypothesis 1*) while new 'cultural' (*Hypothesis 2*) and 'environmental' (*Hypothesis 3*) issues have increased in salience in most countries. Furthermore, I expect that the importance of class issues is positively related to the degree to which the working class votes left and the middle class votes right (*Hypothesis 4*) and that the salience of new environmental (*Hypothesis 5*) and of cultural issues (*Hypothesis 6*) is negatively related to the degree to which the working class votes left and the middle class votes right. Finally, I expect that in contexts where class issues are salient, economic motives will affect voting behaviour more strongly (*Hypothesis 7*), and that in contexts where cultural and environmental issues are salient cultural and environmental motives respectively affect voting behaviour more strongly (*Hypotheses 8 and 9*).

## Data and Measures

In order to assess whether the nine hypotheses are empirically corroborated, I use two sources of data. The first source of data is data on party manifestos, which were earlier used by Clark (2001b) to determine changes in the political culture. (These data were provided by Budge et al., 2001; CD-ROM). In these data, over 250 party manifestos (from 25 countries for the postwar period through 1998) were quantified. Each sentence and quasi-sentence<sup>4</sup> in the party manifestos was coded into one of 56 policy priorities. The data are structured in such a way that, for each party manifesto, all sentences and quasi-sentences amount to 100 percent. All sentences covering a policy priority are summed and expressed as a percentage of the whole. A score on a policy priority in the data thus reflects the space it occupies in the party manifesto. The second source of data is the last two waves of the World Values Survey (1990/2000).<sup>5</sup> These data contain information for class position, economic, cultural and environmental voting motives and (most important) voting behaviour for all 20 countries that were selected. I have selected for my analyses the 20 western countries that were previously analysed by Nieuwbeerta: Australia<sup>6</sup> (2000), Austria (1990–2000), Belgium (1990–2000), Canada (1990–2000), Denmark (1990–2000), Germany (west) (1990–2000), Finland (1990–2000), France (1990–2000), Greece (2000), Great Britain (1990–2000), Ireland (1990–2000), Italy (1990–2000), Luxembourg (2000), the Netherlands (1990–2000), Norway (1990–2000), Portugal (1990–2000), Spain (1990–2000), Sweden (1990–2000), Switzerland<sup>7</sup> (2000) and the US (1990–2000).

I weighed the manifesto data by the share of the vote a party won at a particular election<sup>8</sup> to restrict the relative influence of small (extreme) political parties on the total score of a country. If the data were not weighed, a splinter party in a particular country would count just as much as a larger political party for the measure of the political culture in that country. After this, I aggregated the data and calculated mean scores for class, cultural and environmental policy issues. In this way, a picture can be drawn of which priorities were of particular importance at certain elections in a particular country.

The index for *class issue salience* is a combination of three items. In the first item, *social justice*, sentences and quasi-sentences concerning issues such as equality, need for fair treatment, special protection for the underprivileged, the need for fair distribution of resources and the removal of class barriers were coded. The second item is a construct of two policy priorities, *welfare state expansion/limitation*, and contains sentences and quasi-sentences concerning issues such as the need to introduce, maintain or expand or limit any social service or social security scheme and support



for social services such as health service or social housing. The third item is a construct of two policy priorities: *free enterprise/controlled economy*, and contains sentences and quasi-sentences concerning issues such as free enterprise capitalism, state and control systems, private property rights, personal enterprise and initiative, unhampered individual enterprises, government control of the economy, control over prices, wages, rents, etc. and state intervention in the economic system. Factor analysis gives a first factor with an eigenvalue of 1.16, which can explain about 39 percent of the variance. The three loadings on the first factor are positive and are 0.67, 0.45 and 0.72 respectively. A higher score on the index, which is constructed by saving factor scores, stands for a greater political salience of economic or class issues in a particular country in a particular election year.

In the index for *environmental issue salience*, two policy priorities are combined. In the first policy priority, *environmental protection*, (quasi-) sentences concerning issues such as the preservation of the countryside and forests, the general preservation of natural resources against selfish interests, the proper use of national parks, soil banks and environmental improvement were coded. In the second policy priority, *anti-growth economy*, (quasi-)sentences concerning issues such as anti-growth politics, steady state economy and green politics were coded. Factor analysis on both policy priorities leads to a first factor with an eigenvalue of 1.31. This factor explains about 66 percent of the variance. Both factor loadings are positive and have a value of 0.81. A higher score on the index, which is constructed by saving factor scores, stands for a greater political salience of green or environmental issues in a particular country in a particular election year.

Finally, the index for *cultural issue salience* is a combination of three variables. The policy priorities *traditional morality positive* and *negative* were combined into one variable, since they concern negative and positive mentions of traditional moral values, and divorce, abortion etc. In the second variable, *underprivileged minority groups*, (quasi-)sentences concerned with issues such as support for underprivileged minority groups that are defined neither in economic nor in demographic terms, such as for example the handicapped, disabled, homosexuals, immigrants and refugees, were coded. In the third variable, *law and order*, (quasi-) sentences concerned with issues such as law enforcement, actions against crime, support and resources for police and tougher attitudes in courts were coded. Factor analysis on the three variables, traditional morality, law and order and underprivileged minority groups, yields a first factor with an eigenvalue of 1.31 explaining about 44 percent of variance. Factor loadings were 0.62, 0.80 and 0.53 respectively. A higher score on the index, which is constructed by saving factor scores, stands for a higher salience of cultural issues in a particular country in a particular election year.

The dependent variable, *voting behaviour*, was measured by asking respondents which party they would vote for if elections were held tomorrow. Answers have been recoded in left-right scale scores (developed by Budge et al., 2001) that were also included in the aforementioned manifesto data. Left-right scores for parties were calculated as their mean positions at the time of the last two elections before 1990 and 1998. The advantage of this strategy is that the dependent variable is not reduced into a crude left/non-left dichotomy, and that a variable of quasi-interval level is created, enabling linear regression methods.

Although in the World Values Survey of 2000 very detailed data on the occupations of the respondents are available (occupations were coded as ISCO codes), the same exact information is missing in the earlier survey wave used. However, for both waves a crude schema in seven occupational classes (resembling the famous EGP class schema, see Table 2) could be constructed by combining a 14-fold occupational schema with information on employment status and amount of hours worked by the respondent (>20 hours).

In the World Values Survey, respondents have been asked their opinions on a great variety of issues. From these items, we are able to construct three scales that will be used to measure three voting motives: economic progressiveness, authoritarianism and concern for the environment.

The scale for economic progressiveness was measured by five Likert-type items, measuring how respondents think of issues like 'reducing differences in incomes', 'privatizing', 'protecting the unemployed', 'the responsibility of the state to take care of everybody' and about the 'harmfulness of competition between people'.<sup>9</sup> Factor analysis showed that the responses of the respondents to these items indeed tap the same value dimension.<sup>10</sup> Scale scores have been calculated as the mean for each respondent who had at least three valid responses on the aforementioned items.

The scale for authoritarianism is constructed by four indicators: the index for postmaterialism,<sup>11</sup> a scale for sexual permissiveness,<sup>12</sup> a scale for traditional values about gender roles<sup>13</sup> and a scale for conformity as an educational value<sup>14</sup> (see also Houtman, 2003; Middendorp, 1991). The scale for authoritarianism was constructed by recoding all four indicators in such a way that a higher score on the indicator stands for a more authoritarian outlook. To see whether these indicators all tap the same ideological dimension, they were entered in a secondary factor analysis. Only in Great Britain (2000) was information on one indicator (postmaterialism) missing. Factor analysis showed consistent high factor loadings in all contexts but one: for Finland (2000) the factor loading for postmaterialism proved insufficiently high (<0.25) and was not used to construct the final scale. For each respondent, the scale score has been calculated

as the mean standardized score of the four indicators. A higher score on the scale stands for a more authoritarian outlook towards cultural issues.

The index for environmental concern, finally, was constructed out of three Likert-type items: 'I would give part of my income if I were certain that the money would be used to prevent environmental pollution', 'I would agree to an increase in taxes if the extra money is used to prevent environmental pollution' and 'the government has to reduce environmental pollution but it should not cost me any money' (see also Inglehart, 1995). In the 2000 wave only two of these questions were asked.<sup>15</sup> Factor analysis was performed on these items showing for each context that the three items loaded very high on the first dimension, indicating that each of these items separately could be taken to indicate environmental concern. Index scores were calculated as mean scores for each respondent who had valid responses on at least two items.

## Results

First, I examine whether or not new issues have increased in political salience and whether or not old issues have decreased in political salience. To this end, I correlated the indices for issue salience with election year. Table 1 reports on the trends in salience of class, environmental and cultural issues within 20 countries.

As Table 1 shows, there is no clear trend in the salience of class issues. In 11 countries downward trends and in nine countries upward trends in salience of class issues can be observed. In two of these countries the salience of class issues rises significantly (Finland and France) and in four countries (Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Switzerland) class issues are becoming less important. A highly diffuse picture thus emerges from these results: in some countries class issues have become more important while the reverse may be concluded for other countries. This is underscored by the total trend of class issue salience. No clear and significant trend is found. Thus, I conclude that in general the salience of class issues has neither decreased nor increased in the postwar period, and the first hypothesis must be rejected.

Compared to the salience of the old class issues, we see a completely different picture emerging from the analysis of salience of the new environmental issues. I find as many as 18 significant positive trends. Although positive, the trend for Canada is not strong enough to be found statistically significant. Only in the US did environmental issues become neither more nor less important. Clearly, environmental issues have increased in salience in the western world. As was expected, for the index for environmental issue salience, I found a fairly strong positive trend, indicating that attention to environmental issues has indeed risen in the

**Table 1** Trends per Country and Total Trend in Importance of Class Issues, Cultural Issues and Environmental Issues for 20 Countries (Pearson  $r$ /two-tailed) (1945–98)

Country	N	Salience of class issues	Salience of cultural issues	Salience of environmental issues
Australia	22	.36	.36	.49*
Austria	15	-.04	.71**	.74**
Belgium	17	-.64**	.43	.85***
Canada	17	-.02	.77***	.35
Denmark	22	.03	.70***	.61**
Finland	15	.62*	-.60*	.88***
France	14	.80*	.70**	.90***
Germany (West)	14	.51	.66*	.80**
Great Britain	15	-.10	.79**	.86***
Greece	9	.17	-.15	.75*
Ireland	16	.12	.76**	.68**
Italy	14	.43	.38	.70**
Luxembourg	12	-.76**	.72**	.90***
The Netherlands	16	-.66**	.81***	.83***
Norway	14	.01	.64*	.78**
Portugal	9	.37	.05	.69*
Spain	7	-.52	-.78*	.96**
Sweden	17	.09	.80***	.82***
Switzerland	13	-.58*	.62*	.80**
US	13	-.00	.59*	.01
Total	291	-.08	.47***	.62***

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

postwar period. The second hypothesis can thus be confirmed: salience of environmental issues has indeed risen in the postwar period.

Cultural issues have also become more salient in most countries. Looking at the trends for each country separately, I find significant positive trends for 13 countries and positive but not significant trends for four countries. For three countries, Finland, Spain and Greece, I found negative trends that were significant for Finland and Spain. The total trend for the index for cultural issue salience is also high and positive, as was expected. The third hypothesis can also be confirmed: in general, salience of cultural issues has indeed risen in the postwar period.

In short, in western countries class issues have not lost their importance, but that does not mean that nothing has changed. New environmental and cultural issues have become very important in the postwar period. In the political cultures of western countries, old and new issues

thus compete for attention of the voter. In the following, I investigate how this affects the relationship between class position and voting behaviour.

In order to find out whether members of the working class are more inclined to vote left in contexts where class issues are of particular salience and less inclined to vote left in contexts where environmental and cultural issues are of particular importance, I have estimated some multi-level models, enabling splitting the variance of the dependent variable, (leftist) voting behaviour, into an individual level and a context<sup>16</sup> level. Table 2 demonstrates the results of these analyses.

In order to find out whether members of social classes generally vote more according to conventional class-party alignments in old and less in new political cultures (Table 2), I first<sup>17</sup> investigate (Model 1) whether the effect of class varies significantly across contexts, which is indeed the case. In general, the working class (classes V, VI and VII) votes more for left-wing parties than the middle class (the other classes). In some contexts, however, members of the working class are more inclined to vote left than in other contexts. The question is in which contexts class position matters more for voting behaviour. Model 2, which is an extension of Model 1, provides an answer to this question.

Despite my expectation that the working class is more inclined to vote for leftist parties in contexts where class issues are of particular importance, the empirical evidence for this is rather poor. Only one class (that of the petty bourgeoisie) votes more for right-wing parties in contexts in which class issues are of more importance. For all classes, working and middle classes, the importance of class issues does not influence the degree in which they vote for a left-wing or a right-wing party. Hypothesis 4 can thus be rejected.

Hypothesis 5 expects that as the importance of environmental issues rises, the working class will increasingly vote for a right-wing party, the middle class will increasingly vote for a left-wing party. For only one class – that of the skilled manual workers – must this hypothesis be rejected. Skilled manual workers vote more often for a left-wing party as environmental issues become more important, enforcing the traditional class-party alignment of a leftist working class somewhat. The fifth hypothesis is not rejected, however: two classes (routine non-manual and the petty bourgeoisie) tend to vote more for leftist parties in contexts where environmental issues are of importance. Hypothesis 5 can thus be cautiously accepted: there is some evidence that the traditional class-party alignment is weaker in contexts where new environmental issues are more important.

As cultural issues become more important, Hypothesis 6 suggests, traditional class-party alignments are also reversed. Indeed, members of the middle class (managers and professionals) increasingly vote for leftist

**Table 2** *Left-Wing Voting Behaviour Explained by Class and Three Indicators of Political Culture and by Interaction Effects between Class and Three Indicators of Political Culture*

Independents	Model 1		Model 2		Interaction Model 2 class issue salience		Interaction Model 2 environmental issue salience		Interaction Model 2 cultural issue salience	
Constant	-3.92	(2.28)	0.86	(2.80)						
Year of survey (= 1990)	7.44***	(0.41)	-6.70***	(0.43)						
<i>Class</i>										
I Managers	-8.96***	(1.24)	-10.74***	(1.69)	-1.24	(1.30)	0.37	(0.58)	2.36*	(0.98)
II Professionals	-2.90*	(1.23)	-4.06*	(1.66)	-0.58	(1.09)	0.13	(0.54)	2.08*	(0.97)
III Routine non-manual	-3.25**	(1.16)	-5.27**	(1.55)	-0.36	(0.99)	1.52**	(0.47)	1.24	(0.78)
IV Petty bourgeoisie	-6.46***	(1.21)	-7.82***	(1.66)	-6.28***	(1.11)	1.25*	(0.61)	0.08	(0.98)
V Skilled manual	-0.55	(1.17)	-2.45	(1.57)	0.60	(1.06)	1.44**	(0.48)	1.24	(0.83)
VI Semi-skilled manual	-0.79	(1.21)	-0.58	(1.66)	0.65	(1.14)	0.19	(0.58)	-0.37	(0.94)
VII Unskilled manual	Ref.		Ref.		Ref.		Ref.		Ref.	
<i>Political culture</i>										
Class issue salience	3.30***	(0.37)	3.92***	(1.05)						
Environmental issue salience	3.19***	(0.22)	1.07*	(0.49)						
Cultural issue salience	-1.64***	(0.32)	-6.08***	(0.85)						
Var. individual level	312.76***	(2.72)	310.36***	(2.69)						
Var. context level	126.41***	(42.38)	121.87***	(37.75)						
Var. random slope class	17.73***	(2.98)	11.55***	(1.87)						
Deviance	229,473.0		229,324.7							
Δd.f.			21							

Multilevel regression models World Values Surveys 1990–2000. ( $N = 26,540$  in 36 contexts. Method: maximum likelihood; standard errors in parentheses.)

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

parties as new cultural issues are more important. The sixth hypothesis can thus be accepted.

On the whole, the rise of the new political culture in which new environmental and cultural issues have become more important, causes members of the middle class to vote left and members of the working class to vote right. That class voting today is low can thus be attributed to the fact that besides the old issues of class, new issues have become more important. In Table 3, it is investigated whether this also means that new voting motives affect voting behaviour more strongly in these new political cultures.

The two models shown in Table 3 estimate the effects of social class, political culture and the three voting motives: economic progressivism, environmental concern and authoritarianism. Model 1 shows that economic progressivism and environmental concern indeed lead people to vote for a leftist party. Authoritarianism leads people to vote for a right-wing party. People with economically progressive values, those concerned about the environment and those with libertarian values are, on average, more inclined to vote for a left-wing party than those with economically conservative and authoritarian values and those less concerned with the environment. Moreover, the results show that these old, economic and new, cultural and environmental motives affect voting behaviour variably depending on the context (see bottom Model 1). In some contexts, particular motives affect voting behaviour more strongly than in other contexts.

In Model 2, it is tested whether old economic motives affect voting behaviour more strongly in contexts where old class issues are of particular salience. The significant interaction effect, which is positive, indicates that this is indeed the case: those with economically progressive values who live in a country where class issues are important are more likely to vote for a leftist party than those with equally economic progressive values in a country where class issues are less salient. Hypothesis 7 is thus confirmed.

Likewise, I tested whether new environmental concerns affect voting behaviour more strongly in contexts where new environmental issues are salient. The positive and significant interaction effect shows that this also is the case: those concerned about the environment who live in a country where environmental issues are important will be more likely to vote for a left-wing party than those equally concerned about the environment living in a country where environmental issues are less salient. Accordingly, Hypothesis 8 can also be confirmed.

Finally, I tested whether authoritarian motives lead people to vote more for a right-wing party in contexts where cultural issues are of particular importance. The negative and significant interaction effect shows that people with authoritarian values will be more likely to vote for rightist

**Table 3** *Left-Wing Voting Behaviour Explained by Class, Three Voting Motives, Indicators for Political Culture and by Interaction Effects between Voting Motives and Political Culture*

Independents	Model 1		Model 2	
Constant	3.76	(1.89)	3.75	(1.89)
Year of survey (= 2001)	9.30***	(0.36)	9.29***	(0.36)
<i>Class</i>				
I Managers	-6.01***	(0.50)	-5.97***	(0.50)
II Professionals	-2.67***	(0.47)	-2.64***	(0.47)
III Routine non-manual	-2.90***	(0.38)	-2.85***	(0.38)
IV Petty bourgeoisie	-4.06***	(0.48)	-4.04***	(0.48)
V Skilled manual	-0.41	(0.40)	-0.37	(0.40)
VI Semi-skilled manual	-0.62	(0.46)	-0.59	(0.46)
VII Unskilled manual	Ref.		Ref.	
<i>Voting motives</i>				
Economic progressiveness	6.45***	(1.09)	6.50***	(1.09)
Environmental concern	0.96**	(0.31)	0.71*	(0.31)
Authoritarianism	-2.81***	(0.48)	-2.28***	(0.48)
<i>Political culture</i>				
Class issue salience	0.99**	(0.29)	1.02**	(0.29)
Environmental issue salience	2.48***	(0.18)	2.45***	(0.18)
Cultural issue salience	-0.73**	(0.29)	-0.75*	(0.29)
<i>Interaction effect</i>				
Class issue salience × economic progressiveness			2.21***	(0.44)
Environmental issue salience × environmental concern			0.30*	(0.14)
Cultural issue salience × authoritarianism			-0.85***	(0.27)
Var. individual level	284.36***	(2.47)	283.97	(2.46)
Var. context level	67.50***	(21.04)	67.62	(21.08)
Var. random slope economic progressiveness	24.24***	(7.71)	22.97***	(7.30)
Var. random slope environmental concern	1.58*	(0.62)	1.42*	(0.57)
Var. random slope authoritarianism	4.22**	(1.53)	4.01**	(1.44)
Deviance	226,819.2		226,781.2	
Δd.f.			3	

Multilevel regression models, World Values Surveys 1990–2000. ( $N = 26,540$  in 36 contexts. Method: maximum likelihood; standard errors within parentheses.)

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .



parties as they live in countries where new cultural issues are more important. The ninth hypothesis is thus also confirmed.

In brief, on the one hand, I found that the old economic motives that strengthen the traditional ties between class and voting behaviour affect voting behaviour more strongly in contexts where old class issues are more important. As the old issues have not generally declined in salience, these old economic motives have not lost their determining power for voting behaviour at all. I also found that new environmental and cultural motives that undermine the traditional ties between class and voting behaviour, affect voting behaviour more strongly in contexts where new environmental and cultural issues are more salient. As these new issues have gained in salience in almost all western countries, the determining power of these new motives has thus increased, causing workers to vote right and members of the middle class to vote left, as workers are generally more culturally conservative and less concerned with the environment than members of the middle class.

## Conclusion and Discussion

Much work in the field of political sociology concerns studying the ties between social class and voting behaviour. More specifically, political sociologists have been particularly interested in the question of whether these ties have weakened and whether they have been replaced by other (new) social cleavages or not. Following the work of Key (1955), these scientists often use the *realignment–dealignment* terminology, when they study the relationship between social class position and voting behaviour (see, for example, Manza and Brooks, 1999; Evans and Norris, 1999; Elchardus, 1996; McAllister and Studlar, 1995; Clark, 1996). Key to the matter is the question whether we should take the decline in class voting as an indication of structural *dealignment* or *realignment*. Van der Eijk et al. (1992: 430), for example, suggest that ‘The most salient feature of the political landscape that emerges with the end of cleavage politics is precisely the fact that it has no clear universal features’, thus concluding that the waning of class voting is signifying *dealignment*. Instead, politics will be less a matter of stable alignments, and more unpredictable. In this context some speak of ‘fluid’, ‘wobbling’ or ‘floating’ electorates, which means that people can now ‘begin to choose’ whatever party they prefer without considerations of class or other social cleavages (Rose and McAllister, 1986).

Others suggest that the waning of class politics is signifying a process of *realignment*: the old cleavages are gradually being replaced by other (new) cleavages, accompanied by their own political alignments (see among others: Hechter, 2004; Houtman, 2003; Evans and Norris, 1999;

Inglehart, 1997; Elchardus, 1996; Wattenberg, 1995). These new alignments diametrically oppose the old 'traditional' class-party alignments, causing members of the middle class to vote left, and members of the working class to vote right. In this article, *realignment* theory is supported for two empirical reasons.

First, I have found that in the new political culture the issues of class have not so much disappeared as is frequently suggested. Instead, the importance of class issues is remarkably stable over time and class issues continue to be important for postwar politics in western countries. New issues such as environmental and cultural issues, on the other hand, have increased in salience in most countries, becoming just as (or perhaps more) important as class issues. All in all, in the new political cultures, the old politics of class have come to share the stage with new issues. To conclude that the political landscape has no universal features is unwarranted: nowadays, there are simply more features.

Second, in this article I investigated the relationship between the new political culture and differences in ties between class and voting behaviour. Traditional alignment theory proposes that the working class mainly votes left to improve their economic position, while the middle class will vote right to defend theirs. Research by Nieuwbeerta and others has indicated that in most western countries these ties have become weaker. If indeed electorates can increasingly be classified as wobbling, floating or fluid, surely the rise of the new political culture would not be related to voting behaviour in any way; nothing would be related to this. In this article I tested whether the old alignments were weaker and whether these new alignments were stronger in the new political cultures. It turns out that traditional class-party alignments are somewhat stronger in contexts where class issues are important and that economic motives affect voting behaviour more strongly in these contexts. Furthermore, it was found that traditional class-party alignments are weaker in contexts where new issues are of greater importance, and that in these contexts cultural and environmental motives affect voting behaviour more strongly. If electorates are wobbling or floating then, they are all wobbling or floating in the same – new political – direction. To sum up, the fact that class voting has declined over the years thus indicates that a process of realignment has been going on. In the new political culture, new (cultural and environmental) alignments have appeared, causing the working class to vote for the right instead of the left, and the middle class for the left instead of the right.

## Notes

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1. There is also some scientific confusion about the question whether or not postmaterialism – a left-libertarian variant of new cultural politics – and environmental concerns tap the same ideological dimension (see Brechin and Kempton, 1994, 1997; Dunlap and Mertig, 1997 but also Kidd and Lee, 1997; Lee and Kidd, 1997). There is much less confusion about the question whether environmental concerns and the new right-wing variant of cultural politics tap the same dimension. I therefore choose to regard these environmental issues as a separate indicator for the new political culture.
2. Together with Clark (2001b), I wonder whether or not leftist voting behaviour by the working classes or rightist voting behaviour by the middle class because of new political motives can or should still be called (traditional) voting behaviour.
3. Copied from Mair et al. (1999: 316–17).
4. 'A quasi-sentence is defined as an argument which is the verbal expression of one political idea or issue' (Volgens, 2001: 96). Note that one sentence in an election programme may contain more than one argument; consequently multiple quasi-sentences have been coded.
5. Data retrieved at the Dutch Steinmets-archives. WVS 1990: World Values Study Group. World Values Survey, 1981–4 and 1990–3 (computer file), 2nd ICPSR version; Ann Arbor, MI: Institute for Social Research (producer), 1999, Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) (distributor), 1999; and WVS 2000: Ronald Inglehart et al. World Values Surveys and European Values Surveys, 1999–2001 (computer file), ICPSR version; Ann Arbor, MI: Institute for Social Research (producer), 2002, Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (distributor), 2004. The original collector of the data, ICPSR, and the relevant funding agency bear no responsibility for the use and the interpretations or inferences based upon these data. The author bears complete responsibility.
6. Australia, Norway and Switzerland were not surveyed in 2000. Surveys of 1995 were used instead.
7. Although Switzerland is also surveyed in 1990, the data contain a lot of missing values and omitted questions in this year, disabling to measure environmental concerns and economic liberalism. After considering this, it was decided to remove Switzerland (1990) from the pooled dataset.
8. The share of the vote is a variable in the original dataset.
9. In nine contexts (Germany, Belgium, US, Canada, Norway, Switzerland, Australia, Luxembourg and Portugal all in 2000) information on four items is available, in three contexts (Denmark, 2000, Sweden, 2000, and Greece, 2000) information for only three items is available.

10. This showed that in five contexts (France, 1990, US, 1990, Portugal, 1990, Britain, 2000, and Ireland, 2000) one item should be removed from the scale, as their factor loadings were too low ( $< 0.25$ ).
11. The index for postmaterialism is measured by asking respondents which two out of four possible goals is in their eyes the most important goal. Respondents choosing 'protecting freedom of speech' and 'giving the people more say in important government decisions' were coded as 'postmaterialists' (3). Respondents choosing 'maintaining order in the nation' and 'fighting rising prices' were coded as 'materialists' (1). Respondents choosing any other combination of the aforementioned goals were coded 'mixed' (2). For Great Britain (2000) no values for this measure were available.
12. The scale for sexual permissiveness was measured by five judgements of the respondents about the degree (1–10) to which they think activities like 'married men/women having an affair', 'sex under the legal age of consent', 'homosexuality', 'prostitution' and 'abortion' can be justified. The answers to these items have been factor analysed: in 22 contexts all items were asked in the survey, in three contexts (Denmark [1990], Spain [2000] and Italy [2000]) four items have been asked and in 11 contexts (France, the Netherlands, Denmark, Belgium, the US, Canada, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Australia and Portugal all in the 2000 WVS wave) only three items were asked. For all contexts, only one dimension was found in the responses of the respondents, representing sexual permissiveness. The scale was constructed by calculating a mean score for each respondent who had at least three valid responses to the items used.
13. The scale for traditional values about gender roles consists of seven items, mainly of the Likert-type (agree completely–disagree completely), posing that 'when jobs are scarce, men have more right to a job than women', 'a working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work', 'a preschool child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works', 'a job is alright but what most women really want is a home and children', 'being a housewife is just as fulfilling as working for pay', 'having a job is the best way for a woman to be an independent person' and 'both the husband and wife should contribute to household income'. In 28 contexts all items were asked in the survey, in one context (Sweden, 1990) six items, in four contexts (US, 2000, Canada, 2000, Norway, 2000 and Australia, 2000) five items, and in three contexts (Ireland, 2000, Switzerland, 2000 and Austria, 2000) only three items were asked in the survey. Factor analysis showed that the responses to these items all tap one dimension. Scale scores were calculated as mean scores for each respondent who had valid responses on at least three items.
14. The scale for conformity as an educational value consists of six items in which the respondents indicate which qualities children should be encouraged to learn at home. Three of these qualities, 'good manners', 'religious faith' and 'obedience', emphasize conformity, while the three qualities 'determination, perseverance', 'imagination' and 'independence' emphasize the opposite. For each context, a factor analysis on these six qualities revealed that the three last mentioned qualities indeed oppose the first three. In 30 of these contexts, there

was a clear one-dimensional model, and in six contexts (France, 1990, 2000, Britain, 2000, Denmark, 2000, Belgium, 2000 and Switzerland, 2000) one of the factor loadings was not sufficiently strong ( $< 0.25$ ) and a scale could be constructed out of the five remaining items. After recoding the items emphasizing the opposite of conformity, the final scale was constructed by calculating the mean score for each respondent who had at least four valid scores on the six items.

15. The item regarding the increase in taxes was asked in all contexts. The item concerning the willingness of the respondent to pay for a reduction of pollution was asked in Norway and Australia, in all other countries in 2000, the first item was asked.
16. Although here, in fact, there are three levels – the individual, the context and the wave or year of survey level – I choose not to include the last level mentioned, because the variance on this level is low anyway. Conforming to the suggestion by Rasbash et al. (2000: 95), I include a dummy for year of survey instead.
17. In multi-level analysis it is common practice to build a nested model, by starting with an empty model and then adding a variable at each step. Here, for reasons of brevity, I have chosen not to report all these steps in the analytic process, and only to report the two final steps that matter most for the hypotheses that are tested.

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