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Room for Realignment: The Working-Class Sympathy for Sweden Democrats

How is it that the Swedish populist nationalist party the Sweden Democrats receives its strongest support from the established working class, in spite of the high degree of class voting and left–right mobilization which is known to characterize Swedish politics? Based on surveys from the SOM (Society, Opinion, Media) Institute as well as the Swedish National Elections Studies, this article shows that this is not a result of increasing anti-immigrant attitudes in the working class or of decreasing left–right polarization among voters. Rather, we present the argument that the weakening alignment between the working class and the Social Democratic Party and the weakened left–right polarization between the main parties have created a structure which has left room for a realignment between large parts of the working class and the Sweden Democrats along the alternative underlying ideological dimension of authoritarianism/libertarianism.

UNTIL THE 2010 ELECTION, SWEDEN WAS SEEN AS AN EXCEPTION TO THE general European trend, as no xenophobic populist right party was represented in the parliament. The neo-populist party New Democracy gained representation in 1991, but did not get re-elected in 1994 and dissolved shortly after (Taggart 1995, 1996). Not until the election of 2010 did this change, as the Sweden Democrats were elected to the Swedish Riksdag with 5.7 per cent of the votes.

As is the case for most radical right parties in most other European countries, support for the Sweden Democrats is comparatively strong among the working class, which might be seen as something of a paradox. Sweden has for many years been known as a society with solid class voting (voting along class lines), a unipolar ideological conflict pattern organized around economic left and right, a non-polarized political climate and a social democracy tightly connected

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to the welfare state. These were not the best conditions for an anti-establishment, populist or right-wing party to make a sizeable impression on the Swedish working class (Dahlström and Esaiasson 2011; Rydgren 2002). Nevertheless, it happened. This article presents an analysis of how we might understand this. Our central argument is that a main factor behind the working-class support for the Sweden Democrats is the dealignment between the Swedish working class and the Social Democratic Party, which has given the Sweden Democrats an opportunity to mobilize underlying authoritarian ideological leanings and political distrust. The explanation is framed in a discussion of previous research on social cleavages and political alignments, and of the importance of incorporating both the citizen side (demand) and the party side (supply) in understanding alignment. We start with a discussion of the decrease in class voting in Sweden as well as the decreasing left–right polarization between the main parties in the Swedish party system as providing an opportunity for a populist right party, such as the Sweden Democrats, to gain support mainly in the working class. We first describe the opportunity structure in terms of dealignment and depolarization, and identify where there is ‘room’ for realignment. In view of this opportunity structure we employ an individual-level regression analysis of the correlation between class position and sympathy for the Sweden Democrats, controlling for position along economic left–right and authoritarian–libertarian ideological dimensions as well as political trust as intervening variables. The results confirm the authoritarian–libertarian ideological position and political trust as explanatory variables. However, some effects of belonging to the working-class category ‘lower technical’ remain after controls, indicating a residual direct effect of class position.

The analysis is based on time series from the Swedish National Election Studies as well as the annual surveys from the SOM (Society, Opinion, Media) Institute. The regression analysis is based on a specially designed SOM survey from 2008.

THE OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURE: ALIGNMENT, DEALIGNMENT AND REALIGNMENT

All across Europe, multiple studies have reported a clear working-class bias in support for populist/nationalist parties (Ivarsflaten 2005;

Lubbers et al. 2002; Oesch 2008a; Rydgren 2013). This could be described as puzzling, as the working class is generally seen as closely linked to the political left, and not least to social democratic parties (Blomqvist and Green-Pedersen 2004; Rydgren 2007; Swank and Betz 2003). In other words, as long as the traditional class-based left–right cleavage dominates, there is limited room for realignment along any other cleavage (Kriesi et al. 1995). However, the persistence of the left–right cleavage depends on both the degree to which the voters are oriented by it (demand side) and the degree to which the party system represents it (supply side). Herbert Kitschelt (2013: 224) has formulated this as: ‘Only when demand and supply meet will socio-structural dispositions translate into actual vote choices.’

The political alignment of the working class to the social democratic parties was formed in the early days of European democracy and has been something of a baseline for most party systems (Bartolini and Mair 1990; Korpi 1983; Lipset and Rokkan 1967). However, the alignment has become weaker over the past decades, as discussed in the massive research on the decline of class voting (Clark and Lipset 2001; Evans 1999; Franklin et al. 1992; Knutsen 2006; Manza et al. 1995; Nieuwebeerta and Ultee 1999; Oskarson 2005). The decline of class voting has been explained with reference to changes in the societal structures and lines of conflict among citizens due to modernization and globalization, increasing educational levels and changes in people’s value structures.

However, recent studies have shown that the decline in class voting is also due to changes in the party systems. Most Western European party systems have seen a weakened political polarization between left and right in traditional economic terms, resulting in fewer class-related choices (Evans 2000; Evans and Tilley 2012; Evans and van der Graaf 2013; Jansen et al. 2012; Oskarson 1994, 2005). In line with the work of Hanspeter Kriesi and his colleagues, we see the dealignment of the traditional class-based cleavage between left and right as presenting an opportunity for new actors to mobilize along other conflict dimensions. Party position (supply-side explanations) links the successes of populist/nationalist parties to general changes within the party systems, including those of the social democratic parties. The argument is, in short, that social democratic parties responded to the mobilization of the new left movement in the 1970s by incorporating more libertarian positions in order to gain (or keep) support from the middle classes (Hinnfors 2006; Krouwel 2012).

As libertarian positions were articulated, more traditional communitarian positions were also mobilized, providing fertile soil for modern populist/nationalist parties (Bornschieer 2010a, 2010b; Kitschelt 1997; Kriesi et al. 2006; Lubbers et al. 2002).

As immigration increased, the populist/nationalist party positions were linked to communitarian and nationalistic values, defining immigration as a threat to national values and culture. However, the mobilization and repositioning of parties along the authoritarian–libertarian dimension does not mean that the more traditional economic left–right dimension has disappeared. Rather, new issue areas such as environment, European integration, multiculturalism and immigration as well as libertarian values have led to a change in ideological competition between the parties (Albright 2010; Green-Pedersen and Mortensen 2010). Political challenges and issues related to globalization, environmental problems and migration have created other social divisions and stressed complementary ideological dimensions in most European countries – most notably the sociocultural and authoritarian–libertarian dimensions – regarding issues of tolerance and hierarchical social relations (Flanagan and Lee 2003; Kitschelt 1994; Kriesi 2010; Kriesi et al. 2006; Stubager 2008). A now well-known study (Kriesi et al. 2006, 2008) shows that the potential political tension between the ‘losers’ and the ‘winners’ in globalization processes has been incorporated into the existing two-dimensional national political spaces. The sociocultural dimension has been gaining importance as it has become the primary basis for new populist parties. This supply perspective points to the political opportunity structure which enabled the radical right party the Sweden Democrats to gain success in the Social Democrats’ traditional core group – the working class.

INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL EXPLANATIONS FOR WORKING-CLASS SUPPORT FOR POPULIST RIGHT PARTIES

Several previous studies point to social marginalization and economic risk exposure as important determinants for working-class support for radical right parties, linked to a model of globalization where a group of ‘losers’ is put up against another group of ‘winners’ (Betz 2004; van der Brug and Fennema 2003; Rydgren 2007). The argument states that, due to modernization and globalization, people in low-skilled jobs or in traditional sectors and with low education risk

losing when competition for jobs and resources becomes global due to open borders and migration. The winners, on the other hand, are people who are highly educated and who are in internationally competitive sectors of the labour market.

This transformation of social cleavages presents possible explanations for the labouring class's support of populist/nationalist parties. A first line of explanation sees the working-class bias as an expression of economic conflict in terms of competition with immigrants in the labour market. The economic conflict explains working-class support for populist/nationalist parties by the effects of open borders on competition for jobs. Immigration and open borders are seen as threats to the traditional production industry, and thereby to working-class jobs (Fireside 2002). A second line of explanation focuses on the nationalist/traditionalist aspect of the parties and explains the working-class support more in terms of a defence of traditionalist and authoritarian values (Lipset 1959; Napier and Jost 2008). A third line of explanation sees the populist/nationalist parties as protest parties, opposing the 'political establishment' in defence of the 'ordinary people', and accordingly focusing more on the anti-political or anti-elite aspect of the parties (Abedi 2004).

Daniel Oesch presents a most relevant analysis of working-class support of populist/nationalist parties in five Western European countries (Austria, Belgium, France, Norway and Switzerland), where he employs three lines of explanation: economic conflict, cultural conflict, and discontent with the political system and alienation (Oesch 2008a). His analysis finds the strongest support for the hypothesis that cultural conflict is the driver behind working-class support for populist/nationalist parties, even though discontent with the way democracy works is also part of the explanation for Belgium, France and Norway. In a book chapter entitled 'The Class Basis of the Cleavage between the New Left and the Radical Right', Daniel Oesch (2013: 49) concludes that 'the success of the new left and the radical right depends on the salience of the cultural as compared to the economic conflict' and that 'those left out from the transition toward the knowledge and service society – notably production workers – were successfully recruited by the radical right'. That distrust and disillusionment with the political system are important factors behind support for populist right parties, as well as anti-immigrant attitudes, is also confirmed by Mayer (2005) and Swank and Betz (2003).

Many studies have found strong correlations between low levels of education and support for populist/nationalist parties along with more authoritarian ideological leanings (Hainmueller and Hiscox 2007). Danish political scientist Rune Stubager examines these parties, particularly the Danish People's Party, from a cleavage perspective and shows educational differences as a main explanation for support of the Danish populist party (Stubager 2006, 2009, 2010). As education is in general very closely associated with class position, this could indicate that the mechanism behind working-class support for radical populist parties is education rather than class-related factors in the labour market; the relatively strong support from the working class for these kinds of parties could be a reflection of low educational levels in the working class. However, in a comparative perspective it has been found that some effect of class position actually remains even when controlling for education (Ivarsflaten and Stubager 2013). For Sweden, previous research has also found that class differences in position along the authoritarian–libertarian dimension can largely be explained by differences in education (Bengtsson et al. 2013).

MATERIAL

The description of the opportunity structure for the Sweden Democrats is mainly based on descriptive time series. For these we use the full series of annual SOM surveys. The SOM surveys are mail questionnaires delivered by the academic SOM Institute at the University of Gothenburg. The surveys have been launched annually since 1986, with nationwide representative samples with at least 60 per cent response rates and the number of respondents ranging from 1,600 in earlier years to around 6,000 in later years.¹ The analysis also makes use of the Swedish National Election Studies, performed in connection to all general elections since 1956. The election studies are personal interviews with around 3,000 respondents and a response rate of around 70 per cent.² We present trends for certain classes regarded as strategic in relation to the argument, rather than for all groups. Finally, to describe the polarization between the two main parties we use salience measures from the party manifesto database, which covers all election since 1945 (Klingemann et al. 2006). This is the only available database for parties' issue salience that covers the wide time frame we use here.

The individual-level analysis will be based on a specialized national SOM survey conducted in 2008, with a special focus on effects of social class on ideology (2,400 respondents, 64 per cent response rate).³ This survey has several advantages. It is a mail survey rather than a face-to-face one, which is believed to have a somewhat lesser bias regarding sympathies for this type of party, which may be seen as rather controversial. Also, it focuses on party sympathy rather than voting, and it does so before the election campaigns have started. We consider this an advantage here as it focuses more on the underlying trend in support for the party rather than on short-term effects of campaigning and mobilization. The class variable in the SOM surveys and in the Swedish election studies is based on present or previous occupation. For all studies since 2006, occupations are classified according to the European Socio-economic Classification (ESeC), which is theoretically based on the Erikson-Goldthorpe class definition (Rose and Harrison 2007). In studies before 2006, occupations are classified according to the Swedish election study class scheme, theoretically based on the work of Erikson-Goldthorpe and highly similar to the European Socio-economic Classification, which is verified theoretically as well as statistically in Oskarson (2007).

THE SWEDEN DEMOCRATS

As stated in the introduction, there is a clear working-class bias among the supporters of the populist/nationalist Sweden Democrats. In our survey from the autumn of 2008, 5 per cent of the respondents reported that they supported the Sweden Democrats. However, in parts of the working class the support was clearly higher, as 15 per cent of respondents in 'lower technical' occupations sympathized with the Sweden Democrats. Among respondents in the 'lower sales and service' category, 7 per cent sympathized with the Sweden Democrats and 5 per cent of routine workers did so. This means that of the total support for the Sweden Democrats, two-thirds came from the working class, of which 28 per cent came from 'lower technical' and 27 per cent from 'lower sales and service' categories. In comparison, the Social Democrats received just over half (51 per cent) of their sympathizers from the working class (Oskarson and Demker 2013). In the 2010 election, working-class support for the Sweden Democrats was somewhat weaker, but the working class was still by far

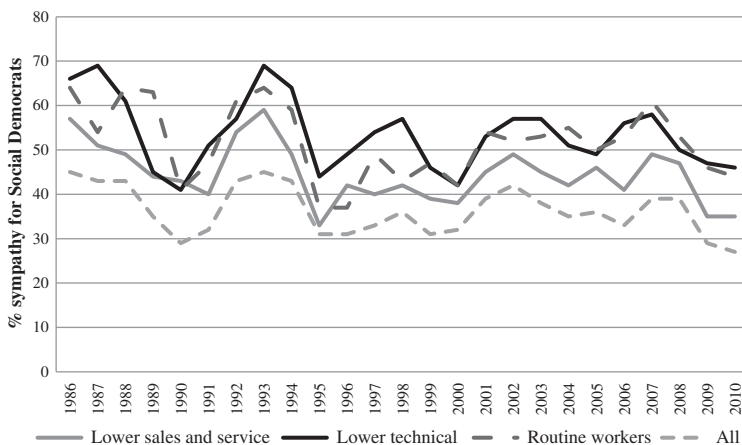
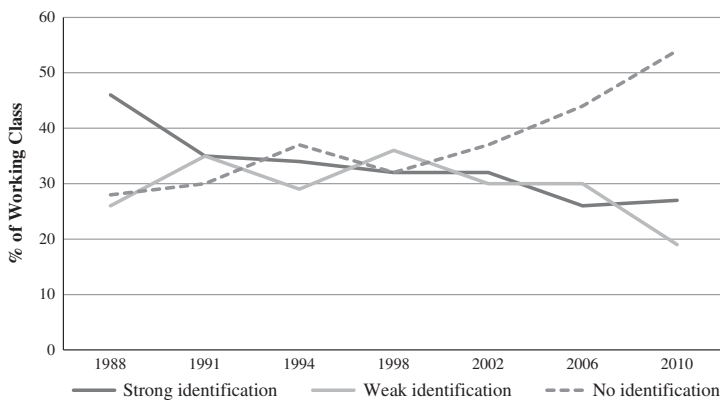
the group most strongly supporting the Sweden Democrats (Oscarsson and Holmberg 2013).

THE OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURE FOR THE SWEDEN DEMOCRATS

Sweden has long been considered one of the countries where the social democratic hold on the working class has been the strongest. Sweden's party system has been characterized as strongly unidimensional, organized around the left–right dimension based in the class cleavage (Knutsen 2006; Nieuwebeerta 1999; Oskarson 2005). The Swedish Social Democrats have, over time, managed to maintain strong support among the working class and among labour union members, while at the same time they have also received considerable support from the middle layers of society. It has been suggested that this successful strategy can be explained by a strong connection between the Social Democrats and the encompassing welfare state. The association between voters' class positions and party sympathy has long been among the strongest in the Western world, even though a decline in the association has been discussed for several decades, not least among younger generations (Oscarsson and Holmberg 2008; Oskarson 1994, 2005). However, within the working class, support for the Social Democratic Party has varied over the years, but for the last 20 years no clear trend is found (Figure 1).

As Figure 1 clearly shows, support for the Social Democrats in the groups that form the working class is higher than for the party's total support among all voters and generally follows the overall trend closely. But with the decreasing overall support for the Social Democratic Party, this means that in many years less than 50 per cent of the working class supported the Social Democrats, even in the traditional 'core group' of skilled workers (lower technical). In other words, the Social Democrats' grip on the Swedish working class is not as strong as it used to be. Further evidence of the weakening grip can be seen by looking at the strength of party identification among working-class sympathizers of the Social Democratic Party. Figure 2 illustrates this.

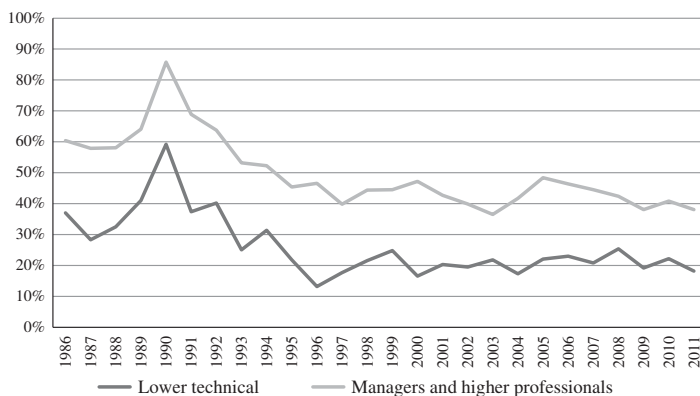
The proportion of strong identifiers among those in the working class who sympathize with the Social Democratic Party decreased from 46 per cent in 1988 to 27 per cent in 2010. During the same period, the proportion of sympathizers not reporting any

Figure 1*Support (Party Sympathy) for Social Democrats in the Working Class, 1986–2010**Source.* SOM surveys 1986–2010.**Figure 2***Party Identification among Social Democratic Party Sympathizers in the Working Class, 1988–2010**Source.* Swedish National Election Studies, 1988–2010.

identification increased from 28 per cent to 54 per cent. Of course, this is a reflection of the generally decreasing levels of party identification, but it implies that the Social Democrats' grip on the working class is even weaker than is reflected in the decreasing class voting.

Figure 3

Attitudes among Swedish Lower Technical Workers and Higher Professionals to Reducing the Size of the Public Sector, 1986–2010 (per cent answers 'very good proposal' and 'good proposal' combined)



Source. SOM surveys, 1986–2011.

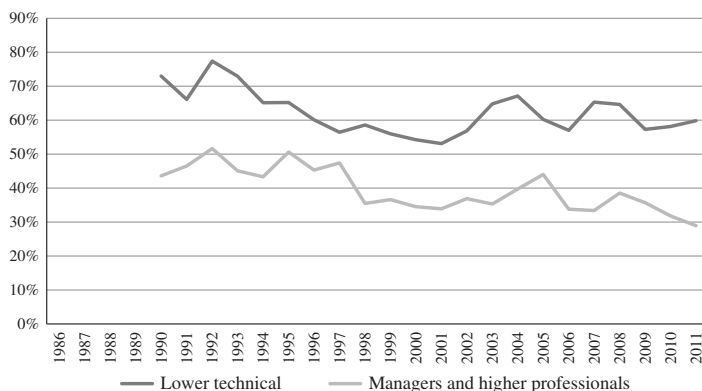
However, that does not necessarily imply that the class-based ideological cleavage between left and right has decreased. In Figure 3, attitudes towards reductions of the public sector are reported for the two core groups of the class cleavage – workers in lower technical positions and higher professionals and managers. The question of the size of the public sector is at the core of the left–right dimension in Sweden, and it is therefore presented as an indicator of the left–right conflict in Sweden.

Apart from some years in the early 1990s, most Swedes rejected proposals to decrease the size of the public sector, probably at least partly because the size was in fact reduced during the crisis years in the mid-1990s. But in spite of the trends, the difference between lower technical workers and higher professionals has remained stable over time, indicating a consistent and stable class cleavage.

Like most populist/nationalist parties in Europe, the Sweden Democrats mobilize support based on criticisms of immigration. However, the party's growing strength is not due to generally increasing levels of immigration and negative attitudes among the Swedish electorate, as Swedes on average are now more tolerant towards foreigners of all kinds than in the 1990s (Demker 2011). Figure 4 presents the attitudes of lower technical and higher

Figure 4

Attitudes among Swedish Lower Technical Workers and Higher Professionals to Receiving Fewer Refugees in Sweden, 1990–2010 (per cent answers 'very good proposal' and 'good proposal' combined)



Source: SOM surveys, 1990–2011.

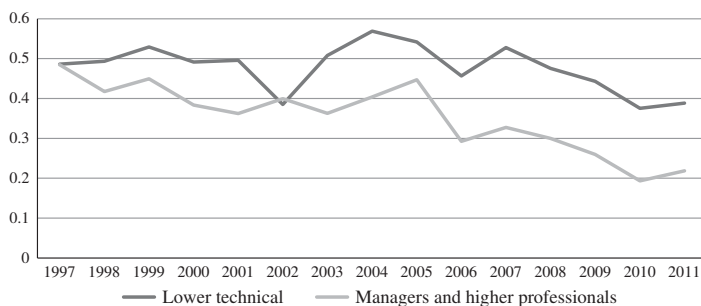
professionals towards Sweden's receiving fewer refugees, for the period 1990 to 2011.

Even though the trend is similar in all groups, attitudes towards refugees and immigration display a quite consistent class pattern. The higher professionals show the least negative attitudes all through the period, and people in the 'lower technical' working-class category display more scepticism. The other working-class groups and the self-employed are similarly sceptical, although somewhat less so. This pattern has not changed in later years, and therefore the working-class support for the Sweden Democrats cannot be explained by a sudden rise in immigration-negative attitudes among the working class.

An additional factor creating the opportunity structure is political trust. Daniel Oesch's work points to a disappointment with the political system and most notably with established parties as a factor providing fertile ground for populist right parties in the working class (Oesch 2008b). That general support for anti-immigrant parties is related to low political trust and protest voting is verified in many other studies (van der Brug et al. 2000; Hainmueller and Hiscox 2007; Mayer 2005; Rydgren 2002; Swank and Betz 2003). Figure 5 shows the proportion of the two core classes that answered 'fairly low' or 'very low' on a question of trust in the political parties.

Figure 5

Distrust in Political Parties among Lower Technical Workers and Higher Professionals, 1997–2011 (per cent answers 'fairly low trust' and 'very low trust' combined)



Source: SOM surveys, 1997–2011.

Up until 2002 the class difference in distrust towards political parties was negligible. However, starting in 2003, we see a widening cleavage between the lower technical workers and higher professionals with respect to trust in parties, where the workers are far less trusting.

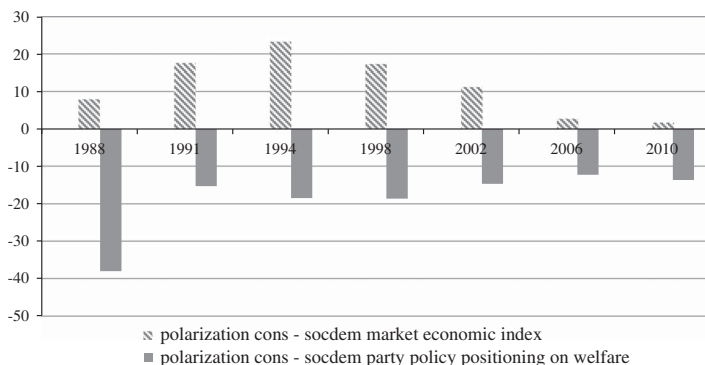
To summarize so far: the dealignment between the working class and the Social Democratic Party is not reflected in any dramatic changes in class polarization in ideological positions, nor in central left–right position, nor in attitudes towards refugees, as a central issue on the authoritarian–libertarian dimension. Quite on the contrary: the class cleavages seem remarkably stable. On the other hand, the class cleavage in trust in the political parties has widened over the last decade, which brings us to the party, or supply, side of our argument.

We argue that the development must also be understood from the supply side, looking at how the left–right cleavage is reflected in the party system. From this perspective, the mobilization of an underlying negativism regarding immigration was possible due to a weaker left–right mobilization between the main parties.

This development is presented in Figure 6, where the changing emphasis in election manifestos between the Social Democratic Party and the Conservative Party are compared between the election years 1998 and 2010 (Klingemann et al. 2006; Volkens et al. 2010). Rather than aggregated left–right positions, we focus on the salience of two core issues in the Swedish left–right debate – welfare issues and market economy – in order to compare the weight devoted to these

Figure 6

Difference in Emphasis of Economy versus Welfare in Election Manifestos of the Social Democratic Party and Conservative Party, 1988–2010



Source. Manifesto Project database, <http://manifestoproject.wzb.eu>. The figure shows the difference in salience between the Social Democrats and the Conservatives.

issue areas by the major left and major right parties. Salience indicates the centrality of the issues in the parties' campaigns.

The columns in Figure 6 illustrate the difference between how large a share of the respective parties' election manifestos was devoted to matters regarding market economy and welfare. Positive values indicate that the Conservative Party devoted more space; negative values indicate that the Social Democratic Party devoted more space. It is clear that the difference between the parties' emphasis on these issues has decreased. The Conservative Party is less dominant on issues regarding market economic issues, and the Social Democratic Party less dominant on welfare issues. Also, in voters' placement of the parties on a left–right scale, the two main opposing parties are perceived to be slightly closer together (Oscarsson and Holmberg 2008, 2013).

Altogether, the ideological climate, with increasing similarities between the major left and major right parties on the supply side, combined with remaining attitudinal cleavages (rather than decreasing tolerance to refugees) on the demand side and the decrease in traditional class voting, could be seen as providing a favourable opportunity structure for the Sweden Democrats (Bornschieer 2010b; Kitschelt 1997). With the working class dealigned from the Social

Democratic Party and traditional leftist stands on welfare and market economy issues, the ground was open for mobilizing other ideological leanings. This leads us to the second part of the analysis and the individual-level analysis.

TESTING THE EXPLANATION: METHODS AND MEASUREMENTS

The test of the explanations for working-class support for the Sweden Democrats discussed in previous sections is performed through a series of binomial logistic regressions of successive models. With statistical elaboration we try to decompose the correlation between class position and sympathy for the Sweden Democrats (Aneshensel 2002). Party sympathy is operationalized with the survey question ‘Which party do you like best today?’ and the dependent variable is accordingly categorical. Class is understood here as based on position in the labour market and measured with the European Socio-economic Classification (Goldthorpe 2000; Goldthorpe et al. 1980; Harrisons and Rose 2006). An additional variable for being active (or not active) in the labour market is also added to the base model in order to incorporate all relevant groups. In order to take account of the age and gender structures of the Swedish labour market the base model is controlled for age (four groups) and gender.

The initial model states what should be explained and incorporates the focal relationship between class position and sympathy for the Sweden Democrats rather than any other party. The second model instead captures the effect of ideology (left–right and authoritarian–libertarian) as an explanation for sympathy for the Sweden Democrats, underpinning the argument that the Sweden Democrats mobilize along the authoritarian–libertarian ideological dimension rather than the left–right dimension. Model 3 then incorporates ideological position as an intervening variable, testing the explanation presented earlier that the working-class support for the Sweden Democrats is mobilizing authoritarian–libertarian leanings rather than left–right leanings.

Distrust in politics and political parties was discussed above as a general explanation for support for populist-right parties. Model 4 tests the direct effect of political trust on support for the Sweden Democrats, and Model 5 tests political trust as an intervening variable between class position and sympathy for the Sweden Democrats.

Political trust is measured with an index from 0 to 10 constructed from three questions on trust in the parliament, the parties and the politicians respectively, and the question on satisfaction with how democracy works.⁴ The sixth and last model tests the full model by controlling for other explanatory factors discussed in previous sections.

In the specially designed 2008 SOM survey (Klass-SOM 2008), attitude questions were posed on policy proposals expected to capture the two ideological dimensions – the economic left–right as well as the sociocultural authoritarian–libertarian – in line with previous research (Bengtsson et al. 2013; Evans et al. 1996; Knutsen and Kumlin 2005; Lachat and Dolezal 2008).

The respondents were asked to evaluate the proposals on a five-point scale ranging from a ‘very good’ to a ‘very bad’ proposal. Two scales were then created (summed indexes, transformed to vary between 0 and 10). The first consists of seven items measuring the left–right orientation ($\alpha = 0.72$), with higher values indicating an ideological position to the right.⁵ The second scale measures the authoritarian–libertarian dimension and is a summation of five items ($\alpha = 0.63$), and higher values indicating a more authoritarian position.⁶ Stating the causal order between attitudes and party sympathy is not easy. However, the general assumption in previous research, which is also followed here, assumes that ideology precedes party sympathy (Oesch 2008a).

Among the controls, educational level is a main factor. Education is measured in four levels – low education (compulsory), medium low (high school), medium high (education above high school but not university degree) and high education (university degree). We also control for political interest (index of subjective political interest and frequency of political discussions, $\alpha = 0.69$), subjective feelings of class and exposure to unemployment risk, and we incorporate controls for working-class identification and fear of unemployment (dichotomies). These controls discern whether it is feelings of risk exposure and exploitation that explain the class bias in support for the Sweden Democrats.

INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL RESULTS

Table 1 presents the results from the binomial logistic regressions. The three class positions making up the working class are highlighted in the table. The main purpose here is *not* to explain support for the

Table 1
Explaining Sympathy for the Sweden Democrats, binomial logistic regression b coefficients

	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>	<i>Model 4</i>	<i>Model 5</i>	<i>Model 6</i>
Managers and professionals	ref		ref		ref	ref
Intermediate occupations	1.07*		0.14		0.8	0.04
Small employers and self-employed (incl. farmers)	0.78		-0.2		0.65	-0.64
Lower sales and service	1.34***		0.75		1.05**	0.54
Lower technical	1.89***		1.11**		1.50***	0.93
Routine workers	0.54		-0.2		0.11	-0.43
Outside labour market	0.37		0.58		0.07	0.62
Age 15–19	1.82**		2.47***		1.85**	2.25**
Age 20–49	0.67		1.05**		0.66	1.15*
Age 50–65	0.11		0.12		0.12	0.09
Age 66–85	ref		ref		ref	ref
Sex	0.45		0.35		0.34	0.11
Authoritarian–libertarian ideology		0.87***	0.9***			0.83***
Left–right ideology		-0.06	-0.1			0.06
Political trust (index)				-0.51***	-0.46***	-0.34***
Low education						1.14
Medium low education						1.15*
Medium high education						0.69
High education						ref
Fear of unemployment						0.52
Working-class identification						-0.64
Political interest (index)						0.10
Intercept	-5.02***	-7.480***	-9.33***	-0.86***	-2.71***	-8.72***
Nagelkerke’s R2	0.11	0.3	0.37	0.14	0.21	0.42
n	1605	1605	1605	1605	1605	1605

Notes: Significance levels are indicated by ***<0.001, **<0.01 and *<0.05.

Sweden Democrats per se, but to test the explanations of working-class support discussed above. This means that we wish to decompose the effects of a working-class position by other variables, and thus the effect of working-class position would diminish or vanish entirely in order to conclude that we have an explanation.

Model 1 confirms that a working-class position is associated with stronger support for the Sweden Democrats. However, it is the more qualified positions in the working class that show significant effects. Neither the 'routine worker' category nor a position outside the labour market show significant effects. We also have a significant effect of 'intermediate occupations' (supervisors, lower-level white-collar workers). Apart from the effect of class position, the only other significant factor is age: being younger (15–19 years) compared with being older (over 66 years). These results indicate that it is not the most socially marginalized groups that support the Sweden Democrats, but rather the quite well-established working class.

Model 2 confirms authoritarian–libertarian ideological leanings as an important factor for sympathy with the Sweden Democrats, while left–right position shows no significant relationship. This confirms the notion that the Sweden Democrats mobilize along the authoritarian–libertarian dimension and not the left–right dimension. In Model 3, the ideological position is entered as an intermediate variable between class position and sympathy for the Sweden Democrats. We thereby reduce the effect of class position considerably, indicating that the class effect is partly due to the fact that class position is quite closely related to ideological position. However, there is still a significant direct effect of belonging to the 'lower technical' category. This means that even though part of the effect of class position on party sympathy is due to ideology, this is not the full story. Model 4 confirms that support for the Sweden Democrats is negatively related to political trust. However, from Model 5 it is clear that low political trust is only a partial explanation for the working-class vote for the Sweden Democrats, since the coefficients for belonging to the established working class remain significant and only slightly reduced compared with the initial model.

Model 6 finally includes ideological position and political trust, as well as the control variables. None of the control variables is significant, but both authoritarian–libertarian position and political trust are clearly significant. Even in this full model a significant effect of belonging to the 'lower technical' category remains, but the

correlation is weaker than in the earlier models, and the significance is just on the 0.05 level (0.047).

The interpretation of this result is that working-class support for the Sweden Democrats is to a substantial degree due to class differences in the other factors in the model, and most notably in low political trust and authoritarian–libertarian ideological position. Left–right position, on the other hand, shows no significant effect. Nor does education level show any significant direct effect here, as compared with some previous studies. Also, we do not find any significant effects of being outside the labour market (unemployed, on long sick leave or early retirement).

CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

Our analysis of the overrepresentation of Sweden Democrats in the working class points to a dealignment between the working class and the Social Democratic Party, and authoritarian leanings within the working class together with a low degree of political trust as significant parts of the explanation. These sentiments within the working class are nothing new, but the present political context of Sweden presented the Sweden Democrats with a ‘window of opportunity’ to mobilize significant parts of the Swedish working class. It has long been known that the working class tends to hold more authoritarian values than do other classes, particularly academics in the middle class, but while the political debates and conflicts have been mobilized and articulated mainly along the economic left–right dimension this has not been of any major significance for party sympathy. But as the left–right polarization in the traditional Swedish party system has decreased and as, at the same time, most parties have moved towards a libertarian position, it has become possible to articulate the authoritarian ideological position, which the Sweden Democrats have done. Our test supports the nationalist and authoritarian character of the party and indicates that mobilization of these layers of the working class can be aligned to new cleavages. The ideological distance between authoritarian-leaning parts of the working class and libertarian middle-class academics has formed a discourse of ‘us vs. them’ and, together with retrenchment policies and increasing cleavages, is most probably reflected in the low political trust driving sympathies for the Sweden Democrats.

NOTES

¹ For further information, see www.som.gu.se.

² For further information, see www.valforskning.pol.gu.se.

³ For further information, see www.som.gu.se.

⁴ Cronbach's alpha = 0.84.

⁵ The policy proposals were income inequalities, the strictness of employment protection, the size of the public sector, privatization of health care, the selling of state-owned companies, the level of unemployment benefits and the introduction of a six-hour working day.

⁶ The issues are the right to free abortion, same-sex marriage, the introduction of the death penalty, the safeguarding of Swedish traditions and values, and whether fewer refugees should be received in Sweden.

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