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Paulus Wagner

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Institut d'études politiques de Paris

ECOLE DOCTORALE DE SCIENCES PO

**Centre for European Studies and Comparative Politics
Laboratory for Interdisciplinary Evaluation of Public Policies**

Doctorate in Political Science, specialization Comparative Politics

Populism as a Problem of Social Integration

*How Tension at the Workplace and with the Welfare State
Fuels Working-Class Welfare Chauvinism*

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Extended Abstract

Welfare chauvinism, the demand to exclude immigrants from the welfare system, is a salient pattern of attitudes among European blue-collar workers and a driver of their over-proportional vote for populist radical right-wing parties (PRRPs). Blue-collar workers' support for populist right-wing politics is a classical object of “modernization loser” theory, which holds that those who face grievances induced by processes of modernization form sociopolitical “resentment”, which PRRPs mobilize and blame on scapegoats, such as immigrants (a mechanism also known as the “politics of resentment”). However, there is a long-standing controversy on what type of “original” grievances would, in such a dynamic, be at stake: is it *socio-economic* or *socio-cultural* losses, a relative decline in *social status* or a lack of *recognition* that “losers of modernization” are subject to? Or do “welfare chauvinists” not suffer from any grievance, racism and myths of injustice propagated by PRRP-ideology sufficing to fuel “resentment“-based politics?

I make the case that “resentment” accumulated by “losers of modernization” is indeed a core factor behind working-class support for welfare chauvinism and join a growing literature in arguing that the core grievance at stake for losers of modernization does not consist in “economic”, “cultural”, or even “status” loss, but in *social exclusion*, which is a distinct sociological mechanism (Gidron/Hall 2019; Sachweh 2020). At hands of the case of working-class welfare chauvinism, I address questions yet unanswered by the literature on populism as a “problem of social integration” (s. Grunow/Sachweh et al. 2023). These are: (1) When we speak of an individual’s “social integration”: into *what* is it that they integrate – and inversely, what is it that the “marginalized” are being excluded from? (2) *How*, i.e. via which mechanisms, are individuals integrated into a “society” – and inversely, in which aspects do these mechanisms fail for “losers of modernization”?

Drawing on the sociological literature, I argue that an individual’s integration into society depends on *social roles* which they practice in institutional settings such as at the workplace, vis-à-vis state agencies, in the family, in associations, churches, unions or in cultural spheres (Merton 1957; Goffman 1959; 1961; Simmel 2013 [1908]). These “meso-level institutions” mediate individuals’ participation in society; and the social roles regulated by them are the central reference point for the distribution of material resources and social status, for social recognition and identity formation (s. *ibid*). “Losers of modernization”, however, are at risk of experiencing permanent *tension* or ultimate *rupture* of precisely those social role-relationships on which their integration into society depends most crucially. Exclusion from *participation in*

society's "social role order" can be causal to the entire range of grievance types known from the literature on the politics of resentment. It can, but does not necessarily, involve material deprivation or insecurity. It almost always involves threats to status or identity, alienation from society's dominant institutions and orientations, a sense of misrecognition and of injustice, of lacking voice and efficacy, of powerlessness (Salmela/Capelos 2021).

Further, I argue that contemporary European blue-collar workers' societal integration or exclusion is driven by two institutional settings at the heart of the socio-economy, which however, are largely overlooked by the literature on the "losers of modernization".

Firstly, I follow Castel's (1995) argument that *employment* is the primary relationship via which a majority of the population experiences integration into contemporary European societies. This socially integrative function of employment is less driven by material income or employment contract types than by the fact that work is a *set of social relationships* which enable integration into a societal system of roles and norms (and underly employments' material reciprocity dimension at the same time). Changing firm strategies and management styles over the recent decades, however, may have strongly impacted on the social relations at workplaces, and notably so in "shrinking" economic sectors. I argue that permanent tension at the workplace, and notably between management and employees in enterprise organizations, can lead to the experience of social exclusion. It does so independently of more commonly surveyed "economic" variables such as income; and it does so notably among those who are in stable, full-time employment: among so-called "labor market insiders" (Emmenegger et al. 2012).

Secondly, I follow Esping-Andersen's (1990) argument that the *welfare state* is the most important solidarity mechanism of contemporary European societies. It keeps individuals not only in material security, but also in an accepted status position within society, once they are not in employment. A welfare recipient's role-relationship vis-à-vis the state is regulated by norms of welfare "deservingness" (van Oorschot 2000). These norms serve as "moral boundaries" defining who is in, and who is out, among the vulnerable members of society (Lamont/Molnar 2002). Welfare reforms of recent decades, however, may have put under tension the societally integrative function of social rights assigned by the state to citizens. This is notably so for blue-collar workers, who depend on those "old", consumption-oriented welfare programs (such as public retirement pensions and unemployment benefits) that have been particular targets of retrenchment and negative-incentive-based "activation" strategies. I argue that permanent tension in *citizens' relations with the policies and institutions of the welfare state* can lead to a deeply seated experience of social exclusion. This can notably occur to those who

are *not* in stable, full-time employment relations (or have not been during their active years) and in effect hold fragmented welfare entitlements: so-called “labor market outsiders” (Emmenegger et al. 2012).

Populist radical right-wing parties are specialized in addressing experiences of social exclusion more affectively than substantively (Salmela/von Scheve 2017) and in attributing blame on ideologically opportune targets. They notably put blame on those who are ostensibly *granted* social inclusion, while the modernization loser is ostensibly *being denied* it. “Those who do not work” (but ostensibly receive things for free from the state) are an opportune target of blame for those who experience permanent tension at work. “Immigrants who receive welfare benefits” are an opportune target of blame for those who themselves feel let down by the welfare state.

I develop these arguments on the basis of 150 biographical interviews, 75 of these with blue-collar workers, conducted between 2018 and 2020 in East Germany and in Austria with the aim of inductively tracing socio-economic “grievance” experiences and the ways in which these politicize. Interviews have focused on the narration of employment trajectories, labor market experiences, experiences with welfare state policies and institutions, and political views (welfare policy and partisan preferences). Cases have been chosen so that in one – East Germany – we would expect the working-class to have lived a relatively high level of socio-economic grievances over the last three decades both due to socio-economic development and welfare reforms while in the other – Austria – we would expect the level of socio-economic grievances to be thinkably low. Both cases, however, feature strong PRRPs with a pronounced “welfare chauvinist” discourse that mobilize over-proportionally many blue-collar workers.

The process of data analysis has included both *inductive* and *deductive* sequences. A sub-sample of the dataset of interviews was used for inductive theory-building. Findings have been set in relation to the existing literature in political sociology of working-class right-wing populism and welfare policy preferences. The final theoretical argument (as summarized above) has been formally tested on the entire sample of interviews in a concluding step of deductive analysis, leading to the confirmation, rejection, or nuancing of propositions. In order to account for external validity, the most important proposition has additionally been tested by use of quantitative survey data (ISSP 2015) using logistic regression modelling.

I find consistent evidence for the theorized attitudinal effects of “workplace exclusion” and “welfare exclusion” both in the Austrian and the East German case.

Interviewees who, at their workplace, experience recognition (material and symbolic), trust, functioning norm systems, and the opportunity to *negotiate* conflicts about pressing problems within these norm systems, take home a sense of efficacy, of dignity, of participation in a collective agency and a sense that society is a just place. They tend to form moderate political views, what most importantly shows in a low *salience* of inclusion/ exclusion issues: they can have diverse views e.g. about migrants' welfare access, but do not attribute much priority to the problem.

Those who experience misrecognition, distrust, normative arbitrariness, persistent management-employee conflicts or socio-structurally delineated conflicts at the workplace, on the contrary, take home a sense of inefficacy, of alienation (“you’re being treated like a number”), of status denial, and a sense that society is *not* a just place. This can – but in numerous cases does not – come with material losses or manifest fear about losing one’s job. Among working-class interviewees who experience such conditions over prolonged time periods, there is a repeated pattern of attitudinal reaction which involves the formation of a “producerist” (Derks 2006; Rathgeb 2021) identity that involves the claim of being “hard-working” – and becomes the basis for salient, emotionalized and moralized blaming of those “who don’t work”, “but receive things for free from the state”.

These findings are similar for both cases studies, with the difference that in the accounts of Austrian (labor market insider) workers, work conditions and workplace relations have deteriorated over an extended time-period, while in East German accounts, the process has happened in an accelerated manner in the 1990s, with a more prominent experience of job loss.

I corroborate the finding that social exclusion experiences in work relations provide fertile ground for right-wing populist mobilization using logistic regression analysis on International Social Survey Program (ISSP) data (2015 wave) for all European countries. Controlling for demographic and socio-economic variables, I find a significant ($p < 0,001$) and considerably strong negative correlation between the subjective quality of workplace relations and reported voting for PRRPs across European democracies.

In the qualitative data, I find yet a distinct, recurrent mechanism among small enterprises. Small business owners show a propensity to make experiences of social exclusion themselves with larger market participants and/ or with the institutions of the tax- and regulatory state. In effect, there are cases of (typically artisan) small enterprises where owner and workforce show strong integration with each other – but collectively feel alienated from society’s dominant institutions and collectively support right-wing populist narratives.

I find consistent evidence for the attitudinal effects of experiences of social exclusion in contact with policies and institutions of the welfare state both in Austria and East Germany. Globally, there is little difference with regard to this mechanism between the two case studies. The policy areas in which interviewees make most of “welfare exclusion” experiences are public retirement pension and “activation”-oriented labor market policies. These are also the areas of welfare policy with which working-class interviewees overall narrate most experiences and those most significant to their lives, while those with histories of health problems also make significant experiences with the health system and health insurances.

“Welfare exclusion” experiences occur where individuals experience a stark discrepancy between a deservingness norm administered by institutions and case workers of the welfare state on the one hand – and a pressing, personal situation of need on the other. Even more, they occur there where really existing welfare dispositives are perceived to not realize the norms that the state uses to legitimize them (perception of “double standards”, of cynicism) and this coincides with pressing situations of need. In such situations, interviewees can accumulate a strong sense of being “misrecognized” and treated “unjustly” by the institutions of the (welfare) state. With regard to pension policy, this is the case for the following groups in the dataset: (1) workers who get unemployed above the age of 50 and sensibly lose pension contribution years for reasons they argue are “not [their] fault” (but rely in the labor market and with employers who lay off elderly workers), (2) women who have worked part time or have interrupted employment trajectories and receive pension benefits way below the poverty risk level, (3) full time employed low-wage earners in Germany, which has a net pension replacement rate of only around 50%. It is the case for the following groups of labor market (unemployment aid) recipients: (1) recipients with a health problem who are required by the “activation”-oriented measures administered by the employment office to look for work; (2) unemployed workers over 50 with low chances on the labor market who are required to “make the impression” of looking for work so not to lose their unemployment benefits; (3) young workers who have never embarked upon a stable employment trajectory and who perceive that the employment office requires them to take up jobs with poor working conditions.

Interviewees who make such experiences can show strong attitudinal reactions. One of these, and the empirically most recurrent one, is to denounce the state’s “deservingness” norm as unjust for oneself; but at the same time to point one’s finger at even less “deserving” groups, demanding the norm be applied to them instead of to oneself. This behavior has been called “deflection” (Bolton et al. 2022). This leads to a dynamic of “kicking down” along the entire

“ladder” of deservingness, which starts with labor market insiders complaining that labor market outsiders would not “make an effort”; continues with elderly “outsiders” complaining that the young don’t “want to work”; and takes its end with the blaming of (non-working) immigrants.

“Welfare chauvinism” seems indeed to serve as the smallest common denominator, the unifying issue, of a coalition of *both socio-economic insiders and socio-economic outsiders* in support of PRRPs (s. Damhuis 2020), all of whom, however, tend to make experiences of social exclusion, which resonate with the resentment-targeting (and -fueling), blame-attributing PRRP-ideology abundantly circulating in the public sphere.

I also find other experiences and reactions among welfare recipients, including a reaction of “categorical challenging” of existing welfare deservingness norms, salient “re-inclusion” experiences in effect of successful labor market policy, and a typical attitudinal mechanism of moderate “mirroring” among those who learn deservingness norms in their own welfare experiences, but for whom the system works out well (notably “labor market insiders”).

In addition, I find evidence that social integration or exclusion in a number of other spheres than employment or welfare equally matters to political preference formation, even if among the manual workers surveyed, the two theorized mechanisms offer the strongest explanation (both of experienced “social integration” itself and of its attitudinal effects). Workers who integrate into social roles within “sociocultural” institutions that link them to society’s dominant institutional orientations form more moderate political views. Such institutions can be associations, unions, churches, (stable engagement in) parties or social movements. It can equally be the family if family members “mediate” social integration for the interviewee: f. ex., the interviewees children have stable jobs in the “knowledge economy”, feel as fully integrated participants of today’s political economy, and the contact between the interviewee and them is proximate and positive.

In the dataset, almost only those workers form “center left-wing” partisan orientations who are engaged in labor unions (or in these parties themselves). Those workers form “liberal left-wing” views who (1) stand in vivid contact with sociocultural professionals e.g. via family or friendship circles or (2) are actively engaged in cultural spheres in which corresponding narratives circulate, which include “educative” cultural spheres (classical/ jazz music, literature, foreign languages, etc.) alongside “counterculture” movements (e.g. alternative rock music).

On the contrary, socio-structurally homogenous, and often geographically local, milieus of working-class occupations mediated via family, associations, etc. can act as a collectively marginalized echo chamber. Most interviewed workers are embedded in homogenous socio-cultural milieus, in which the most important “bridging institutions” with advanced capitalist society’s dominant role-order are *employment* (mediated by enterprises) and the (welfare) *state*.

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Here is my best shot.

Chapter 1 Introduction: Does the Welfare Chauvinist Working-Class have a “Problem”?



III. 1 German AfD electoral billboard (2017) with slogan “Secure the borders. Protect the welfare state” (Source: ImagoImages.de).

Welfare chauvinism is the proposition to exclude *non-natives* (immigrants, “foreigners”) from a country’s public system of welfare provision – this is, from benefits related to labor market, pension, or social minimum assistance policies, family support payments, health services, or social housing – or from other types of benefits deriving from the public budget such as notably, allowances paid to refugees. Located at the intersection of *welfare state* and *immigration* debates, welfare chauvinism has since the 1990s risen to considerable public salience across European democracies (Reeskens/van Oorschot 2011; Enggist 2019; Greve 2019; Rinaldi/Bekker 2021; Careja/Harris 2022). This process has notably been driven by populist radical right-wing parties (PRRPs), who have in the early 1990s started to propagate welfare chauvinism, placing it as the characteristic feature of their social policy program and as a central issue of their general political discourse (Andersen/Bjørklund 1990; Mudde 1999; 2007; Ennser-Jedenastik 2016; 2018; Otjes et al. 2018; Chueri 2020; Abts et al. 2021). This has enabled PRRPs to expand their electoral appeal notably among one social group: the working-class, and most of all, among *blue-collar workers*. No other social group shows such ample support for welfare chauvinism as do manual workers (Mewes/Mau 2012: 139f.). Workers’ attribution of high salience to this issue is underlined by evidence that welfare chauvinism has been a central driver of the blue-collar working class’s electoral realignment with PRRPs during the respective time period (Andersen/Bjørklund 1990; Kitschelt/McGann 1995: 22; Häusermann/Walter 2010; Betz/Meret 2013; Michel/Lefkofridi 2017; Afonso/Rennwald 2018).

Welfare chauvinism, on the one hand, is a problem of welfare policy and public attitudes on *welfare deservingness* (van der Waal et al. 2013; Reeskens/van der Meer 2019; Enggist 2019; Altreiter/Flecker 2020). It is an established insight that European publics tend to base their

perceptions of welfare recipients' deservingness to receive benefits from the public system of solidarity provision on five underlying criteria (van Oorschot 2000; Meuleman/Roosma/Abts 2020). These are: *control* (are the reasons for welfare recipient's situation of need within or outside of their own control?), *attitude* (does the recipient comply with the rules of the community of solidarity?), *reciprocity* (has the recipient themselves contributed to the community before encountering a situation of need?), *identity* (does the recipient *belong* to the community?), and *need* (how dire is the recipients' situation of need?). In sum, these criteria are known as the "CARIN"-model of welfare deservingness (s. *ibid*). Welfare chauvinism as a salient public issue corresponds to a singular emphasis on the criterion of *identity* to regulate welfare access: "natives" shall have access to welfare, while "non-natives" shall be excluded. This said, research has shown that attitudinal "welfare chauvinism" is indeed associated with negative perceptions of welfare recipients more generally among the public (Attewell 2021). This means that negative moral judgements f. ex. of the unemployed, which are typically based on arguments about *reciprocity* ("they don't contribute"), *control* ("they could find work if they wanted"), or *attitude* ("they exploit the system")² are associated with welfare exclusivism against immigrants ("they are not from here"). Neither of these attitudinal patterns, however, fully explains the other: while generally, those who blame the "native" unemployed also tend to blame "foreign" welfare recipients, this pattern diverges among parts of the public (s. *ibid*). In more general terms, both welfare chauvinism and welfare deservingness classify as instances of (il)legitimacy perceptions and patterns of moral argument in public budgetary debates or fiscal conflicts. Other instances of such include moralized conflicts about the tax system (Spire 2018; Wansleben 2021) or the blaming of public bureaucracies (Cramer 2016).

Welfare chauvinism, on the other hand, has since the 1990s been a prominent element of the ideology and program of populist radical right-wing parties (PRRPs) across Europe and typically features as the flagship issue of their socio-economic programs (Andersen/Bjorklund 1990; Mudde 1999; 2007: 119ff; Michel 2017). As an issue in the public and political debate, welfare chauvinism has been dominantly framed by PRRPs (Carreja/Harris 2022), even if taken up by other political parties more recently (such as the Danish social democrats, s. Careja et al. 2016; or the Austrian conservatives, s. Ennser-Jedenastik 2020; s. also Schumacher/Van Kersbergen 2016). PRRPs have in particular known to use welfare chauvinism to turn the 2015 European refugee crisis into a political opportunity (Marx/Naumann 2018; Bartholomae et al.

² See e.g. : Boland et al. (2022); Bolton et al. (2022); Patrick (2016); Pemberton et al. (2016); Jun (2019); Altreiter et al. (2019); Van Oorschot/Meuleman (2014); Roosma et al. (2016); Roosma et al. (2017); Laenen et al (2019); Rosetti (2022); Abts et al. (2022); ch. 5 & 7 of this thesis.

2020). In this sense, welfare chauvinism as a distinct political issue is both a neat case and a defining element of populist radical right-wing politics.

This said, the logic behind PRRPs' socio-economic programs is subject to controversial academic debate (Rathgeb/Busemeyer 2022: 8). The proposition that these programs are marked by a *nativist* ideology, resulting in opposition to welfare access for "foreigners" as flagship issue, has been broadly accepted in the field (Mudde 1999; Ennsner-Jedenastik 2016; Otjes et al. 2018; Fenger 2018). The question whether and to what extent PRRPs on the contrary support solidarity and redistribution among the so-defined "native" in-group is still being hotly debated. This traces back to a debate on whether the European far right is economically "right-wing" ("neo-liberal", opposing state intervention in the economy, e.g. Betz 1994: 108; Kitschelt/ McGann 1995) or "left-wing" (supporting generous welfare policy, e.g. Afonso 2015; Afonso/Rennwald 2018; Betz/Meret 2013; Röth et al. 2018). While indeed, still in the 1980s, several European populist right-wing parties were focused on tax populism and opposition to state intervention (Anderson/Bjorklund 1990; Luther 1991), this picture has changed starting from the 1990s. Today, the degree to which PRRPs across Europe support redistribution indeed varies cross-nationally, with French RN or Polish PiS championing on the "left-wing" side, supporting an extension of social spending in certain areas, while German AfD, Swiss SVP or Belgian VB have been "right-wing" outliers, supporting austere budgetary policies; s. Markowski 2002: 28; Ivaldi 2015; Afonso/Rennwald 2018; Diermeier 2020; Michel 2017: 151ff.). While this could be explained by variation in institutional configurations and entire party systems (France *as a whole* is more economically left-wing than Germany), there is yet more evidence on patterns of PRRPs' behavior within countries. Namely, PRRPs across Europe (RN in France as much as AfD in Germany) have been shown to engage in "blurring" of their re-distributive issue positions (Rovny 2013; Rovny/Polk 2020) so that it is hard to tell where, precisely, they stand economically. This suggests the interpretation that right-wing populists attempt to broaden their electoral appeal by means of actively deceiving their socio-economically weaker constituencies (see the debate on "false consciousness", e.g. Frank 2004).

Recent insights have shed more nuanced light on the socioeconomics of right-wing populism and indeed suggest that it follows a logic of *solidarity for some, yet not for others* also among the ostensibly "native" ingroup. An ideology called *producerism* has been shown to underly PRRPs' socio-economic programs (Derks 2006; Ivaldi/Mazzoleni 2019; Abts et al. 2022). Producerism views as "deserving" all those who make *materially tangible contributions* to the economy and public fiscality, while viewing those who don't as "unproductive". Following this

logic, producerism considers both entrepreneurs (capital owners) and “productive” employees (such as blue-collar workers, whose labor produces materially tangible results) to be deserving beneficiaries of public policy. On the other hand, it considers public bureaucracies, politicians, intellectuals, journalists, artists alongside the unemployed and non-working immigrants to be “unproductive” scroungers of the public budget, whose access to resources should be limited. This re-framing of the “social question” as a *horizontal* conflict between socio-structurally heterogeneous, morally defined groups of “makers” and “takers” (Rathgeb 2021) crosscuts the traditional framing of redistribution as a *vertical* conflict between hierarchically ordered *socioeconomic classes*.³ Moreover, PRRPs have been shown to support the protection of established “consumption-oriented” welfare programs (such as retirement pension schemes), while opposing spending on social investment-oriented policies (Beramendi et al. 2015; Enggist/Pinggera 2022; Morel et al. 2012; Hemerijck 2013).⁴ This is to a certain degree explained by an orientation towards the interests of the “old” working class as opposed to those of the “new” (namely: educated) middle class, respectively, by the interests of the low- to mid-skilled vs. the high-skilled working population (Gingrich/Häusermann 2015; Häusermann et al. 2021). In a similar vein, Chueri (2022) shows how PRRPs position themselves along the division created by *labor market dualization* (Emmenegger et al. 2012) in contemporary European political economies. PRRPs seem to defend the social rights of “labor market insiders”, i.e. of those with stable, full-time, uninterrupted employment trajectories, who in result hold generous welfare entitlements (most notably, to retirement pension benefits). On the contrary, PRRPs support cutting the social rights of “labor market outsiders”, i.e. those with interrupted or “atypical” employment trajectories.⁵ The consistency of PRRPs’ commitment to defending insider workers’ rights has been put in question (Rathgeb/Busemeyer/Sahm 2022) and may in some areas be more rhetorical than substantive. However, the finding that protecting insiders’ pension entitlements is an important issue in the PRR-platform has been corroborated (s. *ibid*). Last but not least, PRRPs support “authoritarian” approaches to social policy which emphasize benefit conditionality and punishment, featuring sanctions if welfare recipients do not fulfill obligations that come attached to the receipt of welfare benefits (s. *ibid*). These

³ This stands in the context of an increasing relevance of “zero sum conflicts”, “deservingness”-issues, and moral group distinctions in European welfare policy that is mirrored in the “welfare priorities” of other party families and segments of the European public as well (Häusermann 2010; Beramendi et al 2015; Häusermann et al 2021; Enggist 2019; Bremer/Bürgisser 2021).

⁴ On the distinction, s. further: Esping-Andersen (2002); Morel et al. (2012); Bonoli/Natali (2012); Hemerijck (2019); Garritzmann et al. (2022); Busemeyer et al. (2018); s. “old” vs. “new” social risks (Häusermann 2012).

⁵ Further in line with this logic, Ennser-Jedenastik (2018) shows that PRRPs protect insurance-based welfare programs (such as the pay-as-you go pension and unemployment insurance schemes of continental European welfare states, s. Esping-Andersen 1990; Palier 2010) while attacking universal, tax-funded welfare programs.

negative effects are, again, mainly experienced by labor market outsiders, who make unemployment experiences or hold fragmented welfare entitlements.

On the political “demand-side”, support for welfare chauvinism is socially structured along the lines of occupational class and education. Attitudinal welfare chauvinism follows the same “peculiar” (Ivarsflaten 2005) socio-structural pattern that is known to explain far-right support: both are strongly represented among the working-class on the one hand, and among small business owners on the other (Oesch 2008; Mewes/Mau 2012: 139f.; Oesch/Rennwald 2018). Sociocultural professionals and more generally the higher educated, on the other hand, are least likely to support welfare chauvinism or the far-right (s. *ibid*). As an outlier, blue-collar workers are the single most welfare chauvinist occupational class group (Mewes/Mau 2012). There is consistent evidence that PRRPs have since the 1990s strategically used welfare chauvinism to mobilize a working-class electorate – and successfully so (Harteveld 2016; Michel 2017; Michel/Lekofridi 2017; Damhuis 2020; Abts et al. 2023). In this sense, popular support for welfare chauvinism qualifies as a case of support for populist right-wing politics. In addition, *working class welfare chauvinism* is a central explanatory factor of the European working class’s electoral realignment with PRRPs (Bornschieer/Kriesi 2013; Rydgren 2013).

The support of the working class for right-wing populist politics has given rise to controversial debate mainly for one reason: it does not seem to be based on an “economic” logic. In advanced capitalist liberal democracies on both sides of the Atlantic, the so-called “white working-class” (McKenzie 2017; Gest 2016; 2018), and most notably the “traditional” “blue-collar” working class, has over the recent decades shown increasing support for political actors of the populist radical right (Kitschelt/McGann 1995; Oesch 2008; Rydgren 2013; Bornschieer/Kriesi 2013; Gougou/Mayer 2013; Betz/Meret 2013; Lamont et al. 2017; Oesch/Rennwald 2018; Westheuser/della Porta 2022; Bartha/Lindenberger 2022; Dörre/Becker/Reif-Spirek 2020; Dörre 2023). This has *à priori* been perceived as puzzling because production workers, in earlier decades, were a core constituency of left-wing parties (Kitschelt 1994; Houtman/Achterberg/Derks 2008; Rennwald 2020; Abou-Chadi/Mitteregger/Mudde 2021; Bremer/Rennwald 2023). The linkage between the working-class and left-wing politics used to be seen as economic interest-based: left-wing parties support redistribution and welfare state expansion, what is in the working classes’ interest. The linkage between workers and PRRPs, on the contrary, seems not to be based on economic self-interest. This is for a number of reasons. One is that the electoral appeal of PRRPs strikes over-proportionally in two social class groups: blue-collar workers on the one hand – and small business owners on the other (Kitschelt/McGann 1995;

Ivarsflaten 2005; Beramendi et al. 2015; Oesch/Rennwald 2018).⁶ These two groups, however, hold the most opposed socio-economic policy preferences of all occupational classes when it comes to questions of budget size and redistribution: small capitalists are the most averse to state-intervention, while blue-collar workers are provenly most in favor (Ivarsflaten 2005). It is hard for a party platform to reconcile such policy demands (s. *ibid*). Moreover, “welfare chauvinist” PRRPs are being supported by blue-collar workers across European countries, globally speaking independently of whether these parties feature more or less redistributive socioeconomic policies (Michel 2017: 157ff.; Afonso/Rennwald 2018; Häusermann 2020).⁷

These puzzles could partly be explained by PRRPs’ defense of consumption-oriented (as opposed to social investment-oriented) welfare programs (Beramendi et al. 2015; Enggist/Pinggera 2022) as well as their support for the welfare entitlements of “labor market insiders” as opposed to “labor market outsiders” (Chueri 2022). Evidence shows indeed that globally, PRRPs are being more supported by protected labor market insiders than by precarious outsiders (Rovny/Rovny 2017; Häusermann 2020). The relevance of this finding for the occupational class of blue-collar workers is, however, put in question by evidence that overall, as a group, they are among those *most at risk* on the contemporary labor market (Rovny/Rovny 2017; Im/Rovny/Mayer/Palier 2019; Kurer/Palier 2019). This means that even skilled manual workers with “insider” contracts face considerable risk of *becoming* unemployed outsiders at some point during their life trajectory. Moreover, the insider-outsider divide in voting behavior does not seem to be consistent within the group of blue-collar workers: if they go to the polls, precarious and non-precarious workers show a similarly high support for PRRPs (s. Bornschier/Kriesi 2013: 23).⁸ Precarious workers show a high likelihood not to participate in elections at all, what has sometimes been interpreted as an indicator of lesser support for populist right-wing politics (s. *ibid*). Im (2021), however, shows that support for the issue of

⁶ More recently, service workers have been shown to hold similar issue preferences like manual workers and to over-proportionally support populist right-wing politics, too (s. Ares 2017; however, s. Häusermann 2020 for a divergent account).

⁷ Michel 2017 (157ff.) shows that working-class share in PRRPs electorates and party’s support for overall welfare state expansion are only very weakly correlated. Afonso/Rennwald (2018) offer a more nuanced picture; however, Häusermann (2020) and already Bornschier/Kriesi (2013) show evidence that blue-collar support for PRRPs is globally very consistent and stable across contemporary European democracies.

⁸ The interpretation that (notably among blue-collar workers, but also in general) *both* over-proportional parts of the (declining) lower middle *and* of the precarious/ poor support PRR-politics is i.a. supported by results by Mayer (2014; 2018) for France; by Antonucci et al. (2017) who show that *both* the economically “left behind” *and* the “declining middle” voted Leave in the Brexit-referendum; and most explicitly by Damhuis (2020) who analyzes the *multiple* electoral reservoirs of PRRPs in France and the Netherlands. German electoral studies show that AfD mobilized 21% of blue-collar workers and 21% of unemployed persons who turned out for the 2017 national parliamentary election while scoring 12,6% in the general electorate (21% of workers and 17% of the unemployed while 10.3% in the general electorate in 2021; source: Infratest dimap); s. also Sachweh (2020).

welfare chauvinism is particularly salient among precarious labor market outsiders. Welfare chauvinism literally motivates “outsiders” to go to the polls and cast their ballot for PRRPs – in spite of evidence that they virtually do not have *any economic stake* in these parties’ policy programs.

An obvious “non-economic” explanation for blue-collar workers’ support for welfare chauvinism specifically and populist right-wing politics more generally is *racism* (e.g. Schröder 2018). It is indeed a long-standing line of argument that only those workers with authoritarian, xenophobic, and other socio-culturally conservative attitudes vote for PRRPs, what can mean that they prioritize “sociocultural issues”, such as opposition to immigration, over their socioeconomic policy preferences (s. Iversflaten 2005; Bornschieer/Kriesi 2013; Mayer 2014 & partly 2018; in a similar vein Lipset 1959; 1960; Inglehart/Norris 2019).⁹ However, this explanation is not fully conclusive, either. First of all, welfare chauvinism qualifies clearly as a case of anti-immigration attitudes, so that explaining support for the demand to *exclude immigrants from the welfare system* with *exclusivist attitudes towards immigrants* amounts to tautology. Secondly, PRRPs today mobilize mass electorates, not deeply ideologized niche electorates who would under any circumstances give *first priority* to the “anti-immigration”-issue. During the 2010s and 2020s, PRRPs have mobilized over 20% of the total vote share in proportional national elections in numerous European democracies (e.g. Austrian FPÖ, Danish People’s Party, Finnish Finns Party, French RN, Hungarian Fidesz, Italian Lega and Fratelli d’Italia, Polish PiS, Sweden Democrats, and AfD in Germany’s Eastern Federal countries). They have mobilized an even considerably higher share of the blue-collar working class (e.g. over 50% in Austria in 2017 & 2019, s. ch. 4). This does not include run-offs (e.g. Austrian 2016 and French 2017 & 2022 presidential elections).¹⁰ Why would such a large part of the working-class *deprioritize their own* socio-economic interest for the sake of *excluding others* from the welfare state? Last but not least, why would PRRPs need to at least rhetorically (Mudde 2007: 119ff) link *nativism* to *welfare politics*, creating *welfare chauvinism* out of simple *chauvinism*, in order to mobilize workers?

⁹ In a partial deviation from this argument, Rathgeb/Bussemeyer/Sahm (2022) argue that PRRP-voters do not demand generous, but *authoritarian* social policies, with the exception of generous pension policy and to a certain degree, health policy. However, they do not show results by social class.

¹⁰ Or yet the Brexit referendum, which has involved salient welfare chauvinist and welfare protectionist appeals both “reinforcing deservingness along ethno-national lines” and “invok[ing] social citizenship to delegitimize EU institutions” (Donoghue/Kuisma 2022) including the Leave campaign’s infamous slogan “We send the EU £350 million a week – let’s fund our NHS instead” (alone, the money never went to the NHS, s. HealthJobs.co.uk¹).

An explanation of this seeming paradox is provided by “modernization loser” theory, also known as the “politics of resentment” (Betz 1994; 2001). It holds that groups who face pressing social “grievances” themselves, which, however, are not practically resolvable and ignored by institutional and political actors, can react by forming generalized socio-political “resentment”. Affective resentment can easily be mobilized by PRRPs by means of blame-shifting on scapegoats – such as immigrants. The problem with “modernization loser” theory is, however, that a long-standing controversy ranks around the question of whether supporters of populist right-wing politics are indeed subject to “grievances” or not, and if so, what type of grievances this would be.

1.1 What is “Modernization Losers” Problem, actually?



III. 2: Billboard from FPÖ’s 2017 national parliamentary election campaign showing former head of party Heinz-Christian Strache and the slogan: “Fairness for Austrians when it comes to social benefits, minimal security, and pensions”¹¹ (Source: Ernst Weingartner/ picturedesk.com)

Since the 1980s, grand socio-economic shifts have transformed the industrialized economies of the post-WW-II era into “advanced capitalist” socio-economic regimes (Beramendi et al. 2015; Baccaro/Pontusson/Blyth 2022; Hassel/Palier 2022). These transformations have included processes such as globalization, the liberalization of the economy, labor market dualization, and sectoral change from an industrial- to a service- and knowledge-economy (s. *ibid*). “Modernization loser” theories hold that these processes have produced winners and losers,

¹¹ The respective chapter in FPÖ’s 2017 election manifesto consists largely in one demand: to cut welfare benefits for foreigners (s. Manifesto Project Database).

leading to the accumulation of social *grievances* in certain population groups (Betz 1994; Kriesi et al 2008). When not recognized publicly and politically (e.g. by public institutions or by centrist politics), these accumulated grievances can lead to a deep-seated sense of injustice, of powerlessness, and of being socio-politically “unheard”, what drives the formation of generalized socio-political *resentment* (Betz 1994; 2021; Hoggett et al. 2013; Hochschild 2016; Cramer 2016; Gest/Mayer 2017; Salmela/von Scheve 2017; Van Hootegem et al. 2021; Rosenthal 2021; Nguyen et al. 2022). “Resentment” is both an affective pattern and a moral sentiment that includes the emotion of *anger* alongside the named elements: a sense of *injustice* combined with a feeling of *inefficacy* due to both lacking options of problem *resolution* and lacking problem *recognition* by competent/ powerful actors (s. Feather/Nairn 2005; Hoggett 2018; TenHouten 2018; Demertzēs 2020; Salmela/Capelos 2021; Linden/Maercker 2011). Generalized socio-political resentment, in turn, is easy to be politically mobilized by means of populist blame-attribution strategies (Wodak 2015; Lamont et al. 2017; Wirz 2018; Hameleers et al. 2018; 2023; Busby et al. 2019; Marx 2020; Scherr/Leiner 2021; Abts/Baute 2022). This mechanism does per se *not* lead to a substantive resolution of the original grievances at stake. However, it leads to the temporary restoration of a “sense of justice” by means of blame attribution on external targets (“scapegoats”). The blaming of an “out-group” implies a symbolic reinforcement of the addressee’s belonging to the social “in-group”, what can be experienced as an (inverted and perhaps precarious) form of recognition, status appreciation, and social inclusion (Lamont 2000; Hochschild 2016: ch.7; Stuewig et al. 2010; Lucas 2017; Boland et al. 2022; Bolton et al. 2022).

There is a broad consensus in the literature that PRRPs are specialists in the “politics of resentment” (Betz 1994; Kitschelt/McGann 1995; Kriesi 2008; Salmela/von Scheve 2017; Mudde/Kaltwasser 2018; Inglehart/Norris 2019). In line with their ideology, they practice blame shifting on institutional and political elites on the one hand; and on social outgroups – such as immigrants – on the other (Mudde 2007; Cramer 2016; Damhuis 2020; Hameleers et al. 2023). Blue-collar workers, on their side, are typically seen as losers of modernization. De-industrialization and skill-related technological change have led to a massive decline in blue-collar jobs over the recent decades (Oesch 2013; Häusermann 2020). At the same time, the needs of the blue-collar working class have shifted out of the center of institutional and political attention with a decline of unionization rates (Ebbinghaus/Visser 1999; Vandaele 2019) and a convergence of moderate left-wing parties towards economically centrist, so-called “third way”

programs, which may not represent the needs and interests of workers (Giddens 1998; Glyn 2001; Arndt 2013; Schwander/Manow 2017; Bremer 2018; Rennwald 2020).¹²

This said, the literature is marked by a long-standing, controversial debate on whether support for populist right-wing politics (such as welfare chauvinism) can indeed be explained by social grievances, and if so, of what nature these grievances would be. While evidence is rather consistent that the “politics of resentment” is not dominantly driven by “economic” grievances, some authors argue that “cultural” grievances are at stake. More recently, it has been proposed that sociological mechanisms such as “relative status loss” or “social exclusion” may best capture what modernization-related losses consist in and how they politicize. Finally, the option must always be considered that the “politics of resentment” functions without any underlying grievances: rather, it may be populist right-wing ideology itself that frames its constituents as “victims”, creating myths of injustice (Feather/Nairn 2005; Vascik et al. 2016; Wodak 2015; Meijen/Vermeersch 2023).

While immediate socio-economic hardship seems to explain support for populist radical right-wing politics among *a part* of the electorate (Ford/Goodwin 2013; Mayer 2014; 2018; Damhuis 2020; Sachweh 2020; Marx 2020), evidence is equally consistent that it is not the dominant driver of PRRPs’ success (Bornschiefer/Kriesi 2013; Antonucci et al. 2017; Mutz 2018; Inglehart/Norris 2019; Häusermann 2020). Most notably, income-levels and other indicators of absolute economic position are a very weak predictor of support for right-wing populism: PRRPs with their nativist and welfare chauvinist discourse tend to mobilize both numerous voters with low, middle, and even high incomes (*ibid.*)¹³ This is consistent with the above-discussed, “peculiar” (Ivarsflaten 2005), occupational support coalition of PRRPs, which consists of both over-proportionally many blue-collar workers and small business owners; or otherwise put: in a coalition of *both* factions of labor *and* of capital (*and* of the poor).¹⁴ Even in terms of social mobility, evidence is consistent that the bulk of PRRP-supporters is *not* made up of those who have dropped into manifest economic hardship due to the recent decades’ grand

¹² Further s. on the transformations of social democracy: Kitschelt 1994; Lavelle 2008; Karreth et al. 2013; Gingrich/Häusermann 2015; Loxbo et al. 2021; on contemporary center-left strategies: Abou-Chadi/Mitteregger/Mudde 2021; Häusermann/Abou-Chadi et al. 2021¹, 2021²; Bremer/Rennwald 2023).

¹³ S. also Hartmann et al. (2022); the same counts for other indicators of economic status: f. ex. for Austria, Fessler et al. (2023: 25) show that FPÖ mobilizes the *most heterogenous* electorate in terms of household wealth (property) among all parties.

¹⁴ A growing literature argues that multiple but “equifinal” causal pathways lead diverse social groups to support PRRPs (and political causes generally). The argument has been introduced by Damhuis (2020); s. further Harteveeld et al. (2021); Weisskircher (2020); Sachweh (2020); Schwander/Manow (2023). I agree with this argument and take it up below (see “*Main Arguments*”). This said, there are mechanisms with strong explanatory potential for a considerable part of the *overall* phenomenon (such as *relative social status loss* or *social exclusion*, which, as I argue below, is one common mechanism that manifests differently for various groups).

transformations (Rovny/Rovny 2017; Gidron/Mijs 2019; Im et al. 2019; Kurer 2020; Häusermann 2020; Im et al. 2023). If among any group, PRRPs show particularly high support among the working lower-middle class (such as skilled “insider” blue-collar workers).

This is addressed by a growing literature, which shows that exposure to economic *risk* is a powerful factor in political preference formation. *Fear* of economic decline (“economic anxiety”, Mudde/Kaltwasser 2018), much more than manifest economic hardship, increases the propensity of support for populist right-wing politics notably among the lower middle socioeconomic strata who *have something to lose* (Antonucci 2017). Labor market risks created by globalization (Swank/Betz 2003; Mughan et al. 2003; Rodrik 2018; Colantone/Stanig 2018) and automation (Kurer/Palier 2019; Im/Mayer/Palier/Rovny 2019; Kurer 2020) have shown to unfold this effect on precisely those skilled “insider” blue-collar workers who so overwhelmingly turn out for PRRPs (Rovny/Rovny 2017). This said, only a part of this literature argues that modernization losers are realistically afraid of economic hardship, namely, by job loss (Mughan et al. 2003; Swank/Betz 2003).¹⁵ The larger part of the literature argues that the lower middle is threatened by a *relative* decline in socio-economic status, but not in manifest economic hardship (Kriesi et al. 2008; Bornschier/Kriesi 2013; Antonucci et al. 2017; Mutz 2018; Häusermann 2020; Kurer 2020, Green/Pahontu 2021; s. more below).

This *impasse* of purely “economic” explanations had been addressed by a stream of literature which argues that losers of modernization are not subject to “economic”, but to “cultural” or “identity”-related grievances (Bornschier/Kriesi 2013; Inglehart/Norris 2019) According to this theory, not socio-economic transformations, but socio-cultural and value shifts of the recent decades cause segments of the population to feel threatened by the perceived erosion of traditional cultural values and norms (Inglehart/Norris 2019). This applies notably to progressive changes in gender roles, LGBTQIA+ rights, multiculturalism, immigration or (yet more recently) environmental and climate politics. These transformations are being met by resistance and opposition in form of a “cultural backlash” (ibid) whose proponents feel that their way of life and identity are under threat due to rapid societal changes and increasing diversity. The theory of cultural “backlash” is intuitive and supported by consistent attitudinal

¹⁵ Im et al. (2019) show that those who are already “just about coping” on their income are particularly afraid of automatization. Abou-Chadi/Kurer (2021) show that economic risk perceptions multiply in households. Held/Patana (2023) show that rising real estate rents, which “lie at the heart of growing concerns related to housing (un)affordability” can fuel PRRP-support as these parties address housing protection in nativist terms.

evidence.¹⁶ However, it is entirely unclear whether cultural backlash is driven by any “losses” faced by those who “lash back” *themselves* – or merely by value *preferences* or albeit a desire to continue cultural *dominance* over others.¹⁷ In effect, it resembles the “racism” thesis discussed above and raises the same questions: why would people ever care so much about *excluding others*, or in other words, what fuels the incredibly high salience of “identity politics”?¹⁸

In a successful attempt to overcome the division in the literature between “economic” and “cultural” theories, Gidron/Hall (2017) have proposed that *status anxiety* caused by a decline in social status *relative to other groups* is the crucial issue faced by “resentful” modernization losers. “Relative status loss” consists in a group’s decline in hierarchies of social prestige (Weber 1968 [1918]). What matters, however, is not whether a group loses (or even gains) status in absolute terms, but that they lose out in relative terms to “reference groups”, with whom they compare themselves. Also known as “relative deprivation theory” (Runciman 1966; Smith et al. 2012) and priorly introduced to political sociology by Lipset (1955) as “status politics thesis”, this theory describes a well-established sociological mechanism, in which *envy* or *fear to lose dominant group status* underly feelings of resentment (s. also Feather/Nairn 2005). In Hochschild’s (2016) famous ethnographic account, rural US-Americans perceive that immigrants or yet LGBT people are “cutting in line” – they are getting more attention and advancing relatively speaking faster on the social status ladder than the speaker, what the speaker, adopting a defensive posture, perceives as *unjust*. As (Gidron/Hall 2017) show, social status and its loss have *both* economic *and* cultural roots: challenges to identity as well as to economic position can contribute to a threat of relative decline in social status. Highlighting parallels in major currents of argument, the theory has found much resonance in the field (Lucassen/Lubbers 2012; Kriesi/Bornschieer 2013; Mudde/Kaltwasser 2018; Antonucci et al. 2017; Mutz 2018; Rathgeb/Bussemeyer 2022; Manow/Schwander 2022; Kurer 2020; Engler/Weisstanner 2020; Derndorfer 2023).

Being increasingly accepted as a master narrative, “relative status deprivation” or “status anxiety” theory features a number of variants, which each place emphasis on different factors

¹⁶ Bornschieer/Kriesi show that socio-culturally conservative attitudes are the strongest predictor of PRRP-support. Inglehart/Norris (2019) show evidence of a consistent (but not strong) correlation between authoritarian values and support for “authoritarian populism” across a number of elections in Western democracies.

¹⁷ Evidence is rather consistent that objective levels of immigration are not causal to anti-immigration attitudes (Heizmann et al. 2018 e.g. find a *negative* relationship between refugee seeker influx and welfare chauvinism across European democracies.)

¹⁸ For a recent account, s. e.g. Hacker/Pierson (2020).

of the same effect. Burgoon et al. (2018) document the political effects of “positional deprivation”, which they operationalize as relative differences in income gains by various segments of the income distribution. Using individual-level panel data to study occupational change, Kurer (2020) argues that “*relative* shifts in the social hierarchy are key”: namely, the social status of semiskilled routine workers in the lower middle class has declined relative to other groups; and that “perception of relative economic decline among politically powerful groups – not their impoverishment” drives support for PRRPs. Protzer/Summerville (2021), Kurer/Van Staalduinen (2022), and Weiss et al. (2022) show that “disappointed expectations” of social mobility over the life-course lead to resentment and support for right-wing populism. In a similar vein, Gest et al. (2017) argue that support for the populist radical right is the product of “nostalgic deprivation – the discrepancy between individuals’ understandings of their current status and their perceptions about their past” (p. 1695). They, too, underline that it has “less to do with economic hardship and more with a perceived drop in status”. Engler/Weisstanner (2020) show that rising income inequality increases PRRP-support among individuals with high subjective social status and lower middle incomes, what they interpret as “a potential threat of social decline, as gaps in the social hierarchy widen”. In their view, “voters higher up in the social hierarchy may turn to the radical right to defend existing social boundaries”. Studying the other end of the social ladder, Rooduijn/Burgoon (2018) speak of a “paradox of well-being”, finding that less well-off citizens form “angry resentment” and vote for radical parties mainly when the national economic climate is favorable, a mechanism that Mudde/Kaltwasser (2018: 1675) interpret as “social envy”. Carreras et al. (2019) point out that long-term dynamics of economic decline (on the regional level) can lead to a high short-term salience of “cultural” issues; and Colantone/Stanig (2018) show that such can lead to shifts in substantive socio-cultural issue attitudes (in the conservative direction). Both resonates with theories of the “racialization” of economic problems in the US-context (s. Melcher 2023). In a similar vein, Ballard-Rosa et al. (2018) argue that “sustained economic decline has a negative effect on the social identity of historically dominant groups” and further that “these losses lead individuals to [...] want to enforce social norm conformity – that is, adopt more authoritarian values – as a way to preserve social status”.

A smaller part of this literature studies attitudinal welfare chauvinism as an outcome. Findings are much in line with the general line of argument. Heizmann et al. (2018) find individuals’ “perceptions of deprivation” to be better predictors of attitudinal welfare chauvinism in Europe than “objective factors related to potential job loss”. Kros/Coenders (2019) find some evidence in Dutch and British panel data that “people at subjective but not objective economic risk

perceive more threat from immigrants” and are therefore “less in favour of granting immigrants welfare rights”. These findings are corroborated by Duman (2023), who finds that even among the most socio-economically advantaged respondents, “subjective risk increases the likelihood of chauvinistic welfare attitudes”, even if perceived threat of unemployment and income risks is not confirmed by objective measures. Rathgeb/Busemeyer (2022: 7) put it slightly differently, but highlight the common points when they summarize the literature:

“[...] the threat of decline in social status, rather than actual outcomes of decline (e.g. unemployment, poverty), drives voters into the hands of PRRPs, as the latter offer [...] the prospect of defending traditional social boundaries, especially between the native in-group and the immigrant out-group. These findings help understand why welfare chauvinism – i.e. selective cuts in social protection targeted at immigrants – is important to PRRPs, even though radical right voters do not gain material benefits from reduced welfare entitlements for others. But cuts for non-citizens may help to restore the relative social status of previously dominant political groups, typically the male, core workforce in manufacturing.”

The mechanisms of politicization proposed by the “status anxiety” literature – defense of traditional social boundaries, “culturalization” and “racialization” of problems, increased salience of “identity politics” – are all very thoroughly theorized (and in line with the assumptions à priori made by the “politics of resentment” theory stream on how grievances politicize and blame is shifted). The dominant narrative on what the source of resentment, the trigger of the backlash, is, however, holds that “losers of modernization” are at risk merely of a *relative decline in social status hierarchies*. Threats are “perceived”. The supposed motivation behind the politicization of this situation is *envy* or a desire to defend *dominant group status*. I will say it frankly: I don’t buy this narrative.

I don’t buy this narrative for two reasons. The first is on the fundamental side. From the theory’s perspective, the “politics of resentment” departs from a question of relative mobility on the social status ladder. You move up (relatively to others) – you’re satisfied; you move down or are being *overtaken* by others (Hochschild 2016) – you feel resentful and support issues like welfare chauvinism. The problem with this view is that social mobility *per definition* is a movement in two directions (Reckwitz 2021): when some move up, others move down (relatively speaking), it is simple as that. This has been the case since societies exist; and it has been very much so since modernization and democracy have vastly increased the velocity of social mobility. To get things straight, if everyone who has relatively speaking moved down on

the status ladder had always supported right-wing populism, democracy and market economy would not exist – they would be politically impossible. There must hence be other mechanisms which mediate this relationship.

The second reason is that while we can safely believe that envy is a powerful political motive, I do not believe that it is powerful enough to explain the incredibly high and persistent salience of welfare chauvinism alongside other issues of right-wing populism. Why would people *care so much* – and mobilize so persistently – if not something very proximate, personal, actually hurtful – I don't want to use the word, but indeed close to *existential* – was at stake, was affecting or threatening to affect them, and fueling the infamously “deep-seated” sentiments of *injustice* and *devaluation* every single ethnographic account of the “politics of resentment” describes (Hochschild 2016; Cramer 2016; Gest 2016; Dörre et al. 2020; 2023)?

An explanation of when and why relative decline fuels particularly much resentment and populist/ exclusivist reactions may be provided by another, distinct, sociological mechanism, which consists in *social integration* and *exclusion*. As Gidron/Hall (2019) observe, the qualitative literature is extremely consistent in characterizing the root experience of populist resentment as one of *alienation*, *marginalization*, or *exclusion* – with considerable independence from objective economic status. McKenzie, studying the British “white working class”, writes “a significant part of the narrative of working people was of ‘not existing’”. She shows that “going beyond frustration and apathy [...] being ‘left out’ has been part of working class political narratives for over 30 years” (2017). In Hochschild's (2016) interlocutor's words, rural Louisianans' feel like “strangers in their own land”. Cramer (2016) highlights that social divisions between metropolises and countryside in Wisconsin are so deep that building a mutual understanding of life realities is a strenuous undertaking. Gest (2016) dedicates an entire chapter to underlining how much “white working class” communities in former industrial towns are socio-politically “alienated”. Köpping (2018) summarizes East Germans' resentful sentiment in the exclamation “Integriert doch erstmal uns!” (Start with integrating us! [Before integrating immigrants.])¹⁹

Gidron/Hall (2019) summarize this so that “much of the discontent fueling support for radical parties is rooted in feelings of social marginalization—namely, in the sense some people have that they have been pushed to the fringes of their national community and deprived of the roles and respect normally accorded full members of it.” Building on an array of sociological

¹⁹ Wagner (2018), equally in East Germany, describes a “rupture between life-worlds”.

literature²⁰, they propose to define “social integration” as “the social relations linking individuals and promoting their sense of being valued members of society” (p. 2). They disentangle the concept into three parts, namely (1) participation in shared norms, values, and beliefs (a common “normative order”), (2) levels of social interaction with others, and (3) the extent to which one feels recognized or respected by others in society. They emphasize that social integration must be regarded “both [at] the macrolevel reflecting how well integrated a society is and at the micro-level reflecting how well integrated into society each individual is”; and highlight that participation in economic spheres (occupation, employment) and in sociocultural spheres (associations, family, etc.) can equally be conducive to social integration.²¹

In simple words, we could describe “social integration” theory as follows: “losers of modernization” are not (only) threatened by a decline compared to others *within the group* – but by exclusion *from* the group. They do not risk stepping down on the social status ladder – onto another firm step, just relatively speaking a bit lower – but being denied a place on society’s common, accepted ladder of social status *at all*. Social exclusion in this sense does not necessarily mean material deprivation. People who are socially excluded can *à priori* be materially rich *or* poor. The point is, they are not able or allowed to *participate in the game* that society plays. This can under certain circumstances, but does not necessarily, *manifest in* material deprivation).²² It almost per definition manifests in severe pressure on social status (and identity).

A small but growing literature has started to echo and show evidence for these propositions. Sachweh (2020: 389), testing Gidron/Hall’s theory for Germany, finds that “what appears to characterize middle-class supporters of right-wing populism is not so much a fear of losing their

²⁰ Gidron/Hall build on Durkheim’s (1984[1892]) argument that “the division of labor in market economies would yield social solidarity only if it provided people with occupations they deemed appropriate and if those people participated in a collective consciousness composed of shared norms, values, and beliefs”; on Blau’s (1960) argument that “participation in the normative order depends on processes of social interaction whereby people acquire “acceptance as peers” (one could on this point also cite Simmel 2013 [1908] or Merton 1957, s. below) as well as on contemporary works on family sociology and social capital (Bellah et al. 1996; Berkman et al. 2000; Etzioni 1996; Putnam 2000).

²¹ While Gidron/Hall (2019) operationalize objective social integration as a combination of several variables measured by survey data (feeling treated with respect; trust in people, participation in social activities and in social meetings) they ultimately build on a measure of subjective marginalization, which mediates the priors’ effect on political alienation and support for radical political parties.

²² A part of the “relative status loss” literature holds that the *outcome* of the lower middle classes’ social decline can consist in forms of *economic hardship*: Busemeyer/Rathgeb (2022) speak of “unemployment, poverty”. Im et al. (2019) of decline “by job loss”. Unemployment and poverty amount to *manifestations* of social exclusion with a strong aspect of economic deprivation. Similarly does job loss – if no new job is found that provides integration into the collective.

dominant socio-economic position but rather a subjective sense of ‘decoupling’ between themselves and mainstream society” (which he operationalizes as group-specific effects of subjective social exclusion and distrust). Weisskircher (2020), when assessing the political effects of Germany’s troublesome re-unification process after the *Wende*, discusses evidence that in 2019, 66% of Saxonians (59% of Brandenburg’s; 70% of Thuringia’s population) and an average 80% of PRRP AfD-supporters in these East German Federal countries feel as “second-class citizens” in Germany. He interprets this as the political effect of a “problem of social integration” and proposes societal “disintegration” should be added to the list of factors that are known to drive right-wing populism.

This may shed a new light on the paradox that lower-middle class modernization losers *subjectively* perceive threats to their status to be very high, while *objectively*, risks realize only “for a minority” of them (Kurer/Palier 2019; Antonucci et al. 2017; etc.): it is thinkable that relatively small objective risk becomes more subjectively salient when you are being *left alone* with it. The working lower middle being *left alone with risk* would imply other interpretations than (mere) “envy” and “dominant group status defense”. It would imply the *defense of social membership* as a motive, namely on two fronts: on the (smaller) front of objective threats, and on the (larger) front created by a condition in which “mainstream society” (i.e. the dominant actors, discourses, and institutions) does not realize, recognize, represent these risks, but *ignores* them (Betz 2021; s. below).

We can similarly interpret Rooduijn/Burgoon’s (2018) “paradox of well-being”, which consists in the finding that “economic hardship leads to radical right voting when the socioeconomic circumstances are favorable”, but not when they are unfavorable. The authors propose as a mechanism that “the less well off [...] might well benchmark their own economic hardship against the positive socioeconomic circumstances at the national level [and] feel that they do not get what they deserve” (1720). Mudde/Kaltwasser (2018: 1675) interpret this as a mechanism of “social envy”. Equally, however, it may be the case that the *deprived* under conditions of collective *deprivation* experience a higher degree of integration into the collective: the “game” of actors around them may be marked by the concern of dealing with economic problems, what can result in an experience of sitting in the same boat or having concerns in common. Under conditions of macro-economic prosperity, other actors are likely to play a game of socio-economic advancement and “normalcy”, from which the precarious are excluded. They may hence to a higher degree find themselves *alone* (with economic hardship on top of it).

This evokes the literature on *recognition* (Honneth 1992; Fraser 2000; Betz 2021). According to Honneth, the exchange of various forms of symbolic recognition – for needs, aspirations, values, achievements, feelings, identities, but also for problems – is a fundamental aspect of social relations (such as e.g., status or power). A “lack of recognition” comes down to being ignored as if *not existent*. Moreover, Fraser (2000) highlights “misrecognition”, which means to be *hurtfully mistaken* by others in one’s values, needs, or problems. This may precisely apply to those who are “left alone with risk”, to those who are “poor in a prosperous context”. It is particularly relevant to the politics of resentment (Betz 2021): pressing problems being *misrecognized* by competent actors is this political dynamic’s ultimate amplifier, escalating (small or large) substantive issues into emotionalized, moralized backlash. Lack of recognition/misrecognition qualifies as a dimension of social exclusion: when society “misrecognizes” a problem this means that it is *not society’s problem*. At the same time, *recognition* is hard to provide when some form of social integration is not given à priori: actors and entire institutions lack an idea of what the values, needs, aspirations, or problems of those are, with whom they have few points of reference in common. (Why does it take such a large scientific literature to understand what the problem of the contemporary dissatisfied is?)

Experiences of exclusion, however, may not only consist in a deprivation from participation in society overall – but in a divergence of *systems of participation* within society. Let us reconsider the famous quote from Hochschild’s (2016) ethnography (who studies middle-class, mostly petty bourgeois rural residents in Louisiana): immigrants, minorities, and LGBT people are seen as “cutting in line”. Hochschild’s interlocutors tell stories about “standing in line”, aspiring to the American dream (which is far away). There is a logic to pursuing the American dream, namely, consistent hard work and self-reliance. Hochschild’s conversation partners describe themselves as having learned this *normative logic of social advancement* when young, having always followed it, while the real, practical power of this mode of advancement to arrive at its goal has persistently grown weaker. They express that they have waited, “in line”, stuck to the *legitimate logic*, and perhaps, the only logic practically accessible to them. This means, conditions harshen: a normative logic, which integrates people, builds collective orientations and legitimacy, is *under pressure*. This is, however, not the point of eruption. At this point, speakers in the book describe to struggle, to make an effort, to try and accommodate with the situation, which is “not ideal” (McKenzie 2017), but which is à priori accepted as *without alternative* (s. Dörre et al. 2020 below). The point where anger and resentment erupt is when others rise in status *not by the same*, but by a *different logic* of social advancement. Some receive welfare – while interlocutors struggle *for* or *on* jobs. Others gain public attention for

their lifestyle. As Hochschild puts it: “She also needed to defend her notion of the line itself” (165). What if her interviewee is not only envious, but also afraid of a drifting apart of logics of participation, of a marginalization of the entire logic on which her sense of participation in society depends (namely, mid-skilled work) – without ample opportunities for herself, her family, and friends, to switch over and participate in another, new, common logic?

A dynamic that may contribute to problems of social integration is rising economic inequality. Engler/Weisstanner (2020) describe the sociopolitical effect of rising income inequality so that “gaps in the social hierarchy widen”, what leads to a “perceived threat of decline” and an inclination of actors, notably in the middle of the social hierarchy, to increasingly “defend existing social boundaries”. We can embrace the first and the last part and add two things in the middle: a “fear of being excluded from society” and a “fear of societal disintegration” – in the sense that those in the higher part of the distribution who proportionally “grow away” from the (lower) middle do not only get increasingly far on the same ladder, but “de-couple” (Sachweh 2020) and play a different game, by different norms, enter into different sociological logics, from which the latter are excluded and that may be outrightly hostile to them. Gest’s white working class feels they “have been battered” by economic elites (2016: 84; 136) whom they, however, “rarely – if ever – confront [...] in their contemporary day-to-day lives [...] the way their grandparents may have encountered the steel barons in previous decades, when cities [...] featured a more diverse class profile” (137). Adding to such a reading, Godechot et al (2020), studying workplace and residential segregation in eleven countries, show evidence that the highest part of the income distribution *increasingly does not have contact* with the rest.

Social boundaries (Lamont/Molnar 2002) are not only walls against out-groups – they also define who is *in* the *ingroup*. People may use negative identities (e.g. Lucas 2011) ascribed to outgroups to over-emphasize their own group membership, because they are afraid of losing it. This reading of Engler/Weisstanner’s findings resonates with a vast literature that describes an increasing *intensification* of social membership norms throughout advanced capitalist societies (Mijs et al. 2016). This may be *welfare deservingness* norms, defining who is in or out among the vulnerable and at the “bottom” of society (Roosma et al. 2017; Soss/Schram 2007; Wacquant 2009; Soss et al. 2011; Mounk 2017; Dwyer et al. 2022). Among the middle class, it can be *meritocratic* norms – for an intensification of which across Western democracies since the 1990s Mijs (2021) shows ample evidence. It coincides with a plethora of accounts that describe how the *lower* middle class is forming ever-more obstinate identities of being “hard-working” in order to delimit itself from the poor (Lamont 2000; Savage 2015; Hochschild 2016;

Rathgeb/Busemeyer 2022; Derks 2006; Abts et al. 2021; Collectif Focale 2022; etc.). It equally speaks to a broad literature describing how the professional *upper* middle classes engages in ever-more intensified practices of self-optimization (Binkley 2011; Houghton (2019) Erjavec/Volčič (2009); Lamarre et al. 2019; Sweet 2018; Watts 2022) and to sociological accounts that testify continuous social “acceleration” (Rosa/Trejo-Mathys 2013) and “individuation of risks” (Beck 1992) in advanced capitalism. Do we live in societies where a considerable part of the population is afraid of *dropping out*?

We could extend this discussion of literature. In Weiss et al.’s (2022) account of disappointed expectations of social mobility, subjective social status *mediates* the effect of rising inequality on the macro-level on negative emotions experienced by mid-aged individuals in Germany. This means, social inequality rises while your subjective status is high: you feel fine; inequality rises while your subjective status is low: you grow resentful. While Weiss et al. use subjective social status as a measure of individuals’ self-comparison with their parental generation, *low* subjective social status (“subjective marginalization”) is used by Gidron/Hall (2019) to measure soci(et)al disintegration. Rising inequality may not only increase differences within the group, but also *shrink* the in-group, broadening the margins who, in various ways, are socially excluded. In partial contrast to the authors’ interpretation, Weiss et al.’s findings may suggest that you care less about rising inequality when you manage to stay *in* than when you are being pushed *out*.

Dörre et al. (2018; 2020; 2023) analyze these problems among East German blue-collar workers. In qualitative interviews and ethnographic studies conducted repeatedly since the 1990s, they document experiences of devaluation, injustice, and social exclusion their interlocutors make and how into the 2000s and 2010s they increasingly interpret these by use of right-wing populist narratives. They emphasize stories of “waiting” for twenty years, under dire labor market and public budgetary conditions, being treated as non-equal to West-German workers in the same occupations and fearing for welfare entitlements that are subject to budgetary pressures – and then witnessing how “suddenly there is money” – the German economy going better in the 2010s, bank-bailouts and refugee aid being paid for by the state – while their own conditions do *not* change. (See the parallel to Hochschild’s findings.) Dörre et al. emphasize experiences of not being part of what is societally represented as “normal” while interviewees place value on describing themselves as “entirely normal”, what leads them to ever more strongly emphasizing national identity as a “chiffre for a good, because normal, life”. (2020: 55). Dörre’s interpretation of these findings strongly emphasizes the notion of “class”:

the underlying problem is that an *objective* class condition (manifest as positional experiences in work- and other societal power-relations) lacks the articulation of an identity, mediated by representatives (such as labor unions), which represents its needs, problems, interests, aspirations, and lived reality vis-à-vis other groups and within society – what would lead to the experience of *dignity* and participation.²³ PRRPs manage to resonate with the same class-experience when building inverse, negative identities (of the resentful hard-working) – by means of blaming outgroups.

Dörre’s account, building on the tradition of *conflict sociology*, adds an important element to an understanding of social integration: group identities within society, even antagonistic ones, and conflict between groups in society, can under certain conditions *enhance* societal integration (s. Deitelhoff/Schmelzle 2023). While we have above read discussions of “social boundaries” as means of exclusion (within society or from society at all), it is of course normal that within society there are multiple groups who construct boundaries against each other. The *political* question is whether these groups negotiate a mode in which they integrate into a larger, societal norm system (and hence a societal macro-“group”) – or not.²⁴

This issue is i.a. addressed by a recent literature on social sorting and social polarization (Mason 2015; Harteveld 2021; Helbling/Jungkunz 2020)²⁵ as well as by the longer-standing “intergroup contact hypothesis” (Allport 1954; Pettigrew 1998; Pettigrew/Tropp 2006). The social sorting literature treats group animosity in society as an outcome and in essence shows that *overlapping* group identities (e.g. class, geography, religion, gender, ethnicity, partisanship) can act as “bridges”, moderating group conflict, while polarized group identities can increase “affective polarization” between groups (i.e., increase and escalate group conflict within society; s. Mason 2015; Harteveld 2021). Proponents of social contact theory have shown evidence that people are more hostile towards other groups when they do *not* actually have contact with them – and

²³ In other words: it needs re-increased representation of *social class-specific* modes of participation in society, what by definition goes with the active negotiation of power relations between social class-groups in society.

²⁴ Cleavage theory, one of the longest-standing accounts of (European) political sociology, holds that structural divisions between groups in society have been essential in the emergence of European democracies, democratic political parties positioning along these divisions and politicizing them in democratic conflict (Lipset/Rokkan 1967; Bartolini/Mair 1990). Since the structural realignment of parts of contemporary societies with PRRPs on the one hand and the “new left” on the other, new cleavage theories have become popular to make sense of the present condition (e.g. Kriesi et al. 2008; Hooghe/Marks 2018; Merkel 2017; Bornschier et al. 2021). However, cleavage theories have not (or at least not to the author’s knowledge) articulated accounts of *endogenous* factors that account for the social “divisiveness” of a cleavage, conceived e.g. as whether conflict articulates within common frames (hence potentially contributing to societal integration across socio-structural division lines) or outside of such (hence potentially leading to political escalation and societal dis-integration).

²⁵ The social sorting literature in essence departs from the debate on political polarization on both sides of the Atlantic (s. Wagner 2021; Harteveld et. al 2022).

less when they do. This theory can e.g. explain why residents of regions with a little immigration are more hostile to immigrants than residents of ethnically mixed regions (Wagner et al. 2003; Laurence/Bentley 2018; however s. also divergent findings: van der Meer/Reeskens 2021).

All of these arguments and evidence considered, the promising literature on “populism as a problem of social integration” still leaves many questions open (Grunow/Sachweh et al. 2023). Firstly, on the fundamental side, it is unclear what social integration, essentially, consists in. What do individuals integrate into when they integrate into “a society” – and what, inversely, is it that “losers of modernization” are ostensibly being excluded from? Propositions include: a *normative order* (Gidron/Hall 2019; Durkheim 1984[1893]; Blau 1960), *social capital* (Gidron/Hall 2019; Putnam 2000), or yet social contact *between groups* in society (Mason 2015; Harteveld 2021). Gidron/Hall (2019) and Sachweh (2020) also use *social trust* as an indicator of social integration, what corresponds to the assumptions of social systems theory (Luhmann 1984). Some of these propositions, however, are contradicted by existing literature: social isolation and social capital, f. ex., have been shown to only marginally matter for PRRP-support, many PRRP-supporters being well-integrated into social relations at least in their immediate environment (Eatwell 2005; Rydgren 2009).

A second, even more practically relevant question is: *via which mechanisms* do individuals integrate into society – and in what aspects are these mechanisms vulnerable to processes of societal change, leading (if the theory holds) to the social exclusion of “losers of modernization”? If societal integration is a matter of a system of social norms: then where, at which precise *loci*, do individuals access integration into it (and which loci matter more than others)? Which institutions *mediate* this relationship? If integration is a question of social interactions or of “trust”: which interactions are these; and what sources does “trust” derive from? Gidron/Hall (2019) emphasize “both the macrolevel reflecting how well integrated a society is and at the micro-level reflecting how well integrated into society each individual is” – but how are both these outcomes mediated by institutions on the societal *meso-level* (s. also Grunow/Sachweh 2023)?

Interestingly, the same questions can be raised concerning objects of “loss” proposed by other theories of the “politics of resentment”. If *social status* is at stake: what sources does it derive from? Which actors or institutions are essential for *endowing* social status on a contemporary manual worker, and how do these sources threaten to collapse? If recognition is at stake: who confers it – or fails to do so? Seen from an individual’s perspective: in which *areas of life*; in which *social relationships* or *encounters* do contemporary European blue-collar working-class

individuals (of both genders, of various age groups) experience dignity – or on the contrary, hurtful status denial and misrecognition that influence their outlook on society and politics?

1.2 Research Questions

The overarching question addressed by this thesis can be formulated as “What explains salient support for “welfare chauvinism” among advanced capitalist blue-collar workers?” Building on the discussion of literature presented above, I translate it into three specific research questions. These are:

RQ 1 Do grievances experienced by “losers of modernization” lead to the formation of “welfare chauvinist” views? If so, which types of grievances, where (in which areas of life) do they happen; what produces them and how are they being politicized?

RQ 2 What more generic vision(s) of the advanced capitalist political economy do advanced capitalist European blue-collar workers hold, of which “welfare chauvinism” is an element?

RQ 3 What explains the seemingly “peculiar” socio-political cross-class coalition of small business owners, manual workers who are labor market insiders, and (manual workers who are) labor market outsiders, in support of welfare chauvinism and populist radical right-wing parties?

1.3 Arguments: Social Integration at Work and by the Welfare State

This thesis makes the following main arguments.

I argue that “resentment” accumulated by “losers of modernization” is indeed a core factor behind working-class support for welfare chauvinism and populist right-wing politics more generally. The core grievance at stake for so-called “losers of modernization”, however, does not consist in “economic”, “cultural”, or even “status” loss, but in *social exclusion*, which is a distinct sociological mechanism. Addressing open questions in theories of “populism as a problem of social integration”, I draw on the sociological literature to forward an argument on *what* individuals integrate into when they integrate into a society; *via* which crucial mechanisms they do so, and what can go wrong with it for “losers of modernization”.

I argue that an individual’s integration into society depends on *social roles* which they practice in institutional settings such as at the workplace, in the family, in associations, in cultural

spheres or vis-à-vis state agencies (Merton 1957; Goffman 1959; 1961; Simmel 2013 [1908]).²⁶ These institutions mediate individual integration into society; and the social roles regulated by them are the central reference point for the distribution of material resources and social status, for social recognition and identity formation in society (s. *ibid.*). “Losers of modernization”, however, are at risk of experiencing permanent *tension* or ultimate *rupture* of precisely those social role-relationships on which their integration into society depends most crucially. Exclusion from participation in society’s “*social role order*” can be causal to the entire range of grievance experiences known from the literature on the “politics of resentment”. This sometimes entails material deprivation or insecurity. It typically involves status loss or identity loss, the experience of alienation from society’s dominant institutions and orientations, a sense of misrecognition and of injustice, of lacking voice and efficacy, of powerlessness.

Further, I argue that contemporary European blue-collar workers’ societal integration or exclusion is driven by two institutional settings at the heart of the socio-economy, which however, are largely overlooked by the literature on the “losers of modernization”.

Firstly, I follow Castel’s (1995) argument that *employment* is the primary relationship via which a majority of the population experiences integration into contemporary European societies. This socially integrative function of employment, however, is less driven by material income or employment contract types than by the *social relations around work*, which enable integration into a societal role-order (and underly employments’ material reciprocity dimension at the same time; Agassi 1986; Lamont 2000; Lucas 2017; Soffia et al. 2022). Inversely, I argue that permanent tension *at the workplace*, and notably *between management and employees* in enterprise organizations, can lead to the experience of social exclusion (of alienation from society’s role-order). It does so independently of pure “economic” factors such as income; and it does so notably among those who are in stable, full-time employment: among so-called “labor market insiders” (Emmenegger et al. 2012).

Secondly, I follow Esping-Andersen’s (1990) argument that the *welfare state* is the most important solidarity mechanism of contemporary European societies, keeping individuals not only in material security, but also in an accepted status position within society, once they are not in employment. A welfare recipient’s role-relationship vis-à-vis the state is regulated by norms of welfare “deservingness” (van Oorschot 2000). These norms serve as “moral

²⁶ Besides Merton, s. e.g. Linton (1945: 113 “a complex of mutual rights, obligations, and functions as defined by the pertinent ideal patterns”) as well as Parsons (1949: 42 “a position in the general institutional system, recognized and supported by the entire society”) on the “structural-functionalist” side of social role theory.

boundaries” defining who is in, and who is out, among the vulnerable members of society (Lamont/Molnar 2002; Bolton et al. 2022). In effect, I argue that permanent tension in *citizens’ relations with the welfare state* (its policies and institutions) can lead to a deeply seated experience of social exclusion. This can notably occur to those who are *not* in stable, full-time employment relations (or have not been during their active years) and in effect hold fragmented welfare entitlements: so-called “labor market outsiders” (Emmenegger et al. 2012).

Populist radical right-wing parties are specialized in addressing experiences of social exclusion more affectively than substantively (Salmela/von Scheve 2017) and in attributing blame on ideologically opportune targets. They notably put blame on those who are ostensibly *granted* social inclusion, while the modernization loser is ostensibly *being denied* it. “Those who do not work” (but receive things for free from the state) are an opportune target of blame for those who experience permanent tension at work. “Immigrants who receive welfare benefits” are an opportune target of blame for those who themselves feel let down by the welfare state. “Welfare chauvinism” serves as a smallest common denominator, as a unifying issue, of a coalition of socio-economic insiders and outsiders – both of which make experiences of societal exclusion – in support of PRRPs.

I develop these arguments in the following way.

1.4 Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

In **Chapter 2** I present the thesis’ conceptual and theoretical framework. I start from pointing out three questions that are not sufficiently answered by the existing literature on “problems of social integration” as a factor of right-wing populism (Gidron/Hall 2019; Sachweh 2020; Mason 2015; Harteveld 2021; s. also Grunow/Sachweh 2023). These are the following. (1) When we speak of an individual’s “social integration”: *into what*, actually, is it that they integrate – and inversely, *what* is it that the “marginalized” are being excluded from? (2) *How*, i.e. via which mechanisms, are individuals integrated into a “society” – and in which aspects, inversely, are these mechanisms particularly vulnerable for “losers of modernization”? (3) How is social integration or exclusion being *politicized*, i.e., via which mechanisms does it affect public preference formation?

In line with the literature in general sociology and social theory, I propose that (1) what individuals integrate into, when they “socially integrate”, is a *social order* (Parsons 1949; Strauss 1978; Grunow/Sachweh et al. 2023). A social order is a system of *social roles* (Merton 1957) which stand both in normative relations to each other (in terms of reciprocal expectations,

rights and obligations) and towards the dominant orientations of society (the common goals and values established by a society's dominant institutions). Social roles are the crucial reference point for the legitimization of material resource distribution, for social status hierarchies, and for the formation of social identities within a society (s. also Linton 1945; Goffman 1959; 1961; Simmel 2013 [1908]).

(2) Individuals' integration into society's social order is a multi-level process mediated by *meso-level institutions*. Meso-level institutions in contemporary societies include f. ex. the family, associations, state agencies, enterprise organizations, churches, unions, or parties. Individuals practice social roles in the context of meso-level institutions (you are member of a family, employee at a workplace, citizen vis-à-vis the state, member of a sports club, etc.), which in turn link them into the common societal order of goals and values. This process is vulnerable at several levels. Actors can be *individually* excluded from integration into social roles (speak: you, individually, are not allowed to join the bowling club); but also *entire collectives* can be excluded from integration into society (the town's residents frown upon the bowling club).

(3) Any social order is subject to *conflict* and contestation (Coser 1956; Mouffe 2005; Strauss 1978; Korpi 1983; Deitelhoff/Schmelzle 2023). Societal integration hinges on the capacity to *negotiate* structural conflicts *within* the given social order. In effect, those social orders enjoy broad legitimacy that offer opportunities for a broad social majority to integrate into social roles that participate in their dominant orientations and that dispose of mechanisms to negotiate structural pressures. Inversely, those actors in society who are excluded from accepted roles and those who are unable to voice and negotiate pressures their position is subject to are likely to put the legitimacy of the given social order in question.

Depending on political opportunity structures and entrepreneurs on the political supply-side, such social-exclusion-induced legitimacy gaps can channel into various political effects. They can channel into "transformative conflict" that contests existing social order and aims to radically change it. They can channel into "conflict externalization", the blaming of external targets with the aim of temporarily stabilizing internal social order. Finally, if such opportunities and initiatives are not given, the excluded are likely to remain silent, confined to coping with their situation.

I continue by applying this generic conceptual scheme to the condition of contemporary European political economies. In line with the literature in political economy, I argue that contemporary European societies are marked by a "productivist" social order (Giddens 1994: 175ff.). The orientations of dominant institutions (the state, enterprises, but also households)

aim at the pursuit of *economic growth* (Baccaro/Pontusson/Blyth 2022: 1). Productivism creates a structure of roles in society, offering social integration through participation in the process of growth-creation. Moreover, it creates a “moral order” which legitimizes those roles which (ostensibly) contribute to the collective pursuit of growth and productivity (Boltanski/Thevenot 2006)²⁷. This influences definitions of *legitimate* income, property and status within the socio-economy and definitions of who *deserves* solidarity provision by the welfare state.

The most important channel of social integration in the productivist social order of contemporary European societies is *employment* (Castel 1995). This mechanism is mediated by enterprise organizations or public organizations that act as *workplaces* (Ó Riain/Healy 2023). Employed individuals practice occupational (and non-occupational²⁸) roles in work-contexts: vis-à-vis the employer, the organizations’ management (i.a. its multiple levels), co-workers, works’ councils, other occupation groups present in the company or work context, or yet, customers (Hochschild 1983; 1997). It is via their integration into employment as a *set of social relationships* that they participate in society’s dominant orientations and in return receive material income and security, social status and recognition, a sense of “stake” in the dominant institutional orientations, and the possibility to form related social identities (Agassi 1986; Lamont 2000; Lucas 2017; Soffia et al. 2022; Marx 1992 [1844])

In European societies, the *welfare state* complements employment as a mechanism of social inclusion (Esping-Andersen 1990). It keeps individuals not only in material security, but also in an accepted status position within society, once they are not in employment. A welfare recipient’s role-relationship vis-à-vis the state is regulated by norms of welfare “deservingness”. Building on van Oorschot’s (2000) “CARIN-model”, I propose that in productivist social order, those are seen as deserving public solidarity who have priorly themselves productively contributed (“reciprocity”); who make an effort to contribute (“attitude”); or whose incapacity to participate in the productive process lies outside of their own “control”.²⁹ These norms serve

²⁷ I follow Boltanski/Thevenot’s definition of “moral order” in a general sense, however, not their typology of “orders of worth”, i.e., the “productivist” moral order as treated here does not precisely correspond e.g. to an “industrial order of worth” in their typology. “Productivism” is naturally only one aspect of contemporary societies’ social order and notably marks their *socio-economic order*. I go with the assumption that the socio-economy is a crucial site of power relations and (therefore) a crucial site of societal integration or exclusion.

²⁸ Social integration in enterprise organizations may be driven by “occupational” roles strictly speaking, but the social fabric of the socio-economic sphere is as much marked by informal relationships as any other.

²⁹ S. similarly Abts et al. (2021) who interpret the same three deservingness criteria as a manifestation of “producerism”. I treat them as “productivism”, of which producerism is a radically materialistic variant (s. below).

as “moral boundaries” defining who is in, and who is out, among the vulnerable members of society (Lamont/Molnar 2002; Bolton et al. 2022).³⁰

Over the last 40 years, grand transformations have turned European societies from post-WW-II *industrial capitalist* (and in Central-Eastern Europe *industrial socialist*) into *advanced capitalist* political economies (Baccaro/Pontusson 2016; Baccaro/Pontusson/Blyth 2022; Hassel/Palier 2022). These transformations have at the macro-level included the globalization and liberalization of the economy, deindustrialization, the shift from an industrial to a service- and knowledge-economy, labor market dualization, decline in union density, and yet, automation (ibid; Kriesi et al. 2008; Emmenegger et al. 2012; Kurer 2020). I argue that increasing socio-economic pressures deriving from these factors have – in the experience of the dependently employed population and in particular the blue-collar working class – manifested notably in those two *meso-level arenas* on which their societal integration hinges.

In line with the literature on corporate organization I argue that these macro-level transformations have come with changing firm strategies and management styles, what has manifested in pressures on the *social relations at workplaces* (Fligstein 1993; Cappelli et al. 1997; Lazonick/ O’Sullivan 2000; Flecker 2007; Weil 2014; Ó Riain/Healy 2023; Carbonnier/Palier 2022; Palier/Wagner 2023). This means that even for “labor market insiders” (Emmenegger et al. 2012) who dispose of stable, full term employment contracts, globalization and automatization do not only bring a risk of losing one’s job (Kurer 2020) but can lead to a deterioration of the relations and conditions experienced every day *at the workplace*. Notably, I argue that social relations between various hierarchy levels at the workplace stand under increasing tension, what brings forth experiences of social exclusion and of incompatibility between the roles, goals, and values of various occupational classes. I argue that this concerns blue collar workers in particular, who tend to be employed in shrinking sectors, where high amounts of pressure can affect work relations – without necessarily showing in the formal statistics on contract types and working conditions.

The self-employed and small business owners can be affected in the same way, only the mechanisms differ: for them, modernization pressures can manifest in exclusion experiences in

³⁰ Besides these “socio-economic” channels, individuals can experience societal integration via participation in a variety of socio-cultural and “political” institutions. These include the family, friendship circles, neighborhood ties, engagements in associations, hobby clubs, religious organizations, cultural “fields of interaction”, unions, parties, or social movements (s. below & ch. 2, 3, 8). This thesis highlights societal integration via employment and the (welfare) state because these two channels appear paramount both theoretically and in the data; and even more so for the working-class (s. ibid).

unequal interactions with large, corporate, transnational market participants³¹ and/or with the tax and regulatory state (s. e.g. Mayer 1986; Damhuis 2020).

In line with an established literature in social policy, I argue that reforms of the welfare state have led to a less inclusive public solidarity system notably for blue-collar workers. Welfare reforms since the 1980s/90s have taken place under conditions of "permanent austerity" (the political vision that public budgets are limited and spending must be decreased; Pierson 2001). This has led to cuts on those generous, "consumption-oriented" programs which respond to the social risks faced by manual workers (notably retirement pension and unemployment benefits; Baramendi et al. 2015; Palier 2010; Häusermann 2010). While welfare reforms have sought to cover "new social risks" and increasingly to provide "active" resources by means of social investment in human capital (Morel et al. 2012; Häusermann 2012), they have also increasingly sought to "activate" the population by means of negative incentives, of obligations and sanctions attached to welfare access (Soss/Schram 2007; Bonoli 2010; Dwyer et al. 2022). This changes the condition of "labor market outsiders" (who are subject to interrupted employment trajectories, to limited term or atypical contracts) and of the unemployed, among whom blue-collar workers are over-represented: they are now prone to face systematic "tension" in contact with welfare state institutions, who have the task of regulating social inclusion at society's lower boundary.

Last but not least, I take up the argument that the socioeconomic transformations of the advanced capitalist era have often followed an argumentative pattern that is known as "There Is No Alternative" (TINA, s. Pierson 1994; Séville 2017; Palley 2022). Deriving from the Thatcherite reforms of the British welfare state, this term refers to justifications that "naturalize" (present as apolitical, as without choice or alternative) socioeconomic realities that in fact are very much subject to social and political choice. In line with the literature on depoliticization and the role of discourse in policymaking I argue that this pattern of argument has, on top of the substantive developments, created a situation in which *the negotiation* of structural socioeconomic conflicts in advanced capitalist societies is being *suppressed* (Mouffe 2005; Séville 2017; Burnham 2014; Flinders/Buller 2006; Bandelow/Hornung 2019; Schmidt 2002). To the existing literature I add the proposition that this argumentative pattern has "trickled" from the macro-level (political speeches legitimizing public policy choices such as welfare reforms; dominant discourses among economic leaders) down to the meso-level and has become a

³¹ This refers to a reading of the "market" as a social field (Fligstein/McAdam 2012) which, among other things, enables social integration. Integration into society via "market interaction" is crucial for the self-employed.

pattern repeatedly encountered by employees in *conflicts with their managers* at workplaces as well as by welfare recipients in *contact with institutions* of the welfare state. This has created textbook conditions for the experience of misrecognition and the formation of sociopolitical resentment (Salmela/von Scheve 2017; Salmela/Capelos 2021).

All of this has created a situation in which a considerable part of the population of advanced capitalist “growth” societies, namely both socioeconomic outsiders and socioeconomic insiders (who are employed and dispose of considerable material resources), experience exclusion from the dominant socio-economic order. In effect, the excluded actors tend to perceive social relations in economy, state and society to be illegitimate.

1.5 Mechanisms and Propositions

In **Chapter 3** I formulate propositions on how this affects political preference formation among advanced capitalist European blue-collar workers. I go with the established assumption that occupational class position comes with predispositions for the formation of political outlooks (e.g. Lipset 1960; Gaxie 1978; Oesch 2006; Kitschelt/Rehm 2014). This said, my emphasis lies on theorizing two mechanisms via which social integration or exclusion *alter* and *moderate* positional outlooks.

Mechanism 1: Integration into or Exclusion from a Common Social Order

I argue that firstly, whether an actor finds themselves *integrated* into or *excluded* from society’s common social *role-order* accounts for a basic difference in their political outlook. In the prior case, they are likely to form *moderate* political views, affirming the legitimacy of the given order and supporting to maintain or albeit marginally change it (because they hold a stake in it). In the latter case, they are likely to form *radical* political views, putting the legitimacy of the given order in question (Gidron/Hall 2019). A “radical” outlook can channel into various directions, of which I distinguish three. It can channel into support for “transformative conflict” (radical change of the social order), into “conflict externalization” (shifting blame on external targets, what temporally stabilizes social order), or be confined to mere silent “coping”. Into which direction it channels depends on the second mechanism.

Mechanism 2: Social Integration between Members of Different Occupational Classes

Secondly, I argue that social integration between members of *different occupational classes* serves as a basis for the formation of social class coalitions (Hall/Evans 2022;

Baccaro/Pontusson 2022; Damhuis 2020; Ivarsflaten 2005)³² which collectively form more specific sociopolitical outlooks (“visions of the political economy”). I theorize the formation of three competing social coalitions in advanced capitalist European societies. One of them is set within the “dominant social order” and holds a *moderate-productivist* socio-political outlook. Two others are collectively marginalized from the dominant order, holding radical outlooks: namely *post-productivist* views on the one side, and *producerist and welfare chauvinist* views on the other.³³ In the following I formulate propositions characterizing these three groups and their political views, emphasizing the position of blue-collar workers.

Three Social Coalitions and their Visions of the Advanced Capitalist Political Economy

Based i.a. on the literature on the moral economy of welfare states (i.a. Mau 2003; Michel 2017), I formulate expectations on how contemporary manual workers’ attitudes on welfare deservingness make part of a more holistic *moral vision of the political economy* that contains definitions of the common good and of rights and duties of members of society. Namely, I propose that the idea of *productive contribution* is central to the moral order (Boltanski/Thévenot 2016) of advanced capitalist “growth societies”. This said, I expect there to be plural and conflicting visions, which in essence consist in moral affirmations or contestations of the dominant model of the political economy and hence also in differing interpretation of its pivotal moral referent: productive contribution (s. i.a. Giddens 1994: 175 ff). Globally, I expect there to be three conflicting sociopolitical outlooks that mark advanced capitalist European publics.

Firstly, this includes a “*moderate productivist*” vision, which holds that all members of society should “productively” contribute to the common good, however, it holds a broad variety of contributions to be valuable and entails nuanced and moderate views on deviance from the rule of contribution, including, on welfare deservingness (**P1b**). This vision is supported by a broad coalition of social types all of which experience firm integration with the dominant model of the political economy.

Secondly, a “*producerist*” and “*welfare chauvinist*” vision equally supports the proposition that everyone should contribute but is radically *materialistic* in its understanding of what is a valuable contribution and features radically-exclusivist stances on deviation from the

³² S. also Pierson/Hacker (2020), Kitschelt (1994), Kitschelt/McGann (1995), all proposing different factors that enable the construction (and persistence) of cross-class coalitions in support of political parties or agendas.

³³ This speaks to the literature that argues advanced capitalist socio-political space is “tripolar” (Oesch/Rennwald 2018) or that a broad, moderate political bloc stands between “polarizing” fringes (Westheuser 2022).

contribution-rule (i.a. Derks 2003; Ivaldi/Mazzoleni 2019; **P1c**). Such an outlook is supported by a coalition of small business owners and blue-collar workers (both labor market insiders and outsiders) all of whom make experiences of exclusion with the political economy's dominant model.

Finally, thirdly, "*post-productivist*" views hold that more than enough value is circulating in the political economy so that there should not be a universal duty of contribution (Giddens 1994: 182 ff.; **P1d**). This outlook is mainly supported by the expanding socio-cultural sectors, which can equally experience alienation from the "disembedded productivist" model of the political economy.

While I expect this typology to capture moral-economic attitudes among the advanced capitalist European citizenry in general, I expect manual workers specifically to emphasize *work* as the default contribution everyone should make to the common good even more than other social types do so (**P1a** "laborism") and to link this "positional outlook" to whichever of the three moral visions of the political economy they join.

Social Integration and Preference Formation at Work, through the State, and in Socio-Cultural Spheres

In the next step, I formulate concrete propositions on how social integration and exclusion influence the political preference formation of blue-collar workers by leading them to join *moderate-productivist*, *post-productivist*, or *producerist and welfare chauvinist* worldviews, depending on whether they are (1) *in* or *out*; and (2) with *whom*. The theorized mechanisms of social integration and political preference formation realize in two "socio-economic" spheres at the societal meso-level: this is firstly, at the *workplace*; and secondly, in *citizen-state relations*. In addition, the same mechanisms realize in *socio-cultural spheres*.

I propose that workers who experience social integration at their workplace, in enterprise organizations that successfully participate in the dominant, productivist order of the socio-economy, form more "moderate" political outlooks (**P2a**). On the contrary, workers who experience social exclusion in work relations form more "radical" political outlooks (**P2b**). When *entire* enterprise organizations experience social exclusion from the "productivist" socio-economic order in interactions with dominant market participants or vis-à-vis regulatory and tax state institutions, this leads to the collective formation of "radical" political outlooks (**P2c**). In which direction experiences of exclusion politicize depends on "who" is excluded "with whom" (mechanism 2). If among the excluded, "post-materialistic" predispositions prevail

(such as typically among sociocultural occupations), this tends to lead to the formation of a “post-productivist” outlook. If among them, “materialistic” predispositions prevail (such as typically among blue-collar workers, small business owners, or yet technical mid-level occupations), this tends to lead to the formation of a “producerist” outlook.

Further, I propose that experiences of “social inclusion” by policies and institutions of the welfare state favor the formation of a “moderate” political outlook (**P3a**). On the contrary, experiences of “social exclusion” – of no solidarity provision in situations of need that would be expected to be covered by the welfare state; of “misrecognition” and “injust treatment” by welfare state institutions – lead to more “radical” outlooks. Depending on the same socio-structural predispositions cited above, it can lead to categorical “challenging” of the productivist deservingness logic of welfare access from a post-productivist (universalist) perspective on the one hand (**P3b**). On the other hand, conflict with the welfare state can be “deflected” (Bolton et al. 2022) and blamed on social outgroups, leading to de-solidarization (**P3c**). The latter phenomenon tends to realize in a dynamic of “kicking down” along the “ranking order” of welfare deservingness (v. Oorschot 2000): those who are “productive” tend to blame those who ostensibly are not; those who have made productive contributions earlier in their life blame those who have not; and those who cannot claim to be productive at all but have access to a “native” identity blame those who are ostensibly unproductive and *not from here* (“welfare chauvinism”). Last but not least, I theorize that particularly strong and visible experiences of social *re-inclusion* due to welfare policy can lead to the formation of very inclusivist views on welfare access (following the consideration that “others should be provided the same opportunity”, i.e. solidarization; **P3d**).

Finally, I add complementary propositions on the political effects of social integration or exclusion via socio-cultural and political spheres. I argue that actors can experience integration into any three of the “social coalitions” theorized above also through role-relationships formed in their family, friends circle, associations, aesthetic-cultural fields (e.g. engagement with music, literature, etc.), churches, or unions, social movements or political parties, on these s. below). I propose that integration into *educative cultural spheres*, in which socio-cultural occupations are overrepresented, can favor the formation of post-productivist views (**P4a**). Integration into institutions that participate in the dominant social order (even outside of the socio-economic sphere) can favor the formation of a moderate outlook (**P4b**). On the contrary, if blue-collar workers experience integration into a socio-structurally speaking *homogenous milieu* via *popular cultural spheres* in which working- and lower-middle-class occupations are

overrepresented, this can act as an echo chamber of materialistic views (P4c). Notably, the latter condition does not feature channels of integration into *dominant social order* other than *work*.

Experience and Resonance: how Demand meets Supply

While this thesis treats “visions of the political economy” as its dependent variable, I add propositions on how *political supply* interacts with the three “visions of the political economy” theorized above. Following the literature in political sociology (Lamont et al. 2017; Häusermann/Abou-Chadi et al. 2021¹; 2021²), I propose that political parties supply concrete ideas and political projects packaged into their ideological and programmatic discourses. These political discourses *resonate* with individuals’ experiences and preconfigured outlooks, leading at the same time to the *formation of concrete political issue preferences* and to *electoral mobilization*.³⁴ I propose that political discourses resonate on two levels with individuals in the population. Firstly, political discourses resonate with experiences of social inclusion or exclusion. I propose that all those who experience to be integrated into dominant social order tend to support “moderate” political discourses. Inversely, all those who experience to be excluded tend to support either “radical” discourses or such discourses which delineate clear, credible pathways that will lead to their societal re-inclusion. Secondly, political discourses resonate with the pre-configured outlooks (“visions of the political economy”) of the three social coalitions described above. As a function of these assumptions, I formulate propositions on which ideological and programmatic discourses resonate with *moderate-productivist*, *post-productivist*, and *producerist/welfare chauvinist* manual workers.

Drawing on the literature on party families and party ideologies, I propose that populism, nativism, and authoritarianism on the political right and on the left resonate with the “producerist and welfare chauvinist” outlook. “New-alternative left-wing” discourses resonate with the “post-productivist” outlook. Center-left, center-right, and liberal discourses resonate with the “moderate-productivist” outlook, while among these, workers will be most receptive to those that propose consumption-oriented social policy (Beramendi et al. 2015; Häusermann/Abou-Chadi et al. 2021¹; 2021²) and/ or a “laborist” discourse that valorizes (low- and mid-skilled) work both ideologically and through substantive policies e.g. aiming at an amelioration of work conditions or at a raise in minimum wages.

³⁴ The chosen research design (s. below) does not allow a consistent empirical argumentation of the mechanisms of demand-supply interaction, and notably not, of proving *voting behavior*. I have chosen to still theorize these, because it rounds up the theoretical picture and may be of interest to the reader in political science.

1.6 Research Design

As I outline in **chapter 4**, this thesis' research design consists in a combination of *inductive* and *deductive* approaches. After formulation of the research questions (s. above), I have chosen two case studies to study these questions in comparative manner. These are East Germany – a case in which we would expect the working-class to have lived a relatively high level of socio-economic grievances over the last three decades both due to socio-economic development and welfare reforms – and Austria – where we would expect the level of socio-economic grievances to be thinkably low. Both cases, however, feature strong PRRPs with a pronounced “welfare chauvinist” discourse that mobilize over-proportionally many blue-collar workers.

Between 2018 and 2020, I have conducted a total of 150 biographical interviews, 75 of these with blue-collar workers, in East Germany and in Austria with the aim of tracing socio-economic “grievance” experiences and the ways in which these politicize. Interviews have focused on occupational biographies, labor market experiences and experiences with policies and institutions of the welfare state. In addition, interviews have included questions on welfare policy and partisan preferences.

The main goal of this methodological approach is to discover “what is behind” salient dynamics of “scapegoating”: where does the pressure come from? *If* we are looking at “conflict externalization”, as I call it above, what is the original locus of conflict? Hochschild (2016) famously discovers “deep stories” in her ethnographic interactions with rural Tea Party supporters. “Deep stories” are more intimate, personal narratives and identities that underly the formation of sociopolitical views, often in emotionally complex or diverted ways. My goal with this research design is to go one step further: while I embrace the potential of the “deep story” approach, I do not think that “identities” and “narratives” are an ultimate explanation. I think if there is anything a “deep story” derives from (or resonates with), it is concrete, personal, situated, biographical, *lived experiences* (Schütz 1932; Schütz/Luckmann 1973; Rosenthal 1995; 2004). This is why I have set out to document accounts of concrete lived situations in which individuals' experience of society manifests. I hold, and this is a basic assumption my research design hinges on, that individuals' views articulate in a tension field between what they *live* and what narratives, what ideational offers, *circulate* in public spheres accessible to them (namely both in immediate social environments – as expressed through the notion of

“social coalitions” – and in large publics – as expressed in political parties’ ideological discourses).³⁵

In an extensive process of data analysis and inductive theory building, it has become clear that a large part of social “grievance experiences” *and* the logic of their politicization can be explained by the two above-presented mechanisms of *social integration* and *exclusion*. This insight was formally theorized by drawing on the literature in sociology and political science. This final theory is reported in chapters 2 and 3 and outlined here-above.

Subsequently, the final theory was another time formally tested on the entire sample of 150 interviews, with a focus on mechanisms pertaining to political preference formation among blue-collar workers alongside their comparison to preference formation among other occupation groups and a comparison between the two case-studies. In addition, I have conducted a logistic regression analysis using International Social Survey Program (ISSP) 2015 data for all European countries to provide an additional test of proposition 2b (the effect of “workplace exclusion” on political preferences). These final tests of the theory are reported in the empirical chapters 5 – 8.

1.7 Empirical Findings

In **chapter 5**, I present qualitative empirical findings on **propositions 1a-d**, pertaining to blue-collar workers’ visions of the political economy. Indeed, almost half of the workers in the sample classify as holding a “moderate-productivist” sociopolitical outlook, while close to another half classifies as holding a “productivist and welfare chauvinist” outlook. Only very few workers in the sample, however, show “post-productivist” views. These latter tend to be younger (under 40) and to have access to educative cultural spheres (s. ch. 8). Workers’ interpretation of productivism is consistently “*laborist*”: in their view, *work* – in a parallel sense of paid employment and of socially valuable laborious activity – is the standard form of participation expected from members of society, in return entitling to income, status, and solidarity provision in case of need. There is some variation with unskilled workers and those with interrupted employment trajectories voicing less “laborist” views than skilled workers in stable, full-time employment relations. Male and female manual workers *in equivalent positions* show globally speaking similar attitudes. Both male and female blue-collar workers

³⁵ This resonates with the perspective on political views and their social articulation formulated by Duchesne/Frazer/Haegel/Ingelgom (2013) as well as by Gamson (1992)

systematically fail to represent *unpaid care work* and *reproductive labor* (Hochschild/Machung 1989; Federici 2012) within laborist claims.

While the data quality on reported voting behavior is not consistently high, the following findings can be reported. Interviewees in the “productivist and welfare chauvinist” category mainly support PRRPs (FPÖ, AfD), and many don’t make a secret of it. They also, in 2020, supported Austrian center-right turned populist-right chancellor Sebastian Kurz – namely both in Austria and in Germany with the restriction that this applies only to interviewees who are “labor market insiders” – not to those with low incomes or in precarious situations. In Germany, Sarah Wagenknecht (Die LINKE, left-nationalist/populist wing) was positively visible to a very small number of economically precarious, “welfare chauvinist” interviewees. “Moderate” workers do *not* voice support for PRRPs (many of them distance themselves explicitly). In Germany, they voiced support for Angela Merkel’s CDU, regional head of state Michael Kretschmar (CDU) or (less often) for SPD (which is historically weaker in Saxony; public sector employment seems to favoring SPD-support among interviewees). In Austria, they voiced support for center-right ÖVP, very often for regional head of state Hans-Peter Doskozil (SPÖ) (also in Vienna, Lower Austria, and Styria), and (only) if they have a relationship to unionism, for SPÖ generally (however, consistently not for SPÖ-head of party Pamela Rendi Wagner). Those workers who voice support new-left-wing parties (e.g. the Green party) have close contact with socio-cultural professionals e.g. in their family.

Besides workers, particularly many independents and small business owners in the sample classify as holding “producerist and welfare chauvinist” views. Socio-cultural occupations and those who are embedded in educative cultural spheres (s. ch. 8) show a tendency to hold post-productivist views. Interestingly, findings are globally very similar for the Austrian and the East German case. The most significant difference is a small number of East German “welfare chauvinists” (who are positioned on the extreme side of these views) propose forced labor for the unemployed (natives and immigrants) who are not “willing to work”, while no such (even affective) claim is being made by Austrian interviewees.

In **chapter 6**, I present qualitative empirical findings on **propositions 2a-c**, pertaining to blue-collar workers’ social integration and political preference formation at the workplace. Problems set in work relations account for 50% of all pressing, unresolved grievance experiences reported by workers in Austria and for 30% of those reported in East Germany. Moreover, a mechanism of “producerist identity formation” accounts for the linkage between workplace exclusion and populist right-wing attitudes in the sample: numerous workers who experience persistent

alienation, injustice, misrecognition, and/ or material problems at work react by forming a resentful identity of being particularly “hard-working” themselves – and put blame on those who “do not work” (but are ostensibly “lazy”: the native and non-native unemployed/ welfare recipients) as well as on those occupation groups who are ostensibly not “productive” (speak, whose activity does not consist in producing *materially tangible* outcomes, e.g. public bureaucracies, intellectuals, journalists, artists, politicians). This is particularly the case for skilled “labor market insider” workers. Some also respond to workplace exclusion with a post-productivist discourse; however, this seems to be explained by a pre-existing embedding into “educative cultural spheres” via family, friends, or hobbies (s. ch. 8). In numerous cases, workplace exclusion ends with job loss, what quasi seamlessly leads to a continuation of problem experiences: namely with the welfare state (s. ch.7).

The mechanisms behind “workplace exclusion” are further enlightened by a typology of workplace relations in small and large, public and private enterprise organizations that I build in interviewees’ narrations in the dataset. The typology includes a total of six types. However, a central distinction is possible between two (ideal-)types of large organizations. On the one hand, there is the “corporatist” type, in which various levels of hierarchy “pull one rope”, play mutually accepted roles vis-à-vis each other, each hold competences within an established organizational culture, communicate, trust, practice feedback and negotiate conflicts.³⁶ In this type of organizations, workers (who stand at lower and lower-middle levels of the hierarchy) tend to feel that they carry a stake in the organization’s goals, experience that collaboration and exchange of recognition with other social types – along occupational classes as well as ethnic backgrounds – is possible and that problems can be resolved in line with accepted social norms. In effect, they have a sense of participation and justice not only at their workplace, but more broadly in society, what leads to the formation of “moderate” political views.

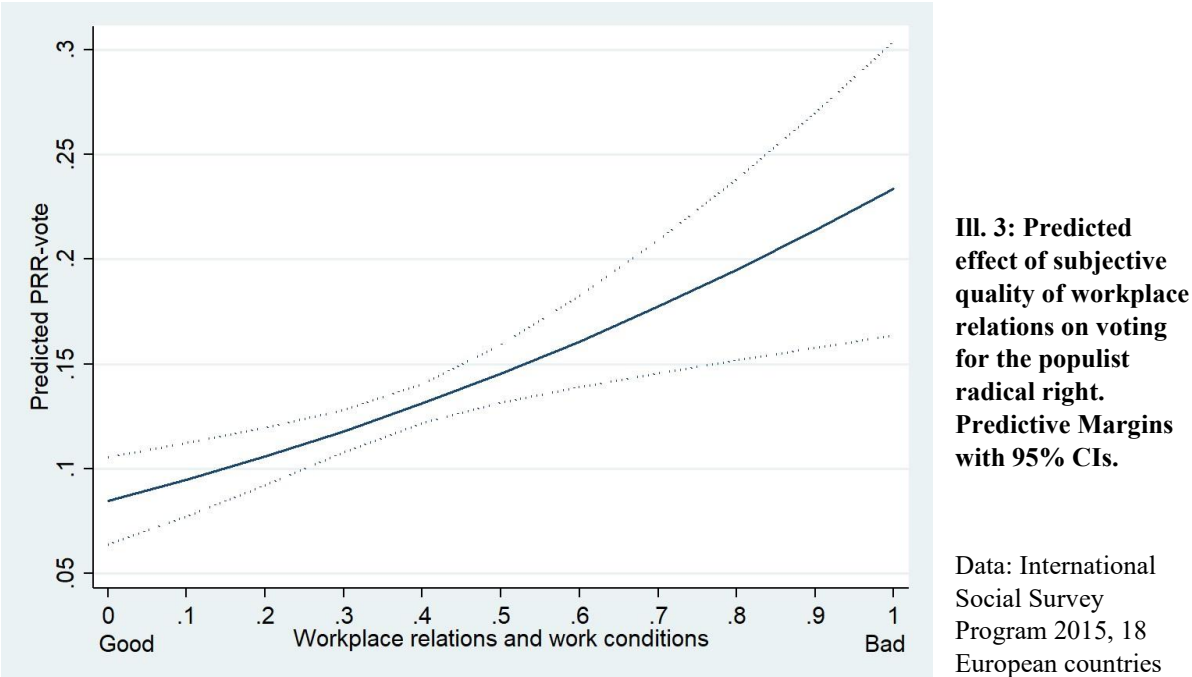
On the contrary, there is the “managerialist” type of organization, in which budgetary and decision-making powers are centralized with higher management, which tends to change often. Controlling is being practiced in a top-down manner and often in a purely quantitative way, middle management is being used to enforce directives (rather than facilitating two-way communication), there is a lack of trust, of accepted organizational norms, and conflicts are being suppressed. Workers in such settings tend to form “integrative” social contact only with social types similar to their own within the organization, while experiencing tension with the higher-skilled, with white-collar employees, or with migrant workers, who in “managerialist”

³⁶ This dynamic is typically, but not in every single case, mediated by works councils/ labor unions.

organizations are typically hired for the blunt reason of suppressing wages. Workers in such organizations experience that social relations in the socio-economy are *unjust*, that they are being *misrecognized*, and take home the pressure of unresolved workplace problems. These conditions favor the mechanism of “producerist” attitude formation described above.

These findings are similar for both cases studied, with the difference that in the accounts of Austrian (labor market insider) workers, work conditions and workplace relations have deteriorated over an extended time-period, while in East German accounts, the process has happened in an accelerated manner in the 1990s, with a more prominent experience of job loss.

Conducting an additional quantitative test of proposition 2b (“workplace exclusion”), I find evidence that a negative subjective experience of work relations and work conditions is associated with a significantly increased propensity to vote for populist radical right-wing parties across European democracies (s. ch. 6)



Moreover, there is a specific mechanism of political preference formation among blue-collar workers who are employed in small (often artisan or family-led) enterprises, which is in line, but goes beyond, proposition 2c. Several small enterprises in the sample show signs of “collective exclusion”. Small enterprise owners can experience misrecognition and injustice in unequal interactions with large or transnational market participants as well as with institutions of the tax and regulative state. This can lead to a sense of exclusion and alienation from the dominant socioeconomic order shared by the entire workforce of small enterprises. This said, these organizations can show a high level of integration between the owner and workers.

Indeed, there is a persistent pattern in the dataset of charismatic, often “strongman”-type enterprise owners, who win workers’ hearts by a mixture of *authoritarian* and *caring* leadership style. This pattern appears for small, medium and even large enterprise owners (oligarchs). Indeed, charismatic enterprise owners, i.e. old-style capitalists as opposed to the managerialist leadership of contemporary, large, shareholder-owned organizations, are the actor-type most often mentioned by workers in the dataset when it comes to questions of “who could act” or “who could make a change” about socioeconomic problems they suffer from in their everyday (work) lives – considerably more often than unions, the state, or politics. I call this phenomenon “patronalism”. Emphasized attitudinal “patronalism” seems to be an independent mechanism leading to the formation of “producerist and welfare chauvinist” views, i.e. to a support for right-wing populist views, among interviewees.

In **chapter 7**, I present qualitative empirical findings on **propositions 3a-d**, pertaining to blue-collar workers’ social integration and political preference formation in contact with the welfare state. I notably survey two areas of welfare policy and *welfare experiences*, namely: public retirement pensions and labor market policy (this is, unemployment aid and active labor market policies administered by the Austrian/ German employment office).

I find consistent evidence that interviewees learn norms of welfare deservingness during “welfare experiences”, in which the state applies these norms to them – and subsequently refer to the same norms when making normative judgements about others’ welfare entitlements. Interviewees who, in a “productivist” order of welfare access, receive benefits based on their own consistent “activity” – consistent employment while in working-age, with no or few interruptions, and ever longer into old-age – tend to internalize this logic and demand that others be “active”, too, in order to receive solidarity in return. This said, those for whom this system works out well tend to form “moderate-productivist” views on welfare access and do not attribute overly much salience to the issue. This typically applies to “labor market insiders” who per definition do not experience unemployment and whose full contribution records entitle them to generous retirement pension benefits.

This is different among those who encounter problems with the welfare state. This is typically the case for “labor market outsiders” and equally for low-paid workers in Germany, who receive low retirement pension benefits. It is the case for those manual workers who become unemployed after the age of 50 (often in connection with health issues) and cannot find a job again, neither retire, but are required by the employment office to “look for work” in order not to lose unemployment benefits. It is the case for young workers who à priori do not integrate

into consistent employment trajectories. In this group, I find a dominant tendency to “deflect” one’s own “welfare exclusion” experiences by “kicking down” on other recipient groups who count as even less deserving than oneself. This leads to a pecking order along the entire “ladder of deservingness”, which starts with labor market insiders complaining about that labor market outsiders would not “make an effort”, continues with elderly “outsiders” complaining that the young don’t “want to work”, and takes its end with the blaming of (non-working) immigrants. “Welfare chauvinism” is indeed the smallest common denominator, the unifying issue, of a “producerist and chauvinist” coalition of both socio-economic insiders and socio-economic outsiders.

Interviewees who make “welfare exclusion experiences” make “needs”-based arguments about welfare policy, too, and do engage in challenging of the restrictive deservingness-logics of welfare access. However, they typically apply such arguments *only to their own category*, while not questioning the application of the same, restrictive and productivist, logic to others (even combining needs-based arguments for oneself with “kicking down” on others).

There are interviewees who *categorically challenge* the productivist logic of welfare access (in response to negative welfare experiences of their own or without such a trigger). These interviewees are typically proponents of “welfare universalism” (Laenen/Meuleman 2020), i.e. radical inclusivism, who hold post-productivist views and e.g. support universal basic income policies. However, these views seem to stand in a strong relationship with being embedded in “educative cultural spheres” (s. ch. 8), so that only few manual workers fall within this category.

Finally, I find weak and mixed evidence for a mechanism of “solidarization” due to “re-inclusion experiences with active, social investment-oriented labor market among manual workers. Evidence is weak, because such a mechanism applies only to very few (three) cases in the entire dataset. It is mixed, because the mechanism seems to work only in cases where priorly unemployed workers have effectively found a job, which they subjectively like, thanks to very visible support by active labor market policy. These interviewees, however, show strong attitudinal effects: they explicitly and extensively narrate about “transformative” experiences and recommend others “should be given the same chance”.

Globally speaking, the same mechanisms seem to apply to other occupation groups, too, with the difference that external resources play a role: if an individual holds other material resources or accesses other sources of solidarity (e.g. via the family), they seem to react less strongly to “exclusion experiences” with the welfare state. The mechanisms work out in a very similar way in Austria and in East Germany. The main differences are the following. Germany has a

considerably lower pension replacement rate, so that full-time employed workers with low salaries receive pension benefits below the poverty risk level (and in effect make social exclusion experiences). Austria has a regulation that allows workers in “heavy physical jobs”³⁷ to retire by the age of 60. In effect, those workers in Austria who profit from the “heavy worker regulation” and retire by 60 tend to form “moderate-productivist” political outlooks, while in the comparison group in Germany, who are required to work until 65 or 67, an age at which manual work is made considerably difficult by health implications, tend to form producerist/ chauvinist outlooks.

In **chapter 8**, I present qualitative empirical findings on **propositions 4a-c**, pertaining to blue-collar workers’ social integration and political preference formation in socio-cultural spheres as well as through engagement in political spheres properly speaking.

I find consistent evidence that social integration into educative cultural spheres is associated with the formation of a post-productivist vision of the political economy. However, this also seems to count for spheres of humanitarian engagement. In summary, occupations set in the education, health, social work, and arts sectors seem to come with such predispositions; and manual workers who closely integrate with such spheres of interaction or their proponents in their private life show a tendency to adapt such views, too. Most stunningly, there is weak but consistent evidence that engagement with *alternative rock music* is associated with the formation of post-productivist views in the working-class.

Further, I find evidence that social integration into labor unions and into certain types of churches is associated with specific political-ideological variants of “*moderate*” views. This means that there is an ideological aspect to it; but also, there seems to be a *social integration-effect*: established labor union organizations and recognized churches (in the given cases, the traditionally dominant catholic and protestant Christian churches of Austria and Germany) integrate individuals into the dominant social order.

Engagement in parties or in social movements with a political orientation is, unsurprisingly, associated with according ideological views in the sample of interviews. I interpret this so that the mechanism of “active political engagement” *overrides* the social-integration mechanism: interviewees who e.g. should form “moderate” views based on the predictions of “social integration theory”, but hold a position within AfD or FPÖ, effectively show right-wing populist

³⁷ Later changed to a regulation for “all those who start work early in life”, allowing retirement by 62 with a full contribution record.

views including salient welfare chauvinism. One could reason about this so that these individuals draw a personal gain from showcasing this ideology.

Interviewees who were socialized into right-wing populist ideologies (or even, in one case, right-wing extremist ideologies) early in their lives through family or friend circles equally seem to keep certain attitudes independently of their personal situation of “integration” or “exclusion”. Interestingly, these individuals show less salient welfare chauvinism and generally less affective sociopolitical “resentment” than their “modernization loser” peers – but rather, consolidated ideological views.

Most working-class interviewees, however, are integrated into socio-structurally homogenous milieus via family, friends, and associative activities, in which the most important institutions enabling participation in common *societal* goals and values are *employment* and *the state*.

1.8 Contributions and Avenues for Further Research

This thesis makes three main contributions. Firstly, it contributes further evidence and conceptual elaboration on why not "economic" or "cultural" losses, but a distinct sociological mechanism of *social exclusion* (Gidron/Hall 2019; Sachweh 2020) is a crucial issue at stake for so-called "losers of modernization" and their political preference formation. Secondly, it makes a theoretical and empirical contribution showing that *the workplace*, in the sense of the social relations around work, is an important site of political preference formation in contemporary societies, independently of more established “economic” variables such as income or employment contract types (s. Burawoy 1979; 1983; Lucas 2011; Soffia et al. 2022). Thirdly, it makes a theoretical and empirical contribution describing mechanisms via which *welfare state reforms* of the recent decades may have caused long-term *policy feedbacks* among the population, namely informing patterns of (de-)solidarization among European publics (Pierson 2001; Häusermann 2010; Enggist 2019; Bremer/Bürgisser 2021; Altreiter et al. 2019; 2022).

Moreover, this thesis makes several smaller and more generic contributions. It makes a methodological contribution, highlighting that *lived experiences* of the socio-economy and of politics are a fruitful object of inquiry for research both into socio-economic conditions and into political preference formation. In so doing, it adds to an emerging literature on *policy experiences* (Dupuy et al 2022; Verhaegen et al. 2021; Revillard 2018) as well as to the debate initiated by Hochschild (2016) on underlying “deep stories” in political preference formation (s. also Dörre 2019). It adds to an existing literature arguing that we should thematize social class relations in a differentiated manner (e.g. Beck/Westheuser 2022). Viewing social structure

as *social role structure* (s. ch.2; s. Merton 1957) can be a fruitful way for political sociology to incorporate and operationalize existing literatures on “social contracts” (Rousseau 1974; Rhodes/Mény 1998), “moral economy” (Thompson 1971; Scott 1977; Mau 2003; Sachweh 2012; Sachweh et al. 2007; 2019; Michel 2017), and more generally, theories addressing the legitimacy of social order (Gramsci 1971; Mouffe 2005) in a way that does justice (a) to the meso-level and (b) to the entanglement of practical and normative elements of social orders.

Last but not least, this thesis is placed at the intersection of three large debates in the social sciences, to each of which it makes a tiny contribution. Firstly, it contributes to an existing literature which argues that *sociology* provides a treasure of insights into how political outcomes come about and that research on political phenomena should incorporate these (s. Hall/Lamont 2013). Secondly, it adds to a growing literature that shows how in-depth and explorative *qualitative methodologies* contribute to theoretically informed research and should be part of any serious research program in the social sciences (for the seminal contributions in the field, s. e.g. Cramer 2016; Hochschild 2016; Gest 2016; Dörre et al. 2020). Thirdly, it points attention to the problem that between the “micro”- and “macro”-levels of society, which receive most of the attention by research on politics, there is a *meso-level* that mediates between the prior two, with crucial implications for political preference formation. This thesis contributes a tiny puzzle piece to our understanding of how it does so.

There are ample avenues for further research. The findings on political preference formation at the workplace should be further explored and corroborated (s. e.g. Palier/Wagner 2023). The theoretical propositions on welfare reform feedbacks, which this thesis formulate based on qualitative data, should be additionally tested by use of quantitative or quasi-experimental methodologies. Furthermore, the interaction between socio-economic and *socio-cultural* channels of social integration and their combined effects on political preference formation may prove to be a relevant area of inquiry (s. also Grunow/Sachweh et al. 2023).

Notably, it should be explored how the mechanisms described by this thesis work out in different countries and different institutional regimes, of which most notably, welfare state regimes and party systems. The welfare states of Northern European countries are more egalitarian and less contribution-based than those of continental European countries: it should be tested whether the theory of “productivist” welfare deservingness rules holds under these conditions. Southern European countries feature strong radical left-wing parties, which may theoretically mobilize the “excluded” instead of or in parallel to PRRPs.

Last but not least, further work should be done on the resonance of partisan strategies, ideological and programmatic, among the advanced capitalist working- and lower-middle-classes. Much work on this topic has recently been done by Mosimann et al. (2019); Rennwald (2020), Abou-Chadi/Mitteregger/Mudde (2021), Häusermann/Abou-Chadi et al. (2021¹; 2021²) and Bremer/Rennwald (2023). Complementary to this work, it would be of interest whether a "laborist" ideological and programmatic strategy, as mirrored in the attitudes notably of politically *moderate* workers documented by this thesis, could help democratic (as opposed to populist and authoritarian) political actors to re-engage the working-class, which is often perceived as politically alienated, with democratic politics, so contributing to the resilience and sustainability of liberal democracies (s. also Wagner 2022).

Chapter 2. Conceptual and Theoretical Foundations

In this chapter, I develop the thesis' conceptual and theoretical framework. Addressing open questions in theories of “populism as a problem of social integration”, I draw on the sociological literature to define societal integration as a matter of *social roles* which individuals practice in institutional settings such as at the workplace, in the family, in associations, in cultural spheres or vis-à-vis state agencies (Merton 1957; Goffman 1959; 1961; Simmel 2013 [1908]). Via these concrete access points, individuals integrate into a societal web of social relations which is structured both by power relations and by common goals and values (*social order*).

I argue that the socio-economic order of contemporary European societies is dominantly oriented at the *pursuit of economic growth*, what goes with a “productivist” model of social integration (Giddens 1994: 175ff.). In this model, individuals gain societal integration mainly through employment (which I conceive of as a *set of social relations around work*) and through the welfare state (a role-relationship between *citizen and state*, which keeps the prior in material security and an accepted social status once they are not in employment). While in the era of industrial capitalism, this model has enabled participation in a common practical and normative framework for large popular majorities, this potential has decreased in the era of advanced capitalism. This is for a variety of political economic reasons. In the experience of the dependently employed population, and notably of the blue-collar working-class, however, it manifests in two *loci*. This is (1) at *workplaces* that have been transformed by firm strategies and management styles aiming at “cost-cutting” and “lean management” into sites of social tension and segregation rather than of participation in society's dominant orientations (Ó Riain/Healy 2023; Godechot et al. 2020). It is (2) in contact with a welfare state that has been transformed by reforms that emphasize “activation” and “conditionality” into a site that can produce social tension and stigma rather than security and recognition (Soss/Schram 2007; Bonoli 2010; Dwyer et al. 2022; Bolton et al. 2022).

Last but not least, I propose that “productivism” comes with a “moral order” (Boltanski/Thevenot 2006) that allows to justify actions, positions, and entitlements within society by reference to *productive contribution* (Weber 2001[1904]; Giddens 1994). I reinterpret van Oorschot's (2000) CARIN-model of *welfare deservingness* from this perspective. I argue that those who are firmly integrated into productivist social order via social role-relationships around work or vis-à-vis the state will affirm its legitimacy by mirroring its moral narratives. Those who are excluded from participation, however, will either *challenge* productivism or resentfully apply its mores on external *scapegoats* so to underline their own belonging.

2.1 Social Integration and Political Sociology

Addressing open questions in the theory of “populism as a problem of social integration”, I draw on the sociological literature to forward an argument on *what* individuals integrate into when they integrate into a society and *via which* crucial mechanisms they do so. I argue that an individual’s integration into society depends on social roles which they practice in institutional settings such as at the workplace, in the family, in associations, in cultural spheres or vis-à-vis state agencies (Merton 1957; Goffman 1959; 1961; Simmel 2013 [1908]). These institutions mediate individual integration into society; and the social roles regulated by them are the central reference point for the distribution of material resources and social status, for social recognition and identity formation in society (s. *ibid*). The experience of permanent *tension* or ultimate *rupture* of crucial social role-relationships, on the contrary, leads to exclusion from participation in society’s “*social role order*”, what can be causal to the entire range of grievance experiences known from the literature on the “politics of resentment”. This sometimes entails material deprivation or insecurity. It almost per definition involves status loss or identity loss, the experience of alienation from society’s dominant institutions and orientations, a sense of misrecognition and of injustice, of lacking voice and efficacy (Salmela/von Scheve 2017).

Populism as a Problem of Social Integration: Open Questions

The literature has formulated multiple arguments on how problems of “social integration” fuel popular support for populist radical right-wing politics. On the one hand, the integration of individuals into society – or exclusion therefrom – has been highlighted as a source of political preference formation (Gidron/Hall 2019; Sachweh 2020; Putnam 2000). On the other hand, the integration of groups *within* society and, on the contrary, deep divisions between groups that fuel fears of societal disintegration have been highlighted (Cramer 2016; Mason 2015; Harteveld 2021). The literature, however, still leaves several important questions open (s. Grunow/Sachweh et al. 2023).

Firstly, it is unclear what social integration, essentially, consists in. What do individuals integrate into when they integrate into “a society” – and what, inversely, is it that “losers of modernization” are ostensibly being excluded from? Even when we speak of inter-group integration: how is it ultimately defined; what does social integration between groups consist in? The literature makes multiple propositions. Gidron/Hall (2019), drawing on sociological work from Durkheim (1984[1893]) to Blau (1960), propose that integration into society equals integration into a common *normative order* – a shared system of norms, values, and beliefs – within which individuals are treated (recognized, respected) as “peers”, i.e., as valued members

of society. They also highlight that integration depends on “social relations linking individuals”, which they operationalize as levels of social capital. Overall levels of social capital (as opposed to social isolation), however, have been shown by other literature to only marginally matter for populist radical right-wing party (PRRP) support, many PRRP-supporters being well-integrated into social relations at least in their *immediate environment* (Eatwell 2005; Rydgren 2009). Without the more practically manifest dimension of “social relations”, the concept of “normative order” comes dangerously close to “culturalist” theories of populist backlash (Inglehart/Norris 2019) – while it is Gidron/Halls’ (2017; 2019) – and my – explicit endeavor to overcome false dichotomies between “material” and “cultural” factors. Is soci(at)al integration really driven by purely “normative” orders – are there not *practical* aspects to it, too? Gidron/Hall (2019) and Sachweh (2020) further use *social trust* as an indicator of social integration, what corresponds to the assumptions social systems theory makes about social integration (Luhmann 1984); and ultimately build on measures of subjective social status, “subjective exclusion” and experiences of “being respected by others” (all measured by survey questions). These indicators are likely to well capture the *outcome* (being/ feeling integrated or not) but the question remains, what it derives from.

The literature on social sorting (Mason 2015; Hartevelde 2021) treats polarized group identities as a driver of “social polarization” that can express in affective political polarization (providing opportunities to PRRPs; s. Hartevelde et al. 2022). A long-standing literature on socio-structural cleavages, however, has shown that social divisions can equally be conducive to types of conflict that *drive democracy* (Lipset/Rokkan 1967; Bartolini/Mair 1990). Are there conditions under which cleavages between social groups contribute to *societal* integration across socio-structural division lines, group conflict articulating “within common frames” – and others under which they lead to societal dis-integration and political escalation?³⁸

A second, even more important, question is: *via which mechanisms* do individuals integrate into society – and in what aspects are these mechanisms vulnerable to processes of societal change, leading (if the theory holds) to the social exclusion of “losers of modernization”? If societal integration is a matter of a system of social norms: then where, at which precise *loci*, do individuals access integration into it (and which loci matter more than others)? Which institutions *mediate* this relationship? If integration is a question of social interactions or of “trust”: which interactions are these; and what sources does trust derive from? Gidron/Hall

³⁸ We would be looking for factors other than political party’s agency here (which is sure to be a major factor), namely for factors that provide *opportunities* to parties to make divisive, radical, vs. moderate politics.

(2019) emphasize “both the macrolevel reflecting how well integrated a society is and at the micro-level reflecting how well integrated into society each individual is” – but how are both these outcomes mediated by institutions on the *meso-level* (s. also Grunow/Sachweh 2023)?

This second question equally applies to intergroup contact (and integration): where does it happen – in which *spaces* of interaction, in which arenas within society do groups connect (or conflict)? The same questions can be raised even concerning objects of “loss” proposed by other theories of the “politics of resentment” (s. ch. 1). If *social status* is at stake: what sources does it derive from? Which actors or institutions are essential for *endowing* social status on a contemporary manual worker, and how do these sources threaten to collapse? If recognition is at stake: who confers it – or fails to do so? Seen from an individual’s perspective: in which *areas of life*; in which *social relationships* or *encounters* do contemporary European blue-collar working-class individuals (of both genders, of various age groups) experience dignity – or on the contrary, hurtful status denial and misrecognition that influence their outlook on society and politics?

Finally, the third question is: how is social integration or exclusion being *politicized*, i.e., via which mechanisms does it affect public preference formation? While we can assume that the politicization of “social exclusion” by PRRPs broadly follows the mechanisms known from the “modernization losing” and “politics of resentment” literatures (s. ch.1; Samela/von Scheve 2017; Betz 1994; Betz 2021; etc.), it is likely that various causes of socio-political frustration and resentment politicize in somewhat different ways.

In the following, I draw on the literature in sociology and social theory to make three arguments on social integration. (1) I argue that individuals, when they integrate into a society, integrate into a *social order* (Parsons 1949; Strauss 1978; Grunow/Sachweh et al. 2023). I propose to understand a social order as a system of interrelated *social roles* (Merton 1957), which are oriented towards shared practical goals and normative values. (2) I argue that “bridging institutions” at the societal *meso-level* mediate this relationship, enabling both the integration of individuals into society and the integration of groups within society into a common order. (3) Any social order is subject to contestation and conflict (Mouffe 2005), which actors can *deal with* in various ways, what provides basic cues for the politicization of social integration and exclusion.

In a subsequent step, I argue that it is from the shared goals and values of society generally, and from their own role-based *modes of integration* into society specifically, that actors derive moral justifications (Boltanski/Thevenot 2006) for their own and others’ positions, actions and

orientations within society. These justifications are used in arguments about membership in society and status within it. They are also being used in arguments about the legitimacy of social order itself, in which case, moral propositions are being formulated to justify or contest the existing role-order.

Social Role Order

In line with the literature in general sociology and social theory, I propose that what individuals integrate into, when they “socially integrate”, is a *social order* (Parsons 1949; Strauss 1978; Grunow/Sachweh et al. 2023). Any organized “group” of people – be it a society or a tribe; or also a family, an association, or an enterprise within a society – disposes of a social order, which features two crucial elements: namely *common orientations* on the one hand, and a structure of *social roles* that nests around these orientations on the other.

A group’s common orientations consist in practical *goals* as well as in normative *values, norms, and morals*. For example, I argue below that societies can be dominantly oriented at the pursuit of *economic growth*. This opens up a variety of ways to participate: for example, an enterprise can produce software (establishing this as its goal) and create a workplace for software engineers and other personnel, all of whom participate in the common societal pursuit of growth. Another society can dominantly orient at the pursuit of warfare, what will highlight other opportunities of participation. Either society will underline the legitimacy of its practical goals with a set of values, norms, and morals: for example, the first society will feature dominant narratives about modernization and productivity; the latter about threat, glory, and hostility. These global normative orientations inform systems of norms (normative orders) that set actors throughout society into normative relationships vis-à-vis each other and towards society’s common goals.

Social roles (Merton 1957; Goffman 1959; 1961) can be understood as nodal points in this societal norm system. Social roles are being formed and practiced in situations of *social interaction* between individuals – e.g. between work colleagues, family members, employers and employees, the members of an association, public servants and citizens (Goffman 1959). They consist in a set of mutually accepted social norms that defines reciprocal expectations, rights and obligations between these interactors. These role-relationships at the “micro-level”, at the same time, link individuals into society’s common order of goals and values. This process is mediated by “meso-level” institutions (s. below): individuals participate as employees at a workplace, while the company, in return, participates in the exchanges of the national economy; individuals participate in a soccer club, while the club participates in the amateur soccer league.

In this sense, Parsons (1949: 42) conceptualizes a “social role” as “a position in the general institutional system, recognized and supported by the entire society”.³⁹ Merton (1957: 424 ff.) is more specific when he outlines that every individual disposes of multiple *role-sets*, namely in each institutional context, in which they participate: at work, an individual takes up role-relationships e.g. with their boss, their co-workers, their customers; in the family with their (step-)parents, siblings, children, (grand-)children, nieces/nephews; in an association, with the other members, and so on.⁴⁰ It is through these role-relationships that an individual *integrates* into the web of social relations that is society, and into the common orientations (practical and normative) that define society’s social order.⁴¹

From what has been said, we can derive that it is through role-based social integration that individuals gain a sense of *participation* in society. This is notably through the integration into *joint courses of action* (Mead 1934; Blumer 1969) with other actors in society. Exclusion from society’s common (role) order, on the contrary, leads to a sense of *alienation* from society.

At the same time, the integration into role-relationships that are linked to society’s normative order comes with a sense of *justice*. This is because each role relationship is based on mutually accepted social norms (hence, shared normative frames), what, if actors stick to them, results in experiences of just social encounters. In addition, if these role relationships link to society’s common normative order, these manifest experiences are in line with social norms that count

³⁹ Structural-functionalist and symbolic interactionist theories have historically been seen as contradictory, notably in American sociology. However, they meet in *social role theory* (s. Merton 1957). In addition, a growing literature argues that Parson’s micro-level theory of action is quite compatible with interactionist approaches (Scott 1963; Turner 1974); interactionist theories of social order have been proposed at least on the meso-level (Strauss 1978; 1994); and an intermediating perspective has been proposed under the name “structural interactionism” (Stryker 1980; 2008; Hall 1987). In essence, “structural interactionism” affirms that social order consists in structured social interactions: there are degrees of agency on all levels and order is being (permanently re-) *negotiated* – a view to which I fully subscribe (s. below, “ways of dealing with conflict”).

⁴⁰ In Merton’s framework (1957: 424 ff.), each “role-set” constitutes a social *status*. F. ex., all the role-relationships in an individual’s work-context together constitute their occupational status (e.g. as a “manual worker”). An individual’s overall integration into society is defined by its “status-set” (all the diverse statuses they hold e.g. via work, family, participation in associations, in cultural fields of interaction, vis-à-vis the state, etc.). This highlights a *relational* understanding of the term “social status”: status does not consist in an accumulable good of “prestige” stocked by individuals who unrelatedly stand next to each other but is being conferred by (a system of) actors who stand in relationships towards each other. This “relational” understanding being, actually, commonplace in social theory (e.g. Weber 1978 [1922]), it appears that within the (public and scientific) debate on right-wing populism, “status” is too often understood (perhaps in an intuitive sense of the word) as an “asset” rather than as a “relationship”. This is why I consistently stick to the term social *role* – which, even intuitively, conveys an understanding of a position in *social relations*. I use the term largely in line with Merton, treating *relationships between individuals* as “role-relationships”. If I diverge e.g. by speaking of “a citizen’s role vis-à-vis the state”, this should be read as a reference to *all the concrete role-relationships* entered into by the citizen vis-à-vis representatives and representations of the state (e.g. in personal encounters with public servants or case workers, when using e-government services, or when receiving a social benefit payment on a bank account).

⁴¹ S. similarly Simmel’s (2013 [1908]) theory of “*Vergesellschaftung*”, which holds that individuals are being “societalized” through reciprocal relationships manifest in interactive encounters, which in turn link them into the web of relationships that is society.

throughout society (or at least, in its dominant spheres): in effect, society can be experienced *as a just place*. On the contrary, if role relationships do not work out (if one of the actors breaches the norms, the other's expectations), this manifests in experiences of injustice. If an actor is excluded from society's common social order, this will lead to structural experiences of injustice with society's dominant institutions, as a result of which, society can be experienced *as an unjust place*.

But this is not everything. Describing the precise mechanism of an individual's integration into society, social roles are also the central reference point for *material resource distribution*, for *social status hierarchies*, for *social recognition*, and for the formation of *social identities* within a society (Linton 1945; Parsons 1949; Merton 1957).⁴² The earning of material income hinges on a mutually accepted *role-relationship* between an employee and their employer (in case of dependent employment) or between market participants (in case of self-employed). The redistribution of material resources hinges on the rights and obligations of economic actors in society which are being negotiated in a political process (Korpi 1983) and implemented by the institutions of the state, manifesting in role-relationships of economic actors (households, companies, etc.) vis-à-vis the institutions of the tax, regulatory, and welfare state, which mediate these societal exchanges (Rothstein 1998; van Oorschot 2000; Mau 2003; Wansleben 2021). In the case that material solidarity is exercised e.g. by the family, this is likely to come with an emphasis on mutual rights and obligations (speak, role-relationships) between family members (s. e.g. Hochschild/Machung 1989).

Moreover, the role-relationships that individuals entertain in various domains of their life – occupational roles at work, citizen roles vis-à-vis the state, family roles, roles in hobby clubs, as a church member, as a union or party member, etc. – are the immediate source of *social status* endowed on them in these concrete interactions and the reference point for status ascribed to them in the large public (Merton 1957: 424 ff.). In an equivalent way, *social recognition* (Honneth 1996; Fraser 2000) is being exchanged in and based on role-relationships. Finally, social roles practiced vis-à-vis others are a crucial reference point for the formation of *social identities* (for example, social identities can typically be based on occupational roles, on roles in the family, in leisure time activities, in religious spheres, etc., s. Tajfel/Turner 1979).

When it comes to intergroup contact, mutually accepted role relationships (e.g. between members of different social classes, of different religions, genders, age groups, or from different

⁴² And further in line with Simmel 2013 [1908]; Durkheim 1984[1893]; Weber 1978 [1922]; Blau 1960, who don't emphasize the term "role", but whose account of social integration corresponds much to the statement.).

geographical regions) enable positive social contact through *interaction rituals* (Collins 2004; Marx 2019; s. further Durkheim 2001[1912]; Goffman 1967; Shilling 2005). (The question is, which institutional settings promote the formation of such relations between members of different groups? See below.) Last but not least, an integration into role-relationships creates *common sense* (Schütz/Luckmann 1973; Blumer 1969): integrating into joint action and normative frameworks, individuals' *life-worlds* link and they access (and create) shared semantic resources, through which they gain a common interpretation of the world. In the opposite case, individuals can make the experience of not or mis-understanding each other.

Social exclusion from society's common role-order can be qualified in several ways. Firstly, individuals can *not* hold role-relationships that link them into society's dominant order of goals and values. Maybe they are individually isolated or, more likely, they live in a collectively marginalized milieu. This form of social exclusion we could call "*social rupture*". On the other hand, they can be integrated into the common role-order, but the relationships via which they are stand under so much *tension* that effectively, they lose their integrative function. This can be the case if someone is employed but experiences the relationship to their employer to be so thoroughly unfair and alienating that through it they get a sense of exclusion from rather than integration in society (s. ch. 6); or if someone is a citizen of a state but experiences their relationship with state institutions to create more insecurity and status denial than anything else (s. ch. 7). This condition we could call "*social tension*".

I sum up what has been said in the following table:

| Social integration through role-relationships | Social exclusion through tension in or rupture of role-relationships |
|---|---|
| Participation | Alienation |
| Recognition | Misrecognition |
| Sense of justice | Sense of injustice |
| Material security | Material insecurity |
| Status security | Status insecurity/ denial |
| Opportunity for identity formation | Obstacle for identity formation |
| Positive social contact with other social types through interaction rituals | Negative/ no social contact with other social types |
| Common sense | Non-/ misunderstanding |

Tab. 1: Dimensions of social inclusion and exclusion

It is important to emphasize that all these dimensions of social inclusion (or exclusion) can occur on several levels of society. Firstly, they can occur on the level of immediate interactions: I, for example, have a happy relationship with my group of best friends. We meet regularly and practice mutually accepted role relationships when we sit around a table, laugh, and tell stories. Ergo, I get a sense of participation, recognition, justice, status, etc. that applies to *this social circle*. Whether *through* this relationship (secondly) I get a sense of participation, recognition, and status in society at large depends, unfortunately, plainly on who my friends are: if they hold accepted social roles in society's common social order (e.g. through their occupations), our meeting may convey a sense of *stake* in society also on me. If they are all excluded from society's dominant practical and normative frames, I may also get a sense of social exclusion from hanging out with them. This said, friendship roles do not tick all the boxes of societal integration: they do typically not, for example, provide material income and security (except your friends are very wealthy and good-humored); and we may even ask whether regular social activities in the evening integrate an individual sufficiently into joint societal action frames to convey a stable sense of participation when they are unemployed.

Based on the social-role-order framework, it is possible to theorize mechanisms that lead individuals to perceive social relations to be *legitimate* – or not. Firstly, those individuals are likely to perceive society's social order to be overall legitimate who *hold a stake* in it (who are firmly integrated into it via role-relationships). Secondly, inter-group relations within society are likely to be perceived as legitimate if members of these groups are enabled to integrate into *joint action* and *common normative frames* (s. also Allport 1954; Pettigrew/Tropp 2006). These two propositions form the basis of the two mechanisms of social integration and political preference formation I theorize in ch. 3.

It is crucial to note that social orders can be overall *more or less inclusive*: a society's dominant social order can offer the opportunity to integrate into roles that hold a stake in its goals and values to a large majority of its population – *or not*. I expect this to exert an important effect on the degree, to which social order is legitimate – and on the mechanisms, through which legitimacy is being built. Participation is one such mechanism. If legitimacy is not built through participation, dominant actors may resort to other legitimacy-building strategies (or to other means of building/ emulating participation than through manifest, stable, social roles).

The social-role-order framework is particularly useful to analyze the *legitimacy of class relations* within a society. It aligns with a relational understanding of social class – class consists in a relationship between groups that is marked by an inequality of power (Marx/Engels 1848;

Gramsci 1971) – but adopts a differentiated position, affirming that *degrees of a stake* in power exist. The legitimacy of class relations is not merely built by “ideational narratives” which are entirely distinct from “material relations”; but through role-relationships featuring *both practical and normative* aspects in the context of meso-level institutions (such as i.a. the workplace). These institutions enable forms of *collective action* (Mead 1934; Blumer 1969) under participation of members of multiple social classes, what brings forth shared practical and normative frameworks: speak, the integration into a common social order. Role-relationships between members of different social classes are both subject to persistent contestation and to (degrees of) mutual acceptance. In this sense, it is possible to understand social structure as *social role structure*: consisting in a nested order of social roles actors in various social positions entertain vis-à-vis each other, mediated by meso-level institutions.

The Meso-Level and “Bridging Institutions”

Individuals’ integration into society’s social order is a multi-level process mediated by *meso-level institutions*. Meso-level institutions in contemporary societies include f. ex. the family, associations, state agencies, enterprise organizations, churches, unions, or parties. Individuals practice social roles in the context of meso-level institutions (you are member of a family, employee at a workplace, citizen vis-à-vis the state, member of a sports club, etc.), which in turn link them into the common societal order of goals and values. In the broadest sense, meso-level institutions include any kind of *organizations* as well as social “*fields*” or *networks* (Fligstein/McAdam 2012; Thomson 2012; Granovetter 1983; Liu et al. 2017; March/Olsen 1984; Powell/DiMaggio 1991). In the following table, I offer a categorization in four types: socio-economic, state, socio-cultural, and political institutions. Because they mediate individuals’ integration into society, I call them “bridging institutions”.

| Socio-economic | State | Socio-cultural | Political |
|--|---|----------------------------------|------------------|
| Enterprises | Welfare state | Family | Unions |
| Markets | Tax and regulatory state | Friendship circles | Parties |
| Educational/ training institutions (private) | Administrative state | Neighborhoods | Social movements |
| | Judicial state | Associations | |
| | Security state | Churches | |
| | Educational/ training institutions (public) | Fields of aesthetic culture | |
| | | Social media, online communities | |

Tab. 2: “Bridging institutions” that mediate individuals’ integration into society

Enterprise organizations act as workplaces for the dependently employed, enabling them to form role-relationships e.g. with colleagues, superiors, subordinates, works councils, or customers, via which they participate in joint action and normative frames and so integrate into society (s. e.g. Burawoy 1979; 1983; Hochschild 1983; 1997). For the self-employed, the same is enabled through role-relationships formed in market interactions with clients (the market is a social field, Fligstein/McAdam 2012), with their employees, or in professional associations/employers' unions (respectively, professional "fields", if not formalized). The welfare state defines social roles of (current or prospective) welfare recipients and governs their rights and obligations (e.g. of retirees, of the unemployed, of those who seek health services, s. e.g. Mau 2003). The same is the case for the tax and regulatory state vis-à-vis (private and corporate) tax-paying subjects (s. Wansleben 2021). Public institutions, naturally, also act as workplaces for those employed in the public sector. Individuals can form social roles in a variety of socio-cultural settings, including through engagement in spheres of aesthetic culture (e.g. music, literature), sports, or religion. When speaking of social roles in socio-cultural or political spheres (parties, unions, social movements), I generally refer to active and continuous *engagement*: formal membership in a party or union would not by itself qualify as an intact social role-relationship (we could be looking at inactive, "sleeping", purely nominal membership, through which no sense of participation is gained). I do not include public spheres created by the "old" media in the list, because they do not enable social interaction (they work only one way, unless you write letters to the editor). Under certain circumstances, however, the new media can allow social role formation and act as mediating institutions, and various applications accessed via the internet can do so (online forums, online games, etc.).⁴³

It becomes clear that the integration of individuals into society is a *multi-level* process. This process is, hence, also vulnerable at several levels. Actors can be *individually* excluded from integration into social roles (speak: you, individually, are not allowed to join the bowling club); but also *entire collectives* can be excluded from integration into society's common social order (the town's residents frown upon the club, giving the bowling alley a wide berth). In order to successfully participate in society's common order e.g. through your occupational role, you must not only find a job – but the enterprise in which you work must also itself successfully participate in the dominant frames of the economy. As I argue below, this may not be the case e.g. for marginalized sectors of the economy in which entire enterprises make the experience

⁴³ I suspect, however, that role-relationships formed *purely* e.g. via Instagram are inherently instable and can only ever lead to fragmented and *tensed* (s. above) stakes in society. Members of generation Z may disagree – I leave the question open.

of being excluded from “just” and equal market interactions.⁴⁴ Integration into family ties, friendship circles, neighborhoods and associations equally comes with the question of whether these are *collectively* situated within dominant social order or in marginalized spheres (s. example above).

When it comes to integration between groups, it becomes clear that this can work in two ways. On the one hand, members of different groups can have *immediate* contact, forming mutually accepted role-relationships. For example, this is the case when you successfully collaborate with members of different demographics than your own (age, gender, ethnicity, skill-/education-level) in a team or entertain ties with them in your family or neighborhood. On the other hand, group integration can be *mediated* by “bridging institutions”. This is the case if you *do not* know representatives of another group, but you are integrated into the joint action and normative frames e.g. through participation in the same economic sector or *by the state*.

Adopting an individual-level point of view, we can understand the *person* in a modern, liberal-democratic society as a nexus point of multiple social role-relationships, which link them into society, acting as “channels of integration”. Different “channels of integration matter more or less for different individuals, depending on factors such as age, gender, class, or historical period. Referring of a *set* of channels of integration that is typical for a specific social group at a specific historical point of time, we could speak of “modes of social integration”. For example, a “mode of integration” can dominantly link an individual into society via their family; or mostly via their work; or they can live of minimum social assistance but visit museums all the time, participating in spheres of high culture; and so on.

Ways of Dealing with Conflict

The sociopolitical processes in which a societies’ common goals and values are established are typically driven by dominant actors and institutions, who are in the position to mobilize the power resources to define and maintain a “common order”. Any “social order” is, hence, marked by power inequalities – and is permanent subject to conflict and contestation (Coser 1956; Mouffe 2005; Strauss 1978; Korpi 1983; Deitelhoff/Schmelzle 2023).

⁴⁴ Below, I argue this may e.g. be the case for traditional artisan firms, small farms, or small construction enterprises, who feel unjustly outcompeted by corporations, for small shops in the age of corporate store chains and Amazon, for local pubs at the edge of closure, etc. The sentiment of injustice in economic competition is often nourished by a sense of *social value* in an activity that is being marginalized by markets (e.g. small towns would profit from infrastructure even if it is not always economically profitable).

Social integration hinges on a society's capacity to *negotiate* structural conflicts *within* its given social order (s. e.g. Strauss 1978; Korpi 1983; Deitelhoff/Schmelzle 2023). If a society disposes of modes of negotiating conflicts, of addressing problems and of settling actors' conflicts of interest within its dominant frameworks (or albeit by marginal changes of these), this enhances its "integrative" capacity. The same counts for relationships between individuals or between groups: role-relationships are able to persist *if* they are able to deal with conflicts.

I argue that the opposite of conflict negotiation is conflict *suppression*. When conflicts in social relations are being suppressed (i.e. *not* dealt with), these relations will over time stand under increasing *tension*. In this way, they lose their capacity to integrate actors into mutually accepted role-frameworks.

There are, in turn, three typical ways in which actors can react to this. Firstly, actors can engage in "transformative conflict" that contests existing social order and aims to radically change it (Mouffe 2005). This is for example the case when parts of the population within a capitalist society support a socialist revolution (or the other way around). Secondly, actors can engage in "conflict externalization", the blaming of external targets with the aim of temporarily stabilizing society's internal social order (Bauer et al. 2021; Marx 2001; Fehr/Fischbacher 2004; Cochrane/Nevitt 2014; Marx/Nguyen 2018)⁴⁵. This is how, below, I propose to interpret the behavior of supporters of right-wing populism. Thirdly, actors can remain silent and merely cope with their situation.⁴⁶

This basic conceptual scheme informs the rest of the theory and notably the mechanisms of political preference formation theorized in chapter 3. In effect, I argue that those social orders enjoy broad *legitimacy* that offer opportunities for a broad social majority to integrate into social roles that participate in their dominant orientations and that dispose of mechanisms to negotiate structural pressures. Inversely, those actors in society who are excluded from accepted roles and those who are unable to voice and negotiate pressures their position is subject to are likely to put the legitimacy of the given social order in question. Depending on who is in or out with whom (inter-group contact) and on political opportunity structures and entrepreneurs on the political supply-side, I argue that such social-exclusion-induced legitimacy gaps can channel

⁴⁵ S. further: Dovidio et al. (2005); Behr (2018); Fenichel (1940); Miller et al. (2003); Roy et al. (1998); Patterns of Prejudice (Academic Journal).

⁴⁶ In allusion to A.O. Hirschmann (1970), we could call this typology of political behaviors "*Exit, Voice, and Scapegoating*" (s. also Bajoit 1988; Grima/Glaymann 2012).

into various political effects, thereby following the logics of “transformative conflict”, “conflict externalization”, or silent “coping” (s. ch. 3.1).

Moral Order and Moral Visions of the Political Economy

Any social order comes with a “moral order“ (Boltanski/Thevenot 2006). A moral order consists in registers of moral justification, which are in line with society’s common goals and values. For example, in a war leading society, references to military success will have the *argumentative power* to justify courses of action, status positions or social membership. In a religious society, a broad variety of things will be argued by reference to deities. Actors within society draw on these registers of justification when making normative arguments in front of each other. Typically, *inclusion* in or *exclusion* from society is justified by reference to these common, dominant, registers of moral argument. When actors contest the legitimacy of social order itself, they may resort to challenging its moral registers as a whole. When actors “externalize” conflict, they are, on the contrary, likely to stick to established registers of argument – just turning them against external “scapegoats”.

I argue that individuals form normative socio-political outlooks in a tension field between their own social roles and (moral) narratives circulating in the public sphere. In this tension field, they notably form *moral visions of the political economy*, which this thesis treats as dependent variable (s. ch. 3). A moral vision of the political economy consists in views on the legitimacy of relations in the socio-economy. It entails views on the legitimacy of material income and property as well as of social status within society. It entails views on welfare deservingness (“who deserves what *and why?*”; van Oorschot 2000). And it entails views on who should be included in society – and who should be excluded from it (Lamont/Molnar 2002), notably around socio-economic questions, involving issues such as *welfare chauvinism*.

In ch. 3, I formulate a theory on how individuals form *moral visions of the political economy*, which features the following main propositions: (1) individuals’ moral outlook always represents their own modes of social integration (their own social roles); (2) it represents whether they are included or excluded from the dominant social order; (3) it represents integration between socio-structural groups (be it within or outside of dominant order); and (4) it draws on ideational resources circulating in the public sphere (moral justifications, ideological frames dispersed by actors such as the state or political parties).

In so doing, my framework largely absorbs, but also differs, from the literature on “moral economy” (Thompson 1971; Scott 1977; with regard to the welfare state Rothstein 1998; van

Oorschoot 2000; Mau 2003; Michel 2017; with regard to social class Svallfors 2006)⁴⁷. The moral economy literature proposes that relationships between actors in the economy are regulated by *mores* (social norms) that define mutual rights and obligations between them – very much as I define “social roles” (following i.a. Merton and Goffman). This said, the moral economy literature does not distinguish between moral discourses circulating in the large public sphere and norm-governed role-relationships manifest sur place, in concrete, situated, social interactions. I distinguish between the two, because I hold that individuals will differently interpret and apply public moral discourses depending on their own situation of role-based social integration (s. ch. 3).

For example, a welfare recipient entertains concrete role-relationship(s), consisting in mutual rights and obligations and in situations of interaction, with the state agency that administers their benefit. In parallel to this, discourses on *welfare deservingness* circulate in the public sphere, making propositions on what rights and obligations welfare recipients *should* have. These spheres interact in two ways. Firstly, the public’s views of welfare deservingness influence the political negotiation of welfare policy. Social policy legislation is based on an understanding of mutual rights and obligations of actors in society (“moral economy”). It ends up framing the concrete recipients’ interaction with the state agency (“role-relationship”) that is instructed to implement the legislation, and hence, to administer the state-set *deservingness norms* (s. e.g. Hansen 2019; Laenen 2020; ch. 7). Secondly, depending on how the concrete, sur place role-relationship works out, the recipient (and maybe also the case worker) will make differential use of moral ideas circulating in the public sphere to articulate normative interpretations of their situation, of the respective other and – as an effect – they will adapt their general views on issues of welfare deservingness.

In a similar manner, Hochschild/Machung (1989) show how spouses in US-American boomer generation families negotiate gender roles within the family by drawing on argumentative resources from the general public debate on feminism, gender, marriage, etc. In return, it is in the tension field between their own gender role experience in the family and these public discourses that they form their normative views on gender *as a public issue*.

⁴⁷ With regard to the tax state: Wansleben (2021); Campbell 1993; Martin 2020; et al. 2009; Spire 2018; with regard to social inequality: Sachweh 2012; to market societies: Koos/Sachweh 2019; to poverty: Sachweh et al. 2017.

2.2 Growth-oriented Societies and Productivism

In this section, I apply the conceptual scheme of “social role order” to the condition of contemporary European political economies. I draw on the literature in political economy to argue that we live in “growth-oriented societies” in which the pursuit of economic growth is a central goal behind which dominant actors and institutions align (Baccaro/Pontusson/Blyth 2022). In growth-oriented societies, “productivism” (Giddens 1994: 175ff.) acts as a model of social integration: actors who take up social roles that contribute to the societal pursuit of growth and productivity receive back material income, status, and recognition. For a majority of the population, this logic manifests in social integration through *employment* (Castel 1995), which consists in a set of social role-relationships entertained around the issue of *work*. This is complemented by the public solidarity system of the *welfare state* (Esping-Andersen 1990), which realizes in social roles of citizens vis-à-vis state institutions. At the same time, productivism acts as a “moral order”, in which “productive contributions” are a central point of reference that legitimizes actions and social positions within society (Boltanski/Thevenot 2006).

I further draw on the literature in political economy to argue that in the post-WWII-era of “industrial capitalism” (and industrial *socialism* in Central Eastern Europe), for various endogenous and exogenous reasons, the productivist social order of European growth societies was inclusive enough to integrate broad social majorities into a common role-order. From the perspective of the blue-collar working class, this was notably for two reasons, namely: (1) workplaces which enabled integration into joint agency and shared normative frames with representatives of diverse social classes and a vivid sense of participation in productivist social order; (2) welfare states which covered the main risks faced by this social group not only materially but by means of a system of welfare deservingness norms that captured life realities and a sense of social justice and inclusion. This has changed in the “advanced capitalist” era. A process of “dis-embedding” of economic from social value has resulted in decreased inclusivity of the dominant social order and in increased marginalization on the “fringes” and the “bottom” of society. For blue-collar workers, this process is notably mediated through (1) a decreased capacity of the social relations at workplaces to mediate participation in social order and (2) reforms of the welfare state that define deservingness norms which structurally mis-conceive of blue-collar working-class realities notably in two domains: retirement and unemployment.

Productivism as a Model of Social Integration

A “growth-oriented” society, in short “growth society”, is a society of which the pursuit of economic growth is a central goal behind which dominant actors and institutions align.⁴⁸ This marks both practical and normative orientations of actors within this society. Actors within the political economy (the state, enterprises, households) base their courses of action on the expectation and affirmation of economic growth (Baccaro/Pontusson/Blyth 2022: 2; Meadows et al. 1972). This is normatively supported by lead narratives about “modernization” and “progress” (Eisenstadt 2000; Wagner 2016), “development” (Gerschenkron 1952; Arndt 1981; van Heijster 2020), “growth” (Spangenberg 2010; Berg/Hukkinen 2011; Lübker et al. 2021), “productivity” (Weber 2001[1904]; Giddens 1994: 175ff.; Mijs 2021), (increasing) “prosperity” (Beckert 2016) and (upward) “social mobility” (Larsen 2016), all of which affirm that *growth must go on*.⁴⁹ This marks the public moral order (Boltansky/Thevenot 2006) of growth societies so that references to *productivity* serve as justifications for actions and positions within society, for policy choices, social status, and social membership or exclusion. During the 19th and 20th centuries, most societies on the globe have entered into growth-oriented frameworks (Rostow 1959; Alavi/Shanin, 1982). Both capitalism and 20th century socialism qualify as growth-oriented models of the political economy (Allen 2003; to quote Lenin’s 1920 slogan: “Communism equals Soviet power plus the electrification of the whole country”, s. Jay 2012).

The collective orientation at the pursuit of economic growth marks the internal social order of growth societies. Growth societies features a specific model of *social integration* which Giddens (1994: 175 ff.) calls “*productivism*”: actors receive recognized *social roles* that yield a material income and entitle to a social status *by* participating in and contributing to the collective pursuit of growth and productivity.⁵⁰ The majority of members of society does so by means of paid, dependent employment (ibid; Castel 1995); a smaller number does so by means of independent enterprise (self-employment).

⁴⁸ Naturally, a society’s socio-economic regime is only one aspect of its social order and there are opportunities of social integration not related to the socio-economy, too. This said, I go with the assumption that societal integration via the socio-economy is central in modern “productivist” societies.

⁴⁹ “Modernization theories” that make linear sense of societal “progress” in terms of economic development, prominent in social science during the 20th century, can be read as primary evidence, s. e.g. Rostow (1959; 1971). S.M. Lipset (1959) is i.a. famous for the application of “modernization theory” to the study of democratization (s. Korom 2019).

⁵⁰ Giddens characterizes “productivism” in critical terms and proposes change to a “post-productivist” political economy (1994: 182 ff.; s. ch.3). My framework emphasizes that productivism – besides its discontents – acts as a model of social integration that under certain conditions is able to integrate large popular majorities into joint courses of action and shared normative frames, creating sociopolitical legitimacy (s. below; s. Baccaro/Pontusson/Blyth 2022: 2).

Employment, understood as “productive” economic activity, enables individuals to integrate into a set of social relationships with common goals and shared normative frames, which mediate their participation in growth society’s dominant orientations. This mechanism is notably enabled by enterprise organizations or public organizations that act as individuals’ *workplaces* (Burawoy 1978; 1983; Ó Riain/Healy 2023). Employed individuals practice occupational (and non-occupational⁵¹) roles vis-à-vis their employer, their organizations’ management (i.a. its multiple levels), co-workers, works’ councils, other occupation groups present in the company or work context, or yet, customers (Hochschild 1983; 1997). The workplace presents a space in which representatives of different socio-structural groups collaborate towards common (“productive”) goals, exchanging recognition and integrating into a commonly accepted set of social norms and roles, which has validity in society at large. It is via this integration into employment as a *set of social relationships* that individuals participate in society’s dominant orientations and in return receive material income and security, social status and recognition, a sense of “stake” in the dominant model of the political economy and social order, and the possibility to form related social identities (Agassi 1986; Lamont 2000; Lucas 2017; Soffia et al. 2022; Marx 1992 [1844])

Participation through “productive” economic activity is complemented by a second “socio-economic” mechanism of social integration characteristic for modern European growth societies, with is the welfare state. The welfare state partially de-commodifies labor and (depending on a given country’s “welfare regime”) provides material security and status maintenance outside of employment as well as active support for “re-integration” into employment (Esping-Andersen 1990; Bonoli 2010; Morel et al 2011). A welfare recipient’s role-relationship vis-à-vis the state is regulated by norms of welfare “deservingness” (van Oorschot 2000; Mau 2003). These norms serve as “moral boundaries” defining who is in, and who is out, among those members of society who do not actively participate in the productive process (Lamont/Molnar 2002; Bolton et al. 2022).

Both employment and the solidarity function of the welfare state are crucial to the integration of individuals into modern European “growth” societies, so that social *tension* or *rupture* occurring in these areas is likely to strongly affect their formation of socio-political attitudes (s. ch. 3).

⁵¹ Social integration in enterprise organizations may be driven by “occupational” roles strictly speaking, but the social fabric of the socio-economic sphere is as much marked by informal relationships as any other.

Most “modern” societies (both capitalist and socialist) are “growth societies”. Strikingly, the *politics and political sociology of growth societies* is rarely being written about explicitly as such. Rather, the primary place to encounter the concept is in the rising literature on the politics and political sociology of *de-growth* and *post-growth societies* (Jennings 2013; Koch/Buch-Hansen 2021; Paulson/Büchs 2022; Fournier 2008; Spangenberg 2010; Berg/Hukkinen 2011; Lübker et al. 2021). This provides an impression of the degree to which the pursuit of economic growth and its ideological attendants are naturalized in contemporary “advanced” societies. In this sense, a considerable part of the literature on European and North American politics during the 20th and early 21st centuries can (and should) be read as theories of politics in “growth societies”.

From Industrial to Advanced Capitalism: the “Dis-embedding” of the Productivist Model of Social Integration

Drawing on the literature in political economy, I argue that in the post-WWII-era of “industrial capitalism”, for various endogenous and exogenous reasons, the productivist social order of European growth societies was inclusive enough to integrate broad social majorities. As an effect, a broad popular majority used to affirm the legitimacy of this social order. This has changed in the “advanced capitalist” era. A process of “dis-embedding” of economic from social value⁵² has resulted in a situation where the dominant model of the advanced capitalist political economy manages to integrate only a shrinking part of the population. Increasing parts of the population find themselves excluded from integrative relationships with the dominant institutions and orientations of society. I argue that while macro-level factors of this development are plural, it has become manifest in the experience of the dependently employed population and notably of the working-class in two meso-level spheres: namely firstly, at the workplace, and secondly, in citizens relations with the welfare state.

The “industrial capitalist” societies of the post-WW-II era (s. e.g. Baccaro/Pontusson 2016; 2022) were fully fletched “growth societies” in the above-defined sense.⁵³ They stood out for their capacity to *integrate broad majorities* of the population in the structure of orientations

⁵² I take this concept from Polanyi (2001 [1944]). A growing literature confirms that in the “advanced capitalist” period (1980s-2010s+), a similar process of socio-economic “dis-embedding” of the economic market logic from social goals and values is underway as Polanyi has described it for the late 19th/ early 20th century. The factors of the contemporary dynamic (financialization, globalization, deregulation, (re-)commodification), equally, resemble those of the historical precedent (Burgoon 2009; Holmes 2018; Wagner 2019; Filetti/Ferragina 2022).

⁵³ Industrial *socialist* societies were growth-oriented, too, and arguably offered ample opportunity namely for blue-collar workers to integrate into common societal frames via *socio-economic* mechanisms. At the same time, they featured authoritarian *political* regimes, what resulted in other dimensions of (integration for some and) exclusion (for others; s. e.g. ch. 6).

instituted by projects of growth and modernization. Industrial capitalism was marked by political party systems that featured two dominant actors: a center-left and a center-right, which largely represented horizontal social classes in an “economic” conflict about “more vs. less state intervention in the market” (Korpi 1983; Kitschelt 1994; Lipset/Rokkan 1967). This said, both the left and the right were in favor of growth and modernization. Their political conflict took place *within* agreement on the narratives of modernization and productivity, focusing on aspects of how to organize the pursuit of growth (e.g. relatively speaking more or less public ownership of industries) and on questions of how to redistribute growth returns.

The capacity of industrial capitalist growth societies to create broad popular legitimacy of the dominant societal orientations and to get broad popular majorities on board of the dominant societal projects was enabled by several factors. Economic growth rates were high, i.a. spurred by the re-construction of European economies after World War II (re-starting from a low point), by high rates of public investments, and by the industrial growth model’s focus on manufacturing industry which is characterized by high (and scalable) productivity rates (Baccaro/Pontusson/Blyth 2022; Baumol 2001). In the “demand-led” growth model of the time, increasing wealth of the broad population acted as the main driver of growth (Baccaro/Pontusson 2016). This was enabled by collective bargaining that yielded wage increases in proportion to increases in macro-economic productivity, what resulted in a relatively high “labor share” of macroeconomic income (also called “wage-led growth”, s. *ibid*) and enabled household consumption to act as the main driver of domestic growth. Growth was driven by labor-intensive industries and growth rates were relatively coherent across sectors of economic activity (s. *ill.* 4). In combination with high levels of public employment, public spending, and regulation of industries, this created a socio-economy that barely left anyone back – in many European countries of the era, unemployment was virtually not an issue – and that was relatively equal socio-economically speaking (Singh 2008; Chancel/Piketty 2021).

I propose that the integration of the blue-collar working-class into industrial capitalist society’s “productivist” framework is likely to have manifested in two spheres of the socio-economy.

Firstly, the *industrial enterprise* acted as a facilitator of social integration. As a large organization, the industrial enterprise employs, in various functions, a very diverse range of socio-structural types (blue-collar, white-collar, management, etc.). Under conditions of economic growth, the industrial enterprise was capable to integrate these diverse social types into collaborative activities, hence into common courses of action and common narratives, bestowing on them a sense of participation in common goals and hence, even to the lowest-

skilled, a sense of participation in the dominant orientations of the political economy (Raphael 2021: 355ff.). The representation and negotiation of structural conflicts within the enterprise, mediated by labor unions (Artz/Heywood 2020; Silvia 2013), served to enhance a sense of propriety and participation in organizational and (mediated via these) societal goals – namely of growth and productivity.

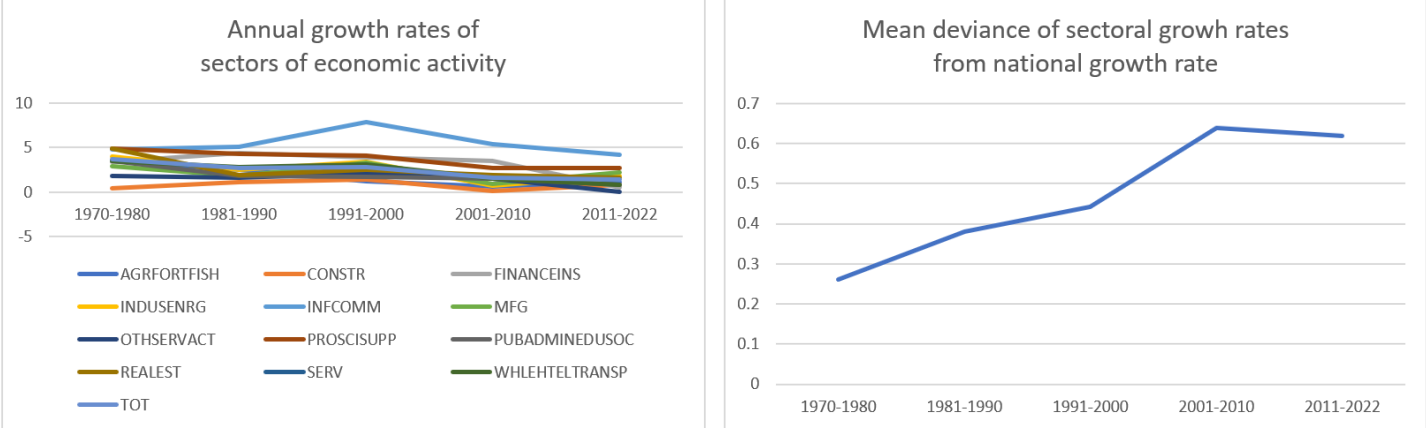
Secondly, the generous, consumption-oriented model of the welfare-state responded to precisely the classical (“old”) social risks – ageing, sickness, and unemployment – faced by those who at the time made up the bulk of the employed: male labor market insider workers.⁵⁴⁵⁵ It did so i.a. by means of generous retirement pension and unemployment insurance programs (Baramendi et al. 2015; Palier 2010; Häusermann 2010; Häusermann 2012). It is not unreasonable to argue that the welfare deservingness norms of the time captured the life realities of the working-class, what would predict a sense of social justice and inclusion.

In the transition from industrial to advanced capitalist political economy, a number of changes have occurred that have narrowed European societies’ capacity to integrate broad popular majorities into their dominant project of pursuing growth and modernization. The legitimacy of the dominant societal orientations, and of the political actors who represent them, has therefore shrunk. The parts of the population that are in various ways excluded from participation in the dominant growth- and modernization-orientations have grown, what provides structural opportunities for new, radical and populist political challengers on the left and on the right to mobilize visions of *radical social change* based on alternative propositions of dominant projects and dominant narratives, and on radically alternative visions of social order.

⁵⁴ Changing gender relations due to women’s mass entry into the labor market from the 1960s are obviously one of the reasons this old model does not serve its purpose anymore and has been subject to reconfigurations over the recent decades, s. (Orloff 1996; Sainsbury 1999).

⁵⁵ Certainly, these factors of “socio-economic” mechanisms of social integration were complemented by “socio-cultural” integration mechanisms (by which I mean channels of integration that run through other spheres than work, the market, or the (welfare) state, s. ch. 3.3.3). The majority of women who did unpaid care and “reproductive” work experienced social integration notably mediated through their “male breadwinner” husband and the institution of the family. Besides this, the industrial capitalist era knew strong “intermediary” institutions: unions (which we could count into the socio-economic sphere), but also churches and party membership (Halman/Draulans 2006; Delwit 2011). Evidence suggests that, even associative (and neighborhood-) cohesion used to be on average higher (Putnam 2000).

A number of factors, some of them exogenous, but many of them endogenous to the advanced capitalist model of the political economy, have contributed to rendering dominant social order of “growth societies” less inclusive. Growth rates have been overall lower in advanced capitalist economies from the 1970s onwards (Baccaro/Pontusson/Blyth 2022). Moreover, the economic returns of growth have been ever more unequally distributed (Chancel/Piketty 2021). Advanced capitalist economies have switched to a variety of new “growth models”, all of which feature a divergence between national economic growth and wage growth – the macroeconomic “labor share of income” has considerably decreased (s. Baccaro/Pontusson 2016). This is one of the axes along which rising inequality structures. Another axis of inequality structuration lies in the diverging growth rates of economic sectors. Across Western Europe, the average divergence of the individual growth rates of sectors of economic activity from countries’ overall GDP growth has increased by 236,6% between the 1970s and the 2020s (s. ill. 5.).



III. 4 & 5: Increasing inequality between sectors of economic activity in Western Europe. Author’s calculations based on OECD (2023) data for all Western European countries.

High growth rates have increasingly concentrated in a small number of sectors pertaining to the service and knowledge economy (s. Hassel/Palier 2022): the ICT-sector, professional and research services, the financial sector and real estate sectors. “Old” industrial sectors (e.g. manufacturing) as well as public services (including education or healthcare) are relatively speaking left behind. At the same time, the geographical distribution of those sectoral activities that drive contemporary growth models has become more unequal (Panzer et al. 2022; Lazzeroni 2010; Muro/Liu 2016; Kessler 2018; Wilkinson 2019).

Furthermore, rising social inequality manifests in the “dualization” of labor markets (Emmenegger et al. 2012): i.a. due to “atypical” employment contracts, i.e. part-time or limited-term contracts, the working population is now divided between “labor market insiders” with stable employment trajectories and comprehensive welfare entitlements and “labor market outsiders” with interrupted employment trajectories and precarious welfare entitlements (access

to which is namely, in many states, based on employment periods). Employment has become more precarious (in the sense of *uncertain*)⁵⁶ overall, and the distribution of risk (e.g. of job loss) more unequal, for reasons of technological modernization and automation (Kurer/Palier 2019), trade shocks, globalization, and offshoring (Mughan et al. 2003; Swank/Betz 2003; Colantone/Stanig 2018; Rodrik 2018). The risk of job loss is notably unequal along the lines of occupational class (Rovny/Rovny 2017; Häusermann 2020). Structural unemployment has since the 1970s become accepted as a fact, leading to the growth of a structurally excluded “underclass” in many European countries (McCombie 2008; Papanastasiou/Papatheodorou 2019). Last but not least, states have in the 1980s started to follow a vision of *fiscal austerity* that has led them to cut public spending (Blyth 2013; Streeck/Schäfer 2013; Hübscher et al. 2023). In effect, public employment rates have decreased as much as public ownership of industries. Consumption-oriented welfare programs (such as retirement pension and unemployment insurance policies) have come under pressure and have in many cases been subject to significant cuts (Pierson 1994; 2001).

While all of these macro-level factors form a background to understanding the reduced inclusivity of advanced capitalist social order, I expect a majority of citizens’ immediate, lived experience of inclusion or exclusion to manifest, notably, in two domains. These are: (1) work and (2) citizen-(welfare) state relations.

In line with the literature on corporate organization I argue that these macro-level transformations have come with changing firm strategies and management styles, what has manifested in pressures on the *social relations at workplaces* (Fligstein 1993; Cappelli et al. 1997; Lazonick/O’Sullivan 2000; Flecker 2007; Weil 2014; Ó Riain/Healy 2023; Carbonnier/Palier 2022; Palier/Wagner 2023). This means that even for “labor market insiders” (Emmenegger et al. 2012) who dispose of stable, full term employment contracts, globalization and automatization do not only bring a risk of losing one’s job (Kurer 2020) but can lead to a deterioration of the relations and conditions experienced every day *at the workplace*. Notably, I argue that social relations between various hierarchy levels at the workplace stand under increasing tension, what brings forth experiences of social exclusion and of incompatibility between the roles, goals, and values of various occupational classes. I argue that this concerns blue collar workers in particular, who tend to be employed in shrinking sectors, where high amounts of pressure can affect work relations – without necessarily showing in the formal

⁵⁶ On the concept of “precarity” with regard to employment relations, see notably Beck (1992); Castel (1995); Castel/Dörre (2009); as well as Standing (2014).

statistics on contract types and working conditions. Moreover, workplace segregation – the segregation of occupational classes and income groups in different companies and sectors of economic activity – has increased (Godechot et al. 2020).

There has been important change in the ownership structure of enterprises, in management models and ergo in work relations. Due to deregulation and globalization, ownership of large corporations has become increasingly privatized, internationalized and financialized (Roland 2008: ch.s 2, 3; Carrol 2010; Fligstein 1993; Lazonick/Sullivan 2000). This comes with frequent eruptive changes for the locally based workforce, such as in the case of industrial enterprises, for manual workers. This is most visible in processes of *offshoring* and *trade-shocks* resulting from international cost-based competition (Mughan et al. 2003; Swank/Betz 2003; Kriesi et al. 2008; Colantone/Stanig 2018; Rodrik 2018). But even beyond trade-shocks, in public and private sectors, visions of the enterprise have gained momentum that place a strong focus on *cost-cutting* (Ó Riain/Healy 2023; Blyth 2013). Both in the state and in private enterprises, *models of management* have circulated in the recent decades that emphasize the accumulation of decision- and budgetary competences with higher management and that increase the importance of *controlling* in enterprise structures (Bezes 2020; Brodtkin 2011; Cappelli et al. 1997; Wray-Bliss/Willmott 1999). This comes at the same time as a decline in unionization rates with effects on workplace relations (Rosenfeld 2006). All of this has a propensity to be to the detriment of the competences of the intermediating middle-level in large organizations, of the experience of *inclusion* of lower-level employees (through *participation*, *recognition*, or yet *conflict negotiation*), and generally speaking, of *trust* and of the *quality of social relations* at the workplace (Crowley/Hodson 2014; Weil 2014; Chandler et al. 2002; Morgan/Zeffane 2003). This decreases the capacity of workplaces to unfold their socially integrative effect onto employees.

The self-employed and small business owners can be affected in a similar way, only the mechanisms differ: for them, modernization pressures can manifest in exclusion experiences in unequal interactions with large, corporate, transnational market participants⁵⁷ and/or with the tax and regulatory state (s. e.g. Mayer 1986; Damhuis 2020).

At the same time, due to sectoral change, the segregation of social types at workplaces has increased (Godechot et al. 2020). While the “knowledge economy” brings forth enterprises in which almost only highly skilled individuals are employed, de-industrialization has increased

⁵⁷ This refers to a reading of the “market” as a social field (Fligstein/McAdam 2012) which, among other things, enables social integration. Integration into society via “market interaction” is crucial for the self-employed.

the relative importance of employment in SMEs and owner-led firms including small artisan enterprises for manual workers (Pontusson 1995; Arndt/Rennwald 2017; Mischi et al. 2014). This means that these social types will experience less integrative contact at the meso-level than in the time when large industrial enterprises dominated the (growing) economy.

In addition, advanced capitalism has seen a considerable growth of employment in *socio-cultural* and *re-productive* sectors of the economy and of individuals qualifying in these areas. This includes education, healthcare, social work, NGO-, arts, aesthetic culture, humanities, social sciences, and media sectors. Many of the individuals training for these occupations, even if bestowed with cultural capital, encounter precarious labor markets (Louvel 2007). This had led to an increasing divergence between economic and cultural, namely educative, forms of capital in advanced capitalism (Gethin et al. 2022; Rovny 2019; Kitschelt 1994; Oesch 2006; 2008). In addition, the value orientations of socio-cultural and *reproductive* sectors can be inherently at odds with the dominant “productivist” orientations of society. This is particularly so when ruptures emerge in meso-level relations between organized fields of social activity. This could for example be the case between the growing *NGO-sector* and established state- and corporate sectors.

European welfare states, beyond being subject to budgetary pressure (Pierson 2001; Häusermann 2010), have undergone multiple reconfigurations. The welfare state has entered a new paradigm: that of *activation* (Soss/Schram 2007; Bonoli 2010). Welfare beneficiaries shall no more be passive recipients of payments (“consumption-oriented spending”), but they shall keep actively contributing to the productive economy by staying in, or getting back into, employment. Welfare beneficiaries, and generally citizens, are called upon by these policies to individually take up responsibility for their employment trajectory and social security, to re-qualify during their life-course, to actively look for work when they’re not in employment, and to stay in employment longer into their old-age. This has exerted an important influence both labor market and pension policy (s. ch. 3.3.2). The activation-paradigm, on the one hand, comes with *social investment*-oriented spending (Esping-Andersen 2002; Morel et al. 2011; Hemerijck 2013). This comes as *enabling resources* the state provides to support citizens to “activate” or to stay “active”. Notably, these include measures of education and retraining, starting from childcare and ranging across to targeted requalification measures for the unemployed. On the other hand, the activation-paradigm comes with negative incentives, namely with *conditionalities*, *obligations* and *sanctions*, that shall motivate welfare beneficiaries to stay in or seek to get back into employment (Soss/Schram 2007; Bonoli 2010; Dwyer et al. 2022).

Among other negative consequences, these sanctions can unfold stigmatizing effects on welfare recipients (Bolton et al. 2022).

Last but not least, a specific style of publicly justifying political-economic change seems to have been characteristic for the “disembedding” of the productivist model. This style of political argument has been called by various names, including *depoliticization* and *naturalizing*. What it comes down to, however, is best expressed in a four-letter acronym: “TINA” - “There Is No Alternative” (Pierson 1994; Séville 2017; Palley 2022; Mouffe 2005; Burnham 2014; Flinders/Buller 2006; Bandelow/Hornung 2019; Schmidt 2002).⁵⁸ The argument that “there is no alternative”, when used to justify social change that is detrimental to (e.g. the social integration of) parts of the population, typically presents the reasons for political decisions as lying outside of society’s or politics’ sphere of influence. It is *force majeure*. Fiscal and demographic pressure on the advanced capitalist welfare state are presented as “natural” forces. Budgetary austerity as something non-negotiable (s. *ibid*). This style of argument consists in a neat case of “conflict suppression”, what is likely to lead to “conflict externalization” or “transformative conflict” (system challenging as I theorize in ch. 2.1. Featuring the mechanism of “misrecognition”, it is also predestined to breed *socio-political resentment* as theorized by modernization loser theory and more generally, social psychology (Betz 2021; Demertzēs 2020; TenHouten 2018; s. ch.1). To the existing literature I add the proposition that the argumentative pattern of “TINA” has “trickled” from the macro-level (political speeches legitimizing public policy choices such as welfare reforms; dominant discourses among economic leaders) down to the meso-level and has become a pattern repeatedly encountered by employees in *conflicts with their managers* at workplaces as well as by welfare recipients in *contact with institutions* of the welfare state. This has created textbook conditions for the experience of misrecognition by competent institutions in everyday life and for the formation of sociopolitical resentment (Salmela/von Scheve 2017; Salmela/Capelos 2021).

2.3 Moral Visions of the Political Economy: Productivism and Welfare Deservingness

Besides acting as a model of social integration, “productivism” also provides a register of *moral justification* (Boltanski/Thevenot 2016) typically found in the political arguments of growth-oriented societies. “Productivist” justifications use *productive contribution* as a central point of reference (Weber 2021 [1904]; Giddens 1993: 175 ff.).⁵⁹ In a productivist vision of the political

⁵⁸ This expression originally refers to the way the Thatcherite reforms of the British welfare state were publicly justified.

⁵⁹ *Productivism* is certainly not the sole register of justification characterizing the moral order of contemporary “growth societies”. It should be understood as one major register among others; and perhaps as the dominant one

economy, a course of action is socially valuable, and a social position is legitimate, when it productively contributes to the common good, which is, to the growth-oriented (socio-)economy and public fiscality. In this view, productive contributions to the common good *legitimize* group membership as well as status and entitlements within the group (Giddens 1993: 175 ff.). This influences visions of legitimately earned income, property, and social status. Equally, it influences visions of *welfare deservingness*.

Existing literature has shown that European publics' perceptions of welfare recipients' *deservingness* to benefit from solidarity provision follow a relatively stable "rank order": there is a hierarchy of social groups who are on average seen to be "more" or "less" deserving to benefit from public solidarity (van Oorschot 2000; Laenen/Meuleman 2017; Roosma et al. 2017; Meuleman et al. 2020). The underlying logic of who stands where on the "ladder of deservingness" has been explained by five "deservingness criteria", summarized by v. Oorschot (2000) in the "CARIN"-model. These are:

- (1) *Control*: is a recipient themselves responsible for being in a situation of need – or are the reasons outside their control?
- (2) *Attitude*: does the recipient comply with the rules of the community of solidarity?
- (3) *Reciprocity*: what has a recipient themselves contributed to the community of solidarity?
- (4) *Identity*: does a recipient "belong" to the community, the polity?
- (5) *Need*: how grave is the recipient's situation of need?

European average publics' perception of which welfare recipients are *relatively speaking* more or less deserving have been shown to neatly and consistently correspond to these five criteria (s. *ibid*). *Pensioners* – the elderly who have contributed to the community during all of their life by means of their work and their social contribution payments⁶⁰ (*reciprocity*), and whose situation of "ageing" will occur to everyone (*control*) – are consistently seen as the most deserving recipient group by average publics, followed by those who are *sick* and hence unable to work for a reason that is out of their control, too. *Unemployed persons* tend to be seen as more deserving when the reason for their occupational inactivity is considered to lie outside their sphere of influence, and as less deserving when unemployment is considered to be their own fault or choice. *Immigrants* who are not in employment tend to be seen as the least

in the socio-economic sphere. The "productivist" register of justification I characterize here does not correspond to one of the registers characterized in Boltanski/Thevenot's study. What I take from the authors are their generic concepts of "moral order" and of "justification". Boltanski/Thevenot's "industrial" register of justification is strongly focused on "rationality", what does not correspond to my vision of "productivism" and does not resonate with the data I analyze either. (If anything, it would correspond to "disembedded productivism", s. ch. 3.2).

⁶⁰ This aspect relates to continental European pay-as-you go insurance systems (Esping-Andersen 1990).

deserving group of all: they have no track record of contribution in their current country of residence, and in addition, they do not “belong” to the in-group (*identity*, Reeskens/van der Meer 2019).

I propose to understand the three main deservingness criteria of *reciprocity*, *control*, and *attitude* as elements of a *productivist moral order* which drives visions of the welfare state and of the political economy in growth-oriented societies (s. ch.s 3.2 & 5).⁶¹ The following interpretation corresponds very well to the notion of *productivism* elaborated i.a. by Giddens (1994: 175 ff.):

Reciprocity: Everyone is called upon to productively contribute.

Control: It is accepted not to contribute if you cannot for reasons beyond your control.

Attitude: You should *perform* an effort of being productive so to support the public morale.

Building on this framework of productivism both as a model of social integration and as a moral order typical for “growth societies”, in ch. 3, I formulate theoretical propositions on how these elements inform contemporary blue-collar workers visions of the political economy and in particular, of *welfare deservingness*. My basic proposition is that the crisis of the productivist model of social integration in advanced capitalism leads to a broad societal conflict in which the conflicting positions are, in essence, driven by moral (*re-*)*affirmations* or *contestations* of productivist social order. Who takes which position hinges on socio-structural position, on experiences of “inclusion” or “exclusion” with the political economy’s dominant model, and on integration vs. rupture with other socio-structural groups in society.

More concretely, I argue that the “disembedding” of the productivist model of the socio-economy has led two socio-political coalitions with distinct normative outlooks to break away from society’s common framework. This is on the one hand, a social coalition driven by socio-cultural professions who feel alienated from disembedded productivism and in reaction formulate a “post-productivist” vision of the political economy, aiming to *overcome growth society*. It is on the other hand a coalition of small business owners and manual workers who, equally, make experiences of exclusion and alienated from “disembedded” productivism, but in reaction formulate a “producerist and welfare chauvinist” vision of the political economy,

⁶¹ See similarly Abts et al. (2021) who interpret the same three deservingness criteria as a manifestation of “producerism”. I treat them as “productivism”, of which producerism is a radically materialistic variant (s. below). Petersen (2012), adopting an evolutionary psychological perspective, proposes that the logic of “contribution” has marked deservingness perceptions of reciprocal solidarity already long before the age of “growth societies”. My expectation would, however, be to find *more pronounced* contribution norms under the latter’s “productivist” social and moral order.

aiming to *take back growth society* from the nostalgic perspective of their shrunk, materialistic, sectors of economic activity. “Producerism” (Derks 2006; Ivaldi/Mazzoleni 2019; Rathgeb 2021) is a radically materialistic form of productivism which among all “productive” contributions to the common good only accepts those which are *materially tangible* as justifications for social membership. Welfare chauvinism links seamlessly to the producerist perspective. It is a highly salient appeal to mobilize an à priori materialistic working-class which makes structural experiences of societal exclusion at the workplace and with the welfare state – and most importantly, *labor marked outsiders*, who make exclusion experiences with the public retirement insurance and an “activation”-oriented employment office – as a part of a producerist sociopolitical coalition that underlines its social belonging by attributing blame to the ever-weaker unit: the frustrated employed “kick down” on the native unemployed, they “deflect” (Bolton et al. 2022) the same motion on immigrants.

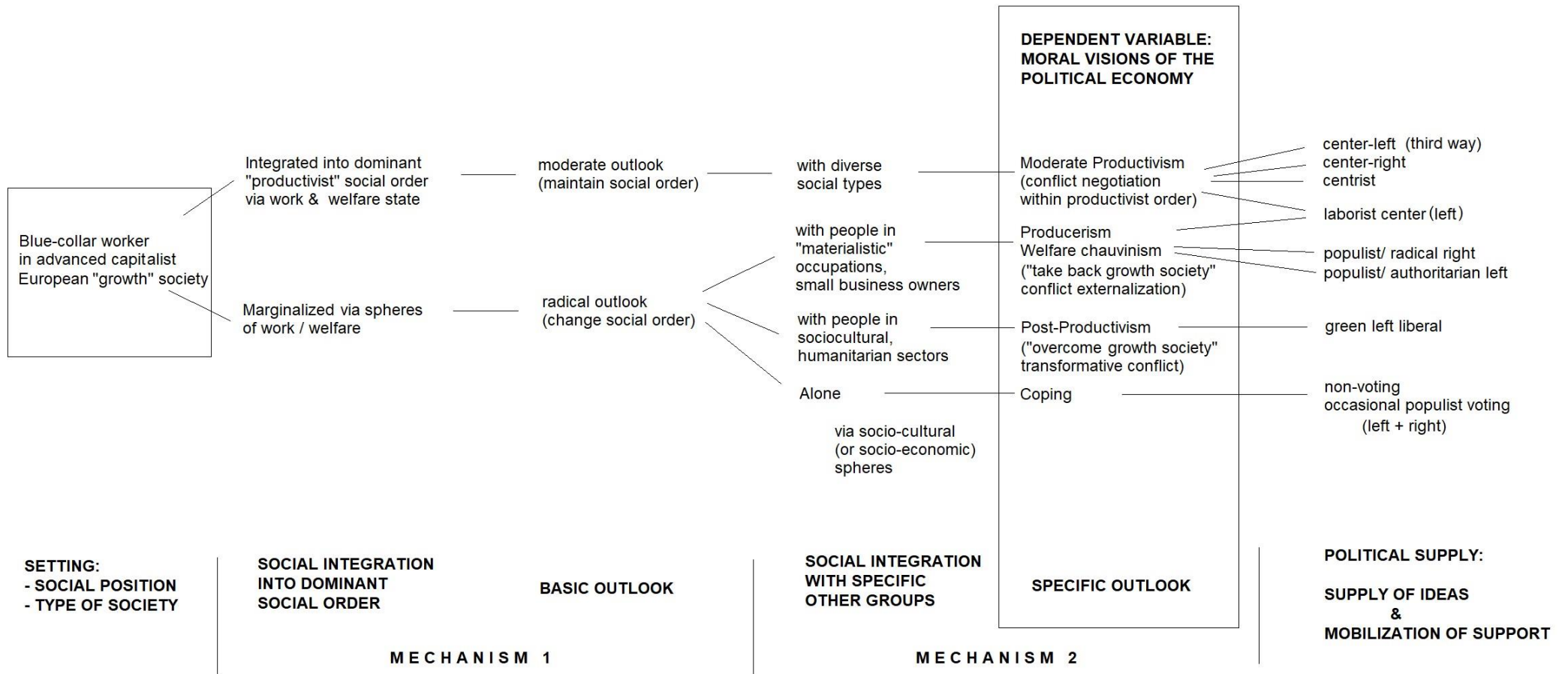
Chapter 3. Social Integration and Political Preference Formation in Advanced Capitalist “Growth Societies”

In this chapter, I outline the mechanisms by which I expect contemporary European blue-collar workers to form their political outlook. I make theoretical propositions on how social integration and exclusion in three social contexts – (1) at the workplace, (2) in citizens’ relations with the welfare state, and (3) in socio-cultural spheres – lead them to form distinct “visions of the political economy”.

In section 3.1, I characterize four factors that influence this process. I argue that an individual’s position in the social class structure informs their political outlook in a fundamental way. However, this positional outlook is altered by two mechanisms of social integration or exclusion. Namely, (1) individuals who are firmly integrated into a common, societal, social role-order interpret their positional outlook in a more *moderate* way – while those who are excluded from such participation interpret it in a more *radical* way. Moreover, (2) integration between socio-structural groups leads to the formation of collectively included or marginalized *social coalitions*. Finally, political supply influences this process by offering concrete political ideas and issue positions that *resonate* with preconfigured normative outlooks.

In section 3.2, I define and characterize this thesis’ dependent variable, which is “visions of the political economy”. I argue that advanced capitalist European publics are characterized by three conflicting visions of the political economy, which in essence promote moral affirmations or contestations of the “productivist” social order. I distinguish between one vision that affirms the current social order (*moderate productivism*), one that aims to overcome it (*post-productivism*), and one that aims to “take back” productivism from the nostalgic perspective of shrinking sectors of economic activity alongside engaging in out-group blaming (*producerism and welfare chauvinism*). These three visions are carried by three distinct coalitions of socio-structural types. In theory, blue-collar workers can join any of these social coalitions and moral visions of the political economy, however, they will interpret each of them in a way that is characteristic for their socio-structural position (“laborism”).

In section 3.3, I make propositions on how blue-collar workers end up joining one of the three social coalitions and normative outlooks rather than the other depending on experiences of *social inclusion* or *exclusion* in three social contexts – (1) at the workplace, (2) in citizens’ relations with the welfare state, and (3) in socio-cultural spheres. Finally, in section 3.4, I make propositions on how the ideological and programmatic discourses of contemporary European party families resonate with the preconfigured outlooks of blue-collar workers.



III. 6: Social integration and political preference formation among advanced capitalist European blue-collar workers: two mechanisms

3.1 Social Integration and Political Preference Formation: Two Mechanisms

In this section, I theorize the mechanisms by which I expect contemporary blue-collar workers to form political preferences. In this context, the term “political preferences” needs to be qualified. This thesis dependent variable are blue-collar workers’ *moral visions of the political economy* (s. ch.s 2.1 and 2.3). A “moral vision of the political economy” is a sociopolitical outlook that consists in views about the legitimacy, or illegitimacy, of relations in the political economy. This entails views about legitimate ways to earn material income, property and social status. It entails views on the legitimacy of membership in society (as opposed to exclusion from it). It entails views on the legitimacy of social order overall, and of social class-relations within it. Very importantly, it entails views on the legitimacy of relations around the public budget and, hence, on *welfare deservingness* (van Oorschot 2000; s. ch.s 2.1; 2.3).

An à priori of analyzing political preference formation is to determine what *type of society* this process is set. In ch.s 2.2 and 2.3, I have argued that contemporary European societies are “growth societies” that dispose of a “productivist” *model of social integration*: the majority of the population integrates into society by means of “productive” employment. At the same time, they feature a productivist *moral order*, in which “productive contribution” to the common pursuit of growth serves as a justification for actions and (status-)positions within society as well as for membership in society. These parameters provide a basis for understanding *what* conflict in contemporary European societies is about and *in what terms* it articulates. Starting from this basis, I expect several mechanisms to influence individuals’ formation of visions of the “productivist” political economy. In this section, I explain the workings of each mechanism in abstract, generic manner. In sections 3.2 – 3.4 I fill them with content, applying the theorized mechanisms to the condition of blue-collar workers in advanced capitalist European “growth societies” so to arrive at theoretical propositions.

In line with the literature in political sociology, I argue that preference formation à priori hinges on socio-structural position. Individuals’ socio-political outlook always represents, in some way, where they stand in society’s multidimensional class structure (*class position*) and via which concrete social role-relationships and meso-level institutions this position is configured (*mode of social integration*). This said, I expect positional outlooks to be relatively speaking *altered* by two mechanisms of social integration or exclusion.

Firstly, integration into – or exclusion from – society’s dominant social order gives a basic cue to preference formation. Individuals who are enabled to participate in common societal goals and values interpret their positional outlook in a more *moderate* way. On the contrary, the

experience of exclusion from such shared frameworks gives a *radical* spin to positional outlooks. Secondly, integration between socio-structural groups provides a more specific cue to preference formation: individuals co-represent those social “types” with whom they entertain well-functioning social role-relationships in their normative outlooks. This is an important factor underlying the formation *social coalitions* – be it within or outside of dominant social order.

Finally, political supply plays a role. Individuals – who bring positional predispositions, make experiences of societal inclusion or exclusion, and articulate a generic sociopolitical outlook together with those they entertain relationships with – ultimately draw on ideational resources circulating in the public sphere in order to form concrete political ideas, including policy issue- and partisan preferences. In so doing, they select, among the available ideational resources, those that *resonate* with their situation and are helpful to make political sense of it.

Positional Predispositions: Manual Workers in the Social Class Structure

The literature on social class provides a coherent picture of where blue-collar workers are positioned in contemporary societies’ social structure: they occupy *lower middle* and *lower* positions in occupational and social hierarchies, what means, along a “vertical” dimension of class (Weber 1968 [1946]; Dahrendorf 1959; Lipset 1960; Treiman 1977; Erikson/Goldthorpe/Portocarero 1979; Erikson/Goldthorpe 1992; Wright 2005; Dörre 2023). In addition, they find themselves in a *more materialistic* work logic and dispose of *less cultural capital* than most other social groups, distinctions along a “horizontal” dimension of class structure that is highlighted by most contemporary theories (Oesch 2006; Bourdieu 1985; 1986; 1989; Savage 2015).

Theories of class commonly hold that an individual’s occupation (their profession, work, employment) positions them in hierarchical power relations and comes with differential control over resources within the political economy. Traditional theories highlight a single dimension of the class structure, namely a vertical, hierarchical dimension that places occupational classes above each other (i.m.o Dahrendorf 1959; Erikson/Goldthorpe 1992; Wright 2005). Along this vertical dimension, manual workers occupy both *lower middle* and *lower* positions of the class structure. This is due to the different position of *skilled* and *unskilled* manual work in occupational hierarchies (s. *ibid*) and due to differential control over resources (income, property, welfare entitlements): manual workers with *labor market insider* status, who hold permanent contracts, and who earn good salaries e.g. in the producing industries, can well reach economic middle class status (Emmenegger et al. 2012; Kriesi/Bornschiefer 2013). Workers with

labor market outsider status, who have interrupted employment trajectories or atypical contracts that come with limited welfare entitlements, and who earn meagre salaries e.g. in small enterprises, can find themselves in economic precarity (Emmenegger et al. 2012). The risk of becoming unemployed is higher for blue-collar workers than for most other groups, what contributes to the divergence of socio-economic positions *within* this group (refs Rovny/Rovny 2017; Kurer/Palier 2019; Im et al. 2019; Häusermann 2020).

Contemporary theories tend to highlight that besides a hierarchical dimension, it takes further, horizontal, dimensions to map the diversity of social classes. These theories emphasize dimensions such as different occupational *work logics* (Oesch 2006; 2008; Kitschelt/Rehm 2014) or different *types of resources* that individuals control, such as *social* and *cultural* capital in addition to economic capital (Bourdieu 1985, 1986, 1989; Savage 2015; Jarness et al. 2019; Westheuser/Zollinger 2021; Flemmen et al. 2022). Oesch's (2006, 2008) two-dimensional class scheme of advanced capitalist societies places manual workers in the *most materialistic* of four different work logics, this is, in a technical work logic, which stands besides a bureaucratic, an interpersonal, and an independent one (see Annex I; s. also Kitschelt/Rehm 2014). In Bourdieusian class schemes (Bourdieu 1985, 1986, 1989; Savage 2015; Jarness et al. 2019; Westheuser/Zollinger 2021; Flemmen et al. 2022), manual workers stand out as disposing of *less cultural capital* than most other social groups. Bourdieusian class theory takes control over multiple types of resources that carry power and prestige in society as the definition of class position. Besides economic capital, these also include *social* and *cultural* capital. While some workers can occupy middle class positions in terms of economic capital, most workers tend to occupy low positions in the hierarchy of cultural capital. This is due to the fact that cultural capital is strongly related to *education* (s. *ibid*). Manual workers typically undergo vocational training, and some of them do not even complete any education degree, what places them low in the educative hierarchy (s. also Attewell 2022).

Due to these positional predispositions, I expect manual workers to *à priori* form economically *materialistic* views that affirm *materially tangible value* in the socio-economy. By the term “economic materialism” I understand a positive perception of materially tangible activities, contributions, assets, and logics of advancements in the socio-economy.⁶² This may include

⁶² This concept of “economic materialism” diverges from Inglehart's (1971; 1977) concept of “materialism” (vs. post-materialism) in so far as Inglehart's measurement, well-known from the World Values Survey, *merges* two dimensions: economic-materialist values on the one hand, and preferences for authoritarian social organization on the other (Knutson 1990; Flanagan 1979; 1982; Abramson 2011). These two value/ preference dimensions are correlated (s. also Lipset 1959; 1960) but are both conceptually and empirically distinct dimensions (what is underappreciated in the literatures on welfare preferences and voting behavior).

manual work, small business ownership, farming, or yet security- and health related activities as opposed to less materially tangible activities such as bureaucracy, management, socio-cultural work, finance, and politics. It can include advancement in social status hierarchies by means of material asset ownership (house, car, etc.) as opposed to advancement in educative and cultural capital (higher education, aesthetic “high” culture, etc.) (s. Bourdieu 1985, 1986, 1989; Savage 2015; Jarness et al. 2019; Westheuser/Zollinger 2021; Flemmen et al. 2022; Oesch 2006; 2008; Kitschelt/Rehm 2014). Due to their hierarchical class-position (low- to lower-middle), I expect manual workers to support economic re-distribution (Rueda/Stegmüller 2019; Ivarsflaten 2005)⁶³, however, notably from a materialistic point of view, valuing consumption-oriented over investment-oriented policy (Beramendi et al. 2015; Häusermann/Abou-Chadi et al. 2021¹; 2021²). As manual workers’ own mode of integration into society is marked by the importance of dependent employment and concretely, of *manual labor*, I expect them to represent this in their normative views by emphasizing the *social value* of (materialistically oriented types of) *work* (Lamont 2000; Lucas 2017).⁶⁴

While I expect these elements to be a departure point for blue-collar workers’ political preference formation generally, I expect their outlook to be *relatively speaking altered* by the mechanisms of social integration (and political supply) theorized in the subsequent sections.

Mechanism 1: Social Integration leads to Moderate, Exclusion to Radical Views

I expect individuals who are well-integrated, who hold a stake, in a society’s dominant social order, to form a “moderate” political outlook in the sense of the perception that this given social order is *legitimate* and a preference to *maintain* it. On the contrary, individuals (or entire groups) who find themselves marginalized from a given social order, tend to form “radical” political outlooks in the sense of a perception that this social order is *illegitimate*. This can channel into various directions, depending on who is excluded together with whom (*mechanism 2*) and on political supply. On a level of fundamental sociopolitical motions, social exclusion-induced legitimacy gaps can either channel into “transformative conflict” (a categorical challenging of the given social order in an attempt to radically change it), into “conflict externalization” (the blaming of external “scapegoats” in an attempt to temporarily stabilize the given order) or into mere, silent, coping.

⁶³ Pro-redistribution stances may be even more favored by the historically strong degree of unionist organization among blue-collar occupations – as opposed to e.g. service worker occupations (Korpi 1983; Ares 2017).

⁶⁴ While the educated middle class disposes of more additional, cultural capital-based channels of social integration, manual workers’ participation in society depends rather strongly on the socio-economic channel of employment.

“Social integration”, in the sense I use the term, is best understood as social *participation*. In ch. 2.1, I have defined a “social order” as a set of *common goals and values* towards which a society’s dominant actors and institutions converge. Actors integrate into a social order by taking up mutually recognized *social roles* which *nest* around said common goals. This process is mediated by meso-level institutions (such as workplaces, associations, families, state agencies, unions, churches, or parties), which offer individuals the opportunity to form concrete social roles that are – by the institution – linked to common societal orientations (s. ch. 2.1). In effect, a social order is a nested structure of orientations and institutions, all of which coordinate around central points of reference (goals and values).

It is important to underline that “social exclusion”, in this sense, is absolutely not to be confused with *economic precarity*. By exclusion, I mean *exclusion from participation* in common goals; I mean *deprivation from a role* in a given social order (s. ch. 2.1). Individuals (or groups) who find themselves marginalized from the dominant social order are not necessarily economically poor. More rather, in advanced capitalist “growth societies”, a considerable number of people are *socially* marginalized who hold various types of resources (economic, cultural) and who also hold status positions. However, these status positions are set within collectively marginalized milieus and therefore incompatible with and misrecognized by the dominant social order (s. ch. 2.2). Precisely this condition (social marginalization while holding resources) renders these groups likely to react – politically.

Individuals who are entirely socially isolated or who live in stark precarity/ poverty, on the contrary, are more likely to be occupied with *coping* and to resort to political non-participation.⁶⁵

I expect the following lived experiences to be associated with inclusion into vs. exclusion from society’s common order of goals and values (s. more extensive discussion in ch. 2.1):

⁶⁵ This proposition is in line with findings by Kriesi/Bornschiefer (2013); Häusermann (2020); Kurer (2020) who show evidence that socio-economic outsiders’ most likely political behavior is non-participation. To this I add the argument that the social networks (social ties, social relations, be it via work if you work, via family, neighborhood, friends, associations, etc.) into which, as a socio-economic outsider, you are integrated, account for a difference in your preference formation in this socio-economic condition: if you are an unemployed manual worker surrounded by employed manual workers, you are likely to want to belong to the group, what will show in your attitudes.

| Lived experiences of social inclusion | Lived experiences of social exclusion | Literature |
|---|---|--|
| Participation | Alienation | Mead (1934); Blumer (1969); Hegel (1979 [1807]); Marx (1992 [1844]) |
| Recognition | Misrecognition | Honneth (1992); Fraser (2000); Betz (2021) |
| Justice | Injustice | Betz (1994); Feather/Nairn (2005); Hochschild (2016); Cramer (2016); Salmela/von Scheve (2017) |
| Material security | Material insecurity | Rovny/Rovny (2017); Im et al. (2019); Kurer/Palier (2019) |
| Status security | Status insecurity/ denial | Gidron/Hall (2017); Engler/Weisstanner (2020) |
| Opportunity for identity formation | Obstacle for identity formation | Tajfel/Turner (1979) |
| Efficacy | Powerlessness | Salmela/von Scheve (2017); Salmela/Capelos (2021) |
| Positive social contact with other social types through interaction rituals | Negative/ no social contact with other social types | Durkheim (2001[1912]); Goffman (1967); Collins (2004); Marx (2019); Shilling (2005) |
| Common sense | Non-/ misunderstanding | Schütz/Luckmann (1973); Blumer (1969) |

Tab. 3: Lived experiences of social inclusion and exclusion (s. ch. 2.1)

In ch. 2.1, I argue that social exclusion can occur in two ways. Firstly, it can occur in the form of “social rupture”. This is the case when individuals do outrightly *not* hold role-relationships that link them into society’s dominant order of goals and values. Maybe they are individually isolated or, more likely, they live in a collectively marginalized milieu. Secondly and more commonly, however, it can occur in the form of “social tension”. This is the case when à priori they dispose of relationships that should integrate them into the common role-order, but these relationships stand under so much *tension* that effectively, they lose their integrative function. This can be the case if someone is employed but experiences the relationship to their employing organization to be so thoroughly unfair and alienating that through it they get a sense of exclusion from rather than integration in society (s. ch. 6); or if someone is a citizen of a state but experiences their relationship with state institutions to create more insecurity and status denial than the opposite (s. ch. 7). (Or yet if someone is member of a family, but on such

miserable terms with some of the other members that these relationships do not mediate integration into society more broadly speaking).

Equally in ch. 2.1, I argue that social exclusion can occur on two levels: namely at the individual level and at that of (organized) collectives: entire organizations, networks, or social fields can be excluded from participation in social order. The latter type of exclusion is likely to build up into social ruptures that marginalize entire “milieus”, e.g. by running through sectors of economic activity, along geographical lines, or through socio-cultural fabric.

Perhaps counterintuitively for the reader who is used to strict distinctions between matters “economic” and “cultural”, I expect this profoundly *sociological* mechanism of social integration to unfold its power notably within two “economic” spheres: namely in the social relations around *work* (s. ch. 3.3.1) and in citizen-*state* relations (s. ch. 3.3.2).

Mechanism 2: Social Coalitions: Who is In or Out – With Whom?

I expect individuals to form a different socio-political outlook depending on *with whom together* they find themselves “inside” or “outside” the dominant social order. Namely, I expect social integration between members of different occupational classes to serve as a basis for the formation of social class coalitions (Hall/Evans 2022; Baccaro/Pontusson 2022; Damhuis 2020; Ivarsflaten 2005)⁶⁶ which collectively form more specific sociopolitical outlooks (“visions of the political economy”). Social coalitions’ outlooks are moderate or radical in type depending on whether they are *collectively* in or out (s. mechanism 1).

Integration between socio-structural groups follows a twofold logic, involving both immediate *social contact* and integration into shared orientations mediated by *bridging institutions*. I expect both to exert the theorized effect on political preference formation.

Individuals who entertain immediate role-relationships, involving direct social interaction, tend to *talk* with each other. The fact that they find themselves in a mutually *accepted* relationship, which they prefer to maintain, has a propensity to lead them to seek forms of agreement on societal and political issues. In processes of *justifying* their positions, actions, needs, and interests *in front of each other* they are likely to bring forth ideas, views, and formulations that *co-represent* both of them. For example, if in a family, one member is a manual worker while the other one is a bureaucrat – and they get along well – they are likely to avoid *blaming bureaucracy* or *de-valorizing manual labor* in front of each other. This is how, over time, they

⁶⁶ S. also Pierson/Hacker (2020), Kitschelt (1994), Kitschelt/McGann (1995), all proposing different factors that enable the construction (and persistence) of cross-class coalitions in support of political parties or agendas.

may find ways to formulate a vision of the political economy that does justice to both their structural positions. The same happens in associations. In party organizations. In churches. At workplaces.

The view that different social types re-formulate their political views by *talking to each other* corresponds to work done by Diane Mutz (2002; 2006). She finds that – at least in the US – *work* is the social context in which people *most often* talk to others who hold views *different from their own* (2006: 28). This is followed by social contexts such as the family and friend circles, the neighborhood, and voluntary associations. The theorized effect also corresponds very well to Allport's (1954) *intergroup contact hypothesis*, which has produced consistent evidence that intergroup hostility decreases through interactive contact namely *if common action frames are given* (Pettigrew/Tropp 2006): speak, if there are intact role-relationships. Moreover, it is a long-standing position in sociology that shared rituals, as we would expect them to take place in successful role-based interactions, create a sense of positive social contact, community, and solidarity (Durkheim 2001[1912]; Goffman 1967; Collins 2004; Marx 2019; Shilling 2005). Last but not least, the formulated view is supported by macro-level evidence presented by the literature on social sorting and political preference formation (Mason 2015; Harteveld 2021).

At the same time, integration between representatives of different socio-structural groups can be mediated by “bridging institutions” – institutions which integrate individuals into common frameworks of goals and values even if these individuals never, personally, meet. Basically, this function can be taken by any large institution in society. If we stick to the view that role-relationships consist in regular, norm-based interactions at the micro-level (such as most typically, between individuals), this function would be exercised by such institutions which set a large number of individuals into a *nested* type of role-relationships with each other that follow shared goals and values. Most typically, this would be *the state*, followed by large *corporations* and *markets*. Unions and churches can do the same thing, if individuals (inter-)actively engage in these institutions; the same counts for political parties (which in today's Europe are not mass membership institutions anymore). It can count for associative institutions such as, say, the amateur soccer league; and for cultural spheres of interaction such as, f.ex. electronic music: engagement in which involved both the regular reception of content (music) that results in shared codes and the attendance of ritualistic subcultural encounters (in nightclubs and at festivals).

I expect the social composition of collectively excluded milieus to exert a particularly important effect on political preference formation. While the social coalition underlying the “dominant” social order of contemporary European societies is likely to be considerably heterogenous in terms of the social types that participate in it, marginalized social coalitions are likely to be much more socially homogenous (socially “sorted” Mason 2015; Hartevelde 2021). Where a marginalized milieu mostly includes social types with “materialist” predispositions – such as manual workers or yet, small business owners – I would expect this to result in a *radically-materialistic* sociopolitical outlook. On the contrary, when a milieu with à priori “post-materialist” orientations finds itself collectively marginalized, this is likely to result in an even radicalized version of the same (e.g. precarious university students, the NGO sector, the education, arts, social work sectors). This results in different (amplified) cues as how to deal with the issue of exclusion from the given, “productivist”, social order of advanced capitalist European “growth societies”.

It is based on these assumptions that in ch. 3.2, I theorize the formation of three competing social coalitions in advanced capitalist European societies, whose disagreements concerns the core orientations of the given social order: growth and productivity. One of them is set within the “dominant social order” and holds a *moderate-productivist* socio-political outlook. Two others are collectively marginalized from the dominant order, holding radical outlooks: namely *post-productivist* views on the one side, and *producerist and welfare chauvinist* views on the other.⁶⁷ The post-productivist social coalition, which is mainly driven by socio-cultural occupations, engages in “transformative conflict”, aiming to overcome growth society. The “producerist and welfare chauvinist” social coalition, which is driven by small business owners and manual workers, engages in “conflict externalization”, blaming external scapegoat in an attempt to underline their societal belonging next to an attempt to *take back growth society* from the nostalgic perspective of shrinking, materialistic, sectors of economic activity. In ch. 3.2 I formulate theoretical propositions characterizing these three groups and their political views, emphasizing the position of blue-collar workers.

Experience and Resonance: How Demand meets Supply

While this thesis treats “visions of the political economy” as its dependent variable, I add propositions on how *political supply* interacts with the prior. Following the literature in political sociology (Lamont et al. 2017; Häusermann/Abou-Chadi et al. 2021¹; 2021²), I propose that

⁶⁷ This speaks to the literature that argues advanced capitalist socio-political space is “tripolar” (Oesch/Rennwald 2018) or that a broad, moderate political bloc stands between “polarizing” fringes (Westheuser 2022).

political parties supply concrete ideas and political projects packaged into their ideological and programmatic discourses. These political discourses *resonate* with individuals' experiences and preconfigured outlooks, leading at the same time to the *formation of concrete political issue preferences* and to *electoral mobilization*.⁶⁸

The articulation of concrete political ideas is a skillful and laborious process. While I expect demand-side mechanisms to account for a considerable part of how individuals' outlook is shaped, I do not expect the larger part of individuals in society to formulate complex political ideas alone at home, and not even, in their social environments (workplace, family, friends, associations, etc.). I primarily expect political associations (parties, unions, social movements) and other actors in the grand public (the media, public intellectuals) to formulate and disperse political ideologies and programs. These "political discourses", in return, *resonate* with some people and groups in the population more than with others – depending on demand-side factors.

I propose that political discourses resonate on several levels with individuals in the population. Firstly, they resonate with *positional outlooks* deriving from class positions in social structure and from modes of social integration (s. e.g. Oesch 2008; Oesch/Rennwald 2018). Secondly, political discourses resonate with experiences of social inclusion or exclusion (Gidron/Hall 2019). I propose that all those who experience to be integrated into dominant social order tend to support "moderate" political discourses. Inversely, all those who experience to be excluded tend to support either "radical" discourses or such discourses which delineate clear, credible pathways that will lead to their societal re-inclusion. Thirdly, political discourses resonate with the pre-configured outlooks ("visions of the political economy") of social coalitions (s. e.g. Hall/Evans 2022; Baccaro/Pontusson 2022; Damhuis 2020).

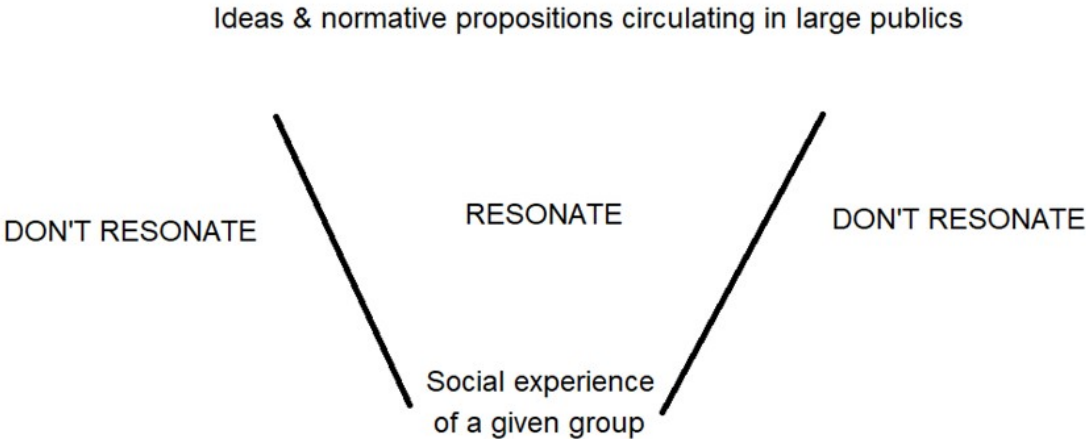
Existing frameworks of demand-supply interaction tend to view either socio-structural positions (Lipset/Rokkan 1967; Lipset 1960; Korpi 1983) or *already existing attitudes* (Ivarsflaten 2008; 2005; Oesch 2008; Oesch/Rennwald 2018; Costello et al. 2020; Hameleers 2021; Lamont et al. 2017) as the "demand-side" variable in political demand-supply interactions (s. e.g. Ares 2022 for an intermediating approach between the two). Even within the more qualitatively oriented literature, f. ex., Lamont et al. (2017) hold that "cultural

⁶⁸ This thesis research design (s. ch. 4) does not allow a consistent empirical argumentation of the mechanisms of demand-supply interaction, and notably not, of proving *voting behavior*. I have chosen to still theorize these mechanisms and outcomes, because it rounds up the theoretical picture and may be of interest to the reader in political science.

resonance” occurs when political discourse resonates with the pre-configured attitudes, values, social norms, and morals of a social group.

My framework adds to this by proposing that *lived experience* (Schütz/Luckmann 1973) is an important factor shaping political demand. Political discourses can resonate with *lived experiences* of individuals in the population, which logically (even if not chronologically) come prior to the formation of attitudes: political ideas supplied by parties can be used by individuals to (re-)interpret their personal, biographical experiences *if* said ideas are useful to make sense of said experiences (speak, there is “resonance”; Schütz/Luckmann 1973; Lamont 2000¹). I propose that this is particularly likely to apply to experiences of *social inclusion and exclusion*, of which to make sense is a problematic and inherently political process, intensive in ideational resource requirements.

It follows that parties disperse political ideas, narratives, concrete issue positions, etc. with a concurrent twofold effect. Firstly, these resonate with (some) individuals (more than with others), leading these individuals to articulate their pre-configured “socio-political outlook” into concrete political preferences and to (re-)interpret their lived experiences in the light of the resonant political ideas. Secondly, at the same time, this serves to mobilize partisan support among the same individuals.



III. 7: Preference formation as experience and resonance

When individuals “access” ideational resources that circulate in the public sphere, meso-level spaces (such as the workplace, the family, associations, etc.) again play an important role in filtering ideational circulation. Meso-level spheres interact between large publics and individual-level preference formation. On the one hand, I expect this “filtering function” to depend on socio-structural composition: if there are mainly young male blue-collar workers in

a local soccer club, they will “select” only certain ideas from the large public and discuss them while having a beer after training. If a workplace is constituted by very heterogenous social types, they are likely to “select” additional ideas for discussion. On the other hand, however, each meso-level sphere follows its own, distinct, institutional logics: in it, some become opinion leaders, while others become followers; even distinct ideologies can develop and “sediment” in institutions such as companies, families, or associations.⁶⁹

In ch. 3.4, I formulate propositions on how the ideological and programmatic discourses of various contemporary European party families (and their varying agendas) resonate with manual workers who make part of the three conflicting social coalitions theorized in ch. 3.2 (these are, *moderate-productivist*, *post-productivist*, and *producerist/welfare chauvinist* manual workers).

3.2 Dependent Variable: Blue-Collar Workers’ Visions of the Political Economy

In this section, I describe the modalities of this thesis’ dependent variable, which is: blue-collar workers’ *visions of the political economy*. I propose that the advanced capitalist public is characterized by a tripartite split of visions of the political economy, which in essence consist in moral affirmations or contestations of the “productivist” social order. I distinguish between one vision that affirms the current social order (“moderate productivism”), one that aims to overcome it (“post-productivism”), and one that aims to “take it back” from the nostalgic perspective of shrinking sectors of economic activity alongside engaging in “conflict externalization”, i.e., out-group blaming (“producerism and welfare chauvinism”). In theory, blue-collar workers can join any of these three visions, however, they will interpret each of them in terms that derive from their socio-structural position and mode of social integration, namely, which I call “laborism”.

I expect all three “visions of the political economy” to essentially refer to the language of the currently dominant “moral order” of European “growth societies” (either affirming or explicitly contesting it). In ch. 2.3, I have described how contemporary European “growth societies” feature a “productivist” moral order, in which *productive contribution* as a central point of reference for socio-economic legitimacy. In a “productivist” vision of the political economy, a course of action is socially valuable, and a social position is legitimate, when it productively contributes to the common good, which is, to the growth-oriented (socio-)economy and public

⁶⁹ Institutions that are explicitly occupied with ideology production (unions, parties, but also churches and aesthetic culture) are yet to be treated distinctly: participation in them is likely to lead to contact not only with “moral” cues, but with thick sociopolitical ideas and ideologies.

fiscality. In this view, productive contributions to the common good *legitimize* group membership as well as status and entitlements within the group (Giddens 1993: 175 ff.). This influences visions of legitimately earned income, property, and social status. Equally, it influences visions of *welfare deservingness*. I have drawn on van Oorschot (2000) and Giddens (1994: 175ff.) when proposing that in a productivist “moral order”, three criteria of *welfare deservingness* are of particular importance.⁷⁰ These are:

Reciprocity: Everyone is called upon to productively contribute.

Control: It is accepted not to contribute if you cannot for reasons beyond your control.

Attitude: You should *perform* an effort of being productive so to support the public morale.

In the following, I first describe how I expect blue-collar workers to interpret “productivism” and the productivist welfare deservingness norms, building on the idea that socio-structural position comes exerts a basic influence on sociopolitical outlook (s. ch. 3.1). Subsequently, I formulate the theory of three conflicting visions of the political economy, which affirm or contest the productivist social order and its views of welfare deservingness. As blue-collar workers’ can in theory join any of these three “visions of the political economy”, I add propositions on how their “positional outlook” interacts with each of these.

Productivism and the Working-Class: “Laborism” as a Vision of the Political Economy

À priori, I expect interpretations of “productivism” to differ depending on individuals’ socio-structural position and “mode of social integration” (s. ch. 3.1). I expect members of the blue-collar working class to forward an interpretation of productivism that emphasizes “work”, in the sense of occupational labor and paid employment, over other types of “productive” contributions, and “physical”, “manual”, “materialistically oriented” labor over other forms of labor (**proposition 1a “laborism”**). This means that workers would interpret the welfare deservingness criterion of “reciprocity” mainly as the norm that everyone should *work*. They would interpret “control” in terms of conditions under which one cannot *work*; and “attitude” as the question of whether one *wants to work*.

⁷⁰ See similarly Abts et al. (2021) who interpret the same three deservingness criteria as a manifestation of “producerism”. I treat them as “productivism”, of which producerism is a radically materialistic variant (s. below). Petersen (2012), adopting an evolutionary psychological perspective, proposes that the logic of “contribution” has marked deservingness perceptions of reciprocal solidarity already long before the age of “growth societies”. My expectation would, however, be to find *more pronounced* contribution norms under the latter’s “productivist” social and moral order.

Research in labor sociology suggests that individuals who work in blue-collar occupations and/or grow up in working-class families often develop esteem for manual work's value at the workplace and in the family (Altreiter/Flecker 2020). Moreover, the literature in political sociology suggests that frames referring to the *value of work* may be central to the way manual workers make sense of the political economy and draw distinctions between in-groups and out-groups, between the “deserving” and the “undeserving”. Lamont et al. (2017) show how contemporary US workers see themselves as the country's “back-bone” and as those who “keep the economy going”, however experience a “gap” between this identity and the social recognition received for their contribution. In her earlier, seminal, study, Lamont (2000) shows how the identity of being “hard-working” and following a disciplined “work ethos” is used by both US and French white manual workers to draw moral boundaries towards other social groups, notably towards black workers (in the US) and towards North African immigrants (in France), but also in both countries towards social groups “above” (e.g. the professional class). In 2016 electoral speeches of right-wing-populist candidate and later US president Donald Trump, the same frames were used to draw a distinction between “deserving” American workers and “undeserving” immigrants, with the success of mobilizing a historically high proportion of the US white working class (Lamont et al. 2017). Several other contemporary accounts highlight how employed manual workers draw ever more rigorous boundaries between themselves and the unemployed, (perceived) welfare “scroungers”, and non-working immigrants: namely, by referring to “work” as a justification (s. for the UK: Savage et al. 2015; for France: Collectif Focale 2022; for the US: Hochschild 2016: ch. 7; s. also ch. 1).

We could name the vision of the political economy centered around *those who work* “laborism”. This term is usually associated with collective actors: social movements, unionism, political parties, or even 20th century sovereign states which were founded on laborist and state socialist ideologies. On the contrary, this thesis treats laborism as a set of attitudes documented in individuals. What remains similar is, laborism puts those who work, and notably those who perform manual work, in the center of a moral picture of economy, state, and society.

In difference to other manifestations of productivism or post-productivism, laborist frames are predetermined to rely on a *socially embedded* (or *substantivist*) vision of the economy (s. Polanyi 2001 [1944]), in which work essentially bears *both* social *and* economic value, and where its economic reward should stand in some proportion to the social contribution it makes. This mean that all forms of laborism are, by tendency, opposed to the “disembedding” of a purely economic logic from social value creation – such as it is f.ex. the case in processes of

financialization. Laborism can equally be distinguished from *meritocracy*: while laborist and meritocratic frames definitely overlap, not all *merits* are *laborious*.

A paradox of laborist morale, in return, is its presumed focus on *paid work*. Laborism as a political ideology has historically been associated with the representation of “male breadwinners” who conducted ostensibly “productive”, because *paid*, work (Hochschild/Machung 1989; Orloff 1996; Sainsbury 1999). This said, an understanding that unpaid *care work* (Hochschild/Machung 1989) and *reproductive labor* (Federici 2012) are equally *work* has in the recent decades become more popularized – at least so in academic discourse (s. *ibid*; Giddens 1994: 182 ff.). Unpaid care work and reproductive labor is *gendered*, even still today (s. Orloff 1996; Sainsbury 1999). I therefore add a doubt to proposition **P1a**: do male and/ or female members of the working-class who hold “laborist” attitudes represent unpaid care work and reproductive labor in their “laborist” views?

“Moderate”, “Inclusivist”, and “Exclusivist” Visions of the Political Economy

I expect the advanced capitalist public to be broadly divided into three socio-political camps, each of them driven by a specific socio-structural coalition, which hold conflicting *visions of the political economy*. These conflicting visions, in essence, mirror a conflict around questions of growth and productivity, which derives from forms of inclusion or exclusion in the dominant, “productivist” social order. I expect blue-collar workers to make part of all three of these coalitions (albeit to different quantitative degrees), and each case to *align* their predisposed “positional” outlook (*laborism*) with the coalition’s more specific “vision of the political economy”. In ch. 3.3, I provide a detailed discussion of the mechanisms by which blue-collar workers sort into these three socio-structural coalitions and (in effect) adopt one of the three socio-political outlooks, mediated by several types of “bridging institutions” at the meso-level, namely (1) the workplace, (2) state institutions, and (3) socio-cultural spheres.

The debate on contemporary European political sociology often makes binary distinctions when speaking of “new politics” as a conflict of populist radical right-wing parties (PRRPs) versus new (green, liberal, alternative) left-wing parties (Kitschelt 1994; Kitschelt/McGann 1995), of “new” cleavages dividing society into two camps (Kriesi et al. 2008; Hooghe/Marks 2018; Merkel 2017; Bornschier et al. 2021), or yet of *binary* political “polarization” (Wagner 2021; Harteveld 2021; Mason 2015; Reiljan 2020). On the contrary, evidence has been presented that political competition in advanced capitalism may indeed rather take place in a “tripartite” political space (Oesch/Rennwald 2018) and that between “polarizing” factions, in European countries, there may be a considerably large (and in itself diverse) centrist bloc (Westheuser

2022).⁷¹ Going with the latter literature, I expect to globally find a moderate (centrist), an exclusivist (right-wing populist), and an inclusivist (new left-wing) socio-political bloc, the essential difference between which relies in three different visions of the advanced capitalist political economy, namely: “moderate productivism”, “producerism and welfare chauvinism”, and yet, “post-productivism”.

I expect to find a “*moderate productivist*” vision of the political economy, whose proponents hold a stake in, and therefore and prefer to maintain, the given productivist social order. Productivism emphasizes the value of contribution to the productive process (Giddens 1994:175 ff). This said, I expect “moderate productivists” to be moderate in two ways. Firstly, I expect them to recognize a broad range of “productive contributions” to the common good to be valuable and hence to allow them as justifications for social membership. This can include manual blue-collar and bureaucratic white-collar work, interpersonal service work, socio-cultural, intellectual, higher-skilled technical, managerial, or “even”, political work. Secondly, I expect the “moderate productivist” vision to hold nuanced views about deviance from the logic of contribution. Namely, when it comes to welfare deservingness, I expect proponents to affirm the productivist deservingness criteria and the mainstream “rank order” (in which pensioners are most, and immigrants the least deserving recipient group). However, I expect them to *basically affirm* every group’s entitlement to public solidarity and, even more importantly, to attribute *low political salience* to issues of welfare deservingness (**P1b “moderate productivism”**). I expect the “moderate productivist” outlook to be carried by a broad coalition of socio-structural types who are all firmly integrated into the dominant, productivist, social order and (through it) with each other. Manual workers who are part of this coalition, I expect to mirror the “moderate productivist” outlook in a moderate form of “laborism”, highlighting the virtue of manual labor among a broad variety of “valuable” productive contributions to the common good and demanding that “everyone should work”, but being nuanced about exceptions from the rule and *not attributing overly much salience* to the issue.

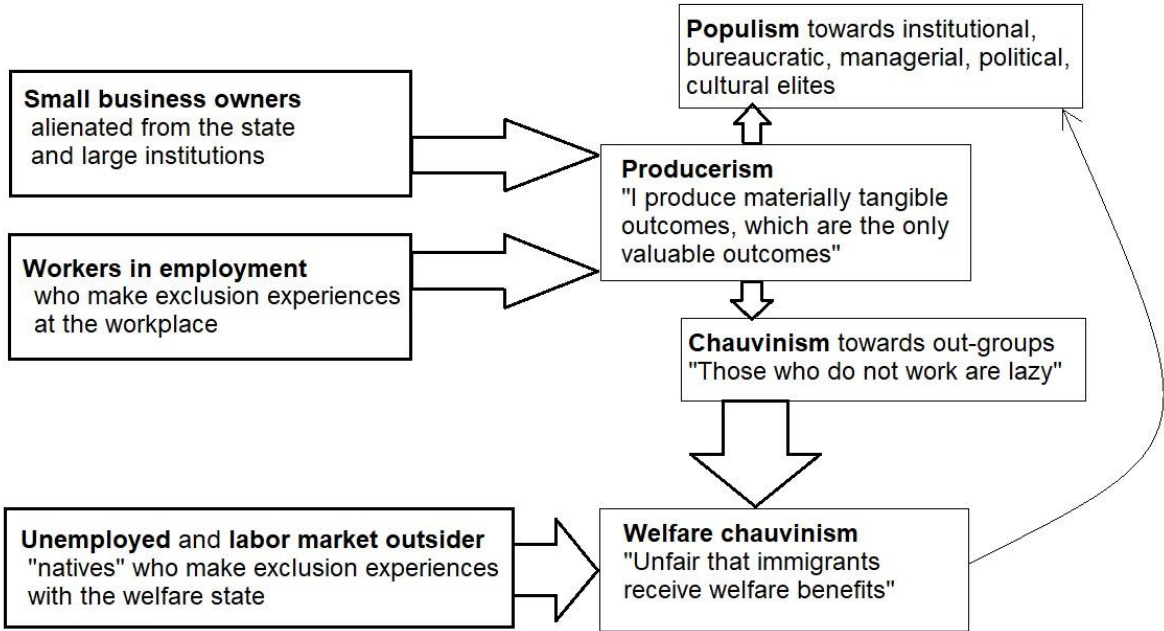
⁷¹ A glance at the French post-2017 situation provides a neat illustration of this idea: there is one large centrist liberal bloc (in this case led by acting president Emmanuel Macron) with a populist-radical-right wing bloc at its right hand (*Rassemblement National, Reconquête*) and a “new left” bloc at its left hand (since 2022, *Nupes*). My assumption is that this tripartite structure is not a mere supply-side phenomenon (e.g. created by the comparatively majoritarian French multiparty electoral system), but has socio-structural, demand-side roots: the shrinking centrist bloc is driven by parts of society who are still firmly integrated into the dominant, “productivist”, social order, while the two other blocs are not – yet react against it from two different sides and in two different political motions (“overcome productivism” vs. “take back productivism”).

Further, I expect to find a “*producerist and welfare chauvinist*” vision of the political economy, which is primarily carried by a social coalition of small business owners and manual workers, and among the latter, both socio-economic insiders and socio-economic outsiders, all of whom make exclusion experiences with the advanced capitalist “productivist” social order – but tend to maintain intact role-relationships *between each other*. All of these social types bring “materialistic” predispositions deriving from their socio-structural position and “mode of social integration”. This is reflected in a *producerist* outlook. “Producerism”, namely, is a special case of productivism which differs in featuring a *narrow* and *radically materialistic* vision of socio-economic value. Producerism is an ideology that opposes all those who make *materially tangible* contributions to economy and fiscality (“makers”) to those who are seen to merely profit from the value created by others (“takers”, s. Rathgeb 2021; Derks 2006 ; Ivaldi/Mazzoleni 2019 ; Abts et al. 2020). The so defined in-group of “producers” typically includes *both* blue-collar workers *and* small capitalists. The supposedly “unproductive” outgroup, on the contrary, typically includes state bureaucracies, intellectuals (journalists, artists, social scientists), and politicians alongside the unemployed and (non-working) immigrants: all of them typical scapegoats and targets of social exclusion attempts by the populist radical right (s. ch.1). Producerism sees a large part of activities exercised in advanced capitalist societies as “worthless” and can be interpreted as a project to “take back growth society” from the nostalgic point of view of shrinking occupation groups and economic sectors that make collective “exclusion experiences” with the advanced capitalist configuration of “productivism”.

In addition, producerism tends to come with radical views of deviance from the norm of contribution, supporting exclusivist and “punitive” measures aimed at unemployed people and non-working immigrants. At this point, it can align with an additional ideological layer of “*nativist*” views and justifications, highlighting “welfare chauvinism” as a specific issue (**P1c “producerism and welfare chauvinism”**). I expect “producerists and welfare chauvinists” to be distinctive notably by attributing very high political salience to issues of welfare deservingness such as welfare chauvinism.

Moreover, there is reason to expect a dynamic of “kicking down” even among the proponents of producerism and welfare chauvinism. Those proponents who themselves are in stable employment and can claim to fully “productively contribute” to the common good are likely to blame (even “native”) social outsiders who are dependent on welfare benefits. Among small business owners, this “blame-game” can be nurtured by exclusion experiences they make in

unequal interactions with large, corporate, transnational market participants as well as with the tax- and regulatory state – what leads them to argue that their “honest”, productive contribution is not recognized as legitimation of societal membership, while others are “included” who *don't even contribute at all*, “externalizing” the conflict. Among blue-collar workers who are labor market insiders (Emmenegger et al. 2012), i.e. who are employed in stable, well-paying jobs, this “blame-game” can be fueled by exclusion experiences they make in deteriorating relations and conditions *at the workplace* (s. ch. 3.3.1) – what leads them to argue that their *work* is not recognized as a legitimation of societal membership, while others *don't even work at all*, equally “externalizing” the conflict, by use of a frame that neatly resonates with that of frustrated small capitalists. Welfare recipients who cannot legitimately claim to be “productive”, but who dispose of an identity of being a “native” to their country of residence, can join this downward blame-game by emphasizing “nativism” and arguing to be still more “deserving” than “immigrants (who do not work)”. In this sense, “welfare chauvinism” serves as a *smallest common denominator*, as a unifying issue, that keeps a collectively marginalized cross-class coalition of both socio-economic insiders and outsiders ideologically in one boat. I summarize this expected socio-political dynamic in the following illustration.



III. 8: Social coalition building and visions of the political economy on the populist radical right

Finally, on the opposite political end, I expect to find a “*post-productivist*” vision of the contemporary political economy (Giddens 1994: 182ff.). The idea that scarcity necessitates productive contributions has driven the ideology of economic growth over more than a century.

In the contemporary era, ever more voices speak out against this idea, proposing that more than enough value is circulating in the political economy, and proposing an outright rejection of *productive contribution* as a logic of social membership (s. *ibid*; Fournier 2008; Spangenberg 2010; van Parijs/Vanderborght 2017; Koch/Buch-Hansen 2021; Paulson/Büchs 2022). The “post-productivist” outlook is carried by a social coalition driven by socio-cultural occupations and by expanding sociocultural and “re-productive” sectors of socio-economic activity (education, social work, NGOs, the arts, i.a. health), which may, however, find themselves in an incongruence with the dominant, (disembedded) “productivist” social order of advanced capitalism. Post-productivism sees all participants of the political economy, at least nominally, as “in-group”, no matter if they contribute (productively) or not. This implies a radically inclusive vision of society. Therefore, I expect proponents of post-productivism to support *universal inclusion* into public welfare solidarity (**P1d “post-productivism”**). This proposition is backed up by evidence presented by Laenen/Meuleman (2017), who in a global survey find that in every country, a part of the population (varying in size) holds universalistic views of welfare solidarity. The question can be posed how well the *laborist* view, which I expect to be characteristic for manual workers, is able to connect to this vision, given that post-productivism may conflict with the claim that “those who work” stand at the center of things – and rather propose that “work” is voluntary.

I summarize the three theorized “visions of the political economy” in the following table, emphasizing blue-collar workers’ expected “laborist” interpretation of any of these visions.

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| Post-Productivism Rejection of contribution logic Universal inclusivism | Moderate Productivism “Contributionism” with a broad vision of social value Moderate views of deviation | Producerism and Welfare Chauvinism “Contributionism” with a narrow vision of social value Radical views of deviation |
| Economic Substantivism Economic and social value go hand in hand and must not be dissociated | | |
| Laborism Work stands at the center of the political economy | | |

Tab. 4: Manual workers’ vision of the advanced capitalist political economy (**P1a-d**): laborism and cross-cutting ideologies

In order to complete the logic, we could theorize a fourth moral vision of the political economy, which is “*disembedded productivism*”. This would be another “moderate” (or “centrist”) vision in so far as it affirms the continuation of the given, productivist, social order. However, it would differ from what I call *moderate productivism* in so far as it does not affirm economic substantivism: socio-economic “dis-embedding” is at stake when *social* and *economic value* diverge (s. ch. 2.2; Polanyi 2001 [1944]). A “disembedded productivist” vision would *approve*

of this divergence. This would manifest in support for economic growth, modernization, and productive contributions, but without a thought about how this affects the integration of large parts of society into the productivist model. This would typically come down to very economically “liberal” views of work, employment relations, and the welfare state (s. ch. 2.2). Disembedded productivism would typically feature the “TINA” (“There Is No Alternative”)-argument as a justification for social exclusion, creating a variant of the “productivism” and “modernization” lead narratives in which it is *impossible* to maintain employment standards or yet an inclusive, non-precarious welfare system under the objectively pressing conditions of advanced capitalism in the domains e.g. of fiscality and demography, which are entirely subject to “force-majeur”, outside of sociopolitical influence, and must never be set in relation to the facts that economic growth overall continues and socio-economic inequality is rising (s. ch. 2.2). I expect “laborism” to align with socio-economic substantivism for reasons of positional outlook and self-interest (s. ch. 3.1) therefore expect laborism and “disembedded productivism” for the most part to be mutually exclusive.⁷²

In ch. 3.3 and ch 3.4 I formulate a theory of how these three socio-political outlooks have formed in result of a combination of *demand-side* and *supply-side* mechanisms. Among these, this thesis only analyses the demand-side mechanisms empirically (s. ch.s 4-8): namely, two mechanisms of social integration and exclusion, which realize in three meso-level spheres: at the workplace, in citizens’ relations with state institutions, and in socio-cultural spheres.

3.3 Social Integration and Preference Formation at the Meso-Level

In this section, I formulate theoretical propositions on how contemporary blue-collar workers sort into social coalitions and form “visions of the political economy” in three key meso-level spheres: (1) at the workplace, (2) in contact with institutions of the welfare state, and (3) in socio-cultural spheres. I expect the two mechanisms of social integration and political

⁷² In ch. 2.2, I argue that historical processes of “disembedding” of the productivist model of social integration have led to the exclusion of a considerable part of contemporary societies from participation in the dominant model of the political economy (“marginalization”), which, as a background mechanism, has led to the success of both “producerist and welfare chauvinist” and “post-productivist” visions (namely among different parts of the marginalized, s. ch. 3.1; 3.2; 3.3). I do not, however, include “disembedded productivism” in the theoretical model that is empirically tested within this thesis for a simple reason: the dataset has a strong bias towards working-class occupations, which I expect the least of all to support “socio-economic disembedding” (which would be at their detriment). In reality, I would expect “moderate productivists” and “disembedded productivists” to occasionally align and articulate political preferences or vote together, namely, for large centrist parties which are able to bridge this gap. I would expect only “disembedded productivists” to turn out for small, economically liberal parties (such as NEOS in Austria or FDP in Germany).

preference formation theorized in ch. 3.1 (societal inclusion/ exclusion; inter-group integration) to realize namely in these three spaces of social interaction.

3.3.1 The Workplace

Dependent employment is a central mechanism of social inclusion for the majority of individuals in modern societies (s. Castel 1995; ch. 3.3) and *even more so* for the working-class, who disposes of less alternative, e.g. socio-cultural, mechanisms of inclusion than the middle-class. Occupational work is a source of material income and security, of social status, recognition, and participation, namely both in the meso-level sphere of the enterprise and, often mediated through the prior, in society at large. While existing literature has thematized the political effects of exclusion *from* work (i.e. unemployment) and of *formally precarious* work arrangements (e.g. contract types) (s. ch.1; s. e.g. Emmenegger et al. 2012; Rovny/Rovny 2017), the political sociology of exclusion *in* work, i.e. *at the workplace*, has so far remained undertheorized. The workplace, however, theoretically qualifies as a primary sphere at which “grievances” could occur that channel into politicized resentment, as it is a long-standing proposition of “modernization loser” theory. This is because work-related problems are predestined to lead *in parallel* to literally all the types of grievance experiences theorized by *conflicting* variants of modernization loser theory (economic, cultural, status, recognition, etc., see ch.s 1, 2 and 3.1).

The subjective relevance of work-related problems is boosted by further factors: for many, work is an essential form of social integration, on which social roles and opportunities in other areas depend (e.g. family, hobbies, or yet welfare entitlements). Employed individuals spend a big part of their awake time at the workplace, so that grievances in this locus may occupy a considerable part of their daily life. In effect, the experience of severe and permanent injustice in employment relations may have a disproportional effect on an individual’s perception of whether society *overall* is a just or an unjust place. Last but not least, work is an important way in which individuals make positive contact with social types very different from their own, namely through the experience of collaborating towards common goals at the workplace. On the contrary, if social exclusion occurs at the workplace, precisely these inter-group ties may rupture.

| Form of inclusion | Aspect of inclusion |
|------------------------|--|
| (Dependent) employment | Income, material security |
| | Social recognition, social status |
| | Participation in the occupational and social relations inside the enterprise organization |
| | Participation through the individual occupational project / through the collective enterprise's project in wider society |
| | Inter-group contact |

Tab 5: Social inclusion via dependent employment (s. ch. 2.2)

| Exclusion mechanism | Problem locus | Primary cause ⁷³ |
|--|---------------|---|
| Exclusion <i>from</i> employment | Labor market | Labor market situation (supply/demand) |
| Exclusion through employment <i>modalities</i> | Contract type | Labor market institutions (labor law, welfare state provisions, union activity, etc.) |
| Exclusion <i>in</i> employment relations | Workplace | Management-worker & organizational relations inside the enterprise |

Tab. 6: Exclusion *from*, *through* and *in* employment: three pathways (s. ch. 2.2)

Addressing the political-economic context, I have argued in ch. 2.2 that socio-economic pressure created by the historical transformation from “industrial capitalism” to “advanced capitalism” may have to a considerable degree manifested *inside* enterprise organizations, namely in management-employee relationships, in management styles and “organizational culture”.⁷⁴ For the longest time, however, there may have been a lack of public and political narratives helping the employed to make sense of this problem *within* the dominant productivist social order (such a narrative would need to come with a problem identification and credible propositions on how to “solve” the problem within the limits of the given socio-economic model, s. ch.s 2.1 and 3.4). This is why “radical” narratives, which propose alternative social

⁷³ The causal pathways leading to the different employment-related social exclusion mechanisms indeed interact. For example, labor law does not only regulate the labor market, but it regulates workplace relations, too: it proposes norms pertaining to workplace relations and sets limits to management agency. So do labor unions. Unions, indeed, are a strong factor of social inclusion at the workplace – if they are present and if they work well. On the contrary, management “styles” and models of organizational culture, if spreading through a sector, can influence labor market dynamics when the impact on the hiring of more, less, or different types of employees. The labor market situation may inversely have an effect on management style: management may be incentivized to treat workers better when labor supply is short and to care less when there is surplus labor. Management-worker relations may have a tendency to work out better in enterprises that operate in growing markets, where “profits” can be shared between capital and labor, and to deteriorate in shrinking markets, where management is incentivized to lay off workers.

⁷⁴ Notably, this is at the same time the period when both the unionization of the workforce in numbers and union bargaining power have declined (Ebbinghaus/Visser 1999; Vandaele 2019).

orders and/or externalize suppressed conflicts, may have profited from this source of social tension.

Moreover, a political narrative which has infamously come to be associated with processes of economic modernization, globalization and liberalization during the period in question – the argument that “There Is No Alternative” (“TINA”, s. ch. 2.2) – may have oftentimes manifested and been experienced by individuals at the meso-level of the workplace. If an organization’s management systematically uses the argument that “there is no alternative” to (modalities of) change that are detrimental for employees; if such a style of argumentation should even become “normalized” in a society’s dominant organizational culture; then we would be looking at a textbook case of the breeding of social resentment as theorized by modernization loser theory and more generally, social psychology, set right in people’s everyday lives (Betz 2021; Demertzēs 2020; TenHouten 2018; Feather/Nairn 2005; s. ch. 2.2). We would equally be looking at a clean case of “conflict suppression”, which is likely to lead to “conflict externalization” or “transformative conflict” (system challenging) as I argue in ch. 2.1.

In accordance with the two mechanisms of social integration and political preference formation formulated in ch. 3.1, I propose that social integration at the workplace has an important effect on the formation of political attitudes.

In agreement with what has been said, I expect those employed individuals who are well integrated at their workplace, in an organization that successfully participates in the dominant, productivist, model of the political economy, to form a *moderate-productivist* outlook (s. ch. 3.2) on the advanced capitalist political economy (**P2a “workplace integration”**). I expect these individuals to feel “holding a stake” in the dominant social order and therefore, to support maintaining this order.

On the contrary, I expect individuals whose experience of the workplace is strongly marked by *social tension* (s. ch. 2.1) to feel more alienated from dominant social order *generally*. This is because work, for them, does not act as a channel of integration with societies’ dominant orientations (**P2b “workplace exclusion”**). In effect, I expect these individuals to form a more “radical” socio-political outlook (*mechanism 1*, s. ch.3.2). This “radical” basic outlook can channel into various directions, depending on *who* is excluded together *with whom* (*mechanism 2*, s. *ibid*). If those who are marginalized while being in employment exercise more materialistically oriented occupations, they can have a tendency to take up “producerist and welfare chauvinist” discourses dispersed by populist radical right-wing parties (PRRPs). This qualifies as “conflict externalization”: no opportunity given to solve or thematize work(place)-

related problems, those concerned by them form an identity of being particularly “hard-working” and blame “those who are not working” as well as those in perceivedly “unproductive” occupations (s. ch. 3.2). If, however, the marginalized are set in non-materialistic (socio-cultural or “re-productive”) occupations, they tend to resonate with post-materialistic discourses dispersed by new-alternative-left-wing parties. This comes down to a posture of challenging the productivist vision of “work” and often comes with the claim that work should not be mandatory (s. *ibid*).

Finally, I expect equivalent effects for social tension *between* enterprises. The literature shows that the segregation of social classes at workplaces has increased in during advanced capitalism (Godechot et al. 2020). This may unfold particularly strong effects if it coincides with collective forms of marginalization. If an entire enterprise organization or even parts of a sector of economic activity are at tension with the dominant, productivist social order, its workforce may react in a similar way: depending on the sector of activity and the degree of socio-occupational “sorting”, they may collectively tend into either of the “radical” directions (**P2c “enterprise exclusion”**).

3.3.2 Citizen-Welfare State Relations

The welfare state has since the 19th century developed into the primary social solidarity mechanism in European societies.⁷⁵ As such, it plays a crucial role providing material security and enabling the social inclusion of individuals wherever employment fails to do so, such as classically in the situations of ageing, unemployment, sickness, or accident (Esping-Andersen 1990). European welfare states have seen their largest expansion during the “golden” years of the post-World-War-II era; and the policies of this time were notably tailored to cover the risks faced by (male) manual workers, consisting mainly in generous “consumption-oriented” policies such as retirement pension and unemployment benefits (Beramendi et al. 2015).

Since the 1980s, however, European welfare states have undergone substantive reforms, which have generally taken place in a context of “permanent austerity” (Pierson 2001): among policymakers, the vision has become commonplace that after the post-war “expansion” years, due to fiscal and demographic pressures, public expenses cannot further grow and must be limited (s. ch. 2.2). In this context, cuts of welfare programs have taken place which have notably concerned those classic consumption-oriented policies which cater to the needs of

⁷⁵ The welfare state coexists with other sources of social solidarity such as the family and community ties; notably historically, churches; more contemporarily, NGOs, etc. (s. i.a. Esping-Andersen 1990; Castel 1995).

manual workers (e.g. retirement pensions and unemployment benefits). Legal retirement age has been considerably increased in most European welfare democracies, what is to the detriment of manual workers who start their career early and face health restrictions earlier than others. In “pay-as-you-go” systems, the required number of contribution years to receive a “full” pension rather than “deductions” has generally been expanded (e.g. to 45 years in Germany). At the same time, welfare policy has started to emphasize “*activation*” (Soss/Schram 2007; Bonoli 2010) and “*conditionality*” (Dwyer et al. 2022): unemployment and social minimum security benefits nowadays come with obligations, such as to actively search for employment, to undergo training and counseling, or to accept jobs proposed by the public labor market administration. Recipients who do not meet obligations face sanctions, such as benefit cuts. Conditional welfare and “activation” policies put pressure on the unemployed – a group among which blue-collar workers are proportionally more numerous than other occupation groups (Rovny/Rovny 2017). For sure, welfare reform in the recent decades has also included a turn towards *social investment*, i.e. the provision of resources that enable recipients to increase their human capital and their labor market position (Esping-Andersen 2002; Morel et al 2012; Hemerijck 2013)⁷⁶). However, there is some evidence that the working-class profits less from the often education-related resources provided by social investment policies than the middle class (Cantillon/Van Lancker 2013).

I expect *welfare experiences* – lived experiences individuals make themselves, personally, with policies and institutions of the welfare state (Dupuy/Teuber/Ingelgom 2022) – to have a considerable effect on socio-political outlook. This is because the welfare state is, (besides) employment, the most important mechanism of socio-economic integration in contemporary “productivist” European societies (s. ch. 2.2). The welfare state – via its various dispositives such as retirement insurance, unemployment insurance, social minimum security, and yet public health systems, public housing (support), etc. – is an important source of material security; which in turn is a basis for social participation. In the case of social investment policies, public education systems, and “active” e.g. labor market re-insertion policies, the welfare state is even very directly occupied with enabling and enhancing social participation.

Most importantly, the welfare state is an immediate locus of negotiation of *societal inclusion/exclusion norms* for that part of the population which is not in employment. More often than not, the access criteria (“deservingness norms”) which citizens need to fulfill in order to receive

⁷⁶ It has also turned towards covering “new social risks”, i.e. risks faced by groups who were historically underrepresented in welfare policy such as women and the young (s. i.a. Esping-Andersen 2002).

a public retirement pension, unemployment benefits, and so on, are at the same time the criteria they need to fulfill in order to stay in their social position rather than losing it; and to stay inside society rather than dropping (even socio-economically) out (s. ch. 2.2). Most citizens, once they are not in paid employment, do not dispose of alternative sources of material income that are comparable in height and security to welfare entitlements (retirement benefit, unemployment benefit, etc.). This means that when the policies and institutions of the welfare state *harshen* the access norms to public welfare solidarity, this is likely to increase the amount of social *exclusion experiences* made by citizens or residents of the given country – what I would expect to lead to the formation of more “radical” socio-political outlooks among these individuals (see ch. 3.1, *mechanism 1*). In addition, a change in the way welfare state institutions argue welfare access is going to shift (e.g. harshen, relax or change categorically) the moral justification order of social membership generally. Like any model of social integration, the social norms that regulate welfare access come with ascriptions of rights and obligations (“reciprocity”, “control”, “attitude”, etc.) to *social roles* (s. ch.s 2.3 and 3.2): concretely, these are the publicly defines roles of the retiree, of the unemployed person (“job searcher”), of the person who is institutionally recognized as unable to work, and so on. If individuals experience their given situation not to correspond to the norms, based on which welfare institutions are judging them, this is prone to lead to experiences of misrecognition, injustice, and institutional alienation. As these experiences are being made with the state, i.e. with the central societal intermediary institution between the rights and obligations of social groups and types⁷⁷, these experiences can easily shape perceptions of whether society overall is a just – or an unjust – place.

As a result, I expect individuals’ own experiences with welfare policy and welfare state institutions to have an important effect on their formation of attitudes on others’ welfare deservingness – and on their socio-political outlook overall.

I expect that those who in effect of stable, fulltime employment relations (“labor market insiders”, Emmenegger et al. 2012) dispose of full welfare entitlements to form “moderate-productivist” views of welfare deservingness (s. ch. 3.1.3). This is because they learn “productivist” welfare access norms (deservingness criteria) during their own welfare experiences, take them for granted, and hence also apply them to others (**P3a “learning”**). As labor marker insiders generally make the experience that the welfare state works (for them) they

⁷⁷ The state perhaps acts as the central dissemination and operation mechanism of norms in society. It is indeed, the core function of the state to operate the negotiation (legislative, judiciary state) and enforcement (administrative, executive state) of norms in society. Norms and moral justifications (e.g. deservingness criteria) disseminated by state institutions are in turn likely to sediment in society (s. P3a; s. also ch.s 2.2 & 2.3).

have no reason to question the system of norms on which it is built. Rather, they will merely demand that others be judged based on the same criteria of “productive contribution” that they need to fulfill (and do so successfully).

On the contrary, there are interviewees who themselves make experiences of injustice, of misrecognition and exclusion with welfare policies. This is often the case because they are “labor market outsiders” (Emmenegger et al. 2012): in effect of interrupted or part-time employment trajectories, they have limited welfare entitlements; or they find themselves in a situation of unemployment at all. I expect these interviewees to turn into either of two directions.

Firstly, they can adopt a posture of “categorical challenging” of the given system of welfare access and deservingness norms based on *post-productivist* views (**P3b “categorical challenging”**). I would notably expect this reaction from individuals who *a priori* have access to post-materialistic and post-productivist *ideas*. In order to *categorically* challenge a system of norms practiced by an apparatus as large as a state, one needs to be able to formulate an alternative proposition. This proposition, one must take *from somewhere* (f.ex. from political narratives promoting universal basic income, which circulate precisely in the socio-cultural spheres of activity such as the education sector, social science, the arts, humanities, NGOs, etc.).

Secondly, they can turn towards “conflict externalization”, i.e. to the blaming of recipient groups who are even weaker than themselves – while leaving the “productivist” deservingness order itself unquestioned (**P3c “kicking down”**). This, I expect to go with producerist and welfare chauvinist views (s. ch. 3.2). I would expect this reaction to be particularly pronounced in contexts where people make welfare exclusion experiences and at the same time, populist-radical right-wing parties (PRRPs) are actively dispersing “welfare chauvinist” discourse in the general public, proposing that “natives” who experience “injustice” are more deserving than “immigrants”. Moreover, I expect this reaction notably from social types who make welfare exclusion experiences plus bring a predisposition to support “materialistic” views, what decreases the change of adopting a categorical “post-materialistic” critique of the welfare state.

Finally, there are interviewees who have made particularly strong experiences of “welfare inclusion”, f. ex. being unemployed but finding a job again thanks to very visible “active” support from the Employment office. In reaction, I expect these interviewees to form particularly solidaristic attitudes towards other recipient groups as well, leading to moderate or even universalist views (**P3d “re-inclusion and solidarization”**).

3.3.3 Socio-Cultural Spheres

While this thesis emphasizes political effects of social integration via work and the state, similar effects are likely to derive from social role-relationships formed in a broad variety of meso-level spheres which, by conscious use of a residual umbrella term, I call “socio-cultural spheres”. I here include social integration e.g. via the family, friends circles, associations, churches, aesthetic-cultural fields of interaction (e.g. engagement with music, literature, etc.), and also by active engagement in “political” organizations such as unions, social movements, or parties (s. ch. 2.1).

I propose that integration into *educative cultural spheres*, in which socio-cultural occupations are overrepresented, can favor the formation of post-productivist views (**P4a “educative spheres”**). Integration into institutions that participate in the dominant social order (even outside of the socio-economic sphere) can favor the formation of a moderate outlook (**P4b “dominant socio-cultural institutions”**). On the contrary, if blue-collar workers experience integration into a socio-structurally speaking *homogenous milieu* via *popular cultural spheres* in which working- and lower-middle-class occupations are overrepresented, this can act as an echo chamber of materialistic views. Notably, the latter condition does not feature channels of integration into *dominant social order* other than via work and can, if there should be issues with societal integration via the economic sphere, find itself collectively marginalized (**P4c “homogenous milieu”**).

3.4 How Demand meets Supply: Party Families and Political Discourses

In ch. 3.1, I have proposed a model of how political parties ideological and programmatic discourse resonates with “visions of the political economy” articulated by socio-structural coalitions, leading *both* to the formation of concrete political ideas and policy issue preferences among these groups *and* to their partisan mobilization as electorates. More specifically, I have formulated the expectation that partisan discourses resonate on several levels, namely, (1) with “positional outlooks”, (2) with experiences of social inclusion or exclusion, and (3) social coalitions preconfigured outlooks (“visions of the political economy”). In this section, I formulate propositions on how the discourses of contemporary European party families (and of conflicting agendas within these) resonate with citizens (and specifically, blue-collar manual workers) who make part of the various social coalitions and à priori favor “moderate productivist”, “producerist and welfare chauvinist” or “post-productivist” views. (This thesis’ research design is, however, *only in a very limited manner* able to empirically test these

propositions supply-side influence and partisan preference/ voting behavior, the dependent variable being “visions of the political economy”, s. ch.s 4 and 5).

Drawing on the literature on party families and party ideologies, I propose that ideological *populism*, *nativism*, and *authoritarianism* (Mudde 2007) on the political right and on the left resonate with the “producerist and welfare chauvinist” outlook; let alone those who propagate the name-giving elements of “producerism” (Derks 2006; Ivaldi/Mazzoleni 2019) and “welfare chauvinism” (Andersen/Bjorklund 1990; Mudde 1999; Michel 2017; Carreja/Harris 2022). This means that populist radical right-wing parties (PRRPs) are predestined to mobilize citizens who favor these views and to supply them concrete political ideas, narratives, and issue preferences. On the contrary, radical left-wing parties who turn towards “nativist”, “populist”, and “authoritarian” views (Häusermann/ Abou-Chadi et al. 2021¹; 2021²) may equally resonate in this group.

New-liberal-left-wing discourses are predestined to resonate with the “post-productivist” outlook. “New-left-liberalism” stands for parties with pronouncedly progressive socio-cultural positions and left-wing positions on economic issues concerning notably the educated “new” middle class (Kitschelt 1988; Beramendi et al. 2015; Häusermann et al. 2021, s. ch. 3).

Center-left, center-right, and centrist liberal discourses may resonate with the “moderate-productivist” outlook, while among these, workers will be most receptive to those that propose consumption-oriented social policy (Beramendi et al. 2015; Häusermann et al. 2021) and/ or a “laborist” discourse that valorizes low- and mid-skilled work both ideologically and through substantive policies e.g. aiming at an amelioration of work conditions or at a raise in wage levels (Wagner 2022). This is less likely to be the case for center-left parties that have converged on a centrist socio-economic program and a centrist or progressive socio-cultural program (“Third way”; Giddens 1998; Glyn 2001; Bremer 2018; Häusermann/Abou-Chadi et al. 2021¹/2021²). Center-right parties, however, could resonate with the “laborist” worldviews of labor market insider workers by emphasizing *meritocracy*. It is on the contrary unlikely that centrist political parties which formulate pronouncedly liberal economic views (“disembedded productivism”, s. ch. 3.2) resonate with blue-collar workers.

As this framework builds strongly on the distinction between societal inclusion and exclusion to explain (“radical” vs. “moderate”) political preference formation, the question must be posed: can “moderate” political discourses ever resonate with the marginalized? The obvious answer is: yes, they can – if, and only if, they express recognition for the social situation(s) of the marginalized and highlight credible pathways towards their societal re-integration. As manual

workers’ “mode of social integration” hinges on employment and more specifically, on manual labor, I would expect “laborist” discourses that valorize low- and mid-skilled work both ideologically and through substantive policies to resonate among those blue-collar workers who are in employment – but societally excluded.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ F. ex. the German SPD (Olaf Scholz) campaign in the 2021 national parliamentary election built on the keyword “respect”; one of its main sections was “respect for work”, addressing the value of all types of work, including notably low- and mid-skilled types of labor.

Chapter 4. Research Design and Research Process

In this chapter, I explain the research design that has been developed to answer the questions set out in the *Introduction* and to treat the theoretical propositions presented in chapter 3. Moreover, it is necessary to explain the sequences of the research process between the formulation of the research question and the final form of the thesis.

This thesis is for the largest part based on qualitative methodology (with the exception of a quantitative test of proposition P3b by means of a logistic regression analysis, s. ch. 4.6). It is specific, however, in so far as it combines *inductive* and *deductive* research logics in a multi-sequential process. I provide a brief overview of the stages of this research process in ch. 4.1.

In ch. 4.2 I present the logic of choosing Austria and East Germany as cases to study “modernization losing” and the formation of welfare chauvinist attitudes among blue-collar workers. The advantage of this case choice is that some relevant parameters are *most different* (based on economic crises and welfare reforms, we would expect many economic grievances in the German East, while few in Austria) yet others are similar (both countries feature “unravelling” working-class chauvinism (Mau/Mewes 2012), strong PRRPs, and besides, a similar welfare system and skill formation regime).

In ch. 4.3 I explain how the conceptual scheme of “lived experiences of social inclusion or exclusion”, presented in ch. 2, has informed my fieldwork and specifically, my interviewing strategy, which has consisted in tracing specific types of lived experiences (injustice, misrecognition, incapacity to act) in interviewees’ biographical narration, as well as equally tracing the mechanisms through which these inform political views.

In ch 4.4 I present the interviewing strategy in detail, including sampling and field entry strategies as well as issues dealt with while interviewing. I present an argument on why the interview data collected between March and September 2020, i.e. when the fields studied were struck by the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic and its aftermath, can be used to study working-class welfare chauvinism.

Finally, in ch. 4.5, I explain the process of data analysis, interpretation, and theory building that has led from the collected biographical interview data to the theory presented in chapter 3 and to the analyses presented in chapters 5 – 8.

4.1 Research Process: Combining Inductive and Deductive Research Logics in a Multi-Sequential Process

In this section, I provide an overview of the sequences of the research process. I argue that an approach combining *explorative* and *analytical* logics of reasoning in a multi-sequential process has been a well-suited choice to treat the given research question.⁷⁹

After formulating the research question (see *Introduction*), Austria and East Germany were chosen as cases to study this question (s. ch. 4.2). More concretely, an area within the German state of Saxony as well as areas in Austria were chosen to conduct field research (s. *ibid*).

Subsequently, I have in 2018 and 2019 realized two short (1-2 months) periods of preliminary, explorative field research. At this stage, various approaches were used to inductively develop hypotheses. For example, local-level politicians of all parties were interviewed in a capacity as “local-level experts” who could supply hypotheses on voters’ orientations (s. Wagner 2018). Equally, the participation in local political events and ethnographic interviews with representatives of associations were part of this effort (s. *ibid*). Furthermore, during this stage, important contacts were built in the fields that have later enabled it to sample respondents for a more systematic, interviewing-based research approach (s. ch. 4.4).

Based on insights made during preliminary field research, equally preliminary steps of theory-building were undertaken and systematic *research rationales* were formulated. I have at this stage formulated four research rationales. The main rationale no. 1 aims to exploratively *trace* whether and in which areas of their lives blue-collar workers make specific types of “grievance experiences” that are known to be linked to “populist” attitudes (s. ch. 4.3).

This has informed the main sequence of field research, which has been more systematic and based on narrative-biographical interviewing. In 2020, I have realized 150 biographical interviews, 50% of these with blue-collar workers, in Austria and East Germany. Interviews have aimed to survey interviewees’ employment biography, experiences at the workplace and on the labor market, as well as experiences with policies and institutions of the welfare state. In

⁷⁹ Explorative research in the social sciences aims to build theory *inductively* from empirical data. Even more, the term exploration refers to the active *tracing* of processes, mechanisms, or the features of a phenomenon. This is typically realized in qualitative *field research* (s. i.a. Glaser/Strauss; Stebbins 2001; McNabb 2015; Dixon et al. 2022). While often associated with extensive *ethnographic* research processes that start with little or no assumptions about the field (e.g. Whyte 1942; Burawoy 1979), exploration is also applied in a priori more analytically informed methodologies such as in “process tracing” (the tracing of causal pathways between two ex-ante measured variables by means of qualitative field research, s. Trampusch/Palier 2016). Analytical reasoning, in the social sciences often referred to as *explanation* in opposition to *interpretation*, consists in logical reasoning about the relationships between phenomena typically in terms of *variables*. It tends to come with refined logical thought on *causality* (s. McNabb 2015; Lijphart 1971; Rihoux/Ragan 2008).

addition, each interview has featured a module on political views. These interviews already followed a loose theoretical rationale but still left much space to exploration, featuring open questions that encouraged extensive biographical narration (s. ch. 4.4).

The interview data has finally been analyzed in the following way. Each interview has been attributed codes for the most central categories proposed by the research question, namely “welfare chauvinism” and “grievance experiences”, besides demographic characteristics. Based on these codes, 25 of the *most dissimilar* cases were chosen and analyzed in detail with the aim of theorizing mechanisms of preference formation. (This restraint sample has included workers who show “grievance experiences” *and* “welfare chauvinism”, such who show *only one* of the two, and such who *don't show either*. In addition, it has been diversified along demographic characteristics).

Grounded in the analysis of these 25 interviews, the theory presented in chapter 3 was built. The building of this theory has, in itself, been a process of multiple sequences. It has consisted in multiple revisions and on both inductive and deductive considerations (s. Dixon et al. 2022; McNabb 2015; Rihoux/Ragan 2008). This means in practice that on the one hand, the confirming and contradicting data of each new interview analyzed was taken into consideration to develop or revise hypotheses. On the other hand, existing literature was consulted for the theorization of new explanatory factors that appeared from the data, what equally led to the (re-)formulation of hypotheses (s. ch. 4.5).

Ultimately, the hypotheses developed on the basis of 25 interviews, and presented in chapter 3, was tested on the entire sample of 150 interviews, using qualitative methods of data analysis. This has led to the confirmation, rejection, or nuancing of theorized mechanisms (s. ch. 4.5). The results of this final round of analysis are presented in chapters 5 – 8.⁸⁰

4.2 Case Selection

The main research question of this thesis – RQ 2 – sets out to understand *whether* and *which* “grievance experiences” are related to the formation of “welfare chauvinist” attitudes among blue-collar workers. The comparative case design chosen to treat this research question features one case where we would expect the working-class to have lived a relatively high level of economic grievances, both for the reason of severe economic crises and for that of far-reaching

⁸⁰ In the presentation of results, I do not distinguish which individual interview has been part of the “theory building” or “test” sub-samples. Rather, I present the evidence for the main propositions, nuances to these, and evidence on alternative mechanisms that interfere with these (s. ch. 4.5).

reforms of the welfare state in comparison with other European countries: East Germany. It features a second case where we would expect a low level of economic grievances due to stable economic development over the recent decades and a relative conservation of “old”, generous consumption-oriented retirement and labor market policies: Austria. This said, both cases feature strong PRRPs with a pronounced welfare chauvinist discourse and an over-proportional working-class vote for these PRRPs. Also, they feature a similar welfare state system in European comparison. This should provide an optimal test of both *whether* and *which* grievance experiences are related to the formation of welfare chauvinist attitudes: “economic” ones? “Cultural” ones? “Sociological” ones? Or, none at all?⁸¹

It is important to emphasize that the logic of case choice follows the *Research Question* set out in the Introduction – *not* the theory presented in ch. 3. Case choice has preceded theory building. The theory presented in ch. 3 has been developed in an inductive field research process *from* the two case studies. For a detailed explanation of the research process, please see ch. 4.1.

Socio-Economic Development and Welfare State Reforms

The East German federal countries form a case where we would expect the population to have lived a relatively high level of socio-economic grievances over the recent decades, namely, between the 1990s and the 2010s. This is on the one hand for the development of economy and labor markets, and on the other, for German welfare state reforms and how they have impacted on the population of the “new” federal countries specifically.

The transition from an *industrial socialist* to an advanced capitalist political economy has in the East German case resulted in abrupt de-industrialization, in long-standing high unemployment levels, and in severe population loss. Directly after the German re-unification, between 1990 and 1993, employment in the “new” Federal countries decreased by 40% (3.5 million jobs), of which the bulk was set in industrial sectors: employment in mining and manufacturing decreased by *three fourths* within this short time period (from 3 million to 750.000 jobs, s. Carlin 1993; Naujoks et al. 1993: 4f.; Ketzmerick 2016: 232; Sander et al 1992). Unemployment remained at 15-20% during the 1990s and 2000s, what does not include those employed through public labor market policy measures (s. Röbenack 2020; Bundesagentur für Arbeit; Uhlig 2008). The East German Federal countries suffered an overall population loss of about 15% between 1990 and 2018, mainly for reasons of emigration to the German West

⁸¹ On case selection in comparative social/ political research, see Lijphart (1971); Gerring (2009); McNabb (2015: ch. 17).

(Saxony -14,4%; Mecklenburg-Vorpommern -16,3; Sachsen-Anhalt -23,2%, Thuringia -17,9%; however, + 6,1% in the city of Berlin and only -2,6% in Brandenburg, the country around Berlin; s. Bundestag 2019; DeStatis 2021; Martens 2020). All of this has struck manual workers even harder than many other population groups: while in the GDR, there was little unqualified labor, skilled worker occupations were among those most hardly hit by the discontents of the post-socialist labor market (s. Ketzmerick 2016: 235).

In addition, Germany has realized some of the most far-reaching welfare state reforms in European comparison during the 2000s, notably in domains of retirement and labor market policy, resulting in significant cuts of program generosity and in the introduction of “conditionalities” aiming at the “activation”⁸² of the population (Dwyer et al. 2022; Bonoli 2010).

The German retirement system, still in the 1990s, used to be based on a single pillar of a generous, statutory, “pay-as you-go” system. Reforms in 2001, 2004, and 2007 have changed it into a multi-pillar system, cutting the generosity of the statutory pillar to an average net replacement rate of around 50%, which is among the lowest in Europe (Blank et al. 2020: 212; OECD 2017).⁸³ In turn, optional company pensions (2nd pillar) and voluntary private pension insurance (3rd pillar) were introduced. However, neither of these options effectively covers the entire working population.⁸⁴ Effectively, in 2019, around 55% of the employed were paying into a company pension and one third into a publicly supported private pension insurance. Around one third (34%) failed to pay into any other than the statutory insurance, with the lower skilled, low-income earners, and residents of the East German Federal countries strongly overrepresented in this latter group (Leinert et al. 2020: 16). Effectively, the reforms have led to a sensible increase in old age poverty, notably among women, the lower skilled, and in the Eastern Federal countries (Vogel/Künemund 2022; BertelsmannStiftung 2019; DeStatis 2023).⁸⁵ The average (mean) monthly public retirement benefit of those who retired in 2019

⁸² The term „activation“ refers to employment status: contemporary welfare policy aims to keep the population “active” in the sense of in employment consistently and longer into their old-age (s. e.g. Soss/Schram 2007; Bonoli/Palier 2007; Bonoli 2010).

⁸³ A low pension replacement rate leads to pension benefits far below the poverty line for low-income earners and is equally sensible to interrupted employment trajectories. Germany has introduced a minimum wage of € 8,50 gross per hour in 2015. This translates to a monthly salary of around € 1,530 gross/ less than € 1,200 net. The net monthly retirement benefit is at around 50% of the latter, i.e., around € 600. If the recipient has not consistently contributed to the insurance at this rate due to periods of unemployment or part-time employment, it may be even lower. This concerns a considerable part of the German working population: in 2019, some 24% of the employed earned gross wages lower than € 10,80/ hour (“*Niedriglohnschwelle*”, s. Grabka/Schröder 2019).

⁸⁴ Employers are not obliged to offer their employees a company pension scheme with the result that many don’t. In 2018/2019 new incentives for employers have been introduced notably to insure low-income earners.

⁸⁵ Notably among women, and notably in the “new” (i.e. Eastern) Federal countries.

was at € 1,019 in the West and at € 874 in the East German Federal countries (DRV)⁸⁶ with the official “poverty risk line” at € 1,176 for a single-person household with no children (DeStatis²).

Moreover, German retirement reform has entailed an increase of the legal retirement age to 67 years for both men and women (stepwise, starting 2012), which is among the highest in Europe. Early retirement with a “full” pension is possible after 45 years of payroll contributions by the age of 65, what benefits “labor market insiders” with stable employment trajectories (of which there are fewer in East Germany; s. Börsch-Supan et al. 2014). Alternatively, retirement from the minimum legal age of 63 is possible with severe deductions (0,3% per month, i.e. 14,4% at the age of 63) with a record of at least 35 contribution years. Manual workers, who typically start their employment trajectory early but are more prone to experience unemployment or health-related incapacity for work are disadvantaged by this system.⁸⁷

Labor market policy reforms between 2002 and 2006 (publicly known as the “Hartz reforms”) have included severe cuts in the level of long-term unemployment benefits. Priorly being an insurance benefit at an income replacement rate of around 60%, the reforms have merged long-term unemployment aid with minimum social assistance. In 2019, a German single-person household was entitled to € 430 in monthly living allowance in minimum social assistance, next to housing aid (s. BAA 2020).⁸⁸⁸⁹ In addition, the Hartz reforms have introduced obligations and sanctions for all minimum social assistance recipients (“Grundsicherung für Arbeitsuchende”) with exception of those above the legal retirement age and those with officially recognized incapacity for work (“Grundsicherung im Alter und bei Erwerbsminderung”), aiming to incentivize labor market re-entry of the long-term unemployed. Long-term unemployed persons are famously obliged to accept jobs for a marginal payment of 1€/hour on top of their social minimum benefit, what has impacted on the general wage-level of low-skilled occupations, leading to the expansion of the German low-wage sector (*Niedriglohnsektor*, s. Bouvard et al. 2013). Moreover, these reforms have led to a strongly increased risk of poverty among the unemployed (s. *ibid*). The East German population is

⁸⁶ These numbers show the amount effectively paid by the German retirement insurance, which is after deduction of social insurance payments, but before taxes. The level of women’s pensions in West Germany is considerably lower; however, it is only slightly lower than men’s in East Germany (women worked full-time in socialism). The Easter German *Länder* are marked by a low wage-level and a prevalence of interrupted employment biographies (due to the labor market situation after the *Wende*), both of which are prone to lead to low retirement pension benefits under the current retirement regulations.

⁸⁷ On the German retirement reform trajectory, s. further e.g. Bonin (2001); Ebert (2001); Börsch-Supan/Wilke (2006); Bonin (2009); Bonoli/Palier (2007); Hinrichs (2010); Häusermann (2010); Honekamp/Schwarze (2010).

⁸⁸ Entitlement to this benefit is additionally conditional on no property ownership above a certain threshold.

⁸⁹ While this is considerably below the level of the insurance-based unemployment aid, it can in some cases amount to a level not far below that of low full-time wages, what creates particular resentment among those who work low-paid fulltime jobs (s. chapters 6 & 7).

particularly affected: due to the long-standing high unemployment level, East Germans are particularly prone to have made experiences with Germany's activation-oriented labor market policy; and workers alongside the lower-skilled even more than others (facing a higher risk of experiencing unemployment during their employment trajectory, s. Rovny/Rovny 2017; Häusermann 2020).⁹⁰

Specifically, I have chosen to treat the German federal country of Saxony as a case study. Saxony is a state of roughly 4 million inhabitants (2020). It fits the definitions made above (deindustrialization; long-standing labor market crisis in the 1990s-2000s; population loss) as well as any of the other "new" federal countries (Brandenburg, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Sachsen-Anhalt and Thüringen; the city of Berlin being a partial outlier). It is a specifically well-suited case to study deindustrialization (Heimpold 2010: 719). While all of the East German countries feature high electoral results of populist radical right-wing party (PRRP) AfD since 2017 (which is precisely when AfD has taken a "welfare chauvinist" turn), Saxony is where the party yields some of its highest results (see below). Much of the fieldwork for this thesis has been done in the South and East of Saxony, in both urban (i.a. the city of Dresden), post-industrial, and rural areas (s. ch. 4.4).

Austria is a case where we would expect the population, and specifically the blue-collar working-class, to have lived a relatively low level of socio-economic grievances over the recent decades. This is on the one hand for a relatively stable development of economy and labor markets, and on the other, for a relatively high level of conservation of traditional, consumption-oriented welfare programs, notably in the domains of retirement and labor market policy.

Austria has from the 1990s to the 2010s consistently featured one of the lowest unemployment rates in Europe. Austrian unemployment was between 6% and 7% during the 1990s, 2000s, and 2010s until an increase to average 8% during the later 2010s (highest level in 2015/2016 at 9,1%; subsequent drop to 7,4 in 2019; 9,9% in 2020) (s. AMS yearly reports; Eppel et al. 2018: 5). In addition, Austria has experienced one of the smallest relative declines in industrial employment of all European countries between 1991-2019 (-23.8%, what is the third smallest relative decline after Norway and Finland, s. WB). In absolute terms, Austria today features one of the highest levels of industrial employment in Western Europe: ca. 25%, what is similar to

⁹⁰ On the political economy of labor market reforms in Germany and the course of reforms see e.g. Hinrichs 2010; Becher et al. 2020; Obermaier et al. 2020.

Saxony (26%)⁹¹, but with a massive difference in relative decline over the time period of one generation (see above).

Welfare reform in Austria has globally gone in globally similar directions as it has in Germany (and with variations in all of Europe, s. e.g. Bonoli 2003; 2010; Bonoli/Palier 2007). Welfare cuts, however, have been considerably less far-reaching.

Austria de facto still features a single-pillar statutory retirement system with a net replacement rate of 80% for “full pensions” with a contribution record of 45 years.⁹² The replacement rate is lower for shorter contribution records and deductions apply for early retirement, however, even in these cases, it remains considerably above the German rate and is among the highest in Europe (PVA 2020; OECD 2017).⁹³ The average Austrian retirement benefit of those who retired in 2019 was around € 1,500 gross (ca. € 1,400 net, s. BMS 2021)⁹⁴, with the official poverty risk level at € 1,286 (Statistik Austria 2020). The Austrian legal retirement age is 65 years for men and 60 for women.⁹⁵ This said, Austrian retirement legislation has since 2000 included a regulation specifically targeted at the needs of blue-collar workers.⁹⁶ The “heavy worker regulation” (“*Hacklerregelung*”) has allowed those employed in jobs with a heavy physical workload to retire earlier, namely, men by 60 and women by 55 (BMS 2023). It has been changed into a policy enabling “labor market insiders” with stable employment trajectories (Emmenegger et al. 2012) to retire by 62⁹⁷ after 45 years of paying payroll contributions to the public retirement insurance in 2019 (“*Frühstarterbonus*”, s. *ibid*). This policy typically applies

⁹¹ According to World Bank (2019) statistics, the third highest in Western Europe after Germany (27%) and Italy (26%), both of which, however, have featured a more pronounced relative decline over the 1991-2019 period. (I have chosen to systematically use 2019 numbers, but changes during the Covid-19 period (2020-2022) are negligible for all cited numbers on sectoral employment.)

⁹² The “replacement rate” is the percentage to which the retirement pension benefit replaces the average lifetime income for all months in which payroll contributions to the public retirement insurance were paid. F. ex., an average net monthly salary of € 1,500 at a replacement rate of 80% leads to a net pension benefit of € 1,200 p.m.. The official “poverty risk level” was at € 1,286 in Austria in 2019 for a single-person household (the methodology is the same as for the German indicator: < 60% of national median income) (Statistik Austria 2020).

⁹³ Before the retirement policy reform of 2003, the 15 highest-income years during a recipient’s occupational trajectory served as the basis for the calculation of the retirement benefit (in 2003 the calculation period was increased to the 40 highest-income years; in 2004 to the entire lifetime record).

⁹⁴ There is a considerable gender pension gap in Austria, with men’s average gross pensions for the cited year closer to € 2000 and women’s below € 1,200.

⁹⁵ Starting 2024, the legal retirement age for women will be raised to 65 years, too (NR 2023).

⁹⁶ Austria has realized retirement reforms in 2000, 2003 and 2004. Before this sequence of reforms, “early retirement” (i.e. retirement before the legal retirement age with a “full pension”) was far more common and accounted for specific risks faced by blue-collar workers among an array of other interests.

⁹⁷ This is for men, and it will apply to women once women’s legal retirement age has been raised above 62.

to occupations based on 3-years vocational training (*Lehre*) such as, among others, manual workers.⁹⁸⁹⁹

In labor market policy, Austria has since the 1990s introduced activation-oriented measures as most European countries have, but reforms have cut less on the generosity of programs. Austria has a specific long-term unemployment insurance policy (*Notstandshilfe*) that is based on payroll-contributions and whose benefit levels are considerably above the German long-term unemployment aid. Austrian unemployment aid has a net wage replacement rate of 55 % - 60% and is being paid for up to 2 years. *Notstandshilfe* is 92% of the unemployment benefit (plus family support payments, where applicable) and can be applied for yearly with no time limit. In 2019, the average *Notstandshilfe* payment was above € 800/ month, what is almost twice the corresponding German benefit. No conditions concerning property ownership apply (but the benefit is means-tested concerning other sources of income).¹⁰⁰

Specifically, I have chosen to do field research in four Austrian federal countries located in the Eastern part of the country. These are: Lower Austria, Vienna, Burgenland, and (the Northern part of) Styria. This choice reflects a good mixture of urban, (post-)industrial, and rural regions with a total population of roughly 4.5 million inhabitants.

Political Parties and Electorates

While Austria and East-Germany present a *most different* case choice with regard to socio-economic development and the advancement of welfare reforms in European comparison, they are rather *similar* with regard to the relevant parameters of politics: both feature strong PRRPs with a pronounced welfare chauvinist discourse, which mobilize over-proportionally many blue-collar workers relative to other occupation groups. Moreover, Germany and Austria feature similar party systems and a similar welfare policy regime (Esping-Andersen 1990).

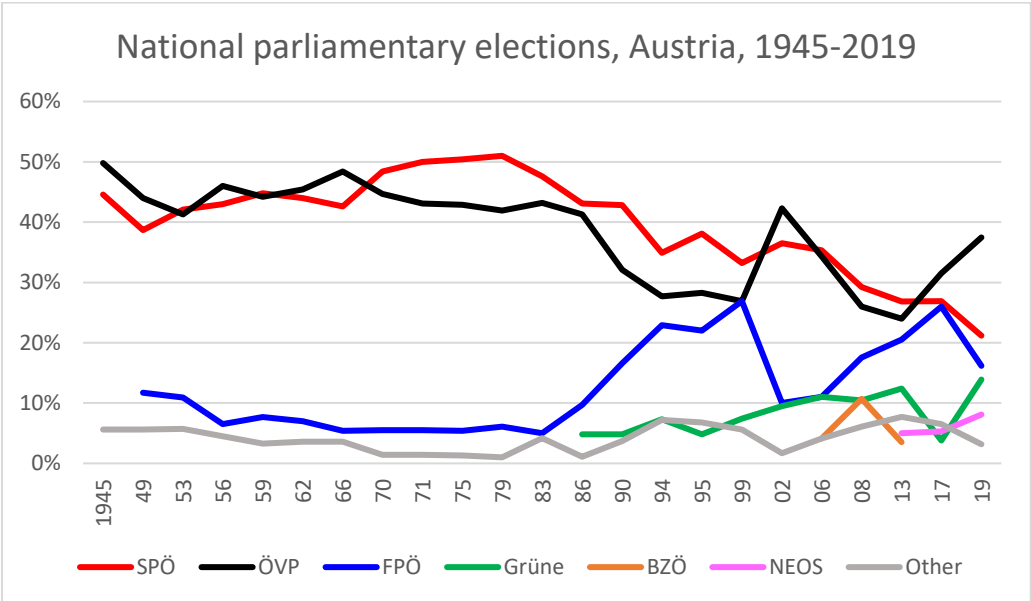
The Austrian populist-radical right-wing party, Freiheitliche Partei Österreich (FPÖ), is one of the oldest in post-WW-II Europe. Dominated by an economically liberal and socio-culturally

⁹⁸ The Austrian retirement system (like the German one) has blind spots for labor market outsiders, what includes the part-time employed (who for the largest part are women, s. footnote 15) and those with interrupted employment trajectories. By age groups, during the 2010s Austria had the highest unemployment rates among *elderly* workers (men and women aged 55-60: 9.5%; men aged 60-65: 13.8% in 2019). Getting unemployed right before retirement leads to a sensible decline in the retirement benefit.

⁹⁹ On the political economy of Austrian welfare reform, see e.g. Obinger/Tálos (2010).

¹⁰⁰ The Austrian long-term unemployed and minimum security (*Mindestsicherung*) recipients are obliged to look for work and to accept jobs when proposed by the employment office. They are not, however, obliged to accept jobs for a marginal payment of € 1/hour on top of social security payments as it is the case in Germany under the “Hartz” regulations. This has resulted in a much larger-sized “low wage sector” (Niedriglohnsektor) in Germany than in Austria (1/5 vs. 1/8 of the total labor market), notably impacting low-skilled jobs (Mazohl 2022).

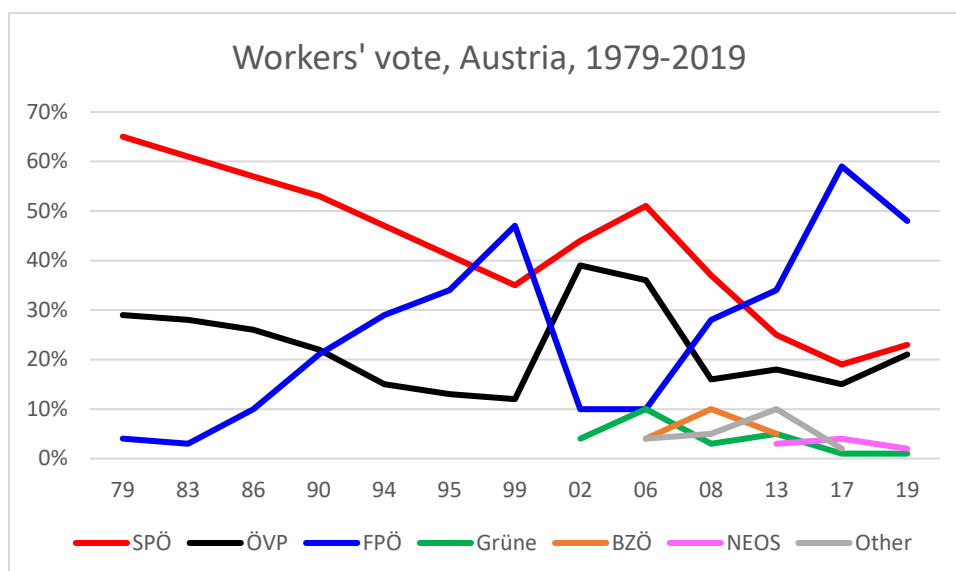
moderate wing in the 1980s, it turned to pronounced nativism, authoritarianism, and populism in the 1990s under party leader Jörg Haider.¹⁰¹ This is when “welfare chauvinism” started to be a feature of the FPÖ’s program. However, it was in the 2000s, after a schism and under new head of party Heinz-Christian Strache, that the Austrian populist radical right made welfare chauvinism one of its foremost flagship issues, which it has stayed ever since (s. Manoschek 2002; Ennser-Jedenastik 2016; 2020; Landini 2022, 2022; Rathgeb/Gruber-Risak 2021). The FPÖ has since the 1990s mobilized over-proportionally many manual workers in relation to other occupational groups (s. ill. 10). It has also, consistently in its history, mobilized an over-proportional share of small-business owners (Plasser et al. 1992;1999;2000;2007; Aichholzer et al. 2014). The FPÖ has twice since the 1990s been part of a governing coalition (Wagner 2022¹): once in 1999-2002; and once in 2017-2019 (during the preliminary field research period, s. ch. 4.1). Both times, these coalitions have ended with corruption scandals and significant electoral losses for FPÖ, which, after several years in opposition, has both times recovered from these losses. During the main field research period, 2020, FPÖ was at a relative low after its second government exit.



III. 9: National parliamentary elections, Austria, Second Republic, 1945-2019. FPÖ in dark blue.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ Nativism, authoritarianism, and populism are the three ideological criteria Mudde (2007) has established as a definition of “populist radical right-wing parties” (PRRPs).

¹⁰² Source: BMI.



III. 10: Voting behavior, blue-collar workers in Austrian national parliamentary elections, 1979-2019.¹⁰³

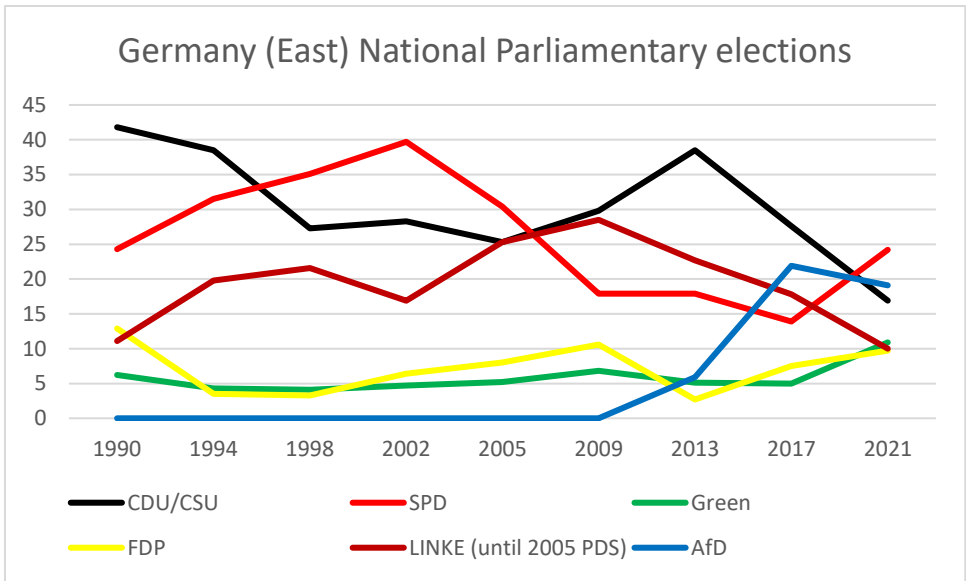
The German party “Alternative für Deutschland“ (AfD) was founded only in 2013 as an economically liberal and EU-critical challenger party. It took a nativist, authoritarian, and populist turn between then German national parliamentary elections of 2013 and 2017, yielding high results notably in the East German federal countries with a pronounced “welfare chauvinist” discourse (Marx/Naumann 2018; Goerres et al. 2018; Arzheimer/ Berning 2019; Bartholomae et al. 2020). The socio-structural profile of its electorate, like FPÖ’s, includes both over-proportionally many blue-collar workers and small business owners. In the 2017 and 2021 national parliamentary elections, AfD scored roughly 50% better among workers than among the average national population (s. ill. 13). In East German regional elections, 2014-2022, it scored by an average of 70.5% better among workers and 27.5% among the self-employed¹⁰⁴ (s. ibid).¹⁰⁵ Since its first significant electoral gains in 2017, AfD has slowly but persistently expanded and proceeded on its way into the institutions.¹⁰⁶ In 2020 (when the main fieldwork was being done), it was at a preliminary historical high both nationally and regionally: AfD won 27.5% in the 2019 Saxonian state elections, placed second after center-right CDU (32.1%).

¹⁰³ Sources: SORA/ISA for 2002-2019; Plasser et al (2000) for 1979-1999. The definition of “workers” is the administrative distinction of (blue-collar) “workers” vs. (white collar) “employees” in Austrian labor law, which loosely corresponds to the Oesch (2006) definition used in this thesis.

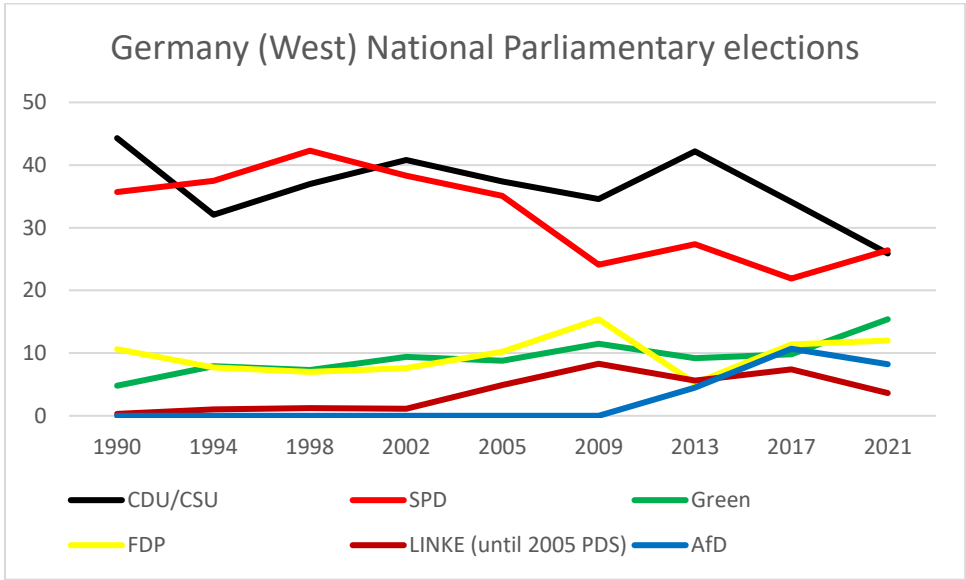
¹⁰⁴ Source: infratest dimap; author’s calculations. There is no evidence of an overrepresentation of the self-employed in AfD’s electorate in national parliamentary elections; however, consistently so in East German regional (state) elections. Unfortunately, socio-structural voting data for East Germany in national elections is not available.

¹⁰⁵ AfD also scores very high among the unemployed: 21% (vs. 12.6% in the general electorate) in the 2017 national parliamentary elections; 17% (10.3% total) in 2021. This is in line with the general insight that PRRPs are supported both by socio-economic “insiders” and “outsiders” in the low to mid-skilled segment, s. *Introduction*.

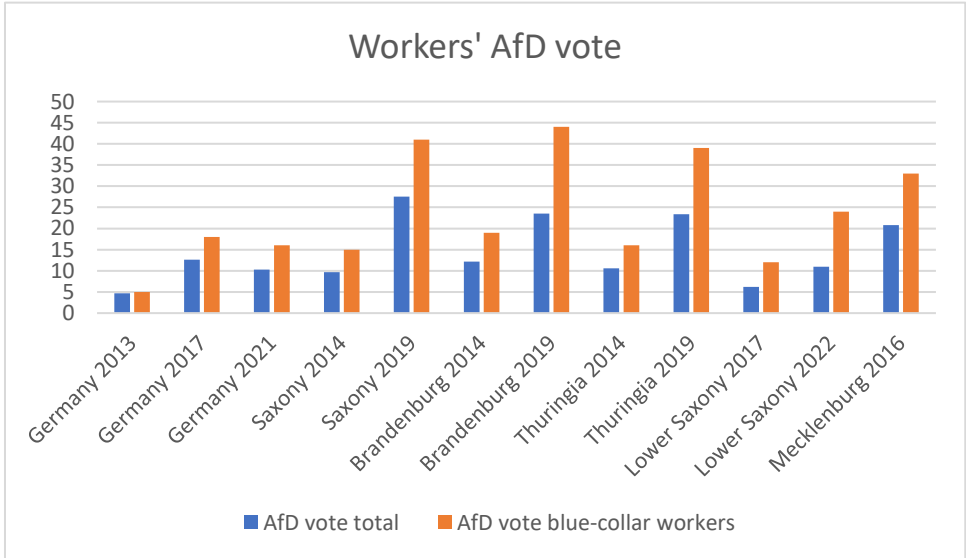
¹⁰⁶ For instance, the year 2023 sees further increased polling results of AfD and a debate about the first AfD county governor (in Thuringia, s. Deutschlandfunk 2023).



III. 11: National parliamentary elections, East-German Federal countries (incl. Berlin-East), since reunification, 1990-2021. AfD in dark blue. Source: Bundeswahlleiter.



III. 12: National parliamentary elections, West-German Federal countries (incl. Berlin-West), since reunification, 1990-2021. AfD in dark blue. Source: Bundeswahlleiter.



III. 13: Blue-collar workers' vote for AfD compared to total electoral results in national and state elections. Source: Infratest dimap.

Germany and Austria have similar party systems with some notable exceptions. Both have a proportional electoral system (Lijphart 2012) and feature historically strong center-left and center-right-wing parties: SPD and CDU¹⁰⁷ in Germany; SPÖ and ÖVP in Austria. These centrist parties have in the recent decades lost a considerable number of votes to challenger parties, namely to the above-discussed PRRPs on the one side, and to Green parties on the other. The Austrian center right (NEUE ÖVP) has reacted to this challenge by adopting parts of a *producerist* and *welfare chauvinist* program and rhetoric (s. Beyer et al 2020; Ennser-Jedenastik 2020; Atzmüller et al. 2020; Wagner 2022¹). Germany further features a radical left-wing party (DIE LINKE), founded in 2005 from remains of GDR's state socialist party (PDS) and a split from SPD in the context of German welfare state reforms (WASG). DIE LINKE has in its close to 20-years history moved from being a protest party opposing welfare reform towards a divide between a more typical "new liberal left-wing" faction (socio-culturally pronouncedly liberal, socio-economically leftist) and a populist and conservative left-wing faction (socio-culturally conservative, socio-economically leftist, populist; s. Kahrs 2022; Rummel 2022; Kuhn 2023). In addition, both countries feature a liberal party. German FDP is economically liberal and socio-culturally centrist. It classically represents small/ medium business owners and independent professionals (s. Treibel 2011). Austrian NEOS are economically liberal and culturally progressive, typically emphasizing liberal stances on socio-cultural issues or yet on education while defending budgetary discipline (Ennser-Jedenastik/Bodlos 2019).

Below I present a classification of both countries' parliamentary parties based on the last national parliamentary elections before 2020 (2017 in Germany, result in the state of Saxony reported; 2019 in Austria, national result reported). All parties are classified based on the ideological/ programmatic classification scheme presented in ch. 3.4.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ CSU in Bavaria

¹⁰⁸ In this scheme, "Third way" stands for center-left parties that have converged on a centrist socio-economic program and a centrist or progressive socio-cultural program (Giddens 1998; Glyn 2001; Bremer 2018; Häusermann/Abou-Chadi et al. 2021¹/2021²). "New-left-liberalism" stands for parties with pronouncedly progressive socio-cultural positions and left-wing positions on economic issues concerning notably the educated "new" middle class (Kitschelt 1988; Beramendi et al. 2015; Häusermann/Abou-Chadi et al. 2021¹/2021², s. ch. 3). This definition notably includes "Green" parties, which feature Ecologism as a flagship issue. "Laborism" stands for left-wing positions on economic issues concerning the "old" working-class/ contemporary (low- to mid-skilled) lower middle class (Beramendi et al. 2015; Kurer/Palier 2019: 4; Palier/Wagner 2023; s. ch. 3). "Christian-social" stands for center-right parties with ideological proximity to (Catholic or Protestant) Christian churches. "Conservatism" stands for center-right parties with conservative socio-cultural and liberal economic positions (and no proximity to churches). "Nativism", "authoritarianism", and "populism" constitute Mudde's (2007) definition of PRRPs' ideology. "Producerism" (Derks 2006; Ivaldi/Mazzoleni 2019) refers to an emphasis on the needs of owner-entrepreneurs plus those of ostensibly "hard-working" labor market insiders (overlapping in part with "laborism", s. ch. 3). The definitions of "economic liberalism vs. leftism" as well as "cultural progressivism vs. conservatism" refer to the literature on the economic and cultural dimensions of the political space in European

| Party name | Party family | Ideological profile | Vote share ¹⁰⁹ |
|------------|-----------------------------|--|---------------------------|
| SPÖ | Center-left | Third way (socio-cultural & economic centrism) | 21.2% |
| NEUE ÖVP | Center-right | Conservatism (social conservatism, economic liberalism); producerism, welfare chauvinism | 37.5% |
| FPÖ | Populist radical right-wing | Nativism, authoritarianism, populism; producerism, welfare chauvinism | 16.2% |
| DIE GRÜNEN | Green-alternative-left-wing | Ecologism, new-left-liberalism | 13.9% |
| NEOS | Liberal | Economic & socio-cultural liberalism | 8.1% |

Tab. 7: Austria: parliamentary political parties in 2020

| Party name | Party family | Ideological profile | Vote share ¹¹⁰ |
|------------|-------------------------------|---|---------------------------|
| SPD | Center left | Third way (socio-cultural & economic centrism) | 11.7% |
| CDU/ CSU | Center right | Christian-social; socio-cultural centrism, economic liberalism | 30.6% |
| AfD | Populist radical right-wing | Nativism, authoritarianism, populism; producerism, welfare chauvinism | 25.4% |
| DIE GRÜNEN | Green-alternative-left-wing | Ecologism, new-left-liberalism | 4.5% |
| DIE LINKE | Radical left Populist left | Socialism/ new-left-liberalism Populism, economic leftism, cultural conservatism, nativism | 17.5% |
| FDP | Liberal | Economic liberalism, socio-cultural centrism | 6.7% |

Tab. 8: Germany: parliamentary political parties in 2020; vote share *in State of Saxony*

multiparty systems (s. also “old politics” vs. “new politics”; s. e.g. Lipset 1970; Inglehart 1971; 1977; Kitschelt 1988; 1994; Kitschelt/ McGann 1995; Kriesi 2008; 2010; Bornschier 2010).

¹⁰⁹ Vote share in last national parliamentary elections before spring 2020: September 2019 (s. BMI)

¹¹⁰ Vote share (*Erststimmen*), state of Saxony, last national parliamentary elections before spring 2020: September 2017 (s. Sachsen.de; in terms of *Zweitstimmen*, AfD won 27%, CDU 26.9%, SPD 10.5%, LINKE 16.1% etc.). In the state elections of September 2019, the result was globally similar: CDU 32.5%, AfD 28.4%, LINKE 12.3%, GRÜNE 8.9%, SPD 7.7%, FDP 4.7% (s. *ibid*).

In addition, there are regional politicians of interest. Austria's Burgenland region features a social democratic governor who has earned a reputation for restrictive stances on migration (Rathgeb/Wolkenstein 2022), however, also presents a pronounced "laborist" discourse on socio-economic issues¹¹¹. He has won an absolute majority in the January 2020 regional elections, regional FPÖ dropping under 10%. Saxony's center right (CDU) head of state Michael Kretschmer has built a reputation for extensive efforts to improve communication channels with the population and to express recognition for citizens' grievance experiences in his speeches, while consistently denouncing right-wing populism.¹¹² He has won 32.1% in the 2019 regional elections, averting an AfD victory. This said, his ideological discourse and program did not substantively diverge from Angela Merkel's CDU at the time.¹¹³

As successful counterexamples to PRRPs, the resonance of these politicians among interviewees can be explored. Equally, potential effects of the regional political supply on interviewees' political attitude formation can be explored.¹¹⁴ For the prior case (Burgenland's *Landeshauptmann*), evidence would be of interest whether a *laborist* discourse and economically leftist stances with a focus on the needs of the old working class/ contemporary lower middle class resonate independently of socio-culturally conservative stances. The politician in question features both these elements; but potentially, interviews could yield evidence on which issues blue-collar workers associate more strongly with this actor. For the

¹¹¹ E.g. December 2019: introduction of € 2,400 gross (€ 1,700 net) minimum wage in the state and municipal sector; press statements: „*The working human is at the center of our politics and shall receive according recognition.*” („*Bei uns steht der arbeitende Mensch im Mittelpunkt und soll auch dementsprechend wertgeschätzt werden*“); „*Our task is to ensure that people can live well from their work*“; „*We are the party of workers. [...] We do not want precarious employment conditions like in Germany*“; „*[It is] a matter of respect*”. The policy is accompanied by an increase of entry-level salaries (flattening of the life-time salary curve) „*to support young employees who want to build a house or start a family*” (s. Kontrast.at 2019; Stadler 2020). November 2019: introduction of free universal childcare (daycare and kindergarten; „*With this step, all children in Burgenland have equal educational opportunities*”; Land Burgenland 2019). October 2019: introduction of a public employment scheme for (hitherto informally and unpaid) caregiving relatives with a publicly subsidized salary of 1.022,21€ net part-time/ 1.750,49€ net full-time (depending on patient's care needs), including professional care worker visits and a training scheme with the perspective to continue employment in the care sector (Sagmeister 2022). In spring 2023 (3 years after fieldwork), H.-P. Doskozil was a candidate for SPÖ leadership, narrowly losing to new-left grassroots candidate Andreas Babler in a nationally and internationally followed runoff election (s. Hanspeterdoskozil.at 2023; Oltermann 2023). He campaigned a laborist program and rhetoric: „*As a social democrat, it breaks my heart to see hundreds of thousands of full-time employees earning only €1,300 or €1,400 net and struggling to make ends meet with their salaries. This situation particularly affects women and young people, causing the wage gap to widen even further. With the support of labor unions, I aim to eliminate this injustice and implement a minimum wage of €2,000 net for all full-time workers because every job in Austria should be valued at that level.*” („*jede Arbeit in Österreich muss das wert sein*”) (Doskozil 2023).

¹¹² Kretschmer has since 2018 attended "citizen discussions" across Saxony, listening to the public and discussing social issues. He has emphasized the public expression of *recognition* both for values held and for problems experienced by the Saxonian population (s. Sachsen.de¹; MDR 2019; 2023).

¹¹³ Angela Merkel was head of CDU from 2000 to 2021 and Federal Chancellor from 2005 to 2001, i.e., both for an extensive period before and during the field work.

¹¹⁴ See the twofold way in which I theorize "political parties" to interact with "socio-political outlooks" in ch. 3.

latter case (Saxony's *Ministerpräsident*), it would be of interest whether offers of *communication* and *recognition* resonate independently of ideological/ programmatic signals with interviewees.

| Party name | Party family | Ideological profile | Vote share ¹¹⁵ |
|---|--------------|---|---------------------------|
| SPÖ Burgenland/ Hans-Peter Doskozil | Center-left | Economic leftism (old working-class, materialist lower middle-class issues), Laborist discourse & policy program; Socio-cultural conservatism | 49.94% |
| CDU Sachsen/ Michael Kretschmer | Center-right | Economic liberalism, socio-cultural centrism; emphasis on “communication” and “recognition” | 32.1% |

Tab. 9. Both countries: regional/ state-level politicians of interest (2020)

Welfare State and Skill-Formation Regimes

Germany and Austria have relatively similar institutional regimes when it comes to welfare state policy, and even, skill formation regimes. Both make part of the “Continental European” or “Conservative” welfare regime type (Esping-Andersen 1990; Palier 2010). As such, they feature payroll contribution based, pay-as-you-go systems in the domains of social, unemployment, and retirement insurance. These are self-administrated by social insurance associations, historically fragmented by occupation groups and have been analyzed to serve social security as much as status conservation (s. *ibid*). Status conservation is at stake for individuals over their life-course: the height of the retirement pension benefit depends on lifetime contributions; the unemployment benefit, too, depends on wages earned and contributions paid before becoming unemployed: i.e. those who pay higher contributions receive higher benefits. It is, equally, at stake for status differences between groups: in a word, the welfare state supports everyone to remain in their social place relative to each other.

The continental European welfare regime may favor the public salience of the “productivist”, contribution-emphasizing welfare deservingness criteria of *reciprocity*, *control*, and *attitude* (s. ch. 3.3). This said, the empirical literature proves that the use of these criteria is also prevalent in other European welfare regimes (van Oorschot 2000; van Oorschot/Reeskens/Meuleman 2012; Laenen/Rossetti/van Oorschot 2019; Laenen/Meuleman 2020). Moreover, welfare chauvinism is a phenomenon that links working classes with PRRPs *across* European welfare

¹¹⁵ Vote share in last regional elections before spring 2020. Burgenland: January 2020 (eGovernment Burgenland). Saxony: September 2019 (Saxony.de).

regimes (Mudde 1999; 2007; van Der Waal/de Koster/van Oorschot 2013; Mewes/Mau 2012; 2013; Michel 2017; Careja/Harris 2022). The use of Austria and (East-)Germany as case studies can hence be understood as a first step in the exploration of formation mechanisms of working-class welfare chauvinism. These mechanisms are likely to be sensible to welfare regime type when it comes to detail, but there is reason to assume that they may show a certain similarity across regime types.¹¹⁶

Both countries dispose of similar skill formation regimes notably for blue-collar labor (BMBF/BMAW 2008¹). These are vocational training systems rooted in the tradition of craftsmanship. Skilled manual workers typically undergo three years of apprenticeship (*Lehre* in Austria, *Ausbildung* in Germany), during which they both work in a company and are inscribed in a vocational school (*Berufsschule*). Traditionally, individuals embarking on this career path can start their apprenticeship and hence their employment trajectory from the age of 15, i.e. at the age when others attend high school. After completion of apprenticeship and qualification as a “skilled worker” (*Facharbeiter*), they have the option of studying for the qualification of a “master [craftsman]” (*Meister*). This typically qualifies for technical mid-management positions in industrial enterprises (*Werkmeister*)¹¹⁷ and/or for the license to independently run an artisan enterprise in their field of specialization (*Handwerksmeister*). Only a qualified “master” has the right to train apprentices (*Lehrmeister*). The apprenticeship-based, “dual” (company and school)-based skill formation regime for manual labor prevalent in Germany and Austria in combination with traditionally high acceptance of the associated professional diploma (e.g. *Lehrabschluss* in Austria) on the labor market has been analyzed to lead to a better labor market position of skilled manual workers than in numerous other European countries (BMBF¹; BIBB¹; Thelen 2007; Graf/Lassnig/Powell 2012; WKO (2012). Both Austrian and German systems have been discussed as a model for other European countries (BIBB¹; WKO 2012).

¹¹⁶ Moreover, most European retirement systems include a public, statutory pillar (differing in volume) and hence, a notable carrier of a “contribution”-based logic (s. Bonoli 2000; Bonoli 2003). All European countries have set out to engage in (a variety of) active labor market policy and activation policies (s. Bonoli 2010; Bonoli 2022).

¹¹⁷ The English translation „foreman“ is common for *Werkmeister*. However, it is prone to confusion with the German term *Vorarbeiter*, which equally translates as “foreman”, but is located one hierarchical level below the “master”. (Adding to the confusion, the term *Polier* is used in Austria with different attribution to either the *Vorarbeiter* or *Werkmeister* roles across sectors of economic activity.)

Political Regime History

An additional difference between the cases of Austria and East Germany relies in the political economy of the historical period preceding the current.¹¹⁸ East Germany, from 1949 to 1989, has experienced a *state socialist* regime similar to the other historical socialist regimes of Central and Eastern Europe, while Austria has in the same period taken the form of a *social market economy* similar to West Germany, France, or other continental European welfare states. When it comes to politics, the GDR was a single-party, authoritarian regime (Linz/Stepan 1996). Austria used to be a multiparty democracy dominated by a center-left and a center-right and quite the archetype of a *Partaiestaat*, in which (two) competing parties and their associate organization (workers' and employers' unions, sports clubs, automobile clubs, NGOs) influence most areas of social life (Secher 1960; Tálos/Fink 2003; Dolezal 2019).

This said, both cases featured *industrialist* ("Fordist", Baccaro/Pontusson 2016), growth-oriented political economies in the post-WW-II era, from which they transitioned to advanced capitalist, post-industrial ("post-Fordist", s. *ibid*) growth regimes at a similar point of time (Hassel/Palier 2022; Baccaro/Pontusson/Blyth 2022). In both cases, blue-collar work received much more public attention and institutional valorization during the "industrialist" than during the "advanced capitalist" period: in Austria, by historically strong labor unions and a socialist sub-culture manifest in social housing, workers' sports clubs, etc. (Lehmbruch 1985; Crouch 1990; City of Vienna¹); and in the GDR by a state socialist regime that adapted (blue-collar) work as its ideological emblem (Wierling 1996: 46). The difference is that East Germany – like all of Central Eastern Europe – *additionally* underwent systemic transitions from a socialist to a (social) market economy and from single-party authoritarianism to multi-party liberal democracy during the 1990s.

Let me remind that hasty claims on a unique causality of these latter transitions to the success of right-wing populism, as they are frequent in the intra-German debate (Pickel/Pickel 2020: 483; Hoyer 2023¹; 2023; Neuroth/Plusty 2019), are contradicted by the comparative perspective. PRRPs are as successful in Austria as they are in East Germany, and they are so *both* in further Western European "old" market-economies and democracies including France, Switzerland, Denmark or Italy¹¹⁹ *and* in further Central-Eastern European former socialist

¹¹⁸ Since the 1990s, both countries qualify as "advanced capitalist liberal democracies" (s. ch. 2 & ch. 3; Beramendi et al. 2015) that feature welfare states of the continental European type (s. above).

¹¹⁹ West Germany is rather the exception than the rule when it comes to the success of PRRPs in Western Europe during the 2010s; and it should be considered whether the particular efforts of the West German state in post-WW-II "*denazification*" and critical history policy concerning the crimes of national socialism (*historische Aufarbeitung, Vergangenheitsbewältigung*) may be causal to this outcome (s. e.g. Cantoni et al. 2019). East

autocracies including Poland and Hungary (s. Mudde 2007). More rather, the comparative literature on factors of right-wing populism has, purposefully I think, started to treat East Germany as a case of a region or country with significant experience of *socio-economic decline*, similar to de-industrialized regions of the USA or of Western Europe (Weisskircher 2020; Gidron/Hall 2019; Schneider 2020).

For sure, the East German history – and the Central Eastern European/ post-socialist history more generally – may give reason to several alternative explanations for the formation of welfare chauvinist attitudes and PRRP-support among blue-collar workers. Individuals who were socialized in an authoritarian regime may be more prone to support the “authoritarian” ideology of PRRPs (Neundorf/Pop-Eleches 2020; Decker et al 2023). The transition from state socialism to social market democracy may have come with “cultural” and “sociological” as much as with “economic” grievances (loss of identity, loss of recognition, relative status decline, etc.; s. Dörre et al. 2018; Diekmann 2023; Köpping 2018; Weisskircher 2020; Sachweh 2020; Hoyer 2023). Finally, former regime insiders may be particularly dissatisfied under the new regime (Neundorf et al. 2020).¹²⁰ These alternative explanations, however, may easily be integrated into my research design. Concerning the first point, it is possible to compare whether East German interviewees’ attitudes come with more pronounced authoritarianism than Austrian interviewees’, or whether the prior, even, view contemporary politics through explicit references to the GDR. The second point (grievance types) corresponds very much to the research question this thesis poses already (RQ 2): to examine *whether* and *which* grievance experiences are associated with the formation of welfare chauvinist attitudes, and yet via which mechanisms, is the very project at stake. Finally, the third point may concern other occupation groups (public servants) more than blue-collar workers, but it is possible in occupational biographic narrations (see below) to examine former regime insider-ness.

In conclusion, I argue that Austria and East Germany offer a unique comparative case fit to study the role of “grievances” and “modernization losing” in the formation of welfare

Germany underwent a process of *denazification*, too – however, conducted by *another authoritarian regime*, which seamlessly propagated its own ideology (rather than liberal democracy; s. Vogt 2000; Remy/Salheiser 2010). Austrian public stances on its role in national socialism were denialist rather than ambiguous after WW-II (Uhl 2001; Utgaard 2003; Beniston 2003), and the “Austro-fascist” regime of the 1930s has not found overly much critical public appraisal either (rather, historical visions of Austro-fascism are divided along partisan lines, s. HGÖ). One might argue that critical appraisal of several other European polities’ role in historical fascism/ national socialism has been lacking in domestic publics, too, with potential effects on today’s political opportunity structure for PRRPs (e.g. Switzerland or even France: was everyone a member of *la resistance*?).

¹²⁰ Given notably that after reunification, most public functionaries associated with the GDR’s secret police Stasi, and numerous associated with functions in GDR’s state party SED were dismissed (Weichert 1991; Majer 1992; Süß 1999; DerSpiegel.de 1991).

chauvinist attitudes and PRRP-success among blue-collar workers. This is because we would expect many, notably socio-economic, grievance experiences in East Germany and few in Austria – however, both cases feature equally strong PRRPs with a welfare chauvinist discourse and an over-proportional working-class electorate. In addition, the two cases feature similar welfare state regimes (notably in the areas of retirement and labor market policy) and skill-formation regimes.

4.3 Tracing Lived Experiences of Social Inclusion and Exclusion

In the *Introduction*, I have formulated three specific research questions (RQ 1-3). Based on these, I here formulate several *research rationales* which define the goals of my empirical research design. These rationales inform concrete methodological choices (s. ch. 4.4).¹²¹

This thesis addresses a classical controversy of “modernization loser” theory, which holds that social “grievances” favor the formation of populist radical right-wing political preferences. The puzzle, however, is unresolved, what type of grievances (economic? cultural? “sociological”?) act as the driver of such an effect (s. *Introduction*). It is in this sense that Research Question 1 (**RQ 1**) enquires both *whether* and *which types of* “grievance experiences” are associated to the formation of “welfare chauvinist” attitudes among blue-collar workers. The question has been further specified as: *where* do these grievance experiences happen, which circumstances *produce* them, and via which mechanisms do they *channel into political attitudes* (if they do so at all)?

I interpret this as a case for *explorative qualitative* research. It should be feasible to produce nuanced insights on this controversial puzzle by means of *tracing* what types of subjective grievance experiences contemporary blue-collar workers live, notably with regard to the socio-economy, as well as equally *tracing* the channels through which these experiences are politicized. To do so is my *research rationale no. 1* and the main rationale for the thesis’ empirical research design. I methodologically realize this rationale by means of narrative biographical interviewing (s. ch. 4.4).

¹²¹ The main part of the empirical research design has been developed in autumn 2019 during a research stay at UC Berkeley Sociology Department hosted by Arlie Russel-Hochschild and Michael Burawoy; other aspects in 2017-18 at CEE-Sciences Po in collaboration i.a. with Nonna Mayer, Florence Faucher, Florence Haegel, Jan Rovny, Bruno Palier, Bruno Cousin, Matthias Thiemann, Colin Hay, Tommaso Vitale and in exchange with colleagues at CEMS-EHESS where the author has acted as co-organizer of a seminar on empirical applications of phenomenological sociology with Audran Aulagnier, Guillaume Gass-Quintero and Luz Ascarate under the guidance of Daniel Cefai, Cedric Terzi, Albert Ogien and Alain Cottereau. The biographical interview design has been tested with 10 persons in the US, France, and Austria in winter 2019/2020 before the start of the main field period in spring 2020. A reduced form of the methodology has earlier been used in Wagner (2017).

Research rationale no. 1 comes accompanied by a little sibling. During tests of the biographical interviewing method, it has turned out that the relationship between “grievance experiences” and “political attitudes” in an individual biography is best understood in the context of a common third: namely, of the “main threads” of a person’s life, as seen from a biographical perspective. By “main threads”, I mean the main *goals, values, and social relationships* a person entertains in their life (or current period thereof).¹²² “Grievances” are typically experienced as such *because* they interfere with goals, values, or relationships that matter to us (Längle 1993¹). “Political attitudes”, on their turn, tend to be *in some way* congruent with our main goals (Hay 2011), values (Hanel et al. 2021), and relationships (Hall/Lamont 2013). Leaving most parameters open, this three-variable-model is a most useful *tracing scheme*, which, if fed with empirical data, can be used to inductively locate the concrete ways in which “grievances” and “attitudes” interact *contextually*.¹²³ This is why I establish as a goal to understand what the “main threads” of an interviewed individual’s life are as *research rationale no. 2*.

The remaining rationales are fast to be spelled out. Research question 3 (**RQ 3**) asks about factors that favor the formation of the “peculiar” socio-structural coalition of blue-collar workers and small business owners in support of PRRPs. The puzzle about this phenomenon is that it is unclear whether these two groups have anything in common besides an aversion to immigration (s. *Introduction*). In order to find out whether they have more in common and what this may be, I aim to trace what *points of contact* manual workers entertain with small business owners. This said, socio-political coalitions may be a matter not only of having *something* in common, but of having *relatively* speaking *more* in common than with others. This is why I establish it as a goal to trace blue-collar workers’ contact points with socio-structural groups

¹²² From the methodological point of view of narrative interviewing, one could also call it the “main storylines” in a biographical narration: those elements that reoccur and show to underlie other elements. Hochschild (2016) has formulated a substantive concept of “deep stories” as baselines of social identity (s. also reception by Dörre 2018). I do not think that the main “threads” of a person’s life are *only* “symbolic” (narrative, identity-related). Rather, I think these are practical action- and orientation-threads (a person’s future plans and expectations; their persistent everyday practices towards people and things that play a role in their life) which *at the same time* come with a value (narrative, identity) dimension. This is, I think that any “deep story” is rooted in concrete, situated, biographical, lived experiences. (And these concrete root points, we can localize/ trace.)

¹²³ I do not mean that the “main threads” of a person’s life (necessarily) act as an intermediating mechanism between “grievances” and “attitudes”. It is possible that they don’t do so at all. However, in many cases (notably in those that feature more complex, indirect mechanisms, s. below) it is hard to make appropriate sense of the latter two’s relationship without understanding the prior in the function of *context*. I will dare a metaphor: we can calculate the gravitational interaction between Earth and Mars. Both Earth and Mars, however, revolve around the Sun, and a model explaining the relationship between the two planets while ignoring their relationship to this more systemic condition will fail to make appropriate sense of what is going on.

other than their own more generally, across the occupational class structure.¹²⁴ This is my *research rationale no. 3*.¹²⁵

Ultimately, Research Question 2 (**RQ 2**) addresses the need to understand in what broader visions of the political economy, held by contemporary manual workers, “welfare chauvinism” comes embedded. What is the *logic* of the worldview, of which welfare chauvinism is a part? In order to explore the logics in contemporary manual workers’ vision of the political economy, I establish as *research rationale no. 4* to collect narrative data on workers’ socio-economic policy preferences.

In the following, I explain the more concrete “operationalization” of these four research rationales. The main focus is on *research rationale no. 1*. In ch. 4.4, I explain how these rationales have informed the choice of methodology – namely, an adapted version of the *narrative biographical interview* – and the concrete design of interview questions, interviewing strategy, sampling, and field access. In ch. 4.5, I explain how they have equally informed the process of data analysis, during which, step by step (s. ch. 4.1), the theory presented in chapters 2 & 3 has been built.

Distinguishing “Experiences” from “Perceptions”

In order to realize research rationale no. 1, I build on a *subjective* definition of the term “grievance”: first and foremost, I understand grievances to be *lived experiences*. More precisely, I understand them to be lived personal, biographical experiences. For example, when someone has lost their job ten years ago, they may have experienced this as a “grievance”. This “grievance” may have been resolved later (f. ex. by finding a new job) or may have persisted until today (f. ex. if the person is still unemployed or dissatisfied in their new job).

¹²⁴ I use the two-dimensional occupational class scheme by Oesch (2006; s. below & ch. 2) to reason about class structure. The main interest is to trace what contact points blue-collar workers have with “social types” that are very *similar* or *different* to their own. The given class scheme provides two dimensions to define similarity and difference. This is firstly, a hierarchical dimension: manual workers occupy low- to lower-middle positions in terms of skill-level and hierarchical positions in enterprises. Those who occupy upper-middle/ higher positions in these terms can count as “different” from this point of view. Secondly, there is the dimension of “work-logics”: manual workers are placed in a “technical” work-logic, while other occupations are set in “administrative”, “independent”, or “inter-personal” work logics. These work-logics are furthermore correlated to sectors of economic activity (s. ch. 2): e.g. most “socio-cultural semi-professionals” work in the health sector; and most “socio-cultural professionals” work in education and cultural sectors. Following this logic, I have set out to distinguish e.g. “inter-group contact points” blue-collar workers entertain (a) with independent entrepreneurs, (b) with technical professionals and technicians, (c) with managers, (d) with socio-cultural professionals and semi-professionals, (e) with clerks, (d) with service workers.

¹²⁵ This is synergetic with the tracing of “grievance experiences”: inter-group contact is a rather likely domain in which such may occur.

I hold that subjective experiences are produced by *objective* parameters. In the given example, the “objective parameter” would be the fact of losing a job, combined with the incapacity to find a new one. These parameters at the “individual” level would be explained by another layer of parameters e.g. on the level of the national economy: this may be an economic crisis and a persistently dire labor market situation. However, which objective parameters are at stake is precisely the puzzle of “modernization loser” theories. In the larger part of cases, the facts are not as simple and clear as they seem in the anecdotal example.

Indeed, political sociology is much more in agreement about the types of subjective experiences associated to right-wing populist attitudes and PRRP-support than about their objective sources. For example, experiences of *misrecognition* (Fraser 2000; Betz 2021; Dörre 2018; Rostbøll 2023) and deep-seated sentiments of *injustice* (Hoggett et al. 2013; Hochschild 2016; Cramer 2016; Protzer/Summerville 2021; Salmela/Capelos 2021) are being consistently associated with the formation of populist attitudes and behaviors by the qualitative (ethnographic or interviewing-based), theoretical, and quantitative (survey-research-based or experimental) literatures (Van Hootegem et al. 2021; Scherr/Leiner 2021; Kim/Hall forthcoming). This said, there is a divergence of views on what sources these subjective experiences derive from: is it from “economic” or “cultural” losses; or from no losses at all (see above)?

This is particularly relevant as *perceptions* of injustice and grievance may, theoretically, develop independently of substantive sources of deprivation (Feather/Nairn 2005). For example, it is thinkable that perceiving social and political injustice is part of a right-wing populist ideology rather than based in personal, biographical experiences (Vascik et al. 2016; Wodak 2015; Meijen/Vermeersch 2023). This points at the necessity to distinguish between “personally lived experiences” and “perceptions”.

A way to do so is offered by Soss/Schram (2007), who distinguish *immediate experiences* individuals make with a social problem from *perceptions* that are not rooted in personal touching points with the issue at stake, but rather, in information accessed via public debates.¹²⁶ Soss/Schram use this distinction to study different mechanisms of public reactions to welfare reforms (“policy feedback”). This means that when, f. ex., a government reforms the unemployment insurance system, those individuals who make immediate experiences with the

¹²⁶ The authors draw on pragmatist and symbolic interactionist theories of the democratic public (s. Lippman 1922; Dewey 1927; Edelman 1971) when building this distinction along what they call a “proximity dimension” (dimension that assesses how “proximate” a spectator is to a social problem in terms of being *immediately* and *concretely* concerned by it).

reformed system as welfare *recipients* and form an opinion on the matter based on these personal experiences, are to be distinguished from bystanders who lack this immediate contact with the matter at stake, but form an opinion based on the public, mediatized debate on welfare reform. This conceptual distinction has been followed by others (e.g. Burlacu et al. 2018). It is fruitful for this thesis not only due to the thematic resemblance (I study welfare experiences, too), but also due to its more fundamental implications, in which it is applicable far beyond welfare policy feedback: namely, to a generic distinction between *personal* (grievance) experiences and political *perceptions*, which is relevant to a nuanced appraisal of “modernization loser” theories.

| Personal experience | Perception |
|--|--|
| <p>Immediate encounter with issue at stake and/or practical consequences for personal life</p> <p>Takes place in concrete biographical situation (e.g. “I tried to explain my situation to the case worker, but they would not listen. I showed them x and y. Finally, I was told that I needed to visit public offices a and b to prove my situation. I did so, and they said ...”)</p> | <p>Derives from information accessed via public, mediatized debates</p> <p>Tendency of generalization (e.g. “the employment office is horrible”; “members of social group x are like ...”; “society moves into a bad direction”)</p> |

Tab. 10: Personal lived experiences vs. perceptions of public issues

In the definition of “personal experiences” I include experiences lived by immediate close ones to the reference person (e.g. partners, parents, or children). This is because experiences lived by close ones with whom a proximate, often interdependent, relationship is given may affect one’s own life with an arguable degree of immediacy.

I treat sociopolitical “perceptions” as a similar phenomenon to political “attitudes” and policy “preferences”. All of these phenomena fall within the category of normative sociopolitical views (outlooks, or “visions”, as I call it for the most part, s. ch. 3). The purpose of my research design is to explain whether, and through which mechanisms, personal experiences *inform* normative views (s. ch. 3).

This said, “personal experiences” as a generic term refers to a vast continuum of situations individuals live during their biography. What I have set out to trace in blue-collar workers biographical narrations are very specific types of lived experiences: namely, those types of “grievance experiences” which are known to be prone, from existing works in “modernization loser” theory, to politicize in right-wing-populist ways.

A Working Definition of “Grievance Experiences”

In order to do so, I have built a working definition of subjective “grievance experiences” known from the literatures on “modernization losing” and the “politics of resentment”. This working definition has included: experiences of “injustice”, of “misrecognition”, and of “inefficacy” (incapacity to act) in the face of “pressing problems” (s.).¹²⁷ I have explained each of these “types of subjective experiences” more extensively in ch. 2 and will here only provide a brief summary.

During an experience of *injustice*, we feel treated unfairly. This is typically the case when expectations about social norms, which should regulate a social encounter or relationship, diverge (Renault 2019; Hoggett et al. 2013; Hochschild 2016). In an experience of *misrecognition*, we feel that things we value are being misjudged and devaluated by others (Fraser 2000; Betz 2021). We feel *powerless* when we do not dispose of (individual or collective) ways to act upon problems (“inefficacy”; Salmela/Capelos 2021).

These types of experiences gain in importance the more *problem pressure* is at stake. I use a double definition of the term “problem”. Firstly, a problem in the sense of a “grievance” is given when someone subjectively suffers from a situation and/ or has to deal with adverse practical consequences resulting from a situation (Stone/Mackie 2013).¹²⁸ Secondly, a “problem” in the Schützian sense is given when we struggle to make sense of and/ or to practically deal with a situation, hampering *problem resolution* (Schütz/Luckmann 1973: 8-15; 116-118). I only treat problems which at the moment of the interview are “unresolved” as such.¹²⁹ Moreover, a problem is “pressing” when it is subjectively relevant: this is the case when someone is subjectively concerned by a given personal problem situation (ibid: 182ff.) and/ or when

¹²⁷ The working definition has informed interview design and field research. During the process of data analysis, it has been refined by further insights. Notably, I have found that in many cases, persistent experiences of the named types can be explained by an underlying factor: namely, *social exclusion* (s. ch. 4.5). This is why, ultimately, I present a developed typology of “subjective experiences of social inclusion and exclusion” in ch. 2 and demonstrate its application to the interview data in the empirical chapters 5–8.

¹²⁸ For example: if someone makes a “devaluating” statement to us – let’s say, a scientist feels bemused to tell a colleague that their dedicated work of many years was worth “nothing” – one of us will be hurt, while someone else will laugh and not care. The question then is what accounts for the difference: personality and ways of dealing with conflict; secure vs. insecure job position (or relations in other areas of life); relationship to the offender: is it a random bystander, or a member of the same field, let alone a superior, whose recognition influences our daily work life and opportunities? (S. ch. 6 & 7).

¹²⁹ This implies a focus on *ways* and *resources* of *dealing with* problems more than on “problems” themselves. Let’s be frank: everyone experiences smaller or larger grievances in their life. What differs are the ways in which we are able to deal with these situations; the resources we access that enable us to deal with these situations in one way or the other; and whether, in effect, these grievances become *persistent* and “pressing” problems in our lives – or we are able to re-establish a non-“problematic” situation by means of effectively dealing with the issue to a degree of our satisfaction.

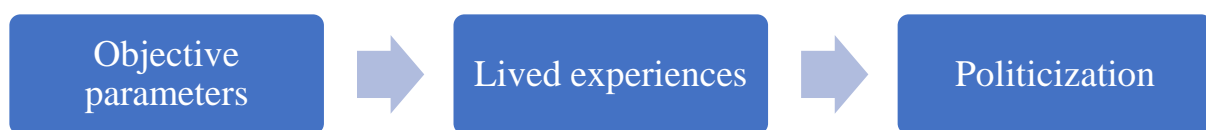
pressure resulting from a problematic situation shows to “spill over” into other domains of their life, influencing their opportunities, behaviors, relationships, etc. in ways that are detrimental to their values, goals, and wishes.

In this sense, unemployment would not count as a *subjective problem* if the person concerned has a clear rationale of how to deal with the situation, effectively manages to deal with the situation according to this plan, does not feel to suffer from this situation, and does not feel misrecognized or treated unfairly by others with respect to this situation.

Inversely, if an individual who is unemployed feels being treated unfairly e.g. by labor market policy; or if an employed individual with poor labor market perspectives experiences unfair treatment by their current employer, these grievance experiences can be personally quite salient. This is because high *problem pressure* is at stake: in the prior case, the individual’s material security depends on unemployment insurance. In the latter case, they do not have a real choice of “exiting” their negatively experienced workplace, because they cannot hope to find an equal job.

Where Does It Come From, Where Does It Go? Tracing the Mechanisms of *Production* and *Politicization* of Lived Experiences

Research rationale no. 1 is to (a) “trace” the above-defined types of lived experiences in interviewees’ biographical narration, (b) reconstruct the objective parameters that have produced these experiences, and (c) establish the mechanisms through which these experiences channel into political preferences (or don’t).



III. 14: Lived experience: its production and politicization

In the following, I will briefly discuss each of these steps. Chapter 4.4, in which I present the interviewing methodology, directly builds on this reasoning.

(a) Where does it *happen*?

In a first step, my goal is to trace, by means of biographical interviewing, whether an interviewee is subject to “pressing grievance experiences” which at the point of the interview are “unresolved” and to determine “where”, in the sense of *in which areas of life*, these experiences are set.

Posing the “where”-question may yield excellent clues of *what issues* we are, actually, looking at (see *Introduction*). While abstract debates about whether populist workers are populist because they suffer from “economic” or “cultural” problems may run into a dead-end, it should be feasible to trace *in which areas of their lives* people experience pressing grievances that tend to be politicized. If, for example, issues of “misrecognition” are at stake, we can ask: a lack of recognition *from whom* are we talking about?¹³⁰ If experiences of “injustice” are the matter at hand, we can pose the question: *in what type of situation* have they occurred?¹³¹ The question of “where does it take place” is a very hands-on way to go about the underlying question of “what’s the problem, actually”. In what type of social situation, vis-à-vis which other actors, and in which domains of life subjectively pressing problem experiences take place can provide a first clue, a rather nuanced lead, to find out about *what* they consist in, “where they come from” and “where they go” politically speaking.

(b) Where does it come from?

Starting from an assessment of *where* a salient and persistent subjective problem experience happens, it is possible to reconstruct the objective parameters that have brought it forth.

My strategy in tracing the “production” of experienced problems is to take into account parameters on both *micro*- and *meso*-levels¹³² and to view these against the backdrop of the political-economic *macro*-level. When f. ex. a conflict in *employment relations* is at stake, I would look for the parameters of problem production firstly in the interaction between concrete individuals. e.g. worker and manager (micro-level), secondly in the organizational sociology of the given enterprise (meso-level), and thirdly, in the political-economic context in which this enterprise operates (macro-level). If pressing problems manifest between welfare state agencies and citizens, the interactions between caseworker and recipient (micro-level) and the functioning of the respective institution (meso-level) are of interest. Both are subject to social policy legislation (macro-level). Furthermore, if salient problem experiences with a relation to

¹³⁰ Is it “misrecognition” expressed by a friend’s friend at a dinner party that leads to a strong and persistent sense of unresolvable grievance? Is it the TV program, or the dominant discourse in the “instagram-bubble”, that does so hurtfully not recognize (i.a.) working-class realities and identities? Or do f. ex. state agencies and public policy “misrecognize” concrete issues lived by citizens with manifest consequences for the latter?

¹³¹ Does an interviewee live experiences that fundamentally shake their sense of social justice in street traffic or while shopping in a supermarket? With their neighbor? With family members? In their hobby club? Or, perhaps, at their workplace?

¹³² This strategy follows the theoretical sensibility to the *meso-level* that I have set out in the *Introduction*. I have entered the field work stage with this theoretical sensibility. During fieldwork and data analysis, I have made findings about *which* meso-level institutions matter particularly much to workers’ integration/ exclusion and preference formation (namely the workplace and the welfare state). This has informed the theory presented in ch. 3. (On the research process globally see ch. 4.1; on the step of theory-building, s. ch. 4.5).

political attitudes consistently take place between partners, siblings or children and parents, the meso-level institution of the family may be a site in which broader social “tension” (s. ch. 2) manifests and the question can be posed, where this tension derives from.¹³³ The same, finally, counts for cultural, sportive, religious, unionist, or even political associations and “fields” of interaction (s. ch. 2).¹³⁴

(c) Where does it go?

My reasoning about mechanisms of politicization relies on the idea that when individuals make subjectively salient “problem experiences”, this can influence their political views in *direct* or *indirect* ways.¹³⁵

A direct link is given when someone consciously makes political sense of personal issues. Making “political sense” of a personal problem can entail the attribution of responsibility for this personal problem to actors or mechanisms within broader society. Equally, it can include the formulation of demands towards politics and public policy. For example, a manual worker with health issues who would like to retire before the age of 67 but is not allowed to can blame the retirement system, specific political parties, capitalism, or yet, immigrants for this (s. ch. 7). They can demand concrete changes to social policy legislation or also more simply demand that politics “pay attention” to the issue.¹³⁶

Secondly, there can be *indirect* links. These are mechanisms that mediate between a person’s experiences and their political views while *not* establishing a *conscious* connection between the two. For example, we can during experiences with the welfare state learn norms of solidarity, which subsequently influence our views about how solidarity provision in society *should* work. Or we can respond to a “problematic” situation by re-formulating our personal identity in a way

¹³³ For an example, see Hochschild/ Machung’s seminal ethnography (1989), in which they trace back tensions in US-American families of the 1980s to gender-role and power conflicts deriving from women’s mass entry into the labor market during the “boomer” generation.

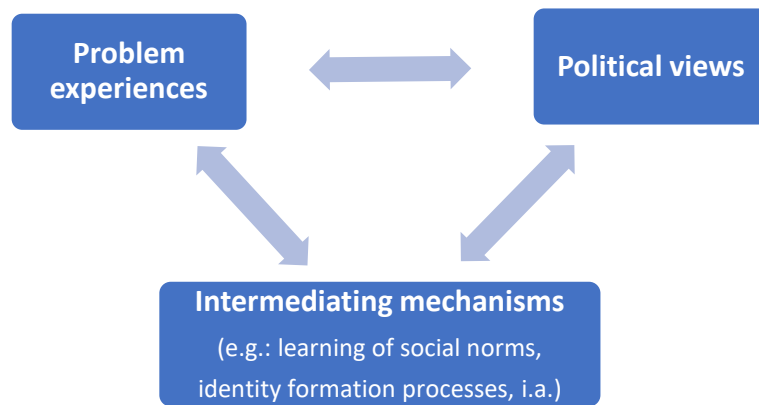
¹³⁴ Getting an understanding of “where it happens” is equally important for our capacity to theorize the implications of “modernization losing” in a nuanced way as it is for eventual policy-implications: if we wanted to act upon the social “problems” that feed into the success of PRRPs (by means of policies that aim to substantively ameliorate problem situations or by means of a rhetoric that expresses recognition for such), this can be done in a much more targeted way if we know what precise problem situations we are talking about (see *Conclusion*).

¹³⁵ The reasoning I present here about “attitude formation” pertains exclusively to mechanisms set on the political “demand-side” and even more precisely, at the individual level. I theorize how these mechanisms interact with political supply in ch. 3.4. Also, I address mechanisms of collective preference formation when theorizing “collective exclusion” (s. ch. 3.1).

¹³⁶ Someone who does *not* (explicitly) politicize a personal grievance experience would exclusively attribute responsibility to actors and mechanisms within their *personal environment* (as opposed to establishing links to more general problems of society and politics). For example, they would blame one specific caseworker at the public retirement insurance (but not see a problem of retirement *policy*). They would blame their own boss for issues in employment relations (but not see a problem of labor-capital relations, leadership styles, or organizational culture in society more broadly). Maybe, they would even overly seek the blame with themselves.

that helps us to make sense of it. Later-on, this identity of ours can influence our political views even on entirely different subjects.¹³⁷¹³⁸

I summarize the two types of links between experiences and attitudes in the subsequent illustration.



III. 15: Direct and indirect mechanisms linking lived experiences and political views

In order to trace “indirect” mechanisms linking “lived experiences” and “political views”, I have used a method that I call “mapping subjects”. It consists in mapping “values” and “problems” experienced by an individual in their own life on the one hand; and “positive” as well as “negative” views they hold of issues in wider society on the other. This scheme established and filled with rich, qualitative, “experiential” data, it is easy to trace fine-grained relationships between the variables pertaining to “personal life” as opposed to “political views”. This can be done in several ways. This is firstly, by establishing recurrent patterns in the two: e.g. the same emotional pattern or moral argument appears repeatedly in certain personal experiences and in certain views of far-fetched socio-political issues (but not in other “regions” of the “map”). It is secondly, by logically seeking “third” elements, which may have mediated a relationship, and by verifying at hands of the mapped-out “global picture” of the individual’s

¹³⁷ These examples are indeed drawn from my findings. In ch. 7, I present findings that suggest that individuals *learn* welfare access criteria (“deservingness criteria”, s. ch. 3) during experiences they make themselves with welfare policies and institutions – and subsequently apply the same criteria in their judgements about other people’s access to welfare benefits. In ch. 8, I present findings that suggest yet another mechanism: lived experiences of problems at work are being dealt with by means of forming an identity of being particularly “hard working”, mixed with the perception of receiving too little recognition therefore. Only in a subsequent step, this identity serves as a reference point for blaming “those who don’t work” of “being lazy” and “taking resources from the welfare state” (“chauvinist laborism”, s. ch. 3.2; “welfare chauvinism”). At the stage of research design, I did not dispose of these theories yet (but literally engaged in an inductive exploration of mechanisms).

¹³⁸ Proving the causality both of “direct” and “indirect” links is, naturally, a delicate task. In the case of a “direct link”, this concerns proving the direction of causality and ruling out confounding bias. In the case of an indirect link (via a third element), we are looking at an even more complex causal pathway. I deal with the issue of causality by means of (a) thick qualitative description of causal mechanisms as well as (b) by considering “alternative explanations” to the same outcome (s. ch. 1; ch. 8). In the Conclusion, I delineate the need for further causal tests.

biography whether the explanation is plausible.¹³⁹ I present an empirical application of this approach in ch. 6.1.

4.4 Interviewing Method and Interviewing Process

In this section, I explain the interviewing method applied during the main field research process (February-September 2020) as well as issues encountered during the process of interviewing. The aims of the interviewing strategy hinge on the rationales outlined in ch. 4.3. This is why throughout this section, I refer to the definitions made in the prior section to justify methodological choices (rationale no. 1 “tracing problem experiences”; rationale no. 2 “tracing values”; rationale no. 3. “tracing inter-group contact points”; rationale no. 4 “collecting narrative data on interviewees’ views of socio-economic policy and partisan politics”).

The methodology I have used is an adapted version of the *narrative-biographical interview* (s. Rosenthal 2004). I firstly discuss the strengths and weaknesses of this methodological choice. Secondly, I present the design of the interview questionnaire. Thirdly, I discuss the issues of sampling and field access. Fourthly, I discuss the process of interviewing and field research. Fifthly and lastly, I explain why interview data collected during the first wave of Covid-19 in spring 2020 is suitable to draw conclusions on the specific research question posed by this thesis.

The Narration of Past Experiences: Epistemological and Methodological Implications

The methodological tradition of the narrative-biographical interview (Rosenthal 2004; 1987; 1989; 1991; 1993; 1995; 1998; Rosenthal/Fischer-Rosenthal 2000; Rosenthal/Bogner 2009; Josselson/Lieblich 1997; Schütze 1977; Kohli 1978; Bertaux 1981; Bertaux/Kohli 1984) builds on the assumption that individuals are capable to recall and verbally express their subjective, lived experience of past situations. Moreover, the methodology aims at understanding the processes in which individuals make sense of said situations (in processes of “meaning-making”, Lamont 2000¹), how they deal with issues they encounter, and what role specific issues play in the ensemble of action threads (“storylines”) that constitute their life. In this section, I discuss the strengths and weaknesses of applying (an adapted version of) this methodology to realize this thesis’ research rationales.

¹³⁹ This method is based on research rationale no. 2 (“establishing the “main threads” [goals, values, social relationships] of an interviewee’s life, s. above). After exploratively “tracing” mechanisms, I have theorized these with reference to existing literature and made analytical considerations on causality as well as on alternative explanations (s. ch. 4.5).

In many regards, the methodology of narrative-biographical interviewing is an excellent fit for realizing this thesis' research rationales. Firstly, it enables us to “trace” certain types of experiences an individual has made in a temporally *diachronic* way during their life course (rationales 1 and 2). Secondly, it yields information on how individuals have made sense of and dealt with these experiences (rationale 1). Thirdly, it helps us to learn about what relevance these specific experiences have had in an individuals' life overall, how they have touched on the individuals' values and the main “threads” of their life (rationale 3). Last but not least, an interviewing-based approach enables us to survey these elements in a considerable number of individual cases, to sample interviewees¹⁴⁰, and in result, to engage in comparative reasoning across the sample of individual cases analyzed.

An alternative methodological choice to study “lived experiences” would have been an *ethnographic* approach or *participant observation*. Indeed, many studies of individuals' experiences with public policy or at the workplace use participative methodologies (Lipsky 1980; Spire 2018; Dubois 2021; Burawoy 1979; 1983; 1985; Gorbach 2022). In French sociology, the term “*sociologie du guichet*” (Dubois 1999) has even become commonplace to refer to the participant observation of citizens' “street-level” interactions with public bureaucracies. Participant observation has the advantage of yielding denser, more detailed material on one given situation. However, it has the disadvantage of being limited to knowing about what happens right now, in temporally *synchronic* manner. Moreover, the processes in which individuals *make sense of* issues and *deal with* issues can be temporally extensive: to know about them requires either permanent ethnographic embedding in a field (e.g. Desmond 2016) or, again, the conversational approach of interviewing. Last but not least, the choice to study a small number of cases in ethnographic depth is opposed to qualitatively surveying a larger, demographically sampled, number of cases. The latter choice is more adapt to this thesis aims.¹⁴¹

This said, several objections could be made to the assumptions underlying biographical interviewing and to the application of the methodology to this thesis' epistemic interest. Most notably, the capacity of individuals to recall their subjective, lived experience of past situations could be put in question. Indeed, the literature on practices of memory has shown that we tend to continuously re-interpret past events, always from our respectively present standpoint (Halbwachs 1992; Olick/Robbins 1998: 128ff.; Conway 2010: 450). In fact, however, this

¹⁴⁰ In practice, sampling has been feasible up to a certain level of limitation, s. below.

¹⁴¹ Please find a discussion of sampling and an argument on what types of conclusions should and should not be drawn from a sample of 150 qualitative interviews below.

corresponds quite well to what I hope to get from the interviews. My aim is to find out whether attitudes interviewees hold *presently*, at the point of time the interview takes place, can be explained by problem experiences that are *presently unresolved* – even if they have persisted for considerable time already and derive from factors more or less far in the past. This means, the subjective “storyline” in which certain lived experiences are salient “problems” is up to date (for however long it has been spun). Moreover, our general tendency to re-interpret the past through the lens of the present does not per se make us incapable to recall how we “used to feel” about something at an earlier point of time (Rosenthal 2004). When an interviewee provides distinct indications about how they have felt about an issue earlier, explicitly distinguishing this from how they now feel about it, this data can be taken into account to reconstruct multi-sequential processes of “meaning making” and “dealing with” issues.¹⁴²

Moreover, one could argue that the approach is prone to overlook reverse causality: attitudes someone has held *à priori* may have influenced how they have lived experiences. I deal with this issue both by considering primary political socialization and by comparing cases across the dataset (s. ch. 4.5 & ch. 8). Finally, one could have fundamental doubts about whether interviewees report their biography, and specific lived experiences therein, truthfully. I apply extensive considerations to the *credibility* of interviewee’s accounts (s. ch. 4.5).

All things considered, I hold that the methodology of the narrative-biographical interview is a well-fit choice to realize the research rationales established in ch. 4.3. In the following section, I explain the design of the interview questionnaire.

Interview Design

In the classical narrative-biographical interviewing methodology, the interviewer asks only one question and then lets the interviewee speak freely for the larger part of the interview.¹⁴³ I have used an adapted version of this method. The questionnaire starts with an open question encouraging biographical narration on the interviewee’s employment biography. This is followed by a few open questions on experiences they have made with welfare policy. These topics link well: many domains of welfare policy – unemployment, retirement – directly hinge on employment trajectories. The discussion of welfare experiences, finally, leads directly to a

¹⁴² In effect, interviewees who report salient past grievance experiences, which they were then able to resolve, tend to use such narrative style (“This really used to make me angry. But now, it doesn’t matter anymore.”, s. ch. 6).

¹⁴³ Typically, the question is either generically to narrate one’s biography from beginning until now, or, to narrate it with special regard to one type of topic (such as, in this case, employment biography).

rather structured module of questions on policy preferences and partisan politics. Each interview has ended with open questions on family, free time, and values.

This questionnaire design integrates multiple methodological and ethical considerations. Notably, it aims to assess biographical experiences *before* assessing political views. This lowers the chance that interviewees “cherry-pick” narrated experiences based on political topics priorly discussed in the same interview. To discuss experiences first may on the contrary increase the chance of documenting *how* they channel into political reasoning, what to explore is in the interest of the research design.

At the same time, this design aims to start from commonplace topics before talking politics. This is to enable some basic trust-building between interviewer and interviewee before addressing potentially controversial political issues. Formal interviewing is a peculiar approach to study both the working-class on the one hand and populist-minded citizens on the other (let alone those who fall within the overlapping category): both characteristics are predictors of distrust in institutions (such as social science; Kim et al. 2021; Qiang et al. 2021). Interviewees may be reluctant to the idea of sitting down in a formal manner and discussing potentially controversial issues of politics. Work and the welfare state, however, are “neutral” enough topics to start a conversation from. Interviewees may even feel appreciated to receive extensive attention for their occupational and general life story. Finally, the topics of welfare policy and partisan politics thematically fit well into the “cognitive thread” established by the discussion of welfare issues and more easily appear as “legitimate” issues of debate in this context.

Placing questions about family, free time, and values at the end of the questionnaire has linked the goals of getting to know about interviewees “main goals, values, and social relationships” (research rationale no. 2) and to trace inter-group ties interviewees form in various areas of their lives (research rationale no. 3) with that of establishing an emotionally “positive end” to interviews. In some of the other parts, interviews can pass through difficult terrain both politically (populism, radicalism) and personally (grievance experiences). Establishing an emotively positive and normatively consensual end point (hobbies; family; things we personally value) to such a potentially rocky journey matters both for the emotional experience of interviewee and interviewer¹⁴⁴ and for establishing persistent ties of trust in the field.

In the following, I present the main questions that were part of each interview.

¹⁴⁴ On some days, I have done three extensive (2-3 hours) interviews; on one, even four. Interviewing was intensive *emotion work* (Dickson-Swift et al. 2009).

At the beginning of each interview, the interviewee was informed about the purpose of the study. This served at the same time as an opportunity to frame the interview. The general phrase used was “I am writing a thesis in sociology¹⁴⁵ which is about experiences people make on the labor market and with the welfare state.” The interviewee’s agreement was asked to record the conversation. Subsequently, the first question was posed:

| |
|--|
| Where have you started your occupational trajectory and how has it developed until today? ¹⁴⁶ |
|--|

Tab. 11: Part I of interview questionnaire: employment biography

This question aims at free narration. The effective length of narrations has varied (s. below). The narration was further encouraged by follow-up questions by the interviewer. These follow-up questions have steered the conversation towards specific periods of the employment biography – changes, periods of unemployment, experiences at the workplace, experiences of searching for a job on the labor market. Three further questions on “work and occupation” were included in each interview:

| |
|--|
| Does your occupation receive the social recognition that it deserves? |
| There is much talk about a labor shortage in skilled manual occupations. How does this come about, in your view? |
| What experiences have you made with labor unions? |

Tab. 12: Part I of interview questionnaire: follow-up questions

The interviewee was asked to link their generic “perception” of these issues to experiences they have, themselves, lived. For example, if someone should state “no, it definitely does not receive the recognition it deserves”, the interviewer would ask “how do you notice this?” or “recognition from whom?”. On the labor shortage topic, the follow-up question would be “how do you experience this yourself?”. Some interviews were shorter than others, what required a prioritization of questions. In these cases, the “recognition” question was prioritized over the other two. If there was enough time, which it was in many cases, additional questions linking occupation and family topics were posed, namely: what occupations do people in your family do? What occupation would you advise a child to learn today?¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ „Sociology“ seemed less controversial than “political science”: the word conveys the impression of a sincere interest in society, people, and socio-economy as opposed to a superficial and perhaps profit-driven interest in politics, voting, and “good bye”. Furthermore, this choice of wording corresponds well with the author’s/ interviewer’s self-identification as both a sociologist and a political scientist (political sociology, effectively, being a research field between the two disciplines).

¹⁴⁶ *Wo haben Sie beruflich begonnen und wie hat sich das bis heute entwickelt?*

¹⁴⁷ Spoiler: most interviewees answered in the sense of “it depends on the talents of the child”. I had hoped to find some manual-work-authoritarianism but consequently didn’t, which is why the question was dropped after a while.

In most interviews, the topic of retirement was used as a logical transition point from work life to welfare experiences. In all interviews, the following questions on welfare experiences were posed:

| |
|---|
| How do you look towards your retirement – how will this work out for you? [If already retired: how has retirement worked out for you – did it work smoothly or did you encounter any problems?] |
| [If unemployment experience] What experiences have you made with the Employment office? What aid did you get from the state? |
| When you need something from the public health insurance, from doctors or hospitals, does this work well for you or not? |
| Is the tax burden fairly distributed in Austria/ Germany? [If pertinent:] What experiences have you made with it yourself? |

Tab. 13: Part II of interview questionnaire: welfare experiences

This said, in many cases, some of these topics were already brought up during the first part of the interview. If, someone, f. ex., has experienced periods of unemployment, follow-up questions about their experiences with labor market policy and the employment office were posed immediately, if the flow of conversation allowed for it. In every case, it was made sure to return to the “cognitive thread” of conversation sooner or later.¹⁴⁸

In addition to the systematically posed questions, further areas of welfare state policy were addressed if they seemed to be pertinent. For example, if an interviewee has (elderly) family members who need care, a question was posed along the lines of: “How do you deal with it? Do you feel supported by the state on this issue?” Typically, issues of homecare, stationary care, and public “care allowance” were then discussed. In other cases, child support was a topic at stake.¹⁴⁹

To drop a question halfway through the field research process because it does not yield findings may seem an unscientific practice from the perspective of quantitative survey research. It is very much in line, however, with the rationale of exploratively *tracing* mechanisms.

¹⁴⁸ Each interview took a somewhat different course, however, typically, it was oriented at the order of topics here presented. Some interviews took almost entirely random pathways because interviewees were fast to mix topics: if someone started politicizing already during the first or second part, the specific political issues brought up by them would be discussed immediately instead of later. The interviewer has made sure to address all of the questions here presented in each interview, except if the interviewee would reject speaking about any of the topics (this happened most often for the questions on partisan preferences).

¹⁴⁹ Topics that unfortunately have *not* made part of the interviews are childcare and education on the one hand and social housing on the other. It is highly probable that experiences in these domains feedback on political attitudes. For the reason of interview length, however, it was necessary to prioritize some topics over others.

The welfare topics, finally, provided the opportunity to lead the conversation towards normative socio-economic policy preferences in a most natural way. The following questions were posed to each interviewee:

| |
|--|
| It is often said that “the state must cut back on spending”. What do you think of it? ¹⁵⁰ |
| There is a debate on the level of unemployment benefits. What do you think – should they be increased or decreased? |
| Should people who migrate to Austria/ Germany have equal access to the welfare system as citizens do? ¹⁵¹ |
| There is a debate on “welfare fraud”. Do you perceive that happens a lot? |

Tab 14: Part III of interview questionnaire: welfare inclusion/ exclusion preferences

These questions – notably the one on “welfare chauvinism” – serve to measure this thesis’ *dependent variable* (see ch. 3.2). In order to receive a consistent and reliable measure, they were always asked in precisely the same way. An exception was only made when an interviewee had already brought up e.g. the issue of welfare chauvinism extensively and in a way that left no doubts about their views during the prior parts of the interview (this has happened in a number of cases). Interviewees were encouraged to narrate their views of the respective policy areas extensively so to collect data that allows to understand the element of “welfare chauvinism” in the context of interviewees’ vision of the political economy more broadly (research rationale no. 4).

The discussion of welfare policy, in turn, lead to issues of partisan politics in a quite natural manner. The following questions were included in most of the interviews.

| |
|--|
| When you think back in your life – what is the first experience you remember to have made with “politics”? |
| And today, which party in Austria/ Germany would you say is closest to you? |
| What do you think of [politician/ party X]? ¹⁵² |

Tab 15: Part III of interview questionnaire: partisan preferences¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰ *Es wird oft gesagt dass „der Staat sparen muss“. Was denken Sie darüber?*

¹⁵¹ *Sollten Menschen die nach Österreich/ Deutschland immigrieren denselben Zugang zum Sozialsystem haben wie Österreicher/Deutsche? (The definition of what is an „Austrian/ German“ was consciously left open.)*

¹⁵² In Germany: e.g. Angela Merkel (CDU; in 2020 federal chancellor); SPD; AfD; die Linke (named as entire parties). In Austria: Sebastian Kurz (Neue ÖVP; in 2020 federal chancellor); Pamela Rendi-Wagner (SPÖ; in 2020 head of party); Hans-Peter Doskozil (SPÖ; regional governor); HC Strache (FPÖ, former head of party). If interviewees brought up other actors of partisan politics by themselves, the rule was to ask a “validation question” (e.g. “You have mentioned the Green party. What do you think of them?”).

¹⁵³ Partisan preferences are a part of the theory proposed in ch. 3 because it makes logical sense to include them (s. *ibid*): the theory proposes that parties *at the same time* influence preference formation *and* mobilize support by publicly promoting their ideological discourse and policy program. This said, the empirical aim of this thesis is to

Partisan politics was certainly the most “sensible” topic to discuss with interviewees. Some rejected to speak about it. Others framed their answers in generic terms instead of bluntly stating for whom they vote. This is why, after the first couple of interviews, I have changed from a “for whom would you vote”- question to the slightly more generic ones reported in table 15 (“who is closest to you”; “what do you think of politician X”). Most interviewees reacted by discussing positive/ negative/ indifferent views of political actors; some also reported past voting or current voting intention for this or that political actor.

The “first experience” question aims at getting a reference point of (primary) political socialization (Darmon 2016; 2024), the political “family background” of interviewees, and, if possible, to shed some light on the infamous puzzle of whether workers have switched from center left-wing to populist radical right-wing parties (over their life-course, not over one single electoral period; s. e.g. Abou-Chadi/Mitteregger/Mudde 2021). The question is framed in an “experiential” rather than “attitudinal” way in order both to be more intuitively accessible for interviewees (it is easier and more reliable to recall a specific situation than “how you thought” about politics at the age of X) and to get to know about the specific “touching points” interviewees have had with politics. The question of *how*, i.e. via which mechanisms and by which meso-level institutions, the working-class used to be politicized then and is being politicized now is of a particular interest.¹⁵⁴

After the “political” question module, each interview has ended with open questions on family, free time, and values.

| |
|---|
| (We have talked a lot about work, but) what else do you spend time with in your life? |
| What role does family play in your life? |
| Are you religious? |
| What is important to you in life? |

Tab 16: Part IV of interview questionnaire: family, free time, values

These questions aim to realize research rationales 3 and 4 (establish points of inter-group contact in various meso-level spheres; establish lived “values” of the interviewee). Equally, it aims to survey sources of politicized “grievances” in other than socio-economic areas of life.

explain the formation of *sociopolitical outlooks* – not voting behavior. During field research, in a number of cases, the choice has been to either survey “lived experiences” and “attitudes” extensively *or* to put all resources into a conversation on party politics and voting. Without exception, I have chosen the prior.¹⁵³ This is why the data collected, in a literal side-effort, on reported voting behavior, is much less consistent than the data collected on welfare inclusion/ exclusion preferences (s. ch. 5) or yet, work and welfare experiences.

¹⁵⁴ See distinction of “perceptions” and “experiences” hereabove.

By necessity, this has been done in a cursory manner. We all know that family life, for example, tends to come with one or the other problem once in a while – and the interview has not gone into any depth on this. What the question module has effectively served to do, however, is to check whether *very salient* (i.e. outrightly life-shaping) grievances or very apparent relationship patterns in the areas of associative activities/ family/ religion/ culture or even political engagement are *very consistently* related to political attitudes across the sample, as well as, whether such overrule the main theorized mechanisms.¹⁵⁵ Often, these issues were already addressed during the prior parts of the interview by interviewees themselves. In this case, some of the questions were skipped at the end.

In addition to the main elements of the interview, some other questions were tried at the beginning of the field research period and then dropped; others were added during the process, because they seemed useful to further explore preliminary findings (what is in line with the rationale of exploratively “tracing” mechanisms).

For example, at the beginning of the process, the interview included questions on interviewees’ perceptions of the “social value” contributed by various occupations across the multidimensional Oesch-class-scheme (s. ch. 2 & 3). For this purpose, a short list of occupations was read out to interviewees and they were asked to give a grade from 1-5 based on their perception of whether this occupation “contributes little or much value to society” as well as to argue their views. This approach, effectively, proved to be useful to neatly observe the socio-structural “silhouette” of *producerism* and other moral visions of the political economy (s. ch. 5). However, it equally proved to severely hamper the flow of conversation. For this reason, it was dropped after a small number of interviews.

At a point of the research process, when the centrality of social integration via work had started to show, a small set of question was added that aimed to survey the subjective significance of work and other socio-economic phenomena. These were: “What does “work” mean for you?”, “What does “property” mean for you”? and “What does “solidarity” mean for you?” (s. ch. 5.).

If interviewees reported unresolved, pressing “problem experiences” during the interview, generally, I have made an effort to understand how they have made sense of these experiences, how they have practically dealt with these, and what resources they have accessed that have

¹⁵⁵ As I discuss in ch.8, I found a stark difference between working-class and middle-class interviewees: the latter report many more “subjective” grievances situated in the realm of the family. The questions on religion and on cultural activities proved to be very fruitful, too: these show an effect on political attitude formation that I have theorized along mechanisms of “social integration” (s. ch. 3 & ch. 8).

enabled them to deal with the issue in one way or another. (For example: why is one person who loses their job able to find a new one, but someone else isn't? Was it due to contacts, human capital, labor market policy measures, or yet other factors?) Whenever possible, I have added the question of "Who could change something about this situation?". The intention behind this question is to understand which actors (Politicians? Unions? Individuals themselves? ...?) are perceived as *capable* to "make a change" in the sense of resolving the subjectively pressing problems at stake.

Sampling and Field Access

Prior to field entry, a demographic matrix was established along which interviewees were to be sampled. At least 50% of interviews should be conducted with individuals whose current or past occupation is "manual worker" based on the classification of occupational classes by Daniel Oesch (2006, s. also ch. 2). Within the manual worker category, a good spread should be achieved along the variables of age, gender¹⁵⁶, skill-level (skilled vs. unskilled worker) as well as unemployment experience.¹⁵⁷ In addition, a diversity of blue-collar occupations, industry sectors, and enterprise sizes should be represented.¹⁵⁸ Among the "non-manual workers", a broad spread of interviewees should be achieved along the *vertical* and *horizontal* dimensions of the Oesch-class scheme, what means both of *education-levels* and of *work logics*. Notably, a number of small business owners should be interviewed, whose socio-political link with workers to understand is in line with research question 3.

Below, I summarize descriptive statistics of the sample along the most important variables. Complete descriptive statistics are presented in Annex III.

¹⁵⁶ In Germany, about 8% of skilled workers and 38% of unskilled workers in manual occupations are female; that is about 18% of all manual workers (2016; estimate based on ESS round 8 data). In line with the proportions in the general population, the blue-collar worker sample consists of 17% women. The sample does not include interviewees who have explicitly identified as gender non-binary.

¹⁵⁷ As the research rationale is to find out about mechanisms of *nativist* attitude formation, the goal was set to sample interviewees *without* first- or second-generation migration background.

¹⁵⁸ This approach to sampling statistically non-representative dataset is known as "quota sampling" (Neuman 2014: 243; Moser 1952).

| | Austria | East Germany |
|---|---------|--------------|
| Manual worker | 37 | 38 |
| Manual worker + other occupation ¹⁵⁹ | 17 | 5 |
| Other occupation | 16 | 37 |
| < 35 | 18 | 16 |
| 35 – 55 | 25 | 30 |
| 55 < | 27 | 35 |
| M | 52 | 62 |
| F | 18 | 20 |
| Labor market insider | 42 | 54 |
| Labor market outsider | 28 | 27 |
| Active | 49 | 66 |
| Unemployed (currently) | 10 | 4 |
| Retired | 11 | 12 |
| Student/ in training | 1 | 1 |

Tab. 17: Demographic statistics of sample of 150 interviewees

Sampling was realized under the constraints of field access. Finding manual worker interviewees and even more a demographically diverse sample was, expectedly, quite some work.¹⁶⁰ Generally, working-class interviewees showed considerably higher distrust towards social science than middle-class interviewees with higher levels of scholastic/ academic education. The motivations to participate in a social scientific study, equally, showed to diverge along the lines of class and education. Many middle-class interviewees voiced that they found it “interesting” to participate in a study, wanted to know more about its preliminary results, and even felt flattered to be “interviewed”. The inverse is the case for working-class interviewees. The word “interview” was being (negatively) associated with being exposed on the media. I regularly received answers such as “why do you want to talk with me about politics, I don’t know anything about it”, expressing embarrassment along educative lines. Not few interviewees said that “talking” was not their thing (even if once we sat down, we often talked for one, two, three hours). Two things, finally, worked out rather well to convince working-class interviewees to meet, sit down, and talk about work, welfare, and politics. Firstly, these were *intermediaries* who are personally trusted (“I want to tell you that I would never do this if not my sister/ old friend/ trusted person had told me that you are OK”). Secondly, this was a

¹⁵⁹ In the Austrian case, this number is boosted by 10 unionist/ industrial works council members that were interviewed who exercise both a blue-collar occupation and, in fact, a managerial one.

¹⁶⁰ None of the interviewees received any pay or other incentives for their participation in the study. Participation has been entirely voluntary.

framing around “help” (rather than “interest”). I sometimes put it the following way: “I am *required* to write a dissertation for my studies and to interview people in worker occupations for it. Could you please *help me out?*”. The answers received to such a query were considerably more positive (“Always glad to help”; “I hope that it has helped you” [at the end of the interview]). My interpretation is that a meaningful link, a type of reciprocal (role) relationship¹⁶¹, needs to be established between interviewer and interviewee in order for the latter to make positive sense of their participation.

While generally, we may think of the contacts of CEOs or government members as particularly “valuable” contacts, let me tell you that when you want to interview 75 blue-collar workers about politics, their contacts become very, very valuable. In the Austrian field, I was helped to establish contacts with manual workers by a regional section of the Austrian Trade Union Federation (ÖGB). In this case – very thankfully – I was able to receive contacts of unionists, who would further forward me to workers in their respective enterprise. This generally worked quite well, however, was often hampered by concerns about data protection. Also, I understood soon that in this way, I would get mostly to workers with active unionist engagements, what presents a strong bias in terms of political attitude formation. A request to cooperate with a regional office of the Austrian Employment Office (AMS) was declined for reasons of data protection concerns.¹⁶²

Finally, two approaches worked well in both the Austrian and German fields to establish interviewee contacts. The first one was to first establish contact with potential “trust brokers” in the field. Such, typically, were socio-cultural professionals with a strong network of contacts in a local area. These persons dispose both of an understanding for the reasons and goals of social scientific research – and of a broad and socio-structurally diverse set of contacts in their geographical region. Several “intermediaries” have supported this research project to the degree of literally asking through their personal telephone directory whether friends and acquaintances would meet with me for an interview. By doing so, intermediaries have made this thesis possible, for what I owe them deep gratitude. I have grown up in Austria and was able to activate a network of contacts across the four regions of interest (Lower Austria, Vienna, Burgenland, Styria). I (used to) have less of a personal relationship with the German state of Saxony, however, I have travelled to the Saxonian field two times for preliminary field research (in 2018

¹⁶¹ Suspiciously in line with the conceptualization of social integration in ch. 2.

¹⁶² I know from other research projects that underwent a more extensive application process to cooperate with the Austrian AMS, what went successfully. These projects, however, focused on issues more immediately and uniquely related to issues of labor market administration, including “street-level” interactions between recipients and case workers.

and 2019). Contacts made during these preliminary stages proved to be absolutely essential to find 38 Saxonian workers who were ready to sit down and talk politics with me in 2020.

The second approach that succeeded was to first contact the owner or management of a company – interview them – and then ask whether I could interview the company’s employees, too. Sometimes it was possible to interview employees during work time, what perhaps increased readiness to participate (these interviews tended to be shorter and somewhat more formal, though). In other cases, a manager/ owner would ask people employed in their company whether they had the time to meet me after work. Even in this case, readiness was given in a good number of cases. When I was forwarded in this way, one downside proved to be that interviewees would be more reluctant to address problems they had with their superiors at work.

The entire sample of 150 interviews consists of 23 independent field entry points (10 in Austria, 13 in Germany). By “field entry points” I mean original contact persons who are based in the field and have forwarded me to others but are unrelated to each other. From these starting points, I have consistently used the technique of *snowballing* to establish contacts with further interviewees in the field: at the end of each single interview, I have asked whether the interviewee would forward me to further friends or acquaintances. In result, 23 branched networks of social ties departing from each original field entry point lead to the entirety of 150 individual cases covered by interviews.

Interviewing 75 “non manual workers”, on the contrary, was a rather feasible task. I have done many of these interviews so to say “along the way” of finding workers. Either, I would interview non-workers of whom I assumed they could later, also, forward me to workers. This helped in so far as they already knew what my interview was about and felt confident to recommend me to others. Or, I would ask whether I could interview further family members, friends, colleagues, club members, etc. who work in different occupations. Small business owners were rather accessible to interviews. Some of them appreciated the opportunity to speak about the history of their business, how they founded it or took it over, how they lead it, and so on.

The first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, which hit Austria and Germany starting from March/April 2020, was an obstacle to field research, but did not render it impossible.¹⁶³ I resorted to conducting interviews per telephone during the Austrian lockdown. Telephone interviews were on average shorter than personal interviews, and they lacked the personal talk before and after the interview strictly speaking. However, I felt that some people were even

¹⁶³ On data considerations see below.

more at ease speaking on the phone than when looking an interviewer in the eye. Also, some were at home for the reason of short-time work regulations (Vogtenhuber et al. 2021) and had even more time for giving an interview. As soon as possible, I changed to personal interviews while strictly complying with Covid-19 measures. As it was spring and summer, it was possible to meet interviewees outside, in open-air settings.

The Process of Interviewing

Most of the interviews were conducted between March and August 2020 (March-June: Austria; June-August: Saxony). A few were additionally realized in September 2020 in Austria. All interviews are listed In Annex III. Interviews are chronologically enumerated, “AT” standing for Austria, “DE” for (East-)Germany (AT-01; AT-02; DE-01; etc.).

The length of interviews has considerably varied. The average length is around 1,5 hours with several interviews being as long as 3 hours (outliers even around 4 hours). In cases where interviewees where interviewees only gave monosyllabic responses or time was limited, interviews are only 30-45 minutes in length.

The strategy in terms of interviewing style was to, sincerely, listen to the interviewee’s story. The interviewer would generally follow the substantive and emotive pathways embarked upon by the interviewee, express interest, recognize experiences, emotions, and views. Encouraging people to speak requires a lot of *being silent* oneself, while at the same time expressing vivid interest by means of gestures or small affirmations. In realization of this endeavor, I have after a while settled on the “Angela-Merkel-posture”: hands clasped in front of the belly, which has been read as a calm and interested pose by interviewees and reenforced trust in the conversation. Generally, it has proven crucial to establish a set of shared understandings at the beginning of the interview about what we are doing here and to remain within a space of reference to these understandings during the conversation. This has created trust, legitimacy, and a coherent “cognitive thread”, all of which enhances engagement in conversation.

Two aspects of the interviews have required specific approaches. Firstly, the interviews have included extensive and by nature (partially) interactive discussions of political issues. In this context, a substantive number of interviews has included the discussion of sociopolitical views in the right-wing populist-spectrum. To deal with this, a strategy of *understanding without agreeing* has been applied: the interviewer would generally encourage the interviewee to continue narrating and attentively listen to (whichever) views they express, themselves expressing interest and comprehension. The interviewer would not express support or

opposition to any types of views except if explicitly asked to, in what case they would give an honest and nuanced answer (e.g. emphasizing pro- and con-aspects where pertinent, so encouraging further debate, and positioning themselves more “in the middle” in cases of doubt), clearly delineating their role as interviewer from their personal views. Secondly, a substantive number of interviews has included narrations about personal biographical grievance experiences, some of which were (by nature) emotionally intense. This has raised ethical questions and questions of well-being (of both parties), which were dealt with in the following way. The interviewer would adopt an attitude of both sensibility and appropriate distance, always leaving the control over the narration to the interviewee, asking follow-up questions in a very careful/ respectful way and often demanding explicit permission to do so. The interviewer would, when appropriate, mirror emotions expressed by the interviewee (e.g. grief, anger, or in other situations, happiness), but always in lower intensity than the interviewee themselves. This has served both to symbolically validate the interviewee’s experience and to center the interview around a calm baseline, to which after intensive episodes it was possible to cognitively and emotively return. All interviews have ended in a slow and positive fade-out, namely with questions about values, family, and hobbies (s. above).

The interviewing process has led to numerous inductive findings. Most notably, the setting of grievance experiences in management-employee relations at the workplace (and more generally in the “social relations around work”) was not theorized beforehand, but appeared consistently during the interviewing process (in the narration of employment biographies, but also e.g. in response to the question on “occupational recognition”). The setting of grievances in the domain of the “labor market” was a theoretical expectation established beforehand. It turned out that experiences of the “labor market”, as lived by interviewees, manifest mostly in contact with its main *institutions*: employers on the one hand, and the public labor market administration (the employment office) on the other.

Why Interview Data Collected During the First Wave of Covid-19 is Suitable to Draw Conclusions on the Long-term Drivers of Working-class Welfare Chauvinism

An obvious objection to the reliability of interview data collected during an exceptional event such as the first wave of Covid-19 could be that it is not comparable with data collected during preceding or subsequent periods and cannot be used to build a theory that aims to explain socio-political phenomena that have prevailed in European societies in “normal” times.

There are several reasons why the collected interview data is a valid dataset to build a theory of *working-class welfare chauvinism*.

Firstly, the phenomenon of welfare chauvinism, which has its roots in the 1990s (Andersen/Bjørklund 1990) and has been an element of political life in many European democracies ever since (Careja/Harris 2022), rising to peak public salience during the 2010s, has persisted during the Covid-19 pandemic. The persistence of welfare chauvinist attitudes in the population is confirmed by survey data (Haderup/Schaeffer 2021; Helbling et al. 2022)¹⁶⁴ as well as by interviewees' responses in the collected dataset itself (s. ch.5). Moreover, PRRPs across Europe, Austria and Germany included, have *continued* to be welfare chauvinist during the pandemic (Rinaldi/Bekker 2021; Falkenbach/Greer 2021; Bambra/Lynch 2021). There is no evidence that welfare chauvinism entirely disappeared from the public scene (or even decreased its salience by more than during other fluctuations between the 1990s and the 2010s) even during the intensive contestations of governmental Covid-measures (lockdowns, vaccination campaigns) that gained momentum in autumn 2020 (Nachtwey/Frei/Schäfer 2020), which is after the fieldwork period. All of this suggests that there was sufficient stability in the *dependent variable* in March-September 2020 to draw conclusions about large, long-standing, patterns and relationships.¹⁶⁵

Secondly, it is to a high degree possible to distinguish between work- and welfare-related “grievance experiences” that derive from reasons preceding the pandemic and from such driven by the pandemic in the interview data. In many cases, the “problems” at stake are considerably long-standing issues. This means that Covid-induced alteration in the main *independent variable*, too, remains within a range that allows a reasonable assessment of long-standing patterns.

Thirdly, as the pandemic was publicly framed as an entirely “new”, unprecedented condition, many interviewees explicitly distinguish in their narration between “now” and “before”. (E.g. “I need to attend meetings at the employment regularly. *Now* I don’t need to, for Covid. But I

¹⁶⁴ These results are corroborated by further evidence suggesting that established patterns of immigration-attitudes were not fundamentally reversed by the pandemic. Albeit the pandemic has had a relative impact on the public salience of migration-related issues: surveying 11 European countries, Heizmann/Huth-Stöckle (2022) find that the pandemic has led to marginally (yet significantly) increased immigrant-blaming among those with higher subjective Covid-related threat perceptions. At the same time, in countries with more Covid-related deaths, immigrant-blaming temporarily decreased to a considerable degree (Austria and Germany, however, have the lowest death rates among 11 European countries studied by the authors).

¹⁶⁵ My definition of “exclusivist” views of welfare deservingness considers “blaming of the (native) unemployed” as much as “welfare chauvinism” towards immigrants. If anything, a crisis would be expected to increase solidarity levels (reference Buss/Ebbinghaus/Naumann 2017), at least within the “native” in-group. However, I find a consistent link between “kicking down” (social outgroup-blaming) onto the unemployed and non-working immigrants (s. ch. 5). This, too, suggests that I measure longer-standing attitudinal patterns in the interview data.

wonder how it will be after the lockdown”).) As many interviews are set during the first wave, the pandemic is being framed as an “exceptional” condition and distinguished from the norm.

Last but not least, the pandemic condition has offered particular opportunities for research into working-class politics. Governments across Europe used a concept of “essential workers” to define who should keep working and who should stay at home (Timmerman 2020; Samek et al. 2021; Schönauer/Stadler 2021). This concept has typically *included* blue-collar occupations and is being taken up by some interviewees as a positive self-identification (s. ch. 5).

4.5 Data Analysis and Theory Building: Methods and Process

In this section, I provide a brief overview of the process of data analysis. This process has entailed several work steps. These are: firstly, choice of a restraint sample of interviews with blue-collar workers for the purpose of theory building. Secondly, theory building, which in itself has been a prolonged process including inductive and deductive logics of reasoning. Thirdly, the test of the theory on the entire sample (test of whether the theorized mechanisms are represented in the remaining interviews with manual workers and to what degree they differ in interviews with members of other occupational classes).

Coding and Choosing a Restraint Sample for Theory Building

In a first step, all 150 interviews were attributed codes based on the most important categories of the research question as well as by demographic categories.¹⁶⁶ These were the following:

| | |
|---|---|
| Welfare chauvinism | 1 / 0 |
| Salient unresolved problem experiences ¹⁶⁷ | 1 / 0 |
| - in which area(s) of life? | Employment relations, labor market, retirement, unemployment, employment office, height of income, poverty, family, marriage market, inter-group contact with x, etc. |
| Occupation | Manual Worker/ Other |
| Labor market status | Insider/ Outsider |
| Age | < 35 ; 35 – 55 ; 50 < ; retired |
| Gender | m/ f |

¹⁶⁶ A large part of the interviews was transcribed to enable data analysis. This has notably included most of the interviews with manual workers. Another part was only partially transcribed.

¹⁶⁷ At this stage, a relatively high level of sensibility was applied to the “grievances” variable, i.e. relatively many issues were coded as such. The criterion for attributing a “1” on this variable, however, was that an interviewee’s narration clearly shows the “problem” in question is either an issue of considerable subjective concern or considerably interferes with their goals/ values/ social relationships (see definitions made in ch. 4.3).

| | |
|---------|--------|
| Country | AT/ DE |
|---------|--------|

Tab. 18: Primary coding of each interview¹⁶⁸

A restraint sample of 25 interviews, exclusively of the “manual worker” occupational category, was then chosen for the purpose of theory building. These 25 interviews were chosen so to represent *most diverse* cases along the main variables of interest, namely welfare chauvinism and grievance experiences, as well as diverse demographic categories. For example, I have chosen interviews which were classified as showing “welfare chauvinism” *and* (various types of) grievance experiences, but also such that *only* showed “chauvinism” (but no salient grievances) and such that *only* showed “grievances” (but no chauvinism). A close-to-equal amount of Austrian and East-German interviewees, both men and women, various age groups, labor market “insiders” and “outsiders”¹⁶⁹ were selected.

Assessing the Credibility of Narrated Experiences

At the stage of data analysis, an important methodological issue was to assess the *credibility* of narrated experiences. There could be several reasons why interviewees would not report their biography, and specific lived experiences therein, truthfully (s. ch. 4.3 & 4.4). On the one hand, “personal grievance experiences” are a topic that one may not wish to speak openly about: it can be personally disagreeable to recall negative experiences and in addition associated with feelings of embarrassment to do so in front of someone else. On the other hand, people may overstate or understate personal experiences. They may do so for political reasons: e.g. someone with left-wing convictions may overstate the failures of employers (while remaining silent about those of the employed). Also, they may do so simply for the reason of personal narration style: some people have an expressive and emotional narration style, while others remain “dry” and taciturn.

¹⁶⁸ The preliminary coding of interviewees’ attitudes on the “welfare chauvinism” issue in a binary way required some simplification. Clear “1”-s express strongly unfavorable and overly generalized views of immigrants’ social rights. Typically, this entails the view that immigrants, *generally*, want to “take advantage of” the state/ national community. Clear “0”-s express either outrightly solidaristic or (more often) nuanced views. “Nuanced” views typically entail a neutral undertone towards the issue and come with argued as opposed to purely moral distinctions on who should hold which social rights and why. On the question of refugee aid specifically (which shows to drive the “welfare chauvinism” issue in the interviews), there is some argumentative/ emotive/ moral neutrality or nuance. There are several (but not numerous) cases in the “grey zone” between 0 and 1, which were attributed to either category based on which tendency is more pronounced in the interviewee’s narration. Later, both the definition of the dependent variable and its coding have been considerably refined (s. below).

¹⁶⁹ Labor market “insiders” have stable, full-time employment trajectories; while labor market “outsiders” have interrupted employment trajectories or “atypical” (e.g. part-time) contracts (s. Emmenegger et al. 2012; Rovny/Rovny 2017; ch. 2). Most operationalizations of the concept rely on cross-sectional survey data and hence refer to *current* labor-market status. The biographical interviews, on the contrary, contain consistent information on individuals’ labor-market status during their entire *life-course*. I have therefore used a more refined, biographical operationalization of labor-market status, which is explained in Annex II.

In order to deal with these issues, I have made an effort to assess the *credibility* of interviewees' biographic accounts in several ways. Firstly, for each narrated experience that I have considered at the stage of the data analysis, I have verified whether the narration is sufficiently *concrete* to make credible things have happened in such a way. For example, when someone states "this way really bad", this would not be a very concrete account of a situation. If, however, they provide details on *what* was bad, *why* it was bad, and yet in addition on the *settings* in which *who* did *what*, this can count as a rather concrete account. Secondly, I have assessed each narrated experience in relation to the given interviewee's *narration style*, i.e., in relation to how they have expressed themselves during other parts of the interview. For example, some interviewees use numbers to express emotions rather than to establish precise facts: they would say "two million" when they mean "a lot". The good thing is that interviewees typically repeat such stylistic elements throughout the entire interview, what provides a context for the adapt interpretation of specific passages. Thirdly, whenever possible, I have already at the stage of field research tried to query multiple interviewees about the same "problematic" situation: this has been possible when interviewing multiple people who know each other, e.g. friends, family-members, colleagues, etc. This inter-subjective data has been considered at the stage of data analysis to establish a further aspect of credibility. Lastly and most importantly, my approach to theory-building is based on the analysis of *repeated patterns* across the sample of interviews. Even if one interviewee would completely make up their story, the probability is lower that five, ten, or more do so, unrelated to each other, and in similar ways.

Theory Building

The restraint sample of 25 interviews was used for theorizing the mechanisms that link "grievance experiences" and "political preferences". For this purpose, interviews were close-read multiple times and coded in detail by using the NVivo qualitative data analysis software package. Initially, a diverse range of concepts and codes was developed in "inductive" manner from individual interviews, which later were condensed to fewer concepts or, if no more pertinent, dropped. After each significant step of inductive theorization, literature was consulted make sense of the mechanisms apparent in the data in the light of existing theories.

During this process of data analysis, "producerism" was added as a category by which interviews were coded. The "blaming of the unemployed" and of "welfare scroungers" was merged with welfare chauvinism into a common category of "welfare exclusivism". Also, to the originally binary coding of both "welfare chauvinism" and "producerism", a third, negative value was added (+1 / 0 / -1) for those interviewees who expressed outright opposite views to

the nominal attitudinal patterns. This third value was later interpreted as a categorically different normative view, namely as “welfare inclusivism” and “post-productivism” (s. ch. 3 & ch. 5). The same was done for “grievance experiences” (coding +1 / 0 / -1). The “opposite” of grievance experiences are particularly positive social experiences. It later turned out that a majority of these can be interpreted as experiences of social *inclusion*.

At a certain point of data analysis, it became clear that a number of interviewees who do not themselves live salient grievance experiences are, however, embedded in a social environment in which both “exclusivist” socio-political attitudes and a generally “pessimistic” view of society are common. These interviewees tend to adapt corresponding views themselves “sociotropically”. I have hence added a coding to all interviews based on *social ties* and *experiences* of inter-group contact that captures whether they are embedded in more “pessimistic” vs. “optimistic” social environments.

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Social embedding | “Pessimistic” vs. “optimistic” environments |
|------------------|---|

Tab. 19: Additional coding of interviews during data analysis process

At a later stage of data analysis, it has turned out that in many cases, collective “pessimism” can be explained by collective *exclusion* (s. ch. 3, ch. 6 & ch. 8).

Equally, I found during data analysis that “patronalism”, i.e. an overly identification of workers with charismatic, “strongmen” types of *entrepreneurs*, who bash labor unions but personally “care” about “their” workers, presents an independent mechanism of the formation of “producerist and welfare chauvinist” attitudes (s. ch. 6).

The process of data analysis has finally led to the theory presented in chapter 3: two mechanisms of “social integration” have been singled out, namely (1) integration into the dominant societal order of advanced capitalist “growth society” and (2) integration between socio-structural groups (s. ch. 3.1). These mechanisms occur in three areas of social life, namely (a) in the social relations around work, (b) in citizen – welfare state relations, and (c) in socio-cultural spheres (s. ch. 3.2). These mechanisms lead to the formation of three “vertical” socio-structural coalitions (s. ch. 3.3) and inform these coalitions’ political outlooks, which are equally categorized as a *tripartite* variable: “moderate productivism”, “post-productivism”, “producerism and welfare chauvinism” (s. *ibid*).

In the final definition the dependent variable (political outlooks), the concept of *salience* plays an important role. “Moderate” workers argue their views on welfare access in similar terms as “chauvinist” workers do. The difference is that “moderates” hold morally neutral views of

welfare recipients, differentiate in their ideas on required policy actions, and attribute low salience to the issue. “Chauvinists”, on the contrary, hold morally negative views of welfare recipients, undifferentiatedly support restrictive and “punitive” social policies, and attribute high salience to the issue. I will briefly explain how I have measured “issue salience” in qualitative interview data.

Measuring Issue Salience in Qualitative Interview Data

The concept of “salience”, when applied to individual political attitudes, captures the degree to which we are concerned about a political issue. In other words, it measures which issue(s) we *prioritize* (Wlezien 2005; Dennison 2019). Salience is distinguished from substantive issue positions (I can think that marijuana should be legalized but also think that raising minimum wages and women’s pensions is a higher priority). Issue salience is often measured by means of the survey question: “What is the most important problem facing [the country]?” (s. Wlezien 2005). I have not consistently asked such an interview question and hence looked for other ways to measure salience in the qualitative interview data.

Salience has been measured in the qualitative interview data by a combination of several approaches. Firstly, I have assessed about which political issues an interviewee speaks *more* than about other issues.¹⁷⁰ This enables a measurement relative to the verbal and expressive style of each individual interviewee. Secondly, I have taken into account which political issues interviewees have addressed by themselves, without being prompted by the interviewer. When interviewees bring up the issue of “welfare chauvinism” by themselves, without being prompted, this is a sign that they hold this is a relevant issue. Thirdly, I have taken into account explicit prioritization. This is f. ex. the case when someone states, “this is the problem politics should really care about”. It is also the case when an interviewee explicitly links an issue to their partisan preferences (“This is why I support party X”). Fourthly, emotional and moral expression was taken into account – in relation to they way an interviewee speaks about other issues and topics. A higher emotionality and moralization of one issue in comparison to others can, too, point at higher subjective relevance.

In practice, the classification of “salience” has been a quite feasible task for the large majority of interviews, because the four elements often coincide. Interviewees who were classified as seeing “welfare chauvinism” as a salient issue typically speak extensively about this topic, bring

¹⁷⁰ The approach to measure issue salience as quantitative prominence in textual data is common in supply-side analyses, e.g. of party manifesto data or of parliamentary speeches (s. e.g. Ivanusch 2023: 6 ff.).

up this topic without being promoted, explicitly prioritize this problem, *and* emotionalize/moralize it. In the most extreme case, an interviewee has responded to my interview introduction (“I would like to speak with you about your experience of work and the welfare state”) by stating “The problem of the welfare state is that the wrong people get the money”. (I followed up and it clarified that he meant immigrants as opposed to natives and the “undeserving” as opposed to the “deserving” unemployed.) In less extreme cases, interviewees brought up the “welfare chauvinism” issue during the discussion of their own work and welfare experiences (e.g. in the way of “I have worked my whole life and get as much of a retirement pension as someone who has done nothing”, s. ch. 7) or in response to the “public budget” (austerity) question (e.g. “The question is what we spend money on. I don’t see, for example, why each immigrant should receive ...”).

Testing the Theory on the Entire Sample

Upon completion of the theorization of causal mechanisms based on the restrained sample of 25 interviews with manual workers, I have formulated *theoretical propositions* (s. ch. 3) which I have subsequently tested on the entire sample of 150 interviews (75 with manual workers, 75 with members of other occupation groups). The procedure for the 75 interviews with manual workers has differed from that applied to the 75 interviews with members of other occupation groups.

The procedure of *testing* the theory developed on the 75 interviews with manual workers has been the following. For each individual case, I have attributed a classification of whether, either, it “corresponds” to the theorized mechanisms, it “partly corresponds”, or does “not correspond”.

I have applied the classification “correspondence” when the mechanisms apparent in an interview are highly similar to those theorized. For example, an analyzed interview would show pressing grievances related to employer relations and an arguable mechanism of “chauvinist laborist” identity formation that leads to “producerist and welfare chauvinist” views (s. ch. 6). In the case of “correspondence”, I cite the respective interview in support for the respective theorized “outlook” in ch. 5 and/ or for the respective theorized mechanism of preference formation in ch. 6-8.¹⁷¹

¹⁷¹ In the presentation of findings in chapters 5 – 8 I do not distinguish between interviews on which the theory was built and interviews that confirm (correspond to) the theory. I do present “nuances” based on those interviews which “partly corresponded” and I address some “alternative mechanisms” based on those interviews that did “not correspond” in ch. 8.

I have applied the classification “partial correspondence” when theorized mechanisms are apparent in an interview, but either they are *less pronounced* or they take ways that *somewhat* (but not essentially) *diverge* from reference cases. For example, while most manual workers in the sample show a specifically “laborist” version of “productivist” views (s. ch. 5.1), this characteristic is more pronounced for some than it is for others: namely for skilled as opposed to unskilled workers and for labor market insiders as opposed to labor market outsiders (s. *ibid*). For a different example, the mechanism leading from “exclusion experiences with the welfare state” to political preference formation tends to somewhat differ for elderly and young workers, and it is specific for those with health problems (s. ch. 7). In the case of “partial correspondence”, I have checked whether the “nuance” at stake is theoretically relevant and/ or whether it applies to several, as opposed to one unique, interview. Generally, I report the nuances found in the empirical chapters 5 – 8.

I have applied the classification “non-correspondence” when priorly theorized mechanisms do *not* show in a newly analyzed interview. In case of non-correspondence with theorized mechanisms, I have tried to analyze which other mechanisms can explain the political preference formation of this interviewee. I briefly discuss some of these in chapter 8. For example, these include “political engagement”, by which I understand active involvement into partisan or unionist organizations. They also include an independent mechanism of “socialization”: there are interviewees who show to have adapted certain political views based on primary political socialization (in their family) or secondary political socialization (in their circle of friends while adolescent, at school) and to keep these even if both my mechanisms of “social integration” would predict otherwise.¹⁷²

When testing the theorized mechanisms on the remaining sample of interviews, I have *not* for each individual “(partially) corresponding” case considered alternative mechanisms that could explain the same outcomes. In all of the cases, and perhaps in any person’s biography, several mechanisms that could theoretically explain political preference formation are present in parallel and I cannot think of an ultimately plausible way, at least based on the given data, to know which mechanism exerts a stronger influence in which *individual* case. I do, however, present a reasoning about alternative explanations in chapters 1, 6, 7, and 8, providing arguments on why such are unlikely to overrule, explain or neutralize the theorized mechanisms *globally speaking* in the sample.

¹⁷² This said, workplace-based political preference formation as studied by this thesis can equally qualify as secondary political socialization, s. ch. 6.

The procedure for testing the theory on the 75 interviews with non-workers has been less strict and mainly served the purpose to find out about whether mechanisms, globally speaking, are (very) similar or (starkly) different across socio-structural groups. I report the results of this comparison in chapters 5 – 8. The socio-structural group of small business owners has received special attention, as their interaction with manual workers is an explicit interest of this thesis (s. ch. 1, 3.2, 6, 8).

4.6 Logistic Regression Analysis

In order to provide a test of the external validity of one of the main propositions formulated in this thesis (P3b “workplace exclusion”), I conduct a logistic regression analysis using International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) 2015 data for all European countries. The data, coding, analysis, and findings are presented in ch. 6.7.

Chapter 5. Varieties of Laborism: Manual Workers' Visions of the Advanced Capitalist Political Economy

*The incentive for the unemployed shall be to get active,
to do something for society. And for the migrant, equally. (AT-38)*

*When we finally make Austria more stress-free,
then people will look for work anyway. (AT-24)*

*Thousands of young men in front of the border – of working age!
They come to us and say, where is my money? (AT-34)*

In this chapter I describe the thesis' dependent variable, which is manual workers' *visions of the advanced capitalist political economy*. Based i.a. on the literature on the moral economy of welfare states (i.a. Mau 2003; Michel 2017), in ch. 3.2, I have formulated expectations on how contemporary manual workers' attitudes on *welfare deservingness* make part of a more holistic and *moral* vision of the political economy that contains definitions of the *common good* and of *rights and duties* of members of society. Namely, I have hypothesized that in advanced capitalist "growth societies", the idea of *productive contribution* plays a central role in this matter; however in several, controversial, variations (s. i.a. Giddens 1994: 175 ff). I expect there to be three large types. These are firstly, "moderate productivist" views, which hold that all members of society should "productively" contribute to the common good, however, they see a broad variety of contributions to be valuable and they have nuanced and moderate views on deviance from the rule of contribution (**P1b**). Secondly, "producerist" and "welfare chauvinist" views equally support the proposition that everyone should contribute, but they are radically materialistic in their vision of what is a valuable contribution and they have radically-exclusivist stances on deviation from the contribution-rule (i.a. Derks 2003; Ivaldi/Mazzoleni 2019; **P1c**). Finally, thirdly, "post-productivist" views hold that more than enough value is circulating in the political economy so that there should not be a universal duty of contribution (Giddens 1994: 182 ff.; **P1d**). While I expect this typology to capture moral-economic attitudes among the advanced capitalist European citizenry in general, I expect manual workers specifically to emphasize *work* as the default contribution everyone should make to the common good even

more than other social types do so (**P1a** “*laborism*”).¹⁷³ I have highlighted the question of whether besides paid work also unpaid work (including care work and reproductive labor) is being recognized as a “valuable contribution” by those who formulate “laborist” views (see Hochschild/Machung 1989; Federici 2012).

| Post-Productivism | Moderate Productivism | Producerism and Welfare Chauvinism |
|---|---|--|
| Rejection of contribution logic | Contributionism with a broad vision of social value | Contributionism with a narrow vision of social value |
| Radical inclusivism | Moderate views of deviation | Radical views of deviation |
| Laborism Work stands at the center of the political economy | | |

Tab. 20 Laborism and cross-cutting ideologies that lead to “varieties” of laborism

The analysis of 150 qualitative interviews lends support to P1b-d. I find interviewees with “moderate productivist”, “producerist and welfare chauvinist”, as well as with characteristically “post-productivist” views.

“Moderate productivist” interviewees use similar moral categories to frame their vision of the political economy as “producerist and chauvinist” interviewees do: most notably, both groups propose that everyone should *contribute* to the common good. A notable difference between moderate and producerist socio-political outlooks, however, is the *salience* of the welfare deservingness issue. It is low among the prior but high among the latter. Furthermore, “producerist” interviewees make pronounced negative moral judgements about “those who do not work”. Post-productivists, again, make *categorically* different statements: they reject a duty to (productively) contribute.

Within the dataset, there are considerably more manual workers in the “moderate” and “producerist” than in the “post-productivist” category. Furthermore, manual workers’ framing of “productivism” is consistently more about *work* than other interviewees’. This evidence in support of P1a leads me to describe a characteristic (blue-collar) working-class version of productivist views, which I call “laborism” (ch. 5.1). Laborism aligns with any of the three “visions of the political economy” described above, leading to more inclusivist vs. exclusivist varieties of working-class sociopolitical outlooks. Its “moderate” variant is well-described as

¹⁷³ This hypothesis is based on two theoretical claims: firstly, social integration *via work* is relatively speaking more important for the working-class than for the middle-class who disposes of more alternative (socio-cultural) channels of integration. Secondly, manual (physical) work is the most “materialistic” of all work logics in the occupational class structure and as such serves as a strong basis for moral claims about labor in general (s. ch.3)

“moderate laborism” (s. ch. 5.2); while its “exclusivist” (“producerist and welfare chauvinist”) variant is well described as “chauvinist laborism” (ch. 5.3).

While many workers, indeed, use “work” as a central referent of their (“laborist”) vision of the political economy, they largely limit this moral vision to *paid* employment. Neither male nor female manual workers highlight unpaid work as a “valuable contribution” that entitles to reciprocal solidarity from the welfare state within a productivist framework.¹⁷⁴

Among blue-collar workers, attitudinal producerism tends to overlap with nativism and the blaming of social outgroups, hence going hand in hand with *welfare chauvinism*. In the given dataset, more manual workers, clerks, and small business owners than other occupational types are found in this category. There is a logic visible of “kicking down”, of blame-shifting on ever-weaker social outgroups, even within the group that holds “producerist and welfare chauvinist” views (s. also ch. 7): the more interviewees can claim to have *productively contributed* themselves to the community (e.g. through their work, through tax payments, etc.) the more their arguments about social membership focus on “contribution” and “producerism” (manual workers in this case typically speak of “*work*” as a condition of social membership). The less an interviewee can claim to have productively contributed themselves, the more their argument focuses on “nativity” as a condition for social membership. This accounts for a notable difference between manual workers who are labor market insiders (who are in stable employment, s. Emmenegger et al. 2012) and those who are labor market outsiders (who have interrupted employment careers, atypical contracts, or are unemployed). These groups use *different arguments* to argue their social belonging as a part of *the same* far right, “exclusivist” social coalition.

I have theorized that this typology of *three attitudinal blocs* is associated to political supply in a twofold way: parties supply narratives that turn pre-configured social outlooks into concrete political preferences. By doing so, at the same time, they mobilize electoral support (“resonance”). This is confirmed by interviewee’s reported partisan attitudes, even if the data does not allow fully consistent conclusions on this point as not all interviewees have given clear

¹⁷⁴ I interpret this so that interviewees’ mirror the norms of the given institutional framework. The given regulations of the welfare state under-valuate unpaid work. Normative discourses which challenge this status-quo are on the rise, but tendentially in academic circles, which are relatively far from manual workers. Numerous interviewees highlight the problematic when speaking of women’s retirement pensions, when framing “single mothers” as a particularly deserving social category, and so on; and numerous interviewees express recognition for unpaid work per se. They simply do not link it to welfare entitlements.

answers on partisan preferences. Interviewees in the “exclusivist” category, in any case, show by far the highest explicit PRRP-support.

In spite of the differences between the Austrian and the East German case studied (s. ch. 4), I do not find much difference in manual workers visions of the political economy in the two countries, *globally speaking*. When it comes to detail, for sure there are nuances. The most visible example is that a small number of “chauvinist” East German interviewees state they would support “forced labor” for the long-term unemployed; such a proposition is not voiced by the Austrian interviewees.

When it comes to partisan support, there is difference which can be assumed to derive from the different political offer (s. ch. 4). In both countries, populist radical right-wing parties (PRRPs, concretely FPÖ and AfD) are the most mentioned parties supported by “producerist and welfare chauvinist” interviewees. In *both* countries, however, Austrian center-right-turned-populist-right politician Sebastian Kurz is also mentioned by interviewees in this category, namely typically by those who are economically somewhat better off – e.g. by labor market insider workers with stable salaries. Labor market outsiders, low earners and “chauvinist”-minded welfare recipients have a clear tendency to PRRPs, emphasizing welfare chauvinism as a main issue. In Germany, Kurz is sometimes mentioned together with former center-right politician Theodor von Guttenberg. In East Germany, certain far-left politicians who have emphasized populist and authoritarian statements also have limited visibility in this group (Sarah Wagenknecht).

Among “moderate productivist” manual workers, centrist parties are most often mentioned; however, center-right wing parties decisively more often than center-left wing parties. This notably counts for workers who reside in rural areas. Active unionists are the only category who voice support for center-left-wing parties almost without exception. In Austria, a considerably high number of “moderate” manual workers, and also some “producerist/ chauvinist” manual workers voice tentative support for Hans-Peter Doskozil, a regional social-democratic politician, who has enjoyed rising popularity using pronounced “laborist” discourse, mixed with restrictive stances on migration. In Saxony, center-right regional governor Kretschmar, who has run a successful campaign emphasizing liberal-conservative values and a clear opposition to PRRP AfD, is often positively mentioned in this category. Barely any manual worker in the “moderate” category considers supporting PRRPs, the large majority explicitly distances themselves from right-wing populist politics.

There is limited evidence that post-productivist interviewees support green parties; however, the N of interviewees in this category is too small to make a meaningful statement on partisan support; and the question is too often not coherently answered among this category.

These findings provide an answer to research question 1 and a partial answer to research question 3 (s. ch. 1). Showing evidence for P1a-d, I find that *welfare chauvinism* is an element of a “producerist and chauvinist” vision of *legitimacy relations* in the advanced capitalist political economy, serving as a *smallest common denominator* of a socio-economically extremely unequal, “vertical” social coalition that is built on blame-shifting on the ever-weaker unit. This provides an explanation of how the peculiar coalition of small capitalists, employed workers and unemployed (or precarious) workers come together on an *ideological* level.¹⁷⁵

In following chapters (6-8), I offer explanations of how interviewees *form* this or that vision of the political economy. I argue that the three socio-political outlooks characterized in this chapter are partly explained by three *socio structural coalitions* that stand behind them. The “moderate” social bloc consists of members of diverse social classes, all of whom find themselves well-integrated into the dominant, productivist social order of advanced capitalist growth societies through their work and through welfare entitlements. These individuals are “moderate” in the sense that they hold a preference for maintaining a social order *in which they have a stake*. The “producerist right-wing” bloc consists importantly of marginalized small business owner and (manual) workers (labor market insiders and outsiders), who experience exclusion in the domain of work and or of welfare solidarity. Being excluded from the dominant, productivist social order, this radically-materialist social coalition’s goal can be circumscribed as to “take back” productivism. Their internal coherence is built on a mechanism of conflict externalization. Finally, the “post-productivist left-wing” bloc mainly consists of socio-cultural professionals, of individuals occupied in the education, arts, and health sectors, and those in close contact with them; however, it also mobilizes a part of (notably younger) social outsiders. Their outlook being built on the social-liberal idea of “limitless inclusion” (everyone is equal – at least at face-level), this social coalition’s goal is in essence to “overcome” productivism. Sorting into these socio-structurally speaking “vertical” coalitions is explained by integration or exclusion via work, citizen-state relations, and socio-cultural spheres (ch. 6-8).

¹⁷⁵ On practical, socially integrative, links that hold together this peculiar coalition see the section on small enterprises and “patronalism” in ch. 6.

5.1 The Working-Class and Laborism: “Work” as the Central Referent of a Vision of the Political Economy

The question is ... whether you work or not. (AT-38)

Most interviewed manual workers, both in Austria and in East Germany, place the *value of work* at the very center of their vision of the political economy. Typically, this comes with a twofold meaning of “work”. Firstly, “work” is seen the legitimate and taken for granted mode of building a material existence and earning a social status. Secondly, hand in hand with this, “work” is associated with making a socially valuable contribution to the common good of the community. This concept of “work” seamlessly merges notions of *paid employment*, *occupational labor*, and *laborious effort*, as well as of both *material* and *social* value. I call the vision of the political economy that puts this moral-economic concept of work center-stage “laborism” (s. ch. 3.2) and interpret it as one specific (sub-)form of “productivism” (s. ch. 3.2, hereabove & ch. 5.2 – 5.4).

Workers use “laborist” frames when arguing their views on *who* should get *what* and *why* from socio-economic policy (v. Oorschot 2000) as well as in more generic judgements on the legitimacy of material income and social status. The most important axis of heterogeneity in the usage of laborist frames is between employed and unemployed workers: the longer someone has been out of employment, the less they use laborist frames. Interestingly, even employed workers emphasize “work” considerably less strongly when expressing identities of their own than when voicing judgements of others. Positive *collective* identities related to work are rare and semantically fragmented. *Individual* identification with occupational roles and positions at the workplace is more pronounced among skilled than unskilled workers and among the long-term full-time than short-term or part-time employed. There is no visible difference in “laborist” frame usage and identification with work between male and female workers *in equivalent positions*. The same counts for a comparison across age groups.

The centrality of “work” makes part of a *productivist* vision of the political economy (everyone should *productively contribute* to the common good, s. ch. 5.2 – 5.4). While many non-manual workers in the dataset of interviews share the productivist vision overall, they place less emphasis on *work* as the default, most valorized or even only valorized type of “productive” contribution. Interviewed small business owners, for example, tend to use *paying taxes* as a

default justification. The further we move up the ladder of *education* and *skill*, these very elements serve as justifications for socio-economic legitimacy. I interpret this so that for many (blue-collar) workers, “work” itself acts as the most important channel of social integration (s. ch. 2 & 3). In addition, experiences made during manual work specifically may present a solid experiential basis for the construction of “laborist” identities.

Researcher: Recently, a property tax has been proposed in Austria, starting at 1 million euros. What do you think of it?

Carpenter, later post-man (retired, m, 55<, AT-25): When someone has extremely much, they usually have not worked for it. [...] I know many people who, through work, have not reached a million. This is why I am for, above one million euro, they should pay the tax.

Throughout the sample of manual workers, whether or not “you have worked” for something is used as a justification for whether you *deserve* it. In this “laborist” view, having earned a resource through one’s labor entitles to legitimately hold it within society. This view informs policy preferences, for example, on property taxation. Property earned through work is seen “honestly” earned property. This given, the type of property typically mentioned by workers is privately inhabited real estate, a single-family home, in the form either of a house or an apartment. Not few of the workers who live in rural or peri-urban areas own a home; most of them know plenty of people who own one and can project themselves into doing so. Even more importantly, most manual workers who own houses have actually *built* (or at least, renovated) these themselves, supported by family and friends, many of whom dispose of the required skillsets, and laboriously supported the building projects of their family and friends. Not every blue-collar occupation is set in the construction sector, but most of them bring skillsets relevant to construction. In addition, doing works oneself is a normal, taken-for-granted, and positively valorized thing within the worker milieu. Notably among male workers, it can come as something between a hobby and a life purpose (AT-25, AT-29, AT-30, AT-50, AT-52; AT-57; DE-03, DE-13, DE-24, DE-64, to name only those who explicitly express it this way). Interviewees reason about the economic value of these houses (paid for by their occupational labor’s wages and build through their own labor) and typically support taxing property above the value of a family home.

Besides economic income and property, in the laborist vision, work legitimizes social status. An Austrian plumber in his 50s, for example, reasons about whether those “on top” in society are there deservedly or not: “*Mh hm hm. How shall I say it. These are normal people, too, only they have done it differently to get on top. They have chosen the right profession.*” (AT-27). He

implies that some professions pay off more than others in terms of the social status position they yield. However, those who work in higher status occupations are still “normal” in so far as they work as everyone else. “*On the other hand, he reconsiders, when one person is on top, others tend to get there automatically. In politics, for example, a lot of people get there who are not worth it.*” He opposes the legitimate, work-based, logic of social mobility to an illegitimate logic of nepotism via the short-cut of friendship, kinship, or partisan ties. Many workers share these views. An unemployed Austrian factory worker (m, 55<, AT-01), who at the same time is District Commander of the Volunteer Fire Brigade in his rural region, tells a similar story:

Interviewee: Today, there's no chance you can join the professional fire department. I've been in the District command for 35 years. We worked a lot with [a major transport hub]; I know the chief personally. There's one job posted: such a stack [of applications] – 200 files. Great people with experience from the volunteer fire department. But: the minister, of course, comes, picks the ones below, puts them on top, and says: this one will be appointed tomorrow. [The chief] says, I have to keep my mouth shut. If I say no, I'll be unemployed tomorrow. [...] It's like that everywhere. If you know someone in higher ranks, you can be dumb and deaf [sic!]. [You] run around in there... but what [you] actually do there, it doesn't matter.

Researcher: Has this always been like that?

I: Actually not. People used to be more capable. People used to give recommendations, to say, he's [sic!] actually interested, he's good at the job. But... it's getting worse all the time.

This interviewee perceives the *undervaluation of work* to be a social problem. He interprets it in temporal terms, associating it with a criticism of modernization (also expressed in other parts of the interview) and with nostalgia. A 28-years old German roofer has similar perceptions. However, instead of historical change, he locates the blame with large institutions: “*In large companies [...] someone comes in and says, so, you will be promoted to this and that job. People are simply being lifted up, they don't work for it.*” He goes on to compare how managers in large firms “*do not know how it is when you work yourself.*” (DE-43)

Laborism qualifies as a specific version of a *meritocratic* view (Mijs/Savage 2020; Mijs 2021). Meritocracy, generally, is the idea that social status should be earned – however, there can be multiple interpretations of *in what way* it should be earned. Laborist workers specify: by one's own work. This concept of “work” merges the meaning of *occupational labor* and *paid employment* with that of *making an effort* and with a moral notion of *honesty*. Sometimes, this comes mixed with notions of *skill* and *experience*. This said, many workers reject the idea that

educative degrees are equivalent to occupational skill and on the contrary emphasize skills acquired through occupational practice. Notably, they reject the idea that educative *titles* inherently entitle to a level of social status (s. ch. 5.2 & 5.3). As a retired skilled worker in oil exploration emphasizes:

Our executives used to be people who had grown in the company; who had moved up starting in the dirt. They finished [university], then they were deployed outside. [...] They first of all spend two years crawling through the dirt with us. They saw everything. Then they moved up. Over the years, this system fell asleep. Then they started to have offices in the tower and thought they had seen the world. There were such and such types. "I'm from [engineering school], I am god." And then he looked surprised as god got soiled. Another, "I'm from [engineering school], I don't know anything yet." For the latter, I crawled into the muck myself, up to the neck, with pleasure. (AT-13)

At the same time, the laborist perspective comes with a profoundly negative view of financialization. In the finance and start-up sectors, for example, the activity of the financial investor is often represented as an *occupation* that requires skill and that legitimately yields profits (eg. Train 1994). This argumentation would typically not be accepted by laborist workers. On the contrary, laborism tends to come with esteem for entrepreneurs who make the impression of “working with their own hands” – this is, of participating themselves in the substantive laborious activity exercised by their firm – and of producing socially valuable outcomes. Interviewees were asked about their perception to what degree (1-5) a diverse, randomized list of occupations make a socially valuable contribution. The list has i.a. included independent and entrepreneurial work logics.¹⁷⁶ An Austrian worker (AT-01) states he has high esteem for “a farmer” (5) and for “an innkeeper” (4), as well as some for “an operator of a gas station”¹⁷⁷ (2). When asked about “a real estate entrepreneur”, he answers: “Zero. Those are the thugs”.¹⁷⁸ These answers can be interpreted along the lines of activities known to the interviewee vs. those not known to him; and they can be seen through the prism of small vs. large enterprise. In parallel, however, there is the aspect that the interviewee sees private control

¹⁷⁶ This interview question was dropped after the first few interviews for the reason of impeding the flow of conversation, so that unfortunately, no quantitative results can be presented. See chapter 4 (“Interview design”).

¹⁷⁷ It is unclear whether the term “operator” (*Betreiber*) was interpreted as “owner” or, as intended, as “tenant” by the interviewee. Gas stations in Austria and Germany are often leased by private small entrepreneurs who operate a single station owned by large companies.

¹⁷⁸ The same interviewee rejects to give an opinion on “a start-up entrepreneur in IT”, stating he does not know that field. He similarly rejects prompts on professions in science as well as in engineering and management in sectors unknown to him by experience (while generally rating the social contribution of higher management occupations in public and private sectors at 1-2 out of 5 points).

of capital as legitimate when capital is deployed towards productive and socially valuable ends (matching the definition of *moderate productivism*, see below) and when the capital owner substantively partakes in the laborious process. This means that laborism does not come with an à priori negative, but with a *substantivist* vision of capital ownership¹⁷⁹ (s. ch. 3.1): *social* and *economic* value should go hand in hand instead of diverging one from the other; and capital should be aligned to those who labor rather than alienated from them.

When asked about the meaning of “work” for them, personally, most workers give a clear answer: it relies in material subsistence and, this goal fulfilled, in material advancement.

Researcher: What does „work“ mean for you?

Lorry driver (m, 35-55, AT-47): That you can afford something.

Car mechanic (m, <35, AT-48): That you can live [...].

Unemployed women [soon to start a traineeship] (<35, AT-49): I work, because I want to build up a life. So that in 10 years, I can build up a house.

This materialistic vision of the purpose of work is entirely “normal” and unquestioned for many workers. The idea that “one has to work to make a living” is being taken for granted to the degree that alternative propositions seem to unravel a deeply seated morale (s. below in this section).¹⁸⁰

At the same time, in coherence rather than contradiction, workers tend to emphasize the substantive *social value* of their work. As an Austrian garbage truck driver (m, 35-55, AT-15) puts it: “*We get the job done. If we wouldn't, who would do the work? No one, if you look at it. They'd drown in dirt.*” During the Covid-period, both Austrian and German states used the category of “essential workers” [ger.: *systemrelevante Berufe; Systemerhalter*] to distinguish between occupations that needed to continue work so to maintain “essential” functions of the state and the economy – and those who needed to interrupt it so to limit the spread of the pandemic [add reference]. Many manual workers readily used this frame to emphasize the contribution and dignity of manual jobs (unemployed man, <35, AT-24): “*I don't understand how a soccer player can earn a million euros a month. [...] I don't want to say that soccer isn't important. But I don't understand the money relation between a soccer player and a craft*

¹⁷⁹ This said, many of the “socialist” regimes the 20th century has known have featured a pronounced laborist ideology, too.

¹⁸⁰ This counts with the exception of those who hold post-productivist views, see ch. 5.4.

worker. For me, craft work is more system-relevant than soccer. When I say system, I mean that things are running.”

This vision of social value is closely bound to ideas about the reciprocity of contribution, reward and recognition. This concerns material pay as much as symbolic appreciation. *“When [a client] says, you’re super the whole year round, and you get a little gift, we appreciate the work you do and [that] it’s not easy, there you really enjoy work”*, says the garbage truck driver (AT-15). *“This, actually, makes me proud.”* He continues to show the researcher pictures a client’s child has drawn for the drivers last Christmas on his smartphone.

The laborist vision of the economy holds that “without the working human, there’d be no economy” (Austrian steel worker and unionist, f, 35-55, AT-66). This argument expresses a position on the relationship between employer and employee. It also expresses a vision of how the “common good” is generated: through a laborious process in which every member of community is called upon to participate. Applied to fiscality and the welfare state, this means that only the norm that *everyone works* renders it is possible for community to support those who *cannot work*.¹⁸¹ As a young German roofer puts it (m, <35, DE-55): *Well, I’ll say, if your health doesn’t allow you to work, it’s OK, it’s not possible. [...] That’s in order. [...] But how many long-term unemployed there are, this is crazy. That’s too much. The money needs to come from somewhere, it needs to be generated somehow.*¹⁸²

Laborism typically proposes a public morale, consisting in a universal duty or call for individuals to participate through work. This is meant to guarantee at the same time the welfare of the community and of the individual within it. In this sense, work is not only seen under an economic aspect. Rather, it is understood as the essential form of integration of the individual into society, through which besides economic resources also identity, existential meaning, and sociability are being created. Not least, work is understood as entry point into the system of societal interdependencies through which the position of free and equal adult citizen is attained. By offering their labor (in exchange for pay, for reciprocal solidarity, etc.), the worker holds a power resource, and hence, a degree of independence.¹⁸³

¹⁸¹ Manual workers with significant unemployment experience tend to base their arguments on welfare deservingness less on the criterion of “reciprocity” (s. van Oorschot 2000) than on the criterion of “need”, e.g.: “people need to get a certain sum of money in order to survive” (AT-01). The use of *laborist* frames is most widespread among *employed* workers (s. ch. 5.3 & 5.4)

¹⁸² In this point, once again, laborism shows to be one specific variant of productivism, as I detail in ch. 5.2. It emphasizes the welfare *deservingness criteria* of “reciprocity”, “control”, and “attitude” (van Oorschot 2000), which I argue are moral justifications inherently linked to “productivism” (s. ch. 2.3; 3.2; ch. 7).

¹⁸³ The quasi-totality of interviewees interpret the power to offer (or withdraw) their labor as an individual power resource enabling a degree of independence as an individual (or family) in society. They do not, however, interpret

Researcher: Have you heard of the proposition to introduce an „unconditional basic income“? This means that the state would pay a certain sum of money to every citizen, from which it is possible to subsist. And income from work would be paid on top of this.

CNC-machine operator (m, 55<, DE-22): Of course, this wouldn't be bad. [...] However, people could say, I don't need to work at all. This would ... like here, now, I could sit the whole day in the garden and drink beer. I'm satisfied with this. But this is not the sense and purpose of it. I, myself, I would lack the communication. Which I have at work. That I hold a chat with other people, tell a joke or whatever. Or, I know this guy has two kids and they were on vacation there-and-there. And already, vacations will hardly be possible when I lack certain money, if I don't work, although I get money. Not so much my thing. I say, as long as I work, I don't need to account for what I do. [...] Where I go or fly. I can do my thing. When I am unemployed, I need to report this.

Certainly, the interviewee misinterprets that UBI would, by most conceptions of the policy, not equal the status of unemployment benefits. He would not be required to report to the Employment Office where he is travelling. However, his point is comprehensible that “as long as he works”, he holds a small position of power in interdependent societal power relations. Theoretically, he has the option to withdraw his labor in protest. If he received payouts from a central state agency without holding a balancing counterweight in his hands – what would he do if the agency stopped payouts?

There are three types of socio-economic policies laborist manual workers, *across all ideological varieties* that I am discussing below, tend to support. This is firstly, a decrease of legal retirement age for manual laborers, which is argued by the physical severity of blue-collar work (s. below in this section). Secondly, it is property taxation above the limit of “what you can earn through your own work”, what in 2020 is typically estimated as more than € 1 million.¹⁸⁴ Thirdly, it is a raise in wage-levels for low-income jobs, such as through a raise in national minimum wage.

*Car mechanic (m, 35-55, DE-08): When you are working, so you must be able to live from your work. This is the first thing. [...] You need to notice that work pays off. But for this, work needs to pay off. In some sectors, look at hairdressers or bakers, you receive the minimum wage.*¹⁸⁵

it in a unionist sense as a collective power resource enabling a struggle to change society. This may, among others, be related to a lack of success experiences with collective action in the sphere of work.

¹⁸⁴ S. citation at the beginning of this section.

¹⁸⁵ The German minimum wage, introduced in 2015, was at € 9.35 gross per hour in 2020. At full-time employment (40 hrs./week), this equals a monthly gross salary of € 1.621 which after deduction of payroll tax and social

This is the “gap” that is getting wider. And this is where politics, and the state, must act and say, “look, it doesn’t work like this”.

So far, I have argued the point that *most* manual workers in the dataset of interviews use *laborist* justifications when arguing their socioeconomic policy preferences and their views on legitimacy in the socio-economy, including the legitimacy of material and social status positions, that of social relations around public budget and around the welfare state. Naturally, this usage of moral justifications comes with heterogeneity, this is, with variation and exceptions, the two most important of which are the following.

There is a notable difference between the employed and the unemployed when it comes to the use of laborist and, more generally, productivist justifications. The more a person can claim to have worked themselves, the more they tend to use laborist justifications. The longer someone has been out of employment, the less this seems legitimate. These interviewees shift to other moral registers than “work” or “productivity”. When it comes to welfare policy preferences, unemployed interviewees (who in this sample typically are former blue-collar workers) tend to argue their own entitlement to public solidarity by emphasizing *need*, which among the CARIN-criteria of *welfare deservingness*, I have classified as a non-productivist criterion (s. ch. 2.3; 3.2; van Oorschot 2000). Interviewees tend to combine the “need”-based line of argumentation with highlighting all the “productive” contributions they have made, so that e.g. someone who has worked for 30 years would emphasize “having contributed” more than someone who has been unemployed for 30 years. However, “need”-based justifications are only one part of the story. Beyond this, unemployed persons who aim to argue their social belonging to a milieu with dominantly materialistic and *producerist* views (s. ch. 5.3) very often use *nativist* justifications to make the point that even if they do not work, they are still more “deserving” than immigrants (s. *ibid*). Alternatively, some (notably young) unemployed interviewees, who in addition have links to educative cultural spheres or humanitarian engagement, shift to *post-productivist* justifications, challenging the entire productivist logic (s. ch. 5.4; ch. 8). This latter register of justification does *not* typically coincide with nativist arguments.

Another axis of variation is the use of “laborist” frames for self-identification. Overall, manual workers in the sample make much more vivid use of laborist justifications to *judge others* than they use work-related frames to explicitly voice (collective) identities of their own. An

contributions (pension, unemployment, and health insurance) comes down to a monthly net salary of around € 1.200. The national minimum wage is typically paid in sectors that are not covered by collective agreements (s. Statistisches Bundesamt).

identification with the “working class”, for example, or even the mere term “working class”, is used by a total of three out of 75 blue-collar workers interviewed (the term was not provided as a prompt by the researcher). Considerably more interviewees make statements in which they identify as “a worker”. In both Germanophone countries, the term “skilled worker” (*Facharbeiter; Handwerker*) carries a positive meaning and is being used by interviewees. This term, however, comes with a social downward distinction: it explicitly excludes unskilled workers. “*Handwerker*”, on the contrary, leaves open an ambiguity of including self-employed artisans (i.e. small business owners). Some interviewees use moralized, culturalized, or figurative expressions, which however often refer to the workplace itself more than to a generalized social status or a political identity. The oil exploration worker cited above (AT-13), for example, emphasizes managers’ training involved “*crawling through the dirt with us*”, associating his occupation group’s work with getting physically dirty. Others f. ex. refer to working “outside” rather than “inside” (DE-11, DE-74).

This said, many workers’ narration shows evidence of considerable personal identification with the work that they do and with their position at their company. There is a clear socio-structural variation in this outcome: it occurs more strongly among skilled than among the unskilled workers, and more strongly if someone has worked in a position for a long time as opposed to switching often. There does *not* appear to be a considerable gender-difference when individuals are compared who work in equivalent positions and equivalent hours. There *is* a gender difference in terms of what positions male and female blue-collar workers in the sample hold (within the blue-collar category, men on average hold more skilled positions) and in terms of their contract types (women more often work part time or have interrupted employment biographies due to care work).

There is no observable difference in blue-collar workers’ use of “laborist” frames to make sense of the political economy between Austria and (East-)Germany, except for linguistic differences.

5.2 Moderate Productivism and Laborism: a Broad Vision of Social Contribution, a Moderate Vision of Deviance

“Productivism” is a moral vision of the political economy that, so I have argued, is typical for growth-oriented societies (s. ch. 2.3; 3.2). It holds that everyone is supposed to productively contribute to the common good. This duty of contribution, in turn, is the basis for reciprocal solidarity by the community with those who have contributed (*reciprocity*), who make an effort to contribute (*attitude*), and who cannot contribute for reasons outside of their *control* (s. *ibid*). “Laborism” is one specific sub-variant of productivism that tends to be used more pronouncedly

by blue-collar workers than by other occupation groups (s. ch. 5.1).¹⁸⁶ Laborism focuses on productive contributions made through *work* in the sense of *occupational labor*. Productivism typically comes with an economistic bias (s. Giddens 1994: 175ff.; ch. 3.2): it emphasizes *economic* contributions to the common good. The laborist sub-variant emphasizes *paid* work (and *formal* employment). For this reason, I have dedicated an extra section to interviewees' visions of the value of "re-productive" labor and of unpaid work, including care work (ch. 5.5).

The analyzed interview data lends support to the proposition (P1b-d) that "productivist" visions of the advanced capitalist political economy come in three large types: "moderate productivism", "producerism", and "post-productivism".¹⁸⁷ In this section, I present qualitative evidence on the "moderate productivist" vision of the political economy, which among blue-collar workers tends to come as *moderate laborism*.

Moderate productivism is "moderate" in two ways. Firstly, it applies a broad vision of what are socio-economically valuable contributions, encompassing the broad majority of activities exercised in advanced capitalist society. Moderate-laborist manual workers emphasize the virtue of manual labor, but also appreciate the economic and social value of service work, white-collar and bureaucratic work, socio-cultural work, or "even" the work of politics. When it comes to education and skillsets, they tend to hold that both practical and academic skillsets have a value, and that vocational training, high-school-training, and university-based training all lead to skillsets with a value in the political economy. Moderate-productivist interviewees in other occupational class positions differ from workers in so far as they put more emphasis on types of (laborious or non-laborious) contributions that are closer to their respective occupational and social standpoint, what can include managerial and sociocultural work, the social importance of innovation, or yet, of tax payments. What unites all moderate productivists is the esteem for a broad variety of contributions to the common socio-economic good.

¹⁸⁶ As explained above and demonstrated in chapters 6-8, I think there are two reasons for why manual workers tend to a more pronounced usage of "laborist" justifications than members of other occupation groups. Firstly, physical, manual labor serves as a strong experiential basis for forming laborist convictions (including the occasional claim that one's own work was more "work" than other people's work). Secondly, work tends to be the most important form of integration with dominant social order that many members of the working-class dispose of – in opposition to members of the middle class, who on often dispose of more varied forms of social integration also via socio-cultural spheres (s. ch. 8).

¹⁸⁷ All three of these outlooks on the political economy are typically carried by socio-structurally speaking "vertical" cross-class coalitions (s. ch. 3.1). Laborism, which is most characteristic for the occupational class of (manual) workers, so to say "horizontally" cross-cuts all three conflicting variants of productivism: workers tend to interpret whichever vision of the political economy in more "laborist" terms than members of other occupation groups do.

Secondly, moderate productivism is “moderate” in so far as it is differentiated in its vision of deviance from the claim that everyone should contribute. It tends to see “work” both as a right and as a duty: while it can be expected from the individual to work, it can also be expected from the public to support individuals to “get into work”, as many put it. When it comes to welfare deservingness, its proponents carefully weigh need-based arguments against the contributionist logic. They are neutral or nuanced in their “moral” perceptions of welfare recipients. While proponents can hold restrictive views of immigrant’s access to the national welfare system (moderate-laborist manual workers often arguing that immigrants’ entitlement to welfare benefit is legitimate “if they work”) they typically *do not attribute high salience to this issue*.

Moderate laborist workers tend to emphasize the value of manual work. At the same time, however, they tend to equally appreciate academic skillsets. As an Austrian carpenter (retired, m, 55<, AT-52) puts it: *“My boss in Vienna, for example, was amazing. He had studied architecture and then took over the carpentry. This is how I’ve learned to read a construction plan. I’ve re-learned carpentry a second time in Vienna. Here, in my old company, we also did sketches: some quick lines, length, width, depth, and you knew – it’s a cupboard. [...] In Vienna, this guy put down a plan that was as large as this table; there you had the view, ground plan, and then all the sectional drawings. [...] You could actually build it the way he had drawn it.”*

The same counts for an appreciation of bureaucratic white-collar work. A man, who for a long time used to work as a truck driver, has several years ago started to take up supervisory tasks in the company’s warehouse and delivery dispatchment. He reports how he has learned respect for white-collar work: *“They asked me, do you want to do it? You know the delivery system. I said, okay. We do the waybills ourselves, we have our own system. We trace every shipment, the prices, per kilogram, and so on and so on. We do all the papers, for customs duty, for dangerous goods, for this we took courses. This is complicated. I would have never thought it is so much work”* (m, 35-55, AT-32). This broad vision of socio-economically valuable contributions extends to public bureaucracies and even to political work. Moderate-laborist workers tend to show at least some degree of trust in public institutions and in politics. *“They have studied these things”*, says a German quarry worker (m, 35-55, DE-73) about members of government. *“They have learned these things, and they have been doing it for years. I actually have trust that they will manage. I wouldn't want to do it myself.”*

When it comes to attitudes on “deviance” from the rule that everyone should work, moderate-laborist workers tend to hold nuanced views. For example, this concerns generalized perceptions of the “motivation” and “effort” of unemployed people to find work. Asked about

how to deal with unemployment, a former steel worker (m, 55<, AT-70) carefully weighs his response: *“I think this is a very, very difficult topic, because you cannot please everybody. I see it as tragic that the young people in our region don’t find work. [...] I’ll say it honestly, there are those who want to work and those who take advantage of the system. But those who take advantage are such a minority, and they pull down the others’ reputation, okay? I think that the majority of the young want a job. [And] it’s going to be a big, big problem for the future when the young don’t have work.”* The typical answer of moderate interviewees to the question of whether “the state should support the unemployed more or less than it does now” is *“It depends”*, followed by statements that try to strike a balance between the idea that people should work (work is a duty) and the idea that they should be supported by the public to get into and stay in employment (work is a right). A retired Austrian construction tinsmith (AT-40) voices views that qualify as more conservative than those cited just before, however, fall within the “moderate productivist” range.

Researcher: “So what should be done [about social inequality]?”

Interviewee: “Well look, try, that everyone in Austria has work. Look into this. People, myself I know many, they don’t want to work. [...] He tells me, you were a jerk to work for 45 years. Well I say, look ... [...] One needs to look that they find work. Or at least, when they don’t want to work – cut the support. So you get people into work again. Two young people who are unemployed together have 2000 euro. [...] One cannot let people starve. One needs to look that they get money. But he also needs to work. At least, look that many find work. That is more or less well paid. They pay tax on top of it, and everything ... this comes back to the state.”

Most interviewees only show diffuse views when it comes to the more precise type of public interventions supported. Propositions are quite obviously shaped by personal experiences and access to information about social policy. One interviewee who has been unemployed himself, plus his wife has been unemployed, argues that the unemployment benefit should be increased so *“you can live of it”* (AT-01). However, only few others share a prioritization of the height of unemployment benefits. Considerably more interviewees insist that the state should support the individual search for employment through “enabling” measures such as public funding for occupational re-training and education programs. A German quarry worker (DE-73) who was unemployed and got an internship abroad funded by the German employment office (what actually changed his outlook on the labor market, s. ch. 7) argues, when asked whether “unemployment benefits should be higher or lower”: *“They should just leave it the way it is. And try more to get people into companies. [...] The only thing brought me something, was [...]*

the three months in Spain. The internship abroad. That was also done through the employment office. [We need] things like that. Unemployment benefits [...] don't have to become more, don't have to become less.” Several others speak up for measures aimed at keeping elderly workers in employment, such as subsidies to employers or support for age-adapted workplaces (e.g. AT-34, DE-33).

Moderate-laborist workers tend to see immigration as legitimate and acceptable when immigrants work and hence contribute through their work in the country of destination. They tend to hold neutral to positive, nuanced views about immigrants’ motivation to comply with this norm. This crucially informs attitudes about immigrants’ access to the national welfare state system. *“Someone who integrates, who works, why should they not get the same? When they bring occupational skills or learn them here”,* states a German CNC-machine operator (m, 55<, DE-22) and adds, *“Recently, they wanted to deport someone, it was on TV. There’s no need to do that.”* While most interviewees hold “unemployment policy” and “immigrants’ access to the welfare system” apart as themes, in fact, views on the “welfare deservingness” of the unemployed, of minimum-security recipients, and of immigrants tend to *covary*: typically, interviewees who have a negative vision of the unemployed also are negative towards immigrants welfare access; the same counts for moderate views. An Austrian electrician (AT-38) is among the rare cases to explicitly associate the two themes, bringing to the point the essence of “moderate productivist” interviewees’ statements: *“The question is ... whether you work or not. When someone is unemployed, they don’t contribute to the state. If it’s not someone’s fault ... well [...] the incentive for the unemployed shall be to get active, to do something for society. And for the migrant, equally. Of course, for them it’s even more difficult, they need to learn the language. In any case, benefits without incentives aren’t good. To give people money and leave them to themselves ... it’s important to link this to certain conditions. They should, well, do something. Money in exchange for no contribution, no effort ... I don’t think that’s good.”* The above-cited quarry worker (DE-73) makes a similar point.

Researcher: “There is a public debate, if people immigrate to Germany now, should they have the same access to benefits from the state, from the welfare state, as a German citizen?”

Interviewee: “Well ... I’ll put it this way, the welfare state is there. And if you don't have a job, then the welfare state steps in. However, you have to take care of yourself a bit. They always

*said, don't only give, but also encourage.*¹⁸⁸ *That you also get back into work. Otherwise ... it's ... let's say ... laziness. If they don't do anything, well. If it's not possible, now, of course, for health reasons, then ... but that's what the welfare state is for. And so they can also help them, if they are here, then they have the claim.*”

There is a notable exception to this “covariance” of attitudes on specific categories of welfare recipients’ deservingness: if an interviewee is a welfare recipient *themselves*, they tend to present the deservingness of *their own category* as considerably higher. This can come with more positive views of welfare recipients overall (s. ch. 5.4 & ch. 7). It can also come with the argumentation that one is deserving while others are not – a behavior I call “kicking down” (s. ch. 5.3 and ch. 7) and that corresponds to the notion of “conflict externalization” (s. ch. 2.1 & 3.1). Interviewees who engage in “kicking down”, i.e. who argue their own deservingness by means of putting blame on others, typically hold salient welfare chauvinistic views (s. next section).

In the given sample, “moderate productivist” and “moderate laborist” views are not typically connected to any demographic characteristics (gender, age, income, skill-level, etc.) with one exception: many “moderate-laborist” workers are *labor market insiders* (Emmenegger et al. 2012). In the following chapters (6-8), I aim to explain why blue-collar workers in contemporary European “growth societies” form a moderate productivist vision of the political economy (as opposed to a “producerist and welfare chauvinist” or a “post-productivist” vision). My theory holds that specifically workers who themselves are *well integrated* into common societal goals and values via their work and/or via provisions of the welfare state, develop moderate productivist views (mechanism 1, s. ch. 3.1). Moreover, workers for whom this counts typically dispose of immediate or mediated integrative ties with social types that occupy very different positions from themselves in the multidimensional social class structure (mechanism 2, s. *ibid*). This means that many manual workers with moderate-laborist views *know* or have made *positive experiences* with representatives of very different occupation groups from their own either at the workplace or in private life.

¹⁸⁸ German: “*fördern und fordern*”, slogan used by the German SPD under Gerhard Schröder since the late 1990s in reference to the social-democratic “third way” and an “activating” welfare state. It has since re-occurred in public debate on labor market and unemployment policy.

5.3 Producerism and Welfare Chauvinism: a Narrow, Materialistic Vision of Social Contribution, an Exclusivist Vision of Deviance

“Producerism” is a radically materialistic version of “productivism” that typically comes combined with socially exclusivist views (s. ch. 3.2; Derks 2006; Ivaldi/Mazzoleni 2019). It shares with moderate productivism the idea that everyone is supposed to make productive contributions to the common good and that contribution is the basis for reciprocal solidarity. However, it starkly differs in two regards.

Firstly, producerism relies on a very narrow vision of socio-economic value: it sees as valuable only those contributions which produce *materially tangible outcomes*. Producerist workers tend to a radically materialistic version of “laborism” that consists in strongly emphasizing the virtue of manual work and of practical skillsets while putting in question the value of academic knowledge, of bureaucratic white-collar work or yet of socio-cultural work. They are joined in this vision by small business owners more than by representatives of any other occupation group, who themselves emphasize the productive contribution of paying taxes (“tax contributionism”), while morally downgrading all those occupations who are typically paid from public funds (public service and public bureaucracy, socio-cultural professions). If there is one specific occupation group that receives the lowest esteem from interviewees with producerist views, it is politicians.

Secondly, proponents of producerism tend to be radically exclusivist in their views on deviation from the norm that “everyone should productively contribute” (what for the most part comes down to the idea that “everyone should work”). Manual workers in this context show a specifically *chauvinistic* form of laborism, which consists in blaming those who *do not work*. They typically demand harsh sanctions for unemployed persons who (ostensibly) do not make an effort to find work, exposing the vision that work is a duty – but not a right. Morally negative views of welfare recipients are a very salient theme for interviewees in this category. For many of them, welfare chauvinism – the idea that immigrants should be excluded from the national welfare system – is *the most salient* issue aborded in the often quite extensive interviews.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁹ The subjective salience of an issue to interviewees has been measured by a combination of four approaches (s. ch. 4 for detailed discussion): 1. Explicit statements the interviewee makes about issue priority. 2. Quantity: how much does the interviewee speak about one issue compared to other issues when several were prompted. 3. Quality: how emphasized is the “pressingness” and how emotionalized (positive/negative affect vs. affective neutrality) is an issue in their speech relative to other issues aborded. 4. Do interviewees start speaking about an issue when not prompted. In many cases, identifying which issues an interviewee is relatively more or less concerned about is a rather straightforward task.

It is crucial to highlight that many workers who have made experiences of unemployment themselves, quite counterintuitively, align with the producerist and welfare chauvinist argumentation lines. Typically, they argue their own “deservingness” to welfare benefits by a mixture of “productivist” with “nativist” arguments. Interviewees in this category vary “producerist” justifications in such a way that they emphasize their own contributions (e.g. having worked for 30 years before having become unemployed) alongside their own material “need” for public solidarity provision – while constructing a moral distinction line towards others who are less “deserving” than themselves. This results in a dynamic of “kicking down” along the “rank order” of welfare deservingness (van Oorschot 2000), in a blame game, in which welfare chauvinism acts as the smallest common denominator.

Properly speaking, this dynamic of “kicking down” takes place along the entire social “ladder” within the producerist coalition. It starts with the fact that small business owners can complain about the laziness of workers, drawing a moral line between the self-employed (productive, virtuous) and the employed (less productive, less virtuous). Employed workers, obviously, hold positive views of their own occupational worth (“laborism”); however, together with small business owners, they can agree that the unemployed are lazy. So together, they draw a moral line between “all those who work” (productive, virtuous) and all those who don’t work (unproductive, not virtuous). Now, workers who have been unemployed for a while cannot claim that they are “productive” to the same degree; but can argue that still, they are more productive *than others*. In this context, f. ex., elderly unemployed workers tend to shift blame on young unemployed workers (“who have never worked at all”). The one thing that all of them – who dispose of an identity of “being a native” to one’s country of residence – can agree on is that *immigrants who do not work* are the least deserving category of welfare recipients and should be excluded from access to the welfare state. These findings suggest that *welfare chauvinism* serves as the ideological “glue”, as the smallest common denominator, of a socio-economically diverse coalition of small business owners, labor market insider workers, and labor market outsider workers with a “producerist” and “nativist” outlook.

Producerist workers draw a distinction line between manual work and bureaucratic, white-collar, office work:

Pool attendant (m, 55<, DE-74, public sector): We [who work outside] are those who are the least paid, and [...] those who sit in the office, they have their high [salary] grades [...] while here this is, well ... even much more important I would ... from my point of view, much more

important. I have often requested that this responsibility would be valued a bit higher and honoured higher.

They do equally so between practical skillsets (acquired through vocational training) and academic skillsets (acquired through high-school or university training). The following group interview has been conducted with a family in rural Saxony: a couple in second marriage where he (35-55, DE-08) is a car mechanic and she (35-55, DE-09) works in the office of the same enterprise is joined by the woman's daughter (<35, DE-10), who is a teacher in a local primary school, and the daughter's boyfriend (<35, DE-11), who is a bricklayer. The conversation circles around the choice of occupation.

Bricklayer: I come from a family with a lot of crafts-related occupations. We have many bakers, crafts-workers ... and so one thing has led to another.

Teacher: I think the parents play a role. A big role. If the parents are, like, studied people [Studierte]¹⁹⁰ then they rather want the child to study something.

Car mechanic: You think? Well, the parents want this, but whether the child wants it...

Teacher: I see this all the time in school. When parents somehow have a higher status of education, they want this. And even when ... we have very many, where the parents have done vocational training, there it is more "better go to Realschule [lower secondary school that is typically followed by vocational training at the age of 15], do something real, something sturdy"¹⁹¹.

Secretary: Do people still speak like this?

Teacher: Well ... this is because we're still a village.

Bricklayer: See, and there come the problems. Meanwhile we have so many studied people and kids who don't work anymore, that the studied kids, too, won't find jobs anymore ...

Car mechanic: There will be enough jobs for them. If not, they can calculate how you have to do your work.

Bricklayer: But I say, I don't need ten in the office if I don't have one outside who does something!

¹⁹⁰ *Studierte* [in Austria often, *G'studierte*] ... people who have completed high school and university education. Colloquial term, in connotation oscillating between the opposites of respect and scorn.

¹⁹¹ „*Etwas Handfestes*“ ... something concrete, tangible, sturdy.

While the conversation starts from rather moderate arguments, it ends at a point where the two male manual workers judge that people with higher education do nothing but calculate the work of those who actually “do something” (valuable). The term “work” ends up being equated with *vocationally trained* and notably *manual occupations only*.

The idea that bureaucracies do (nothing but) calculations about those who actually work reappears in statements about public institutions, notably those of the welfare state:

Interviewer: How do you look at your retirement?

Roofer (m, 55<, DE-43): Well... when I think about it... when I get my big sheet here from time to time, where it says - retirement age 67 ... I sometimes ask myself ... are they stupid in there? They just sit in their office all day [...] One should send these people to a construction site for a day ... that's what I think. So that they can see ... that you can't work in the building trade until you're 67 ... here ... like one of us now, a roofer, bricklayer, carpenter, joiner, plumber [...] Well, but it isn't their fault either. This comes from above!

“From above” means “from politics”. Proponents of exclusivist laborism show little trust in public institutions and in politics. For many of them, *politicians* are among the least deserving groups in society.

On the contrary, an occupation group with relatively much credibility among exclusivist-laborist workers are *small-business owners*. They tend to be seen as “working hard” for their privileged income, property, and status; even as “having worked their way up from the bottom” by their own effort. Often, small business owners have a similar occupational background as their workers do: namely, vocational training. Handshake quality (“you can rely on him”) tends to be equally emphasized as the virtue of a business owner joining the work process themselves (“he has no problem with getting dirty”). This stands in difference to the sterile, distant image of large enterprises’ upper management or public bureaucracies.

Exclusivist-laborist workers hold negative views of long-term unemployed persons who subsist by help of social aid. The critique typically questions the “honest effort” of this stigmatized group.

Roofer (m, <35, DE-42): You see a lot of people who could do anything and who say, fine, I get an apartment, it's enough for beers and for barbecue meat, why should I want to work.

Plumber (m, 35-55, AT-27): If someone wants to find work, they find work. Maybe this doesn't count for groups such as, 50+, who actually don't find work anymore. But 20- or 25-year-olds who could work, there is one hundred and fifty thousand of them.

The proposition of harsh sanctions, punishing the (long-term) unemployed, is not rare.

Machine operator (retired, m, 55+, DE-23): I would force them to work, for real. And I am for taking their money [unemployment benefits] away. Otherwise it doesn't hurt.

While “forced labor” is an extreme outlier idea, mentioned only by two interviewees in Eastern Germany, the proposition to further cut long-term unemployment benefits is commonplace among “chauvinist-laborist” workers in both countries.

Last but not least, proponents of this category tend to highlight the undeservingness of (non-working) immigrants. “Welfare chauvinism”, the view that immigrants must be excluded from access to the national welfare system, is highly salient among this group.

Cleaner (f, 35-55, Austria): We have... foreigners in the village, who have been here for 10, 15 years, who have bought a house here, who go to work here, so I can't say anything about that. [...] Well, they don't really integrate in the village. They only go to their own kind. But they go to work, they earn a living [...] I have no problem with them. But the ones who come and only want our money [...] when on TV I see thousands of young men standing in front of the border – of working age! Instead of looking to build up something, they come to us and say, where is my cell phone? Where is my house? Where is my money? Where is my car?

In the following chapters (6-8), I argue that specifically manual workers who find themselves marginalized from the dominant “productivist” social order due to social exclusion experienced at the workplace or with regard to the welfare state tend to form “producerist” and “welfare chauvinist” views (mechanism 1, s. ch. 3.1). This outcome is yet strongly favored by contacts with other *materialistically* oriented occupation groups (such as small business owners) within collectively marginalized social spheres – be it a sector of small artisan enterprises who feel outcompeted by large companies and the state or a socio-culturally homogenous rural/ peri-urban milieu (mechanism 2, s. *ibid*).

The only relevant difference in findings on “producerist and welfare chauvinist” views between Austria and East-Germany is that a small number of East German interviewees with very radical views (when compared to the rest of the dataset), when proposing harsh sanctions for the unemployed, speak about the introduction of forced labor. This does not occur in Austrian

interviewee's statements. A small number of interviewees with very radical views in both countries, however, speaks of violence against immigrants who "do not want to work".

5.4 Post-Productivism and Radical Inclusivism: Beyond a "Contribution"-Logic

A number of manual workers in the sample voice "post-productivist" views. This comes with a rejection of the idea that individuals are subject to a "duty" of productively contributing to economy and fiscality (through their work or otherwise). Such a rejection of productivism is typically based on the understanding that the advanced capitalist economy has moved beyond scarcity as a pressing problem. It typically goes with radically inclusivist views on socio-economic policy: at least in idea, literally "everyone" is seen as deserving to be included in its benefits. Typically, these views manifest in support for universal basic income policies.

Fire safety worker (m, 35-55, DE-59) and family, educator (f, 35-55), carpenter (m, <35): I, for example, am for a basic income. (Educator: yes.) This is to say, every citizen receives € 1,000 per month from the state for ... simply for being there for the state, so to say. [...] So I have my € 1,000 from the state, I work only 20 hours per week, and the rest I use for education ... it's not as if I was idle. That's the wrong thought, and even if someone does it ... even today, if they want to, they manage and somehow get their Hartz IV ... I don't know what they are afraid of [...] and I think that this would have the effect precisely on manual jobs, which are so poorly paid, or care work, too, that they would be better remunerated, because many would say, well, I am free to pursue further training, or to care about other work, because my livelihood is safe. And that no one would do such occupations anymore, if they are so poorly paid. So, wages would rise ...

Carpenter: I also think one would have the freedom to do what one actually wants to do.

In the statements of manual workers who adopt such a vision of the political economy some tension is notable between laborist and post-productivist mores. The latter at least seemingly run counter to basic assumptions of the prior, such as a moral "duty" to socially contribute through one's work. Some proponents of post-productivism end up leaving laborist frames entirely behind.¹⁹² Others attempt creative mergers between the two logics, keeping the idea that manual work has an important value, or the idea that everyone should exercise activities of social value even outside a "productivist" logic. The young man who emphasizes the "freedom to do what one actually wants to" has notably chosen the occupation of a carpenter (*Zimmerer*).

¹⁹² In several cases, these are individuals who also plan on occupational re-orientation (such as from industrial electrician to psychologist in one case, AT-03).

At the time of the interview, he was moving from Germany to Norway for his “journeyman years” (*Wanderjahre*, a tradition in craftsmanship).

Proponents of post-productivism tend to hold socially inclusivist views. Their views can typically be broken down to the conviction that work is a right, *but not a duty*. This goes with optimistic perceptions about the general population’s inherent motivation to work (meaningful jobs) and with a liberal type of radically inclusivist attitudes towards unemployed people as well as towards immigrants.

Industrial worker (currently unemployed, m, <35, AT-24): Basic income may not be a stupid idea. Not for those who are already at the bottom. But for those who may be cushioned. Those who are at the bottom stay at the bottom anyway, when they don't want to work they don't want to work. But who falls down, due to sickness, or the like ... We'd need to free society from this stress. [...]

Researcher: Should people who migrate to Austria have equal access to the welfare system?

Industrial worker: Yes, so, why not. I see it this way – why indeed, when we look to get better ourselves, when we finally make Austria more stress-free, then people will look for work anyway.

Post-productivism comes with a demographic and a sociological characteristic. Firstly, its proponents are typically younger than those in the other two attitudinal categories. In the given sample, many of them are under 40 years of age. Secondly, irrespective of their formal training, they all share an interest in humanist education. While in the first citation, this is mediated through the mother of the family who studies pedagogy, the second cited interviewee states to have come across the idea of basic income on the Youtube-channel of a popular German philosophy professor (Richard David Precht).

This said, proponents of post-productivism can stand both high or low in the “hierarchical” class order. The category includes several interviewees with higher education and high-standing jobs, typically in sociocultural professions (e.g. DE-34, who used to work in international public service). It includes others who are unemployed – and don’t necessarily have higher education themselves, but access these ideas, as said, via their contacts or via sociocultural spheres in which they participate.

In ch. 8, I explain these findings so that post-productivism is a social outlook characteristically formed in the socio-cultural and humanitarian sectors. Manual workers most commonly align

to such views when they are personally close to individuals with such occupational backgrounds via family or friendship ties and/ or when they are embedded in socio-cultural spheres that carry post-productivist narratives, which typically counts for educative culture (literature, theatre, etc.), as well as for some popular music subcultures.

5.5 Laborist Manual Workers on Unpaid Care- and Reproduction Work

While unpaid forms of work are never explicitly *excluded* from claims about what are valuable laborious contributions, they are only seldomly explicitly *included* by interviewed workers. It is particularly striking that this counts for both male *and female* manual workers: while many female workers *hold laborist attitudes* (even strongly so), they systematically fail to represent the unpaid (care and reproduction) work they often perform themselves by viewing it through these laborist categories and including it into laborist arguments about deservingness. In Austria and Germany, many women work part time, using the other half of their time to perform unpaid care work. As a result, they only pay very low payroll contributions into public retirement insurance and receive a retirement below subsistence levels, what is a problem if they end up living alone (rather than with a “male breadwinner”):

Cleaner (f, 35-50, AT-34): [on retirement pension] Well I hope that I'll receive one. I've seen how this works with my mother. She worked for 30 years [part-time] in [a rather well-known] café in Vienna. She only receives 600 € a month. Of course, I worry. How much this is going to be, whether one will get by. [...] I've run through all these procedures with my mother, applied for pension support so she gets to 800 €, then for rent support ... I found it scandalous. Now I support her a lot, so she gets by from month to month. She has a small apartment to pay, there's not much left for groceries.

The sole laborist justification forwarded for why the mother should receive a pension benefit above subsistence levels remains the *paid* work which she has performed during her lifetime (complemented by a strong argument on *need*).

This said, esteem for care work is being expressed by proponents of all three categories – but not associated with laborist claims about welfare deservingness. A likely explanation is institutionalist: it is not the case in the current system – and progressive ideas about “feminist” change do not currently reach a working-class milieu.

Chapter 6. The Making of Populism at the Workplace: Enterprise Organizations as a Site of Political Preference Formation

I have theorized that social integration at the workplace has an important effect on the formation of political attitudes. This is because *work* is an essential channel of social integration for the majority of individuals in modern societies (s. Castel 1995; ch. 2.2 & 3.3.1). Whether work acts as a channel of integration into a contemporary European societies' "social order" of shared goals and values (s. *ibid*) or not, however, depends on whether an employed individuals' *workplace* facilitates the experience of participation in society's dominant orientations – or on the contrary creates an experience of alienation from these.

I expect those employed individuals who are well integrated into social role-relationships at their workplace, in an organization that successfully participates in the dominant, "productivist", model of the political economy, to form a *moderate-productivist* outlook on the advanced capitalist political economy (**P2a** "*workplace integration*"; s. ch. 3.3.1 & 5.2). I expect these individuals to feel "holding a stake" in society and therefore, both to support its dominant institutions and to form moderate, nuanced, non-salient views on the inclusion or exclusion of others in the community.

On the contrary, I expect individuals whose experience of the workplace is strongly marked by social tension (s. ch. 2) to feel more alienated from social order. This is because work, for them, does not act as a channel of integration with societies' dominant orientations (**P2b** "*workplace exclusion*", s. ch. 3.3). In effect, I expect these individuals to form a more "radical" socio-political outlook (*mechanism 1*, s. ch. 3.2). This "radical" outlook can channel into various directions, depending on *who* is excluded together *with whom* (*mechanism 2*, s. *ibid*). If those who are marginalized while being in employment exercise more materialistically oriented occupations, they can have a tendency to take up "producerist" and "welfare chauvinist" discourses dispersed by populist radical right-wing parties (PRRPs). This qualifies as "conflict externalization": no opportunity given to solve or thematize work(place)-related problems, those concerned by them form an identity of being particularly "hard-working" and blame "those who are not working" as well as those in perceivedly "unproductive" occupations (s. ch. 5.3). If, however, the marginalized are set in non-materialistic ("re-productive") occupations, they tend to resonate with post-materialistic discourses dispersed by new-alternative-left-wing parties. This comes down to a posture of challenging the productivist vision of "work" and often comes with the claim that work should not be mandatory (s. ch. 5.4).

Finally, I expect equivalent effects for social tension *between* enterprises. If an entire enterprise organization or even a sector of enterprise is at tension with the dominant, productivist social order, its workforce may react in a similar way: depending on the sector of activity and the degree of socio-occupational “sorting”, they may collectively tend into either of the “radical” directions (P2c “*enterprise exclusion*”; s. ch. 3.3).

These propositions are based on the assumption that *dependent employment* is a central mechanism of social inclusion for the majority of individuals in modern societies (s. Castel 1995; ch. 3.3) and *even more so* for the working-class, who disposes of less alternative, e.g. socio-cultural, mechanisms of inclusion than the educated middle-class. Occupational work is a source of material income and security, of social status, recognition, and participation, namely both in the meso-level sphere of the enterprise and, often mediated through the prior, in society at large (see ch. 3.3). While existing literature has thematized the political effects of exclusion *from* work (i.e. unemployment) and of *formally precarious* work arrangements (e.g. contract types), the political sociology of exclusion *in* work, i.e. *at the workplace*, has so far remained undertheorized. The workplace, however, theoretically qualifies as a primary sphere at which “grievances” can occur that channel into politicized resentment, as it is a long-standing proposition of “modernization loser” theory. This is because work-related problems are predestined to lead *in parallel* to literally all the types of grievance experiences theorized by *conflicting* variants of modernization loser theory (economic, cultural, status, recognition, etc., s. ch. 1, 2 & 3).

The subjective relevance of work-related problems is boosted by further factors: for many individuals, social roles and opportunities in other areas of life (e.g. family, hobbies, or yet welfare entitlements) depend in one or the other way on employment. Employed individuals spend a big part of their awake time at the workplace, so that grievances in this locus may occupy a considerable part of their daily life simply quantitatively speaking. This adds to the reasons why an experience of severe and permanent injustice in employment relations may have a disproportional effect on an individual’s perception of whether society *overall* is a just or an unjust place. Last but not least, work is an important way in which individuals make positive contact with social types very different from their own, namely through the experience of collaborating towards common goals at the workplace. On the contrary, if social exclusion occurs at the workplace, precisely these inter-group ties may rupture.

I sum up the multiple aspects of social inclusion enabled by employment in the following table.

| Form of inclusion | Aspect of inclusion |
|------------------------|--|
| (Dependent) employment | Income, material security |
| | Social recognition, social status |
| | Participation in the occupational and social relations inside the enterprise organization |
| | Participation through the individual occupational project / through the collective enterprise's project in wider society |
| | Inter-group contact |

Tab. 21: Social inclusion via dependent employment (s. ch. 3.3)

| Exclusion mechanism | Problem locus | Primary cause |
|--|---------------|---|
| Exclusion <i>from</i> employment | Labor market | Labor market situation (supply/demand) |
| Exclusion through employment <i>modalities</i> | Contract type | Labor market institutions (labor law, welfare state provisions, union activity, etc.) |
| Exclusion <i>in</i> employment relations | Workplace | Management-worker & organizational relations inside the enterprise |

Tab. 22: Exclusion *from*, *through* and *in* employment: three pathways (s. ch. 3.3)

Addressing the political-economic context, I have argued that socio-economic pressure created by the historical transformation from “industrial capitalism” to “advanced capitalism” may have to a considerable degree manifested *inside* enterprise organizations, namely in management-employee relationships, in management styles and “organizational culture” (s. ch. 3.1 & 3.3).¹⁹³ However, there may have been a lack of public and political narratives during this precise time period helping the employed to make sense of this problem *within* the dominant productivist social order (such a narrative would need to come with a problem identification and credible propositions on how to “solve” the problem within the limits of the given socio-economic model, s. ch 3.4). This is why “radical” narratives, which propose alternative social orders and/or externalize suppressed conflicts, may have profited from this source of social tension.

Moreover, I have argued that a political narrative which has infamously come to be associated with processes of economic modernization, globalization and liberalization during the period in question – the argument that “There Is No Alternative” (“TINA”) – may have oftentimes manifested and been experienced by individuals at the meso-level of the workplace (ch. 3.3). If an organization’s management systematically uses the argument that “there is no alternative” to (modalities of) change that are detrimental for employees; if such a style of argumentation

¹⁹³ Notably, this is at the same time the period when both the unionization of the workforce in numbers and union bargaining power have declined [Ebbinghaus/Visser 1999; Vandaele 2019].

should even become “normalized” in a society’s dominant organizational culture; then we would be looking at a textbook case of the breeding of social resentment as theorized by modernization loser theory and more generally, social psychology (Betz 2021; Demertzēs 2020; TenHouten 2018; Feather; s. ch. 1) – and we would be looking at a clean case of “conflict suppression”, which is likely to lead to “conflict externalization” or “system challenging” as I propose in ch. 2.1.

An analysis of the interview data with regard to *workplace experiences* and *mechanisms of political attitude formation* indeed lends support to the formulated propositions in most aspects.

50% of pressing personal grievance experiences reported by interviewed blue-collar workers in Austria and 30% in Eastern Germany are set at the workplace and stand in connection with employer-employee (or management-employee) relations. Workplace grievances can typically be traced back to four aspects of social exclusion at the workplace (s. ch. 6.2). This is firstly, infringements to *material security and basic human recognition*; secondly, *lacking reciprocity* in terms of material and symbolic recognition for the employees’ work; thirdly, obstacles to forms of *participation* at the workplace; and fourthly, a lack of communication, feedback, and *problem-solving* (i.e. conflict negotiation) mechanisms. Typically, cases of “workplace exclusion” (P2b) come as a mixture of all these elements. The *height of salaries* appears very rarely as a salient grievance; it does so only in those cases where interviewees struggle to make a living on their salary.¹⁹⁴

The politicization of these experiences, however, follows specific mechanisms which are best understood when taking the meso-level – the organization, the workplace – as the unit of analysis. This is why in ch. 6.2, I present a typology of large and small, public and private organizations as represented in interviewees’ narrated experiential accounts. Each type of *workplace relations* produces characteristic forms of social integration and exclusion – hand in hand with a systematic effect on the social and political outlook of the workforce. One of these types, which I call the “managerialist” type, indeed describes an organizational style that features systematic use of “TINA” (“There Is No Alternative”) argumentations, together with systematic “conflict suppression”, in management-employee relations.

I find evidence that manual workers who find themselves in stable employment, but persistently *excluded at the workplace* (P2b), tend to form “producerist” and “welfare chauvinist” attitudes

¹⁹⁴ In addition, in the German case, low salaries lead to very low retirement benefits for the reason of a low pension replacement rate. This is extensively discussed in chapter 7.

via a specific mechanism: they form an identity of being particularly “hard-working” themselves and resort to blaming those who “do not work” (of being lazy, of not contributing, of not making an effort). I show through qualitative analyses of interview data that, the most salient personally experienced grievances in numerous interviews are related to the workplace and the employer. The most salient political attitudes, however, do not concern work – but instead the blaming of unemployed persons and non-working immigrants (ch.s 6.1 & 6.4). I show evidence that this outcome is favored by being marginalized (*mechanism 1*) – but at the same time, disposing of tight integrative ties with a socially homogenous, collectively marginalized milieu, in which materialistically oriented occupations dominate (*mechanism 2*). There is also evidence that being marginalized at the workplace and having contact with the educative and humanistic occupations/ sectors (in which I expect post-materialistic ideas to circulate) favors a different effect, namely to a reorientation towards *post-productivist* views – even so among manual workers.

These findings are similar for both cases studies, with the difference that in the accounts of Austrian (labor market insider) workers, work conditions and workplace relations have deteriorated over an extended time-period, while in East German accounts, the process has happened in an accelerated manner in the 1990s, with a more prominent experience of job loss. Moreover, I show that workplace and employer-related grievances have a tendency to “spill over” into welfare state-related grievances: namely among those employees who, in final result of a situation of “workplace exclusion”, lose their job and become unemployed. Often, they arrive at the Employment office already with a baggage of resentment and injustice experiences – which they have not been able to voice vis-à-vis their employer. When subsequently, they feel in addition treated unfairly by the welfare state (what is often the case), they can project the entire load of resentment onto the state – and into the blaming of less “deserving” welfare recipient groups who seem to “get everything for free”.

In addition to the qualitative evidence, I propose a quantitative test of proposition P2b (“workplace exclusion”). I test a logistic regression model using ISSP 2015 survey data for all European countries. Findings suggest that a negative subjective experience of *workplace relations and work conditions* is significantly and rather strongly correlated with *voting for PRRPs* (s. ch. 6.7).

Further, I find support for proposition P2c (“enterprise exclusion”) in the interview data. One workplace relations type in the typology consists in marginalized small enterprises, typically led by charismatic owner-entrepreneur (often a master craftsman), in which both owner and

employees, together, form populist and exclusivist attitudes. This is associated with a finding I have not priorly theorized. Namely, I find that employees can over-identify with their boss. I call this phenomenon “*patronalism*”. It can notably occur among blue-collar workers and small business owners with a “hands-on” style who, like the workers, “work with their own hands”. However, also large (family-led) enterprise owners can adopt such a style and create strong resonance among workers. Indeed, *employers* are the most frequently mentioned figure in workers’ (explicit and implicit) responses to the question of “who could resolve” pressing workplace-related grievances, far more often than unions, the state, or politics. This proportion is even more pronounced among producerist workers. The phenomenon is stronger among working-class than among middle-class interviewees. It comes with an interesting aspect: employers, in the sense of enterprise-owners, are single individuals who can *decide* to co-represent the interest of employees – or not. Interviewee’s statements who see employers as actors capable of making a change, therefore typically come as a comparison of an image of a “good patron” – with those of “bad patrons”.

I equally find support for proposition P2a (“workplace inclusion”). Interviewed manual workers (and interviewees generally) who have a stable job and are included at the workplace (in an enterprise which successfully participates in the socio-economy), tend to form moderate visions of the political economy. I trace the mechanisms behind this preference formation process in ch. 6.1 and 6.3.

These findings provide a partial answer to this thesis’ main research question (RQ 1). This question can be tentatively answered as follows: the workplace seems to be a locus in which “grievance experiences” occur which matter to the formation of populist and exclusivist attitudes such as welfare chauvinism. This is because the workplace is a primary site via which individuals integrate into society – or experience social exclusion therefrom, which manifests as all the types of grievance experiences (material, status, recognition, justice, identity, etc.) known from the literatures on the “losers of modernization” and the “politics of resentment”.

In the following, I start the discussion of evidence with a detailed, exemplary analysis of two interviews in order to showcase both the main mechanisms found and the method of analysis in qualitative detail. I visualize these two interviews on large leaflets which are part of this document (ch. 6.1). After, this, I propose a typology of enterprise organizations by management styles and patterns of organizational relations, reconstructed from interviewees’ narrations, encompassing large and small, public and private workplaces. Each of the types comes with characteristic patterns of social integration or exclusion – and they all show an effect on the

socio-political outlook of the workforce. In the subsequent sections (ch. 6.3 – 6.6), I discuss each type in detail, including the multiple mechanisms that lead from experiences of integration/exclusion to political preference formation.

In ch. 6.7 I provide a quantitative test of proposition P2a (“workplace exclusion”). I test a logistic regression model using ISSP 2015 survey data for all European countries. Findings suggest that a negative subjective experience of workplace relations and work conditions is significantly and rather strongly correlated with voting for PRRPs across Europe.

6.1 Workplace Integration and Political Preference Formation: Exemplary Analyses

6.1.1 Pool Attendant Bernd Berger (DE-74)

It is a hot late afternoon in July and I am entering a public outdoor swimming pool. But not to take a refreshing dip. Indeed, I have a meeting with the pool attendant – for an interview. I spot him standing by the edge of the pool, watching the bathers and chatting.

“Guten Tag, Herr Berger?” – „What?“ – „Herr Berger?“ – „I’m Bernd. And you?“¹⁹⁵ – „Paulus. I was given your contact...” – “Yes, I know. From Austria. They told me.”

The scene is set in a Saxonian small town. I have driven here for forty minutes; it is the third interview that day, after an exciting conversation with a quarry worker (DE-73) and an extensive and inspiring morning chat with a former printing plant worker (DE-72), both in another town. This is one of the last interviews I will do in Germany. I meanwhile know the questionnaire with all its possible variations by heart, what helps committing to the flow of conversation. *“Do you have a moment?” – “Yes, yes, if we slowly walk along here... I need to watch the people, because my colleague is cashing up right now.”* I explain that I do interviews about occupational biography and experiences with social policy for my dissertation and get permission to register our conversation. *“I’m interested in what you have done professionally during your life, where have you started and how has it developed until now.”¹⁹⁶*

Bernd starts to tell the story of how he used to work as a butcher, served in the army in 1980 and was *“briefly unemployed in the middle of the 90s for two years. [...] During unemployment I have learned this profession, “skilled employee for baths” it is called. And then I applied here. Now I am already in my 25th season in the bath. And my last one, I’m going to retire. So my*

¹⁹⁵ Most interviewed manual workers insisted to use first names immediately. Once or twice I was taught that *“among workers, we are all “per du”*. The polite form *“Sie”* seemed an inappropriate reference to (middle) class status, overly formal and indeed, arrogant, in this context (see ch. 5.1).

¹⁹⁶ The German term *“Beruf”* in this contextual use (adjective use *“beruflich”, “beruflicher Lebenslauf”*) corresponds to “profession” as well as to “occupation” and “employment”.

colleague ... where is he now? He is collecting the entrance fees. He's going to replace me; and another one will come in addition. This job is still posted, however." He states preferring his current occupation over his former one; I inquire, and he explains: "Firstly, you earn more. Then, I love the cohesion [Zusammenhalt] with all the bath guests. You get to know the news. You talk. This is like a large family here. As a butcher I didn't have this, there I was alone, closed in, there in my work room and together with the master made sausages. This here is something entirely different. The interaction with the people, this interests me, hum. And the responsibility is of course the other side, nothing shall happen ... fortunately not. Except injuries, fortunately. Thank God. I hope that August will also be like this."

Throughout the interview, Bernd speaks positively of *occupational skill*, of *responsibility*, and of *(local) community*. His showcases this when reacting to my subsequent query:

Paulus: Were there any accidents?

Bernd: No fatalities. But injuries, and I had one asthma attack, of an elderly man. He left the water over there at the stairs, sat down with the wife, and she kept waving, well I waved back. Thought she wanted to greet me. But actually the man was so bad. In that case one cannot even do a lot; emergency call and oxygen. Give oxygen. So the... they have problems breathing out, asthma. But oxygen calms, in the first place. [...] They came back the next day and said thank you. They gave him the rest in hospital, injections and what do I know.

But, injuries, cuts, once a cut through the whole hand, this too I had already. Because the young, they drink a lot. They bring stuff here in their backpack, beer, wine, everything, Schnaps, too. And back then, 10 years ago, there were still wine bottles with corks. Where a corkscrew, well they didn't have one. So, they thought they'd hit the bottle on the ground and the cork would come out. Well, the bottle broke of course, and here, all cut. The whole hand cut. This boy was for a week – they sewed the injury – was in hospital for a week. Well, such cases.

These were already the gravest cases that I had, except, during volleyball once someone broke a leg. This, of course, wasn't a fine thing either. Well, you need to know as a first aider what to do until the doctor ...

P: You got training as a first aider, don't you?

B: Of course, I need to. As a skilled employee [Fachangestellter] – that's mandatory. Besides the physics and chemistry and what else ... filtration plant technology. Water treatment. You need to know all that. My colleague here, lifeguard, is with Wasserwacht [Water Watch], I am

with the DLRG [German Life Rescue Society], he is with Wasserwacht, that's a competitor association, but we get along well. And for him ... he's going to tell himself, he was in the [...] there is a chocolate factory. There he was for years and delivered newspapers and now by chance he made the lifeguard [certificate], with 37 or 38 [years], he grows into this profession. So, yes. Another question?

In my analysis of the interview – which I conduct later, during the following winter, when Bernd has already retired from his position – I mark the named elements (occupational skill, responsibility, local community) as “values” in the sense defined in ch. 2 & 4: these are concrete elements of Bernd’s life which he *valorizes positively*, as it becomes visible in the lived biographical experiences he has narrated. I further add his *professional association* to the list, as well as elements he talks about later in the interview, including aspects of *family* and *hobbies* he exercises with joy in the local area.

Bernd’s values are connected to “social roles” he exercises in domains such as his *workplace*, his *family*, or social ties in the *local area* (s. ch. 2). The role-relationships he has exposed to us so far are well intact: interactors’ expectations about reciprocal rights and obligations correspond. Bernd provides first aid after an asthma attack – the man comes back a week later and says “thank you”. Bernd tells people stories and people tell him stories. He helps his younger colleague “grow into” the profession, and the colleague will continue the work Bernd has been doing for 25 years, which he evidently feels, carries a social value. In these interactions, we can identify *common* goals and values: health, community, professionalism.

Back at the public pool, I seize the opportunity to switch topic and ask about how retirement will work out for my interviewee. He responds that he will already turn 65 in autumn (so, he has reached legal retirement age), and immediately adds some generalized attitudes about the German retirement system, stating that “*In Austria this is a bit better. They earn, they get some more in retirement benefits than we do in Germany... We are quasi at the low end in Germany, hum. I don't know in Austria whether this is at 70%, at 72, what you get for retirement, what here is only at 50, 50%. That's of course stupid, but – it doesn't work else... one has to be satisfied with it.*”¹⁹⁷ Bernd states that anyway, he has fulfilled his mandatory contribution years,

¹⁹⁷ This is a case of “TINA” (“There is no alternative”, see ch 3.1 and above): interviewees experience phenomena of social life as personal grievances and injustices, but perceive that there is no way to change this or even to make legitimate arguments about it. What often remains is *generalized resentment*. The politically *naturalized* “fiscal and demographic pressure” on European retirement systems (Pierson 2001; Häusermann 2010) is a typical case for this mechanism (s. ch. 7). Bernd does not argue in the interview that the 50% pension replacement rate puts him and his family at threat of poverty (as other interviewees do, s. equally ch. 7). However, he makes sense of this situation of *scarcity* by means of an *individualization of responsibility*: “*With this [little money] you need to*

so he has “the right to a full pension without deductions”. *“It is important to go without deductions. And ... they want that people go [work] until 67. That’s drastic, of course, that it is like this. Well. Even women, that’s even worse, that women also need to go so long. My wife for example, she is five years younger than I. Yes, she has – I am going to be 71 until she retires. So, she goes with deductions. She stops earlier, this means with 61, and so she is allowed with deductions, they deduct 10% from the pension benefit. Unfortunately, it is like this here in Germany. Austria is of course better, as ... we are quasi ... we live in the wrong country here, I use to say. (laughs)”*

Bernd tells me about personal grievances he and his family face with the public retirement system. We may follow his argumentation that the increase of female retirement age is inconvenient for his wife and himself; and generally, that 67 is a rather high legal retirement age. It is also evident that a pension replacement rate of only 50% leads to economic worries for low-income earners (see ch.7), but Bernd does not voice pressing *personal* grievances with the regulation at this point.¹⁹⁸

I analytically distinguish lived experiences interviewees have made *themselves* from their *generalized attitudes* about society and politics (see ch. 3.4 & 4). I hold that experiences influence attitude formation, but the precise mechanisms of how they do so are diverse and must be specifically theorized (s. *ibid*). Now Bernd’s attitudes about the German retirement system are decidedly negative. His comparison of German and Austrian retirement systems is likely to be inspired by his conversation partner’s (i.e. my) nationality, which is why I do not attribute much significance to it.¹⁹⁹ I do, however, take note of his judgements that “we live in the wrong country here” and “we are at the low end in Germany”, which seem somewhat out of proportion with his personal pension worries.²⁰⁰

We have started to dig into grievances and politics. It is the next question, an evergreen on my list, that hits on something actually big. *“Would you say, does your occupation receive the recognition, socially, that it deserves?”* – *“Yes. From the bath guests in any case.”* Idyllic swimming pool, quiet area, sociable man in his 60s among sociable people. What could possibly

get through, then. Need to learn to get through with it. When you want to keep up the living standard, you need to save up yourself. Save yourself.”, he says later in the interview. This, naturally, changes his vision of what are the valid norms regulating social relations around the welfare state (s. *ibid*).

¹⁹⁸ I treat “social roles” of citizens vis-à-vis the welfare state and grievance experiences in this domain extensively in ch. 7.

¹⁹⁹ In many cases when interviewees compare their own country to others, it is to support a point about their own country they were anyway going to make.

²⁰⁰ For an analysis of the mechanisms linking “welfare experiences” to political preference formation, s. ch.7.

go wrong? And here, he tells an unlikely story. *“From the employer themselves – no, I dare, I have my doubts. Because they let me here, I had more downs than ups in this bath over the 25 years. They let me here, often, all alone, it’s a huge bath, and when there are 500, 600, 700 people here, and one is without help, all alone, then... I don’t know, there a fatality, then the mayor goes to prison, too.”* Bernd tells a story of overwork and legal hazard; yet more profoundly, a story about lack of support and recognition from his employer. *“Yes, he tolerated this, for many years ... I was camping here in the bath, over weeks, during the heat wave, this was in 2003, 6 weeks in a row, over 30 degrees. Every day the bath [was] packed. From 9 in the morning until 8 in the evening you open the bath, then clean everything, the toilets, treat the water, this is part of it: all alone.”*

Paulus [encouraging interviewee to continue speaking]: This all you did alone, from nine to eight?

Bernd: From 9 am till 10 pm in the evening, well then I was done, crawled into my tent and all I could do was sleep. Driving home wasn’t even worth it anymore. Well, they let me down properly, well...

P: Why wasn’t a second person employed?

B: They say they did not have one, no personnel, and of course no money, and it’s anyway going to run somehow. Then, the next thing: the cash desk wasn’t occupied. So, what did I do: closed the cash desk, [let the] people all for free into the bath. For years. They lost many thousands of euros during those years they let me alone.

P: With this money one could have paid someone, not?

B: Oh, the mayor said, still cheaper than we needed to hire someone. This was his reaction. What do we want to say there? One is speechless. Yes.

We have seen enough evidence for a preliminary analysis. According to Bernd’s account, his occupational role at the workplace is subject to some serious “social tension”. Reportedly, Bernd’s employer systematically infringes the (formal and informal) social norms that regulate their reciprocal rights and obligations. The practical goals and values linked to Bernd’s occupational role seem to be in stark divergence from those practiced by his employer; and the negotiation of smaller or larger conflicts (by means of discussion or even protest) seems to be impossible. In a word: employer-employee relations at his workplace are *dysfunctional* (s. ch. 2 & 3.3). This manifests in Bernd’s experience as material insecurity (legal hazard), as

misrecognition both of his personal needs (overwork) and of his professional efforts and values (responsibility), and as severe injustice (“*they let me down*”) that he does not have the power to change or challenge (“*one is speechless*”). This said, Bernd’s values seem to find resonance among his personal and occupational surroundings in the local milieu (“*The bath guests here, they see [that] the responsibility is given; indeed there is a huge responsibility*”). Social tension occurs precisely in occupational relations with the hierarchically higher level (“*But from the employer, it lacks a lot of things. Recognition from the employer is very, very minimal.*”). Bernd tries to deal with this problem individually; but different from the retirement pension worry, he *does not politicize it*. Perhaps for a lack of publicly accepted discourses which would help him to make sense of, which would supply him a category for the type of situation he is subject to and a sense that this may be a broader social problem? “*Maybe it isn’t like this everywhere, but here it is.*”

P: Have these things gotten better, at some point ...?

B: Well no, no. Yes, I have got a second man, now finally. (laughs) Otherwise this was made up for with lifeguards, or temporary workers during the season. [...] It has helped me a bit, yes. But ... last, this means 2018 it didn’t work at all [...] then I was alone again. Then I submitted an “overwork notification” to the mayor. Well one can do this, one is overburdened with the many people, and all alone, well. And they need to take this seriously, I did it for my security, if something happens, then he is going to be charged and not I. Yes, one needs to submit an overwork notification, yes but ... he says, “well, then we need to close.” I say, okay, then I am now going to stick a piece of paper on the front door and close. “No, wait a moment, wait a moment ... we are going to manage this, I will tell you tomorrow morning”, and, “I am going to call you” ... Well what happens in the morning, people stood here in front of the door and I’m waiting for the, there didn’t come a call ... and the people wanted in, so I let the people in again.

P: So, ran the bath all alone.

B: We have ... fully ... completely alone.

P: Respect!

B: It’s heavy, it’s actually ... what do you mean, respect? This is shit, in proper German. (laughs)

Bernd’s story seems unlikely, but indeed it is not. Since the beginning of the interviewing process, I have heard variations of this story dozens of times. Not always narrated in such

tangible anecdotes²⁰¹, but similar in the main points that I have above theorized above to characterize *workplace exclusion* (P2b, s. ch. 3.3 & 6.3). Workplace exclusion, i.e. employer-employee or organizational relations at work that stand under “tension” to the degree of dysfunctionality, is a source of grievances, set plainly at the center of matters socio-economic, in Bernd’s biography. These *experienced* grievances, however, are only a symptom of a bigger problem. The bigger problem is, workplace exclusion prevents Bernd from experiencing participation, through his work and his workplace, in the common goals and orientations of the society in which he lives, and in the dominant model of the political economy. Bernd’s employer is the municipality, this means, the local state. The local state consists of organizations, persons, social norms, goal- and value-orientations, and a distribution of social roles that is in multiple ways integrated with the regional and national state, with partisan politics, with the local and regional economy, with “dominant” cultural spheres, and so on.²⁰² If Bernd’s workplace within the local state would provide him with a viable *channel of integration* with the orientations of the local state, then the local state would act as a *bridging institution*, linking the goals and values of Bernd’s occupational activity into a broad societal web of aligned practical goals and value-orientations, resonant with dominant societal narratives (ch. 2 & 3.1). The opposite is, however, the case: workplace exclusion leads Bernd to experience *alienation* from the orientations of the local state and no participation in dominant social order.

Does Bernd dispose of *alternative channels of integration* with the dominant, productivist, model of the political economy? Bernd is full-time employed, he exercises an activity that, in the local area, is socially respected, but he finds himself in a position of *marginalization* in society at large. What Bernd disposes of are viable integrative ties with social types who are rather similar to his own (his daughter works as secretary in a local hospital; his son-in-law as a car mechanic, also in the local area). I summarize this diagnosis in the following table, emphasizing the three spheres of social integration set out in ch. 3: integration via work, via the state, and via socio-cultural spheres.

²⁰¹ I have chosen to present Bernd’s interview to the reader for the reason of brevity - Bernd was in a hurry to close up the pool, which is why our conversation was only half the length of the average interview in the dataset - and its concurrent exemplarity of the mechanism.

²⁰² For sure, “tension” or “rupture” can equally occur *between* the local state and e.g. the national state. Imagine Bernd’s employer was on Bernd’s side – but together, they would find themselves “marginalized” and oppose the dominant state- and political-economic structures. This is what I theorize in proposition P2c (“enterprise exclusion”).

| | | |
|---------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| Work | Welfare State | Social relations |
| Workplace exclusion | (Minor) retirement worries | Local/ homogenous millieu |

Tab. 23: Channels of social integration, DE-74. Red ... dysfunctional; green ... functional; orange ... social tension of minor degree

Now how does this impact on Bernd’s vision of the political economy – is there any connection between his lived experience of social integration/ exclusion and his sociopolitical attitudes?

I find a way to lead the topic of conversation to issues of budgetary and social policy. Does the state need to “save money”? Few interviewees give a yes- or no-answer to this question; many more make an argument about spending priorities that reflects their general socio-political orientations.²⁰³ Bernd’s answer falls within the latter category – and his views qualify as cleanly *producerist* (s. ch. 5.3): *“I don’t know why, on the other side [the state] throws out the money again for things that aren’t necessary at all. They save on our salaries already, there we start. We [who work outside] are those who are the least paid, and those who sit in the office... they have their high [salary] grades [...] while here this is even much more important I would ... I’d say, much more important.”*

Next, we touch on the issue of unemployment.

P: “Should unemployment benefits be higher or lower than they are?”

B: “Yes, haha. If they’d pay enough unemployment benefit, it would rather be worse here. No one would apply [for jobs] anymore.”²⁰⁴ They would live well off it. This is why I think ... better don’t exaggerate unemployment benefits. So they are forced to apply, somehow, for work. Many don’t want to anymore, because they are well. They get this AAG 2 support, there they get the rent paid, heating cost paid... and in addition another 450 € to live per month. Some are satisfied with this, they don’t want to work anymore. Then they have child benefits and free rent,

²⁰³ This corresponds to findings i.a. by Häusermann et al. (2021); Enggist (2019).

²⁰⁴ In between, Bernd and I have extensively spoken about the difficulty to find people who would do skilled manual jobs, including the job of a pool attendant. Bernd relates this problem to the working conditions and to employers’ behavior (his employer has turned down an applicant two years ago; now they are searching but not finding, so that they resorted to actively contacting the priorly turned down person, who meanwhile had been unemployed). In seeming confirmation of the “conflict externalization” theory presented in ch. 2 & 3.1, Bernd still places *politicized* blame on the height of unemployment benefits more than on anything else. He is doing so in a situation where both the *height of salaries* and the *quality of working conditions* are subject to “TINA”: they are non-negotiable, arguments about them are not being met even with recognition by the competent authorities, and there are no salient political discourses that would, f. ex., propose that the proximity between wage levels and unemployment benefit levels could be resolved through an increase in wages (rather than through a decrease in benefits well below the poverty threshold).

everything, living for free ... well. I don't know whether that's the same in Austria; Germany is probably the exception country, where this exists."²⁰⁵

Bernd adopts the posture of “chauvinist laborism” that I have extensively described in ch. 5.3. He positions “work” and more precisely, productive social contribution through work, as a central value and indeed as a central referent of his vision of the political economy. This value of his, however, is *hurt*. In reaction, he formulates over-emphasized moral contribution claims connected to work – and resorts to blaming of those who don't work, using a radical version of the “productivist” register of justification: “they do not *contribute*”; “they don't make an *effort*”; “they [could but] *don't want* to work”. Should immigrants have equal access to the welfare state?

B: *“No, from my point of view, not at all, no. They haven't done anything. They haven't contributed [geleistet] anything in Germany, have they? I don't know what kind of benefits [Leistungen] they expect. First they get welcome money and so on, but now they are allowed to get... it's like unemployment assistance, what they get now. They have to get something, even if they don't do anything, but I don't think that's right. I don't mind if they work here, if they really want to work here honestly, the, the people. Then they can make an effort, but some of them don't make an effort at all. They come from Libya and expect a house, they don't just expect a place to stay, an apartment, they want to have a house, that's the bad thing about it. I don't know what they promise them. I don't know ...”*

The interview continues for a bit; we speak about partisan politics (“*No one*”, “*terrible*”, but “*Sebastian Kurz*”²⁰⁶ *talks in principle how we think*“ and the AfD, “*I have voted for them for years; at the next elections they would need to go really above 50%, then maybe something would happen*”), about the end of the GDR (“*Everything started well. But half a year later, the first wave of unemployment started. [...] Since reunification they have been at home, living off the state.*”), about hobbies (“*Swimming. That's obvious. (laughs) I will also do this when I retire.*”).

Let us sum up. This thesis' main research question asks: Are “grievance experiences” connected to the formation of “welfare chauvinist” attitudes, and if yes: a) where, in which spheres of

²⁰⁵ This is an example of the use of international comparison for the mere expression of points one would anyway like to make about one's own country. In fact, Germany's unemployment policy is rather harsh in European comparison since the Schröder-government's reforms in the 2000s (s. ch.4).

²⁰⁶ Austrian conservative-turned-right-wing-populist prime minister who resigned over the Second Republic's largest corruption scandal in 2021; had impressive visibility among populist-right-wing leaning interviewees in Germany during the field period.

social life, do relevant grievances occur; b) via what mechanism(s) do they affect preference formation? Bernd’s interview allows it to formulate an exemplary answer to this question. An answer that I will again put in the form of a table:

| | High | Middle | Low | None |
|--|--------------------------|---------------|------------|--------------------------|
| Politicized blame (Salience) | Immigrants Unemployed | Retirement | | Employer |
| Personal grievances (Pressure) | Employer | | Retirement | Immigrants Unemployed |

Tab. 24: “Pressure-Release”-chart for DE-74

I propose that Bernd’s behavior is explained by *conflict externalization* (s. ch. 2 & 3.1): he shifts social problem pressure that concerns him directly onto scapegoats who, in fact, do not concern him directly. Bernd suffers from high personal problem pressure in workplace relations; however, he does not politicize workplace relations at all. Bernd does not report a single *personal* problem experience with unemployed persons and/or with immigrants (barely any interviewee does). Moralized exclusivism against the unemployed and (non-working) immigrants, however, are the most salient political issues he addresses in the entire interview. This corresponds to the behavior of other interviewees with salient “producerist” and “welfare chauvinist” attitudes (s. ch. 6.4).

Why does Bernd not politicize his personal problem, but instead blame social outgroups? I propose this can be explained by two variables, namely firstly, the capacity of *conflict negotiation* (s. ch. 2 & 3.1); and secondly, *political supply* (s. ch. 3.1 & 3.4). Bernd has tried for many years to change something about his situation of workplace exclusion, but without success. If Bernd had left his current job – in which he believes, which provides him purpose – his alternative in the local area would have been to go back to jobbing in the local foodstuff factory, for a lower wage, with a sensible effect on his retirement benefit (and better workplace relations...? We cannot know). In his attempts for problem solution and conflict negotiation he has never resorted to forms of collective or political action, what is likely explained so that these options are not within Bernd’s reach. Where is the work’s council or labor union (s. ch. 6.3)? Where is the political discourse that addresses workplace exclusion grievances (in the decades before the Covid-induced hype on a “great resignation”, a “big quit”, s. ch. 3.4)?

On the contrary, producerist and welfare chauvinist discourse is being ubiquitously dispersed by PRRP AfD in the German public. My explanation for why Bernd is *more receptive* towards welfare chauvinist ideas than workers who are well-integrated through their workplace into a

common societal order of goals and values is: he uses this PRRP-discourse to make sense of his *marginalized* position, crystallized in workplace exclusion experiences, in advanced capitalist society (s. ch.3). A “hurt” form of *laborism*, which becomes *chauvinist laborism*, serves as attitudinal transposition mechanism, channeling his personal experience into this socio-political outlook.

An important specification must be made about the temporality and magnitude of the “treatment” in this theoretical model. According to Bernd’s account, his experience of *workplace exclusion* has been given at least since the early 2000s. His parallel experience related to the welfare state (“there is not much”; “you need to learn to get through”; “you need to save up yourself”), according to his own account, traces back to the 1990s.²⁰⁷ These findings support the idea that structural shifts in the political economy, which have turned the workplace and the welfare state into sites of exclusion rather than inclusion, have *categorically* (rather than just “relatively”) altered these individuals’ social outlook – a process that seems to have been a matter of the mid- to long-term.²⁰⁸ On the contrary, the given evidence does not provide conclusive information on whether or how “smaller” and more short-term work-related worries, which do not account to full-scale “workplace exclusion” (dysfunctionality of the societally integrative capacity of work) lead to changes in political outlook.

Below, I am providing a visual overview of the entire interview with Bernd (**III. 16**), which should provide a most accessible illustration of the theorized mechanism. Bernd’s narration is organized in two circles, of which the inner one clusters *personal experiences* and expectations; the outer circle clusters *generalized perceptions and attitudes* about society and politics. I have marked all *positive* experiences and attitudes in light green. Dark green highlights *values* of the interviewee. All *negative* experiences and attitudes are marked in orange. Dark red is for *pressing problems* (which, typically, are pressing because they conflict with the interviewee’s values). For an easier overview, I have additionally organized the materials by referring to the interviewee’s “present”, “past”, and “future” as well as by the three categories of analysis “work”, “(welfare) state”, and “socio-cultural spheres”. I call this method of visualization “subject mapping” (s. ch. 4).

²⁰⁷ Chapter 7 is dedicated to the analysis of how “welfare experiences” affect preference formation.

²⁰⁸ Theoretically, the fact of “inclusion” or “exclusion” (together with whom?, s. ch. 3.2) is at stake more than a set (biographical) time period. If an individual loses their most essential channel(s) of social integration, their socio-political outlook may take less than 20 years to change. My evidence, however, is not entirely conclusive on the temporality of the mechanism (s. below).

To put it very simple, my claim is that the green and red stuff in the inner circle interacts with the green and red stuff in the outer circle: a person's lived experience makes them prone to take up some narratives about society and politics rather than others (s. ch. 3.1 & 3.4). The more interesting question, of course, is *how precisely* experience and attitudes interact. I sum up the theorized mechanism of "conflict displacement" that is mediated by the formation of a "chauvinist-laborist" identity on the subsequent page in tab. 25 ("Analysis of Attitude Formation Mechanisms in Interview DE-74").

Factors of influence

Resolution and politicisation of workplace/ employer worry not possible ("TINA": Nothing can be done or even legitimately said about it)

Full embedding in homogenous, tight-knit local milieu with few "bridging" institutions with other social types/ parts of society



| Personal experience | Domains of personal experience | Mechanisms of attitude formation | Socio-political attitudes |
|---|--|--|---|
| <p>Swimming pool Communication Guests are like a big family Responsibility Professional association Colleague who will assure future of swimming pool</p> <p>Wife Daughter</p> <p>Sports in local area</p> <p>Been left alone by employer all these years If something happens employers goes to prison with him</p> <p>You need to save up yourself because public pension doesn't suffice</p> <p>Factory jobs, unskilled jobs in area</p> | <p>Work Local Community Family Employer worry Pension worry Fear of unemployment</p> | <p>1) Experience of misrecognition of own work, values, contribution; experience of exclusion from current model of political economy</p> <p><u>Reaction:</u> Formation of chauvinist-laborist identity: over-emphasized moral contribution claims connected to work; Blaming of those who don't work (who do not make an "effort")</p> <p>2) Feeling of being "left alone", "let down" by societal/ state solidarity</p> <p><u>Reaction:</u> Individualization of responsibility to find employment, get along socio-economically; Distrust towards institutional elites; "Kicking down" along the ranking-order of deservingness: blaming of those who are less deserving than oneself</p> | <p>Nativism Producerism Chauvinism towards unemployed and non-working immigrants Populism towards politics and institutions Generalized pessimism</p> |

Tab. 25: Analysis of Attitude Formation Mechanisms in Interview DE-74

6.1.2 Hospital Electrician Johann Pichler (AT-38)

In comparison, I propose to consider the exemplary analysis of an interview with a man whose biography, within the given dataset, is *most similar* to Bernd's – with the exception that he has experienced *workplace integration* rather than exclusion.²⁰⁹

Johann Pichler lives in an Austrian small town. He is of the same generation as Bernd. He has worked for over 30 years as an electrician in the small town's hospital (hence, also in the public sector) and founded the organization's internal fire brigade.

When we look at the visualization below (III. 17), in the inner circle ("personal experiences") we see quite a bit of orange stuff – but considerably less red stuff than in Bernd's. This is because everyone makes negative and problematic experiences (at least, every interviewee in the dataset narrates some) – but the difference relies in whether there are ways of solving these problems, of negotiating these conflicts, or not.

The largest "orange" bloc on Johann's page refers to – surprise – the workplace: to changes in the way the organization is being managed, notably related to budget cuts, outsourcing of services, and management styles. Johann, however, tells the story of how he has been able to navigate these changes and avoiding those superiors who he perceived to practice very negative management styles, *because* there were other superiors with whom he was able to negotiate the issues at stake. He also states that after a point he was in a better position due to concentrating on the tasks of the company fire brigade rather than on his original tasks as an electrician. Johann still has contact with his former work colleagues, they have a WhatsApp group in common, and he goes there regularly to visit them for a coffee.

I analyze the preference formation mechanisms linking Johann's experience and his attitudes on the subsequent page. Johann holds "laborist" views, too, but his views feel within the "moderate-laborist" category (s. ch. 5.2). Johann's *values* are, for the larger part, similar to Bernd's: they include *social cohesion* and a concern for the *future of manual occupations*. In Johann's case, however, these values are not decisively threatened or hurt. The most negative attitudes Johann voices in the entire interview are about "*multinational companies who do not pay taxes*" (2nd place, mentioned once) and about "*right-wing populism*" (1st place, mentioned three times). He explicitly states that he sees "the environment" as the most important political

²⁰⁹ Additional differences include: Johann Pichler is satisfied with the Austrian retirement system; he has been able to retire with a "full pension" by the age of 62. He has contact with socio-cultural professionals in his close family.

issue.²¹⁰ In terms of quantity, the “social problem” he speaks most about is the future of manual worker occupations, which visibly seems to concern him, but he does not politicize it. When it comes to politics, he voices positive views about the Austrian center-right, center-left, and Green party, while voicing very negative views about PRRP FPÖ.²¹¹

| | | |
|-------------|----------------------|--|
| Work | Welfare State | Social relations with diverse social types |
|-------------|----------------------|--|

Tab. 26: Channels of social integration, AT-38. Red ... dysfunctional; green ... functional

| | High | Middle | Low | None |
|--|-------------|------------------------|---|-------------|
| Political issues (Saliency) | | Environment | | |
| Politicized blame (Saliency) | | Right-wing populism | MNCs who don't pay taxes | |
| Personal grievances (Pressure) | | | Future of manual occupations; Employer | |

Tab. 27: “Pressure-Release”-chart for AT-38

The visualization on the following page (**III. 17**) shows the transcript of a telephone interview that was taken in keywords during the conversation. These notes were translated from German into English and arranged in the same way as Bernd’s interview visualization above.

²¹⁰ He reports that members of his family are politically active with the Green party and I would attribute the mentioning of the environment-issue to this factor. In any case, the environment-issue is the most “outlier” point about Johann in comparison to all other moderate-laborist interviewees (s. below & ch. 5.2).

²¹¹ He adds that his family comes from an agricultural milieu which used to be aligned with the conservative (center-right-wing) party.

Factors of influence
 Firm social integration via work and welfare state.
 Ways of dealing with problems (“conflict negotiation”) enabled by social/ institutional environment.
 Positive role-relationships with different social types via family (and probably work).
 Contact with educative and humanitarian ideas via family.



| Personal experience (summary) | Domains of personal experience | Mechanisms of attitude formation | Socio-political attitudes |
|---|--------------------------------|--|---|
| <p>Skilled manual works</p> <p>Fire bridage</p> <p>Nephew</p> <p>Grandchildren</p> <p>Handicraft and repair works</p> | <p>Work</p> <p>Family</p> | <p>1) Experience of recognition for work, values, contribution; experience of firm social integration via work; experience of integration in current model of political economy.</p> <p><u>Reaction:</u> Formation of moderate laborist identity.</p> <p>2) Feeling of being supported by state solidarity.</p> <p><u>Reaction:</u> Moderate attitudes towards others' welfare entitlements.</p> <p>3) "Green" ideas circulate in family sphere.</p> <p><u>Reaction:</u> Prioritization of environment issues.</p> | <p>Social cohesion</p> <p>Future of skilled manual occupations</p> <p>Environment</p> <p>Right-wing populism</p> <p>Multinational corporations that don't pay taxes</p> |

Tab. 28: Analysis of Attitude Formation Mechanisms in Interview AT-38

The mechanisms of preference formation shown in Bernd’s and Johanns’ cases are not merely anecdotal but reoccur throughout the sample of interviews. In so doing, they follow a logic: namely, they are dominantly shaped by management styles and workplace relations in organizations. Drawing on interviewees’ narrations, in ch. 6.2, I reconstruct a typology of *workplace relations* that systematically produce “inclusion” or “exclusion” experiences among parts of the workforce – and in effect favor the formation of some political outlooks over others. In ch. 6.3 – 6.6, I discuss interviewees’ experiences and pathways of attitude formation at each of these types of workplaces in detail.

6.2 The Influence of Management Activity and a Typology of Workplace Relations

Employees’ experience of workplace relations is decisively influenced by actions of the employer, what in practice comes down to actions of enterprise *management*. In the examples discussed above, we can identify several channels through which management actions impact on workplace experience. Firstly, this is direct interactions between management and employees. These can follow mutually accepted norms (or not), express recognition (or not), and be experienced as respectful or, in the extreme opposite case, as discrimination.²¹² Secondly, management is the primary agent shaping organizational relations (norms that count in the organization, organizational culture) and thus exercising a “systemic” influence on inclusion/ exclusion dynamics. Thirdly, it has the power of recognizing and solving problems deriving from other sources (than management activity itself) through communication, feedback, and problem-solving mechanisms: work, collaboration, enterprise activity always and everywhere comes with problems and with conflict – the question is, are there intact mechanisms to deal with these (“conflict negotiation”, s. ch. 2.1 & 3.1) – or not.

| Management activity | Effect on aspects of social inclusion/ exclusion |
|--|--|
| Direct interactions between management and employees | Following commonly accepted norms (or not) Expressing recognition (or not) Experienced as respectful (or, in extreme opposite case, as discrimination) |
| Shaping of organizational relations | Establishing common goals, a mode of collaboration that works practically, a role-and-norm system that is acceptable and respected by all participants; involving employees in decisions and change processes that |

²¹² For many workers, direct interaction with management is the nexus point where their experience of exclusion at the workplace “crystallizes”: stories of unfairness and exclusion at the workplace commonly start with a description of a practical problem and end with a quotation of a management representative who entirely misrecognized this problem (instead of recognizing or even, solving it).

| | |
|--|---|
| | concern them; managing physical, psychological, legal risks to employees – or not |
| Communication / feedback / problem-solving | Recognizing (or not), solving (or not) of problems deriving from other sources than management activity itself: i.e. both work-related and not immediately work-related (social) issues |

Tab. 29: The central role of management in inclusion/ exclusion dynamics at the workplace

While all these factors refer to a dimension of overall “higher” or “lower” quality of workplace relations, the models of organization promoted in an enterprise can be quite different. It is possible to reconstruct a number of models from interviewees’ narrations, which I present in the table below. In the following sections (ch. 6.3 – 6.6), I organize the discussion of further examples by this typology.

Models of workplace relations create different patterns of inclusion or exclusion and, in effect, promote different visions of society. Some models work out better for one interviewee than for another. The important takeaway, however, is that some models *overall* work vastly better than others in producing experiences of inclusion, justice, and participation rather than exclusion, injustice, and alienation among the contemporary manual working class.

| Enterprise type | Type of workplace relations | Experience of inclusion / exclusion among employees |
|---|------------------------------------|--|
| Large Enterprise Multi-National Corporation Large public organization | Corporativist | Inclusion (with some clientelism) |
| | Managerialist | Systematic exclusion |
| Large Socialist State Enterprise ²¹³ | Horizontal authoritarian | Hyper-inclusion with political exclusion |
| Small/Medium or Family Enterprise (Owner-managed) | Charismatic | Inclusion through “incorporation” |
| | Careless | Arbitrary exclusion |
| | Supportive | Inclusion through independence |

Tab. 30: Typology of workplace relations reconstructed from interviewees’ narrations

The typology treats small and family-led (owner-managed) enterprises as distinct from large corporations and public structures (in which ownership and management are separated). While models of workplace relations show similarities across these enterprise characteristics, the also

²¹³ In GDR (before 1989).

show several crucial differences (s. notably ch. 6.5, where I discuss the “charismatic” model of workplace relations). In terms of sectors of economic activity, we are mostly set in the manufacturing, construction, energy, transportation, small artisan, and public sectors, in which a large part of blue-collar workers is employed. Please remind that when I write about “small enterprises” and “small business owners”, this typically refers to either small artisan enterprises, car repair shops, hardware stores etc., or (less often) to mid-sized family-owned manufacturing firms. Throughout this thesis, I do not apply the term to start-ups (which work with high-end technology and rarely employ blue-collar workers).

In the following sections, I discuss each model of workplace relations at the hands of qualitative examples, highlighting patterns of workplace inclusion or exclusion and the mechanisms via which they impact on political preference formation.

Throughout this discussion, it shows that workplace integration and workplace exclusion are related to literally all the types of social inclusion and exclusion experiences discussed in ch. 2.1 & 3.1. In the interview data, it is possible to identify four recurring aspects of an individual’s social integration at their workplace, which are: (1) material security and recognition of fundamental human needs, (2) reciprocity between employer and employee, (3) forms of participation in the goals and values of the enterprise, and (4) problem solving and conflict negotiation mechanisms.²¹⁴ These experiences typically come not individually, but *clustered*. In this form, they lead interviewees to experience, through their work and workplace, to hold a stake in society, that society is a just place, and that they are a recognized and respected member of it.

On the contrary, workplace exclusion can be cause to the entire range of grievance types treated by the literatures on “losers of modernization” and the “politics of resentment” (s. ch.1). Poorly functioning workplace relations *cause* material, cultural, status, recognition, and fairness grievances. Equally importantly, they render impossible *the recognition and resolution* of such grievances even when they result from different causes. This is because where there are poorly functioning management-worker relations, there are no communication, feedback, and problem-solving mechanisms; there even is a lack of awareness on one side of the relationship

²¹⁴ The analysis I present here refers to all interviewees who narrate about workplace experiences they have made as dependent employees (not as self-employed independents/ entrepreneurs). Please note that even the overall dataset has a strong bias towards (manual) worker occupations. These findings may therefore not be representative of how workplace integration functions for higher-level professional jobs, in tech start-ups, or the like.

that is subject to social “tension” or “rupture” that these problems, indeed, exist on the other side. I sum up these findings in the following table.

| Aspect of workplace integration | Issues at stake | Subjective experiences 215 |
|--|--|---|
| Material security and human needs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Fear of losing job vs. trust job is safe ➤ Discrimination, Mobbing ➤ Social roles outside of work reconcilable with occupational role? | Security vs. insecurity Justice vs. injustice Recognition vs. misrecognition |
| Reciprocity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Material and symbolic recognition for work | Participation vs. alienation |
| Participation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Collaboration towards common goals ➤ Occupational and/or social role linked to common goals ➤ Recognized sphere of competence ➤ Agreement on norms within organization ➤ Common organizational culture | Efficacy vs. inefficacy Status vs. status denial Identity formation vs. obstacle to such Common sense vs. misunderstanding |
| Conflict negotiation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Communication ➤ Problem-solving-mechanisms ➤ Feedback-mechanisms | Positive vs. negative/ no social contact with different social groups |

Tab. 31: Summary of findings: aspects and experiences of workplace integration/ exclusion

6.3 Models of Workplace Relations that Produce Experiences of Inclusion and Favor “Moderate” Political Outlooks

In this section, I discuss both a model of workplace relations characteristic for large (private or public) organizations and one for small enterprise organizations, both of which produce patterns of social inclusion that favor the formation of *moderate* political outlooks among employed manual workers. This attitude formation process follows several mechanisms, which include: expectations of material security (including job security); integration into common societal goals and values; the formation of intact role-relations with diverse socio-structural types; the experience that social relations are reciprocal and just; the experience that conflicts can be

²¹⁵ It is not possible to neatly attribute types of subjective experiences to single “aspects” of integration. While the subjective experience of *security/ insecurity* is mostly related to the first category of issues, f. ex. both effective conflict negotiation and recognition for occupational work can be experienced as *participation*. Recognition/ misrecognition is associated with all four elements of workplace integration.

negotiated and hence of efficacy. All of these mechanisms lead manual workers to form “moderate laborist”, rather than radical, outlooks.

Large Organizations: the “Corporativist” Model of Workplace Relations

A typical pattern of enterprise relations already existent in the post-war industrial capitalist period of “old” market economies and still present in the advanced capitalist period is that which I call “corporativist”. In this model, the (large) organization is characterized by a higher management, a middle management, and a level of employees with a *trustful* relationship between each of them. There is communication between the levels and a common “organizational culture”. Mid-managers know “their” workers personally and have some budgetary and decision competences so they can solve smaller problems in the workflow on the spot. Mid managers and often even high managers have “worked their way up”: they have started their career at the bottom of the hierarchy, know the workflow, and have no issue with joining the work process where needed (often referred to as “getting their hands dirty” in manual-work related domains).²¹⁶ They hence share a common sense with the workers. There typically is a labor union and it typically works bottom-up (representing workers, as it conceptually should), creating a parallel organization structure and leading (constructive) conflicts while collaborating well with managers in the collective interest of the enterprise. The enterprise follows a common goal and employees have the feeling of “pulling the same rope”. There is some degree of clientelism. For immigrant workers, it is typically possible to integrate into this structure.²¹⁷

In the “corporativist” model of workplace relations, grievances can often be prevented or solved because there is communication, there are problem-solving mechanisms, and there basically is a shared vision of things. Individuals learn that collaboration with a variety of different social types is possible. Employees tend to engage in collective articulation of political attitudes either with unionists or with mid-level managers. As an effect of all these factors, blue-collar workers whose biography is marked by this type of workplace relations show a tendency to form “moderate-laborist” visions of the political economy.

For example, an Austrian woman (AT-36; 35-55) has started as a seamstress and then for a long time worked as an unskilled production worker.

²¹⁶ This is a reference to an industrial production enterprise. The same “bottom-up” logic, however, applies to other types of activity in both private and public sectors.

²¹⁷ Linguistic problems are solved by team-based communication and translation (with “hands and feet” or thanks to individual immigrant workers who speak the local language better than their peers).

Production worker: I only attended the regular 9 years of mandatory school [...] then a year at HBLA²¹⁸, and after that, I trained as a seamstress [Schneiderin]. I started as a sewer [Näherin], then I was in maternity leave and childcare... After that, due to the divorce, I was alone with a child, so I looked for opportunities to actually earn money and worked in production as you call it, in various firms. The fire extinguisher company closed down, and at the [animal fodder factory], I had a work-injury. That's how things went. Finally, I was at the [foodstuff] factory, in production, and this turned out well, they gave me a chance [...]

She reports having experienced just and reciprocal work relations, which consisted in fair reward and recognition, in an organization of work that worked out both for the company and for employees, in an appreciation of workers as humans, and in a capacity to collectively manage problems and conflicts. Much of this narration becomes manifest at hands of the figure of the shift leader (who is the immediate superior in production). In her account, the production shift was led by a master craftsman who was accurate, but with whom you could always talk if there was a problem. In her like in many other interviewees' narrations (single parents or not) a crystallization point of such experiences tend to be situations when something happens in private life. A family member, a child, falls sick. How does the employer react?

Production worker: I received a call at work, from my son. He was away at summer camp, had injured himself and I had to pick him up. I asked if I could take the next day off work to drive there. The shift leader said, this is about your child, you better fetch him home today than tomorrow, we are enough people, so get yourself together immediately and go.

The interviewee described how for her, such experiences built up trust and she engaged more with the work collective in reaction. *"The next day back at work, I said thank you warmly [herzlich] [...] and I said, when you need people, you can count on me. [...] another time, he approached me, "I would need people on a Saturday". I said, I'll come gladly."* She draws a "motto" from this story, which re-occurs in similar forms on other interviewees' accounts. It highlights reciprocity: *that's indeed a give-and-take.*

There are accounts from mid-level managers (some of them works' councils and/ or unionist at the same time) who tell, one could say, the same story from the opposite perspective (AT-06; AT-08; AT-66; AT-67; DE-56; DE-75).

²¹⁸ Austrian type of middle school notably for tourism-related occupations. Traditional subject "*Hauswirtschaftslehre*" (household management), traditionally girls were "sent" to this type of school (cit. AT-34) to either learn an occupation, or, to "lead the household at home". Can be attended for 3 years with middle-school; 5 years with high-school diploma. Interviewee quit school after one year.

Master craftsman in industrial enterprise (AT-67): [...] of course, the task of the master was the management of employees [Mitarbeiterführung], which is certainly one of the toughest jobs, not because I am in that role now. But you are in a proper sandwich position. You have pressure from below, from employees, from above, to get things through, and that naturally leads to tensions. But as I said, that's the job. It's not easy.

Whether the mid-manager can succeed in this role or not is, in turn, importantly enabled by higher management and the overall organizational culture.

Master craftsman: Our last factory director, he stood down there at the machine with gloves on and worked alongside the workers, he wanted to know how things worked. And that was the same with me, I never wanted to be the boss, I wanted to understand how that thing works. I've experienced that you also earn a certain respect from the employees when I understand a machine. I can't do everything, because he [the employee] is the expert. I'm the one who ensures you can work properly, that your environment is right, that you have all the supplies you need, that you can deliver normal performance; if there's a problem, we look at it together. But I want to know what's really behind it. And I know almost everything, so I can operate all of them [machines]. That's the thing, you gain a certain respect from the employees, and they say, I can rely on him.

The mid-level manager addresses aspects of hiring and firing, of interactions at work, but also social aspects that range beyond “productive” activity in a strict sense, showing a joint, embedded, understanding of economic *and* social value.

Master craftsman: It used to be like this: we received the workers from the works council; we weren't allowed to hire them ourselves [as a team leader]. So, you were always the one to blame when you had to let someone go if they really weren't doing well. The works council was always there, saying, “It's you who can't work with them.” [...] I was one of the first to say: I want the works council to give me a list, but I'll choose who I believe is suitable. In the 30 years that I've been a team leader or a master, this has usually worked well [...]

We actually have a very respectful way of interacting [Umgang]. I notice that the younger ones, who are around 30 now, can be a bit cheekier than the others; you wouldn't have allowed that earlier. It used to be more dictatorial, and now it's about working together. I always try – and I think this is also a key to success – I always try to put myself in the employee's shoes. How would I react if they told me that? And then you think about it, and he's not entirely wrong either. [...]

We also organize events, like a hiking day with all the employees. It usually gets quite cheerful with alcohol, but everything within its limits [...]

I've spent Sundays with employees; we borrowed a VW-bus and went to Germany to visit a company like Bosch, for example. I said Monday would be paid as training, and we drove back with the group in the evening. But that was incredibly important, to show the employees, that he also understands what happens with the product. [...]

And the relationship extends beyond work as well. So, with my employees who have social problems, with family, partners, and so on, we're really well-equipped. At [the mother company], we have our factory psychologists; we have some who are in treatment, and they have their therapy sessions. There's also anti-aggression training, because we have some employees who turn into Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde when they're under the influence of alcohol. [...]

Yes, so we have this topic. Then there's the 'Clean in 5' [program], which has helped me immensely, because I used to have three employees who were alcoholics. Back then, as a master or supervisor, you could only say, 'If you drink, I'll fire you.' That was the only option. [Now] there's a program; it's a 5-step plan, starting with a preventive conversation, then you proceed, and the employee brings their partner or closest person, and it continues to the point of withdrawal. And if there's a relapse, you give them another chance and go through detox again, and then we try again. If it really doesn't work, then unfortunately that's how it is. In the end, they lose their job. But out of the three, we managed to help two stay sober. With one of them, I didn't succeed; he ended up resigning on his own, saying, "I don't want to put you through this, I know you've tried, but I can't manage it." But the other two, I wouldn't have believed it, especially with one of them. We also have Christmas parties, and I always invited him to those. At first, it was a handicap; he didn't come the first two times. But then he came, I asked what I should get for him, alcohol-free beer was fine. And these are somehow successes; it gives me goosebumps when, as a supervisor, you realize that employees aren't only, you got the professional and financial achievements, but also about this aspect.

In this example, the workplace is not a site that causes tensions in workers' lives – but a site that enables workers to manage tensions, even to a part such that derive from other domains of life. Positive, collaborative contact between socio-structural groups and a sense of stake in the enterprise's collective activity and output add to an environment that favors workers' experiences of social, and *societal*, integration.

Most accounts of long-time employment in one organization include accounts of organizational change. What they differ in, however, is how this change is being managed by the interaction of multiple forces within the organization. This is for example evident in the account of a German car mechanic (DE-05, 35-55) who worked as a locksmith for the army before the *Wende*. Now he has been employed for 23 years by a nationwide chain of car repair shops. There was a time when the company was sold and reoriented several times – processes during which internal communication faltered and employees were sometimes indiscriminately dismissed.

Car mechanic: Yes, quite brutal. The area manager arrived and said that two had to go.

What he describes as equally worrisome as the threat of being laid off is that communication between management and local teams in the organization became dysfunctional during this time: *"You no longer had a contact person. You can send an email somewhere and after 14 days you write an email somewhere else [...] so almost nothing happens if we don't take care of it ourselves"*.

However, his company was able to solve these problems.

Car mechanic: Well, [...] during the time when we were sold every two years, they set up a works council. And I have to say that everything has changed for the better since then. [...] As soon as the works council is in place, the works council has to be consulted and there have to be reasons if someone is dismissed [...].

"There is someone there, a contact person," says the interviewee. There now is a works council in every branch, so you only have to talk to the colleague; and *"if I had a bigger problem, I would call the head office"*. Today, there is also a functioning cooperation with the direct supervisory level:

Car mechanic: My first boss [...] he was very... [...] he had no sympathy when someone had a problem [...] he said [...] it was none of his business, whereas the employer has many possibilities to intervene there. My current boss [...] if I have a problem, I talk to him and 99% of the time we get it sorted out. I have a sick child, where I often have to go to [the city], every week to the university hospital [...] and I just gave the appointments to the current boss. And I said I had to go there and he said, sure, take care of it.

The car salesman shows basic trust in German politics mixed with qualified criticism on specific topics. His story shows that types of “workplace relations” often change from one into another

over time. The story starts with a elements typical for what I call the “managerialist” model (s. ch. 6.4), but then transitions to a “corporatist model”.

Works councils and labor unions appear in various ways in interviewees’ narrations about “workplace inclusion”. On the one hand, there are cases where a works council reports to have fought extensive, finally successful conflicts with company management to avoid severe deteriorations for employees (e.g. AT-06; AT-67) – with workers in the same company units reporting that – presumably in effect – everything works fine for them, not even mentioning there has ever been an issue (e.g. AT-69; s. ch. 6.4). On the other hand, there are stories of workplace inclusion also without union/ works council involvement or in cases where the interviewee explicitly depicts the works council as not helpful.

An Austrian oil worker (AT-13), who was sent on an extensive mission to Norway, for example, tells a story of how his employer tried to infringe his right to take time off in a block – which is relevant, as when he stays abroad for several weeks at once, he equally needs blocked time off to come home and see his family (he is married and has three daughters). He was able to *negotiate* this problem with his company’s legal department alone, while in his account, the works councils were not very helpful.

Oil worker: The jurist, Dr [...], set up the contract. [...] I knew, the time off regulation follows the rules of the host country. Norway is a social country. Two weeks full-time service on the [oil] platform, four weeks off... I sent a letter to the company. So, Dr. [...] tried to calculate how they could get around it. “Come in, meeting.” He calculated it three times in front of me. Next to him, two works councils, so they hear it, too, but they didn’t say anything. I said, Herr Doktor, calculations are a matter of luck, hum? We settled on one third Norway, one third off, one third at the Austrian plant.

While occurring with a smaller part of the interviewed manual workers, educative interest acts as a separate channel of participation in work contexts. It does so among interviewees of all generations, but particularly so among young workers in the dataset. The “inclusivity” of a workplace also consists in opening up pathways for those who want to further qualify with the aim of rising up in the ranks. Interviewees who are enabled to do so report a strong sense of stake and participation.

For example, there is a young electrician all of whose siblings have completed higher education. When speaking about his occupational choice, he explicitly thematizes that it was tough for him to put aside considerations about social status that comes with university degrees through

connotations of intelligence and knowledge. He takes his job very seriously, has pursued a master craftsman degree, and aims to further rise in the hierarchy. His employer has played a key role in enabling such endeavors.

Electrician (AT-56, <35): "I took a sabbatical of seven months to get my master craftsman degree. The company didn't like that, they wanted me to do it part-time. I told them, "let me do it all at once and I'll come back afterwards, or don't let me do it, I'll quit, do it myself, and don't come back. They finally said OK, we don't want to stand in your way, so let's try it. I finished the degree and returned to work two days later. [...] It was seven months at full throttle, so you really had to bite through it. I learned a lot, especially in terms of planning, costing, the whole background. I had often done the planning before, but I didn't know how to do it properly. In the end, that's why I wanted to take the degree [...]."

In the case of an 18-years-old German carpenter (*Zimmerer*), an interest for international occupational experiences opens an additional channel of social integration experiences. The young man was interviewed together with his family:

Carpenter (DE-60): Well... in the beginning, after school, I really had no idea what I wanted to do. Something into a handicraft direction, but I didn't have a clear idea. [...] We know a few people who are carpenters, and I started liking that. [...] So, I did my carpentry apprenticeship in [Saxonian town]

Interviewer: So what's the outlook for the future? Do you want to stay with the company?

C: Um, no, actually, I started at the [current] company with the thought that I want to go abroad anyway. I had many countries in mind. But in the end, it turned out that I want to go to Norway.²¹⁹ I looked around for companies, applied, and I've already received an offer from a company, initially for a trial period [...]

I: And do you speak Norwegian? Or can you get by with English there?

C: Well, I... one could also manage with English. The company where I applied is also a German company. The boss, where I applied, is German himself and moved to Norway with his family. (Father: Yes, but that was coincidence! (laughs)) Yes, it was extreme coincidence. I had applied in English and got a response in German within a few hours. (Everyone laughs.) Yes, I was

²¹⁹ It is a coincidence that two interviewees cited in this section work in Norway; while high-wage countries generally attract manual workers in the dataset. Other cases include Switzerland, Luxembourg, and Austria (which is not a high-wage country in Western European comparison, but in relation to East German wages.)

really surprised. We also wrote and talked a lot. Otherwise, I'm currently in the process of learning Norwegian, but...

I: Is your motivation to move more personal or professional?

C: Well, firstly, you earn more. [...] Then the nature is also beautiful. Other countries were also options, including Austria. Yeah... I had also thought about going on a world trip after the apprenticeship. [...] Then I had thought about going on a journeyman's tour. Which some carpenters do. But there are... (Father: some rules), you have to maintain a certain minimum distance from home... (Mother: You're not even allowed to call) and start without money... So, for me, it was easier, I'm going to Norway, and in case of emergency, I can also come back home if something happens...

These cases well considered, individual occupational ambition is only a side-factor of workplace integration across the entire dataset; and it is no guarantee for such, either: there are numerous ambitious, long-term employed workers in the dataset, notably in the “boomer” generation, who are frustrated at the workplace and for whom it does not work out for circumstantial, organizational, reasons (s. ch. 6.4).

Indeed, a there is a tendency among the post-war generation workers in the dataset, who in 2020 are well above 70 or even above 80 years of age and have been retired for a while, to show both labor market “insider” biographies and workplace inclusion experiences (AT-13; AT-22; DE-13 & 14; DE-37 & 38; DE-54; DE-65 & 66). They have worked the larger part of their life in one enterprise, have experienced forms of reciprocal work relations and of workplace inclusion, have (in effect) not feared for their job, and in return show a solid, clear-cut, and often moderate political habitus: they know *their* answers to political questions in a “self-evident” way, to which there is neither much doubt nor resentment. They have their entire life voted for the same centrist (left- or right-wing) party, they think that immigrants should work in a country of destination before getting full access to the welfare state, but do not attribute overly much salience to this issue.

Among the „boomer generation“ workers – who in 2020 are aged between 55 and 70 years – there is a tendency towards biographies that start with labor market insiderness, such as stereotypically in Austria, 30 years of employment in one company. Then, however, in a high number of these biographies, *relations in the enterprise change*. In effect, some of these interviewees stay at a company that shows a considerable decrease in the quality of workplace relations (s. ch. 6.4). Others lose their job and become unemployed or join a new job, often

equally with worse working conditions than the original one. A smaller number of workers who are concerned by detrimental shifts in models of organization and management styles figure out how to navigate the new situation in a way that creates new types of “inclusion experiences” or find a new “good” job that creates such (s. section below; s. ch. 9).

This development is *similar for both Austria and East Germany*, with one big difference: in East Germany, the entire process happened much faster during the 1990s (after the *Wende*) and a large part of those interviewees who in 2020 are 50 – 70 years of age have involuntarily lost their job at least once during their occupational trajectory, namely when socialist enterprises closed or were privatized.

In Austria, among boomer generation interviewees, the “corporativist” workplace often comes as a story of past times. Typically, this involves an account of a higher management that used to entertain intact and proximate relations with the workforce.

Master craftsman (AT-67): Well, these leadership qualities... there used to be executives [...] they were ... first of all, they were personalities. And yes, maybe the times were different, too. But... you could rely on them. Our [former director general], for instance, when he walked through the employees' corridor, he greeted everyone. [...] The old executives would go through all three shifts at Christmas and give Christmas greetings, by hand.

The above-cited oil worker, aged 71 at the point of the interview, was able to retire right at the moment when the situation in his company would have become bad for him.

Oil worker: I've had issues with the lumbar spine for a couple of years. So I could no longer work in that position. [...] I wanted to work until 60 [...] then they started sending me around, harassing me. Today you do this [job], tomorrow that, something different again. Then I said, "Give me early retirement and I'll leave."²²⁰ [...] The mentality in the company changed. In 1973, to join [this company], you would have crawled on your knees from [my hometown] to [the company siege], you would have done that. The directors were people who had grown inside [the company], they climbed the ladder up from the bottom. They came from university, then first of all worked outside; it's a tough environment; they spent two years working with us; saw everything. Then they climbed up. With the years, that changed; then they had their offices in the tower and thought they had seen the world.²²¹ [...] Then they started cutting back

²²⁰ Until the 1990s and still in some cases in the 2000s in Austria, early retirement was offered to elderly employees as a part of social plans when enterprises underwent transformations.

²²¹ See equally ch. 5.

[...]There were fewer and fewer grown [company] people. They bought people from outside. And they just focused on how to get higher salaries, taking away from others.

In East Germany, *some* interviewees tell positive “old times” stories of the socialist workplace (which I treat as a separate type: it is in the narrations characterized by very horizontal socio-economic relations, but in turn by political discrimination, s. ch. 6.6). Others tell stories about post-socialist workplaces (e.g. DE-23), in those companies which in the 1990s were not (yet) affected by the grand transformations, which are in some main points similar to the Austrian accounts: people had intact ways of getting along with each other, of expressing recognition, and of participating, in the socio-economic relations inside the enterprise.

While the generation “in between” (35-55 in 2020) shows mixed tendencies; in the young generation (<35), many already enter into dysfunctional or segregated workplaces à priori and socialize into resentful worldviews carried by their elder peers (s. ch. 6.4). Those young workers who hold moderate mindsets tend to be *education-oriented* (s. above) – as opposed to merely *skill-oriented*: many are committed to artisan skillsets (skillsets at the skilled-blue-collar level, which traditionally – and indeed still today – carry a socio-economic value), but in effect are being marginalized in the social relations at workplaces (s. ch. 6.4).

In several cases, well-functioning workplaces enable positive social contact also between ethnic groups, i.e. between “natives” and “foreigners”. For example, a young Austrian painter (AT-39) tells a long story of how he visited work colleagues in Poland and met their friends and families; a young German quarry worker (DE-73) shares Youtube-videos with his Syrian coworker. Both got to know these peers at a workplace at which the experience prevails that all workers, independently of their national origin, are employed and treated *on equal terms*. The painter even explicitly addresses this issue. He states that there is a predominant perception in the manual workforce of companies he knows that “foreigners” do worse work than “natives”: allegedly, they “non-natives” are “lazier”, “don’t care” about the quality of delivered work, etc. He relates this to the condition that most companies pay and treat foreign workers badly: “*If you pay me at that rate, I won’t care about the quality of work I do for you either*”.²²²

A distinct phenomenon in the dataset are *re-inclusion experiences*. These are made by workers who had lost a job, but then are enabled to re-integrate into a workplace at which positive social

²²² A mid-aged Austrian garbage truck driver (AT-15), on the contrary, distinguishes between “our foreigners” (*unsere Ausländer*) in his company, with whom he is befriended and whom he sees as (generally) “deserving” members of the ingroup, from other foreigners who are, in his perception, “lazy” welfare “abusers”. I discuss this case in ch. 6.5. It corresponds to several other accounts (e.g. AT-25), most of which are set in small enterprises with a “charismatic” (exclusive-solidaristic) leadership style (s. ch. 6.5).

relations, recognition, support, or yet participation, prevail. These interviewees tend to describe their experiences in terms of efficacy and empowerment on the one hand, and of thankfulness towards those actors who supported them on the other (e.g. the employing organization, (re-)training institutions, s. ch. 7) what can spill over into the generic perception that *society is solidaristic* – and into more moderate political attitudes.²²³ This is for example the case for a warehouse worker who had a motorcycle accident, has problems walking, and is happy the company provides him this secure job in spite of his limited physical ability (DE-36). It is equally the case for a CNC-machine operator (DE-22) who reports being proud and overwhelmed that he has been able to undergo the upskilling process required to operate a modern, computer-assisted production machine. In this process, he, too, was strongly supported by the company, its director and a particular master craftsman within the company.

Machine operator: And now, yes, in 2001 I started again, with a computer course for CNC turning. And I've been doing that ever since here in [...] at [...] company. On a lathe, several lathes in a row, and again sometimes newer ones, programming them myself. [It involves] a lot of figuring things out on your own. How to do things best. Of course, with the technologists [engineers], because they say: we need to do pre-processing, then annealing, hardening, whatever, then intermediate processing, final processing, and down to the finest detail, to the hundredth or sometimes even down to the Mu [μ] [it needs to be] turned with precision. That's demanded. So, you have to deliver it. [...] When I started learning this [...] you were alone there and had to get into it. I mean, I didn't know the parts, but I could read a drawing, I learned it. I knew what to watch out for and how to see it spatially or whatever. So, you had to... you were shown a couple of times, and then you had to do it yourself. You could ask questions, time and again, no problem. [...] Everyone there helped each other, too."

While the dataset of interviewees includes more male than female manual worker (due to quota sampling: the sample mirrors demographic structure, s. ch. 4), women and men workers in similar positions report similar experiences and attitudes (e.g. AT-08 who is an unskilled production worker and unionist; AT-35 who used to work as a master craftswoman in a textile company that closed; AT-34 and DE-52 who work as cleaners (s. below); AT-36, AT-37, AT-45 who are/ were i.a. unskilled production workers (s. above and below); AT-16 who is a janitor/ handiwoman at a local school; DE-39 who works as a warehouse worker; and a good part of East-German women above 50 who trained in the GDR's strict regime of occupational gender

²²³ It depends, however, on *who* the actors are by whom interviewees experience solidarity in situations of need and what political outlooks they champion (s. ch. 6.5; s. ch. 9).

equality). This is with exception that female workers often report to perform unpaid care work and reproductive labor on top of their paid jobs.²²⁴

Naturally, there are cases where positive workplace relations do not show the theorized effect or even a visible effect at all on political outlook. In some individual cases, this is explained by altogether different mechanisms of preference formation such as active partisan engagement (e.g. DE-63) or primary socialization with thick ideologies (e.g. DE-64; s. ch. 8). More generally, however, it seems that temporality interacts with the effect of “workplace inclusion” on political outlook in a twofold way.

The first consists in (secondary) *socialization* (s. Darmon 2016; 2024): many of those interviewees for whom the effect is given are employed over extensive time periods at “well-functioning” workplaces that offer participation, security, recognition, and intergroup contact, in addition to the more moderate sociopolitical discourses which we would expect to circulate at these workplaces. The effect, ergo, unfolds over a time period of 10 or 20 years. For example, one 44-years old Austrian woman (AT-37) reports high satisfaction with work relations at her current job. Having been repeatedly unemployed, she has started as a cleaner at a local hotel just before Covid (i.e. 6-9 months before the interview) and now is through the probation period. There is recognition at the workplace, her boss is approachable and the organization acted in fair and considerate ways towards employees when the hotel needed to close for reasons of the Covid lockdown. Before this, however, she tells a life-story of instable work relations and negative experiences with employers (she worked as a cemetery gardener, in production, and at a municipal works center, “*I liked that, they left me alone most of the day*”) and with the employment office; and her political outlook is marked by resentful views she has accumulated during *that* period. The politically “moderating” effect of inclusive workplaces may, in return, unfold faster in cases where young workers in their impressionable years enter a “well-functioning” workplace right at the outset of their career (e.g. during their vocational training, which often is from years 15-18), being socialized into the experience that *work is just* and (ergo) *society is a just place* (e.g. AT-39; AT-56).²²⁵

Secondly, even independently of the objective time period an interviewee spends at a workplace and independently of socialization-effects, *future expectations* stand out as a factor of socio-political outlook: and these are being shaped by workplaces, as well. Interviewees who expect

²²⁴ This said, there are cases where male workers do so, too. F. ex., the (working-class part of the) dataset includes three cases where after a separation, kids live with their father (AT-33; AT-47; AT-15).

²²⁵ Last but not least, we must always consider that different political ideas may circulate at different workplaces, so that a positive workplace experience can end up being framed by various political ideologies: on this, s. ch. 6.5.

their workplace to be a secure channel of participation for the rest of their active life show more moderate attitudes (s. e.g. the re-inclusion experiences discussed above; DE-36; DE-22).

Small Organizations: the “Supportive” Model of Workplace Relations

The pattern I call “supportive” workplace relations refers to small, owner-led enterprises. It namely describes enterprise owners who have a good control of their organization’s substantive activity and sufficient socio-emotional intelligence to do well at team leadership, both of this similar to the “charismatic” type (s. ch. 6.5), but with one difference: they construct rather horizontal relations with employees, emphasizing skill and independent decision-taking. For this to work, they must both trust and support employees. Often, this type of owner holds a higher education degree and, e.g., has a personal project of “uniting” an educative trajectory with continuing their parents’ small enterprise. Workers in such settings report high levels of satisfaction, the experience of inclusion and of emancipation.

Workers in this model narrate few unsolved work-related grievance experiences and are more moderate in their political outlook. Some of them are politicized on the progressive side. This may both express a vision of society acquired through the “horizontal” and “supportive” pattern of organization experienced in work life and mirror frequent exchange on socio-political topics with the enterprise owner who, typically in these cases, holds such attitudes. A self-selection bias must, finally, be thought to play a role.

For example, the owner and several employees of a small East German plumbing and heating company were interviewed (DE-33; DE-34; DE-67; DE-83). The owner was not allowed to do pursue higher education in the GDR because his parents held higher education (class mobility between “intellectuals” and “workers” was a socialist policy goal). So, he went into a skilled manual occupation and after the *Wende* founded a small enterprise. He showcases extensive reflections about society and politics, work relations included. Together with his second wife, whom he met during international cultural activities, they are committed to progressive political views, which he mixes with a high esteem for skilled manual work. The company’s work relations emphasize *independence*: the owner wants to “*support [every worker] in solving problems himself*”, explicitly even the temporary worker who helps them out occasionally.

The enterprise has three permanent employees, one young and two elderly, of whom the latter were interviewed. Both show decidedly calm, differentiated, and moderate takes on society and politics. One of them experienced very bad workplace relations in another company where he worked during the 1990s (“*It was Wild West capitalism*”, “[*they*] hired and fired as they

wanted”. He personally knew his current boss and switched to this company when it became possible. Currently, aged 60+, he suffers from health issues, which involve both problems lifting heavy weights and a bladder problem (he makes clear the discontents of driving from customer to customer while needing to use the bathroom every hour). The company deals with these issues *collectively*, solving them e.g. so that the elderly worker always works in a team with a young trainee, he teaches him the skills and tricks, while the young worker lifts the heavy weights.

The company’s owner explicitly waits with taking his own retirement until both elder interviewees can legally retire. As he will perhaps close or sell the company, they would otherwise be unemployed. The company also attends fairs to find new young employees (finding trainees in skilled blue-collar occupations having become an issue), notably among those who have started but not finished technical middle schools or higher technical education. Currently, they are trying to build up a trainee to later take over and continue the company.

All employees of this enterprise show moderate attitudes, many of them with a progressive touch. The above-cited interviewee, for example, uses Marxist expressions when narrating his political views, which he derives from a GDR socialization and explicitly maintains. (His views, however, stay within the materialistic and “moderate” realm; f.ex., he approved of the “activation”-oriented Schröder-reforms of the German welfare state.) The second elderly employee is e.g. involved in a municipal politics initiative to build bicycle roads in the region.

There are similar cases in Austria. One interviewee who works as an electrician (AT-14) forwarded me to interview “the best superior [he] has ever had” (AT-26). The former boss completed higher education, but then decided to take over his parents’ electrician enterprise. He complains about the conditions under which small enterprises operate, the regulatory environment, unfair competition of transnational enterprises who operate illegally but cannot be held accountable (complaints voiced, in one way or the other, by every single small entrepreneur interviewed). On the other hand, he voices extensive progressive reflections about politics, the meaning of work (his concern has always been to “do something meaningful”) and the condition of the economic system. Investment in the training of employees was a focus of his entrepreneurial activity. Later, he quit this job and now works in coaching.

The priorly interviewed worker (AT-14) trained at the latter interviewee’s company. He has continued his trajectory in other small enterprises with ease. When it comes to politics, he shows views that are laborist – and moderate on all fronts.

Another similar story is that of the architect who leads a carpentry firm, quoted in ch. 5.2: the employed carpenter (AT-52) reports that he has “*re-learned carpentry a second time*”. Positive contact between socio-structural (namely education-) groups, assignments with some of Austria’s most prestigious institutions (e.g. Federal governmental institutions), and contact with an educative interest adds to the formation of a moderate sociopolitical outlook.

Going beyond the manual worker category, there is e.g. a secretary of a German artisan firm that works on the reconstruction of historical monuments (DE-24). Her boss insisted to pay all employees tickets for concerts and theater, emphasizing that “culture is important”; and she regularly attended educative cultural events over years (s. also ch. 8). She is now retired, holds a political preference for the Green party and says that she is much worried about one of her grandkids, who is a worker and orients towards right-wing populist AfD. At the time of the interview, she plans to have a serious conversation with him about that. Her “vision of the political economy” is between moderate and post-productivist; what adds to the latter tendency is that her late husband worked at a uranium mine during GDR times and passed away from cancer aged 60, like allegedly many of his colleagues, while the employer was reportedly never held accountable (s. similar cases of interviewees turning against productivism in ch. 6.4).

This said, not only higher educated owners create “supportive” workplace relations in small enterprises. There is a number of small (artisan) enterprise owners in the dataset who practice a calm leadership style that involves a natural, self-evident handling of sustainable workplace relations, and, most commonly, some explicit reflection on it. Such reflections can come in the terms of experience (“with time, you learn to understand people”) as much as in the terms of coaching and educative discourses (the “meaning of work”, s. above). These enterprise owners typically show two characteristics. Firstly, they show a combination of socio-emotional intelligence (e.g. manifest in a reflection on how does leadership work and how does it not work, what are the needs of other people, how do I communicate) with substantive occupational (e.g. crafts) skill. Secondly, most commonly, they show some *institutional embedding*. If not through higher education, the two most recurrent forms are: church membership and active engagement in a professional trade union (e.g. an artisan trade union; *Handwerkskammer*). In the dataset, this is e.g. the case for several construction and electricity entrepreneurs (DE-02; DE-69); for the owner of a car and motorcycle repairs show (DE-07); another plumber (with whom AT-27 works); an artisan blacksmith (DE-76), or yet the owner of a restaurant (DE-75).

Experiences of Workplace Participation across Occupation Groups

In this section, I sum up empirical findings on one dimension of workplace inclusion experiences, namely *participation*, and offer an overview and comparison across occupation groups. In this part, I do not use citations but summarize general trends in the dataset, referring to the interview codes to which these apply.

Workplace *participation* comes in a diversity of models: there are many ways in which an employee can “partake”, can hold a “stake”, in an enterprise. This can consist in employee participation in decision-making processes (AT-67; DE-56) – or not. It can be enabled by a strong and active works council and by unionization (AT-05, AT-06, AT-07, AT-08, AT-09, AT-10, AT-11, AT-12, AT-18, AT-19, AT-66, AT-67, AT-69; AT-15; DE-05; DE-56) but can also occur in organizations where these are given to a lesser degree. It can derive from independent working styles (DE-33; AT-33), but these are not a necessary condition, either. When it comes to skilled manual jobs, what recurrently matters to interviewees is that a field of competence (however small or large) is being recognized within work relations. For example, a skilled industrial worker may know better than an engineer the tricks of the specific machine which they have been using for years; and workers in various domains of construction or artisanship may each know best how their specific task works in practice (AT-01; AT-13; AT-70; AT-52; AT-57; DE-56; DE-23; DE-54; DE-37; DE-42 & DE-43).

To put it the most generic way possible: experiences of participation happen where enterprises are characterized by a practically functioning mode of *collaboration towards common goals* and where there is an exchange of recognition for the *diverse contributions to these common goals*. A solid indicator of whether this works out or not is whether employees experience their occupational (or social) role within the enterprise to be *meaningful*. This is even more pertinent to blue-collar occupations, for which “meaning” often resides more in the *collective* economic activity than in *individual* task exercised. For sure, there is one interviewed painter (AT-27) who tells a long story about various approaches and styles to the interior and exterior painting of buildings (he also thinks of founding his own enterprise and watches Youtube videos about artistic painting). There is an artist blacksmith (DE-76), an assembler specializing in security doors (DE-54), or yet a carpenter (and later window salesman, AT-52) who narrate with enthusiasm about the specific technical or artisanal tasks their daily work consists in. A gardener states that she inherently enjoys working with plants (AT-37); the same accounts for a former cook (DE-73). However, barely any of the production workers interviewed tell long stories about their individual work tasks (AT-01; AT-02; AT-45; AT-37; AT-36; AT-43; AT-69; DE-22;

DE-73); neither do most construction workers, warehouse workers, janitors, those who work in transportation, in cleaning or waste processing, those who do unskilled manual or service jobs, and also most interviewees who do clerical jobs (e.g. AT-15; AT-16; AT-17; AT-27; AT-34 ; AT-36; AT-46; AT-47; AT-53; DE-16; DE-21; DE-23; DE-39, DE-40, DE-44, DE-45, DE-46, DE-48, DE-49, DE-50, DE-52; DE-63; DE-77).²²⁶ What these interviewees do repeatedly refer to is the overall, common, collective goal of the enterprise's economic activity: be it an industrial product (metals, car parts, animal food, sportswear, plastic products, stone), commerce (selling cars, furniture, groceries), an artisanal activity (interior or exterior repair works, construction), transportation, or other. Many of them do not refer to their enterprise's activity with pronounced pride, but with an understanding that the product is "a thing" in society, something of social (use-)value. This is not necessarily a claim that the product is "essential" or a fundamental social need (with exceptions of course: "*Who would do it if we wouldn't? They would drown in dirt*", Austrian garbage truck driver, AT-15). More often, it is a mere certainty that, factually, the enterprise's product is being used, is of use in society, and for this reason, carries social value. This certainly "productivist" vision (see ch. 5)²²⁷ often comes with a basic understanding that the enterprise's activity *makes sense*. If a working-class interviewee understands that their enterprise's activity "makes sense", typically, they speak of it in very "banal" terms, mentioning the product on the side ("*Maybe you know this [sportswear]/[car part]/[type of window]?*"), paying little active attention to the issue of "whats the purpose", but carrying a taken-for-granted knowledge that *there is* a purpose.

In contrast to many (manual) workers, those in interpersonal occupations (e.g. a masseur, an educator, AT-70, DE-62) and those in occupations with an aesthetic aspect (e.g. an interior designer, DE-51) tend to forward an extensive reflection on the purpose of their work and of their individual tasks. Manual/ service workers or clerks who work in enterprises which (collectively) are engaged in a prestigious, aesthetically or intellectually appealing, or yet

²²⁶ Yet other interviewees appear to stand "in the middle" in this matter. Several who have trained as car mechanics (or yet plan to do so) voice that they have an interest for cars, but a pragmatic rapport to their job prevails (AT-48; DE-05; DE-08; DE-64; with the exception of one woman in her thirties who says this would actually be her life dream, but she fails to find a training place in her region, AT-17). The occupational self-narration of several interviewed hairdressers falls into a similar category (DE-28, DE-29, DE-30): they are interested in hair and styling but lose interest after the interviewer's second query. Every welder that was interviewed emphasizes technical skill and those who are occupationally more successful emphasize interest in the technical complexity of their work, but when it comes to *purpose*, they refer to the "thing at whole" that is being built (an industrial facility, a garden fence, a nuclear reactor) rather than to the individual task (AT-64; AT-68; AT-44). Due to both the small N of observations and the high impact of individual, non-occupation-related factors, these findings should not be interpreted in terms of links between specific occupations and individual meaning-making; the point is rather to describe how (even skilled) worker occupations largely differ from educated middle-class occupations in this point.

²²⁷ Post-productivists would be more likely to question social *usus*. Are certain products really "needed"? Producerists would tend to only see the (even use-)value of materially tangible products.

socially oriented activity also tend to take pride in this. This counts e.g. for a carpenter and a construction tinsmith who have worked on well-known, classical Viennese inner-city buildings (AT-52; AT-40), a clerk whose enterprise has equally worked on classical architecture (DE-24); or skilled workers who have worked e.g. on airplane construction (DE-37) or nuclear reactors (AT-64; DE-14). A saleswoman in a toy store doesn't explicitly voice pride, but definitely interest and affection with her store's activity, different f. ex. from several interviewees who work in retail sales (AT-17), in a hardware store (AT-36; DE-84) or in car sales (after a career in a different occupation, DE-01).²²⁸

Interviewees with higher education generally tend to extensive reflections about the personal meaning of work which are entirely out of the range of attention workers attribute to this issue (AT-03; AT-55; DE-70; DE-12). The same counts for interviewees who do not dispose of higher education, but who hold a "post-productivist" socio-political outlook (DE-60; DE-59; AT-31; AT-42; AT-50; AT-51; DE-33).

Independent artisans and small enterprise owners are specific in this regard. In the interviews, they typically pay a lot of attention to their enterprise's economic opportunity structure. There is much heterogeneity, however, when it comes to their personal relationship with their enterprise's substantive activity. Some cut this thinkably short or put it in very pragmatic terms (several plumbers, electricians, shop owners, construction entrepreneurs, a locksmith, DE-06; DE-20; AT-26; DE-33; DE-35; DE-69), while others express much more affection and interest for what they do and voluntarily narrate about it in detail (including an artist blacksmith, the owner of a restaurant, a roofer who besides their work on private homes emphasizes and shows pictures of their work on public and historical buildings, another roofer who had planned to import Tyrolean woodwork techniques to East Germany, an expert for historical reconstruction woodworks, a supplier of light and sound equipment for (i.a.) music events, two electricians who have worked decades on expanding their enterprises and now employ 10+ people, or yet a construction entrepreneur with a family history of entrepreneurship that was temporally interrupted by the GDR, DE-01; DE-02; DE-04; DE-32; DE-41; DE-47; DE-71; DE-76; DE-75).²²⁹

²²⁸ This said, several interviewees who have moved from a technical occupation to sales in the same area express more affection and interest in that domain, e.g. car mechanics who have moved to car sales (DE-05; DE-08) or carpenters who have moved to carpentry/ furniture/ window sales (AT-52; AT-25; DE-48).

²²⁹ Interviews were similar in length, interview questions were very similar and have included queries to prompt a conversation on these issues. Beyond this, several of the referred to interviewees make explicit their rapport to their (enterprise's) work (quote DE-20; DE-33).

Interestingly, the *degree* to which interviewees take a substantive interest in their individual or their enterprise's collective activity does not seem to be linked to their socio-political outlook.²³⁰ There are numerous entrepreneurs and skilled workers (and even an engineer) in the dataset who take their substantive activity very seriously, strongly believe in its social value, and hold "producerist" views (s. ch. 6.4 & 6.5) What seems to matter is whether the "social purpose" of the economic activity exercised is experienced to be reconfirmed by society (through collaboration inside the enterprise and external confirmation by e.g. customers, market, publics, personal acquaintances) – interviewees for whom this is the case are more often to be found in the "moderate productivist" category. On the contrary, in both "producerist" and "post-productivist" categories there are more cases where the "social purpose" of economic activities stands in doubt, f.ex. because management's vision of purpose diverges from workers' understanding of it (what in several cases comes down to "substantivist" vs. "financialized" visions, see ch. 3.2), or because customers, markets, publics, personal acquaintances react negatively or with misrecognition, whereby economic reactions strictly speaking can diverge from symbolic recognition (s. ch. 6.4).

For those employees who have direct customer contact, the workplace bears an additional channel of potential social inclusion or exclusion. Many manual occupations have *little* client exposure. Those workers who, during their career, have evolved into sales roles explicitly thematize the difference: "*I thought I could not do this*", says a former carpenter (AT-25), and means *speaking with people* (also DE-05). Communication skills, as much as bureaucratic skills, are perceived to be a different domain by many manual workers.²³¹ Another former carpenter argues his goal will always be to do works qualitatively well, associating this "morale" with manual jobs, even if as a seller he is expected to focus on selling more and at a lower quality (AT-52).²³² Regardless of these considerations, contact with customers who express recognition, with whom a reciprocal relationship is upright, is prone to come as an experience of social integration. The same former carpenter and later window salesman keeps talking about the many customers with whom he has remained in contact, who still call him today if they need advice (AT-52). The pool attendant Bernd (DE-74) lives off the recognition of his clients.

²³⁰ The only effect one may remark in the data is, indeed, all "post-productivist" interviewees voice a reflection about the *personal* meaning of work.

²³¹ AT-32 who has become a dispatcher after a career as a truck driver would have "never thought [bureaucracy] is so much work"; AT-39 would like to found his own enterprise but hesitates doing so because he is afraid of cost calculation, feeling he is not good enough at mathematics.

²³² This comes down to a "substantivist" critique of commerce, see ch. 3.2.

One important axis of heterogeneity is, lower-skilled employees across the dataset are less prone to emphasize the goals of the enterprise or the meaning of their individual tasks. Instead, the main mechanism via which they experience workplace participation is the material (and symbolic) recognition received for their work, as extensively discussed above. While “pay and praise”, as we could call it, matters to everyone, it matters *relatively speaking* more to the lower-skilled than to the higher-skilled. As already mentioned, recognition for work naturally act as a mechanism of social integration: who goes home with “pay and praise”, even if not at all interested in what the enterprise does who provided it, is more prone to hold an interest that the employing enterprise goes well. Which is a channel of social integration.

What equally matters to most employees interviewed, but *relatively speaking* more to the lower-skilled than to the higher-skilled, is *sociability*. People who work in an enterprise are present in their occupational roles; however, it will not come as a surprise that besides this, they also form social relationships on a generic human level. I have above highlighted how company events matter to employees’ experience. There are other interviewees who report that “chatting” with colleagues is an important motivation for them to go to work every day (e.g. DE-27). One retired road worker (AT-22), when asked whether he had received social recognition for his work, answers with a bright “Yes” and tells the story of how, when he worked on public road construction sites in his local region, everyone who drove by would greet him and all his friends and acquaintances would stop for a chat, so besides the physical work (which he does not pay much attention to in his narration), he spent his day chatting and joking. In terms of social integration, the question here is once again: sociability *with whom* is enabled by a given workplace (sociability between homogenous or diverse types; sociability between types who are all socially marginalized – or sociability that acts as a link of integration into the dominant social order).

Some occupations – among the blue-collar ones, that of long-distance driver, assembler, or yet oil platform worker – come with an additional motivational “hook” that relies in *getting around* and in *adventure* (AT-02; AT-13; AT-47; AT-64; DE-44; DE-54). This is both a source of purpose and of social integration: getting around, one interacts with people and one can tell stories, resulting in social status, once back home. What social integration depends on is with whom one interacts on occupational missions (and to whom one tells the stories back home). Accounts in the dataset range from coming in touch with engineers and scientists who build cutting-edge technology to attending local pubs and red-light institutions along the highway on occupational missions – and the resulting formation of political attitudes is rather in line with the expectations

formulated in ch. 3. What the interviewees who tell these diverging stories agree on (and most workers who go on missions do) is that the socio-economic conditions of these missions have deteriorated over time. High pay used to be a major motivation to go on adventures, but many say, when factoring in all side-costs, it doesn't pay anymore as it used to.

An element that matters crucially to experiences of “participation” across the dataset concerns *common organizational culture*. Translated into the terminology of “social integration” established in ch. 2 and used throughout this thesis, this means that within an organization, there is clarity about the *norms* that govern occupational and social roles within the organization, about individual's rights and obligations towards each other. A common organizational culture must be successfully established and respected within the organization (what tends to be a task of the organization's management); it consists in norms that are acceptable and that correspond to the work and life reality of employees.

Last but not least, intact mechanisms of conflict negotiation matter to integration (and participation) experiences of all interviewees in the dataset, no matter the occupation group. Every single interviewee, when speaking about their work and workplace, narrates about problems that have occurred at some point: problems of collaboration at the workplace, issues of the recognition of their work, personal life issues that affect their work, preferences for one type of management and collaboration style over others, and so on. The big difference does not rely in whether problems occur or not – but in whether actors in an organization are able to establish mechanisms of *problem solving* and *conflict negotiation*. If in an organization, there are functioning communication, feedback, and problem recognition mechanisms, this hugely increases the chances of problem solving. Conflict negotiation includes the possibility to re-negotiate, even if only marginally, the social norms valid in an organization. Successful conflict negotiation often leads to a particularly strong experience of *participation*.

6.4 Models of Workplace Relations that Produce Experiences of Exclusion and Fuel Radical Political Outlooks

In this section, I describe models of workplace relations that produce experiences of social exclusion and fuel radical political outlooks. This includes one model typical for large (public or private) organizations: the “managerialist” model of workplace relations. It also involves one model that re-appears in small organizations: the “careless” model of workplace relations. After

discussing these, I provide a round-up discussion of findings on “workplace exclusion experiences” in the dataset of interviews.²³³

Large Organizations: The “Managerialist” Model of Workplace Relations

The model I call “managerialist” is typical for large private enterprises and public organizations in the advanced capitalist present. Many of the private enterprises that fall within this type are multi-national corporations. In this model, decision and budgetary power is concentrated with higher management – or even, with an ownership structure residing in a different country than the given enterprise site. Higher management changes frequently. It consists of university-trained managers who do not know the specific enterprise and sometimes not even the technical work process. There is little communication between top and bottom and no common organizational culture. There is no upward flow of communication and there are few to no feedback mechanisms. Information flow in the organization consists in purely quantitative controlling exercised by units attached to upper management. Mid management is used as a tool of enforcing orders. It has little decision or budgetary competences and cannot solve problems reported by workers. When workers report problems, they don’t receive an answer or receive the answer that “this cannot be changed”. Among both middle management and unionists, this model creates either of two effects: firstly, loyalty to the top; or secondly, active and often resentful struggle. Workers experience to be “*treated like numbers*”: “*if I was not there, they would hire someone else, it would not matter to them.*” In this model, cost-cutting measures are a reoccurring theme. Cost-cutting tends to appear out of relation both to substantive enterprise targets and to social considerations, what creates an impression of “mismanagement” among employees pertaining to both themes. Planned reduction of human resources can go hand in hand with e.g. health- or age-related discriminations. Typically, companies of this type hire immigrant workers for a dominantly economic thought – they can pay them lower wages – but do not actively enable their integration with other parts of the workforce. Social divisions between immigrant and “native” workers hence emerge at the workplace.

This model, systematically, creates grievances and resentment among the workforce. Employees learn that collaboration with certain other types is impossible (low- and high-skilled,

²³³ In the thesis’ conclusion (ch. 9), I provide a summary discussion of what happens when workers quit negatively experienced workplaces, describing three distinct pathways on the basis of the data: they either re-integrate into “well-integrated” workplaces, join small enterprises that are set within collectively marginalized milieus (s. ch. 6.5), or they end up unemployed – in which case, they face new problems with the welfare state (d. ch. 7).

elderly and younger, “natives” and immigrants). Employees tend to engage in collective attitude formation only with those who stand at the same side of the division lines that run through the enterprise organization. Not in all, but in many cases, blue-collar workers to whom this applies hold salient *producerist* and *welfare chauvinist* political attitudes. A smaller number of (former) workers re-orient towards a *post-productivist* worldview.

Experiences with a “managerialist” model of workplace relations are recurrent notably in the industrial and public sectors, where many interviewed manual workers are employed. For example, the Austrian mid-level manager and works’ council in the steel industry cited in ch. 6.3 (AT-67) tells an extensive story of how repeated changes of management and an overly orientation towards cost-cutting have led to severe social divisions in the enterprise *and* to significant drops in the enterprise’s performance indicators at the same time.

Master craftsman/ unionist: Last year, for example, we had a huge change to SAP, and that was a complete flop, a real disaster. If we weren't embedded in the [industrial] group, we'd gone bankrupt. We were unable to produce anything for three months. So, a planning system was changed by a new managing director who arrived. There was a project group, in it all young people. Young, committed ones, I must add. And none of us experienced ones. And we always said, funny. Why is there no one who knows the production process hands-on? [...] The managing director always said that the young were the "pushers"; the old were the "blockers" and the "retros". [...]

And this manager absolutely had no idea what the situation actually was. It wasn't just me; others were in the similarly affected. In the meantime, three people who had the same role as mine quit. They simply couldn't handle it anymore. They said, well, these were younger folks; they said, you know, before I do this, I'll find something else and leave. [...] And he said, this has to go through [...] We had people who were afraid that we would close down, they had fears for their livelihoods [...]

Then, I was asked, as a supervisor, to switch into this control group temporarily ... to operate this program ... it was called BBS, it was a planning system, really easy to use, I have grown up with it, and I also contributed to its development with the former planner. And the new one ... really cumbersome, really complex, everything complicated. Well, and the employees were never consulted. Otherwise, when we're making changes, I always talk to the employees, everyone engages with that, cares about the company moving forward ... as well as about their own job, and ... I ended up working 60 hours weeks to get that thing up and running.

The interviewee describes how at the same time, the general management style shifted in the company after a set of new managers joining the company.

Master craftsman/ unionist: First of all, they don't come from within the company. They have no connection whatsoever. [...] I had to tell him when we walk through the corridor together, that he should greet the people. Unbelievable. This arrogance ... Please, thank you, hello. We all learned that as children. What happened there that ... [...] You only realize how important communication is and how much people want it. [...] This mid-level, this contact with the employees, is crucial. [...] Executives used to stay for a long time, they knew everyone. In the meantime, since I've been here, I think we've had four or five CEOs, they come and go. I say [to coworkers], Mr. [...] left to England. They ask me, who's that? [...]

He adds that common company trips, as described in ch. 6.3, are not being held anymore “now, due to cost-cutting measures, all of that has disappeared.”

In spite of everything, this specific story takes a rather positive end – but at the cost of individual unionists’, managers’, and employees’ exhaustion in a struggle to keep the organization working. The situation calmed down; management slowly changed towards a more cooperative style. The interviewee, however, describes the intermediary position as personally extremely strenuous, to the degree of leading to the edge of burn-out.

Master craftsman/ unionist: How the previous year was, how [the colleagues] supported me, too, ... when you're inside for 14 hours ... You think about everything. You even think about suicide. You have [...] On the way home, I thought, I'll jump.

The interviewee finally quit the position in the steering group and went back to his original job but describes that through the engagement of many in the enterprise, the situation slowly ameliorated.

Now with the CEO, Mr. [...], you notice again, he's more like that, people ... just the fact that ... an employee can talk to the superior. [...] Praise and recognition. It's always written about and [...] I tell him that, too. I'm not afraid to address a CEO. I say, you know, we're on a first-name basis now, I want to give you some feedback. It's very well received when you go through with it. [...] You can already tell that it's going back [to how it used to be] a bit, but – it's difficult.

One steel worker who is employed in this very master craftsman’s team was interviewed, too (AT-69). He mentions that there were changes, but globally, he has for 25 years (of which he has worked 17 in AT-67’s team) experienced stable work-conditions and trust in work relations:

Steelworker: [...] and then by chance I came to [the steel company]. And that's where I stuck. I really liked that, to be honest. [...] It fit perfectly. [...] And actually, that's how the last 25 years have been. [...]. When I look back, I think to myself: 'Well, it's okay.' [...] It's independent work, actually. I work on the machine. They entrust you with responsibilities as best as possible. [...] Just by luck, ending up here, and for 25 years now, I can say: "Okay. The work is okay." There have been phases [...]. But overall – I was able to shape it the way I wanted. The working conditions are also good. They're socially oriented. [...] Well, I don't get along with everyone – I'm not Gandhi. Yeah, but what I'm saying is, I get along quite well with my colleagues. [...] overall, on a personal level – we all get along well. I can't complain. We've known each other for 25 years as well. I'm fortunate in that aspect. It's not like that everywhere.

I: And in industrial companies, management changes from time to time. How have you experienced that?

R: Well, I would say, that affects us less. Right now, I have a new CEO. [...] personally, I don't really – I have a direct supervisor as the team leader. [...] I can't say much – they are two or three levels above me. And I don't interact with them much. If I have a problem, I go to the next in line. It's usually resolved that way.²³⁴

What turns would this interviewee's experience have taken without the successful engagement of the above-cited unionist/ shift leader (AT-67) and others in the company?

There are several similar cases in the dataset. In others, those at the middle level comply with upper management orientations, turning towards mere order-enforcing – or they struggle and fail. For example, this has happened to an experienced skilled worker and former works council in a metallurgical enterprise in Saxony (DE-56). The interviewee tells a prolonged story about unproductive conflicts and failed communication between a newly appointed plant management, works council, and employees. The company has introduced modernization strategies in the development of which the workforce is not involved, and which seem to consist in cost cutting out of relation with substantive production targets, let alone social considerations.

²³⁴ This interviewee shows “moderate-laborist views” (as expected by P2a): *R: When people from other countries immigrate to Austria - should they have the same access to benefits from the welfare state? I: Well, I mean, it always depends. I know so many. Of course, there are extreme cases too, where you'd say they take advantage of it. But like I said, there are decent and indecent people everywhere. Generally speaking... When criminals are dealing, I don't have much sympathy. But there are also very serious ones. It benefits us all if we can help there. [...] I say, if someone integrates here – I know many who work seriously, contributing a lot. Truly, where you'd say "productive." Always being generally against foreigners is not fair.*

The main elements in the interviewee's narrative are recognizable; they reoccur again and again where a strategy of financial cuts has been adopted in large (industrial) companies. Corporate social activities (e.g. festivities) were cut. Employees were deliberately put under pressure in favor of staff reductions; f. ex., the company introduced “employee return interviews”, which are mandatory after return from sick leave and intended to determine whether employees were actually sick and what will be their future within the company. The interviewee also reports dismissals due to sickness. "Optimization" has become a catchphrase, but at the same time a company culture has grown in which the blame for mistakes is being shifted from one actor to another and trust is crumbling. Reportedly, individual heads of department have already “*pulled the ripcord, quit and [gone] somewhere else. Because the support was lacking. They say, deliver more, deliver more; but no one backs you up.*”

The interviewee reports that the training of young skilled workers is being neglected due to short-term cost calculations. Instead, a new management layer has been introduced.

Steelworker: Now there are additional team leaders, shift leaders, in addition to the managers... uh, which people have not really understood, because we are actually a company where people are used to a lot of personal responsibility [...] but the biggest problem is that the [shift leaders] have no idea about the company, about the production process. [...] Management said that they don't have to know the field, they don't have to know anything, they just have to recognize mistakes and forward them. [...] We used to hire professionals [skilled workers] in their respective field. Or at least, a metallurgical profession was a requirement. [Now,] one came from a brewery, another from a bakery, and another was a sailor before. We always say: It's a cheap solution, a cheap hire. People are elevated to positions who can't do it at all. Nowadays, it's not just the technical aspect, but also the human management aspect, and one of these things always falls by the wayside. [...] But... when an employee who has been there for 25-30 years... says that the material is badly pickled. In the past he went to the picklers and said, I can't take this, pickle again. He organized it himself. Or he arranged it briefly. And they trusted him. And now it's like this, now you're supposed to get this shift supervisor, he's supposed to assess it.

The shift supervisor, however, initiates a long and incomprehensible process that aims to save material costs, but actually leads to time and quality losses. *"The employee despairs at the machine. [...] Some [of the new shift-leaders] throw around reprimands because they're not taken seriously and they don't understand how the company has worked for a long time. And when they fail, they also don't receive any input from the employees they should actually be working with. [...] One [shift-leader] was let go again because he hadn't built any connections*

and only faced pressure. They were often left alone by the management, especially when it came to equipment and investment management. [...]

And the personal aspect, the groups, brigades that we used to have, it's all gone now. Mostly, it's like people come, do their work, and leave again. So, in terms of the company atmosphere, it's not that great at the moment.

The interviewee does not see any sense in the management's current course even for substantive company goals, since, as he explains, no increases in productivity have so far resulted from the strategy; rather, it has led to a number of legal proceedings with individual employees which he hopes will raise attention from the holding structure sooner or later.

Just like the above-cited Austrian interviewee, this Saxonian worker was active as a team leader and as a unionist. He used to perceive economic and social concerns not as a contradiction, but to go hand in hand: *“I worked there in a supervisory role until around 2005 or 2010, and then I moved into the role of a works council member. So, I've been a works council member for 20 years and was the works council chairman for over 15 years. [...] The primary focus was on securing the site, but also ensuring that employees have reasonable working conditions and balancing that perspective. In my opinion, there has never been a distinction between the two; we've always looked at both sides.”*

The new situation has also resulted in a personal misfortune: he lost both his works council role and the position as a team leader and was graded back to normal production work: *“There was another restructuring in the company, and then they said, 'No, we no longer plan with you.' And then I went back to production.”*

Steelworker: In the past, they were more open, and they also collaborated with the people at the base level. Even regular workers were involved [in these processes]. Everyone was more engaged. There was a lot of recognition too. Nowadays, they hire a process optimizer, but if they're not from the base, it doesn't work. They get training, and they spend €100,000 on that. We also had people conducting surveys. Management consultants were on-site. We've spent thousands of euros on that. [...] They were supposed to find out why the company atmosphere isn't right, why collaboration isn't working, and investigate the distance between top and bottom. If there was criticism, it was so intense: We didn't know about that. If we had known that earlier. Those at the top, they all knew what the problems were. [...] This also came out in the large employee survey. Topics like communication, employee management, information, and supervisors were given. And if certain aspects are very negative, they implement a measure, like

training. It's a waste of money. They should involve the employees more or do something simple like a company festivity. Those are things that make people proud to work there. It's well-received. But: cost-cutting, cost-cutting, cost-cutting. And then you see where money is being wasted senselessly. [...] There were times when I enjoyed my work.

The activity of the works council, too, faltered during the shift in organizational culture. His 20-years engagement as a works council finally ended during an election that, allegedly, was strongly influenced by management in a top-down manner.

Steelworker: [with] the arrival of the new CEO, in any case, we were shocked by his statements. When visitors were around, he would say that he inherited a rundown, unstructured plant. [...] We wanted to be accommodating and build a sensible collaboration there. [So] we invited him to the first meeting, and the first thing he said was, 'He knows how to deal with works councils.' And he followed through with that. Undermining, undermining, constant discussions in meaningless email exchanges. Nothing direct anymore [...] the last election was also somewhat overshadowed by employees being influenced there or aligning themselves with the CEO's side, however you want to describe it. [...] We always used to have a personal election, and then suddenly there were five lists, intentionally to weaken the old works council, I would say. They undermined it, and they succeeded in the sense that we are a seven-member works council, and three managed to get in directly from the old works council, but the others [...] And so, whenever we wanted to take a decision, it was always four against three. [...] Anyway, there was no sensible work left [to do] in the committee after that. [...] You could tell at the first meeting; the casual atmosphere was gone. The humor was gone. If you criticized individual persons, management always got to know about it. It should have stayed within the council. We can't prepare anything if the management is one step ahead of us. That doesn't achieve anything. Now you have this 'yes-and-amen' brigade. [...] It wasn't working anymore when you [...] try to steer or organize something, and you always had to be afraid that the management would be discussing the same issue in the next five minutes. That's why we drew the line there. [...] And yes, as I said, I've been in the company for so long. I've seen many come and go, and I'm trying to stay there for the last ten years now.

Visibly, the interviewee feels cynical and resentful about the situation. His own political outlook is shaped by unionism (he stays involved with national and international unionist peers and thinks of running again for the next company elections with his old works council team). But what about the “base” workforce at his enterprise?

Steelworker: My generation sees many things the other way around [...] their behavior and discussions about certain topics are different, too. Sometimes, the government doesn't quite grasp this, and then they face protest votes, again [...] and about the AfD and their views; they might sometimes head in the right direction, but they're still too far right [...] That's my opinion. You don't even want to think about what all is circulating, let's say in terms of conspiracy theories; it's enough to hear about it in the normal environment, say, at the workplace.

In those accounts where works councils' and unions' capacity to negotiate conflicts within the enterprise falters, the trust of "simple" workers into these institutions tends to break away to the same degree as their trust in the employer ruptures. An Austrian worker (AT-01), printer by training, but at last employed in a plastics manufacturing enterprise, has lived workplace relations very similar to those in the above-discussed example. He was finally laid off, two years before retirement. *"What experiences have you made with labor unions?"*

Production worker: Zero. Zero. Because the unions can't do anything anymore. Large companies say – there, we close down. Done. That's how it is. Then you have 600 unemployed tomorrow. Ah, more unemployed. [...] they never even asked how I was. I don't know why I paid my union fees. And our union representative that we had is from the same town as I am. Until today, nothing [...] She avoids [me] when she sees me. She can't say anything to the boss because if she says something to the boss ... he'll find something tomorrow to get rid of her. [...] That's how it is in companies. All pointless, these unions. No matter where, which party, which... It's all ... I say, pointless. Sadly, that's how it is.

The oil worker who has been cited in ch. 6.3 tells a similar story with yet a different touch: the perception that works councils were corrupted by a transformed company management.

Oil worker [on labor union]: At the beginning, you didn't need it. I joined right away; but I didn't need it. Later on, I started to feel sorry for the money. The union fees. When you needed something, you had to do it yourself – that's the help I expect from you, friends! "That's not our concern; we can only offer advice" I know that myself, I don't need you for that. Works council, union, Chamber of Labor – all underwent a decline. My impression is that they are being bought by the companies. For example, at [...], the central works council was an alcoholic. They provided him with a Mercedes 600; he covered up things, no matter what happened. Like that.

A topic that often appears as a breaking point in work relations is employee health. A 28-years old German man, formerly carpenter (and meanwhile roofer) by profession, for example, reports serious problems with his former employer. He used to work for a large temporal work

agency, where he did well, so that he advanced to deputy team leader. He finally quit, however, for unwillingness to participate in the reportedly miserable way management treated workers.

Roofer: I had a colleague [...] who had problems with his knees. And then he contradicted a team leader, someone who was above me. Then the team leader came to me and said: "Well, he has bad knees, let's have him work at that spot all day long, where he only has to get on his knees. And then I said, if he's stupid, I won't do that, I'd rather work the spot myself. So ... they didn't like the fact that I stood by my team, and then they looked for mistakes [...] and then they dismissed me without notice, I sued and ... I won. Then the personnel manager said, well ... we could pay our people better, but ... we'd rather save the money, if we sack them and they sue, then we can pay them. Yes. That's the problem in big companies. You're just a number and then it doesn't matter.

In this example, we encounter a mid-management (team leader) that is not oriented at a humane management style and that acts purely as a top-down enforcer of productivity (besides resorting to arbitrary discrimination). We also encounter a phrase that is being used by numerous interviewees in similar situations: for the organization, you are not a human – but you are replaceable, a number. The carpenter shows fundamental political distrust and populist-right-wing political attitudes, what becomes more understandable where his story is continued below (s. ch. 6.4).

The roofer's story may sound extreme. In fact, however, health- and age-related workplace grievances re-occur across the dataset. The “problem” at stake is in most cases not an objective health situation, but that employers do *not* support interviewees in these situations – and instead, often, find a way to fire them. An Austrian woman in her 50s (AT-45, also cited in ch. 6.3), for example, reports an extensive medical history interlaced with a manifold interrupted employment biography. Initially trained as a tailor, she looked for work that yielded a higher salary when becoming a single mother. For almost two decades, she did unskilled work in a fire extinguisher factory and an animal fodder factory. Finally, she worked for ten years as a salesperson in a hardware store. This was when she started suffering from problems with her leg, what limited her ability to stand upright and hence, to work the sales job. In reaction, her employer fired her.

I: As I had heard that I needed to undergo surgery, I was honest and I said, yes, I need to do surgery now, and two days before the surgery they actually gave me the dismissal, because they knew that I will turn 50 in December, and that I go for surgery, and that this can take a little

longer that I am away from work, I will have the cast for at least 8 weeks, and yes, then they fired me 2 days before the operation.

In addition to this unexpected job loss, the surgery went wrong. This resulted in extensive proceedings with the treating medical doctor, the social insurance, and the employment office. The interviewee, being less able to stand upright than before, found herself registered as unemployed and obliged to *actively look for work* (s. below & ch. 7).

Managerialist organizations recurrently show *employer-induced* ethnic divisions at the workplace. This is because migrant workers are being hired at different rates than “native” workers with the pure aim of cost-cutting. This division can run along occupational positions (e.g. skilled vs. unskilled) or along the line of individually negotiated contracts; infringements of labor law included. This handling of pay and position constructs an *ethnic* divide between insiders and outsiders at the workplace. Among “native” insiders two perceptions prevail: we will lose our jobs or our jobs’ quality will deteriorate; and, we actually have more skill, do our work better, contribute better to the substantive company goals, than the foreign workers who “don’t care”, who “just want their money and leave” (AT-01).

Interviewer: And why doesn't the company keep its employees until retirement?

Printer: Well ... in the first company, under the old boss, I was sure I'd stay until retirement, but a new one took over, and ... he didn't want to let me go because he would have had to pay a lot in severance ... so he harassed me, you know. Until I said, enough. I couldn't handle the pressure, because ... I still had 17 years left. I wanted to do it amicably, but he didn't agree. So, I left on my own. Lost all the severance ... and then ... went [to the plastics production company]. So, in the beginning ... very good, nice job, and ... over the years, it got worse there. Many Hungarians, Slovaks came in ... The machine broke down ... the side-line also broke down [...] then everything became limited, half an hour break, always clocking in ... it just kept getting worse.

I: How did things change when people from Slovakia, Hungary came into the company?

P: They didn't care about anything, to put it bluntly. They did what they wanted. Some were good ... and of course, some were different. They didn't care. Because they saw that after about half a year, [if] he wasn't good, they fired him and hired the next one. It's ... like everywhere. [...] there were good people among them, even among the foreigners. But ... yeah ... they treated them however they wanted.

There are many more examples of “managerialist”, cost-cutting oriented, workplaces relations that create exclusion experiences and (ultimately politicized) frustration among workers. There is an Austrian welder (AT-64), highly proficient at his trade, currently employed as a teacher with a public training institution. For the larger part of his career, he used to go on missions, including many international ones, that were related to the construction of industrial plants. He tells a story of how conditions in this field have over time deteriorated, namely both material conditions and interhuman recognition, emphasizing an employer orientation that comes down to a cynical treatment he dubs „scamming“. Employees get paid (not poorly on international missions) but get charged extra for everything. For example. they need to organize and pay their own accommodation (in proximity to a remote construction site); or they are being charged extra for showers. This is being experienced as severe double morals by workers.

A young interviewee (DE-16) whose original occupation was plumbing narrates how during a prolonged period of unemployment, the German employment office has repeatedly forwarded him to companies who maltreat the cheap labor supply they get from the office.

Plumber: you have companies [...] that is actually known [...] and I have experienced it myself, they burn people. They have a way of dealing with employees that is disgusting. [...] they threw a folder at a colleague's head. [...] Then ... extreme pressure, fear is stirred up. So, yes ... people regularly drop out. Young women [sic] regularly burst into tears. Because they were insulted and so on. And ... such companies are still represented at the employment office. [...] And ... you can complain as much as you want, they'll be looking for people again next time and they'll get them again. [...] And if they want you ... you have to start there.

Or yet, there is a retired carpenter (AT-25), who has worked for 30 years at a carpentry enterprise, where he was fully integrated into positive work relations. This enterprise, however, closed.²³⁵ He got job as postman and witnessed the partial privatization and restructuring of the Austrian post services – which brought managerialist workplace relations and a lack of recognition for (at least low-skilled) employees. His job was to be cut; as an alternative, the company proposed to move him to a different, geographically remote, region three years before retirement, for which he would have needed to move several hours away from his family. He quit and spent the last years unemployed; at the time of the interview, he is still resentful about the sensible effect this had on his retirement benefit.

²³⁵ While textile production and printing are the industries apparent in the dataset of which there is least left in Western Europe, carpentry comes soon thereafter.

Carpenter/ postman: I became unemployed at 60. And didn't fall into the corridor pension/worker regulation – I could have retired at 62. [...] They virtually pushed me out with a mutual termination agreement. They preferably hired young, married, people who were building a house, and were in debt – so they could do whatever they wanted with them. The post recommended me to accept the mutual termination because if not, I would be sent to the deepest [...] region from Monday, where all houses are 3 kilometers apart. [...] I was [employed] there with two friends. Firefighter comrades, friends. One was seriously ill, he was the older one. The other 10-15 years younger; he was hit even harder. [This] naturally had a negative impact, I received only statutory severance pay with the words – it is recommended that I accept it; because if not; a week up in the [...], a week somewhere else, so that one throws in the towel, one becomes mentally ill... If I take sick leave, if my stomach starts hurting, they said, no problem. You can easily go on sick leave. “I promise you, we have doctors who will confirm that you are not sick” Then they can cut severance pay. I received 7000 euros [severance pay]. Then [I] was unemployed, only received 800 euros [per month]. We had built a house; I had the loan running until 65. [...] I tried to involve the union. It wasn't normal, after all. They said, everything is in order. Everything is exact. They're clearly not for the workers, the people there, the laborers as they say. But only for their own pockets. The union, the red party...

All of these interviewees show severe sociopolitical dissatisfaction and deeply seated injustice perceptions. Workplace exclusion experiences are particularly grave for those for whom work is the *most important* channel of societal integration. It is particularly them who show strongly resentful political attitudes. Resentment, however, does not channel into “constructive” ways of making sense of the problem, but – mainly – into populist exclamations and the blaming of outgroups. Time and again, the most salient political issue addressed by these interviewees is: welfare chauvinism.

Carpenter/ postman: The government – that's a catastrophe! Complete failures. You can't just go and grant the same rights to a person... If you've been following this. Who is an immigrant? Who is allowed to come in? They're all 18, 25, 23-year-olds, who even say on TV: “You promised us 1500, 1200 euros per month - where are they?” They only come for that. I can't even say that. It makes me angry. You know what I mean. They already have everything in their own country [sic]. I had good relations with my Yugoslavian colleagues. I went [during the Yugoslavian war], [said], I donated 100 schillings to you, but he says, I really appreciate you, but that was nonsense. Those causing trouble down there, are alcoholics, rapists ... they don't want to work [...] You can prove that... they list children [for social benefits] who don't even

exist. A bunch of idiots in Austria, paying for that. He goes to the local authority there, gets birth certificates issued for 1000 euros, brings them to Austria. Says, I have 6 children. Austria pays child benefits. But according to Austrian law, not theirs. Refugees, yes, claiming children who don't even exist. Austria pays. Catastrophe.

This comes together with populist-producerist views of elites... “*What do you think of the statement: the state must save money?*”

Carpenter/ postman: What shall I tell you. Such a statement is a catastrophe. Because the problem is exactly what we've been discussing. The others are supposed to save, but the big shots are grabbing with both hands and throwing it out the window. But the little guy is supposed to save. [...] They take things away from some – and distribute it among the arms (unter den Armen²³⁶) – however; not among the poor, but under their left arm and under their right arm...

... and is underlain by the perception to be, oneself, in terms of social solidarity, being left down and alone. „*On whom can you rely in case of need?*”²³⁷

Carpenter/ postman: On myself. And on my family. And nobody else.

In terms of age cohorts, it is notably “boomer” generation workers’ biographies which are cut in half by enterprise restructuring (those aged 55-70 years in 2020; s. ch. 6.3). While the generation “in between” (35-55 in 2020) shows mixed tendencies; in the young generation (<35), many manual workers already enter into dysfunctional or segregated workplaces à priori and socialize into resentful worldviews carried by their elder peers. This is notably visible in family conversations where parents and kids are in a similar occupation group. For example, a truck driver (AT-47; 47 years old) was interviewed together with his daughter (AT-48, who is 18 years old and currently unemployed) and her boyfriend (AT-49, 19 years, works as a car mechanic). The young couple currently lives with him. The older worker actually has a health problem and expects to lose his job before legal retirement age. Support by the employer in this situation is missing. The young do *not* have a health problem but copy the elder’s narrative about workload and physical strain. Together, they agree that politicians earn a lot of money for doing no “real work” at all, while they suffer from straining and unfair jobs (a neat case of

²³⁶ *Unter den Armen* ... among the poor (wordplay).

²³⁷ „*Auf wen können Sie sich im Notfall verlassen?*”

“producerism”). Interestingly, they do not complain about the substantive height of their salaries, but about working conditions.²³⁸

Trucker: I spend up to 70 hours in the truck, I come home in the morning, and my back... [...]

Daughter: Sometimes he comes home, and I think he's going to collapse any moment.

Interviewer: Can you continue this until retirement?

Trucker: No... if it keeps going like this, I can only do it for another maximum of 5 years.

Interviewer: And then?

Trucker: Yeah, that's a good question. That's why I'm searching [...] I've had times when I was sitting at home, and my daughter had to help me get up...

Interviewer: Doesn't the company have any provisions for health? They don't want you to get a slipped disc, right?

Boyfriend: I have a friend who had a slipped disc aged 24 and got fired...

Trucker: Another example is my buddy who had a heart attack... Doctors say he should stay home, but the insurance says no, you can still work... He has to go to work.

Boyfriend: Same with my grandma, two artificial knees, rehab, and they sent her back to work.

[...]

Interviewer: What would you like to see from politics?

Daughter: That they stick to what they promise and stand by the Austrians.

Trucker: Stand by us.

Boyfriend: That Austrians are number one in Austria.

Trucker: Why does a politician earn 9,000 € just because he can talk? We can talk, too...

Boyfriend: The ones who already earn a lot, they stamp 10 times and sign 20 times and then they have their 5,000 €... and I crawl around for 40 hours and go home with a two... [2,000]

²³⁸ See also similarly the family conversation cited in ch. 5.3, where an elder car mechanic and a young bricklayer (who is the only *young* worker in his construction company) agree that people in white collar jobs don't do “real work”.

They should also consider the physical strain because the wrist can handle signing 20 times a day.

Daughter: Take a politician and tell him to do a job like a mechanic... then he'll be lost.

Trucker: They should try living on our wages.

Daughter: They can't put themselves in our shoes.

Boyfriend: Talking nonsense all day and giving signatures, and I wouldn't mind getting 2200€ for that... but then struggling all day with the workload...

Trucker: We already struggle too much in Austria... Our free time... the few hours we have...

There are some cases in which persistent workplace exclusion experiences show as a factor of the formation of *post-productivist* views. In these cases, interviewees narrate an entire life-reorientation process towards values other than work and productivity. “*I really thought I needed to do everything for the company. [...] I was so, so stupid.*”, says an Austrian former production worker and foreman, who left when tipping into a burnout and alcoholism after years of struggle both *at* and *for* his company (AT-50; 35-55). He underwent years of therapy, now lives in a happy relationship in which mental health is a topic that is valorized and treated with sensitivity; he shares reflections about the meaning of work, life, and politics in a 3-hours conversation, during which he (literally) smokes a joint.²³⁹ All of those who make post-productivist sense of “workplace tension”, however, hold access to spheres in which post-productivist ideas circulate, such as higher education: the cited interviewee is exceptional among the interviewed workers in so far as he has also pursued a degree in music, during which – at university – he came in contact with the ideas of the German student movement of the 1960s. For others, this “sphere of access” is humanitarian engagement e.g. in NGOs (AT-51; AT-42), engagement with esoteric subculture (AT-42), and/or with ecological agriculture, e.g. AT-31 has reoriented to self-employed apiculturalist (beekeeper) as an occupation after an unlucky factory job.²⁴⁰

In the dataset, experiences of workplace exclusion occur in similar manner among working-class and middle-class interviewees. If there is a tendency, these experiences cluster in the industrial, construction and transport sectors on the one hand – and in the public sector on the other. Two interviewees who were active as mid-level managers in an Austrian Federal State’s

²³⁹ In which the interviewer did not participate.

²⁴⁰ Footnote: AT-51, AT-42, AT-31 are all women. The most persistent demographic correlate of post-productivist views in the dataset, however, it is (relatively) young age (s. ch. 5.4)

public garbage removal agency (AT-59; AT-60) tell extensive stories about how at a point, work relations in the agency changed. In their narrative, individual political ambitions of higher-level public servants were causal to a system of mobbing, problem obfuscation, and works council bashing in which a small number of managers who have no contact with the agency's frontline activities monopolize decision-taking powers, putting at risk both the agency's substantive activity and the livelihood of its employees.

Another interviewee (AT-41) tells a not entirely dissimilar story from *inside* the Austrian Labor Market Services. He has worked most of his life for the agency, in immediate contact with clients (unemployed job seekers) on the one hand and local-area employers on the other. He states that he used to *know* people – both employers and unemployed persons – and to put them in touch personally, giving personal recommendations, and taking care that things worked out. With time, however, things changed. Policy programs changed more rapidly, and in his view, several very useful programs were first cut, then some of them reintroduced, but the interruption shows negative effects. This includes f. ex. an employment support program for workers aged 50+. He argues that directives accumulated that did not take into account the judgement of the case worker and often did not fit the conditions and requirements *sur place*. At some point of his career, he was promoted to a higher function, which was set in the Federal state's central office of the agency. He claims to have finally understood, at that point, “where this all comes from”: there “were only people behind closed doors [...] in front of computers; and no one talked to anyone”. He claims that his new colleagues at the central office had little idea of how the agency's frontline workflow. Dissatisfied, he ultimately applied to change back to the lower position. His political outlooks are progressive, his free time activities are strongly marked by an orientation towards educative culture (literature, foreign languages, culturally interested traveling); in terms of socio-economic policy, he is interested in knowing more about Portugal.

Small Organizations: the “Careless” Model of Workplace Relations

The pattern I call “careless” leadership typically refers to situations where a small or family-led enterprise is being taken over by a heir generation who has not learned the respective “trade” in a bottom-up manner but tries to manage the enterprise in a way that, notably by long-term employees, is perceived to be incompetent both when it comes to the organization's substantive economic activity and when it comes to team leadership and the social relations at the workplace. It is tricky, based on interview data, to distinguish long-term employees' frustration with changes in a long-standing system of loyalties and patronage from the effect of substantively poor management; however, many cases that fall within this category show

evidence of both. Sometimes, succeeding owner generations have a tendency to view an enterprise primarily in its financial and hierarchical aspects, while less in its substantive activity and social aspects. This can lead to the experience among workers of a lack of meaningful collective goals, of mismanagement of technical and work processes, and of misrecognition of their competences and the value of their labor. What adds to this is that not rarely, this type of generational company take-overs comes with lay-offs of elderly workers who both feel treated unfairly because their many years of experience are of value to the company and encounter problems with finding another job, which is why they encounter problems with the system of labor activation and with retirement insurance. There is no consistent pattern of immigrant worker hiring and integration for this enterprise type.

This model results in grievances and resentment among a part of the workforce, typically among long-term employees. Typical reactions include the retrospect valorization of the “old” model of workplace organization under the preceding, pre-takeover, enterprise leadership and the search for positive “parallel” models of organization to be found in other enterprises at the present time. Depending on whom the concerned individual knows, this often results in the valorization either of “charismatic”, of “supportive”, or of “corporativist” organization types. As a function of these re-orientations, political preference formation somewhat varies. Overall, however, it takes the same channels as in the above-discussed cases of workplace exclusion in large firms.

An example that illustrates this type well is that of an Austrian woman who used to work as a cleaner for 27 years in a local car shop. She describes how enterprise relations changed after the senior owner’s son had taken over the company.

Interviewee: [...] the young boss took over, and this is where the problems started. Before that, we didn't really have freedoms at work, in the sense of ... standing around for five minutes and talking with someone. This was rather frowned upon. But the senior, he estimated his employees and he joined work, physically. He worked in the [shop] like all the others. And his wife was in the office [...]

Due to a less intimate knowledge of the sector and the companies’ work process, and supposedly a lack of interest to acquire it, the new management resulted in losses both financial and in human capital.

I: [...] to the three employees, who have worked in the company for over 20 years and would have managed alone, they have put a new foreman from outside the company. Without saying

anything, without, for example, taking the three aside and saying, the senior boss is now no longer there, what do we do now, how can we arrange it, so that it continues to run, they put, without saying anything, a stranger, who was now the boss there. And what did the three do, who had been with the company for over 20 years? They let themselves be poached, all three of them. They are all three now back in a company, together, who[se owner], funnily enough, once learned at our company and went into business for himself. He poached the three of them. The best employees of the company.

Generally, she perceives the treatment of employees to have been disrespectful.

I: [...] in our company the working people aren't worth anything, but there only to be exploited. We were ... none of us was worth anything to the boss. Also not the mechanics or those in the office ... or the salespeople. Those were just people whom one can drain. Worth nothing, and if one isn't there anymore, then we'll have someone else.

She tells a couple of stories about misrecognition from the side of her employer. Her story takes a turn when at the age of 57, she was diagnosed with a serious neurological illness that required her to take time off to undergo treatment. Instead of receiving any type of support from her long-time employer, she was finally fired, five years before reaching eligibility age for public retirement.

I: And last year in summer they, finally, laid me off. After 27 years. Because I went for rehab. [...] I have [a severe neurological disease]. This I have known, now, for four years. And ... two years ago I went for rehab already and last year I placed the demand again. And ... then they said, such a small firm cannot carry this, as I am gone for four weeks, and they need to pay me. This was the reason for laying me off. [...] I went to the Chamber of Labor and inquired. They can lay me off without giving reasons. [...] The Chamber said, if I felt this was not right, I could sue. [...] But the Chamber could have helped me only in the sense of demanding two monthly salaries. If I had insisted that they would employ me again ... I don't want to return to a company, who does not want me anyway. This ... I would not have wanted.

In her case, resentment towards the former employer mixes with new sources of discontent such as negative experiences with the employment office and public retirement insurance. Hers is one of several cases in the dataset who report problems of having sickness-related incapacity to work (e.g. in hard physical jobs) recognized by public agencies: while really being physically unable to practice her former occupation, at least as a full-time job, officially, she now counts as unemployed.

This interviewee speaks extensively about unfairness in society. While her grievance experiences center at the (former) workplace, her attitudes, however, focus on the unfairness of the welfare system. “Lazy” people who do not want to work should be targeted, immigrants should not receive entitlements, but those who actually cannot work, who actually have health problems, should be supported and not be discriminated against.

Asked about how the public should act about the workplace-related problem, she cannot give an answer. After reflecting, she believes that if someone, employers could make a difference if they, voluntarily, wanted to do so. She compares her own experiences to experiences made with a “better” small business owner who employs other people she knows (s. ch. 6.5).

Similar stories about former workplaces are being told by a carpenter and window salesman (AT-52), by a printer (AT-01), a plumber (DE-67), by several (male and female) young workers who have either lost a several-years job or switched workplaces a lot and never integrated into stable employment relations in the first place (AT-20, AT-24 AT-42, DE-16) and by numerous others.

Experiences of Workplace Exclusion: a Summary

In this section, I provide a systematic overview of workplace exclusion experiences occurring in the dataset, across occupation groups. I follow the four dimensions set out in ch. 6.2: material security, recognition, participation, and conflict negotiation. In practice, experiences along these four dimensions tend to cluster (s. examples above).

I use the term “material security” to refer to two things in the context of the workplace. Firstly, this is the question of whether interviewees can trust their job to be safe or live with fear of losing it. Secondly, it refers to whether at the workplace they feel safe rather than threatened in their physical, psychological, and legal integrity.

Some interviewees fear losing their job because they expect their organization to conduct budget cuts (DE-05; DE-56; DE-67; DE-74) or to move jobs to other regions (AT-25); others fear not being able to work until legal retirement age for health reasons (this counts notably for manual jobs; DE-42; AT-47; but also DE-05; AT-46) or have indeed been laid off (not officially, but effectively) for reasons of health or age (AT-01; AT-34; AT-36). Several interviewees fear to be or have been quit during periods of organizational change induced by a change in enterprise ownership (AT-01; AT-34; AT-67; DE-56).²⁴¹ A number of interviewees have lost jobs

²⁴¹ Obviously, the termination of a work contract is not necessarily experienced as a grievance, and does not necessarily lead to social exclusion, depending on whether the interviewee would have *liked* to continue this job,

that were automatized (e.g. blue-collar jobs in industrial printing) or set in industries that have shrunk (e.g. carpentry) or closed down for reasons of international competition or offshoring (e.g. textile industry; East German manufacturing after the Wende; AT-01; AT-35; AT-25; DE-52; DE-15; DE-72; DE-77).²⁴²

On the other hand, several interviewees report sustaining negative or discriminatory treatment by the employer or management (non-payment of wages: DE-73; targeted mobbing: AT-59; AT-60; screaming²⁴³ (AT-68; DE-16; DE-73), physical violence (DE-16; DE-43); targeted inquiries into employees' health status (AT-34; DE-56). Some interviewees report to be left with legal hazard due to negligence of the employer. For example, an employee in quality control has been repeatedly prompted to do their work below the legally required standard because their employer aims to cut costs, however, they fear to be personally liable. Two security guards report being left alone in situations of uncertainty: AT-54 needs to control the work permit of workers entering large construction sites, but his own employer tries to smuggle in illegal workers; AT-44 is expected to stop offenders until police arrives but is in a grey zone about the means he may use to do so. Interviewed truck drivers report to be in a permanent grey zone in terms of whether they or their employer pays traffic fines that can be related to meeting delivery deadlines set by the employer (AT-44; AT-54; AT-33; AT-47; AT-70; DE-74).

By “reciprocity” between employer and employee I mean forms of *material* and *symbolic recognition* for work. This includes pay and further material benefits as much as verbal or other gestural expressions of esteem and gratitude.

First things first, I do not find evidence that the absolute height of salaries is linked with experiences of workplace inclusion or exclusion. Even evidence that the comparison of one's own pay with that of colleagues or that of employees of other enterprises matters is rather scarce

whether they are *materially dependent* on this job, whether they experience the reasons and modality of the termination to be fair or not, and on how difficult it is for them to find an equivalent job. This said, long-term employment at one company comes with the formation of non-transferable skills and social capital for which it is hard to find an “equivalent”.

²⁴² Many of these interviewees did not experience their job loss to be unfair; rather, they have accepted “modernization” to be a socio-politically neutral factor, a force majeure, for which no one is to blame. This said, if they cannot find a new job or only precarious new jobs, then they still find themselves in a situation of social exclusion and tend to form respective socio-political outlooks. Some interviewees argue that certain (manual) occupations are undervalued, or that the offshoring of certain sectors is a (bad) political decision. These arguments tend to legitimize perceptions of injustice.

²⁴³ Many interviewees report that a certain degree of screaming is normal e.g. on construction sites (DE-42: “*Sometimes we scold, and then it's fine again.*”) or in gastronomy (AT-03; DE-73). Here, I refer to cases where interviewees forward a credible argument that behavior is well beyond the norm, beyond what they are personally ready to endure, and consistently so over time.

(AT-34).²⁴⁴ The one pay-related aspect that shows a strong link with experiences of social exclusion concerns wages that are *hurtfully* low. This can mean two things. Firstly, it refers to interviewees reporting that with their given salary, they have problems sustaining their family. This is f. ex. reported by a 30-years old truck driver (AT-33) who earns around € 1.300 net and pays alimentation for his first child while living with his new partner and two other children or by a 43-years old hairdresser (DE-29) who earns around € 1.200 net a month and reports (in fact, under tears, in the hair salon's kitchen) how she got through with her son as a single-mother until he (the teenage son) recently started work with the public highway administration as a road worker, which is a stable and well-paid job.²⁴⁵ Interviewees tend to interpret these issues both as family-related and as work-related problems, the latter, however, in the sense that a certain *occupation* is a low-paid occupation, what is problematic but there is no obvious solution. Interviewees do *not* tend to blame their individual employer for this problem (with exceptions, notably in cases where interviewees compare and find other employers in the same sector and same region pay more (e.g. AT-34); typically, such arguments come as a comparison of *overall* workplace quality). Barely an interviewee who reports earning more than € 1.500 net monthly²⁴⁶ attributes much salience to complaints about their salary or material worries related immediately thereto.

The second way in which low pay can be materially hurtful is via its effect on welfare benefits in the Austrian and German pay-as-you-go systems. Given the German retirement pension replacement rate is around 50% of income (calculated over an average of 45 years), a number of interviewees expect or already live with considerable material restrictions (e.g. DE-37 & DE-38; DE-08; DE-16; and many more, s. ch.7). In both Austrian and German cases, the same typically applies to women who have worked part-time (s. *ibid*).

When discussing “workplace participation” experiences in ch. 6.3, I have argued that many working-class interviewees “banalize” the meaning of work, not paying much explicit attention to it. The meaning-of-work, and meaning of the collective (enterprise) activity -issue becomes very visible, though, when something goes wrong with it: notably, when enterprise management

²⁴⁴ Some interviewees insist on wage differences between skilled and unskilled workers, e.g. arguing skilled worker wages with justifications such as “a cleaner earns more than that” (argument with a gender-aspect and a chauvinist note). A number of interviewees blames other, more substantive, exclusion experiences onto differences in wage-levels or welfare benefit-levels (see ch. 7), but there is barely a case in which relative wage difference can be identified as the *source* of an overall experience of social exclusion. Interviewees of all categories (integrated/excluded; moderate/ radical...) state that they find income inequality, overall, too high.

²⁴⁵ Material problems to live on one's income are equally reported by interviewees who live on unemployment benefits or minimal social security as well as by those who receive low pension benefits (s. ch. 7).

²⁴⁶ This value refers to the field period of 2018-2020, i.e. before the considerable inflation during 2022-23.

acts *against* the (“banally”) assumed purpose of the organization’s activity. It does not make sense to Bernd (DE-74) that the municipality would act against the purpose of the leisure facility he operates (they would accept its closure to save budget). In other cases, interviewees don’t get their heads and moral outlook around why e.g. an industrial enterprise or a chain of car repair shops, overly cutting costs, would undercut it’s own activity, sustainable development, customer contacts, and product quality (AT-34, AT-67; DE-05; DE-56). Even if barely visible as long as everything goes well, the (*collective*) meaning issue weighs heavy if things do not go well.

In ch. 6.3, I have argued that what seems to matter is whether the “social purpose” of the economic activity exercised by an individual or enterprise is reconfirmed by society (through collaboration inside the enterprise and external confirmation by e.g. customers, market, publics, personal acquaintances). I have argued that contact with customers/ clients are one channel through which social integration can be experienced. The opposite is the case when customers misrecognize the work someone does. In the dataset there are e.g. cases where artisans complain people would not value the quality of their work and prefer cheaper options. For example, two roofers complain that they have installed a window at a private person’s house and they complained that the glass was murky. It was, however, winter, and the glass showed hoarfrost. The client, who was higher educated, would not believe this, holding it for impossible (at least in the interviewees’ impression) that workers would know something that he didn’t. A waiter (AT-03), a supermarket saleswoman (AT-17), or yet a cleaner (AT-34) complain about lacking client recognition. For dependently employed individuals, throughout the dataset, however, the employer relationship affects experience of social inclusion or exclusion *stronger* than the customer relationship (or even relationships with colleagues).

Gender, unsurprisingly, can act as a distinct dimension of social integration or exclusion – particularly so in blue-collar occupations. There are public programs aiming to train women for skilled manual work jobs (“technical professions”). Some women report positive experiences (e.g. AT-43); others to have failed to participate in masculinist, machist work- and colleague-relations notably in the construction sector (e.g. AT-42). Interestingly, however, the latter interviewee reports the fact that “on construction sites, it is [vulgar] humor, all day long” presented an obstacle for her, the final reason why she did not stay in blue-collar employment was a formal regulation prescribing that companies, if they employ women, must offer a separate bathroom – into which her employer was not ready to invest, but afraid of being fined.

She did not insist on having a separate bathroom herself and in retrospect blames the public regulation for being an obstacle to women's employment in construction.

Conflict negotiation, ultimately, is the dimension that can turn all the others around – to the better or to the worse. While successful conflict negotiation often leads to a particularly strong experience of *participation*, conflict suppression leads to salient experiences of *alienation* and *misrecognition* (s. examples above).

6.5 Models of Enterprise Relations that Favor a “Producerist” Social Coalition between Small Business Owners and Manual Workers

In this section, I address models of enterprise relations that favor a “producerist” social coalition between small business owners and manual workers. Most commonly, this is the case in small enterprises which find themselves collectively marginalized: both the owner and the workforce make experiences of exclusion and alienation with the dominant model of the political economy – while practicing forms of integration and solidarity among each other.

There is evidence for a leadership style practiced by some owner-entrepreneurs that I describe as “charismatic”. It consists in a combination of authoritarian and “caring” elements and can evoke a glorification of “good bosses” among workers. Social questions, under such conditions, become a matter of bosses' decisions, and from the perspective of workers, of ending up with a “good patron” rather than with a “bad patron”.

Owner-Led Organizations: the “Charismatic” Model of Workplace Relations

In what I call the “charismatic” model, the enterprise owner is present as a person in work relations. They adopt a strict and authoritative style; however, at the same time, they take care of “their” people: an approach known as “paternalism”. Typically, this owner has “worked their way up” from the bottom and joins the hands-on work process regularly, being familiar with the tasks of the workers while exceeding them in practical know-how. Often in the manual domain, the owner holds a vocational training degree and a craft's master's degree themselves, but no academic degree. They (but usually he) correspond in experience and role to the “middle manager” in large enterprises but are an independent entrepreneur. As such, they typically feel alienated from the (tax) state, from large enterprises who unfairly outcompete them, and from the educated middle classes (who have less economic, but more cultural capital). This type of entrepreneur typically has the feeling of *having built everything on their own, with their own hands*. In this picture, the hands of the workers who have in reality always worked with them are incorporated into the symbolic “body” of the entrepreneur. Workers experience the “patron”

to be demanding, but also as understanding of their everyday work and private problems: “*when push comes to shove, you can rely on him*”. Typically, enterprises of this type do *not* hire immigrant workers for ideological reasons, for the reason of (imagined) incapacity to manage the linguistic challenge, or because their (typically private) clients would not accept an immigrant worker into their house.

If the two aspects of paternalism – authority and care – are in balance, workers in this setting have the tendency to accept this form of social organization and develop respect for charismatic, personalized leadership styles. They report rather high satisfaction and few grievances. This is with the exception of some workers who, systematically, drop out once in a while for conflicts with the boss, which can have a personal touch. Typically in this type of setting, owner and workers articulate *resentful* political attitudes *together*.

The 28-years old carpenter cited above (DE-42; s. ch. 6.4) changed occupation after leaving the temporary work agency and became a roofer. He now works in a local small enterprise, where he was interviewed together with his elder colleague (DE-43). Both insist that workplace relations in their current enterprise are very positive.

Roofer (55<): No, but this is a good company. It's a good team. Sometimes, one person makes a mistake and it is then ironed out by another person. We shout around for a moment. And then it's good again.

Interviewer: Both of you have already told me about superiors where you really didn't get along. Apparently, things are going quite well here compared to the others. What does [the master craftsman] do right then?

Roofer (<35): He is humane.

Roofer (55<): He is humane.

Roofer (<35): He can put himself in the other person's shoes. [...] Which various other bosses don't do either. He is just humane because he has experienced it himself. Because he has worked it out for himself. And nobody comes in and says oh you are now this or that ... when you get everything shoved up your ass, like in big companies [...].

Roofer (55<): You can always go to him if something is wrong. He just knows what it's like. [...] So far, the best boss I've had in my whole life, the whole 40 years. [...]

The boss was interviewed, too (DE-32). He turns out to be a craftsman who excels in his profession and lives for it, is especially committed to apprenticeship training, but at the same

time has a distinct perception of injustice towards crafts enterprises, based among other things on the experience that the state and larger industries massively depress prices vis-à-vis subcontractors, which systematically leads to partially illegal and questionable practices.

Master roofer: Then och, didn't they read the small print, in winter they need to do the same concreting work as in summer... so they had to go through with it... the winter was hard, [there was a] big department store being built – [they] went bust. [...] So they were ... ripped off. [...] As a craftsman they don't get any support. First, they wait for an appointment, half a year. Another six months for an expert. Then court proceedings ... two years ... well, that's a long time [...] And [the expert] first has to understand how the work is being done. [...] If the other person can speak better than you, you'll be wronged [by the court], even though you're right.

The master craftsman also complains about companies that “*depress wages because they want to pay less [and] bring workers from Poland because they are cheaper*”. Due to incidents of non-payment by major clients, his company only works for private clients, i.e. mostly (smaller or larger) private homeowners. He states that he cannot employ people with an obvious migration background in this sector in his rural Saxonian region: “*I have private clients - if I come there with a Pole or Czech, then you don't need to come at all. Because they are all scared ... of burglaries and so on.*”

Severe distrust towards large enterprises, the state and politics is counter-balanced by strong ties with the local community: the master craftsman used to be a municipal council in his hometown (but frustratedly left); he is known as a good employer among manual workers in the area, is known for fair business practices in the local small business sector (DE-01) and has taken on board young workers who lost their job for various reasons (DE-42; DE-55). Several employees of the company were interviewed: they all show pronounced dissatisfaction with the political status quo and support for populist-right-wing politics.

Small business owners and notably artisans (who are a major employer of manual workers) in the dataset univocally voice grievance experiences with large competitors as well as with the tax and regulatory state. Almost all of them cite a German catchphrase which says “*Selbstständig – das heißt, selbst und ständig*” (“Self-employed – this means, on your own, and this all of the time”). The above-cited master roofer literally has a picture with this phrase, framed, hanging on his office wall. Another interviewee (a pub owner) shows a book during the interview, which is called “Black Book of Tax Money Waste” (“*Schwarzbuch Steuergeldverschwendung*”), underlining her account of experiences of public mis-regulation that, allegedly, threaten her local pub’s existence. If there is a tendency to be observed as on

how small business owners make political sense of these experiences, it is: those who are embedded into large institutions besides self-employment tend to make “moderate” political sense of their socioeconomic problem experiences. Such “large institutions” include higher education²⁴⁷, churches, or trade unions (*Handwerkskammern*) (s. ch. 6.3). Those whose *societal integration* and sense of societal (in)justice depends on their self-employed activity alone, on the contrary, tend to form a resentful, producerist political outlook (AT-44 who owned a delivery firm; AT-52’s former artisan boss; DE-12 who is an artisan; DE-18 who owns a hairdressing shop; DE-26 who is a pub owner; DE-04 is on the brink between moderate and producerist views, and interestingly, equally on the brink of institutional in/ exclusion experiences.)

For virtually all of these interviewees, being seen as a respected member of society is a major underlying motive. Their moral demands aim at a *just* economic system (naturally, from the specific perspective of small enterprise). Then, in some cases, the distribution of virtue and blame is blurred, what can lead to even more deeply seated attribution of the latter on the usual targets (institutional elites and social outgroups). An Austrian man (AT-02), for example, who after a factory job loss and a prolonged, successful trajectory as assembler on national and international missions founded a small enterprise, was held accountable for a considerable case of tax fraud – and served a prison sentence. He is now long-term unemployed, known as a good sport in the local pub and beers-at-the-gas-station scene and holds some of the most far right views in the entire dataset.

When Workers Idealize Bosses: Patronalism

Among workers who are employed in collectively marginalized small enterprises whose owner practices a “charismatic” leadership style, one type of reaction stands out: they can hold very positive views of “strongmen” bosses. This typically comes with profoundly *producerist* vision of the political economy which see the virtuous strongman entrepreneur in a struggle with corrupted large institutions.

Indeed, even more generally among those workers in the dataset who make *workplace exclusion experiences*, a set of views reoccurs that idealizes the *authoritarian* but *caring* boss, who has no problem having a conversation with workers on an equal level, who joins work himself or knows how work (and life) is. The anti-managerial type, who speaks the working-classes’ language: but economically speaking can be anything between a small artisan and a, literal,

²⁴⁷ Higher education comes with participation experiences in universities and science, which are some of the largest institutions featured by advanced capitalist societies.

oligarch billionaire businessman (e.g. AT-15; DE-63; AT-34; AT-2). This set of views also appears in cases of large owner-led enterprises, where the owner adopts such a leadership style.

An Austrian garbage truck driver, for example, narrates a very positive relationship with his enterprise's owner that is based on the superior's style to *care* if an employee is in a situation of need.

Garbage truck driver: I know Mr. [...] personally, he's the one who founded the company. [...] So, due to my daughters' disabilities, I have a good connection with these people, right? [...] We've been looking for a disability-accessible car for our daughter. We did that through [an NGO]. And the company has a sort of helping-hand program that sponsors certain things. And the boss himself has also sponsored and paid for the car we need. Because it costs around 30,000 euros and the social office pays for the empty hand [does not pay for it], right? [...]

Listen, there are supervisors who are great, and then there are supervisors whom you can throw away. [...] I know someone who started at [a supermarket chain]. She worked in the deli department for a month, and then she was let go because they said there was too much staff. Then she had to go to another branch. How am I supposed to be motivated in that situation? As a supervisor, like our boss, Mr [...] for example, he's different. He's in his eighties now and he says he wants to do something for the employees. We have a barbecue party in the summer, a great Christmas party, a punch evening. Three or four years ago, he organized a family event in [...]. Buses were provided in Vienna, you and your family got on, were taken to [...], had the family event, and then they took you back home by bus. If there's any problem, you can contact him and it works perfectly. He even says, tell me what the problem is, we have lawyers at our disposal, that's it, right? We can solve it. You can approach him with any problem. And that's really great for the employees. They say it's okay, your performance is good, you can approach him, even on the weekend, if he's not available, he calls you back right away. I find that great as an employee.

In return, the worker idolizes the company owner.

Garbage truck driver: If I receive something, I give back in return, quite simple. Just like with us [in our company]: if I receive something, I give back. [...] ...like when Mr. [...] told me he's offering me a [higher position] he said to me, 'Consider accepting the offer,' and I said yes, right away. And then my supervisor comes to me and says, 'Listen, Mr [...] has two things for you. 500 euros for medications [for the daughters] if you need them.' And he asked what the kids would like. I said, 'The girls enjoy going swimming in [thermal bath], right? It's good for

their [condition], right?' And then he went ahead and gave the order that the kids would receive a voucher for [the thermal bath] for Christmas. That's why I say he's humane and he really understands how things are.²⁴⁸ He stays that way and he is that way. He has his own grandchildren, and they're healthy. He regrets that ours aren't healthy. [...] Afterwards, my girls drew a picture, wrote their names, and placed a photo on it. He hung it up in his hallway. He said it will stay there until he dies. He thanked us, and then the kids baked Christmas cookies for him and sent them through our office.

The other side of the coin is that the company, which employs around 4,500 employees²⁴⁹, does not have a works council – what is uncommon in Austria, to say the least. Austrian law prescribes a works council in enterprises that employ more than five (5) employees, but there are no legal sanctions if the workforce “decides not to elect” a council. The interviewee narrates how employees in his company are afraid to take an initiative, because the last time, everyone involved was fired.

Garbage truck driver: Well, it was like this: there used to be an employee council, but they must have done something wrong, aaand they managed to get rid of them. That's what I heard, right? And the company, of course, doesn't want an employee council. [...] Now, no one dares to sign up for the employee council, for whatever reason. Our foreigners [sic], especially, are afraid of being fired. [...] they are all afraid that if they get involved, they'll be laid off. So you have two sides to consider, right? Before you're elected, you can still be pushed out, essentially. [...] it wouldn't be bad for sure [to have a council]. Because with us... We have people in the [garbage] sorting hall who earn about 1300 net.

The interviewee balances his positive experiences with the company owner against the motivation to support an employee council initiative in the future:

Garbage truck driver: I wouldn't want to disregard the boss in this context. Because he... [showed extensive support and they have built up a personal relationship]. But I also want to do something for our employees, essentially. So, you're torn, right? How do you handle this now? You're in a tricky situation, to put it frankly [...] ²⁵⁰

²⁴⁸ Note the precisely same formulation as in the interview with the Saxonian roofers cited above. These interviewees have never met each other (they even live in different countries).

²⁴⁹ Interviewee's estimation.

²⁵⁰ “Also, du bist gespaltet, na? Wie mochst des jetzt? Du bist am Oasch, auf guat Deutsch [...]“ [sic]

Turning to political topics, the interviewee reports that “*when I speak to colleagues*”, even „*our foreigners, they say themselves, those [refugees] come and don't want to work, they only want money*”.

“Charismatic” workplace organization and attitudinal “patronalism”, the ideolization of “good bosses”, appear as an independent channel towards the formation of right-wing populist views among blue-collar workers in the dataset. There seem to be several mechanisms at work as a part of this logic: firstly, the formation of *producerist* views seems to act as an attitudinal pathway towards re-enforced distrust in institutions (strongmen entrepreneurs are good, institutions are bad) and de-solidarization with those who are not “productive”. This “producerist” logic can be joined by (typically *white*) foreign workers who enter into an exclusive community logic – and participate in blaming newcomers (notably *non-white* foreigners). Notably, “patronalism”, in the sense of the “representation” by a charismatic owner, appears as an antithesis to representation by unions and collective organs – whereby a major source of trust in public institutions, generally, is lost. Secondly, workers who experience the “authoritarian care” of “good bosses” to be a stronger source of solidarity than failing (state) institutions, seem to positively internalize charismatic strongman leadership as a model of social organization – what may easily resonate with the political leadership style practiced by PRRPs and authoritarian political actors more generally.²⁵¹

While charismatic leadership styles and “patronalism” often characterize (e.g. artisan) small enterprises, it seems that the same elements of style can be adopted by owner-entrepreneurs quite independently of company size. The above-discussed example is by far not the only one. An elderly Austrian worker (AT-22), for example, tells a story of a childhood friend who moved to America and became rich. He is fascinated with the combination of material wealth and personal proximity he experienced when visiting the friend in Canada. This story was written down in the form of an ethnographic fieldnote.

The interviewee (retired road worker) tells a story about a childhood friend who worked as a sailor, specifically on a British transatlantic ship. This friend initially settled in Bermuda and worked his way up from a waiter to a higher position in a hotel. However, he didn't want to stay there “because he did not like the mentality”. On the island, “those who had succeeded” just “did whatever they wanted” [lived decadent lives]. He then settled in Canada and worked his way up a second time from a simple service job to becoming the manager of a prestigious golf

²⁵¹ S. Ashwin's (1999) ethnographic account of how Russian mining workers derive a preference for authoritarian styles of *political organization* from authoritarian models of *social organization* at the level of the enterprise.

club with 700 members. Membership required a substantive payment of 250,000 Schilling (dollars?) at the time. The interviewee once visited this friend, who owned a Rolls-Royce while his wife drove a Honda. Unlike before when he frequently moved houses, he stayed in a house near the golf course, with a large surrounding area, including a fenced plot with a forest. They also visited the premises of Frank Stronach's car factories [Austro-Canadian billionaire oligarch²⁵²], where the landscape is adorned with ornate buildings that resemble castles. Frank Stronach pays his workers about one-third more than the market average. "In return, who is a union member – leaves." The interviewee's friend sneaked the interviewee into the golf club, "the porter would have never let me in", declaring the interviewee was a "business representative from Germany".

The story showcases "producerist" morals: materially tangible output of "productive" economic activity is what carries a value. This vision neatly aligns with the idolization of "good" strongman bosses who embody these values.

A similar story is yet told by a German tunnel boring machine operator (DE-63). During a prolonged time period, he worked for a large family-owned tunnel machine company. While he and his coworkers were taking a break on the construction site, the owner-CEO received a delegation, including the former German Federal Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, which he led across the construction site, showing them the works. Suddenly (so the story), the owner-CEO appears in the building lodge with a beer, and says, "*can I hide here, I can't stand this political bullshit talk anymore, how are you guys doing, I'd rather hang out with you.*" No matter how much the details of this story may have changed over time, the interviewee is, naturally, fascinated. Schröder was German chancellor from 1998 until 2005; he tells this story in 2020 and presents it as a highlight of his occupational biography. He has also found his way to join AfD as an active member, being the only blue-collar worker AfD municipal council I have encountered during fieldwork. At the point of the interview, he had been denied by the party to run as a candidate in the state elections, because in his speech he demanded higher wages for workers. He was in the course of preparing a second application, skipping this demand.

Even beyond "charismatic" workplace relations, "patronalist" arguments keep appearing when workers in the interviews make sense of *employment relations problems*. In (explicit or implicit) arguments on "who could act", who could make a change and improve such situations, the single most frequently named category are *bosses*, far ahead of unions, the state, or politics

²⁵² Who has several times, unsuccessfully, attempted to join Austrian politics with right-wing populist campaigns.

(which is merely being blamed in a diffuse manner, and indeed for other, more politically tangible topics, such as retirement policy or migration). The question of social justice – at least at the meso-level – hence for many becomes a question of whether you end up with a “good patron” rather than with a “bad patron” – with the described effect on political attitudes.

The interview with the cleaner, who was cited in ch. 6.3 for her negative workplace experience in a local small business, involves a part in which she draws hope from friends’ and former coworkers’ experiences that differ from hers:

Cleaner: They go very well. I often ask my [friend]. So he [another company owner] has built up the company from nothing. He has a tinsmith and paint shop for cars. They now have two apprentices. They have taken on another person in the office ... so they are already almost 10 people... and the company has only been around for 10 years. They get... so with every employee, when someone has a birthday, the whole company goes out to eat, the company pays for it... they have Christmas parties, they get presents. They have a good atmosphere. Yes. That's how it works. And they are appreciated. Yes. Because my [friend] is sick herself, and often on sick leave, and she has no problem there. He knew beforehand that she was sick, he said, that the boss there, he didn't care, he knew that she was sick, she also has an [...] disease. No problem. And they left after 20 years and didn't get any severance pay from the [ir old] company. Because when you quit yourself, you don't get the severance pay. But he [the new boss] said, he had the tax advisor calculate it, they earn more now, so that they have the severance pay they didn't get until they retire.

Interviewer: Wow. Really.

Cleaner: Yeah. Yes. So now they earn more every month, so that they have the money they would otherwise have received from the severance pay until they are 60, yes. [...] And then they said they didn't have to think about whether to stay in the old company or join the new one. There, they have a better life.

6.6 A Note on Workplace Relations in a Historical Socialist Regime

The “Horizontal Authoritarian” Model of Workplace Relations

The model of workplace relations I call “horizontal authoritarian” is that of large socialist state-owned enterprises in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) during the prolonged post-war period of “industrial socialism”. It ceased to exist after 1989. Many contemporary East German workers still knew this model. It was characterized by the fact that everyone had a job – being

fired, for economic reasons, was no topic – and at the same time, everyone had the duty to appear to this job: freedom to choose was not a big topic either. Everyday relations between management and workers are described as rather unproblematic by interviewees: “they had no reason to put pressure on us” for the economic goals of the organization were communitarian rather than competitive. The fact that managers earned less than twice the salary of workers is often highlighted. Even the duty to work is not being described as an overly restrictive experience by most interviewees, pointing to the power of collective habit: “everyone worked, simple as that. It simply didn’t happen that someone said, I don’t want to work. It may have occasionally happened that someone didn’t appear in the morning because they got drunk the evening before. Then we would look for them, take them to work, he would sleep a bit in a corner and then work. [...] This, we laughed about it.” Exclusion, on the contrary, happened via two channels: firstly, limited choice of educational and occupational pathways; and secondly, political discrimination and repression. The socialist state distinguished between workers (*Arbeiter*) and farmers (*Bauern*) on the one side and intellectuals (*Intellektuelle*) on the other. While a daughter or son of workers or farmers was supported to undertake higher education, this pathway was obstructed for children of “intellectual” parents. This led to high satisfaction among some of the prior and an experience of exclusion among many of the latter. Even more importantly, political discrimination cut through the otherwise rather “horizontal” workplace culture. Interviewees report that with your “boss and your colleagues, you could speak about everything”, work problems and personal themes were openly addressed, as “everyone was in the same situation”. This counted with one notable exception: you would not speak, ever, about politics. When you were known to hold oppositional views, you were discriminated in the education system and at the workplace. Party members, at the same time, would naturally rise faster in the system. The GDR had a limited influx of labor migrants from socialist countries. These individuals were integrated into the workforce following a tightly managed procedure, what led to an experience of “inclusion” between “native” and immigrant workers.

It is impossible to analyze in retrospect how socialist workplace organization impacted on political attitude formation in an authoritarian one-party state, given notably that it must be thought of influencing attitudes *back then*, and not systematically those which were documented by interview questions in 2020. Not much surprising, those who report to have experienced political discrimination also systematically report to have held anti-regime attitudes. Those who report positive experiences within the socialist system also speak more positively about the advantages of this historical mode of organization. Political attitudes were reportedly *not* shared

at the workplace *at all*, except for pro-regime attitudes within official partisan initiatives that involved the workplace.

6.7 Quantitative Evidence: Testing the Main Hypothesis

In this section I propose a quantitative test of proposition P2b: *workplace exclusion leads to the formation of exclusivist and populist attitudes*. Limited data is available to test this hypothesis. This is because few opinion survey datasets include *both* items on workplace relations *and* on politics. The International Social Survey Programme's (ISSP) 2015 wave has been identified to fit the data requirements. I use logistic regression analysis to test the effect of a composite indicator for the quality of *workplace relations and work conditions* on the propensity to hold *salient exclusivist and populist attitudes*, which I approximate using reported voting for populist radical right-wing parties as a dependent variable. I conduct this test for all European countries, using a number of control variables (gender, age, income, education, occupational class, country fixed effects). I find a significant and rather strong correlation. I am not in the position, at this stage, to propose advanced quantitative tests of the causality of the effect: this should be undertaken as a part of future research (see *Conclusion*).

Operationalization

The International Social Survey Programme's (ISSP) 2015 wave includes a range of variables that allow to build a composite indicator measuring the overall quality of workplace relations and work conditions. It also includes a question on reported voting behavior. Voting for populist radical right-wing parties can arguably be used as an approximative measure for "salient exclusivist and populist attitudes". The survey has been conducted in most Western and Eastern European countries among other parts of the world. It is representative at the national level.

In order to build an indicator reflecting the various aspects of workplace relations, I use a total of 17 items and realize Principal Component Analysis (PCA). Utilized survey questions cover the following topics.²⁵³

I include two items that measure overall job satisfaction.

²⁵³ PCA and subsequent logistic regression analysis with PRR-vote as a dependent variable were also run with composite "workplace relations" indicators using different combinations among the here-listed items (e.g. with less items; or excluding "income" and "opportunity" variables). The first PCA-component always showed the same dimensionality; and the effect on political attitudes/ reported voting behavior is robust to these alterations. Even regression analysis with the single items "Management-employee relations" (mgmtrel) or "Overall job satisfaction" (jobsatisfaction) show a significant effect on voting for PRRPs at $p < 0.05$ * with all controls applied that are used in the below reported models.

| Name | Coding | Description |
|-----------------|---------------|---------------------------------------|
| Jobsatisfaction | scale (1-7) | Overall satisfaction with current job |
| Turndown | scale (1-5) | I would turn down another job to stay |

Social relations at the workplace are equally measured by two survey questions.

| | | |
|---------|-------------|---|
| Mgmtrel | scale (1-5) | Relations: between management and employees |
| Collrel | scale (1-5) | Relations: between workmates / colleagues |

Evidence of specific work-related grievances is measured by a total of four questions.²⁵⁴

| | | |
|-----------|-------------|--|
| Stressful | scale (1-5) | How often applies: I find work stressful |
| Family | scale (1-5) | How often: demands of job interfere with family life |
| Timeoff | scale (1-4) | How difficult: take time off during working hours |
| Weekend | scale (1-5) | How often applies: involved working on weekends |

The perceived personal and social value of one's job is measured by three questions.

| | | |
|-------------|-------------|--|
| Interesting | scale (1-5) | My job is interesting |
| Helpothers | scale (1-5) | Can help other people [through my job] |
| Useful | scale (1-5) | Job is useful to society |

Two items measure the respondent's integration into a common set of goals of the enterprise organization.

| | | |
|-------------|-------------|---|
| Firmsucceed | scale (1-5) | Willing to work harder to help firm succeed |
| Firmproud | scale (1-5) | Proud to be working for my firm |

The organization of work is an important aspect of workplace relations and measured by two items.

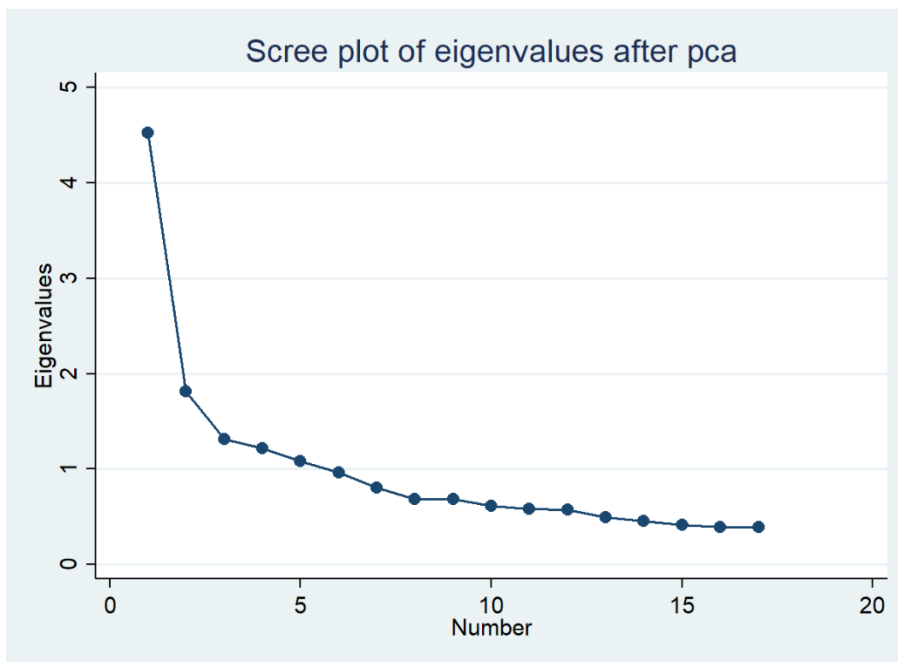
| | | |
|--------------|-------------|---|
| Independent | scale (1-5) | Can work independently |
| Organization | scale (1-3) | Organization of daily work (I am free to decide / Decide within certain limits / I am not free to decide) |

Finally, future opportunities and material incentives present an alternative avenue of making sense of a workplace. They are measured by one item each.

²⁵⁴ The survey includes two variables on discrimination and harassment at the workplace, which were not used in PCA because they come with binary coding. Based on a number of tests conducted, it would not make a relevant difference.

| | | |
|---------------|-------------|--|
| Opportunities | scale (1-5) | Opportunities for advancement are high |
| Income | scale (1-5) | My income is high (subjective) |

Principal component analysis conducted on these 17 item results in one major dimension that measures a respondent’s overall satisfaction with workplace relations and work conditions as well as a number of less salient dimensions that were not interpreted for this analysis. The first component shows an Eigenvalue of 4.5, with 2.7 points difference to the second component (EV 1.8). The first component was saved under the name *workplace relations and work conditions*.



III. 18: Eigenvalues of Principal Component Analysis.

The composite indicator “workplace relations and work conditions” is strongly correlated with most items used in the PCA. It shows a weak negative correlation with the indicators of concrete workplace grievances.

| Variable | Correlation | Variable | Correlation | Variable | Correlation |
|-----------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|-----------|-------------|
| jobsatisfaction | 0.3444 | interesting | 0.3238 | income | 0.2296 |
| Turndown | 0.2564 | helpothers | 0.2405 | stressful | -0.0951 |
| Mgmtrel | 0.2899 | useful | 0.2165 | family | -0.0794 |
| Collrel | 0.2414 | independent | 0.2593 | timeoff | 0.1823 |
| Firmsucceed | 0.2685 | organization | 0.1979 | weekend | -0.0163 |
| firmproud | 0.3438 | opportunity | 0.2559 | | |

Tab. 32: Correlation of “workplace relations and work conditions” with individual items

The dependent variable is reported voting for parties of the populist radical right. The survey includes a question on voting in the last national election before the survey was conducted (field research periods were in 2015 or 2016 for each country). For each country, PRRPs were coded based on Mudde’s (2007) criteria of *nativism*, *authoritarianism*, and *populism*. A binary (0/1) indicator was composed that is positive for a reported PRR-vote while negative for a reported vote for any other party. Invalid ballots and non-voters were dropped as much as respondents who didn’t answer the question.

| | | |
|----|--------------|--|
| RR | binary (0/1) | Populist radical right-wing vote, as opposed to vote for any other party family or “other” (non-voters and invalid ballots not included) |
|----|--------------|--|

The following countries and parties are included in the analysis.

| Country | PRR-parties | PRRP-vote (n/obs.) | Other vote (n/obs.) | Total N of observations |
|---------------------------|--|--------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|
| AT-Austria | FPÖ | 192 | 432 | 624 |
| BE-Belgium | Vlaams Belang, Lijst Dedecker, Parti Populaire, Front National | 47 | 1,420 | 1,467 |
| HR-Croatia | HSP | 7 | 523 | 530 |
| CZ-Czech Republic | USVIT | 25 | 669 | 694 |
| DK-Denmark | DF | 160 | 720 | 880 |
| EE-Estonia | EKRE, EIP | 48 | 641 | 689 |
| FI-Finland | PS | 138 | 696 | 834 |
| FR-France | FN, DLR | 104 | 726 | 830 |
| DE-Germany | AfD, NPD | 43 | 1,030 | 1,073 |
| HU-Hungary ²⁵⁵ | Jobbik | 94 | 411 | 505 |
| LV-Latvia | NA | 70 | 388 | 458 |
| LT-Lithuania | TT | 49 | 481 | 530 |
| NO-Norway | FRP | 127 | 1,051 | 1,178 |

²⁵⁵ FIDESZ was not coded as a PRRP for the reason that with 60% (FIDESZ) + 19% (JOBBIK) = close to 79% of the total Hungarian vote coded as PRR, the indicator would strongly lose in precision. Coding only Jobbik as PRRP in Hungary results in identifies those voters with the *most* salient exclusivist and populist views. This choice can be criticized. Empirically, when analyzing Hungary alone, poor workplace relations show a positive effect on the JOBBIK-vote (but not on the FIDESZ-vote). When including FIDESZ in the global European indicator, the correlation between workplace relations and PRR-vote stays significant at the same level.

| | | | | |
|-----------------------|---|--------------|---------------|---------------|
| PL-Poland | PiS, Samoobrona, KNP/KORWiN, Prawica Rzeczypospolitej | 420 | 703 | 1,123 |
| SK-Slovak Republic | SNS, ĽSNS | 86 | 532 | 618 |
| SI-Slovenia | SNS, SDS | 100 | 379 | 479 |
| SE-Sweden | SD | 104 | 914 | 1,018 |
| CH-Switzerland | SVP/UDC, SD/DS, EDU/UDF, Lega, MCGe | 134 | 408 | 542 |
| Total | | 1,948 | 12,124 | 14,072 |

Tab. 33: Countries and parties included in the analysis

Logistic Regression Analysis

I use logistic regression analysis in order to estimate the increase of probability in voting for the populist radical right as a function of the (decreasing) quality of workplace relations. Below, The reported model estimates the effect for all European countries, using country fixed effects. In model (1) I use *education*, in model (2), *occupational class* as a control variable besides gender (m/f), age (continuous and squared), and personal income (quintiles coded by each country, used as a continuous variable). Both models include country fixed effects.²⁵⁶

Below the reported models, I show a margins-plot for Model 1, depicting the increase in probability of voting PRR for each point decrease in the subjective quality of “workplace relations and work conditions”.²⁵⁷ For this purpose, the main dependent variable has been standardized into a continuous scale ranging from 0-1.

In Model 1, only individuals who *currently are dependently employed* are included (no self-employed, no unemployed or retired, no one in training or education, doing care work, etc.).²⁵⁸

²⁵⁶ The term „fixed effects“ is more often used in panel data analysis. I include country dummies in a model using cross-sectional data to control for the different absolute levels of PRR-party strength in European countries.

²⁵⁷ The marginal effects for model 2 differ only slightly.

²⁵⁸ This choice decreased the number of observations, but it refines the sample to the actual range of the hypothesis. Regression analyses have been run including all respondents who answered the workplace questions (also self-employed, retired, or unemployed). For most models, the correlation was significant at the same level. It makes a conceptual difference, however, when e.g. a self-employed respondent answers a question about management-employee relations in their own enterprise.

In Model 2, which controls for occupational class (the self-employed included), only individuals who *currently are in paid employment* are included.

The fact that data allows us only to include *current* and not *former* workplaces in the analysis results in a rather conservative estimation of the effect. In the qualitative data, the effect of “resentment” formation in poor workplace relations often is particularly strong there where interviewees have finally *lost* their job (by being fired). Subsequently, they would typically find themselves in a worse (less qualified or worse paid) job, in unemployment or in retirement.

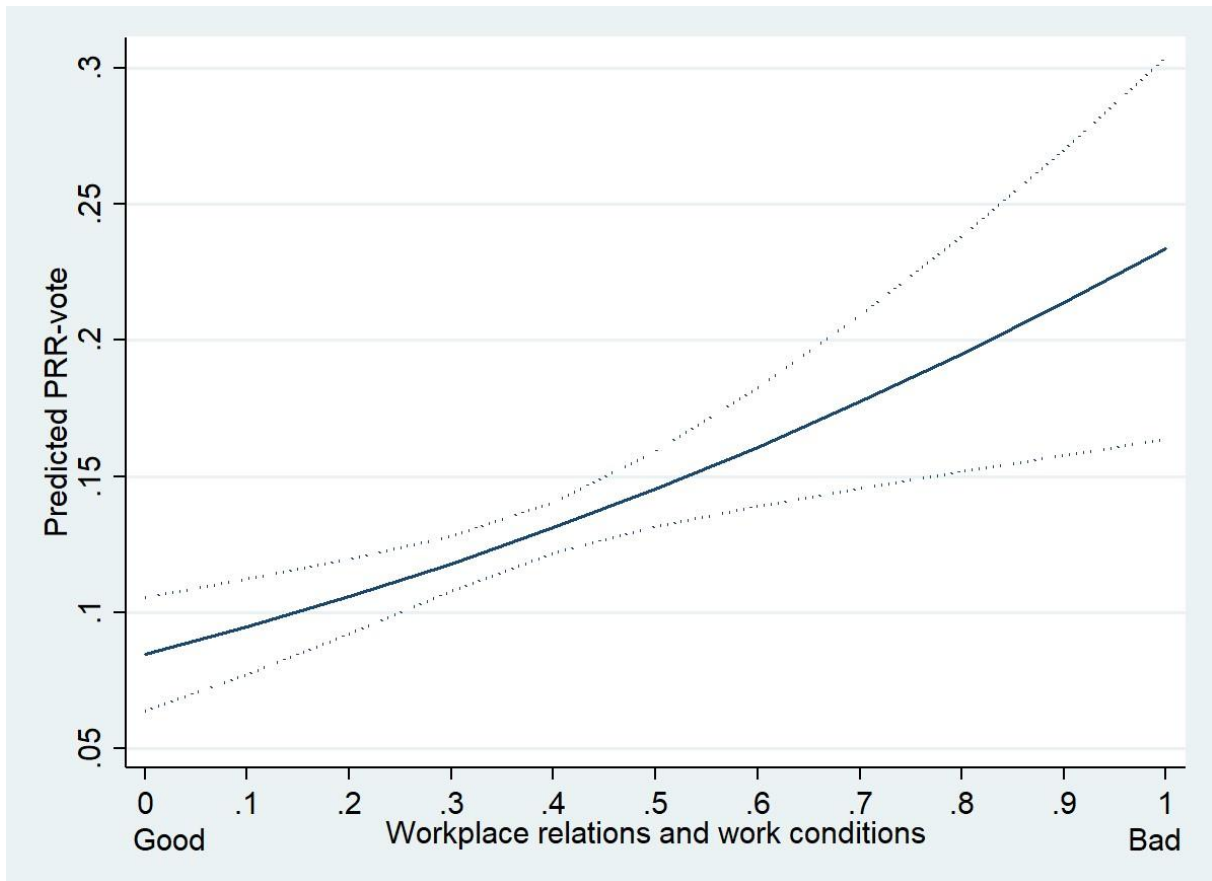
| | (1) | (2) |
|--|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| | Populist Radical Right Vote | Populist Radical Right Vote |
| Workplace relations (continuous good – bad) | 1.3419 (0.369) ^{***} | 1.1884 (0.351) ^{**} |
| Gender: female | -0.5277 (0.097) ^{***} | -0.4288 (0.099) ^{***} |
| Age (continuous) | 0.0189 (0.032) | 0.0066 (0.028) |
| Education (continuous) | -0.1008 (0.018) ^{***} | |
| Household income (quintiles continuous) | -0.0954 (0.045) [*] | -0.0920 (0.042) [*] |
| Oesch-8 Class | | |
| 2. Small business owners | | 0.8751 (0.402) [*] |
| 3. Technical (semi-)prof. | | 0.2331 (0.395) |
| 4. Production workers | | 0.9372 (0.386) [*] |
| 5. (Associate) managers | | 0.4262 (0.388) |
| 6. Clerks | | 0.3333 (0.404) |
| 7. Socio-cultural (semi-)prof. | | -0.1447 (0.399) |
| 8. Service workers | | 0.8317 (0.388) [*] |
| Age ² (continuous) | ✓ | ✓ |
| Country FE | ✓ | ✓ |
| Constant | 0.6933 (0.713) | -1.0002 (0.721) |
| Observations | 4,735 | 5,227 |

Robust standard errors in parentheses; ⁺ $p < 0.10$, ^{*} $p < 0.05$, ^{**} $p < 0.01$, ^{***} $p < 0.001$

Model 1: only “currently working for pay” + “dependently employed” included

Model 2: only “currently working for pay” included

Tab. 34: Logistic regression analysis (Workplace relations, PRRP vote)



III. 19: Predicted effect of workplace relations and working conditions on voting for the populist radical right (Model 1). Predictive Margins with 95% CIs.

The logistic regression analysis (Model 1) provides evidence that the overall quality of workplace relations and work conditions shows a highly significant ($p < 0.001$ ***) and considerably strong effect on voting for populist radical right-wing parties across Western and Eastern European countries. While the predicted probability of voting for PRRPs for a dependently employed European, in whose country there is a PRR-party, in 2015 lies at 8.5% when their experience of workplace relations is splendid, it increases to 23.4% when their experience of workplace relations is catastrophic.²⁵⁹

The results of Model 2 provide evidence that a part of this effect is indeed captured by occupational class. The effect, however, stays highly significant ($p = 0.001$ **) and the magnitude and marginal effects virtually do not change. This suggests that poor workplace relations and work conditions may lead to salient exclusivist and populist views not only in the working-class, but also in other groups within advanced capitalist European societies.

²⁵⁹ Reminder: this includes controls for gender, age, education, personal income and country fixed effects.

Chapter 7. Kicking Down on the Ladder of Deservingness: Tension with the Welfare State and Welfare Chauvinist Reactions

I have theorized that individuals' experience of *welfare inclusion* or *welfare exclusion* can have an impact on their perceptions of *others'* deservingness to benefit from public solidarity provision (s. ch. 3.3.2). I expect this mechanism to contribute importantly to the formation of “moderate-productivist”, “producerist/ welfare chauvinist”, or “post-productivist” visions of the welfare state and of the advanced capitalist political economy overall (s. ch. 5).

Existing literature has shown that European publics' perceptions of welfare recipients' deservingness follow a relatively stable “rank order”: there is a hierarchy of social groups who are on average seen to be “more” or “less” deserving to benefit from public solidarity (van Oorschot 2000; Laenen/Meuleman 2017; Roosma et al. 2017; Meuleman et al. 2020). The underlying logic of who stands where on the ladder of deservingness has been explained by five “deservingness criteria”, summarized by v. Oorschot (2000) in the “CARIN”-model. These are:

- (1) *Control*: to what degree is a recipient themselves responsible for being in a situation of need – as opposed to, are the reasons outside their control?
- (2) *Attitude*: does a recipient comply with the rules of the community of solidarity?
- (3) *Reciprocity*: what has a recipient themselves contributed to the community of solidarity?
- (4) *Identity*: does a recipient “belong” to the community?
- (5) *Need*: how severe is the recipient's situation of need?

European average publics' perception of which types of welfare recipients are *relatively speaking* more or less deserving have been shown to neatly and consistently correspond to these five criteria. *Pensioners* – the elderly who have contributed to the community during all of their life by means of their work and their social contribution payments (*reciprocity*), and whose situation of “ageing” will occur to everyone (*control*) – are consistently seen as the most deserving recipient group by average publics, followed by those who are *sick* and hence unable to work for a reason that is out of their control, too. *Unemployed persons* tend to be seen as more deserving when the reason for their occupational inactivity is considered to lie outside their sphere of influence, and as less deserving when unemployment is considered to be their own fault or choice. *Immigrants* who are not in employment tend to be seen as the least deserving group of all: they have no track record of contribution in their current country of residence whatsoever; and in addition, they do not “belong” to the in-group (*identity*, s. Reeskens/van der Meer 2019).

I have proposed to understand the three main deservingness criteria of *reciprocity*, *control*, and *attitude* as elements of a *productivist moral order* which drives visions of the welfare state and of the political economy in growth-oriented societies (s. ch. 2.3; 3.2 & ch. 5). The criteria of “reciprocity” (everyone is called upon to productively contribute), “control” (it is okay not to contribute if you cannot for reasons beyond your control), and “attitude” (you should at least make the impression that you are making an effort to productively contribute) correspond very well to the notion of *productivism* elaborated i.a. by Giddens (1994: 175 ff.) and discussed in ch. 2.3; 3.2 & ch. 5. My proposition is to understand productivism both as a *regime of social integration* and as an *order of moral justification* typically found in growth-oriented societies. In this regime, the fact that most people “productively” contribute enables solidarity with those who cannot contribute (even if making an “honest effort”). The social norms which carry this system, and which are being referred to when people invoke deservingness criteria as “moral justifications”, are notably being enforced and dispersed by the institutions of the welfare state themselves, who practice them on a daily basis (s. e.g. Mau 2003; Hansen 2019; Bolton et al. 2022). As an effect, citizens learn about the social “access” norms to welfare solidarity notably when they make “policy experiences” themselves, i.e. when they make personal lived experiences with the policies or institutions of the welfare state (s. below).

Further, I propose that while the relative rank order of deservingness is rather stable, the *steepness* of the ladder of deservingness can considerably vary in the eyes of sub-publics, alongside with the *salience* of the welfare deservingness issue overall. This variance is inherently linked to the tripartite typology of moral visions of the advanced capitalist political economy presented in ch. 3.2 & 5. I have shown that interviewees with a “moderate-productivist” socio-political outlook tend to agree with the productivist welfare deservingness criteria (“everyone should contribute”) – but do not attribute much salience to the issue (ch. 5.2). On the contrary, “producerist and welfare chauvinist” interviewees use *the same* productivist deservingness criteria to argue very *exclusivist* views notably towards those *at the bottom of the ladder* and attribute high salience to this issue (ch. 5.3). “Post-productivist” interviewees yet differ: they resort to explicitly *challenging* the productivist vision of the political economy and the productivist welfare deservingness criteria. Arguing that more than enough value is circulating in the political economy, they articulate *universalist* views on welfare access (ch. 5.4).²⁶⁰

²⁶⁰ S. evidence presented by Laenen/Meulemann (2017) that in every country there is a group of varying size which holds “universalist” views of welfare deservingness.

In agreement with these findings, I expect moderate-productivist interviewees to confirm the mainstream “rank order” of deservingness (the elderly are most deserving, then follow the sick, then the “native” unemployed, then immigrants who are not in employment) – but to be moderate in their interpretation of this issue, agreeing that all these groups should have some type of access to public solidarity. I expect producerist and welfare chauvinist interviewees to engage in a practice of “kicking down” on the ladder of deservingness: while supporting their own category’s entitlements to welfare inclusion, they take an even more exclusivist stance against the entitlements of all those who would generally be seen as “less deserving” than themselves. For example, a (prospective) pensioner in this category could complain that the unemployed get too much money; and an unemployed person could complain that immigrants have welfare access. This comes down to a de-solidarization between different groups of welfare recipients. On the contrary, I expect post-productivist interviewees to favor a “flat” ladder of welfare deservingness, in which there are little or no hierarchical differences in who is entitled to what.

This said, I expect interviewees’ own experiences with welfare policy and welfare state institutions to have an important effect on their formation of attitudes on others’ welfare deservingness – and on their socio-political outlook overall. Namely, I expect that those who in effect of stable, fulltime employment relations (“labor market insiders”, s. Emmenegger et al. 2012) dispose of full welfare entitlements to form moderate-productivist views of welfare deservingness. This is because they learn these welfare access norms (deservingness criteria) during their own welfare experiences, take them for granted, and hence also apply them to others **P3a** “*learning*”).

On the contrary, there are interviewees who themselves make experiences of injustice, of misrecognition and exclusion with welfare policies. This is often the case because they are “labor market outsiders” (s. *ibid*): in effect of interrupted or part-time employment trajectories, they have limited welfare entitlements; or they find themselves in a situation of unemployment at all. I expect these interviewees to turn either towards the categorical challenging of the given system of welfare access and deservingness justification based on post-productivist views (**H3b** “*categorical challenging*”). Or, I expect them to turn towards “conflict externalization”, i.e. to the blaming of recipient groups who are even weaker than themselves – while leaving the “productivist” deservingness order itself unquestioned (**H3c** “*kicking down*”).

Finally, there are interviewees who have made particularly strong experiences of “welfare inclusion”, f.ex. being unemployed but finding a job again thanks to very visible support from

the Employment office. In reaction, I expect these interviewees to form particularly solidaristic attitudes towards other recipient groups as well, leading to moderate or even universalist views (**H4d** “*re-inclusion and solidarization*”).

I expect *welfare experiences* to have a considerable effect on socio-political outlook overall, because welfare solidarity acts as an essential channel of social inclusion, complementary to employment, for a large part of the population of modern welfare states (s. ch. 2.2; 3.3.2; Esping-Andersen 1990). The welfare state – via its various dispositives such as retirement insurance, unemployment insurance, social minimum security, and yet public health and education systems, public housing (support), etc. – is an important source of material security; which in turn is a basis for social participation. In the case of *active* social policies such as labor market re-insertion policies, the welfare state is even very directly occupied with enabling social participation (s. Bonoli 2010).

Most importantly, the welfare state is a prominent locus of negotiation of societal inclusion/exclusion norms: more often than not, the *access criteria* (*deservingness* criteria) which citizens need to fulfill in order to receive a public retirement pension, unemployment benefits, and so on, are at the same time the criteria they need to fulfill in order to stay in their social position rather than losing it. This is because most citizens do not dispose of alternative sources of material income that are comparable in height, once they are not in paid employment. This means that when the policies and institutions of the welfare state *harshen* the access norms to public welfare solidarity, this is likely to increase the amount of social *exclusion experiences* made by citizens or residents of the given country – what I would expect to lead to the formation of more “radical” socio-political outlooks among these individuals (s. ch. 3.1, *mechanism 1*). In addition, a change in the way welfare state institutions argue welfare access is going to shift (e.g. harshen/ relax or change categorically) the moral justification order of social membership generally. Like any model of social integration, the social norms that regulate welfare access come with ascriptions of rights and obligations (to contribute, to make an effort, etc.) to *social roles* (s. ch. 2): the role of the retiree, of the unemployed person (“job searcher”), of the person who is institutionally recognized as unable to work, etc. If individuals experience their given situation not to correspond to the norms, based on which welfare institutions are judging them, this is prone to lead to experiences of misrecognition, injustice, and exclusion. As these experiences are being made with *the state*, i.e. with the central societal intermediary institution between the rights and obligations of social groups and types, these experiences can easily shape perceptions of whether society overall is a just – or an unjust – place.

While in reaction, some may categorically challenge the norms used by the state, we need to consider that the state acts as a huge dissemination mechanism of norms in society (it is indeed a core function of the state to enforce norms in society). Norms and moral justifications (e.g. deservingness criteria) disseminated by state institutions are likely to sediment in society. This is one of the reasons why I expect a good number of individuals to voice their dissent with given welfare access norms rather by asking for exceptions for their own category (and de-solidarizing from others) – than by categorically challenging the entire system of welfare deservingness norms.

Another factor of influence, naturally, is political supply. Populist-radical right-wing parties are dispersing a “welfare chauvinist” discourse in the general public, promoting the demand to *exclude* immigrants from the national welfare system. Alternative left-wing actors are dispersing “post-productivist” ideas on welfare access (a. ch. 3.4). At least theoretically, both of these “radical” discourses have a propensity to resonate more with those who feel “misrecognized”, treated “injustly”, “let down” by the welfare state – than with those who experience everything to be in order about their old-age security and health plan. However, I expect the PRRP-discourse (producerism, welfare chauvinism) to resonate more with those who are embedded in a marginalized *and* materialistically oriented milieu (manual work, small business); while I expect post-productivist discourses to resonate those who are embedded in a milieu of post-materialist and humanist orientations (education, arts, health sectors) (ch. 3.2, *mechanism 2*).

In ch. 2.2 & 3.3.2, I have argued that welfare state reforms since the 1980s may have led to a structural shift of *welfare experiences* notably among the blue-collar working class. This counts mostly for reforms of public retirement insurance and of labor market policy. It is a long-standing insight that advanced capitalist welfare politics take place in a context of “permanent austerity” (Pierson 1994; 2001): the total amount of budgetary spending is held limited due to the perception that further expansion of the state budget is fiscally unsustainable. It has often been suggested that this situation is prone to produce *zero-sum conflicts*: as overall spending is constrained, conflict shifts towards questions on which groups *deserve to be treated with priority* (Häusermann 2010; Enggist 2019; Bremer/Bürgisser 2021).²⁶¹

²⁶¹ The precise mechanisms that link this shift in welfare policy making to the formation of salient “exclusivist” or “inclusivist” deservingness-attitudes in the population, however, are still underexplored: a gap that my propositions P3a-d address.

Until the 1980s, European welfare states were largely configured to provide consumption-oriented welfare benefits (such as retirement pensions or unemployment insurance payments, s. Esping-Andersen 1990; Häusermann 2010; Beramendi et al. 2015), which overall speaking, were tailored to the needs of male labor market insider workers. Since the 1980s/90s, on the contrary, the politics of European welfare states have been marked by the effort to adapt existing generous but “passive”, consumption-oriented policies to a changing political economy and social structure (Esping-Andersen 2002; Häusermann 2010; Beramendi et al. 2015). The welfare politics of advanced capitalism have followed the perception that European welfare states face demographic and fiscal pressures, which limit the overall amount of public spending and the overall generosity of the welfare state (Pierson 2001). In numerous cases, this has resulted in outright welfare *cuts*, i.e. in reforms that have decreased the generosity of an existing welfare program (Pierson 1994; 2001). Potentially even more importantly, however, the debate has shifted from the generosity of “passive”, consumption-oriented benefits, to a new subject: the *activation* of welfare recipients (Soss/Schram 2007; Bonoli 2010; Barbier/Ludwig-Mayerhofer 2004; Saunders 2005; Immervoll 2012). *Activity*, in this sense, is equal to participation in the labor market, i.e., to employment. In ageing societies with structural unemployment, welfare policy has started to emphasize measures aiming to make individuals work longer, to keep them in employment consistently, and to move unemployed persons back into employment.²⁶²

This said, we can distinguish two fundamentally different methods, two policy logics, that are being used to meet the goal of activation (Bonoli 2010: 439²⁶³; Barbier/Ludwig-Mayerhofer 2004; Taylor-Gooby 2004; Torfing 1999; Knotz 2012). On the one hand, welfare policies can come with *conditionalities* in the form of *obligations*, necessitating the recipient to “activate”. If obligations are not met, recipients face *sanctions* such as the non-payment of unemployment benefits or deductions from their retirement benefit²⁶⁴ (Dwyer 2019; Dwyer et al 2022). On the other hand, welfare policies can provide *resources* that *enable* recipients to activate (or to stay active into their old-age) by increasing their chances on the labor market or by actively helping

²⁶² Besides the shift to a logic of “activation”, the recent decades have seen other major developments in welfare policy such as notably, a focus on “new social risks” faced e.g. by women, young people, and the atypically employed, as opposed to the “old social risks” faced by male insider workers (s. i.a. Esping-Andersen 2002; Morel et al 2012; Beramendi et al. 2015).

²⁶³ Bonoli (2010) has made the influential argument that not only two, but four types of active labor market policies (ALMPs) must be distinguished. In order to undertake a global distinction of policy feedback effects, however, I restrain myself to the very basic dimension of “obligations and sanctions” vs. “enabling resources” in this paper.

²⁶⁴ On the categorization of pension-policies as „activation-oriented” policies, s. below.

them into employment, an approach called *social investment* (Esping-Andersen 2002; Morel et al 2012; Hemerijck 2013; 2019).

These reforms are likely to have had a more negative impact on the blue-collar working class than on other social groups. The generous consumption-oriented welfare state of the industrial capitalist era was designed for the needs of (male) manual workers who start their careers early and prefer to retire early for reasons including the difficulty to work in physical jobs once age leads to health restrictions. In addition, manual workers are at higher risk of becoming unemployed than many other occupational groups (Rovny/Rovny 2017, which is why activation- and sanctions- oriented labor market policy may affect them more than others. Last but not least, there is evidence that the working-class profits less from the often education-, upskilling-, and human capital-related resources provided by social investment policies than the middle class (Cantillon/Van Lancker 2013).

In the following section, I will provide a brief overview of types of labor market and retirement pension reform policies – and of how I expect these to be associated with welfare inclusion or exclusion experiences among labor market insiders and outsiders.

Associating Labor Market and Pension Policy Reforms with Recipients' Welfare Experiences

Pension policy reforms of the recent decades have generally supported the goal of “activating” the population, i.e. of incentivizing individuals to stay in employment as consistently as possible during their career – and to work ever longer into their old age (s. Gilbert 2005: 3; 16ff.; Mann 2007; van Dyk 2015; or for an example, OECD 2018). The means by which pension policies do so rather consistently fall within the above-elaborated categories of “cuts” and of “conditionality”. *Raises in the legal pension age* require individuals to work longer into their old age. Regulations that foresee “*deductions*” from the replacement rate of a “*full pension*” for missing contribution years incentivize consistent employment trajectories – by means, namely, of sanctioning missing contribution years. So do *increases in the minimum number of contribution years* required to receive a “full pension”. Apart from this, some European countries have started to reform generous public (typically “*pay-as-you-go*”) retirement systems into *multi-pillar-systems* that rely on public pension insurance next to private insurance and yet other dispositives (such as occupational pensions). In effect, such reforms include cuts

of the public scheme, and most typically, of the *replacement rate*.²⁶⁵ Last but not least, increases in the *calculation period* of a prospective retiree’s average gross salary that will serve as the basis of the calculation of the pension benefit de facto amount to a cut (f.ex., in Austria, the calculation period is being increased from the best 26 years to an average of 40 years by 2028, s. ch.4).

| Policy (reform) measure | Classification |
|---|------------------------------|
| Increase in legal retirement age | Welfare cut / conditionality |
| Deductions from “full pension” for missing contribution years | Welfare conditionality |
| Increases of required number of contribution years | Welfare cut / conditionality |
| Increase in calculation period of pension benefit | Welfare cut / conditionality |
| Decrease in replacement rate | Welfare cut |

Tab. 35.: Activation-oriented pension policy: a matter of cuts and conditionality

In labor market policy, a major shift of the recent decades has been the shift from “passive” to “active” labor market policy (“ALMP”; s. Bonoli 2010; Barbier/Ludwig-Mayerhofer 2004; Saunders 2005; Immervoll 2012; Martin 2014). It consists in measures that aim to not only provide consumption-oriented benefits to the unemployed, but in addition to actively help them – or incentivize them – to stay in or to get back into employment. Since the 1990s, “active” labor market policies have become so widely used that they can indeed count as the norm in most European welfare states. From the beginning on, the two above-described, fundamentally different ways to achieve “activation” have played a role in ALMP. “Enabling resources” in labor market policy include the offer of training and requalification (“upskilling”, Bonoli 2010:441) as well as counseling and placement services (“employment assistance”, *ibid*) for job seekers. In broader sense, they include job subsidies and job creation in the public sector (*ibid*). “Obligations” typically include the requirement to actively apply for jobs, to accept job offers, and to participate in training and counseling when offered (rendering the “enabling resource” an obligation at the same time). “Sanctions” typically include the loss of unemployment insurance benefits, either for a certain time period or altogether. This type of sanction can be of existential material significance for unemployed persons. All of these

²⁶⁵ The pension replacement rate is the percentage to which a retiree’s former labor income is replaced by the pension benefit. It is typically calculated as the average gross salary over a defined period (e.g. France 2022: 42 years) is the basis of calculation. The 2020 average replacement rate in Germany is 53%; in Austria 80% (!).

measures are typically administered by employment offices such as *Agentur für Arbeit* in Germany, *Arbeitsmarktservice (AMS)* in Austria or *Pole Emploi* in France.

| Policy (reform) measure | Classification |
|---|-----------------------|
| Training / requalification | Social investment |
| Counseling | Social investment |
| Requirement to write applications | Conditionality |
| Requirement to accept jobs | Conditionality |
| Requirement to participate in training/counseling | Conditionality |
| Non-payment of benefit if failure to meet obligations | Sanction |

Tab. 36: Activation-oriented labor market policy: a mixture of conditionality and social investment

When it comes to training/upskilling, counseling and placement services offered to jobseekers, several dimensions of the quality of these services must be taken into account, which are hard to disentangle in quantitative data on labor market policy. Firstly, there is the degree to which personal situation and preferences of the job seeker are being taken into account (and to which they own an “efficacy” within the dispositive). Secondly, the substantive value of the resources must be considered: how long, intensive, and personalized are training or counseling measures? Does upskilling lead to regular educative degrees? This leads to thirdly, what is the value (notably of training certificates) on the labor market? Last but not least, when placement services are being offered: what is the *quality* of the jobs on offer (in terms of pay, work conditions, and social relations at the workplace)?²⁶⁶

As said above, I expect these policy reforms to lead to different welfare experiences among labor market insiders and labor market outsiders. (In addition, I expect the reforms to concern the (blue-collar) working-class more than the educated middle-class, s. above.) Individuals with stable employment trajectories, no unemployment experience, and jobs covered by collective contracts that provide them comprehensive access to generous welfare entitlements (*labor market insiders*, s. Emmenegger et al. 2012) can easily avoid making negative experiences with advanced capitalist pension and labor market policy regimes. Firstly, as they (per definition) do not experience unemployment, they avoid personal experiences with activation- and sanction-oriented labor market policies. Secondly, as they accumulate a “full” contribution record, they avoid frustrations with pension policy. Labor market insiders are likely to experience that an activation-oriented welfare policy regime works (for them). In return, I argue that they are likely

²⁶⁶ For a detailed account of pension policy and labor market policy in Austria and Germany, s. ch. 4.

to expect from others to comply with the *deservingness norms* which they learn during their own experiences with this welfare system and (as said) which work out well for them (**P3a learning**).

On the contrary, *labor market outsiders* are individuals with interrupted employment trajectories, periods of unemployment, who work part-time or whose jobs are not covered by contracts that provide them full access to welfare entitlements (s. *ibid*). I expect this group to concentrate salient, and notably negative, experiences with labor market and pension policies. Concerning pension policy, labor market outsiders are those who receive “deductions” for not disposing of a full contribution record. Concerning labor market policy, labor market outsiders are those who actually depend on what the employment office has on offer for them: be it enabling resources – or obligations and sanctions. If labor market outsiders “succeed” (to find a job again, to accumulate a pension benefit they can decently live off during their old age) under a harsh, obligations-and-sanctions oriented policy regime, they are likely to learn with even more salience deservingness norms that emphasize “individual responsibility” (see ch. 5.4) and to mirror the same exclusivist norms onto others (**P3c**). If they “succeed” due to support by enabling resources provided by the public, they may on the contrary make salient “inclusion experiences” and in reaction form more inclusivist attitudes towards others, too (**P3b**).

| Labor market status | Policy type | Policy success | Salience of policy experience | Type of policy experience |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| Labor market insider | Enabling resources | - | Low | Inclusion |
| | Obligations & sanctions | - | Low | Inclusion & learning of deservingness criteria |
| Labor market outsider | Enabling resources | Yes | High | Re-Inclusion |
| | | No | Low | Exclusion |
| | Obligations & sanctions | Yes | High | Misrecognition & learning of deservingness criteria |
| | | No | High | Exclusion & misrecognition |

Tab. 37: Expected policy experiences as a function of labor market status and approaches to “activation” in labor market and pension policy.

As said, I expect “welfare exclusion” to matter relatively speaking more for the (blue-collar) working class than for the middle class, as workers’ social position depends more on the “old”, consumption-oriented type of welfare policy (s. above).

Findings

In order to test the propositions P3a-d, I try to identify links between *policy experiences* and *deservingness attitudes* in the dataset of interviews. I do so by focusing on two elements. This is (1) cognitive links *explicitly* established by interviewees between their own welfare experiences and their attitudes towards others’ entitlements. It is (2) cognitive links *implicitly* visible between the two by the use of the same *deservingness criteria* to interpret both issues.

In the given dataset I find consistent evidence for the mechanism of “kicking down” (P3c). Many policy recipients who themselves make experiences of *exclusion* or *misrecognition* with labor market or pension policies tend to justify their own deservingness (to be included, to be treated better) by blaming (even) weaker groups in the sense of “exclude them – rather than me”. In so doing, they apply the same deservingness norms that the state (hurtfully) applies to them to those who stand below themselves on the “ladder” of deservingness.

The “exclusion” and “misrecognition” experiences that are associated to these behaviors can be rather clearly classified. All of them share similar characteristics: *urgent problem pressure* (high stakes) meets perceived *misrecognition* of one’s needs and capacities by the state as well as a perception of *double standards*: the official goals and justifications of the policy do not seem to correspond to its effects on the ground. Among unemployed workers’ experiences with the employment office, this includes being forced to write numerous applications without hope of success (but under threat of sanctions) and being forced to participate in training when expecting it will not increase labor market chances and/or not having had a say in the choice of direction of training. Among prospective retirees, it includes suffering deductions from one’s pension benefit when feeling that one is not responsible for missed contribution years, but rather, unemployment has incurred due to termination by the last employer, unviable conditions at the last workplace, labor market situation, or health status. Finally, among both groups, perceived misrecognition of health status by public institutions (employment office, pension insurance, health/ social insurance authorities) that affects labor market status counts among these experiences. While pressures external to the welfare state (labor market, employers) play a big role, most of these experiences are attributable to welfare reforms or reform processes of the recent decades that can be categorized as “cuts” or, even more so, as “conditionalities”.

These create systematic conflicts notably for workers who are *labor market outsiders* (Emmenegger et al. 2012).

There naturally is heterogeneity among reactions to this type of welfare policy experience. While “kicking down” is the most common reaction among the manual workers in the data set, some interviewees react inversely by *challenging* the norms enacted by the state and proposing *categorically* different norms, including solidaristic and universalistic visions of welfare access (P3b). Interviewees who do so, however, typically have access to political, cultural, or educative spheres, in which alternative visions of welfare circulate. Motions of “challenging” of interviewees who do not dispose of such ideational resources are mainly limited to spontaneous and particularistic demands of an *exception from the rule*, while the general validity of rigorous deservingness-norms and their application to “weaker” groups are *not* being questioned.

On the other side, I find mixed evidence for the mechanism of *solidarization* (P3d, the mirroring of experienced *re-inclusion* in inclusive attitudes) in so far as it applies only to a very small number of cases in the data set. In these cases, however, highly “visible” experiences of social inclusion enabled by social investment-oriented welfare policies go with decidedly inclusivist welfare attitudes, and links between the two are being explicitly established by interviewees.

Findings are highly similar for Austria and Germany with a notable exception: Austria has a retirement regulation aimed at (labor market insider) manual workers that enables them to retire by 60 (after a reform of the policy, by 62, s. ch.4). In Germany, the legal retirement age is 65 (and after a reform, 67). Those blue-collar workers in Germany who are still working or supposed to work aged 60+, but whose capacity to do so is impeded by health issues (which is frequently the case in the manual worker category), typically react resentfully towards institutional elites and at the same time with exclusivist attitudes (de-solidarization) *towards social outgroups*. Those Austrian interviewees who are in the same age and health situation, but profit from the policy regulation, on the contrary, show more moderate political views.

In the following, I first present descriptive statistics on welfare experiences among interviewees. I then discuss the attitudes of labor market insider workers who experience “welfare inclusion”. Further, I discuss attitudinal reactions to “welfare exclusion” experiences. In the final section, I discuss attitudinal reactions to “re-inclusion” experiences enabled by social investment policies.

7.1 Descriptive Statistics

Among 75 manual worker interviewees, only those were chosen for the analysis pertaining to P3a-d who have narrated *both* welfare experiences and welfare policy preferences extensively enough to enable a meaningful analysis of the theorized mechanisms. This applies to 51 out of 75 interviewees.

| Interviewee's welfare experiences are overall | Total & per country | Labor market insiders / outsiders | Age, Gender | Welfare policy area |
|---|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|---|
| Positive | 4 Austria: 2 Germany: 2 | Insiders: 2 Outsiders: 2 | <35: 1 36-55: - 55<: 3 m: 4 f: - | Employment office +: 3 of these: Labor foundation: 1 Retirement insurance: 1 Health system: 3 |
| Negative | 23 Austria: 13 Germany: 10 | Insiders: 4 Outsiders: 19 | <35: 7 36-55: 4 55<: 12 m: 17 f: 6 | Retirement insurance: 13 Employment office +: 14 Minimum security: 3 Health/social insurance: 1 Disability status: 2 Childcare/parental support: 2 Elderly care: 1 Tax office: 3 |
| Neutral | 24 Austria: 13 Germany: 11 | Insiders: 24 Outsiders: - | <35: 9 36-55: 6 55<: 8 m: 23 f: - | Retirement insurance: 1 Employment office +: 2 Health system: 1 Elderly & disability care: 1 "Nothing in particular": 21 |

Tab 38. Descriptive statistics of welfare experiences among manual workers in dataset.
Total N of cases: 51.

7.2 Welfare Experiences and Deservingness Perceptions of Labor Market Insider Workers

As formulated in P3a, I expect insider workers to *learn* deservingness criteria notably from pension policy regulations and to *apply* these in their attitudes towards other welfare recipient groups. I expect this group to be likely to *accept* the deservingness norms encountered in welfare experiences, because fulfilling these criteria is rather easy for them: through their

consistent employment trajectories they avoid both conflicts with retirement insurance and any confrontation with labor market policies administered by the employment office. For the same reason, I expect the welfare experiences of insider workers to be rather low in *salience*: during these immediate policy encounters, the *stakes* of what can be won or lost are rather low, what can lead to a low *visibility* of the policy provisions themselves.

Empirically, I find three types of insider workers in the dataset of interviews. The first type corresponds rather well to the expectations of P3a. In addition to stable employment trajectories, most of these interviewees are subject to *workplace inclusion* (s. ch. 6). These interviewees hold *moderate-productivist* views of welfare deservingness, which do emphasize deservingness criteria, but are neither overly exclusivist, nor is the subjective salience (prioritization) of this policy issue very high. These interviewees regularly draw on their own experience with pension policy, which notably emphasizes the “reciprocity”-criterion of deservingness, when arguing their views. They typically apply these deservingness criteria similarly to retirees, to the unemployed, and to immigrants, drawing a hierarchy between these groups’ deservingness, but not emphasizing or politicizing any of these groups’ welfare access much more than the other.

A retired Austrian man (AT-40) who used to work as a construction tinsmith describes his retirement experience in the following way:

Researcher: So you have retired five years ago. How did this go. Did it work well for you?

Interviewee: It went smoothly. I have worked for 45 years. As a construction tinsmith, we fall under the “heavy worker” regulation. So, I could retire with 60. This was a small advantage. Well, I have worked my whole life, summer and winter. I’ve never been at home [unemployed]. In winter, too, on the roof, remove the snow and work goes on.

The interviewee refers to the deservingness criterion of “reciprocity” when justifying his right to early retirement with a “full” pension: he has been in employment consistently from age 15 to age 60. In addition, he emphasizes the hardship of his manual job as a justification for this entitlement. Both criteria are perfectly in the sense of the policy he has made an experience with.

A 67-years old German man (DE-23) who was lucky to keep his job after the post-socialist transition (*Wende*) and, hence, worked without interruption for all of his life as a machine operator in a paper factory, reports high satisfaction with the public retirement insurance. He

links this to emphasizing the deservingness criterion of reciprocity even more explicitly, establishing the connection with the generosity of the retirement benefit.

R: How do you perceive the public retirement system in Germany. Does it work for everyone?

I: So, yes I think it works well, I am also very content. I cannot complain at all, no, so ... Well, who has always worked, diligently ... If you have earned little, well you'll get little. If you have earned more, you get more.

Interviewees who make the experience that the welfare system works well for them personally can still challenge its logic for ideological or pragmatic considerations. In these cases, however, the motion of “challenging” typically is of low subjective salience. An Austrian electrician (AT-38), for example, explains to have benefited from what he calls a “candy” – a special regulation that allowed him to retire earlier. He is indeed speaking of the re-introduction of an Austrian pension regulation in autumn 2019 that allows insider workers with 45 full years of employment to retire with a “full pension” by the age of 62. He has accepted this offer gladly, even if he thinks the retirement age must be raised to keep the system fiscally sustainable.

I: I wanted to retire in October [2019, with deductions]. Then the government decided to give out a candy and I added two months [to fall within the regulation]. This has turned out conveniently that I receive a higher pension. It wasn't a problem, I had more than enough months of insurance, I have always worked since the age of 16. [...]

R: Do you understand that some people in Austria worry about their retirement pension?

I: Yes I do understand that, because the mass of pensioners grows ever larger. [...] Every 10 years life expectancy rises by 2,5 years. It's clear that the pension pot, the money that's in it, doesn't suffice. [...] One should have considered the age pyramid a long time ago in the pension system, and to adapt the height of benefits. It's always just candies. [...] I am in a lucky position, but those who will retire later, there will be problems. How this will be solved ... whew. I was glad about this candy, but honestly, from an economic point of view, this shouldn't exist. They should much earlier ... it would need ... a system that works for all. That everyone can live well, from the bottom to the top.

When interviewees of this type speak about the welfare deservingness of other recipient groups, namely about that of unemployed persons or of immigrants, they apply the same deservingness criteria and even cite their own experiences. Typically, this results in views that do refer to deservingness criteria, but rather in a moderate manner (as opposed to a radically exclusivist

one). When it comes to labor-market policies, interviewees of this group typically demand a mix of *both* enabling support and obligations- and sanctions-oriented measures; and they generally demand moderate work-incentives when speaking of welfare. (Interviewees do not always distinguish between unemployment benefits, minimum social aid, or the living allowance of refugees).²⁶⁷

The Austrian construction tinsmith (AT-40) who has been cited above exemplifies these “moderate” deservingness attitudes towards the unemployed, which inscribe into a “moderate-productivist” socio-political outlook:

R: So what should be done? [debate on unemployment]

I: Well [policy makers should] look, try, that everyone in Austria has work. Look into this. People, myself I know many, they don't want to work. [...] He tells me, you were a jerk to work for 45 years. Well I say, look ... [...] One needs to look that they find work. Or at least, when they don't want to work – cut the support. So you get people into work again. Two young people who are unemployed together have 2000 euros [monthly welfare benefit]. [...] One cannot let people starve. One needs to look that they get money. But he also needs to work.

His argument concentrates on the deservingness criterion of “reciprocity”, sided by those of “control” and “attitude” (“many don't want to work”); it oscillates between the demand to support the unemployed into employment and that to cut their benefits if they don't want to work; it singles out a less deserving recipient group (young people); and, crucially, it highlights his perception that as he has worked for full 45 years, others should activate, too.

The above-cited electrician (AT-38) extends the same deservingness logic to immigrants' welfare access.

R: Should people who immigrate to Austria have equal access to the welfare system?

I: The question is ... whether you work or not. when someone is unemployed, they don't contribute to the state. If it's not someone's fault ... well [...] the incentive for the unemployed shall be to get active, to do something for society. And for the migrant, equally. Of course, for them it's even more difficult, they need to learn the language. In any case, benefits without incentives aren't good. To give people money and leave them to themselves ... it's important to

²⁶⁷ Many interviewees automatically associate “immigrants” with “refugees”. When arguing that these should *work*, they generally do not take into account that in most cases, asylum-seekers do not have the right to immediate labor market access. (If such a right was given, political discourse might well turn to labor market chauvinism instead.)

link this to certain conditions. They should, well, do something. Money in exchange for no contribution, no effort ... I don't think that's good.

For all interviewees who apply the mainstream set of “deservingness criteria”, the big question about immigrants’ welfare access is whether they contribute to the system or not: do they work, pay social contributions, “contribute” in any other way? In addition, typically, an “immigrant penalty” (Reeskens/van der Meer 2019) based on the “identity”-criterion is applied: they don’t come from here, so their right to solidarity is decidedly lower than that of the “native” unemployed. The cited interviewee showcases very moderate views of immigrants’ welfare deservingness, in effect equating them to the (“native”) unemployed, so omitting the “identity” criterion.

A second type of “labor market insider” interviewees categorically put into question the deservingness-logic of welfare policies as it stands and argue for more universalist inclusivism, typically *vis-à-vis* all welfare recipient groups (sometimes sticking to the idea of a deservingness hierarchy, which here, however, comes as much “flatter”). These interviewees show an entirely different ideational background from those discussed above, namely they hold strongly humanist and/ or post-materialistic ideas, which mark much of their political views: in a word, they hold a “post-productivist” sociopolitical outlook. Their attitudes closely correspond to those of outsider workers with “universalist” convictions, several of whom are cited in the section below.

Finally, a number of labor market insider workers in the dataset are attributable to a third type, who holds salient exclusivist attitudes on welfare deservingness, which comes as part of a “producerist” and “welfare chauvinist” socio-political outlook. Several of these interviewees find themselves in situations of *workplace exclusion* (s. ch. 6). They make reference to particularly “tough” experiences they have made themselves in their work-life, arguing that they are required to make big efforts to consistently stay in employment, so they expect others (those who are less deserving than themselves) not to be “lazy” either (for an extensive discussion, s. ch. 6). Several interviewees in this group make it no secret that they support populist-radical right-wing politics (which distinguishes them from types 1 and 2). Their attitudes on the deservingness of the unemployed and of immigrants correspond rather well to those of interviewees who “kick down” (*deflect*), who are extensively cited in the section below.

7.3 Attitudinal Reactions to Deservingness Criteria in the Context of Exclusion Experiences

As formulated in propositions 3b and 3c, I expect that recipients who make hurtful experiences of *exclusion* and *misrecognition* with welfare policies will have a hard time accepting the deservingness norms on which these policies are based. Rather, they will perceive these norms to be *unjust*. This leads to two options: either they (categorically) challenge the existing deservingness norms, arguing that a different logic of welfare access and welfare provision should be established (P3b “categorical challenging”). Or, they merely find fault with the application of these deservingness norms to *themselves* and their own recipient category, not questioning the overall logic of rigorous deservingness norms. In this case they can tend to argue that in a “just” interpretation of the rigorous deservingness logic, instead of themselves, recipient groups with a respectively weaker standing on the “ladder” of deservingness should be excluded from welfare access, should see their entitlements cut or restricted (P3c “kicking down”).

Most of the interviewed workers who make personal experiences of exclusion, misrecognition, or injustice with retirement or labor market policies are labor market outsiders; while the remaining are German labor market insiders with low wages, who have a consistent, full-time employment trajectory but whose retirement benefit will be below poverty level due to the low replacement rate. Considerably many of these interviewees are women, many of whom have “atypical” employment trajectories.

In the sample, I find support for both hypotheses P3b and P3c, with particularly strong evidence for P3c (deflection/“kicking down”). About a third of all manual worker interviewees in the dataset are indeed attributable to a first type of “excluded” welfare recipients who *deflect* this experience by “kicking down” on those who stand below them on the ladder of deservingness, what goes with salient *welfare chauvinism*. A smaller number of working-class interviewees, on the contrary, correspond to a second type who categorically challenge the mainstream-logic of deservingness, typically by proposing more universalistic visions of welfare, which come with pronounced *post-productivist* arguments. In the given sample, I do not find “excluded” welfare recipients who hold “moderate” visions of welfare deservingness as many of the insider workers discussed in ch. 7.2 do.

Among the first type (interviewees who deflect/ “kick down”), a general logic of *downward* blame-shifting along the mainstream rank-order of deservingness is visible. This starts from those (German) insider-workers who have consistent full-time employment trajectories, but

earn small salaries that, given the low public pension replacement rate, result in a pension benefit below poverty levels.

Car mechanic (35-55; DE-08): The German retirement system is completely sick. It is paradoxical, if I read my pension sheet and [...] I read what I will receive as a pension, I honestly ask myself why I have worked for years. [...] I have never been unemployed, and in terms of the pension I will get (breathes out heavily), well, I will not starve, but that's it.

R: Why, do employment periods from the DDR count in a different way or what is the problem?

I: The general pension level is too low. We are at 48% [replacement rate]. [...] For what people have worked, they should in my opinion get something, but as said, the pension I will receive is something around 800 or 1000 euros. And those who didn't work get Hartz IV or basic security, they get their apartment paid, the heating and so on, which I have to pay from my pension, so we are actually equal [in resources]. And in fact, they laugh about me, "you have been stupid to work like crazy for 45 years." Why didn't I just say, "dear [employment] office, I cannot work, because today my left toe is hurting and the day after tomorrow my right one."

As it is visible, interviewees of this category tend to form an identity that emphasizes how "hard-working" they are, i.e., they identify with the deservingness criteria of reciprocity and attitude. In turn, they tend to blame the "lazy unemployed" who allegedly "do not want to work". They tend to generalize these perceptions, formulating them in a radically-exclusivist way, and to emphasize the salience of the issue.

Elderly workers who expect not to be able to work until the legal retirement age for physical or labor market reasons make similar experiences of injustice (DE-43: "*When I get my big sheet from time to time, where it says – retirement age 67, I sometimes think, they should send these people to a construction site just for a day, so they can see that you can't work in the building trade until you're 67.*"). They make similar arguments on deservingness, too (DE-42: "*those who are permanently unemployed, they lack an incentive to work. I receive money, my main worry is to have my beer and my cigarettes and then I'm at home, in addition I have five children...*" DE-43: "*...and they get child allowance. And the state pays the rent.*")²⁶⁸

The next-lower step on the "ladder" of deservingness is occupied by unemployed workers who have lost their job after many years of employment. They encounter a nexus of problems. This includes being forced to "actively" apply for jobs without much hope of success (but under

²⁶⁸ This group interview has been conducted with two German roofers, aged 55+ and <35.

threat of sanctions). It includes suffering deductions from one's pension benefit for the years of unemployment before legal retirement age. A 60-years-old man (AT-01) who worked in a printing plant for 28 years and then in a tube factory, for example, became unemployed a couple of years before retirement age.

I: Yes, the AMS [Austrian employment office]. I have written 100s of applications. One. One has sent back a read confirmation, and another one answered that the job was already taken. And everyone else – disappeared into thin air. Not even an answer. And then the people from AMS needle you [to appear regularly for meetings] ... so they can see that you're still alive, but nothing more. [...] This is solely a chicanery, nothing else. [...] They knew exactly that no one is going to take me anymore. [...] I have never taken sick leave, my entire life. The last two years I have learnt so much... to be honest, the whole treatment at the AMS ... I was unemployed for one year and then partially registered as sick for another year, you see (laughs) I needed to do that, so to get through the two years until I could apply for retirement.

For those interviewees who report health problems, yet another source of injustice (and deservingness-) perceptions adds up.

Cleaner (f, 35-55, AT-34): I am registered as "looking for a job" with the job center. But that's a problem. First of all, I'm going to turn 57. I am chronically ill. I should go for rehab every year. But the job center wants to get rid of me, as they need to pay me money. Now the woman at the job center told me to apply for invalidity pension due to the sickness. And for disability status. Well, now in January I was in Vienna for the disability card. Well, I didn't get it, as due to [the neurological disease] I do not have a physical disability. I got only 20% disability [status]. [...] So I, theoretically, need to look for work. Well. Now we are looking for a job with 15-20 hours, in [the local town], if possible. So far, they sent me one position, but when I called there, it was taken already. Well. So, I would like to work, but there is nothing to be found. [...] And, I mean, when you talk with the person there, the [case worker], is it ... somehow being accepted that realistically, you won't find a job, or does one still need to act as if ... you know [...] yes, one needs to appear very motivated to work and to look for a job. [...] So, I would like to work, but there is nothing to be found. And [...] probably even less, as enough are unemployed, who are physically fitter. [...] Why does one put sick people under such stress? And others, who are physically fit and young, there one doesn't care to put them into work. Because there are enough people who are at home, who say, no, I don't work, I anyway receive my money, I can live off that.

In reaction to these experiences, interviewees of this category tend to perceive that they have already contributed over many years – and point their finger at unemployed persons who are *young* or *long-term unemployed* and, hence, less “deserving” than them.

A particular position is occupied by female workers who expect to receive a retirement benefit below poverty levels for the reason of missing years of contribution, which were typically invested in unpaid care work and reproductive labor, and for the reason of atypical (part-time) employment. Counterintuitively, unpaid care-work is not represented in most “contribution”-based arguments in the sample, neither in arguments made by male nor by female workers (s. ch. 5). While many interviewees see “elderly women with poverty pensions” as deserving based on the criterion of “need”, they strike low on the mainstream ladder of deservingness when it comes to the “reciprocity”-criterion, which is overwhelmingly applied to paid work and social contribution payments. On their part, many female workers who are concerned by this problem *do* participate in the blaming of even less deserving groups, such as, of immigrants. A 61-year-old German woman (DE-52), for example, was employed as a skilled worker in a textile factory but became unemployed when the factory closed after the fall of socialism. From then on, she took care of her four children, one of whom has a disability. She only started working again in 2007, as a cleaner in a social work center run by a church. When this center started to cut jobs, she switched to a temporary employment agency.

R: How are you looking towards retirement?

I: Oh dear. I'm really worried about that. No, that ... I'll retire in four years, but at the moment it already looks ... like ... [pause].

R: How will you deal with it?

I: Well. That ... is questionable for the time being. I don't know, it's still written in the stars.

Being a single earner, she will have a hard time living on her minimum pension. She tells the story of her son, who has a disability and “sits at the employment office”. The state should create employment, she argues, and adds that “immigrants are given preference. You hear that all the time.”

Finally, long-term unemployed persons and young people with extensive periods of unemployment (who, hence, have not spend many years in employment altogether) make experiences of stigmatization and of social exclusion. These experiences relate both to state institutions and to their social situation more generally. Interviewees of this category cannot

claim ownership of the “reciprocity”-criterion: they are well aware that a long line of more “deserving” people blames them on this point. If they can justify identifying as “natives”, however, they can resort to blaming immigrants. Many interviewees in the sample do so, arguing a salient distinction of welfare deservingness based on the sole criterion of *identity*. This is for example showcased by an 18-years-old Austrian woman (AT-49), who was interviewed together with her partner and her father:

I: After I didn't finish [middle] school the last 2-3 years really went downhill. I am happy to have the chance of a job interview now. I'll need to get a hold of myself and show my best side. This is the first firm that really answers, in three years.

R: That's amazing. What type of job is it?

I: Office administrator. I had started to learn this occupation [as an apprentice]. For half a year, but I quit. I did not get along with these people, and they didn't with how I am, and then they quit me. [...] For a year now, I get some 180€ [per month in emergency aid ²⁶⁹], I cannot possibly live off this. [...] [At the employment office] they told me, when I was still 17: Miss [...], we don't have any opportunities for you, in plain language, you can only do unskilled jobs. Excuse me? I have lived 17 years of my life in Austria and this is what I hear?

The “identity”-criterion of deservingness runs like a red thread through her perceptions of society and politics:

I: I find it unfair, when foreigners, I'll say refugees, okay they have gone through a lot, but at the border they get a huge tent with food, drink and a bed. What about the homeless?

This may be among the more eccentric formulations of the welfare chauvinist argument found in the dataset. However, welfare chauvinism is indeed what *all* of the cited interviewees who “kick down” on each other can agree on. As everyone “kicks down” on the entirety of recipient groups who stand below them on the ladder, welfare chauvinism is the smallest common denominator. The above-cited Austrian woman who did not receive disability status (AT-34), for example, puts it the following way.

R: Should immigrants get equal access to the Austrian welfare system?

²⁶⁹ Austrian *emergency aid* (long-term unemployment aid, starting after) is over 90% of unemployment aid, which is 55% or more of the prior salary. The monthly salary of a 1st-year apprentice in office administration typically is above €600. Even if this calculation does not add up, the interviewee repeats the sum of €180 (“€6,15 daily”) several times. It is possible that alimentation payments she receives from her mother are deducted from her emergency aid-benefit. Furthermore, options to apply for social minimum assistance may be limited as she lives with her father, yet that benefit depends on household income.

I: No, I would say not. And I am not at all xenophobic, I would also like to say that. But they haven't paid anything into the system. They have not yet contributed anything to our state. Of course, they need something to live in, and to eat, ... that's ... that's clear, that's what they should have. But they would get it from me in kind and not in cash. That is the first thing. And of course, they need a bit of money, that's clear, but I wouldn't give them as much as we give to an unemployed person. So, I would make a difference. And I would make a difference whether this is really a refugee, or whether this is just a refugee, because he believes that we have a land of milk and honey. [...] And I really don't want to be hostile towards them. Because if someone comes who is really from a war zone, then we must help them, yes. But when I see on TV that there are, I don't know, thousands of young men standing in front of the border! Of working age! Instead of them staying in their country and looking to build up something, they come to us and say, where is my cell phone? Where is my house? Where is my money? [...] Honestly, they wouldn't get anything from me. (laughs)

The difference merely lies in which deservingness criteria are being applied: while those (“natives”) who can claim to have *contributed* to the system use both the criterion of *reciprocity* and that of *identity*, those who cannot make this claim confine themselves to invoking *identity* alone as the reason why *instead of themselves*, immigrants should be excluded from public solidarity.

There is a second type of interviewees, which consists of those who make exclusion-experiences themselves but react by *categorically challenging* the mainstream-logic of deservingness. Interviewees in this group are on average younger than the comparison group, and they dispose of some sources of access to universalist and/or humanist ideas. This is exemplified by a German worker in the domain of fire-safety, whose partner works in the education sector and currently studies for a university degree in pedagogy. Asked about the topic of retirement:

Educator (35-55, DE-62): "I'm not worried. ... We live in a country where everyone will be covered. I'm quite sure of that, and I'm not worried about it now. And whether I have contributed for so and so many years or so and so many years ..."

Fire protection worker (35-55, DE-59): "Yes, and for me it's like this [...] because of my unemployment and the fact that I've always worked in jobs where you don't earn very much; even here in the company it's not that good ... it's just a joke, I don't even think it's 800 euros. And I'm simply speculating that when I'm ready to retire, there will be basic income until then, and I won't have to rely on any additional security. With her it's just different, she earns well,

pays in well (E: I'm also in the public sector) and the supplementary pension also runs through the public sector ... yes ... you'd be stupid not to do that. In my case you could ... I could only take out private supplementary insurance ... and that wouldn't be worth it.

E: But we both tend not to be like, oh my God, what will the future bring ...

F: No. Well, I have more of an attitude that either the pension system will still be there by then and then it will be better than before. Or it simply won't exist at all, and then we'll have to see how it turns out anyway.

Asked about the issue of unemployment benefits, the couple is in favor of the introduction of an unconditional basic income - a measure that many of the other workers interviewed have never heard of and to which they are intuitively opposed. Here quite inversely: accusing the unemployed of laziness is "*the wrong approach*"; if everyone's livelihood is secured, one would also have "*the freedom to do what one really wants*" (DE-60).

Similarly, a young Austrian man (AT-24) who is long-term unemployed argues "universalistic" views of welfare deservingness. His experiences with a tough labor market and an activation-oriented welfare system are à priori similar to those narrated by interviewees above.

I: In the beginning it was rather annoying, because they sent me every open job [they had]. In total I've written 400 applications at home. Once, during one summer, I needed to send the same application twice to the same company, because the AMS said so. But well I did it cause otherwise they cut the money and then you sit in the street. [...] I've completed courses, because I didn't sit around and sleep for five years, but did a welding certificate. You need a certificate ... for each type of welding. I did it twice because once it expired [...] Every half a year you need to sign that you have done welding work. But in such occupations they look for people with experience. [...] Many have tried me and than fired me again, cause I am a beginner at welding. So after the trial month they laid me off again.

Differently from the earlier-cited interviewees, however, he reacts by questioning the reasonability of a universal duty to work. These ideas he takes from philosophers he listens to on Youtube:

I: Richard David Precht, for example, the philosopher. He is a strong defender of basic income. I haven't read any of his books, now, but came across him through the media. Why doesn't anyone listen to this guy? [...] Basic security may not be a stupid idea. Not for those who are already at the bottom. But for those who may be cushioned. Those who are at the bottom stay

at the bottom anyway, when they don't want to work they don't want to work. But who falls down, due to sickness, or the like [...] We'd need to free society from this stress. [With basic income] you can take it calmly ... let a sickness heal ... then they can still look for work.

The interviewee holds (very) inclusive attitudes towards welfare access of non-natives, too.

R: Should people who migrate to Austria have equal access to the welfare system?

I: Yes, so, why not. I see it this way – why indeed, when we look to get better ourselves, when we finally make Austria more stress-free, then people will look for work anyway. [...]

7.4 Attitudinal Reactions to Re-Inclusion Experiences

As formulated in hypothesis P3d, I expect welfare recipients who make salient and visible *(re)inclusion*-experiences due to policies that provide them enabling resources to “mirror” this experience in their perception of other recipient groups by arguing that they, too, should be more actively supported. I expect this logic of *active support* to lead to overall more solidaristic and inclusivist welfare attitudes through a reduced emphasis on deservingness-criteria and an increased emphasis on the finality of support and inclusion.

In the entire sample, only three interviewees report an overall experience with the welfare state that is dominantly marked by salient inclusion experiences in effect of “enabling resources”-oriented policies. All of them show reactions that correspond to the expectations of P3d.

A German man in his 30s (DE-73) was unemployed for five years. He had learned the trade of a chef but quit his prior job for the reason of bad workplace relations and labor law violations. His story about the employment office starts like many of those cited above.

I: When I was unemployed, I had such measures like application training where you went and the people already said, it's just that you do your time here. That they can make a tick here for the statistics. But it doesn't help you, anyway. The only thing that was really interesting, that brought me something, was, as I said, the three months in Spain. The internship abroad. That also went through the employment office. Through a branch office, BSW. But it came from the employment office. That was really interesting, because ... completely different culture, learn the language and then work there. [...] That was ... I found that quite good.

His experience indeed started similar to the reports of other interviewees. However, it took a substantial *positive* turn when he was granted a type of training that substantively engaged him. After the internship enabled by an organization close to the German employment office, he found work: not in the precise domain of training (landscape architecture), but in a field his

interest was raised for indirectly through the internship (outdoor sports and tourism). At the time of the interview, he had changed jobs and was employed with a temporary employment agency: during the summer in a quarry; over the winter in a factory. He reports overall satisfaction with this work, mainly with the fact of working outside, and with workplace relations.

The interviewee reports that the internship abroad has left a lasting impression on him, notably in terms of his ability to initiate communication with people who are different from himself. When asked about his views on unemployment policy, he demands the state should “*leave unemployment benefits as they are but do more to get people into companies [...] like that internship. Things like that, we need more.*” This amounts to a demand for well-targeted enabling resources.

Also on immigrants’ welfare access, he holds rather inclusive attitudes, not mentioning the “identity”-criterion of welfare access at all, and basically providing a textbook-quality outline of the other mainstream-deservingness criteria in a *moderate* tone:

R: ... it was a huge debate, if people immigrate to Germany now, should they have the same access to benefits from the state, from the welfare state, as a German citizen?

I: Well ... I'll put it this way, the welfare state is there. And if you don't have a job, then the welfare state steps in. However, you have to take care of yourself a bit. They always said, don't only give, but also encourage. That you also get back into work. Otherwise ... it's ... let's say ... laziness. If they don't do anything, well. If it's not possible, now, of course, for health reasons, then ... but that's what the welfare state is for. And so they can also help them, if they are here, then they have the claim.

A different yet similar story is that of an Austrian man in his 50s (AT-70) who had been employed for decades as a skilled worker in a steel producing enterprise. Priorly occupying a responsible position in product quality control, he quit after having suffered for years under negative relations with enterprise management. He tells an extensive story of short-sighted management decision, of liability he was personally carrying for the verification of products of declining quality, of mobbing, and of burn-out. Due to his decision to quit, he was unemployed for the first time in his life:

I: [Unemployment], this used to be something “bad” for me. As I had to go to the employment office [...] I would have liked to walk under the earth, because I was so ashamed.

This man's initial experience was, again, similar to the reports cited above: *"I have written to everyone who exists. Four have written back. The other ones have not even made an attempt to reply. As they had seen that I am 50, you are invisible."* However, he was entitled to support from a *labor foundation*. A labor foundation is a dispositive of labor market policy commonly funded by the state and by a large (here, industrial) enterprise. It serves to manage the social consequences of lay-offs and employment fluctuations. Employees who have worked with the enterprise for a certain number of years are entitled to funding for a re-qualification period of up to four years, during which they receive a part of their prior salary as long as they follow an education program. The given interviewee was granted funding for two years of training for the qualification of a medical masseur.

I: With 47 I quit; and I went into the [labor foundation]. I didn't know what I wanted to become. I wanted to be a masseur as I was younger, I was interested in this. And from the employment office, if you are unemployed, they didn't want to have me become masseur, because they thought I was too old [to undergo extensive re-training]. So I talked to the people in the labor foundation and they told me, I should do whatever I want to do. I am suitable for that. And I know that I am suitable for that. Now there are so many people who contact me, because they know I am good at it. First, I did the training of medical masseur in [city], when I was 47 years old, then the massage therapist and then the medical pool attendant. This has taken all in all 2 ½ years. I had a B once, apart from that only A-s. I really was super interested in this. This is all in Latin. My wife studied Latin with me then. We have done this together. I know for 100% that this is my profession. [...] Burnout – no problem anymore. [...]. I can sleep through the night. I am getting on very well with my wife. I am very well.

He now works in this new profession, of which he reports high satisfaction. He narrates how a general change of lifestyle and worldview has accompanied his occupational transformation; and he has kept a strongly positive impression of labor market policy. He vividly recommends that others should be allowed to profit from the same resources as he has: *"I am very much convinced that there are many people, who are not really happy in their job [...] and if you have the opportunity, this is one of the most important things, that you really have this opportunity to learn a new work [...]"*

The third interviewee with very visible inclusion effect is a German man of over 50 years of age (DE-77) who lost his job in a metals factory after the *Wende* and was unemployed with ups and downs for 20 years, topic that he is unwilling to speak much about. For a year, he has been employed in a publicly subsidized job, namely as janitor in a local kindergarten. He enjoys this

work and is in addition lucky to have a boss, a woman in her mid-30s (who holds pronouncedly universalistic attitudes), who invites him to activities with her friends and family in the local area, so that he has started integrating into her circle of friends. When speaking of policy, he praises this kind of opportunity and demands more “of this type” to be enabled by the state.

This small number of cases gives reason to hypothesize that in addition to *policy success* (effective labor market inclusion) the priorly theorized attitudinal effect of “inclusion experiences” may a lot depend on *what kind of job* recipients find. Strong effects may be related to successful integration into jobs that a) cause high subjective satisfaction notably due to the experience of a meaningful activity, b) put recipients in vivid contact, in sociability with other people who are c) open minded and hold inclusivist attitudes.

The dataset further features inclusion experiences of lower subjective salience, which come mixed with more dominant “neutral” or “negative” welfare experiences. An Austrian woman (AT-45) for example reports a very positive experience with a caseworker at the employment office, but next to a long history of suffering and injustice perceptions related to both her former employer and the health system. A German man (DE-01) reports working in a job that is publicly subsidized, into which he was helped by the employment office after having to close down his artisan company and becoming unemployed at the age of 50+. However, his experience is mainly marked by frustration about the loss of his company, and while both he himself and interviewees in his environment report that he has newly developed inclusive views of the “native” unemployed, he also seems to have started to strongly complain about immigrants’ right to welfare access.

Conclusion

In summary, the analysis of interviews lends support to propositions P3a-d. This said, among interviewed blue-collar workers, the mechanisms of “norm learning” (insider workers learn deservingness norms and apply them to others) and of “kicking down” (workers who make welfare exclusion experiences complain about less “deserving” groups’ welfare rights) are particularly recurrent. Workers categorically challenge the existing system of harsh, deservingness norms practiced by an activation-oriented welfare state if they have access to educative spheres in which alternative (post-productivist) visions of welfare circulate. They form more inclusivist views in effect of own *reinclusion experiences* if as a part of such experiences they reintegrate into *good jobs* with good *workplace relations*.

Chapter 8. Social Integration & Political Preference Formation in Socio-Cultural Spheres

In this chapter I present qualitative empirical findings on **propositions 4a-c**, pertaining to blue-collar workers' social integration and political preference formation in socio-cultural spheres. While this thesis emphasizes political effects of social integration via *employment* and *the state*, similar effects can derive from social role-relationships formed in a broad variety of meso-level spheres which, by conscious use of a residual umbrella term, I call "socio-cultural spheres". I here include social integration e.g. via the family, friends circles, associations, churches, unions, or yet aesthetic-cultural fields of interaction (e.g. engagement with music, literature, etc.). In addition, in this chapter, I discuss the attitudinal implications of active engagement in "political" organizations such as social movements or parties.

In chapter 3.3.3, I have theorized several effects of social integration via socio-cultural spheres. Firstly, I propose that integration into *educative cultural spheres* – in which individuals with higher education and notably socio-cultural occupations are overrepresented – can favor the formation of *post-productivist* views (**P4a "educative spheres"**). This is because I expect post-productivist views to circulate notably in occupation groups and sectors of economic activity that are concerned with re-productive, inter-personal, and non-materialistic activities such as education, health, social work or NGOs; and yet, with aesthetic activities, such as the arts (s. Giddens 1994: 175ff.; 182 ff; Kitschelt/Rehm 2014). Secondly, I propose that integration into socio-cultural institutions that participate in a society's dominant social order can favor the formation of a *moderate outlook* (**P4b "dominant socio-cultural institutions"**). Thirdly, on the contrary, if blue-collar workers experience integration into a socio-structurally speaking *homogenous milieu* via *popular cultural spheres* in which working- and lower-middle-class occupations are overrepresented, this can act as an echo chamber of materialistic views. Notably, the latter condition does not feature channels of integration into *dominant social order* other than via work and can, if there should be issues with societal integration via the economic sphere, find itself collectively marginalized (**P4c "homogenous milieu"**).

Based on the qualitative analysis of 150 interviews, I find pronounced support for proposition P4a. Close contact with socio-cultural professionals and "educative" cultural spheres in private life leads to more post-productivist views, even among manual workers. This, however, is the case only for a relatively small number of workers in the dataset. I further find global support for proposition P4b: engagement in institutions such as (large, established) unions and (established) churches, which participate in contemporary European society's dominant social order, leads to more moderate political views and in addition shows specific effects on political

issue attitudes and partisan preferences. Most interviewed workers, however, are not engaged in such institutions. Active political engagement in parties or social movements with a partisan orientation, rather unsurprisingly, comes with associated political views among interviewees in the dataset. This effect seems to overrule the effects of “social integration” and “exclusion” described in ch. 6 and 7. Moreover, socialization with “thick” political ideologies (e.g. far-right ideologies) equally shows persistent effects, independently of and different in quality from the effects of social integration or exclusion later in life. This said, all of this relates only to a small number of working-class interviewees in the dataset. In sum, I find strong support for proposition P4c. In socio-culturally homogenous (working-class) social milieus, tensions to the main channels of societal integration (employment and the state) show particularly pronounced effects on political preference formation. *Most* workers in the dataset experience socio-structural homogeneity via their family, friends, and associative activities, so that for most workers in the dataset, experiences of societal integration happen either via work and the state – *or not*.

In the following, I discuss these findings in detail.

Contact with Post-Productivist Ideas

I find consistent evidence that social integration into educative cultural spheres is associated with the formation of a post-productivist vision of the political economy. Moreover, this also seems to count for spheres of humanitarian engagement. In summary, occupations set in the education, health, social work, and arts sectors seem to come with such predispositions; and manual workers who closely integrate with such spheres of interaction or their proponents in their private life show a tendency to adapt such views, too. For example, a German family has been interviewed in which the mother (DE-62) is an educator by profession and studying for a master’s in pedagogy. Her husband (DE-59) is a manual worker in the domain of fire protection; her son (DE-60) is a carpenter; her father (DE-57) was a mining worker and her mother (DE-58) a secretary in a GDR industrial enterprise. As cited extensively in chapters 5 and 7, she, her husband and son all hold post-productivist views (support for universal basic income, the idea that people should “be free to decide” whether they want to work or not) which are explicitly nourished by narratives she brings in from her occupational work and workplace. An Austrian skilled worker in his 50s (AT- 50), who has made prolonged experiences of poor workplace relations and overwork in an industrial enterprise and now is unemployed, has also finished a university degree in music and in this way come in contact with the thought of the German student movement of the 1960s. When quitting his former job over a burnout, he has reoriented

towards the latter ideas, now supporting a fundamental social change towards a society where work does not “make people sick”. This would, also in his view, be enabled by a universal basic income (UBI) policy and by a general change in mentality. A young Austrian unemployed worker (AT-24) who listens to philosophers on Youtube states to know about the idea that UBI could replace a duty to work through this very channel. His views on unemployment policy and immigrants’ rights to welfare are highly inclusivist (“*if we would make Austria stress-free, people would look for work anyway*”). A unionist (AT-06) narrates that he has always loved reading educative literature in several languages. He is also the only unionist interviewed who puts in question productivist morals. The secretary whose boss had paid tickets for classical concerts and theater (DE-24) today is concerned about environmental policy and the far right.

Besides „educative spheres“, spheres of humanitarian engagement and of interpersonal work accompanied by a humanist thought seem to be associated with inclusivist attitudes – also among blue-collar workers who stand in proximity to such. The Austrian steel worker who retrained as a medical masseur (AT-70) holds views between moderate and inclusivist, and explicitly relates a personal value reorientation around questions of work to his occupational reorientation. While earlier he thought “*being unemployed is something bad*”, he now thinks that “*many are unhappy in their job*” and should be provided the opportunity to “*learn a new job that they actually like [... and] that [they]’re good at*”. When interviewing salespeople in a furniture store in Saxony, a cashier states that “of course” Germany needs to support “people in need”, by which she refers to refugees; she has “a lot of people in health professions in [her] family” [sic], this is “not a question”. Hans (Johann) Pichler, whose biography was presented extensively in ch. 6, has two daughters who work in health professions and a wife who is a socio-cultural professional. The most pressing political issue in his views is “the environment”. (This said, he maintains moderate-productivist views on most topics, what in ch. 6 I have explained by his lifelong experience of “workplace inclusion”.) There are two interviewees who have worked in NGOs (a chain of fair-trade shops) and who show post-productivist attitudes, speak about ecology, the rights of the Global South vis-à-vis the Global North, etc. (AT- 42; AT-51). The oil worker who was cited in ch. 5 and 6 (AT-13) was urged by his wife and daughters to look for a hobby after he retired early (at the point his workplace underwent a detrimental transformation). He took up a voluntary engagement in local care facility; today he spends one or two days each week helping out with patients, has taken up friendships in this context, and shows moderate-laborist attitudes with a humanist touch in some areas and (constructive) concern for the condition of the Austrian elderly care system.

International experiences and most importantly, an interest for languages and cultures rather unsurprisingly opens another channel for experiences that stand out as causal to inclusivist attitudes. The German quarry worker cited in ch. 5, 6, and 7 (DE-74) has been sent by the German employment office for an internship in Spain, which has been his first experience with foreign languages. He explicitly says that after this experience, he has become more open to speaking with new people, including across language barriers, what has led him to sharing videos with his Syrian colleague at work. This entire chain of experiences stands out as the only difference compared to other German/ Austrian workers in his situation and is hence likely to have caused his diverging views on migrants' welfare access: he is in favor. The young German carpenter (DE-60) who is on his way to Norway and interested in studying that country's language, equally, holds political preferences that reflect this world-openness.

Other interviewees with post-productivist views show engagement with ecological agriculture (AT-31) or with the esoteric scene (AT-42).

Most stunningly, there is weak but consistent evidence that engagement with *alternative rock music* is associated with the formation of progressive and socially inclusivist (albeit not necessarily post-productivist) views, also in the working-class. An Austrian steelworker (AT-69) has since his youth practiced the hobby of playing the electronic guitar. Playing in an amateur rock band and particularly enjoying progressive rock music, he narrates the visit of a Pink Floyd concert in Vienna before Covid: "*And then, above the stage, it said in flashing capital letters: FUCK DONALD TRUMP!*". He laughs, enjoys the joke, it is the punchline of our conversation. His political views are moderate with an inclusivist edge. It is well thinkable that progressive attitudes circulate in the alternative rock music scene – a cultural space much more accessible to the working class than "educative" cultural spheres.

Another German interviewee who is in his 50s (DE-77), manual worker but used to be long-term unemployed, spends most of his time travelling to rock concerts and festivals. He is "always on the road", next week is not good for an interview as he is "in Berlin, meeting friends for a concert." At his current workplace (he has for a year been employed as a janitor at a local kindergarten), i.a. this hobby has enabled him to make friends with his boss, who is a woman in her 30s who used to live in a kind of hippie commune (Dresdner Neustadt) and is now re-settling into (productivist) work life. Both hold inclusivist political views.

In many of these examples, the direction of causality (does engagement lead to the uptake of ideas or does social sorting happen based on priorly held ideological convictions) cannot be fully disentangled with the data at hand, which is much less detailed on socio-cultural

biographies than on occupational biographies and welfare state experiences. In any case, some plausible evidence on causal influence is apparent from the data on the influence of engagement in “educative spheres” and in “spheres of humanitarian engagement”.

Integration with Institutions that Participate in Dominant Social Order

There is consistent evidence in the dataset that engagement in labor unions and in certain types of churches is associated with specific ideological variants of “*moderate*” views.

All active labor unionists that were interviewed show moderate political views, and they are the only subgroup of manual workers who consistently support social democratic politics (AT-04 – AT-09; AT-18; AT-19; AT-66; AT-67; DE-56).²⁷⁰ All these interviewees are engaged in manufacturing sector unions with a proximity to center-left wing parties. (One German police unionist was interviewed at an earlier stage of research who is also a municipal council for AfD.)

Only few interviewees are active members of established Catholic or Protestant Churches. These, however, typically show moderate political views (DE-07; AT-27’s boss; AT-28); one of them even refers to Christian-social morals in the question about welfare access. In Austria and Germany, established Churches have in recent decades been known for an “inclusivist” positioning on the refugee policy issue (s. Ekd.de¹; Asylhilfe.katholisch.at¹). One interviewee is member of Jehova’s witnesses and complies with this community’s rules of not taking a positioning in political questions. This said, on social issues, she shows moderate views.

Virtually all interviewed manual workers, however, voice negative views of churches. Many declare having canceled their church membership for the reason of church tax.

Researcher: One last question, because you were talking about the church earlier. Are you religious in any way?

Young woman (AT-49): Nah...

Car mechanic (AT-48): I don't have any religious affiliation.

Truck driver (AT-47): I'm actually Christian. [...] But the church tax, that should be abolished. The church keeps earning, keeps earning, keeps earning, and doesn't give anything out. Why should I sell my faith just for them to earn something?

²⁷⁰ All but one unionists in the dataset are based in Austria. Besides them, one German interviewee who works in the public sector voices explicit support for SPD at the national level; and his former partner (who is a hairdresser) does so, too.

From these findings, I draw two conclusions. Firstly, and unsurprisingly, there is an ideological aspect of integration with socio-cultural institutions that strategically support certain ideological worldviews. Secondly, however, there may also be a social-integration effect to it: while members of established labor unions and of established churches do not (as apparent from the data) tend to support the same parties, both of them show *moderate* sociopolitical outlooks.

Active Political Engagement and “Thick” Political Ideologies

Engagement in parties or in social movements with a declared partisan orientation is, unsurprisingly, associated with according ideological views in the sample of interviews. The mechanism of “active political engagement” shows to *override* the social-integration mechanism: interviewees who should form “moderate” views based on the predictions of “social integration theory” (s. ch. 3, 6, 7), but e.g. hold a municipal council position with AfD or FPÖ, effectively show right-wing populist views including salient welfare chauvinism. One could reason about this so that these individuals draw a personal gain from strategically put on display this ideology (e.g. DE-63; interviews during earlier stages of field research, s. ch. 4; Wagner 2018).

Interviewees who were *socialized* into far-right ideologies early in their lives through family or friend circles equally seem to maintain certain attitudes independently of their personal situation of “integration” or “exclusion”. Interestingly, these individuals show less salient welfare chauvinism and generally less affective sociopolitical “resentment” than their “modernization loser” peers – but rather, consolidated ideological views.

For example, a German artisan enterprise owner who is a church member shows moderate political views and ticks many of the boxes of good “workplace relations” at his company, mentions that he always disagrees with one of his workers on certain political questions. Intrigued, I asked whether I could talk to the man, as in fact I need to document a diversity of views. The interview (DE-64) was extensive (4 hours), very friendly, included the consumption of several beers, a card game, and listening to music. After a while, the interviewee narrates about his political biography: he used to always vote for NPD (a small, extreme right-wing/Neo-Nazi party that used to be particularly successful in East Germany). He has recently “moderated” his views and now supports AfD. The interviewee is embedded in a tight-knit local milieu – during the interview I get to know much about their friend circle and family activities in the area. His father became unemployed after the Wende and stayed long-term unemployed. The most plausible explanation for where he has taken up these views during his youth is in his circle of friends.

Indeed, three interviewees confirm that in the 1990s and 2000s, extreme-right-wing subculture was spreading among the young in the area notably by means of *right-wing rock music (Rechtsrock)*. Extreme right-wing organizations are still considerably active in some areas of East Germany. A currently unemployed man from the area, who is in his 30s (DE-16), narrates:

Interviewee: Well, [...], where I come from. I'm not sure if you know it. (Researcher: Yes.) Back there, we had the "schoolyard-CD". There was a fence around the schoolyard to keep strangers out. They must have climbed over it and distributed music record with [extreme right-wing rock group] and stuff... Anti-Semitic content, and everything that goes with it. Yeah... then in our school class, there were some who were part of the right-wing scene. Actually, it was quite prevalent at our school back then, at the middle school. There were a few of them. And... in the area, there was the so-called 'SSS,' a group called 'Skinheads [...]'! They were into things like anti-Semitism, anti-left, anti-foreigner, and all that sort of stuff... it was all on their banner... about 100 to 150 members, quite strong and well-organized. They all went to fitness studios, were physically fit... inclined to violence... if they knew something was happening somewhere, they would march in. They had to be removed by police force. And then... at some point, they were banned, with the involvement of the constitutional protection agency, constitutional protection officers... and recently, there was... April 20th... I have a colleague who is somewhat connected to the scene... in the neighboring village, there was some kind of celebration... on April 20th... they had been drinking and then shouted a corresponding greeting loudly over the garden fence and raised a red cloth with a black spider on it... supposedly, it was 5 by 6 meters [in size]... well, they believe in it. And last Pentecost, they apparently had a celebration here too. In [...], near [...]. The police came. The first 20 police officers arrived. They wanted to clear things up but couldn't. They were pushed back. Then they called in a special commando, a special unit, and this and that, and on the second or third attempt, they managed to arrest 35 people. ...violence with batons and knives... someone went berserk. [It was] amplified in the media... there was a stabbing, and someone died.

The purpose of citing this is to showcase that active political engagement and “thick” ideological indoctrination are different mechanisms from the resentment-based blame-shifting described in chapters 5 – 7. While a large number of workers in the sample engage in resentment-based scapegoating, only very few are actively engaged in politics and very few hold a history of staunch ideological far-right views.

Moreover, most of the interviewees above 40 who hold “producerist and welfare chauvinist views” have not started to support PRRPs by primary political socialization in their family but

declare having à priori voted for other parties or not voted, while now supporting the respective views and (in numerous cases declaredly) PRRPs.

Socio-Culturally Homogenous Milieus

The large part of interviewed manual workers do not have much contact with socio-cultural occupations or “educative spheres”, are no union or church members, not engaged in political parties or social movements. Instead, many entertain tight and vivid family relations and friendship networks, often in the local (peri-urban, small town, or rural) area or with some proximity (e.g. 30 minutes drive). Common associative activities include the firefighter commando (notably in small towns) or soccer.²⁷¹ Hobbies further include outdoor sports like cycling, hiking, or motorcycling; handicrafts work around the house in the case notably of male workers, gardening (gender-neutral), barbecue. A good number of East Germans like to spend their holidays in Austria, and Austrians in Italy. Those (e.g. long term unemployed) interviewees who cannot afford holidays visit local pubs and do barbecue.²⁷² Some interviewees state they regularly visit popular music concerts, but mostly, in their respective local area. Via these channels of social integration, many workers have contact with a rather *homogenous milieu*, socio-structurally speaking: low- to mid-skilled occupations (manual worker, service worker, clerk) prevail and there is little contact with people from abroad or non-“native” ethnic groups. In the Austrian and German cases surveyed, this comes with the exception of contact with Eastern European migrants from the neighboring countries (Czechia, Poland, or the former Yugoslavian countries) who bring one characteristic that enables them, under circumstances, to integrate into “exclusivist” Western European communities of solidarity: they are white.

In such socio-structurally “homogenous” milieus, as experienced by the larger part of workers in the dataset, experiences of integration with common *societal* goals and values happen notably via two spheres: employment and the state. If these linkages stand under *tension* or *rupture*, his

²⁷¹ Interestingly, *social tension* associated to financialization also occurs in socio-cultural spheres. A working-class interviewee with a long-standing engagement in the regional amateur soccer league (AT-52) narrates how the field has transformed once large investors started to dominate the national league. Back in the day, players moved up from the regional into the (second, then first) national league. Nowadays, national-level clubs recruit young players directly through their academies, what leads to a “de-coupling” of the two systems: now, amateur and professional sports have nothing to do with each other anymore whatsoever. Moreover, he narrates how a certain amount of tax avoidance in the financials of amateur clubs was normal and even encouraged by politicians who acted as clubs’ mentor’s. He narrates how small and mid-sized amateur soccer clubs stand under a high amount of financial pressure; yet the tax authorities have started to conduct strict controls, as a pressure of which one person he knows, who committed their lives to amateur sports, went to jail and another one (not a personal acquaintance, but it is known in the field) committed suicide. This, of course, is a story of institutional ruptures that break divisions into society and of alienation experiences with large, dominant institutions, including the state.

²⁷² One long-term unemployed interviewee takes cheap flights to Thailand and jokes that Thailand is full of people who receive social benefits in Austria; what does not hinder him arguing loudly that immigrants abuse welfare.

produces collectively marginalized milieus with i.a. over-proportionally many blue-collar workers in them.

Diverging Status Orders

An interesting, even if not entirely surprising, phenomenon is that collectively marginalized milieus are by no means entirely deprived of resources. Rather, we are looking at a divergence of marginalized social orders – with their own logics of social organization, resource and status distribution – from contemporary society’s mainstream social order. This can result in a *mismatch* between *diverging* social status hierarchies.

For example, an interviewee (AT-01) is on the one hand unemployed; he lost a factory worker job, which he has been doing for some years, after losing his long-term (and subjectively preferred) job as a skilled worker at a printing plant. This means he is in a very low position in the dominant hierarchy of *occupational status*. On the other hand, he has been serving for years as the District Commander of the Volunteer Fire Brigade, featuring high status and social capital in *local area ties*. Literally all the small business owners who make exclusion experiences with dominant institutions are respected people in their local area (s. ch. 6.5) – but this status is not represented on society’s mainstream social status ladder.

Experienced, skilled manual workers, equally, still today, enjoy a certain social status in the above-mentioned homogenous milieu. As a result of socio-economic transformations, this has not evaporated into air – more rather, a rupture has built between a modernizing and shrinking “central bloc” of society (because modernizing in a non-socially-inclusive way) and, on the “right-hand side”, a nostalgic “producerist” bloc, which persists. Labor market demand for skilled manual work has in the late 2010s even risen in both Austria and Germany (Dornmayr/Riepl 2022). What are the political effects of being *economically* in demand but *socially* marginalized by mainstream society? Perhaps the articulation of a distinct, “radical”, political outlook.

Family Grievances and Political Preferences: a Middle-Class Phenomenon?

The interviewing strategy used during this thesis’ fieldwork has, primarily, aimed to identify sources of “problems” in interviewees own, personal, lives, as well as the way in which these problems politicize (s. ch. 4). A focus has been placed on experiences in the “socio-economic” domains of occupation, labor market, and the welfare state. This said, however, an effort has been made to also survey relations and (at least very urgent, pressing, apparent) “problems” in other major domains of interviewees’ lives, which of course include *the family*.

Interview data quality on family issues is not very high. Many methodological issues would need to be discussed: family issues are typically an “intimate” matter, about which many may not speak, but remain silent. One tendency, however, is very apparent in the dataset: many middle-class interviewees report pressing personal grievances in family relations, such as parent-child relations. On the contrary, very few working-class interviewees do so.

For example, a couple with a middle-class family background and is in a process of therapy extensively narrates about parent-child conflicts, conservative patriarch fathers, expectations, recognition, roles within the family system, and so on (AT-50 & 51). Several small business owners (notably those who also hold higher education) narrate about worries in partner relations and parent-child relations (AT-26; DE-33). An interviewee whose mother is a socio-cultural professional and his father a car salesperson, and the two are divorced, narrates how this situation creates pressures for him on several levels of life (AT-03). An insurance representative narrates extensively the ongoing separation and custody dispute with his partner (AT-58).

Barely any of 75 manual workers tell such stories. Many of them show family relations that actually seem very vivid, tight knit and consist in much contact. For example, I have easily been able to conduct several family (group-) interviews in working class families, including up to three generations of interviewees at a time, because they would have anyway spent time together. Others have children with several partners, various stepparents etc., with whom they get along better or worse. The “problems” in such situations, however, are (at least in interviewees’ narrations) more *economic* than psychological. For example, a (male) truck driver has one child with an ex-partner living with him, and another child living with another ex-partner (AT-33). He complains that the state does not support him more in this situation and that one of his ex-partners sometimes does not pay custody on time. Full stop. A hairdresser (DE-29) narrates under tears how bringing up a son as a single mother was hard economically. These are the two most apparent family grievance stories told by working-class interviewees.

The big differences apparent in the dataset between middle-class and working-class family relations include²⁷³: (a) The emotion of *shame* plays a much smaller role in working-class family relations. (b) Working-class men are present in the family much of the time and entertain proximate relations with its other members. (c) Status differences between family members are less pronounced. Age-hierarchies are respected, but people entertain stunningly easy-going

²⁷³ I confess to write this without much background knowledge in family sociology, i.e. as a purely empirical insight.

relations across age groups, e.g. speaking in the same way in front of elder family members as they would in front of people their age, and in an entirely natural way so.

From a very naïve perspective, there could be two explanations for why middle-class interviewees voice more family-related “grievances” than working-class interviewees. Firstly, it is thinkable that among the “educated” middle-classes, discourses thematizing family relations circulate in a much more prominent way. Such discourses may derive from the institution of *therapy* and all the literature therearound, which are dominantly middle-class phenomena (Sonnenmoser 2012). Middle-class interviewees may be conscious of and make visible problems that may lie “below the surface” in working-class narrations. This explanation does, however, not explain the structural differences described above (less shame, presence of men, less pronounced status differences).

Both the difference in family “grievance” narrations and these differences would be explained by a second proposition, which is: working-class family relations are less marked by ownership of, potential inheritance of, or competition with regard to economic capital and social status. The fact that less is at stake materially speaking may in fact remove social pressure from relationships.

Conclusion

In summary, while there is ample evidence that contact with “educative” and “humanitarian” socio-cultural spheres has an effect on working-class interviewees, rendering their views more moderate, inclusivist, and in some cases even, “post-productivist”, most blue-collar worker interviewees are embedded in a rather homogeneous milieu socio-structurally and socio-culturally speaking, in which the most important channels of integration into common *societal* goals and values lead through *employment* (school, enterprise organizations) and *the state*.

Chapter 9. Conclusion: Contributions, Limitations, Implications for Further Research

In this chapter, I provide answers to the research questions which were formulated in the Introduction. I summarize this thesis' contributions and highlight avenues for further research. Moreover, I discuss „spotlight findings“ and provide a normative interpretation of these thesis' findings.

9.1 Answering the Research Questions

In this section, I summarize this thesis findings, which have been presented in chapters 5 – 8, in the form of answers to the research questions which have been formulated in the Introduction (ch. 1). In the Introduction, I have formulated an overarching research question, namely, “What explains salient support for “welfare chauvinism” among advanced capitalist blue-collar workers?” In the light of a discussion of existing theories and evidence on working-class welfare chauvinism, this overarching question has been broken down into three specific research questions (RQ 1, 2, 3).

***RQ 1** Do grievances experienced by “losers of modernization” lead to the formation of “welfare chauvinist” views? If so, which types of grievances, where (in which areas of life) do they happen; what produces them and how are they being politicized?*

The findings presented in chapters 6 and 7 suggest that “grievances” experienced by “losers of modernization” are indeed a core factor behind working-class support for welfare chauvinism and populist right-wing politics more generally. The core grievance at stake for so-called “losers of modernization”, however, does not consist in “economic”, “cultural”, or even “status” loss, but in *social exclusion*, which is a distinct sociological mechanism. Moreover, I show evidence that contemporary blue-collar workers make experiences of social exclusion notably in two domains of the socio-economy that are of crucial importance to their integration into advanced capitalist society.

Firstly, permanent tension *at the workplace*, and notably *between management and employees* in enterprise organizations, can lead to the experience of exclusion from society's common order of goals and values – which otherwise employment is prone to enable. This effect occurs independently of pure “economic” factors such as income; and it occurs notably among those who are in stable, full-time employment: among so-called “labor market insiders” (Emmenegger et al. 2012).

Secondly, permanent tension in *citizens' relations with the welfare state* (in the form of experiences of insecurity, injustice, and misrecognition citizens make with welfare policies and institutions) can lead to a deeply seated sense of exclusion from membership in society. This can notably occur to those who are *not* in stable, full-time employment relations (or have not been during their active years) and in effect hold fragmented welfare entitlements: so-called “labor market outsiders” (Emmenegger et al. 2012).

Populist radical right-wing parties are specialized in addressing experiences of social exclusion more affectively than substantively (Salmela/von Scheve 2017) and in attributing blame on ideologically opportune targets. They notably put blame on those who are ostensibly *granted* social inclusion, while the modernization loser is ostensibly *being denied* it. “Those who do not work” (but receive things for free from the state) are an opportune target of blame for those who experience permanent tension at work. “Immigrants who receive welfare benefits” are an opportune target of blame for those who themselves feel let down by the welfare state. “Welfare chauvinism” serves as a smallest common denominator, as a unifying issue, of a coalition of socio-economic insiders and outsiders – both of which make experiences of societal exclusion – in support of PRRPs.

RQ 2 *What more generic vision(s) of the advanced capitalist political economy do advanced capitalist European blue-collar workers hold, of which “welfare chauvinism” is an element?*

The findings presented in chapter 5 suggest that blue-collar workers per socio-structural disposition are prone to hold “laborist” views, which consist in a valorization of work – both in the sense of paid employment and of laborious effort – as the central referent of a (moral) vision of the political economy. “Laborism”, however, comes in several ideological variants, aligning with three different ideological visions of the political economy that mark the advanced capitalist public. Among these is a “moderate” and a “post-productivist” vision. *Welfare chauvinism*, however, is an element of a third, namely of a “producerist and welfare chauvinist” vision of legitimacy relations in the advanced capitalist political economy. Welfare chauvinism serves as the smallest common denominator of a socio-economically extremely unequal, socio-structurally speaking “vertical” social coalition that is built on blame-shifting on the ever-weaker unit. Manual workers who are labor market insiders join this coalition through an attitudinal pattern that I have called “chauvinist laborism”, which consists in a (hurt) identity of being particularly hard-working and in blame-shifting on those who “do not work”. Manual workers who are labor market outsiders cannot claim that they make highly “productive” contributions through their work, but they can join this coalition by forming a nativist identity

and arguing that they should be seen as members of society, because there is an ostensibly even less “deserving” group: “immigrants who do not work”.

RQ 3 *What explains the seemingly “peculiar” socio-political cross-class coalition of small business owners, manual workers who are labor market insiders, and (manual workers who are) labor market outsiders, in support of welfare chauvinism and populist radical right-wing parties?*

The answer to RQ 2 provides an explanation of how the peculiar coalition of small capitalists, employed workers and unemployed (or precarious) workers come together on an *ideological* level. This said, the findings presented in ch. 6.5 provide an additional understanding of how this coalition is built in terms of *social integration*. Owner-led enterprises (such as small and family-owned firms) show to enable intact, even if hierarchical, social role-relationships between blue-collar workers and business owners – while these social types can be societally marginalized *together*. This phenomenon comes with two specifics. Firstly, business owners can under these conditions adopt a “charismatic” management style, which consists in a mixture of *authoritarian* and *caring* elements and shows the potential to appeal to workers notably under conditions where no other sources of solidarity are available. Secondly, workers can react to this with an attitudinal pattern I call “patronalism”, which consists in an idolization of “good bosses”, namely of charismatic strongman bosses who *care*. When the boss (rather than unions and worker organization, the state, politics, etc.) is the only actor who is perceived capable to *change* those conditions from which workers suffer (namely, poor workplace relations), then, however, the “social question” becomes a question of being lucky to end up with a “good” rather than with a “bad” patron.

Case Comparison

This thesis uses a comparative case study design to study the role of “grievance experiences” in the political preference formation of contemporary blue-collar workers. *À priori*, we would think that East German blue-collar workers (who in the recent decades have experienced severe deindustrialization, economic crises, and welfare reforms) are much more likely than Austrian blue-collar workers (who have experienced stable economic development and less far-reaching welfare reform) to accumulate socio-economic grievance experiences.

In fact, however, the findings are stunningly similar for both cases studied. The most important difference is that in the accounts of Austrian (labor market insider) workers, work conditions and workplace relations have deteriorated over an extended time-period, while in East German

accounts, the process has happened in an accelerated manner in the 1990s, with a more prominent experience of job loss. The outcome condition, however, is similar in both cases studied. Findings on political reactions to “workplace integration” and “workplace exclusion”, to “enterprise exclusion”, to “welfare inclusion” and “welfare exclusion” to not differ between the two cases – and in both cases, these mechanisms feature prominently among working-class interviewees. Moreover, workers in both countries show “laborist” views; evidence from both country’s shows a split of the public into three conflicting visions of the advanced capitalist political economy that essentially differ in their normative views on growth and productivity; and “patronalism” features as an independent channel of the formation of populist right-wing views in the working-class in both countries studied.

These findings suggest that not economic crises or relative differences in the degree of reforms, but essential parameters of the *advanced capitalist condition* itself create social exclusion experiences and an opportunity structure for populist right-wing mobilization. While a broad literature has discussed macro-level parameters of the advanced capitalist condition (e.g. liberalization, globalization, financialization of the economy, s. e.g. Baccaro/Pontusson/Blyth 2022), I argue that in fact it is *at the meso-level* that individuals experience and shape their views of the political economy. Two hitherto under-considered parameters of the advanced capitalist condition may be: (a) workplaces turn from channels of societal integration into loci of social alienation, and (b) the welfare state turns from a source of solidarity into a dispositive of “activation” and hence, of permanent tension on social membership, for a considerable part of society and most notably, for the working-class.

Is Immigration a “Grievance”?

The main research rationale of this thesis has been to trace *if* and *which* personal “grievance experiences” channel into populist blame attribution mechanisms (“politics of resentment”). Extensive evidence has been presented that social exclusion experiences at the workplace and with the welfare state do so (s. ch. 6 & 7). At the same time, *not a single* immediate, personal grievance experience with “immigrants”, “foreigners”, or “immigration” in any reasonable sense of the word has been documented in a dataset of 150 interviews. For sure, there are interviewees with right-wing populist views who cite media reports about immigrant criminality, show according Youtube videos during the interview, or know to tell stories that such cases have occurred in the local area (but never to themselves or their proximates).

The only phenomenon that comes close to immediate, personal negative experiences with “immigrants” occurs at workplaces with “managerialist” or “careless” management styles, at

which enterprise management treats migrant workers systematically different from “native” workers, hiring the latter mainly for the goal of suppressing wages and working conditions. Several interviewees end up blaming the outcome of deteriorating material and workplace conditions on the migrant workers (s. ch. 6). Equally in ch. 6, I have shown evidence that equal treatment of “ethnic” groups at the workplace enables positive social contact between these. These findings suggest that when looking into intergroup contact as a factor of preference formation, the *causal third*, namely institutions that enable contact or disrupt it, should receive attention.

9.2 Contributions

This thesis makes three main contributions. Firstly, it contributes further evidence and conceptual elaboration on why not "economic" or "cultural" losses, but a distinct sociological mechanism of *social exclusion* (Gidron/Hall 2019; Sachweh 2020) is a crucial issue at stake for so-called "losers of modernization" and their political preference formation. Secondly, it makes a theoretical and empirical contribution showing that *the workplace*, in the sense of the social relations around work, is an important site of political preference formation in contemporary societies, independently of more established “economic” variables such as income or employment contract types (s. Burawoy 1979; 1983; Lucas 2011; Soffia et al. 2022). Thirdly, it makes a theoretical and empirical contribution describing mechanisms via which *welfare state reforms* of the recent decades may have caused long-term *policy feedbacks* among the population, namely informing patterns of (de-)solidarization among European publics (Pierson 2001; Häusermann 2010; Enggist 2019; Bremer/Bürgisser 2021; Altreiter et al. 2019; 2022).

Moreover, this thesis makes several smaller and more generic contributions. It makes a methodological contribution, highlighting that *lived experiences* of the socio-economy and of politics are a fruitful object of inquiry for research both into socio-economic conditions and into political preference formation. In so doing, it adds to an emerging literature on *policy experiences* (Dupuy et al 2022; Verhaegen et al. 2021; Revillard 2018) as well as to the debate initiated by Hochschild (2016) on underlying “deep stories” in political preference formation (s. also Dörre 2019). It adds to an existing literature arguing that we should thematize social class relations in a differentiated manner (e.g. Beck/Westheuser 2022). Viewing social structure as *social role structure* (s. ch.2; s. Merton 1957) can be a fruitful way for political sociology to incorporate and operationalize existing literatures on “social contracts” (Rousseau 1974; Rhodes/Mény 1998), “moral economy” (Thompson 1971; Scott 1977; Mau 2003; Sachweh 2012; Sachweh et al. 2007; Koos/Sachweh 2019; Michel 2017), and more generally, theories

addressing the legitimacy of social order (Gramsci 1971; Mouffe 2005) in a way that does justice (a) to the meso-level, (b) to the entanglement of practical and normative elements of *social orders*, and (c), generally, to nuance.

Last but not least, this thesis is placed at the intersection of three large debates in the social sciences, to each of which it makes a tiny contribution. Firstly, it contributes to an existing literature which argues that *sociology* provides a treasure of insights into how political outcomes come about and that research on political phenomena should incorporate these (s. Hall/Lamont 2013). Secondly, it adds to a growing literature that shows how in-depth and explorative *qualitative methodologies* contribute to theoretically informed research and should be part of any serious research program in the social sciences (for the seminal contributions in the field, s. e.g. Cramer 2016; Hochschild 2016; Gest 2016; Dörre et al. 2020). Thirdly, it points attention to the problem that between the “micro”- and “macro”-levels of society, which receive most of the attention by research on politics, there is a *meso-level* that mediates between the prior two, with crucial implications for political preference formation. This thesis contributes a tiny puzzle piece to our understanding of how it does so.

9.3 Limitations and Avenues for Further Research

There are ample avenues for further research. The findings on political preference formation at the workplace should be further explored and corroborated (s. e.g. Palier/Wagner 2023). It should be explored whether the political effects of “workplace integration” and “workplace exclusion” are similar or differ between socio-structural categories and between countries. Moreover, quantitative or quasi-experimental tests of the causality of the effect should be conducted.

The theoretical propositions on welfare reform feedbacks, which this thesis formulates based on qualitative data, should be additionally tested by use of quantitative or quasi-experimental methodologies. In chapter 7, I show evidence of typical attitudinal *reactions* to welfare experiences that are associated with retirement pension cuts and with activation- and sanctions-oriented labor market policy. It should be tested, however, whether these types of welfare reforms are indeed causal to substantive shifts of attitudes, or respectively to shifts in the salience of attitudes, among affected recipient groups.²⁷⁴

²⁷⁴ My research proposal that aims to do so has been accepted for a two-years Max Weber Post doctoral Fellowship at the European University Institute, 1st September 2023 – 31st August 2025.

Furthermore, the interaction between socio-economic and *socio-cultural* channels of individual integration into society and their combined effects on political preference formation may prove to be a relevant area of inquiry (s. also Grunow/Sachweh et al. 2023). While this thesis, when speaking of social integration, focuses on firm and stable social roles held by individuals in the socio-economic sphere, it is evident that engagement both in socio-cultural and in properly speaking political institutions can create strong sentiments of social membership. To find out how a combination of these mechanisms can (re-)create democratic forms of socio-political integration in contemporary societies is a research agenda of the utmost importance for the sustainability of these (our) liberal democratic societies.

Notably, it should be explored how the mechanisms described by this thesis work out in different countries and different institutional regimes, of which most notably, welfare state regimes and party systems. The welfare states of Northern European countries are more egalitarian and less contribution-based than those of continental European countries: it should be tested whether the theory of “productivist” welfare deservingness rules holds under these conditions. Southern European countries feature strong radical left-wing parties, which may theoretically mobilize the “excluded” instead of or in parallel to PRRPs.

Last but not least, further work should be done on the resonance of partisan strategies, ideological and programmatic, among the advanced capitalist working- and lower-middle-classes. Much work on this topic has recently been done by Mosimann et al. (2019); Rennwald (2020), Abou-Chadi/Mitteregger/Mudde (2021), Häusermann/Abou-Chadi et al. (2021¹; 2021²) and Bremer/Rennwald (2023). Complementary to this work, it would be of interest whether a “laborist” ideological and programmatic strategy, as mirrored in the attitudes notably of politically *moderate* workers documented by this thesis, could help democratic (as opposed to populist and authoritarian) political actors to re-engage the working-class, which is often perceived as politically alienated, with democratic politics, so contributing to the resilience and sustainability of liberal democracies (s. also Wagner 2022).

9.4 Spotlight on Specific Findings

In this section I highlight several findings that seem of particular relevance to the public and political debate. Firstly, I delineate a specific type of social roles that “social tension” and “rupture” seems to create in core institutional settings of society. I argue that a type of actors emerges who try to individually make up for institutional rifts, at the same time aiming to keep institutions working and to secure their own position, often supporting this overwhelming condition by heavy attitudinal moralization. Secondly, I summarize various pathways the

experience of the “boomer” generation takes and argue for a more nuanced appreciation of the condition of elderly workers in the circumstances of activation-oriented societies.

Moral Performers in Times of Social Ruptures

In chapter 6, we have gotten to know situations in which societal institutions, which stand under massive pressure, are being held together by people who struggle and are running on fumes at the middle level. This is the case in industrial corporations (AT-67; DE-54; AT-06; AT-70; AT-50), in the public sector (DE-74; AT-59; AT-60), in the education system (DE-68), in welfare state institutions (AT-41), and in the domain of small enterprise (DE-32; DE-33; DE-04; AT-26; etc.). These individuals are committing themselves to fighting at the same time for their own jobs and for keeping upright the substantive, socially valuable, goals these institutions are originally designed to pursue (producing good-quality industrial products that are safe to be used in other industries, providing public services, education, welfare services, performing quality artisan work in a legal rather than illegal way). Attitudinally and politically, these interviewees tend into various directions: some of them tip into right-wing populist blame externalization; others undergo a value transformation to post-productivism and “exit” the productivist universe of motivations; yet others (usually those with strong institutional, e.g. unionist, embedding), show moderate attitudes that stand under a lot of pressure. They all, however, have two things in common. Firstly, they are overwhelmed. Secondly, they heavily *moralize* their condition.

We could call these people “moral performers”. Moral performers are individuals who in a situation of severe socio-institutional tension resort to (over-)dedicating to the core values of those institutions that threaten to rupture, trying in ostensibly heroic ways to hold disintegrating things together. It is clear that these individuals perform this moralization of their role and activity against the backdrop of personal insecurity: the claim of fighting for social value serves as a strong justification for defending their own job; perhaps for keeping a positive (even if heavily pressured) identity and a sense of social membership upright; and, very likely, as a source of perseverance in the face of socially adverse daily (work) realities.

This said, the moralization of performance is not a *pure* justification (in the sense of an *excuse*) either, and this is likely “where the dog is buried”. There is considerable substance to moral performers’ claim that institutions, in their areas of activity, rupture, become dysfunctional, and create social exclusion. Chapters 6 and 7 have clearly shown that there is considerable substance on which these (over-)moralized claims are based *at the root*, even if these claims end up being

channeled into very diverse political directions, including into entirely detrimental ones such as “conflict externalization” and scapegoating.

This gives us food for thought on “social integration” and “sociopolitical legitimacy”. Every institution, even in normal, not “pressured” or “tensed” conditions, likely produces individuals who internalize the institution’s values and show readiness to perform their functions i.a. for moral motivations (in a “moderate” case, this would likely come mixed with socio-economic and yet other motivations). To put it frankly: you want to have precisely these people, who are ready to act upon considerations about *social value*, involved in common societal targets – not rebelling against them. These are people who internalize the values of society’s common institutions and uphold them (Weber 1965 [1919]), acting as standard bearers. These are people who are ready to invest their life energy into common, social, goals and values; and who carry others along. When socio-economy puts these people into a situation that plainly resonates with the reductionist and misleading populist claim that “a corrupted elite” was in a conflict with “a virtuous people” – then our democracy has a problem.

How we might make sense of this is that keeping institutions together is *not* a task of single individuals, cannot be successfully completed by them; and we do *not* need individual heroes, but modes of collaboration that work. I have presented evidence that these, in return, result in moderate popular outlooks.

“Cut in Half” Biographies, Inner Retirement, and Activation Limbo in the Boomer Generation

As I have pointed out in chapter 6, the effects of social tension and rupture seem to occur in original and particularly pronounced manner among the so-called “boomer” generation (interviewees who in 2020 are 55-70 years of age). In Austria, (male) blue-collar workers of this generation typically show biographies that start with 30 years of employment at one enterprise, insider-ness to this enterprise’s social relations, workplace participation – and then, management style and workplace relations detrimentally transform.²⁷⁵ In East Germany, the same seems to have happened in fast-forward (for both male and female workers) in the years after the *Wende*. We can characterize several pathways of how boomer-generation interviewees

²⁷⁵ Some female Austrian blue-collar worker interviewees show similar biographies; more, however, show “atypical”, multiply interrupted and part-time occupational biographies: virtually *all* female workers interviewed are *labor market outsiders*. Considerably many of them find themselves in the condition which in this section I call “activation limbo” at the age of 55+: they have been laid off, don’t find a job anymore, but cannot retire yet. In this condition, they can either opt to fully rely on a male breadwinner husband (as their maternal generation has, s. Hochschild/Machung 1989) – or struggle their way through conditions that are socioeconomically even *much* more adverse than their male peers’.

deal with this situation, partly depending on individual choice, but much more prominently, on resources they access, and of how in these processes, they (re-)shape their sociopolitical views.

Some interviewees stay in their job, in conditions of workplace exclusion, for the sake of material security. They show a propensity to enter into a mental state that is best described as “inner retirement”. This is a specific form of “inner emigration”, of “quiet quitting”, that consists in concentration on the goal of retiring, in 2 years, in 5 years, in 10 years, which becomes a highly valorized goal under these conditions. Maybe we could go so far as to describe this as a form of “retirement escapism”. Instead of wasting your valuable, healthy lifetime on a socially invaluable job with adverse social conditions at the workplace, interviewees focus on the travels, holidays, family activities, hobbies, or local-area social engagements they will be able to take up once they have retired. Retirement appears as the salvation from suffering. Interviewees who find themselves in such conditions can tend to produce resentful sociopolitical views namely around the work-retirement nexus. They can form identities of being particularly hard-working and blame those who ostensibly “don’t want to work” (s. ch. 6). They can particularly over-emphasize their own deservingness to retirement, demanding it to be prioritized over the rights of less “deserving” welfare recipient groups, such as the unemployed or immigrants who do not work (s. ch. 7).²⁷⁶

Others quit their job (or are fired) and end up at a similarly detrimental workplace. The effects are similar.

A third group finds “better jobs” that come with a positive work relations experience *and* channels of integration into common societal goals and values. This is notably enabled by opportunities and a capacity to undergo upskilling or to requalify for interpersonal, socio-cultural types of work. These interviewees show considerably more moderate sociopolitical outlooks.

A fourth group finds jobs with a positive workplace experience, which are, however, set in a collectively marginalized milieu – typically of local-area small enterprises, which make experiences of societal alienation and articulate right-wing populist views *collectively*, starting from the owner themselves.

²⁷⁶ As shown in ch. 6 & 7, some interviewees in this group also undergo a “post-productivist” value transformation and resort to categorically challenging the productivist social order; however, this is most typically associated with contact with educative or humanitarian socio-cultural spheres (s. ch. 8).

A last, but considerably large, group of interviewees becomes unemployed at the age of 50+ and does not find a job anymore, both due to circumstances (enterprises do not hire workers over 50) and, perhaps, by a lack of motivation to re-integrate into a low-quality job offer, most importantly, in terms of work *relations*. These interviewees are not allowed to retire yet, sensibly lose in retirement entitlements, and, here's the catch, they need to comply with the regulations of an activation-oriented labor market policy to keep receiving unemployment benefits (on which their livelihood depends): they need to write "400 applications [...] know[ing] that nobody wants you", need to undergo training courses for certificates with a low value on the labor market in the choice of which they do not have an appropriate say, "to make a tick for the statistics. That's it" (s. ch. 7). In Austria, the unemployment level of men aged 60-65 was at 10-12% during the 2010s (AMS 2015), which is the highest unemployment quote of all age groups. Manual workers and the low-skilled more generally are highly overrepresented in this category. Most female Austrian blue-collar worker interviewees show "atypical", multiply interrupted and part-time occupational biographies: virtually *all* female workers interviewed are *labor market outsiders*. Considerably many of them find themselves in the very condition of "activation limbo" at the age of 55+: they have been laid off, don't find a job anymore, but cannot retire yet. In this condition, they can either opt to fully rely on a male breadwinner husband (as their maternal generation has, s. Hochschild/Machung 1989) – or struggle their way through activation-oriented labor market policy conditions, receiving low levels of welfare benefits that make them even *much* more prone to experience manifest poverty than their male peers. "Welfare chauvinism" is a vastly salient issue precisely among this group (s. ch. 7).

In summary, "activation-oriented" society seems to marginalize (i.a.) a group of elderly employed, who should be "active", but cannot or even better said, are not *enabled to*. This is unlikely to be an issue of the boomer generation only; but to reproduce for the following generations if not systematically changed.

9.5 Normative Interpretation

In this brief section, I offer a normative interpretation of this thesis' findings.

Democracy Needs Channels of Social Participation

It is often said that "democracy must defend itself" in the face of populist and authoritarian challenges. This proposition is certainly to be supported: liberal democracy needs to set (perhaps broad, but clear) limits to what is acceptable within democratic political competition,

and what is unacceptable (s. e.g. de Jonge 2019; Krause et al. 2023). It may be the case, however, that a consistent policing of *what is not OK* is not enough to render liberal democracy a sustainable socio-political regime. It may be the case that – hand in hand with the prior – democracy needs to perform a second type of action, namely: democracy must offer ample channels of social participation in the dominant, liberal-democratic, social order for broad popular majorities.

Social participation is not the same as political participation – but it may carry equally much, if not more, political weight. Political participation typically means to vote and beyond this, to engage politically, in political associations or debates, and so to publicly voice demands, views, and interests. Indeed, important socio-political issues are being negotiated by means of electoral politics and public engagement in contemporary liberal democracies.

This said, is it not evident that equally much, if not more, of the societal *negotiation of power, needs, and interests* happens outside of the nominally “political” sphere? It happens at workplaces and in work relations. It happens between citizens and state institutions. It happens in and between (non-“political”) associations.

The findings of this thesis suggest that when a society offers ample channels of participation; ample social roles in functional “bridging” institutional frameworks; and functioning ways of dealing with conflicts, this society’s dominant social order and institutional regime attain a sustainable level of legitimacy. Such a condition of a sustainable level of societal integration (s. Grunow/Sachweh et al. 2023) necessarily features political mechanisms properly speaking (s. below), but it manifests in manifold channels of social participation, in various areas of social life, and very certainly, in the sphere of the socio-economy.

Laborism: a Mode to Engage the Working Lower Middle Class in Democratic Politics?

While I argue that ultimately, stable, manifest, well-functional social roles in the socio-economic sphere are crucial for societal integration and democratic sustainability, it is true that politics properly speaking plays a pivotal role in enabling the (re-)building and maintenance of a regime that provides such. The role of politics in this comes down to two aspects: firstly, the realization of substantive policies; and secondly, the production of symbolic lead narratives that motivate and legitimize such collective action, that supply individuals on the ground ideas that carry a use-value: namely the use-value to make constructive sense of the everyday lived experience of their position and condition in society.

The socio-political condition of the working lower middle class is at the heart of this thesis. Labor market “insider” blue-collar workers are precisely part of such a social stratum: the low- to mid-skilled working population, which besides blue-collar workers also includes e.g. service workers, clerks, nurses, police officers, street-level bureaucrats. This very working lower middle class seems to be at the center of the populist revolt that keeps shaking contemporary liberal democracies (s. Kurer/Palier 2019; Kurer 2020; Antonucci et al 2017). Interestingly, this situation seems to be characterized so that the working lower middle is eternally “shrinking” in size but is not entirely disappearing. The substantive remaining group makes experiences of social marginalization (s. ch. 3, 6, 7, 8) and in effect turns against dominant social order in one way or another.

I have argued (s. ch. 3) and shown evidence (s. ch. 5) that *work* is a central referent of the working lower middle’s vision of the political economy. This is the case (so my interpretation) because work is the central channel via which this broad social stratum participates in society’s common goals and values. There may be few political narratives available, though, in contemporary liberal democratic societies, that provide an opportunity to make constructive political sense of this condition. There may be few *positive identity offers* for the working lower middle circulating in public sphere, dispersed by political supply-side actors. Rather, populist radical right-wing parties (PRRPs) spread their version of it: *chauvinist laborism*, which does not help the working lower middle to make constructive sense of their own condition, but merely channels their “exclusion experiences” (s. ch. 3 & 6) into detrimental and useless blaming of scapegoats (“negative”, inverse identities, s. Lucas 2011).

Moderate laborism would be a positive identity offer. It is a constructive way to make political sense of the condition of the contemporary working lower middle class (s. ch. 5; 5.2). Laborism consists, in essence, in a positive valorization of the experience of being mainly bound into society via one’s *work*. The homo laborans stands, hence, at the center of a moral vision of the political economy – without, if articulated in a “moderate” way, denying other forms of participation in society and the political economy; and without denying solidarity to those who do *not* work.

Could *moderate* political narratives ascribing value and providing recognition to *the working population*, voiced by political actors who stand firmly, with “both legs”, inside democracy, provide an ideational opportunity for the working lower middle to make sense of their condition within dominant social order – and within the liberal democratic regime; rather than in opposition to both of these? Could this be an approach that enables this group, which currently

finds itself societally marginalized, while not being economically poor, to be socio-politically *represented* – as a part of a diverse society; side by side with multiple other groups whose participation hinges on similar or different modes of integration, in multilateral respect and recognition?

Lead narratives are only one side of the coin; the other being substantive policies. What would a “laborist” policy program look like? This thesis has presented extensive findings on what pressing (socio-economic) issues are being faced by contemporary blue-collar workers. On this basis, we can say that: such a program would come with one main difference to what Häusermann/Abou-Chadi et al. (2021¹; 2021²) classify as an “old left” program. They classify as an “old-left” program (in distinction to new left; centrist left; and left-national programs)²⁷⁷ one that promotes *consumption-oriented* social policies alongside economic redistribution. A laborist program would, in addition, build on *work* as a central referent to guide and legitimize such policy elements. And this makes a crucial difference for both for social legitimacy and for social participation.

People do not want to merely *receive*. They want to *hold a stake*. The working lower middle is unequal to the poor. The poor exist, and their needs and interests need to be represented, too (s. below). But the working lower middle is not in the position of demanding charity. They want *reciprocity*.

A substantive “laborist” policy program would thematize *work conditions* and *workplace relations*. It would address *wage levels*, as the population needs to be able to live – well – of the income created by their work. It would feature public support for employment creation. It would address active ageing in a way that works, supporting the elderly at the workplace; and perhaps enlarging the notion of “activity” to non-“productive”, but socially valuable activities. It would address elderly care, alleviating those mid-aged people who work and cannot provide care to their elders at the same time (except that currently, they do; or women stay at home and do it instead of working, what renders them labor market outsiders and shrinks their welfare entitlements). It would address the situation of working parents who need free universal quality childcare. It would make heavy use of social investment into the young *and* into all those who need or want to switch occupation during their lives (s. ch. 7): in the dataset of interviews, most of those who were enabled to undergo substantive retraining leading to standard education degrees, as opposed to short-term training for certificates with little value on the labor market,

²⁷⁷ “Moderate Laborism”, as I conceive of it, is not by necessity bound to a party family or ideological camp.

managed to reintegrate into (quality) jobs. Last but not least, a laborist policy program would, instead of blaming those who “do not work”, make use of job guarantee policies in order to offer jobs to the unemployed (s. Kasy/Lehner 2023). This costs marginally more than paying out consumption-oriented welfare benefits and brings massive advantageous socioeconomic and sociopolitical effects.

Such a “laborist” policy program may, quite naturally, come with a fiscal cost. This cost, however, is likely to be much lower than that of permanent populist backlashes against public policy (let us briefly think of Covid, and of Climate policy); let alone that of democratic backsliding.

For sure, “laborism” comes with several achilles’ heels. A contemporary form of laborism must not, and cannot, be a mere copy of a past condition (that of the 1970s), but needs to live up to (negotiating the conflicts of) the present conditions, of advanced capitalism. I will briefly discuss three ostensible flaws of laborism, all of which can actually turn into strengths: two of these concern gender; and one concerns social class. (1) Historically, “laborism” has been associated with the representation of male breadwinners. This is not up to date. Since the 1960s, a mass entry of women into European labor markets has occurred. So – what about the *dignity of working women*? It would be a primary element to be represented by a contemporary form of laborism. (2) Laborism is associated with the representation of paid, but not unpaid work (s. ch. 5.5). Unpaid care work and reproductive labor, however, evidently is work (s. *ibid*). A contemporary version of laborism would need to integrate this fact into its universe of moral claims. (3) Last but not least, I have presented “laborism” as an ideological and programmatic articulation of the condition of the working lower middle-class (those who are low-to mid-skilled and in employment). What about the educated, urban, young, “new” middle-class? What about university graduates in social science (seriously), about artists, graphic designers, unpaid interns at international organizations; what about yoga-teachers; about struggling high school teachers; what about social workers? Aren’t these social types those who face even worse problems? The answer is more than evident: these social types, too, face problems related to *work*: its conditions, its meaning, and how it pays. A contemporary form of laborism should highlight the needs of the low- to mid-skilled (because they do not dispose of additional, cultural-capital-based modes of social participation), but definitely co-represent the work- and employment-related needs of the educated middle: so perhaps striking a bridge that is direly needed.

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Annex I: Definition of “Blue-Collar Worker” Based on Oesch (2006) 2-dimensional Occupational Class Scheme

The occupational class scheme proposed by Oesch (2006) distinguishes a hierarchical dimension of occupational class from a second dimension that captures four different work logics (technical, administrative, independent, and interpersonal). Skilled and unskilled manual workers (technical work logic) are distinguished from service workers (interpersonal work logic). This thesis treats as “blue-collar workers” (and synonymously “manual workers”) all those occupations that fall within the classes 7 and 8 in Oesch’s 16-classes scheme, respectively, into class IV in the 8-classes scheme (s. table 39). The Oesch (2006) class scheme is based on the ISCO-code. The table 40 provides a rough overview which ISCO-categories it attributes to which occupational class group.

16-Classes-Scheme

8-Classes- Scheme

| | | |
|--|--------------|---|
| 1 "Large employers" | I (1+2) | Self-employed professionals and large employers |
| 2 "Self-employed professionals" | | |
| 3 "Small business owners with employees" | II (3+4) | Small business owners |
| 4 "Small business owners without employees" | | |
| 5 "Technical experts" | III (5+6) | Technical (semi-)professionals |
| 6 "Technicians" | | |
| 7 "Skilled manual" | IV (7+8) | Production workers |
| 8 "Low-skilled manual" | | |
| 9 "Higher-grade managers and administrators" | V (9+10) | (Associate) managers |
| 10 "Lower-grade managers and administrators" | | |
| 11 "Skilled clerks" | VI (11+12) | Clerks |
| 12 "Unskilled clerks" | | |
| 13 "Socio-cultural professionals" | VII (13+14) | Socio-cultural (semi-)professionals |
| 14 "Socio-cultural semi-professionals" | | |
| 15 "Skilled service" | VIII (15+16) | Service workers |
| 16 "Low-skilled service". | | |

Tab. 39: Oesch (2006) 16-occupational-classes and 8-occupational-classes schemes

| ISCO 08 Code | Title EN | Oesch Class |
|--------------|--|-------------|
| 1 | Managers | 9 |
| 11 | Chief executives, senior officials and legislators | 9 |
| 12 | Administrative and commercial managers | 9 |
| 13 | Production and specialised services managers | 9 |
| 14 | Hospitality, retail and other services managers | 10 |
| 2 | Professionals | |

| | | |
|----|---|----|
| 21 | Science and engineering professionals | 5 |
| 22 | Health professionals | 13 |
| 23 | Teaching professionals | 13 |
| 24 | Business and administration professionals | 9 |
| 25 | Information and communications technology professionals | 5 |
| 26 | Legal, social and cultural professionals | 13 |
| 3 | Technicians and associate professionals | |
| 31 | Science and engineering associate professionals | 6 |
| 32 | Health associate professionals | 14 |
| 33 | Business and administration associate professionals | 10 |
| 34 | Legal, social, cultural and related associate professionals | 14 |
| 35 | Information and communications technicians | 6 |
| 4 | Clerical support workers | 11 |
| 41 | General and keyboard clerks | 11 |
| 42 | Customer services clerks | 11 |
| 43 | Numerical and material recording clerks | 11 |
| 44 | Other clerical support workers | 11 |
| 5 | Service and sales workers | 15 |
| 51 | Personal service workers | 15 |
| 52 | Sales workers | 15 |
| 53 | Personal care workers | 15 |
| 54 | Protective services workers | 15 |
| 6 | Skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers | 7 |
| 61 | Market-oriented skilled agricultural workers | 7 |
| 62 | Market-oriented skilled forestry, fishery and hunting workers | 7 |
| 63 | Subsistence farmers, fishers, hunters and gatherers | 7 |
| 7 | Craft and related trades workers | 7 |
| 71 | Building and related trades workers, excluding electricians | 7 |
| 72 | Metal, machinery and related trades workers | 7 |
| 73 | Handicraft and printing workers | 7 |
| 74 | Electrical and electronic trades workers | 7 |
| 75 | Food processing, wood working, garment and other craft and related trades workers | 7 |
| 8 | Plant and machine operators, and assemblers | 8 |
| 81 | Stationary plant and machine operators | 8 |
| 82 | Assemblers | 8 |
| 83 | Drivers and mobile plant operators | 8 |
| 9 | Elementary occupations | |
| 91 | Cleaners and helpers | 16 |
| 92 | Agricultural, forestry and fishery labourers | 8 |
| 93 | Labourers in mining, construction, manufacturing and transport | 8 |
| 94 | Food preparation assistants | 16 |
| 95 | Street and related sales and service workers | 16 |
| 96 | Refuse workers and other elementary workers | 8 |
| 01 | Commissioned armed forces officers | 9 |
| 02 | Non-commissioned armed forces officers | 10 |

Tab. 40: Oesch (2006) class scheme coding based on ISCO-08 code (approximate)

Annex II: Current vs. Life-Course Operationalization of Labor Market In-/Outsiderness

| | Current status | Life-course status |
|------------------------|---|---|
| Labor market insiders | Permanent contract AND Full-time employed | Full-time employed for the quasi-totality of their working-age employment trajectory if not (voluntarily) in education or training AND Expecting to stay in full-time employment until public retirement age EXCLUDING unemployment and/or (child)care periods of up to 12 months in total |
| Labor market outsiders | A-typical contract (e.g. part-time employed) OR Limited-term contract OR Unemployed | A-typical contract (e.g. part-time employed) during more than 12 months OR Involuntary changes of employment that led to lower-quality job in terms of pay, occupational status, and/or welfare entitlements OR Unemployed for more than 12 months OR (child)care periods of more than 12 months OR the realistic expectation to encounter any of these situations in the foreseeable future ²⁷⁸ |

Annex II: Current vs. life-course operationalization of labor market in-/outsiderness

²⁷⁸ By „realistic expectation“ I do not understand generalized sentiments of risk and threat, but concrete and manifest issues for which with high probability one will not keep one’s current job, such as: health problems that make (e.g.) manual work impossible or knowledge that the company will close.

Annex III: Overview of Interviews conducted for the PhD Thesis

| IV Number, Country | Gender, Age | Occupational class (Oesch-8) ²⁷⁹ | Occupation(s) | Labor market insider/ outsider, active/ retired | Socio-political outlook |
|--------------------|-------------|---|---|---|--|
| AT-01 | M 55< | MW (SB) | Printer, factory worker, Small wine farmer | Outsider Retired | Producerist/ welfare chauvinist |
| AT-02 | M 55< | MW | Assembler, Factory worker | Long-term unemployed | Producerist/ welfare chauvinist |
| AT-03 | M <35 | MW (SP) | Electrician, Waiter, Psychology student | Insider Student | Moderate productivist, Post-productivist |
| AT-04 | M <35 | MG | Labour Union Secretary | Insider | Moderate productivist |
| AT-05 | M 35-55 | MW | Works council member, unionist | Insider | Moderate productivist |
| AT-06 | M 55< | MW | Works council member, unionist | Insider, Retired | Moderate productivist, Post-productivist |
| AT-07 | M 35-55 | MW | Works council member, unionist | Insider | Moderate productivist |
| AT-08 | F 35-55 | MW | Works council member, unionist | Insider | Moderate productivist |
| AT-09 | M 55< | MW | Works council member, unionist | Insider | Moderate productivist |
| AT-10 | M 35-55 | MW | Works council member, unionist | Insider | Moderate productivist |
| AT-11 | M 35-55 | MW | Works council member, unionist | Insider | Moderate productivist |
| AT-12 | M 55< | MW | Works council member, unionist | Insider | Moderate productivist |
| AT-13 | M 55< | MW | Petrol industry worker | Insider, Retired | Moderate productivist |
| AT-14 | M <35 | MW | Electrician | Insider | Moderate productivist |
| AT-15 | M 35-55 | MW | Garbage truck driver, various prior occupations | Outsider (lifecourse), Now insider | Producerist/ welfare chauvinist |
| AT-16 | F 35-55 | MW | Janitor | Outsider | Moderate productivist |
| AT-17 | F 35-55 | SW | Salesperson | Insider | Producerist/ welfare chauvinist |
| AT-18 | M 35-55 | MW | Works council member, unionist | Insider | Moderate productivist |
| AT-19 | M 55< | MW | Works council member, unionist | Insider | Moderate productivist |
| AT-20 | M <35 | MW | Carpenter, unemployed | Outsider | Moderate productivist, |

²⁷⁹ Occupational class (Oesch 8 scheme, s. Annex I): LB: large business owner (>10 employees); SE: self-employed professional (without employees); SB: small business owner (<10 employees); TP: technical (semi-)professional; MW: (skilled or unskilled) manual worker; MG: (associate) manager; CL: clerk; SP: socio-cultural (semi-)professional; SW: (skilled or unskilled) service worker

| | | | | | |
|-------|------------|------------|--|--|---|
| | | | | | Post-productivist |
| AT-21 | M <35 | MW (SB) | Road worker, Small farmer | Insider | Moderate productivist |
| AT-22 | M 55< | MW | Road worker | Insider, Retired | Moderate productivist, Producerist/ welfare chauvinist |
| AT-23 | M <35 | MW | Construction worker | Insider | Producerist/ welfare chauvinist |
| AT-24 | M <35 | MW | Carpenter | Long-term unemployed | Post-productivist |
| AT-25 | M 55< | MW | Carpenter, Postman, unemployed | Outsider, Retired | Producerist/ welfare chauvinist |
| AT-26 | M 35-55 | SB, SP | Entrepreneur (electrics & construction), Life coach | Insider | Post-productivist |
| AT-27 | M 35-55 | MW | Plumber | Insider | Moderate productivist |
| AT-28 | F 55< | MG | Sales manager | Insider, Retired | Moderate productivist |
| AT-29 | M 35-55 | MW | Truck driver | Insider | Moderate productivist, Producerist/ welfare chauvinist |
| AT-30 | M 55< | MW | Mining worker, various occupations | Outsider | Moderate productivist |
| AT-31 | F 35-55 | MW, SB | Factory worker, Apiculturist | Outsider | Post-productivist |
| AT-32 | M 35-55 | MW, CL | Truck driver, dispatcher | Outsider (lifecourse), now insider | Producerist/ welfare chauvinist |
| AT-33 | M <35 | MW | Truck driver, various prior occupations | Outsider | Producerist/ welfare chauvinist |
| AT-34 | F 35-55 | MW | Cleaner, unemployed | Outsider | Producerist/ welfare chauvinist |
| AT-35 | F 55< | MW, TP | Tailor (master of trade) | Outsider | Moderate productivist |
| AT-36 | F 35-55 | MW | Production worker, various occupations, unemployed | Outsider | Producerist/ welfare chauvinist |
| AT-37 | F 35-55 | MW | Production worker, various occupations, unemployed | Outsider | Producerist/ welfare chauvinist |
| AT-38 | M 55< | MW | Electrician | Insider, Retired | Moderate productivist |
| AT-39 | M <35 | MW | Painter | Insider | Moderate productivist, Post-productivist |

| | | | | | |
|-------|------------|-----------|---|-------------------------|--|
| AT-40 | M 55< | MW | Construction tinsmith | Insider | Moderate productivist |
| AT-41 | M 55< | MG | Middle manager in public Sector | Insider, Retired | Moderate productivist, Post-productivist |
| AT-42 | F <35 | SW | Salesperson, various prior occupations | Outsider | Post-productivist |
| AT-43 | F <35 | MW | Cleaner, various occupations, unemployed | Outsider | Producerist/ welfare chauvinist |
| AT-44 | M <35 | MW | Unemployed, priorly tinsmith, welder, small entrepreneur | Outsider | Producerist/ welfare chauvinist |
| AT-45 | F 55< | MW | Production worker, various occupations | Outsider | Producerist/ welfare chauvinist |
| AT-46 | F 35-55 | CL | Secretary in legal services (including for red-light and informal business sectors) | Outsider | Producerist/ welfare chauvinist |
| AT-47 | M 35-55 | MW | Truck driver | Outsider | Producerist/ welfare chauvinist |
| AT-48 | M <35 | MW | Car mechanic | Insider | Producerist/ welfare chauvinist |
| AT-49 | F <35 | - | - | Long-term unemployed | Producerist/ welfare chauvinist |
| AT-50 | M 55< | MW | Industrial worker, former unionist, studied musical instrument, unemployed | Outsider | Post-Productivist |
| AT-51 | F 35-55 | SW, CL | Unemployed, various occupations | Outsider | Post-Productivist |
| AT-52 | M 55< | MW, SB | Carpenter, window salesman, small entrepreneur | Insider, Retired | Moderate productivist |
| AT-53 | F 55< | CL | Secretary in artisan enterprise | Insider | Producerist/ welfare chauvinist |
| AT-54 | M 55< | MW | Security at construction site, various occupations | Outsider | Producerist/ welfare chauvinist |
| AT-55 | M <35 | MG | Insurance broker | Insider | Moderate productivist |
| AT-56 | M <35 | MW, TP | Electrician, master craftsman | Insider | Moderate productivist |
| AT-57 | M 35-55 | MW | Glazier | Insider | Producerist/ welfare chauvinist |
| AT-58 | M 35-55 | MG | Insurance broker | Insider | Producerist/ welfare chauvinist |

| | | | | | |
|-------|------------|------------|---|-------------------|---|
| AT-59 | M 55< | CL | Dispatcher at public waste collection | Outsider, Retired | Moderate productivist |
| AT-60 | M 55< | CL, MG | Dispatcher at public waste collection, formerly manager | Outsider, Retired | Moderate productivist |
| AT-61 | F 35-55 | SP | Teacher at vocational training school | Insider | Moderate productivist |
| AT-62 | M 55< | MW, TP, SB | Master of multiple trades; small entrepreneur | Insider | Producerist/welfare chauvinist |
| AT-63 | M 35-55 | MW, TP | Welder, Teacher at vocational training school, unionist | Insider | Moderate productivist |
| AT-64 | M 55< | MW, TP | Welder, Teacher at vocational training school | Insider | Moderate productivist, Producerist/welfare chauvinist |
| AT-65 | F <35 | SP | Teacher at pre-vocational training school | Insider | Post-productivist |
| AT-66 | M 35-55 | MW | Works council member, unionist, railways worker | Insider | Moderate productivist |
| AT-67 | M 55< | MW, TP | Works council member, unionist, foreman | Insider | Moderate productivist |
| AT-68 | M <35 | MW | Welder | Insider | Moderate productivist |
| AT-69 | M 35-55 | MW | Steel worker | Insider | Moderate productivist |
| AT-70 | M 55< | MW, SP | Steel worker, medical masseur | Outsider | Moderate productivist, Post-productivist |

| IV Number, Country | Gender, Age | Occupational class (Oesch) | Occupation(s) | Labor market insider/ outsider, active/ retired | Socio-political outlook |
|---------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------------|--|--|---|
| DE-01 | M 55< | SB, MW, SW | Former artisan enterprise owner, car salesperson | Outsider | Producerist/welfare chauvinist |
| DE-02 | M 55< | SB | Artisan enterprise owner, craftsman | Insider, Retired | Moderate productivist |
| DE-03 | M Various | SB | Group interview four artisan enterprise owners | - | Moderate productivist |
| DE-04 | M 55< | LB | Artisan enterprise owner, craftsman | Insider | Moderate productivist, Producerist/welfare chauvinist |
| DE-05 | M 35-55 | MW, SW | Car mechanic, car salesperson | Insider | Moderate productivist |

| | | | | | |
|-------|------------|---------|--|------------------------------------|---|
| DE-06 | M 35-55 | SB | Artisan enterprise owner, craftsman | Insider | Moderate productivist |
| DE-07 | M 55< | SB | Car mechanic, owner of car repairs shop | Insider | Moderate productivist |
| DE-08 | M 35-55 | MW | Car mechanic | Insider | Producerist/welfare chauvinist |
| DE-09 | F 35-55 | CL | Secretary in car company | Insider | Producerist/welfare chauvinist |
| DE-10 | F < 35 | SP | Teacher | Insider | Producerist/welfare chauvinist |
| DE-11 | M < 35 | MW | Bricklayer | Insider | Producerist/welfare chauvinist |
| DE-12 | various | various | Group interview at an artisan small business owner's place | Various | various |
| DE-13 | F 55< | CL | Secretary in industrial GDR enterprise | Insider, Retired | Moderate productivist |
| DE-14 | F 55< | MW | Skilled worker in industrial GDR enterprise | Insider, Retired | Moderate productivist |
| DE-15 | F 55< | MW, SB | Tailor, small entrepreneur, unemployed | Outsider, Retired | Producerist/welfare chauvinist |
| DE-16 | M <35 | MW | Plumber, unemployed, real estate agent, warehouse worker | Outsider | Producerist/welfare chauvinist |
| DE-17 | M 35-55 | TP | Technician in car industry | Insider | Moderate productivist |
| DE-18 | M 45-55 | SB | Hairdresser, owner of shop | Insider | Producerist/welfare chauvinist |
| DE-19 | M <35 | MW | Construction worker | Insider | Moderate productivist |
| DE-20 | M 35-55 | SB | Locksmith, owner of locksmith firm | Insider | Moderate productivist |
| DE-21 | F 55< | CL | Secretary | Insider | Producerist/welfare chauvinist |
| DE-22 | M 55< | MW | CNC machine operator | Outsider (lifecourse), now insider | Moderate productivist |
| DE-23 | M 55< | MW | Machine operator | Insider, Retired | Producerist/welfare chauvinist |
| DE-24 | F 55< | CL | Secretary at artisan enterprise | Insider, Retired | Moderate productivist/Post-productivist |
| DE-25 | M 35-55 | SW | Personal driver | Insider | Moderate productivist |
| DE-26 | M 35-55 | MW, SB | Owner of bar, formerly manual worker, long-term unemployed | Outsider | Producerist/welfare chauvinist |

| | | | | | |
|-------|------------|--------|---|-------------------------------|---|
| DE-27 | F 35-55 | MG | Restaurant manager | Insider | Moderate productivist |
| DE-28 | F 35-55 | SW | Hairdresser | Insider | Moderate productivist |
| DE-29 | F 35-55 | SW | Hairdresser | Outsider | Moderate productivist |
| DE-30 | F 55< | SW | Hairdresser | Insider | Moderate productivist |
| DE-31 | M 55< | SB | Self-employed carpenter, supplier to the cardboard packaging industry | Insider | Moderate productivist |
| DE-32 | M 55< | SB | Master craftsman, small business owner | Insider | Producerist/welfare chauvinist |
| DE-33 | M 55< | SB | Plumber, small business owner | Insider | Moderate productivist, Post-productivist |
| DE-34 | M 55< | SP | Formerly international public service | Insider | Post-productivist |
| DE-35 | M 35-55 | LB | Owner of furniture store | Insider | Moderate productivist |
| DE-36 | M 35-55 | MW | Warehouse worker | Outsider | Moderate productivist |
| DE-37 | M 55< | MW | Assembler at scientific laboratory; Side-jobs besides retirement bec. benefit too low | Insider, Retired | Producerist/welfare chauvinist |
| DE-38 | F 55< | MW, SW | Skilled worker at GDR industrial enterprise; Postwoman (sidejob besides retirement) | Outsider, Retired | Moderate productivist, Producerist/welfare chauvinist |
| DE-39 | F 35-55 | MW | Warehouse worker | Outsider | Moderate productivist |
| DE-40 | M 35-55 | MW | Janitor, warehouse worker | Outsider | Producerist/welfare chauvinist |
| DE-41 | M 35-55 | SB | Plumber, electrician, small business owner | Insider | Moderate productivist |
| DE-42 | M <35 | MW | Roofer, carpenter | Outsider | Producerist/welfare chauvinist |
| DE-43 | M 55< | MW | Roofer | Outsider | Producerist/welfare chauvinist |
| DE-44 | M 35-55 | MW | Truck driver | Long-term unemployed | Producerist/welfare chauvinist |
| DE-45 | M 55< | MW | Janitor, barkeeper at social club | Long-term unemployed | Producerist/welfare chauvinist |
| DE-46 | M 55< | MW | Skilled worker in GDR industrial enterprise | Long-term unemployed, retired | Producerist/welfare chauvinist |

| | | | | | |
|-------|------------|----|--|---------------------------------------|--|
| DE-47 | M 35-55 | SB | Owner of artisan enterprise in carpentry and historical reconstruction | Insider | Moderate productivist |
| DE-48 | M 55< | MW | Carpenter | Insider | Moderate productivist |
| DE-49 | F 35-55 | SW | Salesperson | Insider | Producerist/ welfare chauvinist |
| DE-50 | F <35 | SW | Salesperson | Insider | Moderate productivist |
| DE-51 | F <35 | SP | Interior designer | Insider | Moderate productivist/ Post-productivist |
| DE-52 | F 55< | MW | Cleaner, long-term unemployed | Outsider | Producerist/ welfare chauvinist |
| DE-53 | M 35-55 | MW | Carpenter | Insider | Producerist/ welfare chauvinist |
| DE-54 | M 55< | MW | Assembler | Insider | Moderate productivist |
| DE-55 | M <35 | MW | Roofer | Outsider | Producerist/ welfare chauvinist |
| DE-56 | M 35-55 | MW | Works council member, unionist, steel worker | Insider | Moderate productivist, Producerist/ welfare chauvinist |
| DE-57 | M 55< | MW | Mining worker at GDR enterprise, truck driver, various occupations | Outsider, Retired | Moderate productivist |
| DE-58 | F 55< | CL | Secretary at GDR industrial enterprise | Outsider, Retired | Moderate productivist |
| DE-59 | M 35-55 | MW | Fire safety worker | Outsider | Post-productivist |
| DE-60 | M <35 | MW | Carpenter | Insider | Post-productivist |
| DE-61 | M <35 | MW | Carpenter, aims to retrain in IT | Outsider | Moderate productivist, Producerist/ welfare chauvinist |
| DE-62 | F 35-55 | SP | Educator, studies pedagogy | Outsider (lifecourse), now insider | Post-productivist |
| DE-63 | M 35-55 | MW | Tunnel boring machine builder, unemployed, temporary worker, municipal council (AfD) | Outsider | Producerist/ welfare chauvinist |
| DE-64 | M 35-55 | MW | Car mechanic | Insider | Producerist/ welfare chauvinist |
| DE-65 | M 55< | MW | Carpenter | Insider | Moderate productivist, |

| | | | | | |
|-------|------------|--------|---|--------------------------|--|
| DE-66 | F 55< | SP, CL | Artist; worked as secretary in her father`s enterprise | Insider | Moderate productivist |
| DE-67 | M 55< | MW | Plumber | Insider | Moderate productivist |
| DE-68 | M 55< | SP | Teacher | Outsider, Retired | Moderate productivist |
| DE-69 | M 35-55 | SB | Artisan enterprise owner | Insider | Moderate productivist |
| DE-70 | M 55< | TP, MG | Engineer/ manager in energy technology | Insider | Producerist/ welfare chauvinist |
| DE-71 | M 35-55 | SB | Small business owner (light & event technology) | Insider | Moderate productivist |
| DE-72 | M 35-55 | MW | Printer, long-term unemployed, (semi-prof.) photographer | Outsider | Moderate productivist, Producerist/ welfare chauvinist |
| DE-73 | M <35 | MW | Quarry worker, factory temporary worker; formerly outdoor tourism guide, cook, long-term unemployed | Outsider | Moderate productivist, Post-productivist |
| DE-74 | M 55< | MW | Pool attendant, formerly butcher | Insider, about to retire | Producerist/ welfare chauvinist |
| DE-75 | M 55< | MG, SB | Manager of large cleaning company, restaurant owner | Insider | Moderate productivist |
| DE-76 | M <35 | SB | Artist blacksmith | Insider | Moderate productivist |
| DE-77 | M 55< | MW | Janitor, former factory worker, long-term unemployed | Outsider | Moderate productivist, Post-productivist |
| DE-78 | M 35-55 | MW | Car mechanic | Insider | Producerist/ welfare chauvinist |
| DE-79 | M <35 | MW | Electrician | Insider | Moderate productivist, Producerist/ welfare chauvinist |
| DE-80 | M <35 | MW | Electrician | Insider | Moderate productivist |
| DE-81 | M <35 | MW | Electrician | Insider | Moderate productivist, Producerist/ welfare chauvinist |
| DE-82 | M <35 | MW | Electrician | Insider | Producerist/ welfare chauvinist |
| DE-83 | M 55< | MW | Plumber, Municipal council (independent) | Insider, Retired | Moderate productivist, Post-productivist |

Annex IV: French Summary

Le Populisme en tant que Problème d'Intégration Sociale. Comment les Tensions au Travail et avec l'État-Providence Nourrissent le « welfare chauvinism » de la Classe Ouvrière

Résumé Détaillé

Le « welfare chauvinism », soit la demande d'exclure les immigrants du système de protection sociale, est un modèle saillant d'attitudes parmi les travailleurs européens de la classe ouvrière et un moteur de leur vote disproportionné en faveur des partis populistes radicaux de droite (PPRD). Le soutien des travailleurs de la classe ouvrière aux politiques populistes de droite constitue un objet classique de la théorie des « perdants de la modernisation », qui soutient que ceux qui sont affectés par les méfaits des processus de modernisation développent un « ressentiment » sociopolitique, que les PPRD mobilisent en le faisant reposer sur des boucs émissaires tels que les immigrants (un mécanisme également connu sous le nom de « politique du ressentiment »). Cependant, il existe une controverse de longue date sur le type de mécontentement « original » qui serait en jeu dans une telle dynamique : s'agit-il de pertes socio-économiques ou socio-culturelles, d'un déclin relatif du statut social ou d'un manque de reconnaissance auquel sont confrontés les « perdants de la modernisation » ? Ou les « chauvins du welfare » ne souffrent-ils d'aucun grief, le racisme et les mythes d'injustice propagés par l'idéologie des PPRD suffisant à alimenter une politique basée sur le « ressentiment » ?

Je plaide en faveur de l'idée que le « ressentiment » accumulé par les « perdants de la modernisation » est en effet un facteur central derrière le soutien de la classe ouvrière au chauvinisme du welfare. Je rejoins une littérature croissante pour soutenir que le grief central en jeu pour les perdants de la modernisation ne consiste pas en une perte « économique », « culturelle » ou même de « statut », mais en une exclusion sociale, qui est un mécanisme sociologique distinct (Gidron/Hall 2019 ; Sachweh 2020). À travers l'exemple du chauvinisme du welfare de la classe ouvrière, j'aborde des questions encore sans réponse dans la littérature sur le populisme en tant que « problème d'intégration sociale » (Grunow/Sachweh et al. 2023). Il s'agit notamment de : (1) Lorsque nous parlons de « l'intégration sociale » d'un individu : à quoi s'intègrent-ils – et inversement, de quoi les « marginalisés » sont-ils exclus ? (2) Comment, c'est-à-dire par quels mécanismes, les individus s'intègrent-ils dans une « société » – et inversement, dans quels aspects ces mécanismes échouent-ils pour les « perdants de la modernisation » ?

En m'appuyant sur la littérature sociologique, j'affirme que l'intégration d'un individu dans la société dépend des rôles sociaux qu'il exerce dans des contextes institutionnels tels que le lieu de travail, les agences étatiques, la famille, les associations, les églises, les syndicats ou les sphères culturelles (Merton 1957 ; Goffman 1959 ; 1961 ; Simmel 2013 [1908]). Ces « institutions de niveau mésoscopique » médiatisent la participation des individus à la société ; et les rôles sociaux régulés par elles sont le point de référence central pour la distribution des ressources matérielles et du statut social, pour la reconnaissance sociale et la formation de l'identité (voir *ibid*). Cependant, les « perdants de la modernisation » courent le risque de vivre une tension permanente ou une rupture ultime des relations de rôles sociaux sur lesquelles leur intégration dans la société dépend le plus crucialement. L'exclusion de la participation à « l'ordre des rôles sociaux » de la société peut être la cause de l'ensemble des types de griefs connus dans la littérature sur la politique du ressentiment. Cela peut, mais pas nécessairement, impliquer une privation matérielle ou une insécurité. Cela implique presque toujours des menaces pour le statut ou l'identité, l'aliénation par rapport aux institutions et orientations dominantes de la société, un sentiment de méconnaissance et d'injustice, de manque de voix et d'efficacité, d'impuissance (Salmela/Capelos 2021).

En outre, j'affirme que l'intégration ou l'exclusion sociale des travailleurs européens de la classe ouvrière contemporaine est motivée par deux cadres institutionnels au cœur de la socio-économie, qui sont cependant largement négligés par la littérature sur les « perdants de la modernisation ».

Tout d'abord, je suis l'argument de Castel (1995) selon lequel l'emploi est la principale relation par laquelle la majorité de la population s'intègre dans les sociétés européennes contemporaines. Cette fonction socialement intégrative de l'emploi dépend moins du revenu matériel ou des types de contrat de travail que du fait que le travail est un ensemble de relations sociales qui permettent l'intégration dans un système sociétal de rôles et de normes (tout en sous-tendant la dimension de réciprocité matérielle de l'emploi en même temps). Cependant, les changements de stratégies d'entreprise et de styles de gestion au cours des dernières décennies ont pu avoir un impact considérable sur les relations sociales au travail, notamment dans les secteurs économiques en « réduction ». Je soutiens que les tensions permanentes au travail, et notamment entre la direction et les employés au sein des entreprises, peuvent conduire à l'expérience de l'exclusion sociale. Cela se produit indépendamment des facteurs « économiques » plus couramment étudiés tels que le revenu ; et cela se produit notamment chez

ceux qui sont en emploi stable à temps plein : chez les « insiders » du marché du travail (Emmenegger et al. 2012).

Deuxièmement, je suis l'argument d'Esping-Andersen (1990) selon lequel l'État-providence est le mécanisme de solidarité le plus important des sociétés européennes contemporaines. Il maintient les individus non seulement en sécurité matérielle, mais aussi dans une position de statut acceptée au sein de la société, une fois qu'ils ne sont pas en emploi. La relation entre un bénéficiaire de l'aide sociale et l'État est régulée par des normes de « mérite » en matière de protection sociale (van Oorschot 2000). Ces normes servent de « frontières morales » définissant qui est inclus et qui est exclu parmi les membres vulnérables de la société (Lamont/Molnar 2002). Les réformes de l'État-providence au cours des dernières décennies ont cependant pu mettre sous tension la fonction d'intégration sociétale des droits sociaux attribués par l'État aux citoyens. Cela est particulièrement vrai pour les travailleurs de la classe ouvrière, qui dépendent de ces programmes de politique sociale « anciens » et axés sur la consommation (comme les pensions de retraite publiques et les allocations de chômage) qui ont été des cibles particulières de réduction et de stratégies de « l'activation » basées sur des incitations négatives. Je soutiens que les tensions permanentes dans les relations des citoyens avec les politiques et les institutions de l'État-providence peuvent conduire à une expérience profondément ancrée de l'exclusion sociale. Cela peut notamment arriver à ceux qui ne sont pas en relations d'emploi stables à temps plein (ou ne l'ont pas été pendant leurs années actives) et qui détiennent en fait des droits fragmentés en matière de protection sociale : les « outsiders » du marché du travail (Emmenegger et al. 2012).

Les partis populistes radicaux de droite sont spécialisés dans l'adressage des expériences d'exclusion sociale de manière plus affective que substantielle (voir Salmela/von Scheve 2017) et dans l'attribution de blâme à des cibles idéologiquement opportunes. Ils blâment notamment ceux qui sont ostensiblement inclus socialement, alors que le perdant de la modernisation est ostensiblement exclu. « Ceux qui ne travaillent pas » (mais reçoivent ostensiblement des choses gratuitement de l'État) sont une cible opportune de blâme pour ceux qui ressentent une tension permanente au travail. « Les immigrants qui reçoivent des prestations sociales » sont une cible opportune de blâme pour ceux qui se sentent eux-mêmes abandonnés par l'État-providence.

Je développe ces arguments à partir de 150 entretiens biographiques, dont 75 avec des travailleurs de la classe ouvrière, menés entre 2018 et 2020 en Allemagne de l'Est et en Autriche dans le but de retracer de manière inductive les expériences de « mécontentement » socio-économique et les façons dont elles se politisent. Les entretiens se sont concentrés sur la

narration des trajectoires professionnelles, les expériences sur le marché du travail, les expériences avec les politiques et les institutions de l'État-providence, et les opinions politiques (politiques sociales et préférences partisans). Les cas ont été choisis de manière à ce que dans un cas – l'Allemagne de l'Est – on s'attende à ce que la classe ouvrière ait vécu un niveau relativement élevé de mécontentement socio-économique au cours des trois dernières décennies en raison du développement socio-économique et des réformes de l'état-providence, tandis que dans l'autre – l'Autriche – on s'attendrait à ce que le niveau de mécontentement socio-économique soit relativement faible. Cependant, les deux cas présentent des PPRD forts avec un discours « chauvin du welfare » prononcé qui mobilise de manière disproportionnée de nombreux travailleurs de la classe ouvrière.

Le processus d'analyse des données a inclus à la fois des séquences inductives et déductives. Un sous-échantillon du jeu de données des entretiens a été utilisé pour la construction de théories inductives. Les résultats ont été mis en relation avec la littérature existante en sociologie politique du populisme de droite de la classe ouvrière et des préférences en matière de politiques sociales. L'argument théorique final (tel que résumé ci-dessus) a été testé formellement sur l'ensemble de l'échantillon des entretiens dans une étape finale d'analyse déductive, conduisant à la confirmation, au rejet ou à la nuance des propositions. Afin de tenir compte de la validité externe, la proposition la plus importante a été testée en utilisant des données d'enquête quantitatives (ISSP 2015) à l'aide de modèles de régression logistique.

Je trouve des preuves cohérentes des effets théorisés de l'« exclusion au travail » et de l'« exclusion par l'état-providence » à la fois dans le cas autrichien et dans le cas allemand de l'Est.

Les personnes interrogées qui, sur leur lieu de travail, éprouvent une reconnaissance (matérielle et symbolique), une confiance, des systèmes normatifs fonctionnels et la possibilité de négocier des conflits concernant des problèmes pressants au sein de ces systèmes normatifs, retirent un sentiment d'efficacité, de dignité, de participation à une agence collective et le sentiment que la société est un endroit juste. Elles ont tendance à adopter des opinions politiques modérées, ce qui se manifeste principalement par une faible saillance des questions d'inclusion/exclusion : elles peuvent avoir des opinions diverses sur l'accès des migrants aux prestations sociales, par exemple, mais n'attribuent pas beaucoup de priorité au problème.

En revanche, ceux qui éprouvent une méconnaissance, une méfiance, une arbitraire normatif, des conflits persistants entre la direction et les employés ou des conflits socio-structuraux délimités au travail, ramènent au contraire un sentiment d'inefficacité, d'aliénation (« on vous traite comme un numéro »), de déni de statut, et un sentiment que la société n'est pas un endroit

juste. Cela peut – mais dans de nombreux cas ne le fait pas – s'accompagner de pertes matérielles ou de la peur manifeste de perdre son emploi. Parmi les personnes interrogées de la classe ouvrière qui vivent de telles conditions sur de longues périodes, on observe un schéma récurrent de réaction attitudinale qui implique la formation d'une identité « productiviste » (Derks 2006 ; Rathgeb 2021) qui consiste à revendiquer d'être « travailleur acharné » – et devient la base d'un blâme saillant, émotionnalisé et moralisé envers ceux qui « ne travaillent pas », « mais reçoivent des choses gratuitement de l'État ».

Ces résultats sont similaires pour les deux études de cas, avec la différence que dans les comptes rendus des travailleurs autrichiens (insiders du marché du travail), les conditions de travail et les relations au travail se sont détériorées sur une période prolongée, tandis que dans les comptes rendus allemands de l'Est, le processus s'est accéléré dans les années 1990, avec une expérience plus marquée de la perte d'emploi.

Je confirme la constatation selon laquelle les expériences d'exclusion sociale dans les relations de travail constituent un terreau fertile pour la mobilisation populiste de droite en utilisant une analyse de régression logistique sur les données du Programme international d'enquêtes sociales (ISSP) (vague de 2015) pour tous les pays européens. En contrôlant les variables démographiques et socio-économiques, je trouve une corrélation négative significative ($p < 0,001$) et considérablement forte entre la qualité subjective des relations de travail et le vote déclaré en faveur des PPRP dans les démocraties européennes.

Dans les données qualitatives, je trouve néanmoins un mécanisme distinct et récurrent parmi les petites entreprises. Les propriétaires de petites entreprises ont tendance à vivre des expériences d'exclusion sociale avec les grands acteurs du marché et/ou avec les institutions de l'État fiscal et réglementaire. En fin de compte, il existe des cas de petites entreprises (généralement artisanales) où le propriétaire et la main-d'œuvre montrent une forte intégration mutuelle – mais se sentent collectivement aliénés des institutions dominantes de la société et soutiennent collectivement les récits populistes de droite.

Je trouve des preuves cohérentes des effets attitudinaux des expériences d'exclusion sociale en contact avec les politiques et les institutions de l'État-providence à la fois en Autriche et en Allemagne de l'Est. Globalement, il y a peu de différence à cet égard entre les deux études de cas. Les domaines politiques dans lesquels les personnes interrogées font le plus d'expériences d'« exclusion par l'état-providence » sont les pensions de retraite publiques et les politiques du marché du travail « d'activation ». Ce sont également les domaines des politiques sociales avec lesquels les personnes interrogées de la classe ouvrière relatent le plus d'expériences et ceux les

plus significatifs pour leur vie, tandis que celles ayant des antécédents de problèmes de santé font également des expériences significatives avec le système de santé et les assurances maladie.

Les expériences d'« exclusion par l'état-providence » surviennent là où les individus font l'expérience d'un écart marqué entre une norme de mérite administrée par les institutions et les agents de l'État-providence d'une part, et une situation personnelle de besoin pressant de l'autre. De plus, elles surviennent là où les dispositifs de l'état-providence réellement existants sont perçus comme ne réalisant pas les normes que l'État utilise pour les légitimer (perception de « double standard », de cynisme) et cela coïncide avec des situations pressantes de besoin. Dans de telles situations, les personnes interrogées peuvent accumuler un fort sentiment de « méconnaissance » et d'injustice » de la part des institutions de l'État-providence. En ce qui concerne la politique des retraites, cela est le cas pour les groupes suivants dans le jeu de données : (1) les travailleurs qui deviennent chômeurs après l'âge de 50 ans et perdent sensiblement des années de cotisation à la retraite pour des raisons qu'ils estiment « ne pas être de leur faute » (mais qui dépendent du marché du travail et des employeurs qui licencient les travailleurs âgés), (2) les femmes qui ont travaillé à temps partiel ou ont interrompu leur carrière professionnelle et reçoivent des prestations de retraite bien en dessous du seuil de risque de pauvreté, (3) les travailleurs à faibles salaires à temps plein en Allemagne, qui ont un taux de remplacement net des prestations de retraite d'environ 50 %. C'est le cas pour les groupes suivants de bénéficiaires de l'aide sociale (allocation chômage) : (1) les bénéficiaires ayant un problème de santé qui sont tenus par les mesures « d'activation » administrées par le service de l'emploi de chercher du travail, (2) les travailleurs âgés de plus de 55 ans ayant peu de chances sur le marché du travail et qui sont tenus de « donner l'impression » de chercher du travail pour ne pas perdre leurs allocations de chômage, (3) les jeunes travailleurs qui n'ont jamais entamé de trajectoire professionnelle stable et qui perçoivent que le service de l'emploi les oblige à prendre des emplois avec de mauvaises conditions. Les personnes interrogées qui font de telles expériences peuvent présenter des réactions attitudinales fortes. L'une de ces réactions, et la plus récurrente sur le plan empirique, consiste à dénoncer la norme de « mérite » de l'État comme injuste pour soi-même ; mais en même temps à pointer du doigt des groupes encore moins « méritants », exigeant que la norme soit appliquée à eux plutôt qu'à soi-même. Ce comportement a été appelé « déviation » (Bolton et al. 2022). Cela conduit à une dynamique de « dénigrement » le long de toute la « hiérarchie » du mérite, qui commence par les insiders du marché du travail se plaignant que les outsiders du marché du travail ne « font pas d'effort » ;

se poursuit avec les « outsiders » âgés se plaignant que les jeunes ne « veulent pas travailler » ; et se termine par le blâme des immigrés (non-travailleurs).

Le « chauvinisme du welfare » semble en effet servir de plus petit dénominateur commun, la question unificatrice, d'une coalition composée à la fois d'insiders socio-économiques et d'outsiders socio-économiques en faveur des PPRP (voir Damhuis 2020), tous ayant cependant tendance à faire l'expérience de l'exclusion sociale, ce qui résonne avec l'idéologie des PPRP axée sur le ressentiment et l'attribution de blâme, abondamment diffusée dans l'espace public.

Je trouve également d'autres expériences et réactions parmi les bénéficiaires de l'aide sociale, y compris une réaction de « remise en cause catégorielle » des normes de mérite existantes en matière de la politique sociale, des expériences de « réinclusion » saillantes résultant de politiques du marché du travail fructueuses, et un mécanisme attitudinal typique de « mise en miroir » modéré chez ceux qui apprennent les normes de mérite dans leurs propres expériences avec les politiques sociales, mais pour qui le système fonctionne bien (notamment les « insiders du marché du travail »).

De plus, je trouve des preuves montrant que l'intégration sociale ou l'exclusion dans un certain nombre d'autres sphères que l'emploi ou l'état-providence est tout aussi importante pour la formation des préférences politiques, même si parmi les ouvriers manuels interrogés, les deux mécanismes théorisés offrent la meilleure explication (à la fois de l'« intégration sociale » vécue en elle-même et de ses effets attitudinaux). Les travailleurs qui s'intègrent dans des rôles sociaux au sein d'institutions « socioculturelles » qui les relient aux orientations institutionnelles dominantes de la société adoptent des opinions politiques plus modérées. Ces institutions peuvent être des associations, des syndicats, des églises, des partis ou des mouvements sociaux (ou un engagement stable dans ceux-ci). La famille peut également jouer ce rôle d'intégration sociale pour les personnes interrogées : par exemple, si les enfants des interviewés ont des emplois stables dans l'« économie de la connaissance », se sentent pleinement intégrés en tant que participants à part entière de l'économie politique actuelle et ont des contacts proches et positifs avec les interviewés.

Dans le jeu de données, presque seuls les travailleurs qui sont engagés dans des syndicats du travail (ou dans ces partis eux-mêmes) forment des orientations partisans de « centre-gauche ». Ceux qui adoptent des opinions de « gauche libérale » sont ceux qui (1) entretiennent des contacts étroits avec des professionnels socioculturels, par exemple via des cercles familiaux ou d'amitié, ou (2) s'engagent activement dans des sphères culturelles où circulent des récits correspondants, notamment les sphères culturelles « éducatives » (musique classique/jazz,

littérature, langues étrangères, etc.) ainsi que les mouvements de « contre-culture » (par exemple, le rock alternatif).

En revanche, des milieux socio-structurellement homogènes, souvent localisés géographiquement, d'occupations ouvrières médiatisées par la famille, les associations, etc., peuvent agir comme une chambre d'écho collectivement marginalisée. La plupart des travailleurs interrogés sont intégrés dans des milieux socio-culturels homogènes, où les institutions de « liaison » les plus importantes avec l'ordre de rôle dominant de la société capitaliste avancée sont l'emploi (médiatisé par les entreprises) et l'État-providence.