

Changing classes, changing preferences: how social class mobility affects economic preferences

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Abstract

While many studies have identified an association between social class and economic preferences, we know little about the implications of changes in class location for these preferences. This paper assesses how social class and intra-generational class mobility affect economic preferences drawing on longitudinal data from the British Household Panel Survey. In doing so, the paper adopts a post-industrial perspective that considers horizontal and vertical class divisions. Even when time-invariant characteristics of individuals are kept constant (through fixed-effects estimation), we find that both vertical and horizontal class location explain economic preferences. Thus, these estimations suggest that social class molds preferences, even when accounting for factors that can lead to selection into classes. Moreover, people who change classes hold different economic preferences than their peers in the class of origin, but do not completely assimilate into their class of destination. This implies that growing intra-generational class mobility could undermine the class basis of political conflict.

Keywords: social class; class mobility; economic preferences; public opinion; panel data

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INTRODUCTION

Over the last twenty years, a vast amount of literature documented relevant changes in the structure of class politics in post-industrial societies (see e.g. Evans & Tilley, 2017; Häusermann & Kriesi, 2015; Kitschelt & Rehm, 2014; Oesch, 2008b; Oesch & Rennwald, 2018). By now, it is an established fact that the tertiarization of the employment structure led to the rise of new social classes (e.g. professionals in social and cultural services) with distinctive political and policy preferences (Güveli, Need, & De Graaf, 2007; Kriesi, 1989). The growth of the service sector introduced greater heterogeneity in the occupational structure, which, in turn, is reflected in new political divisions among social classes. In post-industrial societies, social classes are distinguished by their vertical location (the level of marketable skills required in the job), but also by their horizontal location (concerning the work logic or nature of the work) (Oesch, 2006).

While there is abundant—mostly cross-sectional—evidence about the political differences arising along vertical and horizontal class divisions, there are next to no studies that have adopted a longitudinal approach to the study of classes' political preferences. Nor do we find analyses that address the impact of intra-generational class mobility on policy or party preferences (see Kohler, 2005 for an exception). The scarce attention paid to the political consequences of social mobility is particularly surprising given that, as some recent contributions have suggested, occupational mobility appears increasingly common in post-industrial economies (Jarvis & Song, 2017; Kambourov & Manovskii, 2008).¹ Moreover, a longitudinal approach has the added benefit of addressing a common assumption made in most accounts of class voting: that social class molds

¹ Jarvis and Song (2017) and Kambourov and Manovskii (2008) present evidence of an increase in intra-generational mobility in the US for the 1969-2011 and 1968-1997 periods (respectively). Gregg and Wadsworth (1995) also identify an increase in job instability and a decrease in job tenure in the UK. There is, however, considerable debate on the evolution of intra-generational mobility and tenure over time (for an overview of this literature see Kalleberg & Mouw, 2018).

political preferences. Thus, this paper contributes to the debate on whether social class has an actual impact on preferences, or whether the class differences observed in cross-sectional analyses are primarily the outcome of like-minded individuals selecting into similar occupations. The longitudinal analyses here presented provide new evidence that social class has an impact on economic preferences even when controlling for all constant characteristics of individuals, and also that the socially mobile differ in their preferences from the class immobile.

To account for the occupational heterogeneity pertaining to post-industrial societies, I adopt a simplified version of Oesch's class scheme to analyze class divisions and social mobility of two kinds: vertical and horizontal. Relying on data from the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) I first study the association between vertical and horizontal class location and preferences concerning the role of the state in the economy. These results of the British case indicate that social classes do differ in their economic preferences even when implementing fixed-effects models, which account for all constant heterogeneity between individuals. This lends credibility to the proposition that economic preferences respond to individuals' class location and their experiences in the context of their occupation. A second set of analyses, indicates that individuals who have experienced class mobility (vertical or horizontal) hold different economic preferences than those who have remained immobile. While the preferences of the socially mobile are closer to their new class of destination, they also resemble their class of origin. This suggests a change of preferences in line with the new class, but also an enduring influence of the class of origin.

These results have relevant implications for class conflict in post-industrial democracies. First, they provide evidence for what is implicitly assumed in many analyses of class voting. Namely, that there is an effect of social class on economic preferences and, hence, that class differences are not the mere outcome of a process of selection of individuals into classes. Second,

the analyses show that horizontal divisions between classes based on work logic are as politically relevant as vertical distinctions. Third, the results also have relevant implications for overall levels of class-based political conflict. Because class mobile individuals tend to show more moderate economic preferences than the immobile in their classes of origin and destination, at an aggregate level, higher rates of intra-generational class mobility will lead to lower distinctiveness of classes' economic preferences. Ultimately, pervading social mobility over the life course could dilute the class basis of political conflict.

In what follows, I start by discussing the literature on class voting and class-based preferences in post-industrial societies, and elaborate on their implications for within-individual variation in class location. Next, I discuss the theory concerning class mobility, and elaborate on the expectations regarding changes in class location and economic preferences. Next, I introduce the research design used to identify the impact of social class and class mobility. This is followed by the presentation of the main results. I conclude by discussing the implications of these findings.

CLASS-BASED PREFERENCES IN POST-INDUSTRIAL SOCIETIES

Social class has been frequently studied as a determinant of policy attitudes, especially in relation to economic preferences concerning income redistribution, state intervention in the economy, or social policy. Even if it might still be up for debate whether its political impact has been in systematic decline or displaying temporal and cross-country fluctuations (Evans & De Graaf, 2013; Franklin, Mackie, & Valen, 1992), numerous studies have addressed and documented a persisting association between class and political preferences in post-industrial societies (Evans & Tilley, 2017; Häusermann & Kriesi, 2015; Kitschelt & Rehm, 2014; Oesch, 2008a). Moreover,

some of these recent studies have also established that, in post-industrial societies, it is necessary to account for class divisions beyond the traditional vertical or hierarchical dimension (e.g. level of marketable skills, or the advantageousness of the employment relationship). Horizontal divisions based on work logic (i.e. the nature of the work) have proved relevant even when studying economic preferences—an issue typically associated to the advantages in life chances captured by vertical class location (Güveli, 2006; Kriesi et al., 2012, 2008; Lachat & Oesch, 2007; Oesch, 2008a). For this reason, I rely on Oesch’s class scheme to conceptualize and operationalize social class and mobility (Oesch, 2006).

Oesch’s social class scheme provides a systematic structure that allows us to account for heterogeneity among both upper- and lower-grade occupations. This scheme follows previous attempts to capture post-industrial transformations in the occupational structure. In contrast to earlier contributions which introduced differentiation exclusively among middle-class occupations to, for example, separate managerial jobs from new cultural professions (Güveli, 2006; Kriesi, 1989; Van de Werfhorst & De Graaf, 2004), Oesch proposes work logic as a common criterion of horizontal differentiation that cuts across the whole class structure. Table 1 summarizes the structure of Oesch’s eight-class scheme, and includes some examples that serve as illustrations of typical occupations included in each of the classes. The vertical dimension separates classes according to the level of marketable skills of different occupations, and hence distinguishes hierarchically between more and less advantageous class positions (professionals and associate professionals vs. skilled and low-skilled workers). The horizontal dimension separates classes according to four work logics: the interpersonal service, the technical, the organizational, and the independent work logic.

Table 1: Oesch’s eight-class scheme

Horizontal dimension: work logic					
Interpersonal service logic	Technical logic	Organizational logic	Independent logic		
Sociocultural professionals and semi-professionals University Teachers Social workers	Technical professionals and technicians Mechanical engineers Electrical technicians	Managers and associate managers Business administrators Tax officials	Large employers (>9) and self-employed professionals Firm owners Lawyers	Professional & semi- / associate professional	Vertical dimension: Marketable skills
Service workers Children’s nurses Shop assistants	Production workers Machinery mechanics Assemblers	Office clerks Secretaries Call center employees	Small business owners Restaurant owners Farmers	Generally/ Vocationally skilled & Low/ Unskilled	

Source: Based on Oesch (2006)

Note: Cells include occupations in the different classes as an illustration. Solid lines separate the two vertical class locations and the two horizontal class locations that will be studied in this paper.

Occupations are assigned to each of the work logics based on the nature of the work carried out in them and the kind of daily experiences to which individuals are exposed.² Following differences in assets and ownership—which entail a different logic and structure of incentives in their work—employers and self-employed are assigned to the independent work logic. Among employees, work logics differ on four different underlying dimensions: the setting of the work process, the degree of authority relations at the workplace, the primary orientation of the job, and the kind of skills required in the execution of daily tasks (Oesch, 2006). The organizational work logic follows a clear command structure where, among the higher-grade occupations, daily work entails coordination and control, whereas the low-skilled mainly execute clerical tasks. The primary orientation of this logic is towards the employing organization, and emphasizes loyalty towards it. In contrast, in the technical logic, professionals work largely outside the lines of

² Individuals are classified into different work logics and to different vertical class levels based on their occupational titles. I implement Oesch’s coding of occupational titles (as measured by the International Standard Classification of Occupations, ISCO) into classes (Oesch, 2006).

command, and their work is primarily oriented towards the scientific community (or to their trade, among low-skilled workers). Low-skilled technical workers rely on the deployment of craft and manual skills in their daily work. Lastly, in the interpersonal service logic we find professionals and low-skilled employees who work largely outside the line of command, who depend on social skills in their daily jobs, and who orient their work towards other people. Table 1 presents some prototypical higher- and lower-grade occupations in each of the work logics.

Relying on work logic as a source of horizontal differentiation is in line with early works in sociology of occupations that identified daily work experience as a critical factor shaping personality, values and behaviors both within and beyond the work sphere (Kohn & Schooler, 1969, 1982; Mortimer & Lorence, 1979). Some of the traits of occupations analyzed in this literature concern: the nature of networks and interactions established in the workplace; the extent to which these interactions are embedded in strict hierarchies or entail instead negotiation processes among equals (Ashford & Nurmohamed, 2012); or whether occupations provide opportunities to exercise self-direction and use initiative in the development of the work, or they instead entail the need to conform to externally imposed rules (Kohn & Schooler, 1982). We find that these occupational traits—considered by this literature as relevant and consequential for values and attitudes—are parsimoniously captured in Oesch’s definition of work logic.

Recent research indicates that these class divisions are, indeed, associated to different positions on the economic conflict. The traditional pattern of higher-grade classes favoring market-liberal economic policies and lower-grade classes favoring economic redistribution and state intervention in the economy still holds in post-industrial societies. Large employers and professionals are, on average, more likely to prefer market solutions and oppose state intervention in the economy when compared to low-skilled workers. However, these average differences based

on the advantageousness of one's market position mask substantial heterogeneity between social classes that is better captured by horizontal divisions (Kitschelt & Rehm, 2014; Kriesi, 1989; Müller, 1999).

Within the upper classes, socio-cultural professionals appear as particularly more favorable towards state intervention in the economy and income redistribution. Some have even found that their economic preferences are close to those of workers (Häusermann & Kriesi, 2015). On the contrary, large employers and self-employed professionals, as well as the managerial class, hold consistently more market-liberal preferences, not only in comparison to the other middle classes (technical and socio-cultural professionals) but also to the rest of the class structure. In their jobs, managers are incentivized to run their organizations as efficiently as possible and to maximize income. They share the responsibility and the power of running an organization and, therefore, their interests are closely aligned with those of their employers (Oesch, 2006). This brings managers and employers close in their favorability of market-liberal economic policies. Conversely, socio-cultural professionals work largely outside the lines of command. Their work is not instrumental to economic goals but to attending to people's needs (Güveli, 2006). This draws their loyalty away from their employers and closer to their clients, patients, students, users (Oesch, 2006). Technical professionals are similarly less aligned to their employing organization, their work is more oriented to their professional community and less instrumental to economic goals.

The kind of horizontal distinctions present among the upper classes are also evident for the lower classes. Here again, occupations in the independent and organizational work logic (small business owners and office clerks) tend to be the most favorable towards market solutions. Office clerks' work is more closely oriented to their employing organization, and brings them in closer contact with managing cadres, which emphasizes loyalty to the organization's interests, and which

has been associated to more conservative economic preferences (Arndt & Rennwald, 2017). Moreover, because of the clear bureaucratic structure in which they are embedded, which makes advancement up the career ladder possible, we also expect office clerks to be more self-reliant and reluctant of state intervention. On the contrary, production and service workers are the two classes most favorable to income redistribution and state regulation of the economy (Oesch, 2006). Although most studies concerning the political preferences of the working class tend to focus almost exclusively on production workers, the studies that explicitly account for service workers' economic attitudes indicate that these are seemingly indistinguishable from those of production workers (Ares, 2017).

THE IMPACT OF CLASS MOBILITY IN POST-INDUSTRIAL SOCIETIES

Differences across vertical and horizontal class divisions in economic preferences, as well as in electoral behavior, are firmly established in the literature. However, because most studies have relied on cross-sectional data, they must assume that social class molds preferences. A direct, although untested, implication of this assumption is that changes in class location should affect political predispositions. There is, however, scarce empirical evidence about the impact of changes in class location on political attitudes (see Kohler, 2005; Lahtinen, Wass, & Hiilamo, 2017 for some exceptions). In fact, whether social class—because of the implications it carries for life chances and job experiences—actually affects preferences or whether class differences are the mere outcome of a process of selection of like-minded individuals into similar occupations has been a frequent subject of debate in studies of class voting (Kitschelt & Rehm, 2014; Van de Werfhorst & De Graaf, 2004).

Differences in preferences between social classes can arise because occupational experience shapes attitudes and preferences, but also as a consequence of people selecting into occupations that match their pre-existing personality and predispositions. The debate on the link between class and political preferences has been particularly salient in post-industrial class voting, because selection is more likely to operate in a diversified occupational structure, where the educational system offers more opportunities for specialization (Kitschelt & Rehm, 2014; Müller, 1999; Van de Werfhorst & De Graaf, 2004). Some studies have indicated that the field of study can account for class differences in preferences, more so on cultural issues than on economically oriented topics (Van de Werfhorst & De Graaf, 2004; Van de Werfhorst & Kraaykamp, 2001). Thus, part of the selection into classes could operate through educational trajectories.

The literature has provided arguments supporting both a selection into occupations that match pre-existing attitudes, as well as a preference-shaping effect of social class. Because the job and the workplace play a crucial role in the life of an adult—in industrialized societies citizens spend over a third of their waking time at work (Kitschelt & Rehm, 2014)—several studies addressed how different characteristics of occupations systematically shaped personality, values and behaviors both within and beyond the work sphere (Kohn & Schooler, 1969, 1982; Mortimer & Lorence, 1979). Moreover, a pure selection process seems unlikely, since individuals face uncertainty about how occupational experiences will match their predispositions, and the labor market does not always allow for a perfect match to one's preferences (Kitschelt & Rehm, 2014).

By implementing a longitudinal approach, this paper sheds light on the plausibility of a causal effect of social class on economic preferences. Finding that within-individual variation in class location is associated to differences in preferences will indicate that social class shapes (or at least reinforces) these preferences. Estimating class differences in economic preferences based

solely on within-individual variation allows us to rule out constant characteristics of individuals as potential explanations for the link between these two variables. This kind of constant traits of individuals (such as values or personality) have been frequently considered as guiding selection into specific occupations (Kohn & Schooler, 1982).

If social class does, indeed, exert an effect on preferences, then people who move between classes should, accordingly, change their preferences in line with their new class location. Finding differences in preferences based on social mobility would lend further support for a (re)socialization effect of class. Because of the changes that class mobility entails—such as the economic resources and risk associated with the new class location, the kind of skills at use in the new work sphere, as well as the networks and interactions established around it—I expect mobile respondents to adapt their economic preferences in line with their class of destination (i.e. the one they are entering). As studies in occupational sociology have demonstrated, there is a propensity in adults to change their attitudes in response to their new working environments (Kohn & Schooler, 1978; Mortimer & Lorence, 1979). This expectation is also in line with a number of contributions which have shown, through longitudinal analyses, that individuals adapt their policy preferences and electoral behavior in response to changes in their employment situation (such as having lost one's job, or experiencing a reduction in earnings) (e.g. Cavaille & Neundorf, 2016; Margalit, 2013; Tilley, Neundorf, & Hobolt, 2018).

Even if the class mobile should be closer in their preferences to immobile individuals in their class of destination, we do not expect a complete assimilation into the new class. In line with recent research addressing the implications of social mobility for health and educational outcomes, socially mobile individuals are also expected to partly retain preferences in line with their class of origin (i.e. the one they have left) (Bartley & Plewis, 2007; Plewis & Bartley, 2014). There are

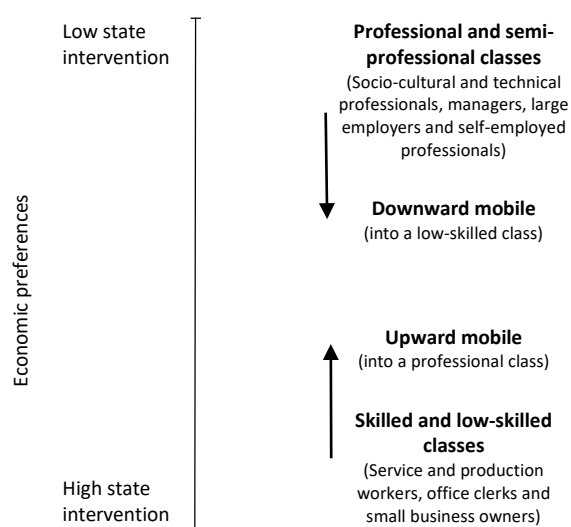
different reasons to expect this lasting effect of class of origin. People in the same social class share norms, values, a common reference group, and are also exposed to similar kinds of networks and contacts (De Graaf, Nieuwbeerta, & Heath, 1995). These norms and networks are not expected to recede immediately after an individual has switched social classes. Mobile individuals are likely to retain contact and exposure to the networks and culture of their class of origin while, simultaneously, being exposed to the experiences and interactions established in the new class. Hence, networks and values represent a source of stability for preferences (Weakliem, 1992). Different studies have shown that some of the core values and beliefs that we expect to be partly molded in the workplace show continuity or ‘stickiness’ over time (Evans & Neundorf, 2018; Rohrschneider & Whitefield, 2004). Existing research has also indicated that early labor market experiences have a sustained influence on economic attitudes over time (O’Grady, 2017). Moreover, it can take time for respondents to connect their new circumstances with the relevant policy measures that match their interests (O’Grady, 2017).

This partial adaptation of economic preferences to the new class of destination, while simultaneously retaining an enduring influence of class of origin implies that individuals who experience mobility will differ in their preferences from the immobile in both their class of origin and destination. This is, precisely, the outcome proposed by the gradient constraint hypothesis, elaborated in the context of health studies (Bartley & Plewis, 2007), and supported by one of the few studies that have addressed the political implications of intra-generational class mobility (Lahtinen et al., 2017).³ Following this hypothesis, we expect individuals who experience mobility to differ from the immobile in their attitudes and behavior. Specifically, the outcome for mobile respondents will lie between the average levels of the origin and destination classes. For the case

³ Lahtinen, Wass & Hiilamo (2017) analyse the impact of intra-generational class mobility on turnout in Finland.

that concerns us, the economic preferences of vertically or horizontally mobile respondents should fall between those of the immobile in their class of origin and destination. This expectation is also closely aligned with studies that addressed the political implications of social mobility from an inter-generational perspective (see e.g. De Graaf et al., 1995; Jaime-Castillo & Marqués-Perales, 2018; Weakliem, 1992).

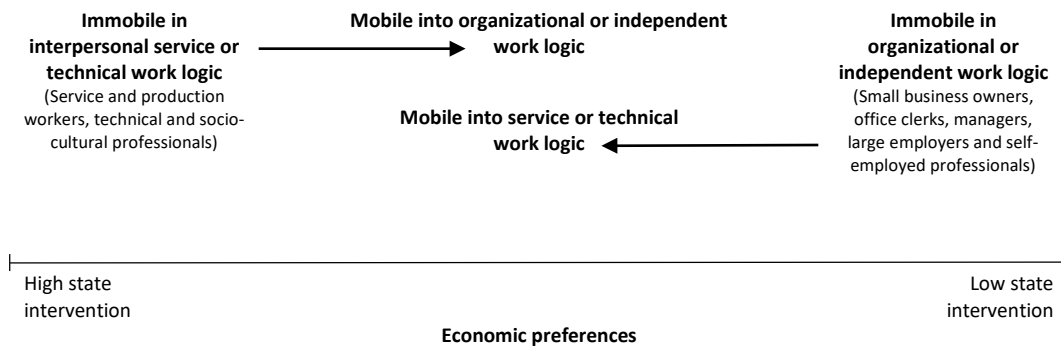
Figure 1: Expected differences in economic preferences between individuals holding different status of vertical mobility



In the case of vertical mobility, the expectations about its impact are straightforward. The relative position on economic issues of respondents who have experienced vertical mobility in comparison to the immobile is graphically illustrated in Figure 1. Immobile respondents in the higher- and lower-grade classes should be, respectively, the most and least supportive of market-liberal economic policies. Upwardly mobile respondents should be less supportive of state intervention and redistributive policies than immobile workers in low- and unskilled occupations, and more supportive of these policies than immobile professional workers. Conversely, those who

move downwards from a professional class to a skilled and low-skilled class should show more support for state intervention in the economy and redistributive policies. In other words, as illustrated in Figure 1, upwardly and downwardly mobile workers are expected to display similar preferences, located between those of the immobile in lower- and higher-grade classes.

Figure 2: Expected differences in economic preferences between individuals holding different status of horizontal mobility



Because the association between social class and preferences is not merely based on economic prospects but also on work logic, I expect horizontal mobility to also be associated to variation in economic preferences (as displayed in Figure 2). Both within the higher- and lower-grade classes (i.e. independently of their vertical location) individuals in the independent work logic as well as employees in the organizational work logic are expected to be the most economically right-wing. Hence, mobility into either of these two work logics should be related to higher support for market-liberal solutions. On the contrary, I expect those entering the technical

and the interpersonal service work logic to be more supportive of state intervention.⁴ In line with the gradient constraint hypothesis, mobile individuals should hold more moderate preferences than the immobile in the origin and destination work logics. This is made evident in Figure 2, where individuals who move from either group of work logics into the other are expected to fall between the two immobile groups in their support for state intervention. For example, someone who entered the organizational work logic (e.g. became a manager) should be more favorable of market-liberal solutions than her peers in the class of origin, but she should still be less so than someone immobile in the managerial class of destination. Similarly, those entering the interpersonal service work logic should be less supportive of state intervention than their destination class, but more so than the immobile in the logic of origin. In short, as with vertical mobility, we expect mobile individuals to hold more moderate preferences than the immobile in the class they are entering or exiting.

DATA AND METHODS

The analyses in this paper rely on data from the BHPS. This survey includes longitudinal information on respondents' occupation, which allows for the operationalization of Oesch's class scheme, as well as items capturing preferences on economic issues. Moreover, the BHPS is a long panel—the analyses rely on data for the period 1991 to 2007—which increases the likelihood of observing class mobility.

⁴ As I explain in further detail in the 'Data and Methods' section, I implement a simplified division of work logic, separating the independent and organizational from the technical and interpersonal service logics, because this facilitates the analyses of mobility and the test of the gradient constraint hypothesis, but also because it is between these two groups that we expect the greatest differences in economic attitudes, as explained above. In any case, additional analyses and robustness checks (summarized in Appendices B.4, B.5 and B.6) indicate that the results are robust to alternative operationalizations of work logic and class location.

The British case is particularly well-suited for studying the impact of class trajectories for several reasons. First, in terms of occupational change and employment growth, Britain's productive structure underwent a process of occupational polarization, with considerable growth among both professional and low-skilled service occupations (Oesch, 2013; Oesch & Rodríguez Menés, 2010). This should provide a larger number of observations in typically post-industrial occupations, and hence greater variation in terms of the key variable of interest: social class. Moreover, in Britain, occupational turnover is comparatively higher than in other European economies (Longhi & Brynin, 2010). This increases the likelihood of observing intra-generational mobility in the sample under consideration.

Another advantage of drawing on the BHPS is that it contains multiple survey items to operationalize economic preferences. The survey includes six items that capture attitudes and perceptions regarding economic and social policy preferences in waves 1, 3, 5, 7, 10, 14 and 17 of the panel.⁵ These items have been extensively used to measure economic orientations (Evans & Heath, 1995; Evans & Neundorf, 2018; Heath, Evans, & Martin, 1994). While two of these items measure perceptions of economic and social fairness in the country, the other four relate more directly to attitudes on economic and social policy. A factor analysis of these six different items (in the pooled dataset and separately by wave) reveals that the items related to perceptions of economic and social fairness and those related to economic and social policy preferences load on two different factors.⁶ Therefore, the operationalization of economic preferences is based on the four items that refer more directly to policy preferences. These items asked respondents whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement: (i) '*Private enterprise is the best way to solve Britain's*

⁵ Waves in which these preference items were not included are excluded from the analyses.

⁶ The factor analysis returns two factors with an Eigenvalue higher than 1. The factor loadings are summarized in Appendix A.2.

economic problems', (ii) *'Major public services and industries ought to be in state ownership'*, (iii) *'It is the government's responsibility to provide a job for everyone who wants one'*, and (iv) *'Strong trade unions are needed to protect the working conditions and wages of employees'*. Economic preferences are operationalized by averaging individuals' responses over these four items. This operationalization maintains the range of the original response scale (from 1 to 5) where higher values indicate opposition to state intervention and redistributive mechanisms.⁷

The operationalization of respondents' class location and class (im)mobility takes as a starting point Oesch's eight-class scheme. I create two variables on the basis of the scheme's two dimensions: one variable captures vertical class location, and another variable operationalizes horizontal class location. Vertical class location separates occupations into two different groups, one comprises low- and unskilled occupations, and the other includes professional occupations. Horizontal location is also operationalized into two different groups of work logics, occupations are assigned to a horizontal class location depending on whether they fall in the independent and organizational work logic, or in technical or interpersonal service logic.

Class mobility (vertical or horizontal) captures whether a respondent has changed her class location between two waves of the panel (i.e. the time points at which social class and preferences are measured). Vertical and horizontal mobility are measured separately by different indicators. A respondent is coded as being upwardly mobile when he has moved from a low- or unskilled occupational class into a professional class (independently of the work logic of the class of origin or destination). A change in class location in the opposite direction (professional to low-skilled) is accordingly coded as downward mobility. The operationalization of mobility also needs to account

⁷ Respondents with a missing value in any of these items receive the mean score from valid responses. Details on the operationalization of all variables can be found in Appendix A.1.

for the situation of immobile individuals. To test the gradient constraint hypothesis, it is necessary to compare the preferences of the class mobile to those of the immobile in their class of origin and destination. For this reason, on top of the two categories capturing upward and downward mobility, the vertical mobility variable includes another two categories: one for the immobile in professional occupations and another one for the immobile in low-skilled and unskilled occupations.

Coding horizontal mobility is more complex since there are four different work logics between which respondents can move. Creating one indicator for each of the different patterns of horizontal mobility would leave us with 12 different transitions (with a reduced number of observations for some of these), and the additional four immobile groups (one for each work logic). With 16 different categories of mobility and immobility it would be difficult to visualize the pattern proposed in the gradient constraint hypothesis. For this reason, as indicated above, I simplify horizontal mobility by aggregating work logics into two groups: the independent and organizational work logics as one category, and the technical and interpersonal service logic in another category.⁸ As a consequence, mobility can take two different patterns: mobility into the independent and organizational logic (when respondents enter either of these two work logics from a technical or interpersonal service occupation), and mobility into the technical and service logic (for respondents entering from the independent or organizational work logic).⁹ This aggregation inevitably means a loss of some of the complexity of mobility. However, it facilitates the interpretation and test of the gradient constraint hypothesis. Moreover, the aggregation of logics is

⁸ This division is captured by the solid vertical line in Table 1.

⁹ Even if the main analyses rely on this simplified version of Oesch's work logic, additional estimations implement alternative operationalizations as robustness checks. I additionally estimate the fixed-effects models with class operationalized through the eight-class scheme, as well as with horizontal class location divided into the four different work logics (in Appendices B.4 and B.5). Moreover, I also analyze class mobility by capturing mobility into one of the four work logics, and immobility in each of these work logics (in Appendix B.6). These alternative estimations support the main results presented in the paper.

theoretically and empirically justified. The aggregation of the organizational and independent work logic is in line with Esping-Andersen's (1992, 1993) proposal to separate managers from professionals. The embedment of managers in bureaucratic structures, their supervisory responsibilities and authority over other workers brings them closer to the interests of the employers. Professionals, on the other hand, frequently stand outside the lines of command and tend to have little control over other workers. Following an asset-based distinction of classes, managers, who control organizational assets also fall closer to employers, who hold capital assets, in contrast to professionals and workers whose assets are expertise and skills.

Previous studies and the data at hand also indicate that the main horizontal divisions on economic attitudes appear between the independent and organizational logic, on the one hand, and the technical and interpersonal service logic, on the other.¹⁰ This operationalization also facilitates the formulation and testing of expectations concerning the impact of horizontal mobility. While moving to the independent or organizational logics should be associated to stronger opposition to state intervention (a shift to the right), the opposite is true for transitioning into a technical or interpersonal service occupation (a shift to the left). The horizontal mobility variable also accounts for immobility by assigning one category to immobile in the independent and organizational logics, and another one to immobile in the technical and interpersonal service logics. In all models, respondents who are not employed at the time they are interviewed are excluded from the analyses, since mobility cannot be coded for them. Non-citizens are also excluded since patterns of social mobility usually differ for migrants (Platt, 2005).

¹⁰ This is also apparent in the analyses estimating the economic preferences of each of Oesch's eight classes in appendix B.4.

The analyses study the link between social class, class mobility and economic preferences in two steps. In a first step, I estimate fixed-effects models that assess how within-individual variation in class location relates to economic preferences, while relaxing the assumption that time-invariant characteristics of the individual are independent of the explanatory variables. To make the operationalization of class location in the fixed-effects models comparable to the operationalization of mobility, I code class location by separating the two dimensions of the class structure, and distinguishing two groups within each dimension. Vertical class location captures whether an individual holds a low- or unskilled class (=0) or a professional or semi-professional class (=1). Horizontal class location separates classes in the independent and organizational logic (=1) from the technical and interpersonal service logic (=0).¹¹

In a second step, I estimate random-effects models on the indicators of mobility to test the expectations from the gradient constraint hypothesis. These analyses rely on random- rather than fixed-effects models because the latter do not allow for a comparison between mobile and immobile individuals. Because fixed-effects models are based on within-individual variation only, they provide an estimate of the association between mobility and preferences based on the individuals who experience mobility. Respondents who are consistently class immobile along the panel do not contribute to the fixed-effects estimation. This is why a comparison between the class mobile and immobile has to rely on random-effects models. In these models I include the age and gender of the respondent as control variables, as well as wave and region fixed-effects. I do not include additional variables as controls to avoid including bad controls (i.e. mediators in the association between class mobility and preferences) (Angrist & Pischke, 2009). Additional

¹¹ I also estimate these fixed-effects models by identifying all four different work logics and the eight classes. The results are consistent with the results from the simpler operationalization, as shown in appendices B.4 and B.5.

robustness checks summarized in the appendix (Table B.1) estimate models including controls for educational attainment and part-time employment.

RESULTS

Before going into the results of the different analyses conducted, it is worth noting that social mobility is not an uncommon phenomenon in the sample under study. Almost 24 per cent of the sample experienced some form of social mobility (vertical, horizontal, or both). Comparing the two forms of mobility, horizontal mobility is slightly more common than vertical mobility. About 15.15 per cent of the sample under study changed from an occupation in the organizational or independent work logic to an occupation in the service or technical logic (or vice versa).¹² The rate of vertical mobility is marginally lower, 13.91 per cent of the sample experienced either upward or downward social mobility during the period under study.

Table 2 presents the results from three different models that regress economic preferences on vertical and horizontal class location. Model 1 implements an OLS estimation (with clustered standard errors at the individual level) which is based only on between-individual variation and is, hence, comparable to most existing cross-sectional analyses of the relationship between social class and economic preferences. As we would expect, the higher-grade classes (professionals and associate or semi-professionals) show greater opposition to state intervention in the economy than the lower-grade classes (the low- and unskilled workers). Respondents that are self-employed or employees within the organizational work logic are also more favorable to market-liberal solutions than employees in the technical or interpersonal service work logic. Interestingly, the difference

¹² The distribution of both the vertical and horizontal mobility variables in the sample is summarized in Appendix A.1.

based on horizontal work logic is larger than the one associated to vertical class location. The latter amounts to 0.148 points on the response scale, while the former is of 0.243 points.

Table 2: OLS, Random- and Fixed-effects Regression Models on Economic Preferences

Variables	(1) OLS model	(2) RE model	(3) FE model
Vertical class location (Ref: low- and unskilled workers)			
Professionals and semi-professionals	0.148*** (0.010)	0.079*** (0.007)	0.026** (0.008)
Horizontal class location (Ref: Technical and interpersonal service work logic)			
Independent and organizational work logic	0.243*** (0.010)	0.114*** (0.006)	0.018* (0.008)
Male	0.144*** (0.011)	0.130*** (0.009)	
Age	0.005*** (0.000)	0.005*** (0.000)	0.004 (0.010)
Wave fixed-effects	✓	✓	✓
Region fixed-effects	✓	✓	✓
Constant	2.533*** (0.018)	2.612*** (0.015)	2.764*** (0.313)
Observations	40,621	40,621	40,621
R-squared	0.093		0.021
Number of individuals	13,898	13,898	13,898

Source: BHPS 1991-2007

Standard errors in parentheses (Clustered standard errors at the individual level in model 1)

*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05, + p<0.10

Model 2 presents the results from a random-effects estimation, which is based on a weighted combination of between- and within-individual variation. The coefficients for class location are now smaller, which indicates that within-individual class differences in preferences are smaller than between-individual differences. In this estimation we find, again a greater difference along the horizontal dimension (in comparison to the vertical), which is in line with recent literature that has documented the relevance of horizontal class distinctions in post-industrial societies also on economic issues (Güveli et al., 2007; Oesch & Rennwald, 2018). In

fact, additional analyses (included in appendix B.4) indicate that there are statistically significant differences in preferences between the eight classes, with self-employed professionals and large employers, and managers as the classes most favorable towards market solutions, and (on the other extreme) production and service workers as the most favorable to state intervention.¹³ To provide a point of comparison for the size of these vertical and horizontal differences, we might contrast them to differences based on educational attainment, a variable that has been frequently addressed in the literature.¹⁴ The difference in economic preferences along the vertical class division is almost twice as large as the difference based on increasing educational attainment (from one ISCED level to the next), while for horizontal class divisions the difference in preferences is close to three times as large as the coefficient associated to educational attainment.

Because models 1 and 2 take into account between-individual variation in class location, they do not overcome the shortcomings of previous cross-sectional analyses. Model 3, instead, fully exploits the structure of panel data to fit a fixed-effects model, which controls for all observed and unobserved time-constant heterogeneity between respondents, such as individual abilities', motivation, or personality traits that could guide them to select into specific occupations. Even after controlling for this heterogeneity, we still observe differences in economic preferences associated to class location, albeit of smaller size than those estimated in the random-effects models. The higher-grade classes still appear as significantly more likely to oppose state intervention than lower-grade classes, and employees in the organizational work logic and the self-employed are also more likely to hold right-wing economic preferences. In this estimation, it is

¹³ Appendices B.4 and B.5 replicate the analyses in table 2 with alternative operationalizations of class location: with the eight individual classes in Oesch's scheme (B.4) and with horizontal location divided into the four different work logics (B.5). These alternative estimations support the results presented and discussed above. The main text presents the results from the simplified operationalization to keep the consistency with the analyses of mobility.

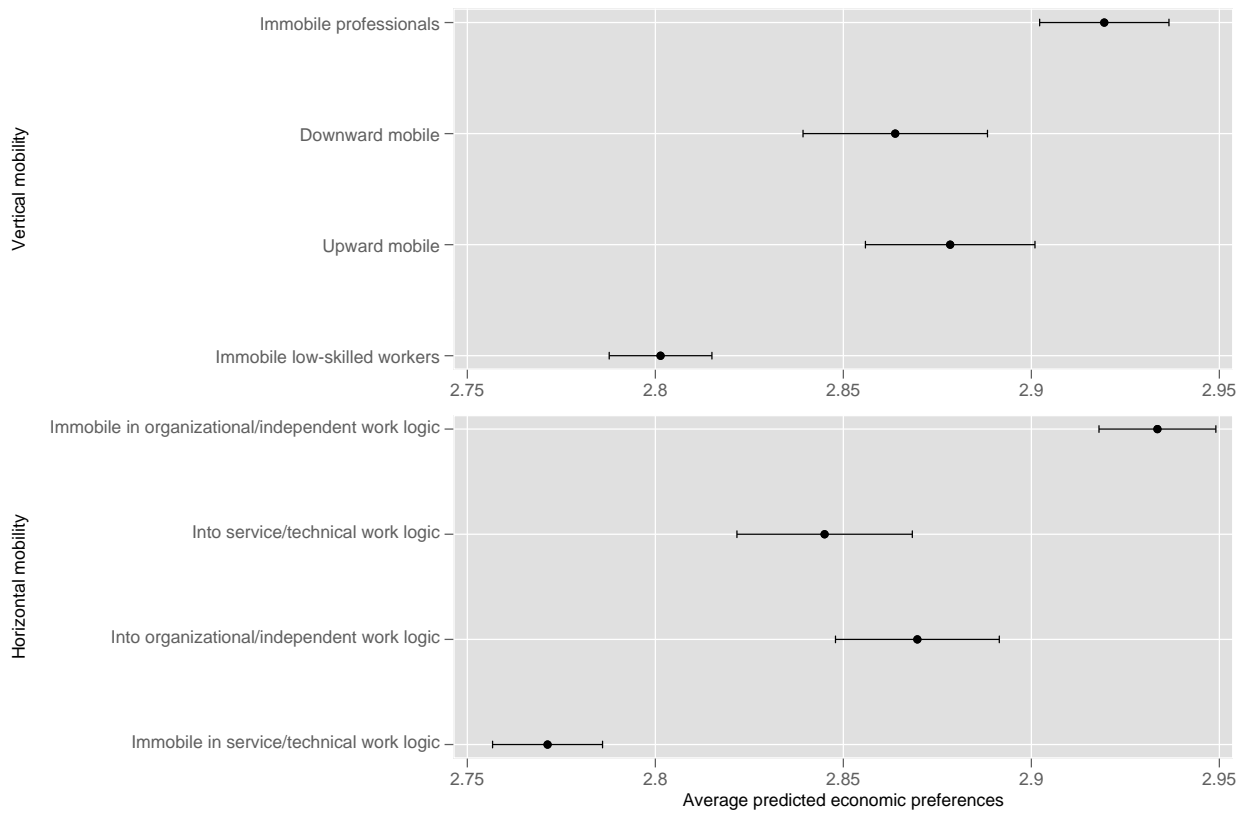
¹⁴ Models introducing the additional control for educational attainment are presented in appendix B.1.

now the coefficient for vertical class location that is slightly larger than the one for horizontal class location. Comparing the coefficients from models 1 and 2, the reduction in size is larger for horizontal class location. This could indicate that self-selection or selection on third variables plays a greater role for horizontal than for vertical class location.

Although the magnitude of the differences in economic preferences in the fixed-effects models might appear unimpressive, they are still larger than differences based on educational attainment (which does not reach conventional levels of statistical significance in the fixed-effects estimation).¹⁵ Moreover, it is noteworthy to find that systematic differences in economic preferences still appear between classes, even after accounting for all persistent individual heterogeneity. The reduction in the strength of the association between class and economic preferences in fixed-effects models can be attributed to the implicit control for all the constant between-unit heterogeneity, but this weakening of the association is also in line with the theoretical proposition of the gradient constraint hypothesis. Since model 3 is exclusively based on within-individual variation in class and preferences, only respondents who change their class location throughout the survey will contribute to the estimation. Following the gradient constraint hypothesis, we expect these individuals to hold more moderate preferences than respondents immobile in either their class of origin or destination. To provide a better test for the gradient constraint hypothesis, the next analyses compare, precisely, the preferences of the class mobile to those of the immobile.

¹⁵ The coefficient associated to educational attainment is presented in Appendix B.1..

Figure 3: Average predicted economic preferences by vertical and horizontal mobility status with 95 per cent confidence intervals



Note: Estimates are based on a random-effects model introducing controls for age, gender, wave and region fixed-effects. The full models are presented in appendix B.2.

Figure 3 presents estimated average economic preferences of individuals who are immobile in their class location, and of respondents who were vertically (upper panel) and horizontally mobile (lower panel). In contrast to the models in table 2, which captured static class location at the time of the interview, this estimation includes as the key explanatory variable respondents' mobility status—that is, whether they changed their class between surveys.¹⁶ The two panels

¹⁶ In these models mobility measures whether respondents experienced a change in class location since the previous wave, while economic preferences are measured at the current wave. As in the models in table 2, this estimation introduces controls for gender, age, wave fixed-effects and region fixed-effects. Further robustness checks in the appendix (B.2) include additional controls for educational attainment and full-time vs. part-time employment. These additional estimations do not alter the substantive conclusions in this section.

provide evidence in support for the gradient constraint hypothesis: individuals who have experienced mobility appear more moderate in their preferences than their immobile counterparts.

The upper panel shows that immobile low- and unskilled workers are the most supportive of state intervention in the economy, while those immobile in the higher-grade classes are the most opposed to it. The difference between these two groups is of 0.118 points in the response scale, and statistically significant at the 0.001 level. Workers who have experienced upward mobility into a (semi-)professional class are on average 0.077 points less supportive of state intervention than their low-skilled peers in the origin class. A similar pattern in the opposite direction is observed for professionals who experienced downward mobility into a lower-grade class, who are 0.056 points more supportive of redistribution than their former professional peers. Both of these comparisons, are statistically significant at the 0.001 level. This suggests that, indeed, the preferences of the mobile bear some resemblance to the class they move into, but are still distinct from those of their peers in this class of destination. When comparing the two mobile groups, we see that upward and downward mobile respondents hold very similar preferences.

The same pattern of the mobile holding more moderate preferences than the immobile in their classes of origin or destination is repeated for horizontal mobility (lower panel). Immobile respondents in the independent and organizational work logics are the least supportive of state intervention in the economy, while the opposite is true for respondents in the technical and interpersonal service logics. The difference between the two groups is of 0.162 points, and statistically significant at the 0.001 level. This divergence is marginally larger than the one observed between the two vertically immobile groups. Compared to the immobile in the technical and interpersonal service work logics, mobile into the organizational and independent logics are 0.098 points more opposed to state intervention. Those who have been mobile into the technical

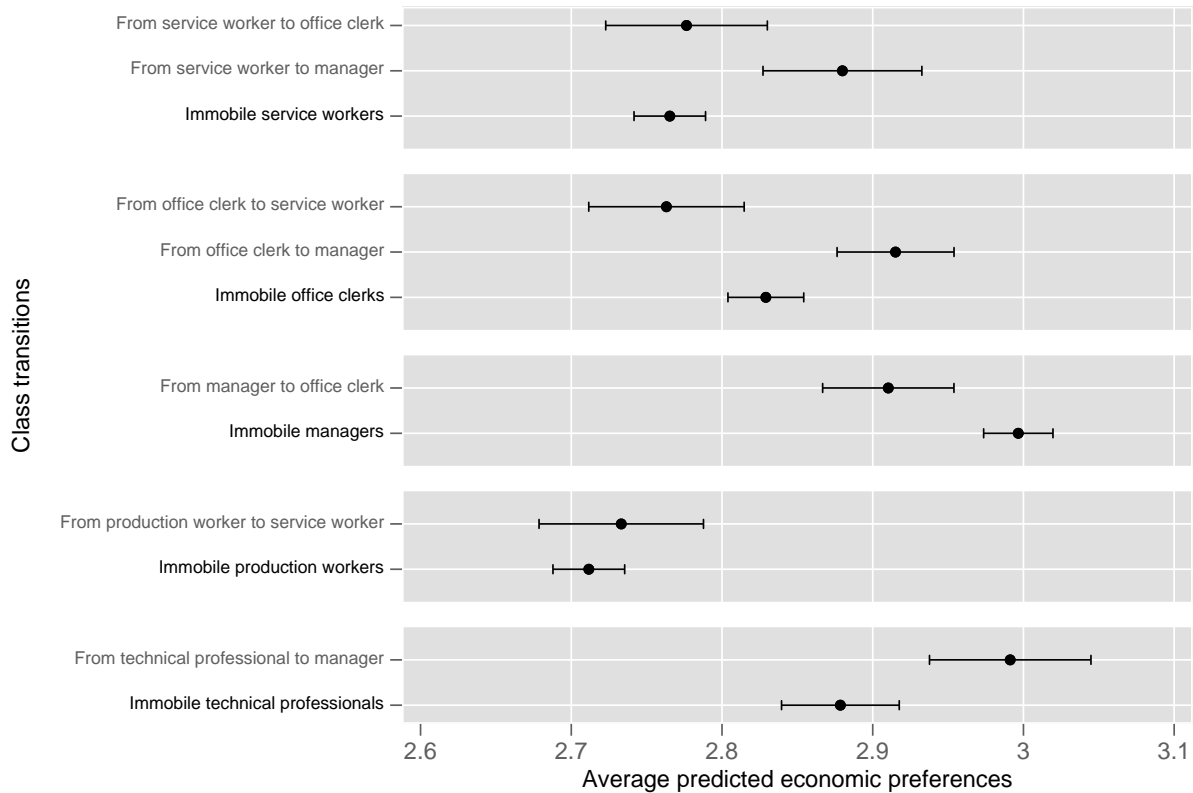
and service logics are more opposed to redistribution (0.074 points) than their peers in their class of destination. Also in this case, the two mobile groups hold very similar preferences, with the mobile into the organizational and independent work logics holding a marginally more right-wing economic position (although this difference does not reach conventional levels of statistical significance). The analyses of mobility provide further support for the relevance of horizontal class position and horizontal mobility as determinants of economic preferences, with differences along the horizontal dimension being comparable in size to those found along vertical class divisions.¹⁷¹⁸

The analyses above addressed the two forms of class mobility, vertical and horizontal, separately. With an eight-class scheme, studying all possible class transitions (8x7 transitions and 8 immobile categories) introduces much complexity to the analyses. Moreover, some of the transitions display only a low number of occurrences in the sample and, hence, their association to preferences cannot be precisely estimated. Figure 4, however, presents the results from an analysis of specific class transitions which present, at least, 300 occurrences in the sample. Some of these class transitions entail only vertical mobility (e.g. going from being an office clerk to a manager), some only horizontal mobility (e.g. technical professionals who become managers), and one entails both (from service worker to manager). In each panel of the figure, I plot average predicted preferences of mobile workers after they have experienced a transition, which are displayed just above the predicted preferences for the immobile in their class of origin (to provide a meaningful point of comparison).

¹⁷ Appendix B.2 presents an additional model that adds controls for educational attainment and part-time employment. The results in this model are also consistent with the gradient constraint hypothesis, portraying similar patterns to those reflected in figure 3. While the coefficients associated to horizontal mobility remain virtually unchanged, the coefficient for the comparison of the vertically immobile in the lower-grade and higher-grade classes is reduced, although still statistically significant at the 0.001 level.

¹⁸ Appendix B.6 presents the results from an estimation with an alternative operationalization of horizontal mobility that introduces further disaggregation of work logic. These results also indicate that mobile individuals hold economic preferences between the immobile in their classes of origin and destination.

Figure 4: Average predicted economic preferences by specific class transitions with 95 per cent confidence intervals



Note: Estimates are based on a random-effects model introducing controls for age, gender, wave and region fixed-effects. The full models are presented in appendix B.3.

These results confirm the findings from the previous analyses. Individuals who experienced upward mobility, like office clerks or service workers who entered the managerial class, are less favorable to state intervention in the economy than their respective classes of origin. On the contrary, managers who experienced downward mobility into the clerical class, are more favorable to state intervention than immobile managers. Specific horizontal transitions are also associated to different economic preferences, although, in this case, some of them do not reach conventional levels of statistical significance. Technical professionals who enter the managerial class and office clerks who move into the service working class are significantly more opposed

and favorable (respectively) to state intervention than their peers in their classes of origin. The horizontal transitions from service worker to office clerk or from production to service worker are, however, not associated to significant deviations from the preferences of the classes of origin.

Taken together, the fixed-effects estimation and the analyses of mobility provide compelling evidence about the impact of social class on economic preferences net of selection. However, as an additional robustness check, we can also assess whether individuals select into specific social classes when they experience a change in their economic preferences. We could consider that individuals who change their economic preferences—and experience a mismatch between their preferences and class location—could attempt to change their social class to match these preferences. This would be the case if individuals select into a specific occupation as a response to their change in economic orientations. To check for this, I estimate a model that regresses social class on change in economic preferences. If there were a selection mechanism at work, we would expect individuals who change their economic preferences to enter a social class that is in better alignment with their new economic orientation. This, of course, would assume that it is possible and easy for individuals to change their occupation and class location in response to their preferences, which appears unlikely. The analyses included in Appendices B.7 and B.8 indicate that past changes in economic preferences do not explain current class location of respondents. Neither in random-effects nor in fixed-effects models do we find support for the idea that individuals adapt their class location as a response to their changing economic preferences. This, thus, provides further support for an actual effect of socialization within social classes.

CONCLUSION

This paper has addressed social class and its impact on economic preferences from a longitudinal perspective, analyzing first within-individual variation in class location through time and then intra-generational class mobility. Rather surprisingly, there are few studies implementing such an approach to the analysis of social class and class mobility. A longitudinal analysis of class and mobility has allowed us: (i) to assess whether class differences observed in cross-sectional data are the outcome of social class having an effect on preferences (rather than of like-minded individuals selecting into similar occupations), and (ii) to compare the preferences of the class mobile to those of the class immobile.

The novelty of the analyses carried out stems not only from their longitudinal approach, but also from implementing a post-industrial perspective that addresses both vertical and horizontal class divisions. The results indicate that both dimensions are relevant in accounting for economic preferences. Even if the vertical dimension has been the primary focus of most analyses of economic attitudes and, also, class voting, both within-individual variation in horizontal class location and horizontal mobility are associated to differences in economic preferences. In some cases, class differences along the horizontal dimension are even larger than those along the vertical dimension. This is in line with a growing body of research that has underlined the importance of accounting for such horizontal class divisions in post-industrial economies (Güveli, 2006; Oesch, 2006; Oesch & Rennwald, 2018).

The first part of the analyses, which estimated class differences in preferences based on between- and within-individual variation separately, indicate that social class does have a (re)socialization effect on economic orientations, since class differences remain even after controlling for all individual time-invariant heterogeneity. However, the comparison of the

different models also showed that class differences in economic preferences are smaller when only within-individual variation is considered. This suggests that some selection might be taking place. Moreover, the results suggest that selection could be stronger for horizontal class differentiation. While, overall, the coefficients capturing differences in economic preferences along the vertical and horizontal class dimension decreased from the between- to the within-effects estimation, this decrease was larger for the horizontal dimension. The discrepancies between the between- and within-effects estimations can also be explained by the gradient constraint hypothesis, which receives further support from the analyses of mobility. Focusing on class mobility, we observed that people who changed their class location display levels of support for state intervention that fall between those of the immobile in their class of origin and those in their class of destination. Thus, the mobile tended to display more moderate preferences than the class immobile.

Taken together, the analyses show that social mobility is related to different preferences and that classes differ in their preferences even when controlling for all constant individual heterogeneity. This points to an actual effect of social class, and goes beyond most of the recent research on class preferences and voting in post-industrial societies. However, the results also provide a relevant implication for aggregate levels of class conflict since increasing social mobility can undermine the distinctiveness of classes' preferences. Hence, while the results provide further evidence of class effects, they also indicate that social mobility can attenuate class heterogeneity. Indeed, intra-generational social mobility is not an uncommon phenomenon in the British case. Almost a quarter of the sample under study underwent a change in their class location (vertically, horizontally, or both) in the period under study. While the higher occupational turnover in Britain could suggest rates of intra-generational mobility to be lower in other countries (Longhi & Brynin, 2010), recent literature has argued that post-industrial economies are characterized by greater

instability in employment careers, which could be further associated to more frequent changes in class location. An important area for future research lies in extending these analyses to other countries for which panel data is available, and assess whether mobility has the potential to undermine class distinctiveness also in other contexts. Moreover, a logical next step is to further establish the link between mobility and within-individual variation in social class to party choice. From the current analyses, we can expect the distinctiveness of classes' positions on economic issues to become more diffuse where intra-generational mobility is greater. If this is further associated to smaller differences in voting behavior—as we would expect this to be—social mobility could undermine the class basis of political conflict.

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