

A new wave of solo self-employed workers?

A thesis exploring the differences in voting behavior between self-employed workers

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Abstract

It is often believed that the self-employed are a homogenous class that are most likely conservative right-wing voters. Flexibilization of labor markets and the rise of solo self-employed workers has changed this. A new wave of solo self-employed workers has entered the self-employed class and made it more heterogenous. This research explores the voting behavior of self-employed workers with theories from both an economic and cultural perspective. Using data from the ESS round 9, the voting behavior of self-employed workers from eight different countries was analyzed using multiple variables to account for both economic and cultural theories. The findings suggests that the self-employed are a heterogenous group that vote differently, with solo self-employed workers being significantly more likely to vote for new-left wing parties compared to self-employed workers with employees, and that the new wave of solo self-employed workers are even more likely to vote for new-left wing parties compared to the old wave of solo self-employed workers. Furthermore, the impact of workplace autonomy on voting behavior was also analyzed. The literature on autonomy and voting behavior is scarce, but most studies believe that autonomy can be seen as a predictor of right-wing voting behavior. In contrast to previous studies, this thesis found that autonomy is actually a predictor of new-left wing voting when analyzing solo self-employed workers, but not when analyzing the self-employed workers with employees. The findings thus suggest that autonomy means something different for the solo self-employed workers than that it does for the other self-employed workers.

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Introduction

The flexibilization of the labor markets has led to a resurgence of self-employed workers. This is one of the most significant developments that has taken place in the labor market (Buschoff and Schmidt, 2009). The amount of workers with self-employment status was in decline for most of the 20th century. However, the past few decades we have seen a sharp increase in self-employed workers. There were about one million self-employed workers in the Netherlands in 2003, of whom two-thirds were solo self-employed (SSE) workers (Zzp in Dutch). The number of SSE workers has increased with about half a million since 2003, while the amount of self-employed workers with employees has only barely increased with 30.000. At this moment there are close to 1.5 million self-employed workers in the Netherlands. More than three quarters (1.15 million) of these workers are SSE workers (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2021).

It is not just the Netherlands where we see this fast growth of SSE workers. In the entire EU the amount of SSE workers has increased from 12.9 million in 2000 to 16.7 in 2019 (Eurostat, 2019). Is this new wave of solo self-employed workers similar to the previous generation of self-employed workers? Or are there significant differences between the old and new generation?

In the traditional literature of social classes, self-employed workers (i.e., craftsmen and farmers) are commonly thought to belong to the “petty bourgeois” or small employer classes (Jansen, 2017). This approach sees the self-employed as a relatively homogenous social class with shared interests as employers and entrepreneurs. They would be opposed to labor market interventions, such as wage regulations and high taxes. This is because they depend on flexible labor markets and low cost workers in order to effectively run their businesses. They would also generally be against redistribution policies, such as taxes on inheritance or property taxes, as they would traditionally donate their businesses to their children (Jansen, 2017). These factors would cause them to most likely vote for right-wing parties, because they advocate for more flexible labor markets and less distributive policies. Multiple studies have confirmed this traditional image that stems from class voting theory (Evans, 1999; Evans and de Graaf, 2013). However, this image does obviously not apply to SSE workers, because they do not have employees and thus they do not depend on low cost workers. Furthermore, this traditional image applies even less to this potential new wave of solo self-employed workers, as this group tends to work on their own account and are often in profession with low capital requirements. The new wave can be found in the ‘modern’ service sector branches (such as education, health and financial services) (Buschoff and Schmidt, 2009; Jansen, 2016). Because of the fact that the traditional image does not apply to the new wave, it can be questioned whether we can assume that they would prefer right-wing parties.

Rueda (2005) has an explanation for the tendency on why self-employed workers vote right wing. The argument is that workers can be divided into two categories: insiders and outsiders. Insiders are people with a stable job who mostly care about their own job security. Outsiders, on the other hand, do not have a stable job and care much more about unemployment in general. There is also a category called the upscale groups (employers, the upper middle-class, and the business and financial communities). The argument follows economic voting tradition, where it is assumed that there is a relationship between an individual’s economic interest and the party he or she is likely to vote for. The insider-outsider model implies that, sometimes, conservative parties who cater to the upscale communities pursue labor policies that are more beneficial to outsiders than insiders. This is due to lower job protection being favored by both the upscale groups (who want flexible hiring and firing) and outsiders. This might seem paradoxical, however, having upscale groups as their core

voter base makes it difficult for conservative parties to promote the interest of insiders. However, as mentioned previously, outsiders favor lower levels of insider job protection. By ignoring insiders' interests in the labor market, right-wing conservative parties might be able to attract outsiders. This happens despite the fact that their tax policy is not beneficial for the outsiders. In this case, self-employed workers are either part of the upscale groups if their business is very successful or part of the outsider group if they were forced to become self-employed due to lack of available jobs. Whether it is the former or the latter does not matter: self-employed workers are expected to vote right-wing conservative more often than voting for left-wing social democrats (Rueda, 2005).

An additional economic approach to self-employment links solo self-employment (SSE) to higher labor market risks. Some SSE workers are on the balance of self-employment, dependent-employment and unemployment. This is a group that is rapidly growing due to the flexibilization of the labor market. SSE workers have higher economic risks, because they do not build up pensions and are often underinsured. In this perspective, self-employment is often forced and leads to very different predictions regarding political preferences. Jansen (2019) finds that, on one hand, SSE workers are more orientated toward rightist positions regarding welfare policies and they tend to prefer right-wing parties. On the other hand, SSE workers are even more supportive towards new-left parties compared to the average employee. This makes little sense for people who are being forced into self-employment, because they should not have the income or market position to rationally vote for the new-left. So perhaps there is a different explanation?

A possible explanation for this phenomenon is that culture has overtaken class as the most dominant predictor for voting preferences. Clark and Lipset (1991) concluded in their influential paper that new patterns of social stratification are emerging. The factors that are most important when considering the voting behavior of SSE workers are: *"the decline of economic determinism, and the increased importance of social and cultural factors"* (Clark and Lipset, 1991). They point out that people still speak of left and right, but that the definitions are changing. The old left that stresses class related issues still exists. However, a new left has emerged that puts the focus on more social and cultural issues such as climate change and immigration.

However, this does not mean that economic factors are no longer of any value. More recent research has shown that class voting did not necessarily go away (van der Waal, Achterberg and Houtman, 2007). These authors argue that class voting has actually increased over the course of the 20th century. The decrease in a left-wing working class and a right-wing middle class has not been caused by a decrease in class voting, but by a steep increase in cultural voting that has been driven by educational differences. In the end, it is not low income that makes people become culturally conservative, but lower amounts of education. And it is not the rich, but the well-educated who are more progressive in their view of society (van der Waal, Achterberg and Houtman, 2007).

There is more evidence that cultural voting is important. Kriesi (1989), for instance, made a distinction between two different classes: technocrats and specialists. Specialists here are the 'new' class that try to defend their own and their clients' relative autonomy against interventions (Güveli et al., 2007). These are the young specialists in social and cultural services, and some of the young administrative workers in public service. Could it be possible that the new wave of SSE workers belong for a large part to this new class? This might be the case as the number of self-employed workers in this field has increased. In 2018 more than 20% of the self-employed workers in the EU was labeled as professionals, while only 29% was in the 'traditional' professions (craft and related workers/skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers, see figure 1). This shift in employment type of self-employed workers could explain the contradicting results found on SSE workers, because they personally benefit from economic right-wing policy. This is due to flexible labor markets giving them

more and better opportunities. However, they also hold post material/cultural values that causes them to associate more with the 'new' left.

Figure 1. self-employed workers divided by profession (Eurostat, 2019).



There seems to be a tension in the literature between cultural voting and class voting. This tension might not only exist in the literature, but also in real life. One group might become self-employed in order to find opportunities for responsibility and profit, where other self-employed workers seek autonomy in order to avoid working for a boss or be a small entity in a big company. Research has been done on self-employed workers and the group seems to be very different from the classic idea of a self-employed worker. There is evidence that self-employed workers are not a homogenous group, but that there is a divide in the self-employed worker class. Autonomy might be an explanation for this divide (Jansen, 2017). On one hand, one group of the self-employed workers strives for profit and responsibility, making them more likely to vote for right-wing parties. On the other hand, another group seeks autonomy from bosses and big corporations, seeing autonomy as a form of personal freedom which is associated with post-materialism (Inglehart, 1991). Research has shown that autonomy is an important reason as to why people start their own business or become self-employed (Gelderen en Jansen, 2006; Taylor, 1996).

Based on the expected heterogeneity in the self-employed workers group and the tension in the literature between cultural and class voting, this paper will answer the following research question:

Research question: Can we define a new wave of (solo) self-employed workers that vote based on cultural/post-materialistic values instead of economic values?

With this question this paper will try to contribute to the existing debate on class versus culture voting. It seems that class was the most dominant factor until the late 20th century. However, if a shift towards cultural voting is happening, then we are most likely to find evidence for it under the SSE worker group in western and northern Europe. Due to the high average educational level and the large service industry, western/northern Europe could be considered an ideal case for cultural voting. The paper also contributes to the research on SSE workers. SSE workers are a group that is rapidly growing in European countries, such as the Netherlands, across nearly all professional fields (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2021). This growth could possibly continue given the results of the latest elections in the Netherlands, in which both liberal parties (VVD and D66) came out on top. Understanding what reasons drive their voting behavior is important for political parties in order to explore the issues that the solo self-employed workers face.

Literature review

In order to understand voting behavior among SSE workers, we need to understand why someone's economic and cultural position in society influences their voting behavior. To accomplish this, we shall first research the traditional class voting literature and take a closer look as to why class was almost declared dead at the end of the 20th century. Furthermore, we will discover that cultural factors are likely to play a large role in the reasons as to why class voting is less relevant today. Therefore, we will also research the traditional literature about voting from a cultural or postmaterialist perspective. Concludevily, this literature review will help us understand what is already known about voting behavior, which will be used as the basis of new hypotheses and statistical tests.

Traditional class voting and cultural voting

Class voting, as a way of predicting voting behavior, originally comes from the post-war period, in which manual labor workers were more expected to vote for left-wing parties than non-manual workers. Traditionally, left-wing parties are in favor of redistribution of wealth by a central government, while right-wing parties are not. Left-wing parties are thus more likely to implement higher taxes and higher worker security, and to support collective organizations such as labor unions (Nieuwbeerta & de Graaf, 1999). Thus, the concept of social economic class was developed in order to effectively measure the position of a person in society and what their 'natural' vote would be. The differences between the economic situations of these classes allows us to make predictions about voting behaviors of the members of the classes. However, the very simple manual/non-manual distinction fails to capture these economic situations adequately. Therefore, more distinctions are made in order to get a better picture (Nieuwbeerta & de Graaf, 1999). The traditional class scheme that is most used in the literature and still the basis for most modern social economic class schemes is the EGP (Erikson-Goldthorpe-Portocarero) scheme (see table 1). In the following paragraph, I will briefly discuss the classes of this scheme before continuing to more modern ways of defining classes.

The traditional literature makes a major distinction between employer and employee classes. Employer classes, which are the petty bourgeoisie and farmers, are expected to have the least left-wing voting behavior of all classes (Nieuwbeerta & de Graaf, 1999). This is because left-wing distributive policies such as wage regulations and inheritance tax would cut into their profits and prevent them from giving their wealth to their family. In other words, employer classes would be more likely to vote for right-wing parties because of their economic self-interest. On the other hand, manual employee classes with a labor contract are expected to have the most left-wing voting behavior, because the left-wing parties fight for their contract rights. An exception in these manual employee classes are agriculture laborers: A portion of agriculture laborers are the sons of farmers, and with the prospect of inheriting the farm in the near future, they are unlikely to vote for left-wing parties. In this case, we are applying the idea that voting behavior is not only based on current socio-economic class, but also on future prospects of being in a higher social economic class (Nieuwbeerta & de Graaf, 1999). Furthermore, there is also the service employee class. Since this class enjoys significantly better labor conditions than manual classes, they wish to uphold the status quo and therefore they care less about redistributions. . Thus, the expectation is that this class will constitute a conservative element within modern societies, and that members of this class are more likely to vote for a right-wing party. Finally, there are routine non-manual workers whose employment conditions lie between manual workers and service class workers. Therefore, it is expected that this

class votes more left-wing than service class workers but more right-wing than manual class workers (Nieuwbeerta & de Graaf, 1999).

Table 1. simplified EGP Scheme of class (Erikson, Goldthorpe & Portocarero, 1979)

Title	Description
Service class	Large proprietors; professionals, administrators, and managers; higher grade technicians; supervisors of non-manual workers
Routine nonmanual class	Routine non-manual employees in administration and commerce; sales personnel; other rank-and-file service workers
Petty bourgeoisie	Small proprietors and artisans, with and without employees
Farmers	Farmers, smallholders and other self-employed workers in primary production
Manual classes/ Skilled workers	Lower-grade technicians; supervisors of manual workers; skilled manual workers
Nonskilled workers/ agricultural laborers	Semi- and unskilled, nonagricultural manual workers; agricultural and other workers in primary production

This traditional way of looking at class voting was heavily criticized at the end of the 20th century. New empirical research kept finding a decline in class voting. Therefore, it became an outdated and increasingly irrelevant concept, with many scholars announcing it the end or death of class politics (Clark & Lipset, 1991; Evans, 1999; Bauman, 2009; Gorz, 1997; Pakulski & Waters, 1996). It was argued that, once class is no longer relevant for voting behavior, it may just as well be considered a dead concept. Indeed, by looking at table 1 it is not hard to imagine that the nonskilled workers/ agricultural laborers group has been on a steady decline due to automation. Also, the petty bourgeoisie class has significantly increased and also changed in its composition. However, not everyone agreed on the idea that class is dead for good. New articles using different empirical techniques started to find evidence that class is far from dead and still very significant (van der Waal, Achterberg & Houtman, 2007; Evans, 2000). As such, there is a clear tension in the literature revolving around class.. The argument of classes still being relevant is based on the fact that the original definition of class is either wrong or poorly conceived. To elaborate: the traditional distinction between the classes was mostly based on economic terms. However, conservatism and liberalism can also be viewed in a cultural way. When we define liberalism in economic terms, it refers to issues concerning redistribution of wealth and power among the classes. People with lower income tend to be more liberal/leftist on such issues. On the other hand, if we define liberalism in non-economic or cultural terms, issues such as civil rights for ethnic and racial minorities, internationalist foreign policies, and liberal immigration legislation become important. In this case, the middle class and higher educated people are more liberal/leftist than the people with lower income (van der Waal, Achterberg & Houtman, 2007).

This divide between the economic and cultural dimension cannot be seen as evidence that one's cultural conservatism/liberalism can be explained by class, because class is closely linked to income. Therefore, the income differences between classes is being regarded as solid evidence for the continued existence of classes. However, it is quite an important fact that income does not affect cultural conservatism/liberalism at all (van der Waal, Achterberg & Houtman, 2007). It is not so much the ones with low incomes that are cultural conservatives but rather those that are poorly educated. It also holds true for the opposite side: it is not the rich who are more culturally liberal, but the higher educated. This is important when we define classes in ways that not only differ strongly in income, but also in the level of education one has achieved. To illustrate, working class economic liberalism that is pro redistributive policies can be explained by their economic vulnerable position. It is their low income, wage dependence, job insecurity and low level of education that leads them to support economic liberalism. On the other hand, working class cultural conservatism cannot be explained by their economic position. While an insecure economic position is no predictor for cultural conservatism, a low level of education is a strong predictor of cultural conservatism. Moreover, those with higher education have a way higher change to be cultural liberals.

Education is not only related to high-status cultural participation (Dimaggio, 1982), but it is also often regarded as an indicator for cultural capital nowadays (de Graaf & Kalmijn, 2001). Cultural capital is a relevant concept when discussing class and voting behavior. A broad definition of cultural capital is a person's familiarity with the dominant culture in a society and the ability to understand and use 'educated' language (Sullivan, 2001). It can refer to simple things such as knowing the proper etiquette in a France restaurant or reading a high quality newspaper every morning. Furthermore, people with ample cultural capital tend to be more open towards other cultures and their norms and ideas, while people with less cultural capital are more intolerant towards other cultures and thus more hostile towards groups from different cultures (Van der Waal et al., 2010). This so-called cultural insecurity does not stem from a weak economic position, but from a lack of education (Van der Waal et al., 2010). In conclusion, the traditional class approach explains why citizens of the working class vote for left-wing parties and citizens of the middle class vote for right-wing parties. However, this focus on economic position fails to explain why citizens of the working class increasingly vote for right-wing parties and citizens of the middle class increasingly vote for left-wing parties. Achterberg and Houtman (2006) developed a supplementary explanation of voting behavior, which focuses on cultural, rather than economic, differences. Their conclusions were that interests linked to cultural capital account for votes that cannot be explained by class interests. In the following paragraphs we will first argue why the economic dimension is still important. After that, I will take a closer look at the cultural dimension, post materialistic values and autonomy. These insights will help in analyzing the voting behavior of the new and old wave of self-employed workers from multiple perspectives.

Economic dimension

Economic self-interest has always been seen as a rational explanation of voting behavior. Those with higher income are less likely to support redistributive policies compared to those with lower incomes (van der Waal, Achterberg & Houtman, 2007). However, there is another variable, besides income, that is important when measuring voting behavior based on economic self-interest: job security. Rueda (2005) argues that you can divide society in roughly three groups: Insiders who enjoy high levels of job protection and security, outsiders who have very little job security, and the upscale groups who employ people. Insiders would be most likely to support traditional left parties as their wages are not very high and thus they support redistributive policies. They also support parties that promote job protection, which are mostly found on the traditional left. Outsiders, on the other hand, have a hard time supporting parties that promote job protection as it makes it more difficult for

them to compete on the labor market (Rueda, 2005). However, outsiders should, just like insiders, support redistributive policies and welfare policies, because, due to their low job security, they would want distributive policies to work in case they lose their clients and thus their income. Marx (2014) makes the argument that outsiders should support parties that promote universal redistributive policies, such as universal income. Parties that promote these policies are usually the green/ new-left parties. On the other hand, Marx (2014) argues that insiders should support parties that promote redistributive policies with biases towards trade unions and labor markets, such as having to pay off someone's contract if you want to fire a person. Parties that pursue these type of policies are mostly the old-left parties.

In this research, the self-employed workers, who are considered to be outsiders or upscale groups based on whether they have employees, are the main focus. We should expect that, based on insider-outsider knowledge, the self-employed with employees are mostly traditional/ old-right voters because of their preference for high market flexibility and low job security. To illustrate, if, indeed, the market flexibility is high and job security is low, people with employees have to pay lower wages and it will be easier for them to hire and fire people when needed. SSE workers are expected to be outsiders that should prefer universal redistribution policies such as policies for universal income and healthcare., while also preferring open and flexible labor markets. Therefore, they should be expected to be mostly new-left voters. However, this is only true if we are only considering the economic dimension. As mentioned before, other dimensions such as the cultural dimension, might be more important.

Cultural dimension and post-materialism

As we have learnt so far, the economic dimension has always been an important explanation of voting behavior. However, recently, research mentions another explanation of voting behavior as well: the cultural dimension. The cultural dimension refers to the idea that, recently, people started to vote less based on their income or position in the labor market, but more on other values that are harder to define in numbers and statistics. There are multiple authors who define this phenomenon in different ways. A first way to define this is given by Kriesi (1989, 1998). In general, he tries to understand voting behavior in the form of cleavages. When speaking of cultural differences, Kriesi (1989, 1998) speaks of a value cleavage that has appeared over the past decades. Where one side puts more value on their economic position, the other side puts more value on their cultural and social position in society. He argues that the people who value economics are more likely to vote for right-wing parties, while the other side is more likely to vote for left-wing parties and join social movements.

Because the work of Kriesi (1989, 1998) is more focused on social movements than it is on voting behavior, this paper will take another definition as the base of the cultural dimension, namely post-materialism by Inglehart (1990). Inglehart's (1990) argument is that the value priorities of western publics has been shifting from a materialistic basis to a post-materialistic one. It shifted from giving high priority to physical sustenance and safety towards heavy emphasis on belonging, self-expression and the quality of life (Inglehart, 1990). Post-materialism started to gain popularity in the 1960s. Initially most of the people that valued it were students. However the students have grown older, and at the end of 20th century, post-materialism was observed to be a major factor in the rise of the "new class" in Western society: A class of highly educated and well-paid young technocrats, who take a critical stance towards their society (Inglehart, 1990).

There are two hypotheses that explain this shift in value priorities. The first one is the scarcity hypothesis: *“An individual’s priorities reflect the socioeconomic environment: One places the greatest subjective value on those things that are in relatively short supply”* (Inglehart, 1990, p.68). This hypothesis is a very rational and intuitive one that is linked to the principle of diminishing marginal utility in economic theory. The idea is that unmet physiological needs take priority over social, intellectual or aesthetic needs. One can imagine that a starving individual will take food as his highest priority over anything else. The ranking of these needs becomes less clear when we move beyond the basic needs of survival, but there is still a clear distinction between material needs for physiological substance and safety, compared to post-material needs such as esteem, self-expression and aesthetic satisfaction.

The second hypothesis is the socialization hypothesis: *“The relationship between socioeconomic environment and value priorities is not one of immediate adjustment: A substantial time lag is involved because, to a large extent, one’s basic values reflect the conditions that prevailed during one’s pre-adult years”* (Inglehart, 1990, p.68). This second hypothesis states that the relationship between the socioeconomic situation and materialist/post-materialist values is not simply one on one. One of the most basic concepts in social science is that someone’s personality is mainly formed in their pre-adult years with little change after becoming a full grown adult. This does not imply that it is impossible for someone to shift their position after becoming an adult, it is just rarer and takes more time (Inglehart, 1990). In this way, the socialization hypothesis complements the scarcity hypothesis, as it predicts that as our society grows richer, post-materialistic values become a higher priority. However, the change does not occur overnight and will most likely take multiple decades to become fully crystalized. After all, it takes time for the new generation to become older and gain positions of more power.

These were the hypotheses in the late 20th century, and most of it still holds true. However, more recent research has shown the presence of a backlash against the post-materialistic values and the new left in the form of radical right populism. The so-called cultural backlash theory predicts that people who are most opposed to progressive cultural values (such as attitudes towards sexuality, religion and multiculturalism) are older generation white men (Inglehart & Norris, 2016; Inglehart & Norris, 2017). The takeaway is that it is not only the older generation that is more likely to lack post-materialistic values, but that they are actively backlashing against these values. This backlash in the cultural dimension might be able to explain the voting behavior of lower educated people that vote for right wing parties, even while that is not in their economic interest. Supposedly, they would rather backlash against this shift in cultural values than that they vote for what is in their own economic best interest.

The link between post-materialism and socioeconomic status

The relationship between post-materialistic values and socioeconomic status is seemingly paradoxical. On one hand, the theory states that post-materialistic values are the result from a childhood with physiological security. This would imply that post-materialists are among the upper classes of society. On the other hand, post-materialistic values deemphasize economic achievement: it is expected that post-materialists place a lower value on economic achievement than on quality of life. Since post-materialists are far better educated than materialists, they tend to earn more, but they seek to maximize cultural status as opposed to income. When controlled for education and family connections, post-materialists actually earn less than materialists from similar family backgrounds (Inglehart, 1990). In other words, they are economic underachievers.

Now that we know all of this well-documented research on post-materialism, it is time to link it to the new wave of SSE workers. It can be expected that new wave SSE workers are more likely to be more post-materialism oriented. This is due to multiple factors. First of all, new wave SSE workers are more likely to be younger of age and have higher education. Both of these factors are positively related to post-materialism, because education is a valid indicator of cultural capital due to its positive correlation with cultural participation (Ganzeboom, 1989; Sullivan, 2008). The second reason why they are more likely to have post-materialistic values has to do with economic growth. In most of the EU there has in general been economic growth in the last two decades of the 20th century. Most of the people that grew up during this time are likely to have not faced any physiological scarcity. Thus, they have been socialized to have more post-materialistic values.

This leaves the new wave of SSE workers with a dilemma. One might expect that the new wave of SSE workers tries to maximize cultural status as opposed to income, because they would put a lower priority on economic values and a higher priority on post-material values such as their status. However, what if their economic position is not strong or secure at all? Would this new wave still put their cultural values above their economic values if they struggle with economic and financial means? It seems obvious that the economic dimension cannot purely be ignored in favor of the cultural dimension. Therefore, we need to take both dimensions into account if we want to accurately explain the voting behavior of this new group.

Combining the dimensions

The modern literature clearly suggests that there is more to voting than just the economic dimension. Cultural and social dimensions play an important role in predicting voting behavior among citizens. Class in the strict economic sense appears to have lost its relevance. In order to revive socioeconomic class as a relevant predictor of voting behavior, it needs to be changed. Savage et al. (2013) have developed a new class schema based on three factors: Social capital, Cultural capital and economic capital. This is along the line of Bourdieu (1984), who already made a distinction between these three types of capital. In the following paragraph, I will briefly discuss these three form of capital before moving on to the new schema that they developed with these concepts.

Firstly, social capital is about the social contacts and connections that people have that allow them to draw on their social network (Savage et al., 2013). It is not just about the sheer amount of contacts, but also the position in society of these contacts. Therefore, people with a lot of contacts might still score quite low on social capital due to all these contacts being low skilled manual workers, while someone who knows a few powerful people might score higher due to their contacts being more valuable. Secondly, cultural capital can be seen as the ability to appreciate and engage with cultural goods. Savage et al. (2013) makes a distinction between 'high' culture and 'emerging' culture. 'High' culture is associated with arts, classical music, museums and French restaurants, while emerging culture is being associated with video games, social network sites, playing/watching sports and preference for rap or rock. This distinction is necessary due to the elite culture becoming more liberal and tolerant towards emerging and popular cultural, and thus overlap is more likely to happen and leads to more cultural capital. Lastly, economic capital is about the economic means a person can access. It is possible to use either individual or household income in order to measure economic capital. Savage et al. (2013) prefer to use household income as they argue that it is more likely to reflect the economic resources available to an individual.

Going into detail on this new social class system is unfortunately beyond the scope of this study as it would require data that is currently not available. The main takeaway here is that it is a combination of social, cultural and economic capital that influences the voting decision of people. The differences between these dimensions can help us understand the differences between the voting behavior of the self-employed workers, and more specifically the new wave of SSE workers. This is important for this paper as SSE workers are typically only looked at from an economic capital perspective.

Autonomy

The previous paragraphs reviewed the wide research on the relationship between voting behavior and class, either traditional or more recent. A concept that could also be interesting to link to voting behavior is autonomy. Workplace autonomy is an important subject for many scholars regarding workplace well-being and satisfaction. However, the link between voting behavior and autonomy has barely been researched. This is a shame, because it could be a very interesting variable when trying to understand voting behavior between different groups. Especially when we try to explain the voting behavior of self-employed workers, since they generally enjoy higher levels of autonomy in their workplace than contract workers. There are a few studies that have found a link between workplace autonomy and certain voting patterns. Some studies suggest that a lack of autonomy in the workplace can strengthen traditional left-wing preference and that more autonomy can strengthen liberal right-wing preferences (De Witter, 1999; Kitschelt and Rehm, 2014). This right-wing orientation of the self-employed is often explained by the idea that they take individual responsibility for awards and costs that they suffer. They should advocate individual freedom, initiative and responsibility, and therefore reject redistribution policies (Jansen, 2019). This is a logical explanation for self-employed workers with employees, as they experience both the high risks and rewards that comes with running a business that employs other workers. If they fail they are most likely bankrupt, but if they succeed they will reap great benefits.

Does this explanation also make sense for solo self-employed workers? They do not run similar risks, because if they fail, they are not likely to be in financial ruin immediately. After all, they do not have to pay other workers' salary. Similarly, the rewards of being solo self-employed are usually not as staggering as having a business with employees. However, being 'your own boss' still grants you ample autonomy in the workplace. Jansen (2019) found that greater job autonomy does not strengthen right-wing voting among the self-employed workers, but it did strengthen new-left wing voting. A possible explanation for this is that autonomy is not an economic factor as these studies suggest, but a cultural factor. The idea of being independent and not following orders from any kind of boss might be a post-materialistic value. Inglehart (1991) points out middle-class post-materialism is characterized by individual freedom (Achterberg & Houtman, 2006). As discussed previously, the new wave of SSE workers are relatively speaking economic underachievers. They might be willing to trade some amount of income or job security for more autonomy in their work.

The fact that job autonomy may be a cultural factor as well leads to a new idea that autonomy might mean something different for different kind of self-employed workers. On one side, we have the self-employed workers with employees. They see autonomy as taking individual responsibility for the risks and rewards they take in the workplace. Their sense of autonomy leads them to be against redistributive policies and thus be more likely to vote for right-wing parties. On the other side, we have the solo self-employed workers who value autonomy in a way that it relates to personal freedom. They see autonomy as a way to be free of restrictions by bosses or other obstacles that come with being a contract employee. It is the cultural or post-materialistic value of individual freedom that make these solo self-employed workers seek autonomy in the workplace. They are more likely to vote for new-left wing parties based on the cultural dimension.

Hypotheses

The literature review indicates that economic factors are becoming less relevant for explaining voting behavior. Traditional classes that are still frequently used in surveys appear to be outdated.

However, the economic dimension is not entirely irrelevant, but it seems that the cultural dimension has become more relevant over the recent decades, causing a relative decrease in the relevance of the economic dimension. The goal of this research is to understand the political position of self-employed workers while having the cultural dimension in mind. Another goal is to show how traditional class schemes should be careful to lump SSE workers and self-employed with employee(s) workers together. In order to research this, we will first analyze the differences in class voting when comparing SSE workers and self-employed with employee(s) workers.

This first hypothesis is based on the assumptions that SSE workers hold more cultural capital and are therefore more likely to vote for new-left parties. Based on insider-outsider theory they should also prefer more universal ways of redistributive policies compared to biased forms of redistributive policies. This is why they are expected to vote for new-left and not for old-left, as new-left parties are more likely to have positive attitudes towards universal redistribution. Self-employed workers with employee(s) are more likely to vote for old-right parties as they can be considered to be part of the upscale group. The upscale group would benefit from more flexible labor market as it makes it easier for them to hire and fire people which allows them to pay lower wages. They also are generally against redistributive policies which means they are less likely to vote for left-wing parties. This leads to the following hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1a: SSE workers are more likely to vote for new-left parties compared to self-employed workers with employees.

Hypothesis 1b: Self-employed workers with employee(s) are more likely to vote for old-right parties compared to SSE workers.

In contrast to previous studies, the current research assumes that autonomy among solo self-employed workers is actually an indicator of higher cultural values rather than an economic factor. However, we do not expect this to be the case for the self-employed with employees, for them autonomy is an indicator that predicts right-wing voting. The problem arises that people who have employee(s) are also more likely to have more autonomy in their workplace, so when we compare self-employed workers as one big group, it is expected that people who have more autonomy are more likely to vote for right wing parties or that the opposing effects of these groups render the autonomy variable insignificant. This leads to the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis 2: Solo self-employed workers with higher levels of autonomy are more likely to vote for new-left wing parties, whereas self-employed with employees workers with higher levels of autonomy are more likely to vote for right-wing parties.

This research also wants to make a distinction between the old wave and new wave of solo self-employed workers. We expect that the new wave of self-employed workers put more value on autonomy and cultural capital than the traditional self-employed workers. Autonomy will also be considered as a post-materialistic value, so for this new-wave their new-left wing voting behavior is expected to be moderated by both cultural capital and autonomy. Along the same line of thought, we also expect that the new wave of self-employed workers put less value on income and other economic factors than the traditional self-employed workers. Unfortunately this could be difficult to assess as level of education is a major factor in determining cultural capital but it also has a positive effect on income. So it might be the case that the new wave of self-employed workers still have a

higher income compared to the old wave even if they value it less. However, we assume that income is an insignificant predictor when we compare new-left voting with right-wing voting. It should be a significant predictor when we compare old-left voting with right-wing voting. So to recap, we expect the new wave of SSE workers to be more likely to vote for new-left wing parties based on them being more post-materialistic. This also causes them to put more value on cultural capital and autonomy and less value on economic factors. We can summarize this with the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 3a: New wave SSE workers are more likely to vote for new-left wing parties compared to old wave SSE workers

Hypothesis 3b: Old wave SSE workers are more likely to vote traditional old-right parties compared to new wave SSE workers

Interaction hypotheses:

Hypothesis 4a: New wave self-employed workers value cultural capital and autonomy more compared to old wave SSE workers.

Hypothesis 4b: New wave self-employed workers value job insecurity less compared to old wave SSE workers.

Data and measurements

To test these hypotheses, the integrated file of the European Social Survey (ESS) round 9 from 2018 was used. There are multiple reasons for why this file was chosen. First, in order to effectively research the political voting behavior of SSE workers, a data file with a sufficiently large sample size is required. In Europe, self-employed workers make up about 14% of the workforce, with most countries (exception is Greece) ranging between the 10% and 20% of their workforce being composed of self-employed workers (Eurostat, 2019). Most national data sets would not have a high enough amount of cases in order to find statistically significant results. Therefore, a pooled dataset is needed to study the political voting behavior of SSE workers. However, using a pooled dataset has its drawbacks, which will be discussed in the discussion part of this paper. Secondly, the ESS is the only large dataset that contains information on both work relations and political attitudes (Kitschelt and Rehm, 2014; Marx, 2014; Jansen 2016). Other large datasets on SSE workers themselves often lacked political attitudes.

To effectively run analyses with the ESS round 9 dataset, weights must be applied (Kaminska, 2020). This is necessary due to differences in sample designs and nonresponse processes across countries and demographics. There are two relevant types of weights: post-stratification weight and population weight. Post-stratification weight corrects for sampling errors based on gender, age, education and geographical region. Population weight takes into account the differences in population sizes across countries. If population weight was not applied, countries with fewer citizens would be overrepresented. In order to apply the post-stratification weight and the population weight, this study made use of the 'analysis weight' is provided in the round 9 ESS dataset. Analysis weight is a combination of post-stratification weight and population weight and it corrects for differential selection probabilities within each country for nonresponse, for non-coverage, and for sampling error related to the post-stratification variables. It also takes into account the differences in population sizes across countries (Kaminska, 2020). Without applying analysis weight, our results might be biased.

To make the analysis as comparable as possible, I followed along the line of Jansen (2016) by only including Western European countries with a more or less similar party structure. These countries are: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway and Switzerland. All these countries have a similar party structure that include both new-left and old-left parties. By including these countries we get a valid N of 9248 of which 1097 are self-employed, with 601 of these 1097 self-employed workers being solo self-employed. After filtering out the employees, we get a dataset with an N of 1097. The reason for only using self-employed workers in our dataset is simple. The main goal of this research is to find within-group differences among the self-employed and solo-self-employed. Therefore, using other types of workers such as permanent contract workers or temporary employees is not necessary.

Dependent variable

To examine voting behavior, the variable was used that registers which party the respondent voted for in the last election. This measurement was used, because it is the most direct way to measure voting behavior. Since there is a time gap between the last election and the time of data collection, this may cause some problems for people that are new in self-employment and are only there temporarily. As a solution, Marx (2014) and Jansen (2016) offer using party identification rather than last party voted for. However, the people we are interested in are probably young and of the new wave group, and thus are less likely to have very strong party identification. Furthermore, since Marx

(2014) and Jansen (2016) use last party voted for when they cannot find strong party identification, it can be argued that last party voted for is more suitable in this case, because it ensures the same dependent variable is used for everyone. Also, a quick look at the data shows that for this new wave group the missing value on party identification hovers between 45%-60% based on country. Thus, party voted for in last election seems to make more sense, as the missing values for this variable only account for less than 5% of the cases.

To make a comparative analysis of voting behavior, the parties of each country were coded into one of four families: new-left, old-left, old-right and new-right. The classification of the Manifesto Project Database (Volkens et al. , 2020) was used to make this distinction. In general, new-left parties are the green/ecology parties and old-left parties are the (former) communist and social democratic parties. The old-right parties consist of liberal, Christian democrats, conservative and agrarian parties. New-right parties consist of the (populist) nationalist parties. The parties for each country were coded into one nominal variable for the entire EU , in which respondents got a score from 1 to 4 based on the party they voted for in their last national election. Descriptive statistics can be found in table 2. There are a few exceptions that have been made regarding the Manifesto Project Database: Following Marx (2014), the Danish and Norwegian Socialist people's party was classified as new-left instead of old-left. D66 in the Netherlands was classified as new-left instead of liberal, in line with Jansen et al. (2011). Lastly, the New Flemish Alliance (N-VA) was coded as a new-right party instead of an ethnic-regional party, because it can be quite easily argued that this party belongs among the new-right parties. Besides, N-VA was the largest party in the Belgian dataset, so leaving them out would make Belgium no longer a relevant case.

Independent variables

The main independent variables are: employment type, job security, cultural capital, wave and autonomy. Firstly, employment type distinguishes between two types of employment: self-employed with employees and solo self-employed. Self-employed with employee(s) had an N of 496 and SSE workers had an N of 601.

Secondly, the ESS did not provide any question about how a respondent perceives their current job security. It does, however, provide a variable that tells us if a respondent had ever experienced job insecurity in their life. The variable asks the respondent if they had ever been unemployed and were actively looking for work for a period of more than three months. The respondent could answer with either yes or no. It is expected that a person that has ever experienced such a form of job insecurity is more likely to perceive job insecurity in their current position than a person that has never experienced job insecurity. Therefore, job security was operationalized by using the question about if the person had ever experienced job insecurity in their life. If their answer was yes they were put in the job insecure group, if their answer was no they were put in the job secure group.

Thirdly, there are unfortunately no precise measurements for cultural capital in the ESS round 9 dataset. Therefore, following de Graaf and Kalmijn (1995, 2001), a proxy is made for cultural capital. This proxy combines the ISCO-08 occupation groups with the total amount of years of full-time education attended. The ISCO-08 occupation groups have been recoded to a two-digit scale. Then, for each group, the average amount of years of full-time education attended was calculated. This refined measurement of education was used as a proxy for cultural capital (Manevska & Achterberg, 2011).

Fourthly, there are also no precise measurements in the ESS round 9 dataset for knowing when someone exactly became self-employed. However, there is a measurement that tells us in which year someone entered the workforce. This measurement was used as a proxy for measuring the new wave of self-employed workers. Anyone who entered the workforce in the year 2000 or higher was coded as new wave and anyone who had entered the workforce before 2000 was coded as old wave. Consequently, this leaves us with two groups based on when someone entered the workforce. This measurement is more precise than age, because it makes a distinction between the people who were already self-employed before the year 2000 and the people who became self-employed after 2000. However, there is only one small problem: the dataset does not show any information about job or contract switches. This means that older workers who entered the workforce before 2000, but became self-employed after 2000 are still considered being in the old wave. Unfortunately, there is no way around this problem with the data available. It is assumed that this group is rather small and has no significant impact on the results of the research.

Lastly, two variables were combined to measure autonomy. Respondents were asked to what extent they were allowed to decide how daily work is organized and to what extent they were allowed to influence policy decisions about activities of organization. Both were measured on a scale ranging from 1 to 10. By taking the product of these two scales and dividing it by 100, an index was created that measured autonomy from 0 to 1. In this index, a 0 would indicate that a person has no autonomy at all at their work and a 1 would indicate that a person has full autonomy at their work (Jansen, 2016). This index was then recoded into a 0 to 10 scale because of two reasons. The first reason is that the 0 to 1 index would have a lot of empty cells. The second reason that it was easier to interpret the results using an 0 to 10 scale instead of an 0 to 1 index.

Control variables

Gender and income were included as a control variables. Gender was measured as male = 1 and female = 2. Income was measured as the total net household income from all sources divided in deciles. Age is only controlled for in the initial models that focus on the differences between solo self-employed workers and self-employed workers with employees. It is not possible to control for age in the model that looks at the differences between solo self-employed workers due to the multicollinearity between age and the year when someone entered the work force (the variable that the wave variable is based on). Including age would change the model in such a way that both age and wave are no longer significant. This multicollinearity is logical, because a younger person is obviously more likely to enter the workforce for the first time than an older person. Running the logistic regression model as a linear regression model and controlling for multicollinearity gives age and the year someone entered the workforce a rounded VIF of 14. This is an acceptable method for testing multicollinearity, because the VIF value is not affected by a nominal dependent variable in standard regression. Therefore, age is excluded from the later analyses.

Another typical control variable in studies that contain multiple countries are country dummies. This study is not interested in the differences between countries. Therefore, country dummies are not included. Including country dummies would only increase the noise in the model that is already being stretched thin due to its mediocre N. Furthermore, some models have been run with country dummies in previous research and the differences in the results was neglectable. The reason to only include Western European countries is because, in this way, the group of self-employed workers is similar enough to not worry about between-country differences.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of complete set.

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. dev.
EU_partyfamily	751	1	4	2.559	0.960
Employment type	751	1	2	1.418	0.493
Job security	747	1	2	1.730	0.445
Cultural capital	748	9	18	14.241	1.997
Wave	726	1	2	1.193	0.395
Autonomy	724	0	10	8.156	2.653
Gender	751	1	2	1.390	0.488
Income	682	1	10	6.839	2.815
Age	751	18	67	49.473	11.880
Education	749	3	36	15.08	3.628

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of solo self-employed only set.

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. dev.
EU_partyfamily	437	1	4	2.404	0.968
Job security	434	1	2	1.670	0.469
Cultural capital	434	9	18	14.376	2.074
Wave	418	1	2	1.225	0.418
Autonomy	413	0	10	8.270	2.940
Gender	437	1	2	1.470	0.500
Income	393	1	10	6.194	2.818
Education	435	3	30	15.03	3.668

Results

This research uses multiple different models. For each model a likelihood ratio chi-square test was performed, the results of these tests are available in table 4. Statistical significance in these tests indicate that the full model represents a significant improvement in fit over the null (intercept only) model.

Table 4. Likelihood ratio chi-square test for all models.

Model	-2 Log likelihood		
	Intercept only	Final	Chi-square
1	1718.153	1604.796	113.356***
2	1729.114	1597.642	131.472***
3	1717.631	1573.349	144.282***
4	1664.859	1531.150	133.709***
5	1664.859	1512.820	152.039***
6	851.341	791.708	59.633***
7	906.708	831.777	74.932***

In all analyses, new-left is used as the reference category for the independent variable. Self-employed with employee(s) is the reference category for solo self-employed and male is the reference category for female.

Firstly, to test the hypothesis that solo self-employed workers are more likely to vote for new-left parties compared to self-employed workers with employee(s), a Multinomial logistic regression model was run. This model was chosen due to the nominal structure of the dependent variable. Table 5 shows the first model, which researched the differences between solo self-employed workers and self-employed workers with employees, with only the control variables added. .

Table 5. Multinomial logit regression for party voted for last election. N = 680

Model 1		B	SE	Odds ratio
New-left versus Old-left	Solo self-employed (ref = self-employed with employees)	0.153	0.285	1.165
	Female (ref = male)	-0.363	0.254	0.695
	Income	-0.138***	0.046	0.871
	Age	0.020**	0.010	1.021
	Education	-0.107***	0.035	0.898
	Constant	1.740**	0.816	
	New-left versus Old-right	Solo self-employed (ref = self-employed with employees)	-0.713***	0.235
Female (ref = male)		-0.501**	0.221	0.606
Income		-0.015	0.042	0.907
Age		0.028***	0.009	1.028
Education		-0.074**	0.029	0.929
Constant		1.401**	0.708	
New-left versus New-right		Solo self-employed (ref = self-employed with employees)	-0.893***	0.305
	Female (ref = male)	-1.080***	0.313	0.340
	Income	-0.125**	0.054	0.882
	Age	0.022	0.012	1.022
	Education	-0.221***	0.044	0.802
	Constant	3.661***	0.985	

Notes: * $p < 0.1$; ** $P < 0.05$; *** $P < 0.01$ (two-tailed test); Analytics weight applied.

Table 5 shows that solo self-employed workers are significantly more likely to vote for new-left parties than self-employed with employees when comparing them with both old-right and new-right parties. As we can see, the negative and significant effects are -0.713 and -0.893 respectively. The odds ratio of both 0.490 and 0.409 respectively means that the odds that a solo self-employed worker votes for an old-right or new-right party compared to a new-left party is less than half when compared to a self-employed with employees worker. Therefore, there is solid evidence that solo self-employed workers are more likely to vote for new-left parties than self-employed workers with employees. There is no significant difference on the left wing when comparing solo self-employed workers to self-employed with employees. What is also interesting is that almost all our control variables are significant in this first and simple model: education is a significant predictor on all three categories, while gender, age and income are significant in two out of the three categories. Once we start adding more complex variables, the significance in control variables might change.

In model 2 (table 6) cultural capital was added as an independent variable in order to test if cultural capital is a significant predictor for voting behavior between new-left vs old-right and new-right parties. This is important, because we will later test an interaction hypothesis with cultural capital. If there would be no significant effect right now, then we would not have to test our interaction hypothesis with cultural capital. Model 2 shows that cultural capital is a significant predictor with both new-left vs old-right voting and new-left vs new-right voting. With the B value of -0.123 when comparing old-right with new-left and -0.305 when comparing new-right with new left. Solo self-employed also remains a significant predictor on these categories, even though its effect is slightly weaker. What is interesting is that education changes from significant to insignificant on the old-right vs new-left category when cultural capital is added. This might have to do with the small amount of multicollinearity between cultural capital and education. However, as was already discussed in the control variables part of the Data and measurement paragraph, the multicollinearity between education and cultural capital was not strong enough to warrant excluding one of them.

Table 6. Multinomial logit regression for party voted for last election. Cultural capital included.
N = 676

Model 2		B	SE	Odds ratio
New-left versus Old-left	Solo self-employed (ref = self-employed with employees)	0.176	0.286	1.192
	Cultural capital	-0.041	0.070	0.959
	Female (ref = male)	-0.347	0.255	0.707
	Income	-0.133***	0.046	0.876
	Age	0.019*	0.010	1.019
	Education	-0.094**	0.038	0.910
	Constant	2.140*	1.122	
	New-left versus Old-right	Solo self-employed (ref = self-employed with employees)	-0.682***	0.237
Cultural capital		-0.123**	0.062	0.885
Female (ref = male)		-0.431*	0.224	0.650
Income		0.008	0.043	1.008
Age		0.029***	0.009	1.029
Education		-0.045	0.033	0.956
Constant		2.452**	0.968	
New-left versus New-right		Solo self-employed (ref = self-employed with employees)	-0.785**	0.308
	Cultural capital	-0.305***	0.090	0.737
	Female (ref = male)	-1.057***	0.317	0.347
	Income	-0.102*	0.056	0.903
	Age	0.018	0.012	1.018
	Education	-0.161***	0.048	0.851
	Constant	7.008***	1.425	

Notes: * $p < 0.1$; ** $P < 0.05$; *** $P < 0.01$ (two-tailed test); Analytics weight applied.

Table 7. Multinomial logit regression for party voted for last election. Cultural capital and job insecurity included.

N = 676

Model 3		B	SE	Odds ratio
New-left versus Old-left	Solo self-employed (ref = self-employed with employees)	0.166	0.289	1.181
	Cultural capital	-0.045	0.071	0.956
	Job insecurity = yes (ref = job insecurity = no)	0.558**	0.270	1.748
	Female (ref = male)	-0.392	0.258	0.676
	Income	-0.133***	0.046	0.875
	Age	0.014	0.010	1.014
	Education	-0.085**	0.039	0.918
	Constant	2.155*	1.138	
	New-left versus Old-right	Solo self-employed (ref = self-employed with employees)	-0.603**	0.253
Cultural capital		-0.113*	0.062	0.893
Job insecurity = yes (ref = job insecurity = no)		-0.362	0.253	0.722
Female (ref = male)		-0.486**	0.226	0.615
Income		0.004	0.043	1.004
Age		0.028***	0.009	1.028
Education		-0.047	0.033	0.954
Constant		2.500**	0.974	
New-left versus New-right		Solo self-employed (ref = self-employed with employees)	-0.725**	0.311
	Cultural capital	-0.288***	0.090	0.749
	Job insecurity = yes (ref = job insecurity = no)	-0.295	0.334	0.744
	Female (ref = male)	-1.121***	0.319	0.326
	Income	-0.110*	0.056	0.896
	Age	0.016	0.012	1.017
	Education	-0.162***	0.048	0.851
	Constant	6.989***	1.423	

Notes: * $p < 0.1$; ** $P < 0.05$; *** $P < 0.01$ (two-tailed test); Analytics weight applied.

In model 3 (Table 7) a similar model as in model 2 was run, but now job insecurity was also included as an independent variable. This independent variable is needed in order to test the interaction hypothesis that the new wave of SSE workers are less concerned about job insecurity than the older generation of SSE workers. As we can see in table 7, the economic independent and control variables (job insecurity and income) are both insignificant compared to the odds for new-left voting versus old-right and new-right voting. This means that, for self-employed workers in general, the economic dimension seems to be insignificant when comparing new-left voting versus old-right and new-right voting. It is expected that this dimension will be even more insignificant once all self-employed workers with employees are filtered out. Another detail is that cultural capital has most of its significance when comparing new-left vs old-right voting. There is no good theoretical explanation for this, but it could be caused by the combination of the measurement for cultural capital being an imperfect proxy and the complexity of the model when adding more independent variables.

In the final model (table 8) autonomy is added. First of all, we can immediately see that cultural capital has lost all its significance when comparing new-left vs old-right parties. The only factors that remain significant when predicting the odds of new-left vs old-right voting is solo self-employed and age. As stated in the literature review, we expect that autonomy means something different for solo self-employed workers than it does for self-employed with employees. As we can see in table 5, autonomy is an insignificant variable on all three categories, but this can be explained by our theory. If our suspicion is correct, then we expect that having autonomy among solo self-employed workers would mean they are more likely to vote for new-left wing, while having autonomy for self-employed with employees would mean they are more likely to vote for old-right wing parties. In order to test this, an interaction variable is created with autonomy and solo self-employed workers. As shown in table 9, there is a significant negative interaction effect between autonomy and solo self-employed workers when comparing new-left vs old-right (-0.328) and when comparing new-left vs new-right (-0.394). This means that solo self-employed workers with higher levels of autonomy are significantly more likely to vote for new-left wing parties compared to old-right or new-right wing parties. There is evidence that autonomy means something different for this group than the traditional literature would cause us to expect. Figure 2 and 3 were made to visualize this effect and to ease the interpretation. We can clearly see that having autonomy makes self-employed with employees have higher odds to vote for old-right and new-right parties compared to new-left parties, while the opposite is true for solo self-employed workers. For them, having autonomy lowers the odds of voting for old-right and new-right parties compared to new-left parties.

Table 8. Multinomial logit regression for party voted for last election. All variables included.
N = 653

Model 4		B	SE	Odds ratio
New-left versus Old-left	Solo self-employed (ref = self-employed with employees)	0.149	0.293	1.161
	Cultural capital	-0.046	0.072	0.955
	Job insecurity = yes (ref = job insecurity = no)	0.560**	0.278	1.750
	Autonomy	-0.050	0.047	0.951
	Female (ref = male)	-0.335	0.264	0.716
	Income	-0.120**	0.048	0.887
	Age	0.015	0.011	1.016
	Education	-0.080**	0.040	0.923
	Constant	2.367	1.235	
New-left versus Old-right	Solo self-employed (ref = self-employed with employees)	-0.611**	0.243	0.543
	Cultural capital	-0.100	0.064	0.905
	Job insecurity = yes (ref = job insecurity = no)	-0.272	0.258	0.762
	Autonomy	-0.035	0.044	0.966
	Female (ref = male)	-0.416*	0.230	0.659
	Income	0.010	0.044	1.010
	Age	0.028***	0.009	1.028
	Education	-0.039	0.034	0.961
	Constant	2.430**	1.067	
New-left versus New-right	Solo self-employed (ref = self-employed with employees)	-0.757**	0.316	0.469
	Cultural capital	-0.274***	0.091	0.760
	Job insecurity = yes (ref = job insecurity = no)	-0.164	0.340	0.849
	Autonomy	0.050	0.063	1.051
	Female (ref = male)	-1.166***	0.332	0.312
	Income	-0.117**	0.058	0.890
	Age	0.016	0.013	1.016
	Education	-0.139***	0.049	0.870
	Constant	6.085***	1.540	

Notes: * $p < 0.1$; ** $P < 0.05$; *** $P < 0.01$ (two-tailed test); Analytics weight applied.

Table 9. Multinomial logit regression for party voted for last election. Interaction between solo self-employed and autonomy. N = 653

Model 5		B	SE	Odds ratio
New-left versus Old-left	Solo self-employed (ref = self-employed with employees)	0.843	0.919	2.322
	Autonomy	-0.007	0.088	0.993
	Solo self-employed * autonomy	-0.071	0.106	0.931
	Constant	2.027	1.335	
New-left versus Old-right	Solo self-employed (ref = self-employed with employees)	2.222**	0.868	9.223
	Autonomy	0.201**	0.080	1.222
	Solo self-employed * autonomy	-0.328***	0.098	0.721
	Constant	0.544	1.182	
New-left versus New-right	Solo self-employed (ref = self-employed with employees)	2.699**	1.286	14.866
	Autonomy	0.328***	0.119	1.388
	Solo self-employed * autonomy	-0.394***	0.140	0.675
	Constant	3.717**	1.773	

Notes: * $p < 0.1$; ** $P < 0.05$; *** $P < 0.01$ (two-tailed test); Analytics weight applied. Not shown: the other control variables and independent variables (see model 4).

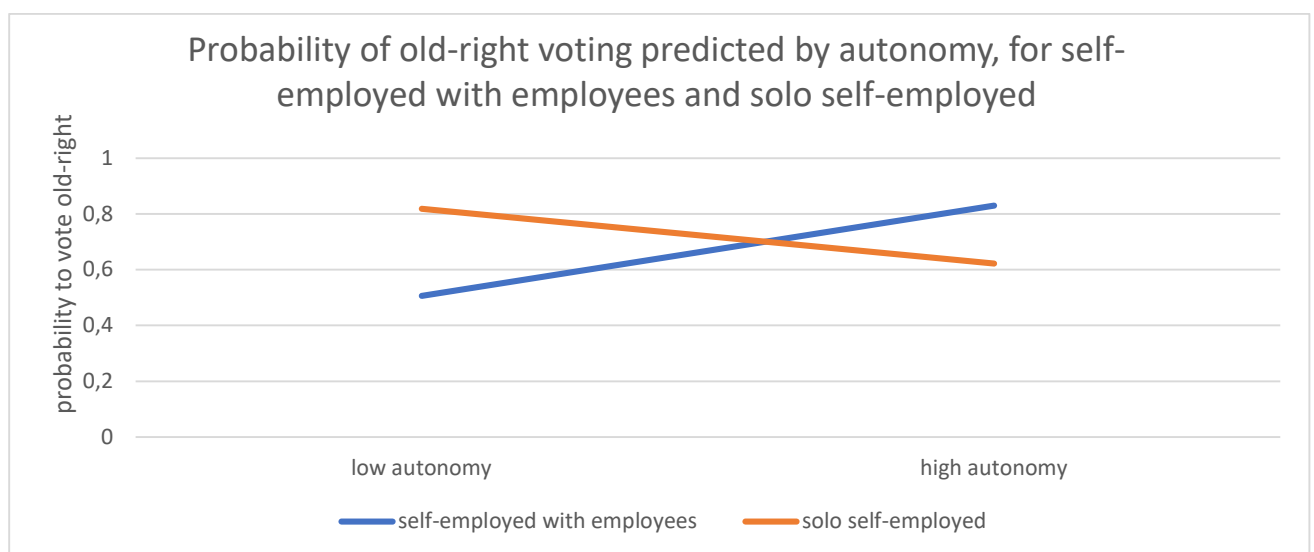
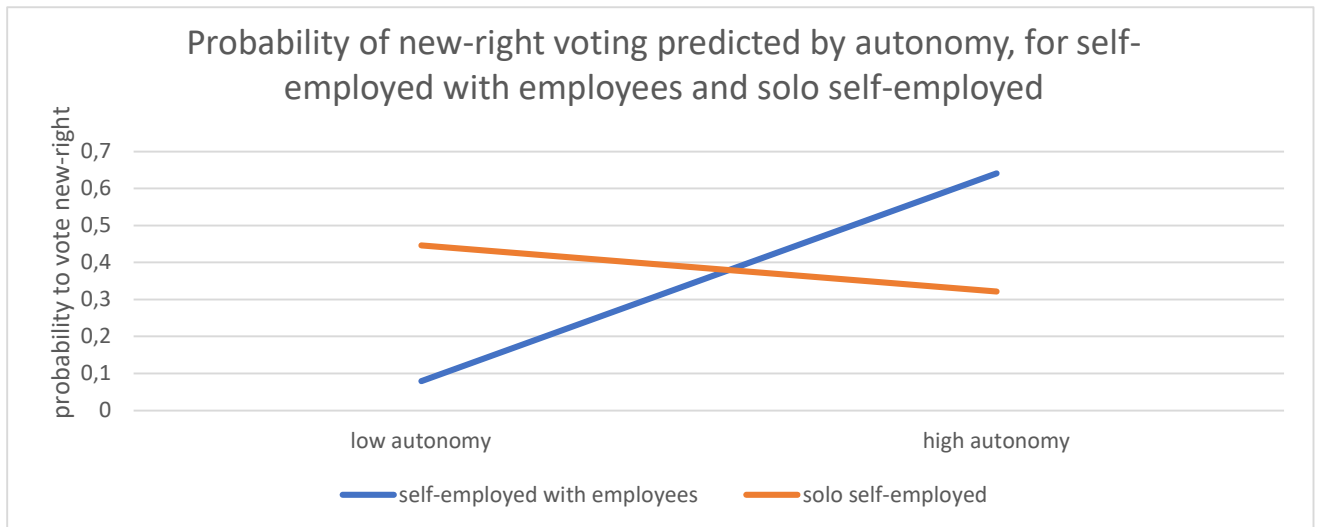
Figure 2. Probability of old-right voting predicted by autonomy.

Figure 3. Probability of new-right voting predicted by autonomy.



For the next part of the analysis we only look at solo self-employed workers. The goal is to make a distinction between the older generation of solo self-employed workers and the new generation of solo self-employed workers that started working between the year 2000 and 2020. If there are differences between these groups, we would also like to try and find out what causes these differences. We start with a simple model that contains only our control variables and the wave variable, this model is shown in table 10. As stated in the data and measurements chapter, we cannot control for age in this model since the collinearity with wave is too high.

Table 10. Multinomial logit regression for party voted for last election. Solo self-employed workers only. N = 372

Model 6		B	SE	Odds ratio
New-left versus Old-left	New wave (ref = old wave)	-0.768**	0.353	0.464
	Female (ref = male)	-0.647**	0.313	0.524
	Income	-0.059	0.057	0.942
	Education	-0.141***	0.046	0.869
	Constant	3.237***	0.801	
New-left versus Old-right	New wave (ref = old wave)	-1.079***	0.330	0.340
	Female (ref = male)	-0.457	0.288	0.633
	Income	0.005	0.053	1.005
	Education	-0.088**	0.041	0.916
	Constant	2.388***	0.744	
New-left versus New-right	New wave (ref = old wave)	-0.469	0.464	0.626
	Female (ref = male)	-0.456	0.398	0.634
	Income	-0.189**	0.073	0.828
	Education	-0.291***	0.065	0.748
	Constant	5.036***	1.014	

Notes: * $p < 0.1$; ** $P < 0.05$; *** $P < 0.01$ (two-tailed test); Analytics weight applied.

As can be seen in the table, the wave variable has a significant and negative effect when comparing new-left voting (-0.768) with old-left voting and when comparing new-left voting with old-right voting (-1.079). This means that the newer wave is significantly more likely to vote for new-left parties when compared to old-right and old-left parties. Interestingly, no significant effect was found when comparing new-right to new-left parties, however there are significant differences between the other categories. Therefore, we can continue to look for the cause of these differences. In order to do that, the other variables that were used in the previous models were added to this model as well (See table 11). These variables are cultural capital, job insecurity and autonomy.

Table 11. Multinomial logit regression for party voted for last election. Solo self-employed workers only, all variables included. N = 352

Model 7		B	SE	Odds ratio
New-left versus Old-left	New wave (ref = old wave)	-0.644*	0.376	0.525
	Cultural capital	0.029	0.092	1.030
	Job insecurity = yes (ref = job insecurity = no)	0.648*	0.330	1.912
	Autonomy	-0.084	0.067	0.919
	Female (ref = male)	-0.588*	0.325	0.555
	Income	-0.051	0.059	0.951
	Education	-0.135**	0.055	0.873
	Constant	3.113**	1.448	
New-left versus Old-right	New wave (ref = old wave)	-0.930***	0.353	0.395
	Cultural capital	-0.135	0.087	0.874
	Job insecurity = yes (ref = job insecurity = no)	-0.328	0.322	0.720
	Autonomy	-0.165***	0.062	0.848
	Female (ref = male)	-0.373	0.303	0.688
	Income	0.041	0.057	1.042
	Education	-0.043	0.057	0.958
	Constant	4.885***	1.338	
New-left versus New-right	New wave (ref = old wave)	-0.285	0.484	0.752
	Cultural capital	-0.106	0.120	0.899
	Job insecurity = yes (ref = job insecurity = no)	-0.486	0.461	0.615
	Autonomy	-0.063	0.081	0.939
	Female (ref = male)	-0.661	0.420	0.516
	Income	-0.179**	0.078	0.836
	Education	-0.240***	0.074	0.787
	Constant	6.517***	1.841	

Notes: * $p < 0.1$; ** $P < 0.05$; *** $P < 0.01$ (two-tailed test); Analytics weight applied.

As we can see in model 7, our other independent variables show no significant effects when comparing new-left voting to all the other party families, except for autonomy. Autonomy has significant negative effect on the new-left versus old-right category (-0.165). This is expected, given the fact that a significant interaction effect was also found between solo self-employed workers and new-left voting compared to old-right voting in model 5. Following that logic, it would also be expected that autonomy has a significant and negative effect when comparing new-left and new-right voting. However, that this is not the case. There could be multiple reasons why there is no significant effect in model 7, such as the N in this model, which is quite low for the amount of independent variables we have. These reasons and the shortcomings of this model will be discussed in the conclusion and discussion part of this paper. What remains is that our wave variable is still highly significant when we compare new-left and old-right voting. Therefore, there is evidence that the newer generation is indeed more likely to vote for new-left parties compared to old-right parties.

Table 12. Multinomial logit regression for party voted for last election. Solo self-employed workers only. Interaction effects only. N = 352

Model 8		B	SE	Odds ratio
New-left versus Old-left	New wave * cultural capital	0.027	0.189	1.027
	New wave * Job insecurity	0.035	0.805	1.035
	New wave * Autonomy	-0.172	0.158	0.842
New-left versus Old-right	New wave * cultural capital	0.128	0.179	1.137
	New wave * Job insecurity	1.474*	0.767	4.365
	New wave * Autonomy	-0.262*	0.146	0.770
New-left versus New-right	New wave * cultural capital	-0.194	0.250	0.824
	New wave * Job insecurity	3.312***	1.046	27.450
	New wave * Autonomy	1.007	0.968	2.737

Notes: * $p < 0.1$; ** $P < 0.05$; *** $P < 0.01$ (two-tailed test); Analytics weight applied.

In our final model 8, we try to find interactions between the new wave and our independent variables when comparing new-left voting with the other party families voting. All these interactions were performed separately and put together in table 12 to give a clear overview of all the interaction effects. As we are able to see in table 12, there are almost no significant interaction effects between the new wave and the other independent variables. The only significant interaction that was found is a positive effect between new wave and job insecurity when comparing new-left with new-right parties (3.312). Also, a weak significant negative effect was found between new wave and autonomy (-0.262), and a weak positive effect between new wave and job insecurity (1.474), when comparing new-left with old-right. Cultural capital remains completely insignificant on all categories.

Conclusion and discussion

The goals of this research were to provide evidence that solo self-employed workers are no longer a homogenous group that have a tendency to vote for old-right wing parties, and that a new wave of solo self-employed workers are the cause of this. Another goal was to make the meaningful distinction between solo self-employed and self-employed workers with employee(s), because these groups are often lumped together in research and surveys. Furthermore, this thesis should provide evidence regarding the 'culture vs economics' and 'death of class' debate when trying to explain voting behavior among self-employed workers. This is the first study that implements both cultural and economic elements while trying to make a distinction between the new and old wave of SSE workers. The self-employed are a group worth studying, because there is an interesting dynamic between the fact that they can be considered outsiders on the labor market, and also part of the upscale group. Furthermore, their high increase in numbers over the past two decades makes them an interesting group to test hypotheses about post-materialistic values on. A novelty of this thesis is that it tries to research if autonomy is a post-materialistic value for the new wave of SSE workers.

The first results suggest that SSE workers are significantly more likely to vote for new-left wing parties instead of both old-right and new-right wing parties when compared to self-employed workers with employee(s). I can thus accept the hypothesis (1a) which states that *SSE workers are more likely to vote for new-left parties compared to self-employed workers with employees*. Hypothesis 1b was that *Self-employed workers with employee(s) are more likely to vote for old-right parties compared to SSE workers*. While my results indicate that self-employed workers with employees are indeed more likely to vote for old-right parties when compared with new-left parties, the results also indicate that self-employed workers with employee(s) are even more likely to support new-right parties when compared with SSE workers. This is surprising as these parties should in general be economically less beneficial for self-employed workers with employee(s) compared to old-right parties. However, it might be the case that it is not per se the self-employed workers with employee(s) who are more new-right wing leaning, but that it is the SSE workers who are very distinctively not voting for new-right wing parties.

The results do not confirm traditional literature in which autonomy among self-employed workers is linked to old-right wing voting, based on this group taking responsibility for individual rewards and costs associated with their position in the labor market. However, we expected that the effects of autonomy would be insignificant based on the idea that autonomy means something different for solo self-employed worker. The interaction effects that I tested with solo self-employed workers and autonomy gave strong and significant effects. This means that the Hypothesis 2: *Solo self-employed workers with higher levels of autonomy are more likely to vote for new-left wing parties, whereas self-employed with employees workers with higher levels of autonomy are more likely to vote for right-wing parties*, can be accepted. Seeing autonomy as a significant predictor of new-left wing voting compared to old-right wing voting, when we only analyzed solo self-employed workers, further strengthens this idea. Autonomy clearly seems to mean something different to solo self-employed workers than that it does to self-employed workers with employees. This has some big implications for further research.

Furthermore, the results clearly indicate that new wave SSE workers are more likely to vote for new-left wing parties than their old wave counterpart. We can accept Hypothesis 3a: *New wave SSE workers are more likely to vote for new-left wing parties compared to old wave SSE workers*. What is surprising is that the interaction between new wave and cultural capital is completely insignificant in

the model. This might be, because I also included the autonomy interaction that might actually be a better predictor for cultural capital than the education proxy that was used in the model.

Based on the results, hypothesis 4a cannot be accepted: *New wave self-employed workers value cultural capital and autonomy more compared to old wave SSE workers.* Further explorative research between the effects of autonomy and cultural capital and how these variables interfere with each other is needed to draw conclusive results about the link between autonomy and cultural capital in new wave (SSE) workers. We did not find a significant effect between cultural capital and the new wave of SSE workers. There is solid evidence that this new wave of SSE workers vote differently than the old wave of SSE workers. However, the most logical explanation for the new wave of SSE workers voting for new-left wing parties has primarily to do with young age. A future qualitative research might be needed to better understand the dynamics of voting within the solo self-employed group.

Hypothesis 4b also cannot be accepted: *New wave self-employed workers value job insecurity less compared to old wave SSE workers.* As the results indicate, a significant interaction effect was found when comparing new-left wing with new-right wing. The literature of this thesis offers no explanation for this significant interaction effect. However, other literature on political science might offer an explanation for this effect. The fact that young people struggling with job security are more likely to vote for new-right wing parties might be interesting for research on the rise of populism/nationalism or research on the losers of globalization/automation. After all, the new-right wing category mostly consists of populist/nationalist parties.

The findings of this research are relevant for voting behavior theory for several reasons. First of all, this research suggests that self-employed workers are not a homogenous group. Scientists would do well to make a clear distinction between self-employed workers with employees and solo self-employed workers when they are making class schemes or study voting behavior. Secondly, the literature on autonomy and voting behavior is very scarce. This research suggests that autonomy in the workplace might not only be a relevant variable when trying to explain the voting behavior of certain groups, but that autonomy might also mean something different for certain groups. A possible explanation for this could be that the solo self-employed view autonomy as a part of their freedom and as a post-materialistic value, while self-employed workers with employees view autonomy as a way of taking responsibility for one's decisions and actions. It would certainly be interesting to see how solo self-employed workers see and value autonomy in their everyday life. A possible future qualitative research that maps how solo self-employed workers look at autonomy and how self-employed workers with employees look at autonomy would definitely be relevant and interesting. Also, future quantitative research should be careful to interpret the insignificance of autonomy on voting behavior, because the difference in meaning of autonomy for different groups might cause unnecessary insignificance.

Discussion

The results of this study are unfortunately not conclusive, because there were multiple limitations on the empirical side of this study. The pooled analysis of eight different west European countries ignores the different economic and cultural context of countries that could moderate the relationship between new wave and old wave of SSE workers. Differences in labor markets and education systems should be addressed in future studies. A large enough national sample of SSE workers in which political orientation is addressed would help in this matter, because even after

pooling the data from eight different countries, I still ended up with a relatively low N. This was especially the case with our solo self-employed only dataset. This low N might also be the reason why not a lot of significant variables were found when only the solo self-employed workers were in the dataset. Also, this thesis only uses data from 2018, whereas longitudinal data on the voting behavior of SSE workers might be helpful in establishing the change in the voting behavior of SSE workers.

Next, a lot of proxies were used in our analysis. Cultural capital, job insecurity, and our wave variable are all not perfect. The cultural capital variable was a very imperfect proxy. To truly understand the cultural dimension of voting behavior, a more accurate way of measuring cultural capital would be needed. For example, some simple questions about cultural behavior could be used, such as how often someone goes to a restaurant or to the theater. The job insecurity variable and wave variable can also be seen as imperfect. The job insecurity variable only measures past job insecurity and not current job insecurity. It would be better to have a variable that measures current job insecurity instead of past job insecurity. The wave variable only measures the moment when someone joined the workforce, but not when they became self-employed. The difference between these two might be small, but it could make our findings toward new-left attitudes among the new wave biased. It might not be specifically the new wave that is voting for new-left parties, but young people. The multicollinearity between these two variables shows that this is most likely the case. A dataset, in which the exact time that someone became self-employed is known, would increase the accuracy of these models. Due to the lack of this type of data in political studies, it becomes very hard to accurately research SSE and other self-employed workers. That being said, the present study further proves the differences in voting behavior between self-employed workers with employee(s) and SSE workers, and makes an important step in establishing the differences between new wave SSE workers and old wave SSE workers.

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