Chapter 3. Loud Values, Muffled Interests

Third Way Social Democracy and Right-Wing Populism

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The Progress Party (Frp), established in 1973, has become, at times, Norway's leading opposition party, with support reaching as high as 37 per cent according to some polls in 2006. In the last two parliamentary elections, the Frp scored 22 per cent. It does exceptionally well among unskilled workers, especially the non-unionized, although it also attracts better-off people (private sector types without 'old money'). The main focus of this chapter is the Frp; however, the results should be relevant to the analysis of right-wing populism in other countries as well.

The most interesting aspect of the Frp's rise to popularity is probably its ability to attract an impressive proportion of working-class votes. In a predominantly social-democratic country such as Norway, this is something of a paradox in view of the policies of the Frp in areas such as economic redistribution, workers' rights and trade-union power. The economic policies of the Frp are drawn from the chilliest wells of American *laissez-faire* and Thatcherism, although these have been tempered by more than 30 years of ideological accommodation to Scandinavian welfare-state traditions. While paying considerable lip service to these traditions, the Frp retains a more radical programme on privatization and tax cuts than any other political party in Norway. It is still the Norwegian party that is most hostile to trade unions. The Frp's programme is opposed (in principle) to nationwide tariff agreements, which are seen by many as the *sine qua non* of the trade union movement in Norway. Still, many workers favour this party at the ballot box. Even unionized workers now vote in large numbers for the Frp (Marsdal 2007: 18). Adding these votes to those usually obtained by the more traditional right-wing parties could prove crucial to the establishment of lasting right-wing hegemony in the Norwegian Parliament (this was the situation in Denmark, where the Danish People's Party made an important contribution to the undisturbed reign of the centre-right coalition from 2001 to 2011). The Frp's emergence as the 'new labour party' could be the most serious threat faced by the Norwegian left parties since the battle with the radical right during the 1940s.

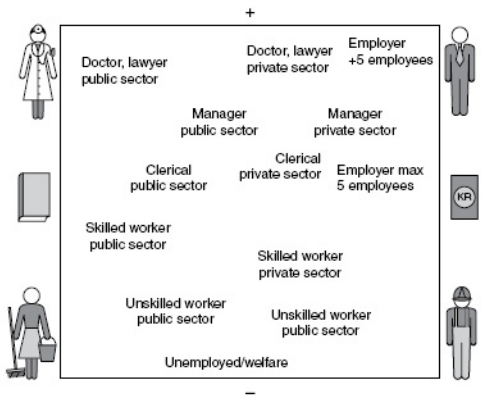
In my 2007 book *Frp-koden* ('The Frp Code'), I set out to explore the reasons why the Frp has gained such considerable support among working-class voters. In this chapter, I will present some of my findings. My investigation, consisting of qualitative interviews with 13 Progress Party voters (in their homes, at their workplaces, during leisure activities and on vacation on the Spanish Costa Blanca), drew on extensive sociological data of voters and their opinions, and on comparisons with accounts (from political science, sociology and journalism) of similar voters and parties in other countries (primarily Denmark, France and the United States). The aim of this chapter is not to set out a coherent theory or

comprehensive account of the success of right-wing populism among working-class voters, but merely to convey some elements that make up the analyses put forth in *Frp-koden*. One controversial topic to be discussed is what relation, if any, we can find between 'Third Way' social democracy (especially its accommodation to neo-liberal economic policies) and the emergence of right-wing populism as such a strong political current in large sections of the working-class electorate in many European countries (Rydgren 2005).

The position of Frp voters in a two-dimensional social space

In order to explore the political sociology of these voters, it makes sense to use a two-dimensional map of Norway's 'social space of occupational groups' distributed according to the weight of economic capital and cultural capital held by members of

Figure 3.1. The social space of occupational groups



these groups. The data presented in Diagram 3.1 are drawn from the market analysis firm TNS Gallup's Norwegian survey 'Forbruker & Media', with a representative sample of 10,000 respondents, and processed with the Norwegian statistics tool *Sosioraster*. The concept of 'capital' used here is in the tradition of the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1986: 241–58). 'Cultural capital' is defined here by parameters such as level of education and father's level of education. Annual income and different forms of accumulated wealth define 'economic capital'.

Along the vertical axis, groups of respondents are distributed (using the statistical method of correspondence analysis) according to their *overall volume of capital* ('have-nots' at the bottom and 'have-lots' at the top). Along the horizontal axis, the groups are distributed according to a different principle, the *composition of capital*. Respondents on the right have more money (symbolized in the diagram by the Norwegian unit of currency 'Krone' (KR)) than education (symbolized in the diagram by a book); on the left, the composition is the opposite. In the middle, we find respondents with a balance of the two forms of capital.

How is the propensity to vote for the Frp distributed in the social space thus constructed? In order to map this out, the respondents can be separated vertically into three 'classes (Élite, Middle, Lower). These are then divided horizontally into

three ‘class fractions’ (Cultural, Balanced, Economic) within each class. This produces a total of nine class fractions of equal size (same number of respondents in each), as shown in Diagram 3.2.
Respondents are distributed along the vertical axis according to their total volume of capital, and along the horizontal axis according to the composition of their capital, with cultural capital (primarily education) to the left and economic capital to the right. Respondents are divided into nine equal size groups, as shown.

Figure 3.2. The population divided into nine groups

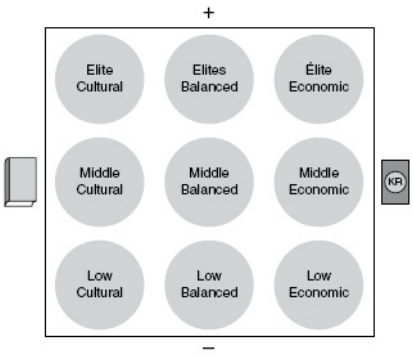
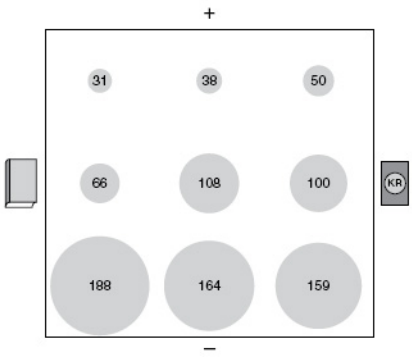


Figure 3.3. Smokes roll-your-owns



It is now possible to show social patterns of opinion or taste by measuring the average propensity of respondents within each of the nine class fractions. As an example, consider the pattern of propensity for smoking ‘roll-your-owns’, illustrated in Diagram 3.3 above.
If a group of respondents shows exactly the same propensity as the average for the whole sample, it is set to 100 (as the middle-class economic fraction in Diagram 3.3). Those with a score higher than 100 show over-propensity, those with a score lower than 100 show under-propensity. (Please note that this diagram says nothing about the overall prevalence of the measured preference, neither within each group nor in the total sample; it merely indicates in which regions of social space we find *over-representation* (or the opposite) of this preference. Also, be aware that the geometrical increase in the size of these circles overstates the differences, due to a methodical error in the statistics tool *Sosioraster* (the numbers are, nevertheless, correct).)
The diagram reveals a clear social pattern in the preference for roll-your-own cigarettes. The largest difference observed is the one between those at the top and those at the bottom. This indicates that the most powerful *principle of social differentiation* in this case is the *overall volume of capital*. The smoking or non-

smoking of such cigarettes is thus ‘a class issue’, that is, if, by ‘class’, we refer to differences pertaining to the vertical axis in the constructed social space, as opposed to differences pertaining to the horizontal axis. Now let us look at the propensity for voting for the Frp, as shown in Diagram 3.4.

This party is more popular on the right-hand side than it is on the left. This indicates that the *composition of capital* is an active principle of differentiation for this issue: The Frp is more strongly favoured by those who have ‘more money than education’

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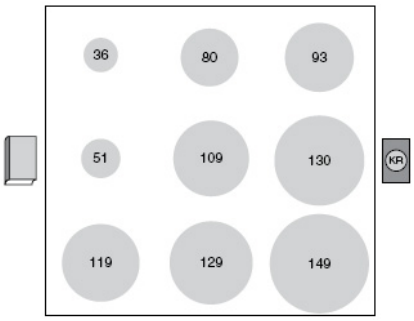
Figure 3.4. Votes for the Frp



(which, to a certain extent, translates to ‘the private sector’, which again, to some extent, translates to ‘men’). However, the *volume of capital* is clearly also relevant: The Frp is more strongly favoured by those placed at the bottom of the diagram than by the élites found at the top. Hence, the Frp is a ‘popular’ party with a stronghold in the male-dominated private sector. In *The Frp Code* (as mentioned in this chapter), the object of analysis is not the Frp supporters found higher-up in this social space, but the ‘working-class’ voters of the party (which, for the purposes of analysis in my book, I define, somewhat arbitrarily, as *those 60 per cent of the Frp voters who have the lowest annual income*).

The most striking feature of this chart is perhaps the exceptional dislike of the Frp expressed by ‘the educated’, especially in the public sector (the élite-class cultural fraction and the middle-class cultural fraction). To shed light on the meaning of this relation, we may compare the distribution of the propensity for voting for the Frp with that of voting for the Socialist Left Party (SV), currently a junior partner to Labour in the coalition government and the most radical of the leftist parties in the Norwegian Parliament (its support ranging from 4.1 to 12.5 per cent in the last four national elections). The two groups who dislike the Frp the most are strongholds of the SV, as presented in Diagram 3.5.

In light of the SV’s programmatic references to the political importance of ‘the working class’, it is interesting to note that the most powerful principle of differentiation in this diagram is clearly the *composition of capital* (which, to some extent, translates into the opposition between the public and private sectors). The SV is clearly not a ‘class’ party; it is a sector party. It is the party of, one might say, those with more education than money, and who are a little on the privileged side (Marsdal 2007: 220–35).

The Frp is quite the opposite – it is the party of those with more money than education, but who are a bit on the underprivileged side (ibid.: 234–5). Historically, these are both *middle-class parties* (‘middle class’ in a modern sense, not the more

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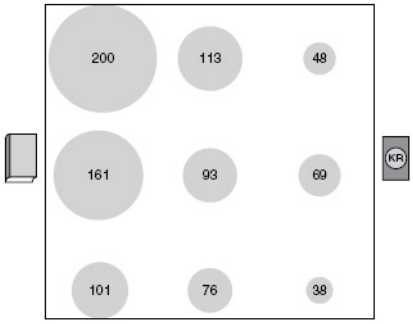
Figure 3.5. Votes for the Socialist Left Party



aristocratic English sense where ‘middle class’ often means ‘the bourgeoisie’). The SV was formed in the 1970s, by the *educational middle class*. The Frp was formed around the same time, by the *business middle class*. This sociopolitical development, spurred by opposing fractions within ‘the middle class’, is observed in several countries in post-Second World War Europe. Whereas previously the most explosive ideological show in town *used* to be the confrontation between capital and organized labour – a bottom-top opposition, as it were – we now witness a ‘horizontal’ polarization between the ‘socialism’ of the growing educated middle class and the right-wing ‘populism’ of the striving and often discontented business middle class. This confrontation is described by Bourdieu as the opposition ‘between the primary school teachers and the small shopkeepers, which in post-war France has been expressed as a political opposition between left and right’ (Bourdieu 1995: 35–6).

Both the SV and the Frp have made efforts to appeal to working-class voters. Whereas the socialists have mainly ‘talked the talk’ (with programmatic references to ‘the working class’), the right-wing populists seem to have ‘walked the walk’, making remarkable electoral progress among exactly those social groups which the radical left is trying to win. In 2005, the Frp was for the first time the most popular party among unskilled workers (receiving 36 per cent of the votes among this group), thus achieving a narrow victory over the social-democratic Labour Party within this group of voters (Marsdal 2007: 18).

Confusing patterns of political attitudes?

A quantitative study was performed by exploring the Norwegian dataset *Forbruker & Media*, number 1/2006 produced by TNS Gallup, through surveys of 10,000

respondents. From my own studies of the Frp and also European research on right-wing populism (Rydgren 2005), I knew that the heterogeneous electoral base of the party could be divided into one ‘working class’ segment and one more ‘petit bourgeois’ segment (small-business owners, shopkeepers, etc.). I was more concerned with the former. My crude construction of the Frp’s ‘working class’ voters was achieved by removing the top 40 per cent income earners among their voters in the TNS Gallup dataset. The remaining 60 per cent were the object of the quantitative study, in the book these are referred to as the Frp’s ‘common folk’ voters.

From the quantitative data, as well as through qualitative interviews, I found that these voters share a set of thoroughly *conservative* or *right-wing* attitudes on issues

including the following:

- Immigration;
- Crime/punishment;
- Foreign aid to developing countries;
- Environmentalism (and especially environmentalists);
- Feminism (and especially feminists).

On these issues, the Frp's working-class voters are very well aligned with the party leadership. However, the same voters also share a set of *leftist* attitudes on issues including the following:

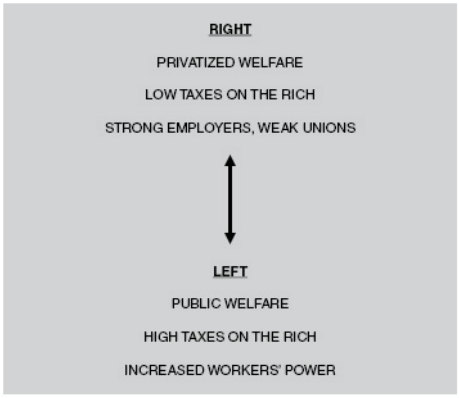
- Reduction in economic inequality in society;
- State responsibility for providing welfare services to all citizens;
- Increased workers' power/influence in the workplace.

On these issues, the Frp's working-class voters (here defined as the 60% of Frp voters with the lowest incomes) are not at all aligned with the party leadership, which is positioned far to the right of these voters. For instance, according to the Frp programme, the party wants to abolish the taxation of wealth and discard all inheritance tax. These are the demands of the rich and wealthy, not of the Norwegian workers who would have to shoulder a higher proportion of total national taxation if the rich received these tax cuts from the Frp.

In fact, the Frp's working-class voters are very similar to the Labour Party's working-class voters (here, defined by education as the lowest 60% of Labour's voters) on these issues: Both groups hold traditional working-class views, so much so in fact that the *Frp's working class voters stand alongside or to the left of Labour's élite voters* (here, defined by education as the 15% of Labour voters with at least four years of higher education) on issues such as increased workers' power or economic redistribution through the tax system. While 34 per cent of the Frp's working-class voters 'fully agree' that 'Employees should have a much greater influence in the workplace', only 18 per cent of élite Labour voters 'fully agree' with the same proposition. Among the Frp's working-class voters, 50 per cent 'fully agree' that there should be higher taxes on higher incomes, whereas the figure among élite Labour voters is 47 per cent (Marsdal 2007: 187–91).

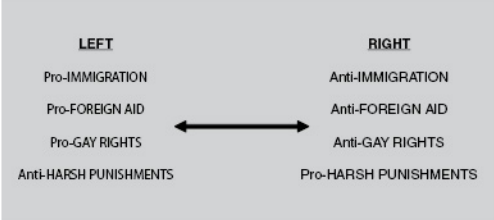
The Frp's working-class voters are right wing/conservative on some important issues and left wing/socialist on other political issues. This makes it challenging to position them on a simple left-to-right political axis. In order to plot the coordinates of these voters, we need to make use of two *different* right-to-left political axes simultaneously. These are the traditional left-right axis (the 'class' axis) and the axis of value politics, as given in Diagram 3.6.

Figure 3.6. The traditional left-right axis



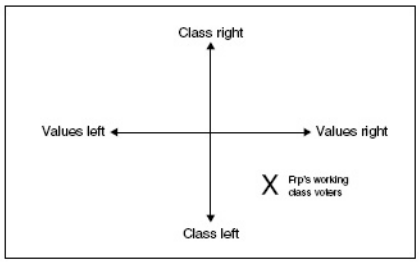
On this axis, working class Frp voters are on the left, while the party leadership is on the right. However, as mentioned above, we need one more axis to plot the coordinates of these voters, as shown in Diagram 3.7.

Figure 3.7. The left-right axis of value politics



On this axis, the Frp's working-class voters are placed on the right. Thus, their approximate coordinates can be drawn as illustrated in Diagram 3.8.

Figure 3.8. Two dimensions of political confrontation



The conflicts which define the traditional axis are characterized by the fact that they stem from the oppositions between rich and poor, capital and labour, the powerful few and the organized many. As such, they are true 'class conflicts'. The issues that define the horizontal axis of so-called value politics do *not* spring from such class oppositions. They may be equally important or salient, but they are not 'class issues'.

This difference is of relevance to the political strategies of the left. While the issues defining the vertical axis tend to unite working-class voters politically, the issues defining the horizontal axis tend to divide them. The left-wing political mobilization of majorities used to be interest-based and built around class issues that united workers. In Scandinavia (and elsewhere), this strategy successfully promoted workers' movements to positions of political power (such as parliamentary majorities), via which the movements' parties *also* implemented progressive policies

on so-called value issues. The sociopolitical *basis* of the political mobilization, however, remained 'class' issues relating to welfare, power and economic distribution (ibid.: 44–52).

A new top-level consensus in party politics

Many of the Frp voters I encountered during my investigation were unionized workers who had previously voted for Labour. One of these, a 67-year-old pensioner, told me that she now voted for Frp in the local elections, but was sticking with Labour in the national elections. She was clearly considering moving over to the Frp camp for good, like her son had done some seven years previously. This woman had been a worker and unionized throughout her adult life. Her father was a radical and active organizer in the construction workers' union from the 1940s through to the 1970s, and her late husband was a unionized worker. The whole family was proud of their history

as staunch trade unionists. She also held very clear left-wing social democratic views on growing inequalities, the need for more union activism, the rich being too powerful, etc.

So I asked her: 'Eli, you have all these clear views about equality and inequality, which the Frp does not share. Shouldn't you be voting with the left?' She looked at me and said: 'Well, does it make a difference? It seems to me that whoever is in power, it's always the same. They all come straight out of school and go into politics, they know nothing about ordinary workers' lives, and still they go about passing all kinds of laws and regulations and impose them on us. No one listens to people like me.' In short, when asked why she would not stand by the left anymore, she answered: 'We've already tried that'.

This does not explain why the Frp has a strong appeal among voters like her, a question which is explored further in my book. However, it does give us a clue as to why a social democrat such as her has – over time – opened up to the *possibility* of voting for a right-wing political party. It seemed to me that she, and several others I met, could not really see the difference between Right and Left anymore, and so the fact that the populist Frp had always been a right-wing party did not matter very much to them, even though they would never identify themselves as being 'right wing'. I wondered: Has the left-right political compass of these workers really been broken?

I went on to explore what had actually happened in top-level party politics over the last three decades. I found a clear pattern of convergence around market-oriented policies: Policies, which up until the 1970s had been considered right-wing/conservative/economic liberalism and thus the opposite of what the labour movement stood for, had gradually become the favoured policies of the social-democratic leadership – and hence the new orthodoxy in Parliament was more or less unchallenged. This was the case for a number of important and previously hotly contested areas of public policy. Under the new consensus, the outcome was the following, *regardless of who was in power:*

- Reduced taxation on capital, wage-earners should shoulder a larger proportion of the cost;
- Increasing economic inequalities;

- Privatization of major public companies (Statoil, Telenor);
- Deregulation of the electricity market (Norway introducing the world's most marketized system in 1991);
- Abolition of social-housing policies;
- 'Free trade' policy restrictions dictated by the European Union's (EU) internal market and the World Trade Organization;
- Pension cuts;
- More power and influence to the deregulated private financial sector.

The old woman had a point: It can certainly be hard to tell the difference between one government and another, these days. While election campaigns tend to make voters believe that by changing the government they can actually turn the political steering wheel of society, the reality for three decades has been that voters are only able to get their hand on the gear stick – by changing the government they are only changing the *pace* of

political transformation towards increased inequalities and weakened public welfare provision, and not the overall direction of socio-economic development.

At the ideological level, this course of events was justified most vigorously, within social democracy, by proponents of the 'Third Way' – such as Anthony Giddens and Tony Blair. They saw the submission to neo-liberal policies not as retreat, but as the necessary modernization of the Left in an era of 'globalization' and 'individualization' in which economic policy-making had moved 'beyond left and right' (Giddens 1994). This ideological current has held a strong position among social democratic élites, especially in the 1990s, including the Jospin government in France, the Schröder government in Germany, the Prodi governments in Italy, Nyrup Rasmussen in Denmark and Stoltenberg's first government (2000–1) in Norway. The interesting question here is not whether one agrees with the 'Third Way' accommodation to the neo-liberal orthodoxy of economic policy or not. Rather, it is how this unprecedented right-wing convergence in the field of economic policy might affect our object of investigation: right-wing populism's potential voters among the working class.

The salience of value politics on Election Day

'Earthquake', shouted the front page of the French daily newspaper *Le Monde.* It was the morning after the *Front National*'s Jean-Marie Le Pen beat the Socialist Party's Prime Minister Lionel Jospin in the first round of the 2002 presidential election. For the Left this spelled catastrophe. The sociologist Loïc Wacquant was quick to pass the blame:

The rise of the extreme right, starting in the early 1980s, coincided with the jettisoning by the French left of its working-class tradition and ambition. As the Socialist Party switched its doctrine and policies to appeal to the educated middle classes and dragged the Communist Party alongside it (and into government), the *Front National* became the top vote-getter among workers and the unemployed.
The French socialists have even theorized this betrayal. Dominique Strauss-Kahn, Jospin's spokesman and likely prime minister had Jospin become president, has explained that, in spite of three million unemployed and four million officially living under the poverty line, even as the stock market booms, French '*society considers that it has reached its limits in matters of redistribution*'.
Jospin even became the first left-wing prime minister in French history to reduce income tax rates for the rich. In September 1999, he explained: '*I don't believe that one can administer the economy any more. One does not regulate the economy through the law, through texts. Everyone admits* [the rule] *of the market*'.
So long as the Socialists of France, and of the rest of Europe, continue to ignore the growing social insecurity spawned by welfare retrenchment and economic deregulation, they will continue, stone by stone, to pave the road toward fascism.

(Wacquant & Halimi 2002)

In his polemical account, Wacquant claims that there is some kind of causal relation between 'Third Way' (neo-liberal) social democracy and the rising tide of right-wing

populism among the working class. In *The Frp Code*, I investigate whether such a relation indeed exists.
Some interesting pieces of evidence from political science emerged in the aftermath of the landslide victory of the right in Denmark's 2001 general election. In Denmark, both the xenophobic Danish People's Party (Dansk Folkeparti) and the more mainstream Liberal Party (Venstre) have exploited the anti-élitist rhetoric of right-wing populism in recent election campaigns, with strong emphasis on immigration issues and on the 'culture war' waged by bearers of so-called common sense against the stuck-up *besserwissers* of the universities, the official cultural committees and the intellectuals of the Left in general.
During this period, the Danish Social Democrats have subscribed, in Third Way fashion, to the new orthodoxy of economic policy, often to the disappointment of many among their voters. One example is how the Social Democrats government in 1998 enacted controversial pension cuts, despite having promised in the election campaign that same year to safeguard people's pensions. Eighty-two per cent of Danes at this point were of the opinion that the Social Democrats had broken their promise (Goul Andersen & Borre 2003: 49).While the Social Democrats pushed through policies of the new orthodoxy, the Liberal Party adjusted its rhetoric towards the centre, praising the virtues of Scandinavian welfare-state accomplishments. Ideological lines were blurred.
The landslide victory of 2001 ushered in a stable decade-long right-wing hegemony in Danish politics. In the 2001 election, the Social Democrats suffered a terrible blow in their traditional stronghold constituencies – among the workers. The political scientists leading the Danish Election Project pointed out that there was 'a complete

breakdown of the collective mobilization within the working class … a near extinction of the workers' parties among the younger part of the working class … especially among skilled workers' (ibid.: 2007–11).

So what happened in 2001? The Danish Election Project, led by Jørgen Goul Anderssen at the University of Aalborg, provides some interesting information:

- Workers and white-collar occupation groups switched places on Election Day: On average, workers who used to vote to the left of the non-manual groups now voted to the right of them.
- Workers had, however, *not* moved to the Right on welfare policies: They are traditionally to the left of white-collar voters on issues such as economic redistribution and public welfare, and they remained so in 2001 (on some issues even *further* to the left of the white-collar workers than they were in 1979).
- Voters in general had *not* moved to the Right on welfare and economic policies.
- Voters in general had *not* moved to the Right on issues such as immigration and other 'value politics'.
- Voters in general did not even report that they were *emphasizing* 'value politics' over welfare issues. From voters' answers to the question 'Which problems do you see as most important today, that politicians should deal with?', welfare issues received a 51 per cent score, economy (unemployment, taxes) 13 per cent and immigration 20 per cent.

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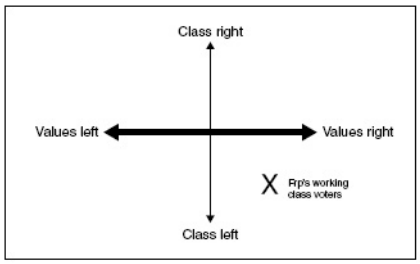
So what had changed? On one particular question, the political scientists registered a significant change among the electorate. This was on how they replied to the question of *what issues determined their choice of political party* on Election Day. 2001 saw the first Danish election (registered by researchers) in which the axis of value politics was more salient to voters in determining party choice than the axis of economic policy. The 'value politics' axis is defined here by issues of immigration, environmental protection, foreign aid and the punishment of criminals (harsher punishment or not). The 'economic' axis is defined by issues of maintaining the level of welfare-state provision, decreasing inequalities in wages, the democratic regulation of business life and increased taxation of high incomes (ibid.: 171–3). Taken together, welfare policies and economics were still by far the most important issues for voters. But they no longer made such a big difference on Election Day. Though there was much anger among many voters when the great pensions reform was pushed through in 1998, come Election Day in 2001, there was in fact no (significant) correlation between voters' opinions on this huge political issue and whether they voted for the Right or for the Left. This is perhaps no wonder, as the traditional party of the workers – the Social Democrats – was the government party behind the pension cuts and in this regard indiscernible from the right-wing parties. The neo-liberal consensus on economic policies widely affects the course of election campaigns and media coverage. In Denmark, the parliamentary consensus turned the pension reform into a 'dead' political issue, even though it affected the huge majority of voters. When an issue is 'left for dead' like this, the effect is usually enhanced by the mass media. Political journalists cover conflict, not consensus. Thus, when political journalism is reduced to covering political parties (which it most often is), an élite consensus in Parliament means that there is nothing to report. This *depoliticizing of economics* leads to the politicizing of everything else. With nothing to report on pensions or inequalities, journalists move on to cover those topics that

are still perceivable as being controversial under the new consensus, namely 'value politics'. In Denmark this means, above all, immigration and immigrants. In the Danish state television's news coverage of the 2001 election campaign, 66 per cent of the stories were about 'foreigners', 14 per cent were about 'welfare' and 12 per cent were about 'the economy' – almost an inversion of voters' priorities (ibid.: 121–2).

All in all, the neo-liberal élite consensus in the field of economics ensures that economic and welfare policies – issues which once were the basis of successful majority mobilization by the left – are 'taken off the table' before voters have their say. The effect on the relation between the two dimensions of political confrontation amounts to something like Diagram 3.9.

Class issues are shoved into the background and value issues come to the fore. Tensions over economic distribution and fairness are *demobilized*. This takes place, however, at the top level of party politics, and *not* in society. In society, economic and social inequalities and tensions have been rising over the last decades, not only in Denmark, but also all over Europe. The political demobilizing of class conflicts does not take place because most voters have come to emphasize value issues more than class issues, which they have not, but rather because, under the neo-liberal élite consensus on class issues, confrontation on moral and cultural issues ('values') has become the

Figure 3.9. Effect of the new consensus on the two dimensions' salience for party choice



only available means of party-political and ideological demarcation. Welfare issues and the economy may still be a high priority in election campaigns (party slogans, etc.), but they are rarely the disputed terrain of *demarcation* and *confrontation*. To many voters, all party leaders sound the same on these issues. Economic policy debates are dull and grey. Then, someone says something about the Muslim veil and media hell breaks loose.

This modus operandi of the political system has proved fortunate for right-wing populists such as the Frp. Whereas the party has *much in common* with its potential working-class voters on the axis of value politics, it is *opposed* to those same voters on 'class' issues of power and economic equality. On this axis, it retains a Thatcherite agenda (although these days Frp politicians seldom broadcast this to a wide audience). So the more a strongly neo-liberal orthodoxy enforces its élite consensus in the field of economic policy, the more space is created for confrontation along the conflict lines of value politics – and the more the Frp stands to gain from working-class voters. And this seems to be exactly what has happened over the last three decades, not only in Norway but also in many other countries. Among those mentioned in 'The Frp Code' are Denmark (People's Party), France (Front National), Austria (Haider's movement/FPÖ), Belgium (Vlaams Blok/Vlaams

Belang), Italy (Fini and Berlusconi), Switzerland (People's Party) and the United States, where the Republicans exploited the new consensus of neo-liberal orthodoxy within economics to attract a substantial number of working-class voters from previous Democrat strongholds through 'culture wars' waged against the educated élites (Frank 2004).

The Third Way and right-wing populism

So, what of the Third Way and its relation to right-wing populism? Within the party political left, Third Way leaders have represented the ideological current most eager to deregulate financial markets, introduce market mechanisms to the provision of

public services and enforce 'flexibilization' of labour laws. In other words, they have been eager to blur or altogether eliminate the political opposition between Left and Right on key issues of economic and welfare policy. The question is whether, by promoting this strategy of depoliticizing the economy, they run the risk of promoting a politicizing and a polarization of 'value' issues, which is a development most conducive to the success of right-wing populist mobilization among workers. If this is the case, one might hypothesise, from the strategic viewpoint of a right-wing populist party, that the preferred leadership of the political Left must be the Third Way type of social democrat.

For the Left, the opposite might be true, at least as far as winning over or securing working-class votes that are within the reach of right-wing populism is concerned. If we look at where the Frp's working-class voters are located in Diagram 3.8, a feasible strategy for a leftist party trying to win them over, would be connecting with them through policies firmly located around the left pole on the 'class' axis. This strategy would necessarily include a redistribution of power and income, shifting away from a neo-liberal process of increasing financial domination towards a more democratic and egalitarian development, which was what happened during the construction of the welfare state in the heyday of popular social democracy. Such a confrontation with the interests of the wealthy few seems all the more relevant in the current state of financial, state and welfare crisis, seen by many to have been brought about by three decades of neo-liberal redistribution to the top.

With rising unemployment in the aftermath of the great financial crisis, the 2011 election campaign in Denmark saw economic issues at the top of the agenda. The Left's narrow victory in September of that year was, however, no thanks to progress by the Social Democrats. In spite of the economic crisis and the centre-right government's growing unpopularity after ten years in power, the social democratic party of Helle Thorning-Schmidt actually lost one seat, compared to the result of the 2007 election. The 2011 victory was secured by Thorning-Schmidt's centre-left coalition partners, along with parliamentary support from by far the most radical leftist party in Denmark, Enhedslisten, which won eight new seats in 2011. Notably, the Danish People Party's progress was reversed, as it lost three seats in this election. As a supporter of the centre-right coalition, it had been made responsible for unpopular welfare cuts, especially concerning early retirement pensions. This was eagerly pointed out by the trade unions in a national campaign to expose the right-wing character of the Danish People's Party on economic issues.

There is, however, no sign of any renewed strategy among social-democratic party

leaders. In Greece, they have sided with the banks and the International Monetary Fund, imposing harsh austerity measures with dramatic consequences for large parts of the population, rather than siding with the trade unions struggling for increased equality and reduced financial power. As head of the EU presidency, Helle Thorning-Schmidt might have been expected, as a social-democratic leader, to voice political alternatives to the austerity policies drawn up by German Chancellor Angela Merkel and other conservatives in the EU; but while the debate over the austerity pact ran high in other quarters, Thorning-Schmidt retained a pose so depoliticized that one commentator at

a major Danish daily was inclined to ask whether 'there is any Government present in Denmark at all' (Mogensen 2011).

With the neo-liberal model in deep crisis, it could have been the mission of the political Left to confront the powers of financial capital and turn the tide of increasing inequality. For Third Way social democrats, such a strategy might appear not only difficult but outright unthinkable given that they claim to have moved 'beyond Left and Right' on economic policy. From my studies of the Norwegian Progress Party's success among working-class voters, I draw the conclusion that this Third Way strategy seems bound to reproduce, in the political field, that *opus operatum* of muffled interests and loud values which has proved so favourable to the growth of right-wing populism.

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