

Identification of the *bloc bourgeois*

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Abstract

This paper proposes an empirical study of the policy demands of the electorate based on the French electoral survey 2012. With the help of a latent class model, a partition of the French electorate in 18 classes is analysed. This analysis sheds light on the composition of the respective social bases of the left and the right as well as on the possibility of an alternative social base, the *bloc bourgeois*, gathering the skilled and better-off segments of the left and right blocs.

1 Introduction

At the end of 2016, French president François Hollande declared that he would not run for a second mandate the following year. This decision was influenced by his low level of popularity,¹ the growing social discontent following the implementation of a "supply-side-oriented" policy that had failed to deliver on the promise to curb unemployment, and the dissatisfaction of a large part of the left electorate with the "structural reforms" undertaken under Hollande's mandate, in particular the labour market reform commonly known as the *loi travail* or El Khomri law. Hollande's expectation of failure was later confirmed by the dismal performance of the candidate of his party (the socialist party, PS), Benoît Hamon, in the 2017 election: 6.4%. In the legislative elections that followed, PS lost over 80% of their deputies.

The victory of Emmanuel Macron in 2017 and the landslide of his newly-founded movement (*La république en marche*, LREM) at the legislative elections were interpreted both domestically and internationally as a sign of renewal of the French political landscape. There are of course objective elements of a certain novelty: Macron, not yet 40 in 2017, was the youngest elected French president ever; he was not a member of any of the traditional government parties and had never held an elected position before. Macron's election and LREM's victory were presented as overcoming the key political divide of the 5th Republic between a liberal/post-Gaullist right and a socialist/communist left. Macron

¹In November 2016, 11% of the respondents to the Kantar-TNS poll had trust in Hollande against 87% who did not trust him (Baromètre Kantar TNS / Figaro-Magazine).

was allegedly neither left nor right, or alternatively both left *and* right. Also and more significantly, Macron's avowed ambition was to drastically change the French socio-economic model and initiate a period of "new growth".² His election was therefore the signal of a radical change in French economic and structural policy.

But the claims of radical novelty ('*nouveau monde*', a new world) are grossly exaggerated. Emmanuel Macron had been a top advisor of Hollande, in charge of economic policy, before becoming his Minister of economy. More significantly, the political strategy that he and his movement LREM adopted had been tried, unsuccessfully though, by PS for decades, and particularly during the mandate of Hollande between 2012 and 2017. In more ways than one, Macron is the political heir of Hollande, and the latter's failure paved the way for the former's success.

The roots of Macron's attempt to go beyond the left-right divide go even deeper in the past. During the 4th Republic (1947-1958), the so-called "non-communist left" struck an alliance with centre-right parties and strongly refused any coalition with the communist party (PCF), although the constitution of a left coalition was impossible without PCF, a party that never obtained less than 25% of the votes in the 4th Republic's legislative elections. The institutions of the 5th Republic (1958) made it possible for the right parties to form a coalition without the socialists. The only solution for the latter was to search for an explicit or implicit political alliance on the left that included the communists. This political alliance was supported by a broad left social base, the left social bloc, which had demands oriented towards a left economic policy.³

But a nonnegligible fraction of PS⁴ were hostile to the full implementation of such an orientation and were inclined to adopt a more orthodox macroeconomic policy and, later, to implement more or less drastic neoliberal "structural reforms". This would have implications for the political alliance as well as the social base of PS. In order for the socialists to stay in power, both would have to change simultaneously. This change proved too difficult to achieve for PS. The failure was epitomised by former minister and president of the European Commission Jacques Delors renouncing to be PS' presidential candidate in 1995 because he considered that the pro-European integration and pro-"reforms" economic policy he wanted to implement required a political coalition impossible to form. The contradiction between an electoral victory achieved with the support of a left electorate and an economic policy more likely to please the centre-right was not seriously addressed by the successive PS-led governments after 1983. Once elected, left governments would more or less reluctantly renege their left-wing economic policy commitments and systematically fail to be reelected.

The need to find an alternative social support became gradually more pressing. In 2011, shortly before the presidential election, the so-called "progressive"

²A book written by three economists close to Macron (Aghion et al. 2014) and published a few years before the election was tellingly entitled "*changer de modèle*" (changing models).

³See Amable, Guillaud & Palombarini (2012) and Amable (2017).

⁴Roughly one third of PS in 1979.

think tank Terra Nova urged "the left",⁵ in fact PS, to relinquish the support of the working classes because their policy demands would be impossible to satisfy: their economic demands because globalisation and the evolution of modern capitalism had allegedly made the welfare state unsustainable and the neoliberal reforms inevitable; their "cultural" demands because these were authoritarian and clashed with the "values of the left" as defined by Terra Nova.⁶ Terra Nova (2011) recommended that the mainstream left look actively for a new, rather fuzzy, social base, "*la France de demain*", away from the traditional constituency of the left. If François Hollande did not heed this recommendation during the 2012 presidential campaign, his presidency was nevertheless marked by the search for a new social base. The economic policy spectacularly took a neoliberal direction, culminating with a radical labour market reform, the *loi travail*, and the successive governments were formed excluding not only the parties to the left of PS but also the left wing of that party.

Hollande's strategy was a personal failure not because of a lack of credibility regarding his economic policy options, but because neither he nor PS could embody the drastic change of political and social alliances that should accompany this economic policy. Such a change probably needed a new face and a new political party.⁷ But Hollande's attempt led to the success of Emmanuel Macron at the 2017 presidential election. He was in a position to reap the benefits of a transition that started with Mitterrand and Delors in the early 1980s, and was completed by Hollande after 2012.

This paper analyses the possibility of a change in social alliances at the time of Hollande's election in 2012. This should shed light not only on the reasons behind Hollande's failure in 2017, but also on those behind Macron's success, as well as the chances that this success could endure. The analysis is based on a bottom-up approach. Using the data of the 2012 French electoral study (hereafter referred to as FES2012), a latent class analysis defines social groups on the basis of the proximity the policy demands of the individuals that compose them. The aim is to see how these groups are positioned with respect to the traditional partition between a left and a right social bloc and how they could realistically be aggregated in other social alliances on the basis of a commonality of policy preferences. In particular, the strategy implied by Hollande's policies, and recommended by Terra Nova (2011), was to focus on the educated middle classes and neglect the working classes. The possibility for middle classes to form the core of a new dominant social bloc, the "*bloc bourgeois*" (Amable et al. 2012; Amable and Palombarini 2014, 2017), is investigated.

The paper proceeds as follows. Next section sums up the gradual break-up of

⁵Terra Nova (2011).

⁶The Terra Nova report made more or less explicit reference to some political science analyses focusing on the cultural divides (Inglehart 1990) or based on a two-dimensional view of the political space: economic and cultural (Kitschelt 1993).

⁷'Some people think [... that] in order to be protected from the great transformations of the world, we should go back in time and apply the recipes of the last century. Others imagine that [...] the game of political alternation will be enough. After the left, the right. The same faces and the same men, for so many years. I am convinced that both are wrong.' (Macron 2016: 2, our translation).

the left and right social blocs and the difficulties of the search for an alternative socio-political alliance. The following section turns to the empirical analysis of the French electorate's policy demands and presents the latent class model. The possibilities of aggregating a *bloc bourgeois* are discussed in the next section. A brief conclusion follows.

2 The break-up of the left and right social blocs

Political competition during most of the 5th Republic (1958-) could be summed up as the opposition of two socio-political alliances: the liberal/post-gaullist alliance on the right and the socialist-communist (PS-PCF) alliance on the left. Each of these political alliances had relatively well-defined constituencies (Amable et al. 2012). The left social bloc included the majority of the public sector employees and of the working classes. The core of the right bloc were the medium and superior categories of the private sector, the self-employed and professionals, and farmers. The policy expectations of these blocs were strongly antagonistic. The left bloc expected an extension of the social protection system and industrial democracy, an economic policy favouring real wage increases and a greater state control on the economy. The expectations of the right bloc were a mix of social conservatism and public intervention in the economy, at least until the crisis of the 1970s (Gauron 1988), and a more or less soft transition to a neoliberal model of capitalism from the 1980s on.

Both the left and the right social blocs started to gradually fall apart in the 1980s. After the electoral victory of the left coalition in 1981, the U-turn in economic policy in 1982/1983 (Lordon 1998) established an enduring contradiction between on the one hand the supply-side economic policy that the PS-led governments wanted to implement, geared towards the European Monetary Unification (EMU) and the achievement and deepening of the European Single Market, and on the other hand the policy expectations of the left constituency. On the right, the 1980s saw the growing divergence between a radical neoliberal core, favouring drastic market liberalisation reforms, and a more moderate fraction that wanted to preserve the essential elements of the social model.

The European issue appeared increasingly related to that of "structural reforms". European integration took a specific turn in the 1980s with the Single Market and the EMU. The Single Market promoted competition at the level of the union and more or less directly affected a series of institutions that had been the core of the socio-economic model of the post-war period, in particular the public sector. These themes came to the foreground of the political debate. Prime minister Juppé presented his social protection reform of 1995, which met a massive opposition and was eventually dropped, as the consequence of the need to reduce public deficits in order to meet the requirements of the Maastricht treaty. '*Europe is a machine to reform France against its will*' declared D. Kessler,⁸ a former vice-chairman of employers' organisation Medef.

⁸La Tribune, Paris, 4 décembre 2000

Pascal Lamy, the former chief of staff of Jacques Delors at the European Commission, considered that *'the reordering and the "marketisation" of the French economy [...] were made by Europe, thanks to Europe and because of Europe'*.⁹ Jean Pisani-Ferry, who was to become the main economic advisor of Emmanuel Macron during the 2017 presidential campaign, stated bluntly that *'Europe was our structural adjustment program. [...] France has let European integration play the role that the IMF or the World Bank play for poorly governed countries'*.¹⁰

Consequently, "Europe" emerged progressively as a salient political divide cutting across the left and the right blocs as it became clear during the referendums on the Maastricht (1992) and the constitutional (2005) treaties.¹¹ For a part of the left bloc, European integration appeared to lead to the imposition of a series of reforms that were the opposite of the evolutions that they wanted for the socio-economic model: restrictive monetary and budget policies, privatisation of public sector activities, increasing labour market flexibility, threats to the social protection system, etc. The situation was somewhat different for the right bloc, where the opposition to European integration stemmed partly from the will to keep control of macroeconomic policy but was also related to the (im)possibility to implement policies catering for specific economic interests or the consequences of increased competition for some protected activities, as well as linked to the will to defend national sovereignty in other areas of public policy, including immigration.¹²

The pro-European integration social groups were split across the traditional left and right blocs. The most skilled and well-off parts of the blocs expressed similar demands regarding the pursuit of the integration process. The less affluent or skilled groups of both the left and right blocs expressed less confidence in that process.¹³ The rising importance of the European integration issue in the 1990s and 2000s brought the pro-EU groups closer together, as the analyses of the 1992 and 2005 referendums on respectively the Maastricht treaty and the constitutional treaty showed.¹⁴ The possibility to structure political competition around the issue of European integration appeared as a way to escape from the political dealock: the impossibility to implement neoliberal reforms without losing the elections thereafter.

Confronted with such a problem, the left first tried to find a new compromise and extend their social base rather than renew it altogether. For instance, in response to the "third way" that was much in vogue in the late 1990s, PS Prime minister Jospin claimed that *'[o]ur sociological base is neither homogeneous nor narrow; it has been renewed and extended. This is why we must find the best trade-off between social classes. Those who are rather satisfied with the current state of society and do not want to incur the 'cost' of increasing equality.[and] Those for which the notion of equality and its concrete deepening are fundamen-*

⁹ Lamy (2005) Le Débat Le modèle français vu d'Europe. Entretien

¹⁰ Le Figaro 2005.

¹¹ On the analysis of the referendums, see Goux & Maurin (2006) and Ivaldi (2006).

¹² Amable (2017).

¹³ See Jacquier (2016) on the economic drivers of the support for European integration.

¹⁴ Lehingue (2007).

tal.'(Jospin 2000: 50). His spectacular failure at the 2002 presidential election demonstrated that he had failed to 'find the best trade-off'.

The construction of a *bloc bourgeois*¹⁵ gathering the skilled and affluent pro-EU social groups demanded that the political actors looking for it should actively neglect the traditional left/right cleavage and promote a European divide instead. This pro- vs anti-European integration could not be reduced to the now traditional opposition between libertarian-universalistic vs. traditionalist-communitarian values (Kitschelt, 1993), as we will see.

The search for a social base likely to support a process of "modernisation" (i.e. neoliberalisation) of the economy in connexion with the pursuit of European integration was not limited to the left. Already in the 1970s, the liberal fraction of the right had expressed similar ambitions. The link between, on the one hand, a transition towards a socio-economic model that would be markedly different from that inherited from the post-war Fordist period, and, on the other hand, the necessity to support this drastic change by a new political equilibrium based on a new social alliance, was already made by President Giscard d'Estaing in the 1970s (Giscard d'Estaing 1976). Giscard d'Estaing was the first leading politician of the post-war period to have an explicitly neoliberal agenda (Amable 2017).¹⁶ In a later book, Giscard d'Estaing also called for the emergence of a new social alliance, the "central group", that would, according to him, gather two thirds of the French population united by 'common cultural attitudes' and 'similar lifestyles' (Giscard d'Estaing 1984: 246). François Bayrou, a centre-right politician many times a minister in conservative governments was a candidate to the 2007 and 2012 presidential elections where he obtained respectively 18% and 9% of the votes, carried the flag of the *bloc bourgeois* by promoting the European integration divide and advocating an orthodox economic policy *cum* "structural reforms". The (honourable) electoral failures of Bayrou do not reflect so much the weakness of a political strategy based on the *bloc bourgeois* as they illustrate the difficulties for a politician identified with the support of a traditional social bloc to transcend the left/right cleavage.

3 Identifying socio-political groups

The breakup of the traditional left and right social blocs and the possible re-composition leading to a new dominant social bloc can be investigated with the analysis of the structure of the political demands by the different socio-political groups. In order to identify these groups, a bottom-up approach is adopted in

¹⁵Amable & Palombarini (2014).

¹⁶Giscard d'Estaing considered that in order to achieve such a transition, France would need to go beyond what he called the 'traditional ideologies': socialism and *laissez-faire*. The search for a "third way" between an "antisocial liberalism" and a "planned economy" has been one of the most prominent characteristics of neoliberalism since the 1930s (Amable 2011; Dardot & Laval 2014). He is one of the few politicians to have claimed the label: '*The most scientific form of modern economic thought is the liberal thought [... it is necessary] to give it a modern name: neo-liberalism*' (Armand & Giscard d'Estaing, 1968, cited in Bourdieu & Boltanski 2008: 33).

what follows. Rather than consider already defined social groups, on the basis of occupation for instance, the analysis will start from the demands expressed by individuals and these individuals into groups defined by the proximity between their demands. Demands will be identified by the answers given to the electoral study of 2012 (FES2012) to policy preference questions. Before presenting the questions selected for the analysis, the method used to identify the social groups is briefly presented in what follows.

3.1 The latent class model

The identification of socio-political groups will be made with the help of a latent class model. The objective of the latent class analysis is to find a categorical structure for the individuals of FES2012, defined on the basis of their policy preferences. The model considered in the empirical analysis has the following form:

$$f(y_i) = \sum_{x=1}^K P(x) \prod_{t=1}^T f(y_{it} | x)$$

y_{it} is the answer of individual i to one of the T survey questions included as active variables in the model. x is a latent variable designating the class to which the individual i may belong ($1 \leq x \leq K$). f is the density corresponding to particular set of y_i and $P(x)$ is the probability to belong to a certain class. One supposes a multinomial distribution for the y_{it} and a model of multinomial or ordered logistic regression according to the variable. The values of the latent variable are also assumed to come from a multinomial distribution and a multinomial regression model is used.

There is no definitive criterion for choosing the number of classes. The information criteria (AIC, BIC...) are often used. The simulations performed by Nylund et al. (2007) lead to the conclusion that the indicator giving the best results is a log-likelihood difference-based test (bootstrap likelihood-ratio test), using samples obtained by bootstraps to estimate the value of the statistics. This test is used in determining the number of classes in the model presented in the next subsection.

3.2 The data: the 2012 electoral study

The data used in the analysis come from FES2012, the French electoral study for 2012 (Sauger 2012), a post-election survey comprising 2014 interviews, representative of the French population registered on the electoral roll. Some policy questions covering the economic as well as the broadly "cultural" domain were selected in order to derive an expression of the demands of the respondents. The following questions were considered. All questions included the possibility of a response of no answer/do not know, which will be taken into account in the determination of classes.

A series of questions addressed the question of neoliberal reforms. The 2012 electoral study asked the respondents for their opinion (very favourable / somewhat favourable / somewhat unfavourable / very unfavourable) on a radical labour market flexibility-enhancing reform project, the replacement of all open-ended and fixed-term employment contracts by a single employment contract, the *contrat de travail unique*, which would have workers' rights in terms of benefits and entitlements as well as firms' firing costs increasing with tenure. Formally, the new contract would be open-ended, but firms would be relieved of some of their obligations in case of employment termination: no obligation to propose a redeployment plan for fired workers in case of collective dismissal, or to give an economic motive for the termination of the contract and therefore no possibility for a judge to check whether such a motive is valid. The single employment contract was one of the reforms promised by conservative Nicolas Sarkozy during the 2007 Presidential campaign, but was never implemented after his election.¹⁷ The proposition popped up again before the 2012 Presidential election, and the centre-right candidate to the Presidential election, François Bayrou, included it in his program. Some prominent PS politicians expressed an interest for this measure before and after the election.¹⁸

A question related to labour market regulation and social protection asked whether the respondent thought that the unemployed could find a job if they really wanted to (strongly agree / somewhat agree / somewhat disagree / strongly disagree). Although this is not a question directly implying a policy decision, the responses could be informative on how receptive the respondent would be to labour market flexibility-enhancing policies or welfare state retrenchment.

An important social protection reform of the Sarkozy presidency concerned pensions. It included many changes, the most significant being a two-year extension of the working period necessary for obtaining a full pension. The reform led to a significant union-led contestation in autumn 2010 and one electoral promise of PS candidate François Hollande was to partially reverse it. One question of the survey asked the respondent to appreciate the fairness of the reform, from 0 (unfair) to 5 (fair).¹⁹ A question on value-added tax (VAT) was also related to the issue of social protection and the labour market. A project put forward by the conservative party (UMP) and Sarkozy was to partially substitute a financing of social protection by VAT to the current system based on employers' and employees' social contributions. The drop in social contributions would lower labour costs, and it was expected that this would boost employment. But the transition would have distributional consequences too since VAT is a regressive taxation. The possible answers to the question of whether the VAT rate should be increased ranged from 0 to 6.

Another question concerned the size of the public sector and asked the respondent his/her opinion on the evolution of the number of civil servants, from 0 (reduce) to 5 (increase). The question on the appreciation of privatisations

¹⁷See Amable (2014).

¹⁸For instance Manuel Valls, Hollande's Prime minister.

¹⁹For this question and others concerned, the initial range of response from 0 to 10 was reexpressed as going from 0 to 5 or 6 depending on the profile of responses.

(Very positive / Fairly positive / Fairly negative / Very negative) was also selected.

The issue of European integration is central to the breakup of the traditional left and right blocs. Therefore, the question on the desired direction for European integration is of particular interest. Respondents were asked whether they would like to see more power given to the French state or to "Europe". The possible answers considered for the analysis range from 0 (France) to 5 (Europe)

A traditional question on how favourable the respondent is to the income inequality-reducing action of the government (strongly agree / somewhat agree / somewhat disagree / strongly disagree) was also included, as well as a question on what the priority of economic policy should be: to improve firms' competitiveness or employees' condition.

Other policy issues than the economy were featured in the survey. The ecological issue was present with a question on the desired future of nuclear energy, with a possibility to answer from 0 (stop) to 5 (continue). Immigration was also an issue on which respondents could give their opinion, from 0 (stop) to 5 (continue). Finally respondents were asked whether they thought that homosexual couples should have the right to adopt children (strongly agree / somewhat agree / somewhat disagree / strongly disagree).

3.3 The 18-class model

A series of latent class models were estimated²⁰, increasing each time the number of classes until the bootstrap likelihood ratio test indicated the lack of significance of adding another class to the model. After a series of estimations, a 19-class model was eventually rejected by the test. The chosen model comprises therefore 18 classes for the sample of 2014 respondents to the French electoral survey. A succinct description of the classes is given in Table 1, with the relative weight of each class in the sample, their main policy demands and some general characteristics of the class.

²⁰The models were estimated with Latent Gold 5.0.

Table 1. 18 classes.

| Class | weight | policy demands | characteristics |
|-------|--------|---|--|
| 1 | 10.3% | Pro-European integration; hostile to neoliberal reforms; | young; high income; high education level; public sector employees |
| 2 | 9.1% | not pro-European integration, hostile to some neoliberal reforms; | middle-aged; low income; low education level; clerks, workers, artisans, women |
| 3 | 8.8% | Not pro-European integration ; hostile to some neoliberal reforms; | middle-aged; Low/mid income; technical education |
| 4 | 7.9% | Anti-European integration ; favourable to some neoliberal reforms; anti-immigration; anti-gay; | Low income, low education level; old |
| 5 | 6.7% | Anti-European integration ; hostile to some neoliberal reforms; | young, high education level; public sector |
| 6 | 6.5% | Pro-European integration ; ambiguous on neoliberal reforms; pro-competitiveness pro-VAT increase; | High income and wealth, high education level; upward social mobility |
| 7 | 6.4% | Undecided on European integration, undecided on neoliberal reforms except privatisations (pro); | High income; higher technical education; upward social mobility women |
| 8 | 6.1% | Anti-European integration; pro-CTU; pro-redistribution, against nuclear energy, against immigration; | Women, young, mid income |
| 9 | 5.4% | Divided on European integration; hostile to immigration and gays; favourable to some neoliberal reforms; | Men, old; high income; self-employed |
| 10 | 5.4% | Pro-European integration; favourable to neoliberal reforms; anti-immigration; men; | Men, old; high income and education level |
| 11 | 4.7% | not pro-European integration; pro-redistribution ; in favour of some neoliberal reforms; not favourable to immigration; | Old |
| 12 | 4.7% | not pro-European integration; pro-redistribution; not favourable to immigration; | Young; mid income |
| 13 | 4.3% | express no opinions on many issues; | Women; low income; low education level |
| 14 | 4.3% | against neoliberal reforms; favourable to immigration; | Young; low income |
| 15 | 3.9% | divided on European integration; favourable to neoliberal reforms; against immigration; | Old; high income |
| 16 | 2.1% | pro-European integration; favourable to neoliberal reforms; | young, high/mid income |
| 17 | 2.1% | divided on European integration; favourable to some neoliberal reforms; against immigration; | Old mid income |
| 18 | 1.5% | pro-European integration; | High income |

3.4 Predictors of class membership

The 18 classes are defined by the policy expectations of the individuals. One may also want to look at the variables influencing (probabilistic) class membership. Although it would have been possible to include predictors directly in the latent class analysis, it would have been cumbersome to do so while testing the significance of the different variables. Also, these variables would have influenced the outcome of the classification, which was not desirable. Therefore, the so-called three-step approach was chosen instead. After having estimated the latent class model of interest (first step), individuals were assigned to latent classes using the posterior class membership probabilities (second step), and then the association between the assigned class memberships and external variables could be investigated. In this subsection, the variables likely to influence class membership are considered. The impact of class membership for political support will be looked at in the following section.²¹

Individual characteristics such as sex and age were included in the variables possibly explaining class membership. In addition, income, education, occupation and religious participation (the respondent attends a religious service at least twice a month) were considered. The income variable selected is the level of total household income divided the square root of the number of household size. Various indicators for the education level were considered for inclusion in the model. Elimination of non significant variables led to keep indicators for technical education and higher education. Occupation variables proved to be jointly insignificant with the exception of the indicator for civil servants.

The model for probabilistic class belonging is summarised in Table 2. Class 1 membership is associated with a lower than average proportion of seniors; individuals (probabilistically) belonging to this class are better-off and have a higher education level than the average population. The proportion of civil servants is high. This class gathers individuals opposed to neoliberal reforms (single labour contract, pension reform, income inequalities, decrease in the number of civil servants...) and are broadly in favour of European integration. Class 2 are somewhat similar to class 1 in terms of policy expectations but differ with respect to the opinion on European integration. A majority of this class would want more power given to the French state rather than to the European Union. Apart from the age structure and the higher than average proportion of women, the main differences with class 1 are the income and education levels: class 2 have lower degrees and income levels than class 1. The only distinctive characteristics of class 3 is a higher than average proportion of technical education. Class 3 are divided on the issue of the single employment contract, rather hostile to giving more power to the European Union, not particularly favourable to immigration or gay rights; they tend to agree with the idea that the unemployed could find

²¹The unadjusted three-step analysis yields downward biased estimates of the association of class membership with external variables because classification errors are introduced when (probabilistically) assigning individuals to latent classes. An adjusted step-three analysis procedures proposed by Vermunt (2010) and Bakk, Tekle, and Vermunt (2013) corrects for this bias.

a job if they really wanted to. They are not in favour of neoliberal policies such as privatisations, the pension reform or reducing the number of civil servants; they are pro-redistribution and favourable to an economic policy oriented towards the wage-earners. Class 4 tend to have low income and education levels, with a majority of middle-aged individuals. They are divided on the issue of the single labour contract as well as other neoliberal reforms (income inequality policies, number of civil servants). They are rather hostile to immigration and gay rights and do not want more power given to the European Union. Class 5 is composed of young highly educated individuals working in the civil service. They are not in favour of giving more power to the EU and are on the whole hostile to neoliberal reforms. Class 6 is mostly composed of well-off and highly educated individuals. Their policy preferences lead them to support European integration. Without necessarily being strongly in favour of all neoliberal reforms, they nevertheless support some of them (pension reform, privatisations); they are more reserved on other reforms such as the single labour contract. They support inequality-reducing state intervention but they consider that economic policy should be geared towards improving firms' competitiveness.

Class 7 has a high proportion of women, civil servants and well-off highly educated individuals. The class are divided on the issue of giving more power to the EU or the French state and the decrease in the number of civil servants. They are rather opposed to the single labour contract but not to the pension reform. They are mildly opposed to redistribution (relatively to the population average), in favour of nuclear energy, privatisations and homosexuals' rights, but not strongly supportive of immigration. Also, they favour an economic policy for competitiveness rather than wage-earners. Class 8 regroups a higher than average proportion of young, low-income women with a low level of education. The class are against more power given to the EU, favourable to the single labour contract but opposed to the pension reform and in favour of an economic policy improving the situation of wage-earners. They are not particularly supporters of redistribution. They are also not in favour of immigration and divided on gay rights. Class 9 regroups proportionately more senior men with a high income than the average population. The class are divided on the European integration issue, rather against the single labour contract but in favour of the pension reform. They want an economic policy for competitiveness and are not supporters of gay rights or immigration. Class 10 are very similar to class 9 (senior men with high income) but possess a higher than average education level. They are pro-European integration, broadly in favour of neoliberal reforms, and against immigration and gay rights.

Table 2. Predictors of class membership.

| Classes | woman | under 40 | over 65 | household income per person | technical education | higher education | civil servant | religious |
|---------|---------|----------|---------|-----------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|------------------|-----------|
| 1 | -0,0381 | 0,0147 | -0,413 | 2,1946 | -0,5767 | 0,6867 | 0,3684 | -0,8964 |
| | -0,4088 | 0,1233 | -2,7691 | 2,3409 | -4,2789 | 5,9306 | 3,6195 | -2,5857 |
| 2 | 0,2857 | -0,2255 | -0,4532 | -3,4247 | 0,2192 | -0,3086 | -0,005 | 0,0954 |
| | 2,7718 | -1,9811 | -2,5779 | -1,9714 | 2,0715 | -2,199 | -0,027 | 0,5048 |
| 3 | -0,0006 | -0,1187 | 0,0516 | -1,8835 | 0,2853 | -0,1018 | 0,1984 | -0,4476 |
| | -0,0062 | -0,8557 | 0,4047 | -1,0866 | 2,7058 | -0,7245 | 1,2458 | -1,4919 |
| 4 | -0,1362 | -0,4089 | -0,2193 | -5,7621 | 0,0812 | -0,7402 | -0,058 | -0,0297 |
| | -1,4227 | -3,2459 | -1,7865 | -2,5852 | 0,8163 | -3,0689 | -0,3512 | -0,1639 |
| 5 | 0,0101 | 0,3842 | -0,5521 | -0,9815 | 0,047 | 0,3543 | 0,3939 | -0,782 |
| | 0,076 | 2,3078 | -1,9643 | -0,5107 | 0,3277 | 2,9561 | 2,7752 | -1,2089 |
| 6 | -0,073 | 0,112 | 0,02 | 3,8795 | 0,0394 | 0,6864 | -0,2116 | -0,1133 |
| | -0,6149 | 0,9318 | 0,133 | 4,1613 | 0,3154 | 5,4524 | -1,3313 | -0,538 |
| 7 | 0,2587 | 0,1392 | -0,1061 | 3,1716 | 0,2047 | 0,2786 | 0,3477 | -0,2274 |
| | 2,2235 | 1,0318 | -0,6835 | 2,8058 | 1,649 | 2,151 | 2,4574 | -0,7865 |
| 8 | 0,4192 | 0,3492 | 0,1201 | -4,263 | 0,1037 | -0,3229 | 0,2621 | 0,0994 |
| | 2,9436 | 2,4417 | 0,7262 | -2,5067 | 0,868 | -1,9199 | 1,5375 | 0,5431 |
| 9 | -0,255 | 0,0092 | 0,3218 | 3,8788 | 0,2238 | 0,212 | 0,033 | -0,146 |
| | -2,2562 | 0,0643 | 2,4214 | 4,0748 | 1,6578 | 1,5517 | 0,1881 | -0,619 |
| 10 | -0,2502 | 0,1633 | 0,289 | 3,8434 | -0,1305 | 0,321 | -0,4096 | 0,1086 |
| | -2,2075 | 1,1188 | 2,153 | 3,8438 | -0,9588 | 2,4741 | -1,7677 | 0,653 |
| 11 | -0,0309 | 0,1337 | 0,3941 | -3,0362 | 0,0245 | -0,3771 | -0,3397 | 0,1591 |
| | -0,2416 | 0,8236 | 2,542 | -1,0123 | 0,1844 | -1,7717 | -1,2808 | 0,9065 |
| 12 | -0,0174 | 0,3929 | 0,0028 | 4,1633 | 0,1893 | -0,4666 | -0,4538 | 0,2221 |
| | -0,1356 | 2,7415 | 0,0155 | 2,6468 | 1,3684 | -2,4776 | -1,1737 | 1,0364 |
| 13 | 0,21 | 0,3974 | 0,3488 | -1,0977 | -0,1797 | -0,3264 | -0,1783 | 0,3847 |
| | 1,8424 | 2,6784 | 2,3655 | -0,6948 | -1,5946 | -1,8748 | -0,8274 | 2,6797 |
| 14 | -0,0083 | 0,1903 | -0,2295 | -4,5249 | -0,152 | 0,1719 | 0,3361 | -0,0426 |
| | -0,0682 | 1,4165 | -1,2434 | -2,5665 | -1,2689 | 1,1935 | 2,1731 | -0,198 |
| 15 | -0,1044 | -1,0774 | 0,2225 | 4,3692 | -0,3289 | 0,2897 | -0,7747 | 0,5566 |
| | -0,7681 | -2,3782 | 1,5074 | 4,7396 | -2,0723 | 1,7364 | -1,9578 | 3,4306 |
| 16 | -0,1953 | 0,1528 | 0,1978 | -3,4283 | -0,013 | 0,0932 | 0,0825 | 0,4388 |
| | -1,1007 | 0,6707 | 0,8894 | -0,8265 | -0,0658 | 0,4503 | 0,3202 | 2,0248 |
| 17 | 0,0438 | -0,7663 | 0,1158 | -1,968 | 0,0144 | -0,9583 | 0,1253 | 0,2138 |
| | 0,2763 | -2,0123 | 0,6399 | -1,1303 | 0,0837 | -1,6121 | 0,5255 | 0,9098 |
| 18 | -0,1181 | 0,1579 | -0,1108 | 4,8696 | -0,0517 | 0,5083 | 0,2832 | 0,4065 |
| | -0,6084 | 0,7569 | -0,359 | 4,9195 | -0,2415 | 2,4971 | 1,2493 | 1,6678 |

Class 11 is characterised by a high proportion of seniors who tend to give no answer to many questions. They are not in favour of more power given to the EU and express some views in favour of neoliberal reforms (the unemployed could find a job, less civil servants...). Class 12 regroups young and well-off but not necessarily highly educated individuals. Their policy demands are not in favour of European integration. They expect the redistributing action of the state and are otherwise divided or undecided on most neoliberal reforms. They are not favourable to immigration or gay rights. Class 13 has young (under 25) and old (over 65) as well as religious individuals. The most significant characteristic of this class is that they express no definite policy preferences ("no answer" to most questions). Most individuals of this class have a low level of education and income. Class 14 have a rather low income in spite of not having a low level of education. Civil servants are particularly represented in this

class. Policy expectations are not in the direction of European integration and against most neoliberal reforms (CTU, pension reforms, privatisations). They are for an economic policy oriented towards the wage-earners and in favour of immigration and gay rights.

Class 15 gathers older, religious and relatively well-off individuals. They are divided on European integration and in favour of most neoliberal reforms (CTU, pension reforms, privatisation, decrease in the number of civil servants) and nuclear energy; they are against redistribution, immigration and gay rights. Class 16 are difficult to define with the explanatory variables taken into account in Table 2, with the exception of church attendance. Class 16 are pro-European integration and express otherwise standard conservative policy demands: in favour of the single labour contract and the pension reform, and against redistribution. There are relatively few younger individuals in class 17. This class are divided on European integration and have conservative policy demands: favourable to the single labour contract, privatisations and the pension reform; against income redistribution and immigration. Class 18 regroups well-off and educated individuals. They are favourable to European integration, a pro-competitiveness economic policy and neoliberal reforms (single labour contract and pension reform); they are hostile to income redistribution and immigration. Classes 17 and 18 are rather similar in their policy demands but class 17, being poorer, are not so keen on a policy oriented towards competitiveness and would rather welcome a decrease in VAT whereas class 18 are favourable to an increase.

4 Aggregating a social bloc

4.1 Political preferences

We now turn to the political preferences expressed by each class. One survey question asked respondents for their degree of sympathy towards the different political parties, with a grade ranging from 0 to 10. Taking the degree of sympathy into consideration makes it possible to consider the potential political support rather than simply the electoral outcome for a single election.²² The following parties are included: *Front de Gauche* (FdG), which gathered PCF and the *Parti de gauche* (PG);²³ PS; the green party (EELV), the centre-right MoDeM, the conservative UMP, the far-right FN. A "no response" to the question is also taken into consideration. For comparison purposes, estimations of the influence of the class on the vote at the second round of the presidential election and at the first round of the legislative elections are shown in Appendix I.

²²The response rate to the sympathy question is higher (over 97%) than the corresponding rate for questions about the vote (83%). The information content of the sympathy question is also higher. Respondents give a grade to all parties whereas the vote goes by definition to one party only. Also, a certain degree of strategic voting for the first round can be expected both on the right and on the left, blurring the respective social bases of the different parties and probably underestimating the potential support of small candidates/parties.

²³PG was formed by a left dissident of PS, Jean-Luc Mélenchon.

From the estimation²⁴ results presented in Table 3, one can see that class 1 have broad left sympathies, which comes as no surprise considering their policy demands; they are also strongly opposed to the far right. Their votes²⁵ reflect these sympathies. Class 2 are similar to class 1 except for a limited sympathy for PS. Interestingly, these sympathies did not give a clear voting pattern at the legislative elections. Class 3 are strongly left (FdG) and opposed to the conservative UMP. However, the voting behaviour of this class is more centrist. Class 4 appear as far right and opposed to the centre-right. The vote is far-right and partly left. Class 5 have left sympathies and are hostile to conservatives. Their vote goes to the left, the green party or the centre-right. Class 6 have centre- left or right and green party sympathies; this class are strongly opposed to the far right and vote for the centre-right. Class 7 have centre-right sympathies and vote accordingly. Class 8 have no definite political sympathies. The votes go to the left and against the centre-right. Class 9 have right sympathies (conservatives and FN) but the votes extend to the centre-right. Class 10 have conservative sympathies and vote accordingly. Class 11 have conservative and far right sympathies but their voting pattern is unclear. Class 12 have no definite sympathies but their vote is centrist. Class 13 express no definite political sympathies but their votes betray a dislike of the green party. Class 14 are strongly left and vote accordingly. Class 15 are strongly conservative in both political sympathies and votes. Class 16 have no definite political sympathies and no clear voting pattern either. Class 17 are strongly right and vote accordingly. Class 18 express very contrasted sympathies (FdG, conservatives and far right) a dislike of the green party. The voting pattern is more rightward oriented than the expressed sympathies.

²⁴Ordered logit.

²⁵See Appendix 1 for the votes at the presidential and legislative elections.

Table 3. Degree of sympathy towards different political parties.

| | FdG | PS | EELV | MoDeM | UMP | FN | n.a. |
|----|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| 1 | 3,2517 | 1,5175 | 3,2719 | 0,2555 | -2,2359 | -5,7169 | -0,3438 |
| | 6,0398 | 4,4781 | 6,2187 | 0,4239 | -1,3429 | -11,9295 | -0,7746 |
| 2 | 1,028 | -0,0693 | 1,0899 | -0,9842 | -0,9341 | 0,4332 | -0,5635 |
| | 2,0906 | -0,3118 | 2,0988 | -1,5701 | -2,5314 | 1,0575 | -2,2792 |
| 3 | 1,5285 | 0,2368 | -0,6141 | 0,0996 | -1,6342 | 0,7062 | -0,3229 |
| | 2,936 | 0,8559 | -0,5606 | 0,2017 | -2,6746 | 1,5201 | -1,0704 |
| 4 | 0,1905 | -0,5286 | -0,2737 | -1,4379 | -0,1801 | 2,311 | -0,081 |
| | 0,311 | -1,893 | -0,336 | -2,1443 | -0,5783 | 6,8361 | -0,317 |
| 5 | 1,3962 | 0,2913 | 1,0898 | -0,1192 | -1,5877 | -0,8953 | -0,1751 |
| | 2,6567 | 1,0371 | 1,8376 | -0,2203 | -2,7845 | -0,8834 | -0,5886 |
| 6 | -1,6085 | 1,6506 | 2,8354 | 1,9154 | 0,0118 | -5,6314 | 0,8267 |
| | -0,3993 | 2,3525 | 3,3704 | 2,4434 | 0,0137 | -7,3461 | 1,1573 |
| 7 | -0,2395 | -0,4297 | 0,6186 | 0,8345 | 0,1551 | -0,1928 | -0,7462 |
| | -0,3714 | -1,6638 | 1,0512 | 2,0192 | 0,5621 | -0,3514 | -2,7235 |
| 8 | 1,7363 | 0,1361 | -0,1966 | -4,0235 | 0,2907 | 1,3917 | 0,6654 |
| | 1,7416 | 0,1518 | -0,1392 | -0,792 | 0,3163 | 1,4655 | 0,7487 |
| 9 | -3,4433 | -1,7659 | 0,875 | 0,7429 | 1,7991 | 1,7661 | 0,0263 |
| | -0,7775 | -1,8131 | 0,8828 | 0,8447 | 2,3178 | 2,1259 | 0,0332 |
| 10 | -2,12 | 0,1361 | -2,5411 | 1,4661 | 2,2533 | 0,5481 | 0,2574 |
| | -0,7422 | 0,1602 | -0,6555 | 1,617 | 2,7234 | 0,4935 | 0,3046 |
| 11 | 1,1348 | 0,5247 | -3,8163 | -0,8879 | 0,9454 | 1,1724 | 0,927 |
| | 1,6588 | 1,32 | -2,3608 | -0,8567 | 2,2662 | 1,936 | 2,4156 |
| 12 | 0,3465 | 0,1685 | -2,0184 | 0,984 | 0,0491 | 0,5037 | -0,0335 |
| | 0,3686 | 0,2476 | -0,5301 | 1,2663 | 0,069 | 0,6184 | -0,0489 |
| 13 | 0,1777 | -0,7832 | -0,4045 | -0,4628 | -0,0637 | 0,7772 | 0,7593 |
| | 0,2647 | -2,3061 | -0,4583 | -0,7687 | -0,1793 | 1,6456 | 2,9255 |
| 14 | 3,1419 | 0,7763 | 2,5686 | -0,225 | -6,0993 | -0,2733 | 0,1109 |
| | 6,063 | 2,3688 | 4,6279 | -0,3042 | -16,6878 | -0,21 | 0,2947 |
| 15 | -4,6065 | -0,7152 | -0,0559 | 0,7332 | 3,088 | 1,3375 | 0,2188 |
| | -7,4399 | -1,0187 | -0,0296 | 0,9377 | 7,5327 | 1,6975 | 0,4326 |
| 16 | 0,8468 | 0,0638 | 1,1666 | 0,1366 | 0,4526 | -2,0311 | -0,6353 |
| | 1,0175 | 0,1101 | 1,3155 | 0,1734 | 0,7446 | -0,6886 | -1,0009 |
| 17 | -4,4306 | -0,8756 | 1,2399 | -0,0556 | 2,3324 | 2,298 | -0,5085 |
| | -6,6049 | -1,3049 | 1,3324 | -0,0598 | 6,8682 | 4,6686 | -0,9502 |
| 18 | 1,6696 | -0,3342 | -4,8352 | 1,0283 | 1,3575 | 1,4958 | -0,3819 |
| | 2,5418 | -0,7153 | -5,7429 | 1,6641 | 3,7287 | 2,4317 | -0,7685 |

This overview of political sympathies is complemented by considering how each class influences the self-positioning of individuals on a left-right scale (0 to 10). For the sake of simplification, the self-positioning was re-expressed in five categories: far left (0 to 2), left (3 and 4), centre (5), right (6 and 7) and far right (8 to 10). The estimation results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Self-positioning on a left-right scale.

| | far left | left | Centre | right | far right |
|----|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| 1 | 1,2416 | 0,7397 | -0,8091 | -0,9692 | -3,4203 |
| | 7,7999 | 6,0561 | -3,6881 | -3,187 | -13,4934 |
| 2 | 0,6267 | 0,3218 | 0,2162 | -0,0552 | 0,1306 |
| | 3,533 | 2,3588 | 1,9788 | -0,4075 | 0,5074 |
| 3 | 0,8565 | 0,1707 | 0,295 | -0,2594 | -0,0203 |
| | 4,9699 | 1,1641 | 2,7353 | -1,6432 | -0,0681 |
| 4 | 0,4615 | -0,3178 | 0,1322 | -0,4058 | 1,1588 |
| | 2,4691 | -1,7309 | 1,2153 | -2,4175 | 5,6962 |
| 5 | 0,6252 | 0,7904 | -0,1457 | -0,228 | -0,7485 |
| | 3,3246 | 5,7375 | -0,9474 | -1,3425 | -1,3202 |
| 6 | -0,0717 | 0,7805 | 0,2551 | -0,0871 | -1,8298 |
| | -0,249 | 5,8071 | 2,2921 | -0,5778 | -0,7393 |
| 7 | -0,1745 | 0,0462 | 0,529 | 0,1726 | 0,3238 |
| | -0,5881 | 0,2811 | 4,9232 | 1,339 | 1,3387 |
| 8 | 0,5065 | 0,3005 | 0,1572 | -0,0746 | 0,4431 |
| | 2,5311 | 1,9918 | 1,1881 | -0,4585 | 1,8441 |
| 9 | -3,1531 | -0,6039 | -0,2148 | 0,9604 | 0,8857 |
| | -16,5186 | -2,1906 | -1,2987 | 8,4036 | 4,0675 |
| 10 | -1,4011 | -0,1347 | -0,0107 | 0,5889 | 0,9635 |
| | -1,2332 | -0,6972 | -0,0772 | 5,1898 | 4,3518 |
| 11 | -0,016 | 0,3537 | 0,0131 | -0,0186 | 0,632 |
| | -0,0563 | 2,2516 | 0,092 | -0,1171 | 2,6755 |
| 12 | 0,3234 | 0,2638 | 0,3142 | 0,2321 | 0,1476 |
| | 1,3655 | 1,6171 | 2,3907 | 1,6926 | 0,4996 |
| 13 | 0,2883 | 0,0863 | 0,2338 | -0,1174 | -0,1767 |
| | 1,3246 | 0,5204 | 1,8984 | -0,7374 | -0,5177 |
| 14 | 1,7902 | -0,0119 | -0,7003 | -0,858 | -2,3197 |
| | 9,3483 | -0,0652 | -2,5233 | -2,4543 | -1,3143 |
| 15 | -1,7152 | -1,9495 | -0,1094 | 0,5814 | 1,277 |
| | -0,8701 | -1,2705 | -0,6664 | 4,5327 | 5,8437 |
| 16 | 0,7441 | 0,121 | 0,002 | 0,1235 | 0,1549 |
| | 3,09 | 0,5411 | 0,01 | 0,6083 | 0,4082 |
| 17 | -0,4384 | -0,7115 | -0,3922 | 0,0586 | 1,6885 |
| | -0,8289 | -1,7212 | -1,4685 | 0,2835 | 6,8987 |
| 18 | -0,4939 | -0,2453 | 0,2345 | 0,3559 | 0,7099 |
| | -0,7744 | -0,7697 | 1,1132 | 1,7059 | 2,4357 |

4.2 The social blocs

From these results, the left bloc can be said to include classes 1, 2, 3, 5 and 14. The right bloc comprises classes 9, 10, 11, 15,16 and 18. Other classes can be considered either as centre-left (6 and 12), centre-right (7) or neither specifically left or right (4,8,13 and 16). These classes are at the periphery of the left and right blocs and could join one or the other depending on the political strategies followed by conservative or social-democratic parties.

Table 5 shows the partition of classes according to the social blocs to which they could be aggregated, their appreciation of neoliberal reforms and their position with respect to European integration. One sees that the unifying element of the left bloc is the more or less drastic opposition to neoliberal reforms,

whereas the common elements of the right bloc is the approval of such reforms. One may also note that, from what was said above, the enthusiasm towards "reforms" varies across the classes of this bloc.

Table 5. The blocs and the EU and neoliberal divides.

| | | neo-liberal reforms | | |
|---------|---------|---------------------|------|---------------|
| | | pro | anti | unclear/split |
| Left | pro-EU | 1 | | |
| | anti-EU | 2,3,5 | | |
| | unclear | 14 | | |
| Centre | pro-EU | 6 | | |
| | anti-EU | | 12 | |
| | unclear | | 7 | |
| Right | pro-EU | 10, 15 | | |
| | anti-EU | 18 | | |
| | unclear | 9,11,17 | | |
| Unclear | pro-EU | 16 | | |
| | anti-EU | | 4,8 | |
| | unclear | | 13 | |

As mentioned previously, the European integration issue splits both the left and right blocs. On the left, class 1 are pro-EU partly because they do not think

that it threatens either the social model or the national identity (Table 6). Class 14 do not think the EU is a threat to the national identity. For the other classes of the left bloc on the other hand, the EU represents a threat to both social protection and national identity (2 and 3) or simply to social protection (5). Such risks are also perceived by some classes of the right bloc: loss of national identity (9, 17).

Table 6. Risks associated with European integration. Logit estimation.

| | EU is a risk for | |
|----|-------------------|-------------------|
| | social protection | national identity |
| 1 | -0,1257 | -0,8905 |
| | -1,5211 | -7,4305 |
| 2 | 0,3285 | 0,2694 |
| | 2,7527 | 2,7402 |
| 3 | 0,4248 | 0,2855 |
| | 3,1573 | 2,7868 |
| 4 | 0,3921 | 0,7422 |
| | 3,4299 | 5,93 |
| 5 | 0,3362 | -0,1794 |
| | 2,5703 | -1,705 |
| 6 | -0,1717 | -0,6983 |
| | -1,716 | -5,2586 |
| 7 | 0,0392 | -0,039 |
| | 0,3603 | -0,3761 |
| 8 | 0,174 | 0,3393 |
| | 1,4051 | 2,894 |
| 9 | 0,005 | 0,2605 |
| | 0,0438 | 2,2891 |
| 10 | -0,5975 | -0,0418 |
| | -5,2868 | -0,3856 |
| 11 | -0,0514 | 0,1085 |
| | -0,4282 | 0,9322 |
| 12 | 0,4211 | 0,6681 |
| | 2,6716 | 4,2131 |
| 13 | -0,0901 | -0,1862 |
| | -0,8002 | -1,6865 |
| 14 | 0,1849 | -0,3492 |
| | 1,3711 | -2,8713 |
| 15 | -0,5706 | -0,2336 |
| | -4,5805 | -1,8855 |
| 16 | -0,5668 | -0,0864 |
| | -3,3566 | -0,5292 |
| 17 | -0,0266 | 0,3449 |
| | -0,1617 | 2,0446 |
| 18 | -0,1054 | -0,3139 |
| | -0,552 | -1,5981 |

4.3 The possibility of a *bloc bourgeois*

The previous results point to the difficulties that François Hollande could expect during his term. Like other PS presidents or prime ministers before him, but considerably more than them, he had to face the contradiction between the economic policy he wanted to implement and the expectations of the social base of the left. Not only did Hollande's macroeconomic policy take an orthodox turn with an attempt to slash the budget deficit and respect the Maastricht criteria by means of an increase in taxes in a first time followed by a freeze of public expenditures (Etiévant et al. 2014), but the Ayrault and Valls governments also launched a series of business-friendly reforms culminating with the El Khomri law reforming the labour market more drastically than any previous reform implemented by conservative governments during the preceding four decades. The twin orientation of Hollande's economic policy, the pursuit of European integration and a "supply-side-oriented" economic policy, was bound to antagonise or at least to split the left bloc, as can be gathered from the partition presented in

Table 5. This proved to be fatal for Hollande, who was so politically weakened at the end of his term that he renounced to run for a second mandate, opening the way for Macron's victory. The latter was facilitated by the ill-inspired choice of François Fillon as a conservative candidate. Fillon took an extremely neo-liberal and culturally conservative position that was not likely to unite the right bloc but rather represented a fraction only of that bloc.²⁶

The enduring success of Macron's political strategy lies in the stability of a new dominant social bloc whose main policy demands would be the pursuit of European integration and the implementation of neoliberal reforms. As mentioned before, the *bloc bourgeois* would unite the skilled segments of the former left and right blocs precisely on these issues. From Table 5, the class that would form the core of that bloc is class 6. This class gathers highly-educated people enjoying a rather comfortable income who express strong pro-European policy demands and have centre-left or centre-right political preferences. They are not entirely in favour of all neoliberal reforms but have no strong objections to them either, and the issue of competitiveness is central to their policy expectations.²⁷ Considering their sociological composition (age, income, education), class 7 are not too dissimilar to class 6. Their policy demands are less in favour of European integration and more pro-neoliberal reforms than class 6's, but there are compatibilities that would make class 7 a group likely to join the core *bloc bourgeois*. Classes 10, 15 and 16 are pro-EU and pro-neoliberal reforms too. However these classes are more radically neoliberal than class 6. These four classes taken together represent ca. 24% of the individuals. To compare, Emmanuel Macron obtained 24% of the votes (18% of the electorate) at the first round of the presidential election, and LREM 32% of the votes (15% of the electorate) at the first round of the legislative elections.

²⁶In addition to that, Fillon's campaign was plagued by a scandal concerning his wife who had been employed as a parliamentary assistant by her husband but apparently never completed any substantial work.

²⁷One may note that this class are not particularly "culturally progressive" if one is to judge by their attitude regarding the right to adopt children by gay couples.

Figure 1. Policy issue compatibility between classes.
 Plain: pro-European integration or pro-neoliberal reforms.
 Hatched: opposed to European integration or neoliberal reforms.
 Blank: split or undecided.

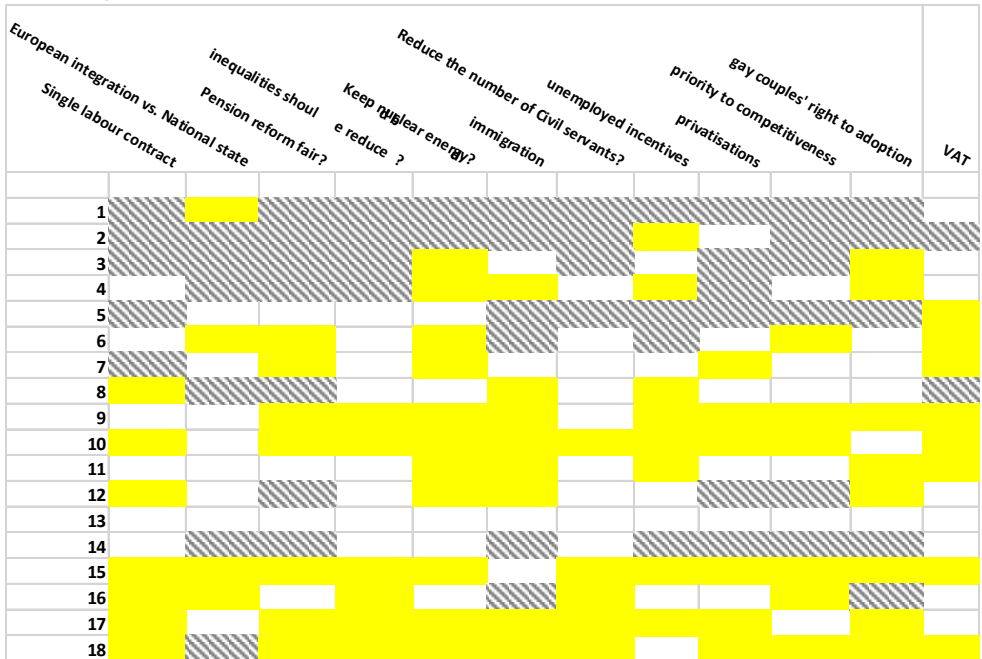


Figure 1 represents a summary of the respective positions of the 18 classes on all policy issues taken into account for the analysis. The aggregation a *bloc bourgeois* hinges on the possibility to find policy demands sufficiently important for the groups potentially joining the bloc, and sufficiently compatible between them to guarantee the political support of the groups. The consideration of the demands expressed by the different groups lead to conclude that, considering the central role that European integration plays in the existence of the bloc, the only possibility of extending the *bloc bourgeois* beyond the core classes 6 and 7 is on the right of the political spectrum, which, once again, stresses the difficulties of Hollande and PS to achieve this. The only left class favourable to European integration is class 1. But this class are rather strongly opposed to neoliberal reforms, and it seems therefore impossible to find a political compromise with them that would include classes 6 and 7. On the other hand, some right classes are favourable to neoliberal reforms, sometimes more so than core class 6, and are either undecided or divided on the issue of European integration. It seems therefore possible to aggregate all or part of these classes with a political compromise oriented towards labour market reforms (class 16) and social protection reforms (classes 9 and 11).

5 Conclusion

The presidency of François Hollande represented a key-moment in the transformation of political equilibriums and the future of the socio-economic model of France. The gradual breakup of the social blocs that had structured political competition during most of the 5th Republic was completed, and this made possible the victory of an outsider with a "movement" formed barely one year before the 2017 elections. The analysis of the policy demands performed in this paper sheds some light on the reasons of the failure of Hollande and his party, as well as those of the success of Macron and LREM in 2017. Elected by the left bloc, Hollande implemented a policy designed to satisfy the demands of a new social bloc, the *bloc bourgeois*, which he and his party, PS, were unable to aggregate. Neither PS nor the conservative party could credibly claim to unite social groups formerly split between the traditional left and right blocs. By promoting the key issues for the formation of the *bloc bourgeois*, Emmanuel Macron was able to exploit an opportunity created by the emergence of the European integration issue as a key political divide. The *bloc bourgeois* comprises social groups with policy demands oriented towards the deepening of European integration and the implementation of some neoliberal structural reforms in order to transform rather radically the French socio-economic model.

The analysis performed in this paper has shown that the core of this bloc is rather narrow, and extending the bloc in order to integrate other social groups is a political necessity. The analysis suggests that this extension would not be possible, at least not to a significant extent, with "*nonbourgeois*" groups of the former left bloc. An extension on the right appears more feasible, based on the satisfaction of demands for the implementation of neoliberal reforms. But even such an extension would not guarantee a majoritarian social alliance. A key element in Macron's victory in 2017 was the particular political institutions of France and their presidential character. The outcome of the legislative elections is strongly dependent on that of the presidential election. This, and a particularly low participation rate, made it possible for LREM to obtain an absolute majority in parliament while representing only 15% of the electorate in the first round.

The stability of the *bloc bourgeois* depends crucially on the acceptability of neoliberal reforms by the groups of that social alliance. As shown by the empirical analysis, there exists potential conflicts within the extended *bloc bourgeois* on the area subject to "reforms" and on the extent of the transformations. A unification of the *bloc bourgeois* on these issues would make it increasingly resemble the more affluent part of the traditional right bloc. Another possible issue is immigration. A "liberal" attitude in this respect is important for the core *bloc bourgeois* but possibly antagonises some groups of the former right bloc that would be necessary for the extension of the bloc. On the other hand, too repressive an attitude in this respect would be in contradiction with the expectations of the *bourgeois* part of the former left bloc.²⁸ But one should not

²⁸A study of LREM (Cautres et al. 2018) reveals the existence of several groups within

overestimate the "progressive" or "culturally liberal" values of the *bloc bourgeois*. Finkelstein (2018) showed that a large fraction of LREM supporters (46%) were in favour of having as a head of state a 'strong man' that would not have to worry about elections or the parliament. Of all supporters of other parties, only those of Front National were more in favour of that option (55%).

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the movement/party. The so-called "liberal progressive" holding economic neoliberal and culturally progressive values represent slightly less than a third of the party members, being outnumbered by the (liberal- and moderate-) "conservatives" that represent together 42% of LREM membership.

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7 Appendix

7.1 Variables

Respondent's position on

- the single employment contract: Very favourable / Somewhat favourable / Somewhat unfavourable / Very unfavourable / no answer, do not know.
- the power of the French state vs. Europe, from 0 (French state) to 5 (Europe), and no answer / do not know.
- Sarkozy's pension reform, from 0 (unfair) to 5 (fair), and no answer / do not know.
- the proposition 'the government should reduce income inequalities': strongly agree / somewhat agree / somewhat disagree / strongly disagree / no answer, do not know.
- on nuclear plants, from 0 (stop) to 5 (continue), and no answer / do not know.
- immigration, from 0 (stop immigration) to 5 (welcome new immigrants), and no answer/do not know.
- the number of civil servants, from 0 (reduce) to 5 (increase), and no answer/do not know.
- privatisations: Very positive / Fairly positive / Fairly negative / Very negative / no answer, do not know.
- the priority for economic policy in the forthcoming years: improve firms' competitiveness / improve employees' condition / no answer, do not know.

Degree of approval of the proposition

- ‘The unemployed could find work if they really wanted to’: strongly agree / somewhat agree / somewhat disagree / strongly disagree / no answer, do not know.

- ‘Homosexual couples should have the right to adopt children’: strongly agree / somewhat agree / somewhat disagree / strongly disagree / no answer, do not know.

- ‘the VAT should be increased (to finance social protection)’: from 0 to 6 and no answer/do not know

7.2 18-class model

7.2.1 Description

| | |
|------------------------------|--------|
| Number of cases | 2014 |
| Number of parameters | 1097 |
| Degrees of freedom | 917 |
| Classification errors | 0.1657 |
| Reduction of errors (Lambda) | 0.8153 |
| Entropy R-squared | 0.8367 |
| Standard R-squared | 0.7441 |

7.2.2 Test 18 vs. 19 classes

Test bootstrap 500 iterations

| Log-likelihood (LL) | -2LL Diff | p-value |
|---------------------|-----------|---------|
| -34193,3673 | 40,9271 | 0,2040 |

Conclusion: Reject the 19-cluster model

7.3 Votes

Second round of the presidential election

| | Hollande | Sarkozy | n.a. |
|----|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| 1 | 1,68 5,599 | -1,5544 -2,8614 | -0,1256 -0,3668 |
| 2 | 0,4256 2,6925 | -0,0749 -0,4081 | -0,3507 -1,8094 |
| 3 | 0,6667 3,7379 | -0,7771 -3,0238 | 0,1104 0,5592 |
| 4 | -0,3831 -2,448 | 0,1448 0,957 | 0,2383 1,6381 |
| 5 | 0,9736 4,7622 | -0,8357 -2,758 | -0,1379 -0,549 |
| 6 | 0,7923 4,263 | -0,617 -2,3559 | -0,1752 -0,7772 |
| 7 | -0,4358 -2,5019 | 0,2884 1,7717 | 0,1475 0,8914 |
| 8 | -0,0543 -0,318 | -0,0302 -0,163 | 0,0845 0,4824 |
| 9 | -1,1704 -4,3594 | 1,1869 6,3808 | -0,0165 -0,0756 |
| 10 | -0,5525 -2,3312 | 1,3469 6,8187 | -0,7944 -2,7222 |
| 11 | -0,2367 -1,315 | 0,0058 0,0308 | 0,2309 1,2965 |
| 12 | -0,0285 -0,1564 | -0,1412 -0,692 | 0,1697 0,898 |
| 13 | -0,467 -2,544 | -0,1925 -0,9999 | 0,6595 4,0705 |
| 14 | 2,5919 4,8117 | -3,8633 -3,7339 | 1,2713 2,2595 |
| 15 | -2,6949 -2,0466 | 2,5112 3,7033 | 0,1837 0,2548 |
| 16 | 0,5518 2,1846 | -0,2347 -0,7367 | -0,3171 -0,9688 |
| 17 | -0,8051 -1,5875 | 2,0057 4,9504 | -1,2006 -1,7161 |
| 18 | -0,8534 -2,5305 | 0,8314 3,1282 | 0,0221 0,0706 |

first round legislative elections

| | FdG (+LO NPA) | PS | EELV | MoDeM | UMP | FN | n.a. |
|----|------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|
| 1 | 4,0388 | 1,5417 | 2,9785 | 1,8196 | -6,1229 | -4,4079 | 0,1522 |
| | 6,9642 | 2,9659 | 5,0351 | 1,9296 | -10,6488 | -1,5298 | 0,2781 |
| 2 | 1,4369 | -0,1542 | 1,4449 | -1,619 | -0,6688 | 0,2788 | -0,7186 |
| | 1,6869 | -0,1956 | 1,7057 | -0,3519 | -0,7663 | 0,318 | -0,9039 |
| 3 | 1,2552 | -0,1455 | -0,3156 | 1,9245 | -2,0899 | 0,388 | -1,0167 |
| | 2,9866 | -0,5857 | -0,4406 | 3,5383 | -2,621 | 0,857 | -3,6158 |
| 4 | 1,3952 | -0,2733 | 0,6779 | -5,2254 | 0,7213 | 2,0745 | 0,6297 |
| | 2,7108 | -0,9855 | 1,1452 | -7,8638 | 1,9538 | 5,1195 | 2,8137 |
| 5 | 2,0387 | 0,2413 | 1,795 | 1,6205 | -4,0513 | -1,7164 | 0,0722 |
| | 3,4732 | 0,4955 | 3,0512 | 2,102 | -1,8086 | -1,1462 | 0,1475 |
| 6 | -0,8696 | 0,9238 | 1,4979 | 3,3004 | 0,2171 | -4,7061 | -0,3634 |
| | -0,2787 | 1,068 | 1,5803 | 3,4398 | 0,2316 | -1,1417 | -0,4106 |
| 7 | -0,9062 | -0,5543 | 0,5466 | 2,0285 | 0,3414 | -0,6619 | -0,7941 |
| | -0,7487 | -1,8326 | 1,116 | 3,8019 | 0,9056 | -1,0728 | -2,63 |
| 8 | 2,2913 | 0,3621 | -0,218 | -4,4529 | 0,8143 | 0,9494 | 0,2538 |
| | 5,0548 | 1,113 | -0,1845 | -4,5219 | 1,8899 | 1,8084 | 0,7804 |
| 9 | -5,1031 | -1,1074 | 0,446 | 2,4093 | 1,8909 | 1,515 | -0,0508 |
| | -12,5453 | -2,5883 | 0,6335 | 3,8993 | 5,734 | 3,4566 | -0,1861 |
| 10 | -3,9341 | -0,4811 | 0,825 | 1,1424 | 1,8892 | 0,7299 | -0,1713 |
| | -1,9997 | -1,0358 | 1,1793 | 1,0489 | 3,9695 | 1,1738 | -0,3886 |
| 11 | 0,0622 | -0,5013 | 0,332 | 0,2006 | -0,028 | 0,1866 | -0,2519 |
| | 0,0758 | -1,4561 | 0,5591 | 0,1484 | -0,0633 | 0,3417 | -0,7605 |
| 12 | 1,8164 | -0,7872 | -2,0346 | 2,5971 | -0,2781 | -0,2725 | -1,041 |
| | 3,3623 | -1,6792 | -0,8516 | 4,1526 | -0,5014 | -0,4279 | -2,1862 |
| 13 | 1,1552 | 0,0099 | -5,3409 | 2,4643 | 0,3489 | 0,3329 | 1,0298 |
| | 1,8608 | 0,0333 | -7,9557 | 3,9018 | 0,7897 | 0,5651 | 4,1557 |
| 14 | 3,4149 | 0,1107 | 1,3048 | 0,1112 | -3,4899 | -0,9372 | -0,5145 |
| | 5,0025 | 0,1707 | 1,6885 | 0,07 | -1,0667 | -0,8319 | -0,7694 |
| 15 | -3,2459 | -0,324 | 0,6281 | -3,2179 | 3,7203 | 1,9961 | 0,4434 |
| | -4,579 | -0,5046 | 0,4551 | -3,3869 | 8,868 | 3,2595 | 0,9421 |
| 16 | 0,9959 | 0,0502 | -2,9462 | 1,1272 | 0,6531 | 0,0054 | 0,1145 |
| | 1,0771 | 0,086 | -1,0604 | 0,9834 | 0,9967 | 0,0061 | 0,1959 |
| 17 | -3,4165 | -0,3189 | 1,7366 | -3,5187 | 3,1633 | 1,8239 | 0,5303 |
| | -6,0935 | -0,5116 | 2,0479 | -3,907 | 8,1422 | 3,0096 | 1,2656 |
| 18 | -2,4254 | 1,4076 | -3,3577 | -2,7116 | 2,9692 | 2,4214 | 1,6966 |
| | -3,4439 | 3,2757 | -4,152 | -2,6069 | 6,6999 | 3,6385 | 4,3165 |