



# Who is a right wing supporter? On the biographical experiences of young right wing voters in Poland and Germany

Adam Mrozowicki, Vera Trappmann, Alexandra Seehaus,  
Justyna Kajta, Denis Neumann



# Overview

- Introduction
- Explaining support for the right in Poland and Germany
- Research on young precarious workers: methods and data
- Four cases
- Conclusions (tentative)

# Introduction

- Growing support for (far) right wing parties in European and non-European countries, Poland and Germany including, and the emergent trend of precarisation of employment
- Turn of young people to the right (Zick/Küpper/Krause 2016; Messyasz 2015), Die Identitäre; Junge Alternative.
- Competing views on the sources of right wing support (Ingelhart and Norris 2016)
  - Socio-economic explanations connected with economic deprivation, precarisation, economic exclusion, labour market competition with immigrants (e.g. Kalb 2007; Dörre 2003)
  - Cultural explanations linked to new identity politics, symbolic exclusion, disembedding from communities and fear of cultural Others (Beck 2002; Ingelhart and Norris 2016)
- Research questions:
  - What is the relationship between biographical experiences and the emergent right wing views of some of the young people in Poland and Germany?
  - What is the role played by socio-economic background, individual resources and objective precarity/precariousness in support granted for right wing parties and social movements?
- Data:
  - NCN-DFG project PREWORK (UMO-2014/15/G/HS4/04476) (N=22 cases of right wing supporters)

# Voting preferences of young people

	2015 Elections Poland (18+)	2015 Elections Poland (18-30) (source: IPSOS 2015)	2015 Elections Poland (18-30) (PREWORK CATI, N=702)*
Law and Justice	<b>37,58%</b>	<b>25,8%</b>	24,7%
Civic Platform	24,09%	14,6%	15%
Kukiz '15	<b>8,81%</b>	<b>19,9%</b>	14,3%
Modern (N)	7,6%	8,5%	8,5%
KORWIN	<b>4,76%</b>	<b>16,8%</b>	8,5%
Together (Razem)	3,62%	5,2%	3,4%
Polish People's Party	5,13%	3,8%	1,4%
United Left	7,55%	3,9%	1,1%

For the PREWORK CATI sample in Poland: 29,8% out of N=1000; missing (not voted), only those who voted counted, 12,9% - refused to answer, 8,6% - did not remember, 1,6% - voted for a different party

	2017 Elections Germany (18+)	2017 exit polls (18-24) - the Federal Returning Officer	2015 Party preferences PREWORK CATI (18-30), N=1000
CDU	30,2%	19,9%	25,7%
CSU	7,0%	5,1%	
SPD	24,6%	18,4%	17,7%
AfD	<b>11,5%</b> <i>(27% in Saxony)</i>	8%	4,3%
FDP	7%	13,2%	5,4%
Die Linke	8,6%	10,5%	6,0%
Alliance 90 /The Greens	8%	14,6%	7,4%
Others	3,1%	10,4%	2,6%

For the PREWORK CATI sample: in Germany, 5,5% declared not to go for voting or voting invalid, 18,1% was undecided, 4,3% - refused to answer

# Economic explanations for the rise of the right

- Germany:
  - Klaus Dörre (2003): Attempts to pose social question anew; complex process of precarisation, including the degradation of working and living conditions (even if not described as precarious)
  - Flecker et al. (2004): Acceleration of socio-economic change challenging individual socio-economic positions and increasing insecurity as causes of right-wing turn
- Poland
  - David Ost (2005): Economic inequalities (increased after 1989) generate popular anger which needs to be politically organised along some lines or cleavages. Due to the weakness of trade unions and the avoidance of the discourse of class by liberals, the mobilisation of economically disadvantaged is taken over by illiberal parties and organised along cultural identities;
  - Don Kalb & G. Halmai (2011) – *Headlines of nation, subtexts of class ...*: Working class neonationalism as the traumatic expression of material and cultural disenfranchisements in neoliberal epoch. The social basis of nationalist movement – lower tiers of dispossessed working class

# Cultural explanations for the rise of the right

- Right-wing populism as the by-product of:
  - Liquid modernity (Bauman 1991) and search for communities; ontological insecurity (Giddens 1991)
  - Resistance to cultural globalisation and migration (Rex 1999)
  - Need for recognition (Zarycki 2009), feeling of orientationlessness and social isolation (Sommer 2010)
  - “Fears and crises of orientation” (Hanesch 1994; Heithmeyer 1989) typical of the youth phase
- Germany:
  - *Kulturkampf* from the Right (Minkenbergh 2011); latent xenophobia (Decker et al. 2016) combined with the need for parties to distance themselves from NS
- Poland
  - Need for superiority and control over socially weaker groups – neo-authoritarianism cutting across various social strata (Gdula 2018)
  - Limited differences between left-wing and right-wing supporters regarding economic issues, strong differences regarding cultural and political issues (Feliksiak 2015)

# Need for combined perspective

- Inglehart and Norris (2016) – neither economic nor cultural factors work alone, but rather cultural and socio-economic aspects combine and amplify each other's effects
  - Opposition between fundamentalist and post-modern values/ right-wing populism and cosmopolitan liberalism
- Varieties of new right wing populism(s):
  - Right-wing populism as economically liberal, business-friendly, market-oriented, socially conservative, value-traditional, euroskeptical stance (Inglehart and Norris 2016)
  - The phenomenon of new cultural racism or “post-racism”: “apparently politically neutral and unideological” (Hedl, Hackl, Bröse 2017) and replacing “racist categories by cultural ones” (Lentin and Titley, 2011)
  - The “welfarist” aspect of new right wing populism: “trading material benefits or bureaucratic favors for political support by citizens who become the populist ‘clients’” (Müller 2016)
- Dörre (2003) and Sommer (2010) – the integration of traditional value orientations, nationalism and new struggle over a share in social benefits as combined sources of new right wing populism
  - The relevance of variegated perception and experiences (subjective factors)

# Methods and data

- 130 biographical narrative interviews with young people in PL (70) and DE (60) using F. Schuetze method, in non-standard employment, unemployed or precarious forms of VET, aged 18-35, in locations varying by their economic development;
- Difficulties in reaching far-right milieu during theoretical sampling:
  - In Germany, AfD contacted many times, AfD stands visited during electoral campaign, contacts made with football supporters, FB forums etc. Limited success, only 3 cases of AfD voters.
  - In Poland, mostly informal contacts via friend and acquaintances; different grades of nationalist and far-right involvement: 3 activists and 16 cases in at least one of conditions was met: (1) voting for right-wing parties (KORWIN, Kukiz '15, PiS); (2) expressing racists, homophobic or anti-refugee views; (3) joining demonstrations or events organised or co-organised by far right (MW, NOP, ONR, Ruch Narodowy); (4) expressing ultra-liberal views on economy (abolishing social security and welfare system, public health care, obligatory taxes etc.) (Kajta/Mrozowicki forth.)
- Data analysis: combining sequential analysis with GTM; reconstructing biographical portraits and extensive analytical memo writing
- Case selection for the paper based on social background criteria



# Case selection table

	Johanna (DE, 23)	Marianna (PL, 25)	Marian (PL, 22)	Sven (DE, 32)
Social background	Low middle class, fragmented family; degradation	Working class, small entrepreneurs; fragmented family; degradation	Working class / low middle class, fragmented family; social advancement	Middle class ( <i>mésalliance</i> ), degradation /reproduction
Logic of story told	Trajectory	Trajectory	Trajectory → Biographical planning	Trajectory → Biographical planning
Education	Vocational <i>Abitur</i> , commercial specialist	Lower secondary; aspirations to higher	Technical/upper secondary	Secondary education ( <i>Abitur</i> )
Economic resources	Relatively low	Relatively low	Relatively high	Relatively high
Current job	Unemployed, Harz IV, selling cloths online	Unemployed, trainee at Voluntary Labour Corps	Civil-law contract as (self-learnt) IT sector employee (coder)	Open-ended contract in electronic industry as quality controller
Right wing views	<b>Life-world centered;</b> Anti-refugee; AfD; Competition for resources; pro-welfarist	<b>Life-world centered</b> Anti-refugee; neo-traditional; fear-based; pro-welfarist;	<b>Post-political:</b> Anti-refugee, anti-LGTB, anti-women's, anti-elite, anti-welfarist; Kukiz '15, Independence Day March;	<b>Post-political:</b> Anti-elite, anti-systemic; mild racism and anti-multiculturalism; protest voting for AfD and Die Partei;

# The case of Joanna (DE)

- Biographical portrait
  - 23 y.o., born and living in mid-sized W. in south-west Germany, 1 brother, low middle-class bkg.
  - divorced parents, complicated relationship with mum
  - outsider at school, doing various mini jobs
  - serious appendix rupture causing further health and family problems
  - works in large department store; finishes *Fachabitur*
  - meets a partner, violent relationship, unexpected boy baby born, relation broken
  - doing commercial training and receiving Harz IV at the moment
- Analytical remarks:
  - Dominance of biographical trajectory of suffering
  - Blames the status of single mother for her labour market problems
  - Feeling of helplessness, abandonment and betrayal preparing ground for right wing turn
  - Economic and material motives rooted in life world rather than fear of being culturally dominated

# The case of Joanna

- ***Joanna:*** *Well, occupationally, and I'd say for my living standard too it limits me a lot because you're really not respected as single parent, but as I said, I've sent already so many applications. I didn't even get one answer. Earlier I always sent the same one and always got the job. Uh, and then I, I really looked during the pregnancy for a flat. I looked for one after I had him (the child), and you're not accepted, now I find that really bad. Above all when you go to the city [local council] and they say well, municipal flats are out, because they're all reserved for refugees. Uh, well and then you do get a bit, well, hateful too, that nothing's happening.*

# The case of Marianna

- Biographical portrait
  - 25 y.o., born and lives in former mine district in SW of Poland, 1 brother, working-class bkd
  - parents' separation at the age of 18 and collapse of grocery shop they have
  - drug and alcohol addiction of Marianna since lower secondary school
  - two unfortunate relationship with men addicted to alcohol
  - short-term jobs in Special Economic Zone, handing leaflets, Post Office
  - experience of migration to the UK (and manifold migration of her partner)
  - baby born with her current fiancée – biographical metamorphosis
  - finishes evening secondary education & Voluntary Labour Corps course
- Analytical remarks
  - The dominance of biographical trajectory of suffering and (partial) metamorphosis
  - Less obvious relation between objective precarity, precariousness and xenophobia, still: competition at the bottom matters (the migrant-dominated UK neighbourhood)
  - Fear-led xenophobia as a part of a larger syndrome of fear of external, threatening and unsupportive world of institutions and externally imposed norms

# The case of Marianna

- **Marianna:** *“I am not interested in politics. More... I mean, maybe I am interested a bit, more about the refugees. This stay in Great Britain, when we were for half a year in Great Britain. I got to hate Islam. Terrible. We lived for three months in C. where there were thirty mosques and no white person in the street, and I had too much of them, they were rude, unpleasant, almost run over us on the pavement. They almost killed our daughter in the pram, because they run the car right into the pram, and they wanted to fight us afterwards. This was all in Great Britain so in terms of politics this is the only thing that interests me, so they do not let them in here.”*

# The case of Marian

- Biographical portrait
  - 22 y.o., born in south-west Poland, lives in Warsaw, 1 brother, low middle class bkg; experience of parents' divorce and move to central Poland
  - finishes technical secondary school as electrician
  - formative short-term migratory experiences: Germany and Corsica
  - Unregistered work in construction, short-term work in plant maintenance
  - Occupational accident as turning point: an IT course in Silesia paid from short-term loan
  - New, well paid job in IT company with civil law contract
  - No relationship; limited sport-related friends (doing street workout)
- Analytical remarks
  - Hidden biographical trajectory, now: dominance of biographical planning
  - *Hysteresis effect* – working class habitus and quick social advancement; combination of (neo)liberal discourse and work ethics based on the norm of obligation to work
  - Self-made man motive defining both his life strategy and political views: anti-elitism and anti-welfarism, anti-politics, anti-refugee; at the top of it: homophobia and cultural racism

# The case of Marian

- **Marian:** *“In terms of refugees, this is also much pumped up balloon. My opinion on this topic is that in general our current government behaves in such a way that here they do not want them yyy but this is due to what terms they would come here on. (...) They have to work. (...) They have different culture, but I do not know, because of that they can come maybe not in such a big group as they would like to, we know, that in Germany this is at the moment a big disaster what is happening. Because now it is difficult to find a true German there. There are many Poles, many Turks, many... And because of that, that even these people later come, become a minor... became a majority in the country and yyy. I will be the host of the country, living as a true citizen, yyy, later I have no rights, because I suddenly become a minority. So I am this way. But I have nothing against refugees as such, a family may come but work here, not get everything for free, because we the nationals in Poland get nothing for free. In any case, I do not respect Poles, yy who live somewhere on benefits, you know, and they do not need it, it is simply not convenient for them. I will not go to this work, because you know. And it is good taking benefits. I hate, hate parasites.”*

# The case of Sven

- Biographical portrait
  - 32 years old, born into “a good German family” in Hamburg, rather affluent despite mezzalianse; 1 brother (no contact)
  - difficult school experiences; being outsider, dyslexia
  - Vocational education as gunsmith (father’s occupation) in different city
  - Short term jobs in construction, salesman
  - Job as gunsmith interrupted by criminal case for illegal weapons (withdrawn as unjustified) – break in work within occupation
  - Temporary agency work (hated) in electronics industry, turned into permanent
  - Job on side – as gunsmith consultant in airsoft industry (also: hobby)
- Analytical remarks
  - hidden/potential biographical trajectory, now: biographical planning
  - basic opposition of individual against the system as background figure of the story, extended into the public sphere
  - anti-politics (“politics stinks”), protest voting for AfD and Die Partei, scepticism about democracy (preference for republican elitism), anti-political correctness
  - Refugee crisis interpreted in anti-systemic language; cultural and political motives come first



# The case of Sven

- **Sven:** *I would have voted for the AfD now, as I said, but I was afraid that they would become too strong. Because as an opposition, I like them. I think they're dumb as a party. Well, they're partially just airheads. Now here, what's the name of the one who left? Ms Petry? ((I: Yes exactly)) She seemed to have something going on in her head. She was a bit of a hardliner, though. But now, what's that? It is really just such a Nazi thing. Although, I mean, okay, why not. Why not bring a little bit of stink to the Bundestag? Like everything always runs in one direction. But I, as I said, I wouldn't have voted for them now because I simply predicted the trend that they would probably (.) I was afraid they would be too strong*

# Conclusions

- How do “ordinary citizens” start to express far-right views?
  - the **life-world centred pathway**: socio-economic precarity, competition for rare resources and welfare leading to fear of Otherness; limited importance of political motives and consciousness
  - the **post-political pathway**: limited/no socio-economic precarity, but high individualism as the basis of anti-systemic/elitist orientations and protest vote; high importance of political motives and consciousness, but also: lability
- It is precariousness (including cultural disorientation/disintegration and general insecurity) rather than just precarity which matters
- Open issues
  - Open (in qualitative research) question about a social distribution of two patterns, their relationship to social background and mobility
  - Comparative analysis needed with non-right wing supporters to understand better why certain precarious individuals *do not* support the right
  - Side note: If politics is seen as spectacle (Debord) [in particular in post-political world], do biographical experiences at all matter for political choices (or are they rather situational?)

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