Original Article

A legacy of 'uncivicness'? Social capital and radical right-wing populist voting in Eastern Europe

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Abstract This article is focusing on radical right-wing populist voting in Eastern Europe, and shows that neither the mass society thesis nor the theory of social capital, in Putnam's tradition, has much explanatory value for explaining the support for radical right-wing populism. Individuals with low participation in civil society are shown not to be significantly more right-wing populist than others, so that participation in civil society organizations is not a shield against populism. That means, that claims that radical right-wing populism has risen in Eastern Europe over the past one and a half decades because of a weakly developed civil society, that is, because of a legacy of lack of civic virtues being born through participation in civil society organizations, must be questioned. Such claims are not finding support in the empirical results presented in this article.
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Introduction

Since the mid-1980s, the radical right has reemerged as an electoral force in Europe. This new family of radical right-wing populist parties shares a fundamental core of ethno-nationalist xenophobia (based on the so-called ethno-pluralist doctrine) and anti-political-establishment populism (see also Minkenberg, 2001; Rydgren, 2005, 2007; Mudde, 2007). During the past two decades parties such as the French Front National, the Belgian Vlaams Blok, the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) and the Danish People's Party, among several others, have established themselves in their respective party systems. After the fall of communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe similar

parties have emerged during the 1990 in Poland (LPR), Hungary (MIÉP), Romania (PRM), Russia (LDPR) and Slovakia (SNS), sometimes with vote shares between 10 and 20 per cent (Mudde, 2007).

I will in this article study the effect of social isolation and social capital on radical right-wing voting. It has been implied that such factors are of particular importance for the post-communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe. The many decades of communist rule impeded the development of a strong civil society in Eastern Europe, and the regimes of fear and systems of informers made generalized trust particularly rare. People were not trustful, because they had good reasons not to be. Many studies on trust, social capital (in Putnam's, 1993, 2000 sense) and civic cultures (in Almond and Verba, 1963 sense) demonstrate that the former communist countries in Eastern and Central Europe are still characterized by having lower trust, more distrust, weaker stocks of social capital and less civic values than Western Europe (see, for example, Letki, 2004). This fact has sometimes been interpreted as a threat to successful consolidation of democracy in these countries (cf. Dahrendorf, 1990). And it has been argued that the legacy of communist rule, in the form of weak civil society, has left citizens socially isolated and more prone to support authoritarian parties and movements.

This article is a sequel to a study of the role of social isolation and social trust for radical right-wing voting in Western Europe (Rydgren, 2009), which found surprisingly small effects and that concluded – contrary to van der Brug and Fennema (2007, p. 483) – that these factors are not major explanations to radical right-wing voting. Turning to Eastern European voters, this article will provide an additional, and I would argue tougher, test of the hypotheses that socially isolated voters with low degrees of social capital and with week links to civil society are particularly prone for voting for radical right-wing populist parties.

The remainder of this article will be structured as follows. In the next two sections I will discuss mass society theory and social capital theory, respectively; as well as their potential relevance for explaining radical right-wing voting. Data will be presented in the third section. By using data from the third round of the European Social Survey (ESS, 2006–2007), I will estimate a number of logistic regression models that test the effect of social isolation and social capital on the likelihood of voting for a radical right-wing populist party in the four countries included in this study (Poland, Romania, Russia and Slovakia). In addition, I will test the same models for non-voting, in order to address the question if socially isolated individuals respond to social isolation with 'exit' rather than 'voice' (Hirschman, 1970). The result of these analyses will be presented and discussed in the penultimate section. The final section will conclude.

Social Isolation: The Mass Society Thesis

Mass society theory argues that society is characterized by growing atomization and loss of community, which leads to increasing readiness to embrace new ideologies – in particular ideologies that satisfy the desire for community (Kornhauser, 1959). According to Hannah Arendt (1973, p. 317), for instance, 'the chief characteristic of the mass-man is … his isolation and lack of normal social relationships'. More specifically, the modern individual is seen as largely lacking attachments to primary and secondary associations. Moreover, as a result of disintegration at the structural level, people are becoming increasingly disorganized at the psychological level; the psychological consequences of mass society are feelings of detachment and alienation (Gusfield, 1962, p. 21). According to Nisbet (1970, p. ix), alienation in mass society can be described as 'the state of mind that can find a social order remote, incomprehensible, or fraudulent; beyond real hope or desire; inviting apathy, boredom, or even hostility. The individual … does not feel a part of the social order …'. Because of the diminished importance of established primary and secondary associations, Nisbet (1970, p. 15) continues, 'fewer individuals have the secure interpersonal relations which formerly gave meaning and stability to existence'. As a result, people do not find satisfaction for their increasingly unfulfilled needs for identity, assurance and affection – and as a result their relationship to the world becomes more distant and distrustful (Gusfield, 1962, p. 21; Fromm, 1994, p. 259).

According to mass society theory, this situation fosters the emergence of extreme right-wing movements. First, the diminished role of intermediate structures – family, local community, professional organizations, traditional civil society organizations – had the direct effect that more people were left unattached and hence available for mobilizing efforts by charismatic leaders (for example, Kornhauser, 1959, p. 33; Gusfield, 1962). Second, the decline of the well-working pluralist society, with its cross-cutting affiliations and loyalties of a local, proximate nature, removed an important barrier for keeping 'the loyalties from moving towards a single and remote object, such as the nation' (cf. Simmel, 1955; Coser, 1991; Shils, 1996, p. 159). Third, in order to reduce feelings of frustration, insecurity and detachment that result from social isolation, people are motivated to replace decaying identities and social networks with new ones – real ones such as authoritarian social movement organizations that offer 'quasi-communities' (Kornhauser, 1959) as well as those that are only metaphysical or metaphorical in character, such as ethnic nationalism (Fennema and Tillie, 1998; cf. Arendt, 1973, p. 317; Fromm, 1994, p. 18; see also, Fromm, 1990).

To summarize, the hypothesis derived from mass society theory is that social isolation is important for explaining why some people are more likely to

support the radical right. This, in turn, implies that an explanation of the emergence of radical right-wing populist parties should focus on factors associated with objective social isolation, such as (lack of) friendship relations, (weak) family structures, (no) membership in civil society organizations, unemployment, as well as on factors associated with subjective feelings of social isolation, such as feelings of loneliness, alienation and distrust (cf. Fennema and Tillie, 1998). Moreover, it is generally assumed within mass society theory that these factors are more common in urban settings, in particular in big cities (for example, Mills, 1956, pp. 320–322; Kornhauser, 1959, pp. 120–121), and that these factors are more likely to be operative in situations of severe crisis (Shils, 1996). However, as noted by Kornhauser (1959), among others, it cannot be assumed that all people will respond to social isolation with political extremism. They may also respond with apathy, by withdrawing from public life and political participation. Hence, in some situations socially isolated individuals are at least as likely to choose exit as voice (Hirschman, 1970). In fact, as indicated by Kornhauser (1959, p. 93), lack of ties to institutions and organizations may be more important than lack of friendship relations in explaining radical right-wing mobilization: 'the totally isolated individual (that is, the person without any social ties) will be unable to maintain his personal organization sufficiently to engage in cooperative ventures of any kind, whereas the individual who has personal ties but no broader ties in the society is more likely to be available for mass movements'. This might in particular be the case for isolated unemployed individuals (Kornhauser, 1959, p. 159).

Social Capital: Networks, Organization Membership and Generalized Trust

As indicated above, the theory of social capital is not a unitary one (Portes, 1998, 2000). Within sociology it is common to view social capital as a range of resources available to people through their social network contacts (for example, Bourdieu, 1986; Lin, 2001), or more broadly as aspects of the social structure that facilitate certain actions for actors embedded within these structures (Coleman, 1988, 1990). Such resources could be economic capital, information, obligations of reciprocity derived from mutual trust, and – for Coleman – social norms (see also Herreros, 2004). Within political science, however, it is more common to follow Putnam's (1993, 2000) conception of social capital as 'features of social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions' (Putnam, 1993, p. 167). Although Putnam emphasized the importance of social networks, the object of study *par excellence* is membership in

voluntary organizations, and the civic values and mutual trust assumed to emerge through active membership in such associations.[1] As Stolle and Rochon (1998, p. 48) put it, within political science 'associational memberships have become the indicator of choice for examining the rate of formation or destruction of social capital'. Building on Toqueville, Putnam (1993, pp. 89–90) argues that 'associations instil in their members habits of cooperation, solidarity, and public-spiritness … Participation in civic organizations inculcates skills of cooperation as well as shared responsibility for collective endeavors'. Later others have added to the list of beneficial effects of membership in voluntary associations, and have seen them as a place for practicing compromise and tolerance, and for stimulating political participation (see, for example, Paxton, 2002).[2] However, as has been increasingly emphasized within the literature, not all kinds of organizations are likely to have the same effect on trust, tolerance and other civic virtues. In fact, the *raison d'être* of some organizations is to promote the logic of separation and to produce mistrust or even hatred of (some) other people (Portes, 2000; Paxton, 2002; Rothstein, 2005, pp. 56, 101). It has been proposed (Putnam, 1993, p. 175; 2000, p. 22) that membership in horizontally ordered associations is likely to breed trust and civic values, whereas membership in hierarchically ordered organizations is not, and that membership in socially heterogeneous organizations – by providing bridging social capital – is more likely to foster generalized trust and tolerance than is membership in socially homogeneous organizations (which provides bonding social capital).

Keeping these distinctions in mind, earlier studies show that members of voluntary organizations tend to be more likely to share democratic and civic attitudes and norms, and that they tend to be more politically active (see, for example, Almond and Verba, 1963; Verba and Nie, 1972; Leighley, 1995). However, with regard to the hypothesis that associational membership leads to more generalized trust, the findings of empirical studies are more mixed. Whereas some studies present supporting results (for example, Stolle and Rochon, 1998; Paxton, 2002, 2007; van Oorschot *et al*, 2006), this relationship has been questioned by other studies (see, for example, Delhey and Newton, 2003, who argue that more informal social networks are of greater importance than membership in more formal organizations). Wollebaek and Selle (2007) found, contrary to Putnam's (2000, p. 58) assumption, that members of civil society organizations are more trusting than non-members, but that active members are not more trusting than passive members. In addition – and this is of importance for this study – although Stolle and Rochon (1998) did find a correlation between associational membership and trust, no such correlation was found for tolerance.

Hence, as with mass society theory, we can from the theory of social capital derive the hypotheses that people who are active in civil society organizations,

including churches (cf. Sztompka, 1999, pp. 131–132; Welch *et al*, 2007, p. 26), and who have active friendship networks are more likely to be trusting of others, and to share civic virtues and democratic values. It is not far-fetched to assume that such individuals are less likely to support radical right-wing populist parties, which base their appeals on intolerance and criticism of the political systems, and that people who lack membership in voluntary associations and who are socially distrustful are more likely to be among the radical right-wing voters. Of course, for similar reasons as were discussed above concerning mass society theory, an alternative hypothesis is that people who largely lack social capital abstain from voting altogether. Yet, it is striking that the literature on the radical right has not been the least interested in the theory of social capital (Veugelers, 2005, p. 409; cf. van der Brug and Fennema, 2007, p. 483). The two notable exceptions are Coffé *et al* (2007), who showed that Vlaams Blok tends to be more successful in municipalities with sparse networks of organizations than in municipalities with dense networks of organizations, and Veugelers (2005) who studied the role of 'sour' or 'bad' social capital by showing that organized *pied noirs* in France are more likely to support the Front National than those who are unorganized. However, up until now there have been no systematic cross-national studies that examine the role of social capital for radical right-wing voting (but see Rydgren, 2009).

Data and Methods

As should be evident from the presentation above, mass society theory and the theory of social capital are not distinct theories; there are significant overlaps between the two. Yet, we can extract one principal hypothesis from mass society theory, that is, that (Hypothesis 1) people who are socially isolated, or who feel socially isolated, are more likely to be among the radical right-wing voters; and two main hypotheses from social capital theory: (Hypothesis 2) those who lack ties to associations and organizations are more likely to vote for the radical right; as are (Hypothesis 3) socially distrustful people. In order to test these hypotheses, I estimate a number of logistic regression models. The first four models test different aspects of Hypothesis 1. Models 1 and 2 involve variables that measure social isolation directly; model 3 involves variables that measure sentiments that are assumed to be associated with social isolation; and model 4 involves variables that measure the way people experience the social interaction they do have (are they treated fairly and with respect?). Models 1 and 2 are the core models for testing the effect of social isolation on radical right-wing voting; models 3 and 4 are complementary. Model 5, which test Hypothesis 2, includes variables measuring people's ties to associations and organized activity; and models 6 and 7, by including

variables measuring social trust, test Hypothesis 3. The models are further specified below.

However, as has been discussed repeatedly above, the same hypotheses can be assumed to be valid for people who abstain from voting. It is thus an open, empirical question whether people have chosen 'exit' or 'voice' as a response to their social isolation. In order to test the hypotheses above, as well as to address this last question, I will estimate a number of logistic regression models which will be tested against two different dependent variables: (i) to vote or not to vote for a radical right-wing populist party; and (ii) to vote or to abstain from voting.[3] For (i) voters who voted for the radical right in the last national election in Poland, Romania, Russia and Slovakia were coded 1 and other voters were coded 0.[4] For (ii) people who abstained from voting in the last national election although they were entitled to vote were coded 1 and voters who did vote were coded 0.

I will use data from the third round of the European Social Survey, which were collected in 2006/2007. The response rate varied very slightly among the countries included in this study, and was 70 per cent in Poland (1721 completed interviews), 72 per cent in Romania (2139), 70 per cent in Russia (2437), 73 per cent in Slovakia (1.766).[5]

Model 1 involves variables that measure social isolation. For the variable 'meet socially', respondents were asked how often they meet socially with friends, relatives or colleagues, and the answers range from 1 = never to 7 = very often. Here we anticipated negative associations, that is, the more often people engage in social interactions the less likely they are to vote for a radical right-wing populist party, or to abstain from voting. For the variable 'intimate friends', respondents were asked if they have anyone with whom they can discuss intimate and personal matters, and here answers were coded as 0 = yes and 1 = no. For the variable 'feel lonely', respondents were asked to what extent they have felt lonely over the past week, and the answers range from 1 = never to 4 = always. For the variable 'people who care', respondents were asked to what extent they agree with the statement that there are people who care about them, and the answers range from 1 = agree strongly to 5 = disagree strongly. For the variable 'close to local people', respondents were asked whether they feel close to local people, and the answers range from 1 = agree strongly to 5 = disagree strongly. For these variables we anticipated positive associations. The variable 'people in household', finally, measures the number of persons residing in the household. Here we anticipated negative associations.

However, it is a good heuristic device to look at 'extreme voters' as well, that is, at voters who are located at the end poles of the scales. If there are any associations at all, we may assume that they appear in sharper profile when we look specifically at extremes. In Model 2, therefore, I have included the

variables 'never meet socially' and 'meet less than once a month', that is, those who were coded as 1 or 2 in the variable 'meet socially' (as was discussed above). 'Meet everyday' is the reference category. Similarly, I included the variables 'always lonely' and 'mostly lonely', that is, those who were coded as 3 or 4 in the variable 'feel lonely'. 'Never lonely' is the reference category. The variables 'nobody cares strongly' and 'nobody cares' are coded from those who disagreed strongly or disagreed, respectively, with the statement that they had people who cared about them. The reference category consists of those who neither agreed nor disagreed. The variables 'not close, strong' and 'not close' are coded from those who disagreed strongly or disagreed, respectively, with the statement that they feel close to local people. Here as well, the reference category consists of those who neither agreed nor disagreed. Finally, I included the variables 'live alone' and 'two persons' (in the household). The reference category consists of households that contain three persons or more. For all these variables we anticipated positive associations.

Model 3 involves variables that measure sentiments associated with social isolation. The variable 'feel satisfied' ranges from 1 = extremely dissatisfied with life, to 11 = extremely satisfied, and the variable 'feel happy' ranges from 1 = extremely unhappy, to 11 = extremely happy. The variable 'life is good' ranges between 1 = extremely dissatisfied with how life turned out, and 11 = extremely satisfied. For these variables we anticipated negative associations. The variable 'feel depressed' ranges between 1 = never depressed, and 4 = always depressed. Here we expected positive associations. For the variables 'positive', 'optimist' and 'feel like a failure', respondents were asked to what extent they agreed with the statement that they feel positive about themselves, the statement that they are optimistic about their future, and the statement that they feel like a failure. The answers range between 1 = agree strongly, and 5 = disagree strongly. We anticipated positive associations.

Model 4 includes variables that measure the way people experience the social interaction they take part in. Are they generally treated with respect, and are they treated fairly? The variables 'treated with respect' and 'treated fairly' both range between 1 = not at all, and 7 = very much. We anticipated negative associations.

Model 5 includes variables that measure people's ties to associations and organized activity. For the variable 'active organization', respondents were asked if they had worked in a voluntary organization during the past 12 months. 0 = no and 1 = yes; we thus anticipated a negative association. For the variable 'how often organized', respondents were asked how often they get involved in work for voluntary organizations, and the answers range from 1 = often, to 6 = never. Similarly, for the variable 'social activity', respondents were asked how often they help with or attend organized activities, and the answers range from 1 to 6, where 6 = never. For the variable 'church activity',

finally, people were asked about how often they attend church activities, and the answers range between 1 = often and 7 = never. For these variables we anticipated negative associations.

Model 6 involves variables that measure social trust. For the variable 'social trust', respondents were asked whether most people could be trusted. The answers range from 1 to 11, where 11 = most people can be trusted. The variable 'advantage' ranges between 1 = most people try to take advantage of me, and 11 = most people try to be fair. For these two variables we anticipated negative associations. In Model 7, involving the variables 'low social trust' and 'low advantage', I look specifically at those who scored low (1–3) on the scales discussed above.

Model 8 adds various control variables, as well as variables that measure urbanity. Males are coded as 1 and females as 0. The variable 'education' is measured on a scale where a value of 1 corresponds to low education and 7 to very high level of education. Unemployed persons are coded as 1, employed people and students are coded as 0. Age is measured in years. The variables 'big city', 'suburb', 'village' and 'countryside' are dummies for the respondent's area of residence. 'Small village' is the reference category.

Analyses and Discussion

Let us first examine the results for the logistic regression analyses of the likelihood of voting for a radical right-wing populist party (Table 1).

Models 1 and 2 clearly fail to provide support for Hypothesis 1, that is, that the likelihood of supporting a radical right-wing populist party is higher for socially isolated individuals. Only when looking at 'extreme voters', in Model 2, do we find some support in Romania ('nobody care strong'), Russia ('always lonely') and Slovakia ('nobody care'). Moreover, although some few individual variables yield significant associations, the models explain very little of the total variance.

In addition, Model 3 fails to provide strong support for Hypothesis 1. We do find some support for Romania, where we find the expected negative associations between 'feel satisfied' and 'life is good' and radical right-wing voting. However, for Poland the results are ambiguous – although depressed voters are more likely to vote for the radical right, the same is true for voters who feel happy – and the results for Slovakia rather run contrary to our expectations. For Russia we do not find significant associations at all.

If Hypothesis 1 has received scant support, a reading of Model 5 shows that Hypothesis 2 fares even worse. In three out of four countries, we do not find significant associations at all, and in Poland the results run contrary to

Table 1: Social isolation, trust and social capital, and the vote for the radical right (logistic regression analyses)

	Model 1	*Model 2*	*Model 3*	*Model 4*	*Model 5*	*Model 6*	*Model 7*	*Model 8*
Poland								
Meet socially	0.88	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.93
Never meet soc	—	1.90	—	—	—	—	—	—
Meet < month	—	1.74	—	—	—	—	—	—
Intimate friends	0.91	—	—	—	—	—	—	1.01
Feel lonely	1.27	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.95
Always lonely	—	1.68	—	—	—	—	—	—
Mostly lonely	—	1.64	—	—	—	—	—	—
People who care	0.51*	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.48
Nobody care strong	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Nobody care	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Close to local peop.	0.78	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.79
Not close, strong	—	2.03	—	—	—	—	—	—
Not close	—	0.46	—	—	—	—	—	—
People in househ.	1.01	—	—	—	—	—	—	1.13
Live alone	—	0.70	—	—	—	—	—	—
Two persons	—	1.41	—	—	—	—	—	—
Feel satisfied	—	—	0.92	—	—	—	—	0.93
Feel happy	—	—	1.32*	—	—	—	—	1.28
Feel depressed	—	—	1.71*	—	—	—	—	1.33
Life is good	—	—	0.95	—	—	—	—	0.93
Positive	—	—	1.06	—	—	—	—	1.09
Optimist	—	—	1.05	—	—	—	—	1.11
Feel as a failure	—	—	1.04	—	—	—	—	0.80
Treated w. respect	—	—	—	0.95	—	—	—	0.91
Treated fairly	—	—	—	0.68*	—	—	—	0.76
Active organization	—	—	—	—	2.39	—	—	2.60
How often organized	—	—	—	—	0.88	—	—	0.82

Table 1 *continued*

	Model 1	*Model 2*	*Model 3*	*Model 4*	*Model 5*	*Model 6*	*Model 7*	*Model 8*
Organized activity	—	—	—	—	1.36	—	—	1.36
Church activity	—	—	—	—	0.37***	—	—	0.40***
Social trust	—	—	—	—	—	0.92	—	0.92
Low social trust	—	—	—	—	—	—	1.71	—
Advantage	—	—	—	—	—	0.99	—	0.94
Low advantage	—	—	—	—	—	—	1.19	—
Male	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.95
Education	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1.38*
Unemployed	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3.85
Big city	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.58
Suburb	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Village	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1.17
Country	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Age	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1.03
Pseudo-R^2	0.026	0.046	0.027	0.012	0.095	0.004	0.008	0.197
Prob > Chi^2	0.434	0.886	0.530	0.116	0.000	0.655	0.426	0.056
Log likelihood	−109.67	−106.88	−109.54	−105.77	−102.17	−107.97	−107.54	−80.73
N	1659	1617	1656	1633	1682	1671	1671	1397
Romania								
Meet socially	1.01	—	—	—	—	—	—	1.03
Never meet soc	—	0.43	—	—	—	—	—	—
Meet < month	—	0.92	—	—	—	—	—	—
Intimate friends	0.93	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.83
Feel lonely	1.09	—	—	—	—	—	—	1.25
Always lonely	—	1.11	—	—	—	—	—	—
Mostly lonely	—	1.42	—	—	—	—	—	—

People who care	1.11	—	—	—	—	—	—	1.19
Nobody care strong	—	4.30*	—	—	—	—	—	—
Nobody care	—	1.19	—	—	—	—	—	—
Close to local peop.	0.99	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.95
Not close, strong	—	1.01	—	—	—	—	—	—
Not close	—	0.58	—	—	—	—	—	—
People in househ.	1.11	—	—	—	—	—	—	1.20**
Live alone	—	0.77	—	—	—	—	—	—
Two persons	—	0.92	—	—	—	—	—	—
Feel satisfied	—	—	0.89**	—	—	—	—	0.93
Feel happy	—	—	1.01	—	—	—	—	0.96
Feel depressed	—	—	0.95	—	—	—	—	1.00
Life is good	—	—	0.90*	—	—	—	—	0.88*
Positive	—	—	0.96	—	—	—	—	0.94
Optimist	—	—	0.84	—	—	—	—	0.98
Feel as a failure	—	—	1.07	—	—	—	—	1.04
Treated w. respect	—	—	—	0.97	—	—	—	0.94
Treated fairly	—	—	—	0.98	—	—	—	0.85*
Active organization	—	—	—	—	0.21	—	—	0.16*
How often organized	—	—	—	—	1.03	—	—	0.99
Organized activity	—	—	—	—	0.91	—	—	0.93
Church activity	—	—	—	—	0.98	—	—	0.95
Social trust	—	—	—	—	—	0.90*		0.99
Low social trust	—	—	—	—	—	—	1.70**	—
Advantage	—	—	—	—	—	1.06	—	0.99
Low advantage	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.76	—
Male	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2.01***
Education	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1.33***
Unemployed	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.90
Big city	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.98
Suburb	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Village	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.83

Table 1 *continued*

	Model 1	*Model 2*	*Model 3*	*Model 4*	*Model 5*	*Model 6*	*Model 7*	*Model 8*
Country	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Age	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1.00
Pseudo-R^2	0.004	0.014	0.023	0.000	0.008	0.004	0.005	0.066
Prob > Chi^2	0.792	0.911	0.011	0.908	0.196	0.157	0.123	0.015
Log likelihood	−394.55	−390.43	−394.34	−408.74	−396.74	−429.84	−429.60	−318.89
N	1927	1927	1957	2002	1996	2104	2104	1667
Russia								
Meet socially	1.01	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.99
Never meet soc	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Meet < month	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Intimate friends	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.94
Feel lonely	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1.34
Always lonely	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Mostly lonely	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
People who care	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1.27
Nobody care strong	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Nobody care	—	0.53	—	—	—	—	—	—
Close to local peop	0.83		—	—	—	—	—	0.82
Not close, strong	—	0.78	—	—	—	—	—	—
Not close	—	1.43	—	—	—	—	—	—
People in househ.	1.02	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.94
Live alone	—	0.83	—	—	—	—	—	—
Two persons	—	0.49**	—	—	—	—	—	—
Feel satisfied	—	—	0.96	—	—	—	—	0.99
Feel happy	—	—	1.01	—	—	—	—	1.02
Feel depressed	—	—	1.02	—	—	—	—	0.79
Life is good	—	—	1.06	—	—	—	—	1.05

Positive	—	—	1.00	—	—	—	—	1.11
Optimist	—	—	0.85	—	—	—	—	0.89
Feel as a failure	—	—	0.88	—	—	—	—	0.97
Treated w. respect	—	—	—	1.10	—	—	—	1.06
Treated fairly	—	—	—	1.16*	—	—	—	1.22**
Active organization	—	—	—	—	1.01	—	—	0.67
How often organized	—	—	—	—	0.91	—	—	0.87
Organized activity	—	—	—	—	0.97	—	—	0.99
Church activity	—	—	—	—	1.05	—	—	1.01
Social trust	—	—	—	—	—	1.01	—	1.00
Low social trust	—	—	—	—	—	—	1.11	—
Advantage	—	—	—	—	—	0.93	—	0.97
Low advantage	—	—	—	—	—	—	1.33	—
Male	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1.52
Education	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1.16
Unemployed	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1.27
Big city	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.84
Suburb	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1.56
Village	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1.75
Country	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Age	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.99
Pseudo-R^2	0.008	0.035	0.006	0.006	0.002	0.004	0.003	0.048
Prob > Chi^2	0.553	0.296	0.811	0.160	0.889	0.253	0.417	0.666
Log likelihood	−295.50	−287.16	−329.43	−334.05	−329.31	−334.99	−335.49	−240.50
N	1940	1927	2224	2260	2184	2274	2247	1601
Slovakia								
Meet socially	0.99	—	—	—	—	—	—	1.02
Never meet soc	—	1.38	—	—	—	—	—	—
Meet < month	—	0.76	—	—	—	—	—	—
Intimate friends	0.91	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.82

Table 1 *continued*

	Model 1	*Model 2*	*Model 3*	*Model 4*	*Model 5*	*Model 6*	*Model 7*	*Model 8*
Feel lonely	0.86	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.87
Always lonely	—	0.96	—	—	—	—	—	—
Mostly lonely	—	0.64	—	—	—	—	—	—
People who care	1.05	—	—	—	—	—	—	1.14
Nobody care strong	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Nobody care	—	7.55***	—	—	—	—	—	—
Close to local peop	0.77*	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.77
Not close, strong	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Not close	—	0.25	—	—	—	—	—	—
People in househ.	1.00	—	—	—	—	—	—	1.04
Live alone	—	1.03	—	—	—	—	—	—
Two persons	—	0.71	—	—	—	—	—	—
Feel satisfied	—	—	1.04	—	—	—	—	1.01
Feel happy	—	—	0.96	—	—	—	—	0.97
Feel depressed	—	—	0.89	—	—	—	—	1.08
Life is good	—	—	1.03	—	—	—	—	0.97
Positive	—	—	1.26	—	—	—	—	1.13
Optimist	—	—	1.02	—	—	—	—	1.10
Feel as a failure	—	—	1.31**	—	—	—	—	1.38**
Treated w. respect	—	—	—	1.11	—	—	—	1.10
Treated fairly	—	—	—	0.98	—	—	—	1.04
Active organization	—	—	—	—	1.38	—	—	0.84

How often organized	—	—	—	—	0.92	—	—	0.97
Organized activity	—	—	—	—	0.88	—	—	0.88
Church activity	—	—	—	—	1.00	—	—	0.97
Social trust	—	—	—	—	—	1.04	—	1.04
Low social trust	—	—	—	—	—	—	1.01	—
Advantage	—	—	—	—	—	0.98	—	0.94
Low advantage	—	—	—	—	—	—	1.35	—
Male	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1.32
Education	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1.29**
Unemployed	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.18*
Big city	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.73
Suburb	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.60
Village	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.92
Country	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1.18
Age	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1.00
Pseudo-R^2	0.007	0.029	0.011	0.003	0.011	0.001	0.002	0.044
Prob > Chi^2	0.554	0.241	0.299	0.323	0.069	0.808	0.457	0.502
Log likelihood	−361.30	−352.17	−367.97	−385.82	−381.55	−395.98	−395.42	−306.29
N	1656	1635	1657	1718	1701	1734	1734	1444

*Significant on the 0.1 level. **Significant on the 0.05 level. ***Significant on the 0.01 level.

expectations (where people who are active in church organizations are more likely to vote for the radical right).[6]

Similarly, Models 6 and 7 show that Hypothesis 3 receives some support only in Romania, where trusting people are less likely to vote for the radical right. For the other countries we find no significant associations.

Hence, logistic regression analyses indicate that neither social isolation nor social capital are strong predictors of radical right-wing voting. Yet, it should be emphasized that we would need more fine-grained data in order to further study the role of social capital for radical right-wing support. As was discussed above, we may assume that civic virtues and values originate foremost from activity in horizontally ordered, socially heterogeneous voluntary organizations, and that it is principally people active in such organizations who would be disinclined to vote for the radical right. For people active in hierarchically, socially homogeneous organizations we would expect to see no such effect, or even the opposite effect. Unfortunately, the European Social Survey data do not allow us to distinguish between different kinds of organizations along these lines. It is not far-fetched to assume, however, that organizational activity would be more strongly associated with a disinclination to vote for a radical right-wing party if we could have isolated horizontally ordered, socially heterogeneous voluntary organizations from other organizations.

As was discussed above, mass society theory posits that under certain conditions people may respond to social isolation by withdrawing from political participation altogether. They may choose exit rather than voice. If that is true, that would be a possible explanation of the weak support for the social isolation hypothesis on radical right-wing voting. If true, that would also – if we follow mass society theory – indicate the existence of a possible reserve of potential voters that could be mobilized during a severe crisis, in particular if a strongly charismatic leader were to appear. In order to address this question I have estimated six different logistic regression models of the effect on social isolation and social capital on non-voting (Table 2).

From Models 1 and 2 we can see that Hypothesis 1 – the social isolation hypothesis – receives mixed support. Although people who often meet socially with others are more likely to abstain from voting in Romania, Russia and Slovakia, so are people who lack intimate friends (in Poland, Russia and Slovakia) and those who feel lonely (in Poland and Slovakia). Hence, although results are ambiguous and that we see a considerable cross-national variation – the support for Hypothesis 1 is strongest for Slovakia – the social isolation thesis seems to be of more, if still limited, use for explaining non-voting than voting for the radical right. As a reading of Models 4 and 5 shows, this is even more the case for Hypothesis 2, for which we find fairly strong support for all four countries, and for Hypothesis 3 for which we find support for Poland and Russia. These results provide some support to the idea that isolated and

Table 2: Social isolation, trust and social capital, and non-voting (logistic regression analyses)

	Model 1	*Model 2*	*Model 3*	*Model 4*	*Model 5*	*Model 6*
Poland						
Meet socially	1.02	—	—	—	—	0.95
Intimate friends	0.77	—	—	—	—	0.77
Feel lonely	1.29***	—	—	—	—	1.15
People who care	1.07	—	—	—	—	0.99
Close to local peop	1.20***	—	—	—	—	1.15*
People in househ.	1.10***	—	—	—	—	1.03
Feel satisfied	—	1.02	—	—	—	1.03
Feel happy	—	0.99	—	—	—	0.96
Feel depressed	—	1.08	—	—	—	1.19*
Life is good	—	0.93*	—	—	—	0.98
Positive	—	0.83*	—	—	—	0.85
Optimist	—	1.14*	—	—	—	1.10
Feel as a failure	—	0.92	—	—	—	1.03
Treated w. respect	—	—	0.90**	—	—	1.01
Treated fairly	—	—	1.09**	—	—	1.02
Active organization	—	—	—	0.68	—	0.86
How often organized	—	—	—	1.03	—	0.94
Organized activity	—	—	—	1.14**	—	1.14**
Church activity	—	—	—	1.30***	—	1.30***
Social trust	—	—	—	—	0.94**	0.97
Advantage	—	—	—	—	0.97	1.00
Male	—	—	—	—	—	0.92
Education	—	—	—	—	—	0.68***
Unemployed	—	—	—	—	—	1.31
Big city	—	—	—	—	—	0.95
Suburb	—	—	—	—	—	1.09
Village	—	—	—	—	—	1.06
Country	—	—	—	—	—	1.68
Age	—	—	—	—	—	0.97***

Table 2 *continued*

	Model 1	*Model 2*	*Model 3*	*Model 4*	*Model 5*	*Model 6*
Pseudo-R^2	0.016	0.001	0.009	0.024	0.006	0.096
Prob > Chi^2	0.000	0.008	0.000	0.000	0.002	0.000
Log likelihood	−950.90	−979.26	−964.22	−985.92	−994.26	−800.85
N	1512	1545	1524	1573	1562	1392
Romania						
Meet socially	1.17***	—	—	—	—	1.15***
Intimate friends	0.77	—	—	—	—	0.76
Feel lonely	1.05	—	—	—	—	1.01
People who care	1.00	—	—	—	—	0.92
Close to local peop.	1.23**	—	—	—	—	1.04
People in househ.	0.95	—	—	—	—	0.94
Feel satisfied	—	1.05	—	—	—	1.07*
Feel happy	—	1.02	—	—	—	0.96
Feel depressed	—	1.01	—	—	—	1.09
Life is good	—	0.99	—	—	—	1.00
Positive	—	0.96	—	—	—	0.96
Optimist	—	1.00	—	—	—	0.96
Feel as a failure	—	0.82***	—	—	—	0.90
Treated w. respect	—	—	0.87***	—	—	0.86**
Treated fairly	—	—	1.09*	—	—	1.05
Active organization	—	—	—	0.52	—	0.60
How often organized	—	—	—	0.95	—	1.02
Organized activity	—	—	—	1.13***	—	1.10*
Church activity	—	—	—	1.10**	—	1.08
Social trust	—	—	—	—	1.00	1.00
Advantage	—	—	—	—	0.99	0.99
Male	—	—	—	—	—	1.08
Education	—	—	—	—	—	0.91

Unemployed	—	—	—	—	—	2.73***
Big city	—	—	—	—	—	1.21
Suburb	—	—	—	—	—	1.03
Village	—	—	—	—	—	0.73*
Country	—	—	—	—	—	—
Age	—	—	—	—	—	1.00
Pseudo-R^2	0.021	0.007	0.012	0.010	0.000	0.052
Prob > Chi^2	0.000	0.128	0.000	0.001	0.823	0.000
Log likelihood	−711.92	−818.44	−868.54	−856.30	−929.55	−686.38
N	1562	1761	1860	1854	1950	1556
Russia						
Meet socially	1.16***	—	—	—	—	1.13***
Intimate friends	1.42**	—	—	—	—	1.35
Feel lonely	1.02	—	—	—	—	0.97
People who care	1.06	—	—	—	—	1.07
Close to local peop.	1.30***	—	—	—	—	1.23***
People in househ.	1.19***	—	—	—	—	1.22***
Feel satisfied	—	1.02	—	—	—	1.01
Feel happy	—	1.02	—	—	—	1.01
Feel depressed	—	1.20**	—	—	—	1.28***
Life is good	—	1.02	—	—	—	1.07**
Positive	—	0.99	—	—	—	0.95
Optimist	—	0.88**	—	—	—	0.84**
Feel as a failure	—	0.99	—	—	—	0.94
Treated w. respect	—	—	0.91**	—	—	0.92
Treated fairly	—	—	1.09**	—	—	1.05
Active organization	—	—	—	0.60*	—	0.57*
How often organized	—	—	—	1.08	—	1.06
Organized activity	—	—	—	1.08	—	1.11*
Church activity	—	—	—	1.10**	—	1.08
Social trust	—	—	—	—	1.01	1.01

Table 2 *continued*

	Model 1	*Model 2*	*Model 3*	*Model 4*	*Model 5*	*Model 6*
Advantage	—	—	—	—	0.94***	0.93***
Male	—	—	—	—	—	1.07
Education	—	—	—	—	—	0.85***
Unemployed	—	—	—	—	—	1.06
Big city	—	—	—	—	—	1.43***
Suburb	—	—	—	—	—	0.89
Village	—	—	—	—	—	0.90
Country	—	—	—	—	—	0.67
Age	—	—	—	—	—	1.00
Pseudo-R^2	0.029	0.007	0.007	0.009	0.004	0.070
Prob > Chi^2	0.000	0.014	0.000	0.000	0.003	0.000
Log likelihood	−984.79	−1236.77	−1346.51	−1304.92	−1358.63	−908.43
N	1596	1944	2117	2054	2125	1532
Slovakia						
Meet socially	1.11***	—	—	—	—	1.11***
Intimate friends	1.54***	—	—	—	—	1.37*
Feel lonely	1.23***	—	—	—	—	1.13
People who care	0.94	—	—	—	—	0.85
Close to local peop	1.44***	—	—	—	—	1.36***
People in househ.	1.11***	—	—	—	—	1.13***
Feel satisfied	—	0.99	—	—	—	1.01
Feel happy	—	1.06	—	—	—	1.06
Feel depressed	—	1.14*	—	—	—	1.02
Life is good	—	0.90***	—	—	—	0.93
Positive	—	0.92	—	—	—	0.96
Optimist	—	1.07	—	—	—	1.07
Feel as a failure	—	0.90	—	—	—	0.92

Treated w. respect	—	—	0.85***	—	—	0.90**
Treated fairly	—	—	1.07	—	—	0.99
Active organization	—	—	—	0.52***	—	0.59**
How often organized	—	—	—	1.11	—	1.07
Organized activity	—	—	—	1.11**	—	1.10*
Church activity	—	—	—	1.14***	—	1.10**
Social trust	—	—	—	—	0.97	0.99
Advantage	—	—	—	—	0.98	0.99
Male	—	—	—	—	—	1.06
Education	—	—	—	—	—	0.69***
Unemployed	—	—	—	—	—	1.07
Big city	—	—	—	—	—	0.94
Suburb	—	—	—	—	—	0.83
Village	—	—	—	—	—	0.65***
Country	—	—	—	—	—	0.31
Age	—	—	—	—	—	1.00
Pseudo-R^2	0.030	0.012	0.012	0.025	0.002	0.074
Prob > Chi^2	0.000	0.001	0.000	0.000	0.155	0.000
Log likelihood	−960.43	−976.63	−1020.96	−997.09	−1037.08	−793.63
N	1587	1590	1650	1629	1662	1390

*Significant on the 0.1 level. **Significant on the 0.05 level. ***Significant on the 0.01 level.

low-trusting voters in Eastern Europe so far have chosen exit. Yet, the reservoir of socially isolated voters that could be mobilized during a severe crisis by the radical right is evidently rather small.

Conclusions

The main conclusion of this article is that the legacy of a weak civil society in the post-communist countries is of little importance for explaining the emergence of radical right-wing parties. Neither social trust, social isolation, week links to civil society, explains much of differences in radical right-wing voting. In fact, all the estimated models fair considerably worse in an Eastern European context than what they did in a Western European context (Rydgren, 2009). And without support from individual-level data, the validity of studies using ecological data must be questioned. Even if the radical right turns out be stronger in areas with few civil society organizations than in areas with many such organizations, this correlation is likely to be spurious.

However, concerning the effect of active membership in voluntary organizations better data are needed. As argued above, it is possible that people in particular who are active in horizontally ordered, socially heterogeneous voluntary organizations are disinclined to vote for the radical right – so we would need data that allow us to distinguish between organizations along these lines. Still, with existing data it seems that social isolation – broadly conceived – is of little importance in itself for explaining radical right-wing voting.

About the Author

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Notes

1 As acknowledged by Putnam (2000, p. 19), his conception of social capital comes close to what earlier was usually discussed in terms of civic virtues (for example, Almond and Verba, 1963).

2 However, as has been increasingly noted within the literature on social capital, the link between membership in social associations and these outcomes is often not very well specified. This is in particular the case with trust (and, as a corollary, tolerance): although it is plausible that repeated

social interaction leads to increased trust (and tolerance) for the people within the group, it is unclear how this trust is generalized to people outside the group or association (Stolle, 1998; Paxton, 2007, p. 50). Moreover, most studies do not deal satisfactorily with the problem of (reverse) causality. As Stolle (1998, p. 498) noted, it is always possible that 'people who are more trusting will self-select into associations'.

3 For readers who are unfamiliar with logistic regressions, the tables should be read in the following way: Instead of displaying coefficients (b), as is common in OLS regressions, odds ratios (e^b) are used. The odds ratio shows how the odds of the 'event' are influenced by changes in the independent variables. For example, an odds ratio of 2 means that the odds of the event are doubled by a one-unit increase in the independent variable. A value of 1 means that the change in the independent variable has no effect on the odds, and an odds ratio of 0.5 means that the odds of the event is halved as the independent variable increases by 1. Odds ratios greater than 1 thus signify positive relationships, odds ratios less than 1 negative relationships, and odds ratios equal to 1 no relationship at all. Log likelihood is a value for the overall fit of the model, whereas pseudo-R^2 provides a way to describe or compare the fit of different models for the same dependent variable (cf. Pampel, 2000). Here and in the following models the dependent variable will be 'voted for the radical right in the last national election'.

4 The following parties are deemed to belong to the radical right (cf. Mudde, 2007): Liga Polskich Rodzin (LPR), Partidul România Mare (PRM), Liberal'no-demokraticheskoi Rossii (LDPR) and Slovenská národná strana (SNS).

5 For more information about the European Social Survey, see www.euopreansocialsurvey.org.

6 However, since I do not control for religiosity, we cannot know if it is organization membership that has an effect here, or if it is religion *per se*.

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