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## Exploration of class and political behavior in Croatia

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political parties in Croatia”, co-authored with D. Cepic (*Contemporary Southeastern Europe, 2015*); books: “Process of reconciliation in the Western Balkans and Turkey: a qualitative study”, co-authored with M. Adamovic & A. Gvozdanovic (*IDIZ, Complex 2017*); “From subjects to citizens – Development of youth political competence”, co-edited with M. Horvat (*IDIZ, GONG, 2016*)

# **Exploration of class and political behavior in Croatia**

## **Abstract**

In Western European countries studies on the relationship between class position and political outlooks so far have a limited understanding of the relevance of class analysis, while in semiperipheral countries, like Croatia, research on class related mechanisms and political behavior is modest with a clear deficit of empirical research. Main goal of class analysis is to have a potential to explain various life outcomes primary through explaining and exploring relationship between class position and life chances. In this paper we have employed Neo-Weberian class analysis with the purpose to explore the relationship between class position and political behavior. In the paper we use the concept of political behavior as a broader term that consists of individual's interest in politics, political efficacy and political participation (voter turnout). We have used the data from the International Social Survey Programme module Role of Government V from 2016. Analysis has shown that in Croatia, class membership is a predictor of interest in politics and political efficacy, i.e. that the members of a higher class show greater interest in politics and asses that they have a better understanding of politics. Class per se does not have a direct effect on voter turnout, but it is mediated through political efficacy and interest in politics since voting is mostly under the influence of personal interest in politics.

Key words: Neo-Weberian class analysis, political behavior, political efficacy, political participation, Croatia

## **Introduction**

Following the fall of communism, but also stimulated by a generally present loss of interest in Marxism as an approach to social phenomena analysis, in 1991 Clark and Lipset began asking whether class as such is dying out. Although their article produced numerous answers and criticism disputing the claims about the irrelevance of class perspective in social sciences (Evans 1999; Hout, Brooks, and Manza 1993), the fact remains that for the past two decades the class

perspective on social phenomena in numerous countries (especially East European countries) was completely absent or present very modestly (Ost 2015). It wouldn't be fair to say that there are no papers dealing with class issues or presenting class as an explanatory variable for some social phenomena, but it remains insufficiently researched. According to Swedish authors Bengtsson, Berglund, and Oskarson (2013:692), mostly in reference to the literature of western scientists, "Less is known about why class-related conditions matter. Studies of the relationship between class position and political outlooks still only have a limited understanding of class related mechanisms." Literature on post-socialism dealing with class analysis and using class to explain political phenomena in semi-periphery countries is even more modest, with a distinct deficit of empirical research, as is shown by Gijsberts and Nieuwbeerta (2000:398). Croatian literature in the areas of sociology, anthropology and political science is similarly lacking in class analysis of certain phenomena which means that an entire dimension of sociopolitical reality remains unexplored. The idea behind this paper is to contribute to the enlightenment of one such segment positioned on the demarcation between sociology and political science. In other words, the goal of this paper is to examine the influence of class membership on particular aspects of political behavior with the purpose of answering the question of whether class membership can serve as a kind of predictor for certain aspects of political behavior.

In order to answer this question, the following article is divided in two main parts. The first is concerned with conceptualizing the main phenomena dealt with in the paper. Those are an interest in politics, political participation, and political efficacy. The conceptualized phenomena are contextualized in Croatian reality by presenting current scientific achievements in researching them. Although political behavior consists of numerous segments (such as emotions, political competence, ideological [self]identification etc.), those selected most succinctly describe the

functioning of an average *homo politicus*. Taking into consideration the limitations which arise from focusing on these three aspects of political behavior, we are convinced that the selected concepts are sufficient to draw a tentative conclusion on the connection between class membership and political behavior in Croatia. With respect to that, the second part of the paper provides an empirical analysis and interpretation of data collected within the ISSP Role of Government module.

### **Theoretical framework**

Based on extensive literature overview concerning contemporary class analysis in sociology Cepić and Doolan (2018) claim that class analysis unrolls in eight research fields – education, social ties and networks, identity, politics and political economy, work and employment, social risks, social mobility, and cultural consumption. Although political economy was at the core of class analysis at its beginnings, contemporary research clearly divides class research within the political economy field and class research concerning politics in specific. While within the field of political economy research focuses on class perspective connected to the overall context of financialisation, neoliberalism, welfare state and capitalist systems, among politics specific class analysis mostly focuses on class belonging and voter's behaviour (Cepić and Doolan 2018).

During the second half of the twentieth century, social scientists in core countries found relative interest in research dealing with class and certain forms of political behaviour. Weakliem and Addams (2011, p. 476) thus claim there are three main distinct lines of discussion when it comes to class politics – firstly “there is a controversy over ‘class voting’ – that is, the link between the individuals’ class position and party choices”, while the second line of discussion focuses on “the precise definition of class – the number of classes and the boundaries between them”, and thirdly, the literature covers discussions which “combine a critique of the materialist concept of class

with an analysis of cultural and social changes in modern capitalist societies [...] on the historical rise, and now decline, of “class” as an idea under whose banner collective action can be organized. Class research and politics in specific does not hold one unified theoretical position in terms of definition of class nor is there an overrepresentation of one of the dominant theoretical perspectives known in class research (Marxist, Weberian or Bourdieuan). However, Neo-Weberian class analysis tends to be more represented in overall contemporary class research (Cepić and Doolan 2018) and therefore it is used also in this analysis.

According to Weber, in capitalism, the market is the main determinant of life chances since it distributes life chances with respect to the resources that individuals bring to the market and recognizes how these resources can vary in different ways (Breen 2005). Main goal of class analysis is to have a potential to explain various life outcomes primary through explaining and exploring relationship between class position and life chances. Class position is the determinant of individual conditions for actions while similar actions can be expected for those individuals who have similar conditions for action. That is why we can take a broad range that can be explained through class analysis - actions, behaviors, values, attitudes, etc. Neo-Weberian class analysis mostly stems out of the work of John Goldthorpe and the perspective of defining the class based on occupation and work situation that determines an occupation’s position within the system of authority and control in the production process (Goldthorpe, Llewellyn, and Payne 1987)(Goldthorpe et al. 1987). What is important for class analysis, according to Breen, is to “explain not only why certain distinctions of position within labor markets and firms lead to differences in life chances, but also why a categorization of positions developed for this purpose explains variations in a range of different outcomes” (Breen 2005:36) like for instance class and political behavior.

One of the unavoidable models linking social and political phenomena is certainly the Lipset-Rokkan cleavage model (1967), which in one of its segments touches on class issues (the opposition of labour and capital). Although primarily intended for Western countries, Kitschelt et al (1999) had shown that one of its versions can serve to explain the development of the East European countries party system. However, if we take a step back from formal politics (election systems, political parties and other institutions), the political sociology literature lacks proper analysis of the role of class in explaining other segments of the political, such as political behavior for example. Taking into account that political behavior is an eclectic field of social sciences, for the purposes of this paper we decided to focus on just three indicators relevant to it. An interest in politics is a significant indicator of satisfaction with public policies, but it is also used to explain numerous social and political occurrences. The perception of political efficacy of citizens in a particular country speaks volumes on their role in decision making as well as on the communication between political elites and citizens, while political participation is one of the most important determinant (and mechanism) of liberal democracy which (in)directly creates the direction, type and dynamics of the democracy in a particular country. Below we will conceptualize each of the mentioned indicators and depict previous efforts to contextualize these concepts in Croatian reality.

### ***An interest in politics***

An interest in politics represents “the degree to which politics arouses a citizen’s curiosity” (van Deth 1990:278), while also being the precondition for political participation (Lupia and McCubbins 1998:22). According to Almond and Verba (Almond and Verba 1989:117) the ordinary person is more interested in the political output than input. That is, they are less interested in the manner in which processes in political life are implemented (how



decisions are made, how is voting conducted, how they can contribute), and more interested in the final result of those processes (who is favored by those decisions, who is winning the election, what are their benefits from politics). The reason for reduced interest is a combination of several factors – a) threatening consequences of political activity – avoiding grudges and conforming to general opinions, b) the futility of political activity – a conviction that it is futile to expect one person to change anything, and c) the absence of spurs to action (van Deth 1990; Rosenberg 1954). Besides these reasons, van Deth (1990) underlines the absence of political competence in the form of knowledge and skills as one of the reasons for the reduced interest in politics. An interest in politics i.e. the degree to which citizens display interest in individual political issues is precisely the first step towards their potential engagement and active participation. It is stated that an interest in politics influences the possibility of a more active participation, so those individuals with an articulated interest in politics will also be more active in political life (van Deth 1990:275).

In the papers of Croatian scientists, the interest in politics was mostly considered in regard to specific groups – women (Leinert Novosel 1996), students and youth (Ilišin 2008), and pupils (Bagić and Šalaj 2016; Ćulum, Gvozdanović, and Baketa 2016; Ilišin 2007), or the interest in politics was linked with different kinds of political behavior (Lalić 2011; Milas 2006).

### ***Political efficacy***

The construct of political efficacy was originally presented by Campbell, Gurin and Miller (1954, p. 187) that defined it as “the feeling that individual political action does have, or can have, an impact upon the political process, i.e. that it is worthwhile to perform one’s civic duties. It is the feeling that the individual citizen can play a part in bringing about change.” More simply put, political efficacy “represents an individual’s perceived ability to participate in and

influence the political system.” (Yeich and Levine 1994:259). Twenty years after the initial definition of this construct, Balch (1974) introduced two dimensions of political efficacy – internal and external, and McPherson, Welch and Clark (1977) defined the concepts of internal and external political efficacy.

Thus, by Zimmerman (1989, p. 555) internal political efficacy implies “the belief that one is competent enough to participate in political acts such as voting. External PE was defined as the belief that the political system would be responsive to efforts to influence policy decisions.” Furthermore, internal efficacy is also called the subjective or internal competency, while external efficacy is called the systemic competency, and these labels basically describe the spheres to which the terms apply (Newton and van Deth 2005). Also, it has been recognized that the internal efficacy is strongly linked with an interest in politics, and certain unconventional forms of political participation (political protests and violence) are more present in people with highly developed internal efficacy and external inefficacy (Craig and Maggiotto 1982:100). Unfortunately, thus far political efficacy has not been the focus of research by Croatian scientists so there is no data or papers indicating the levels of political efficacy in Croatian citizens.

### ***Political participation***

The role of citizens in a democratic society should not be limited to being objects of politics, but should rather include being active subjects contributing to the development of their community, i.e. participation in politics (Almond and Verba 1989). Political participation builds on the interest in politics and political efficacy. The definitions of political participation are various, however the one given by Verba and Nie (1972, p. 2) can be considered the model definition: “Political participation refers to those activities by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of governmental personnel and/or the actions they

take.” A somewhat broader definition is given by Morales (2009, p. 7) according to whom political participation includes activities aimed at “attempting to influence the activity of government and the selection of officials, trying to affect the values and preferences which guide the political decision-making process, and seeking to include new issues on the agenda.” On another hand, Martin and van Deth (2007) advocate for the definition given by Brady (1999), who considers political participation an “action by ordinary citizens directed towards influencing some political outcomes.” Martin and van Deth (2007:336) point out that this definition encompasses four important components; that political participation implies action; that individuals in question are not members of the political elite; that the purpose of this action is achieving influence; and that the purpose of that influence can be any political outcome, ultimately not connected only with citizens influencing the decisions of political institutions. These three definitions show that political participation encompasses the active involvement of citizens with the purpose of influencing the functioning of elected officials and their decisions, but also influencing other non-governmental institutions from either the private or civil sectors.

Besides from the perspective of the goal trying to be achieved or actors who are being influenced, political participation can also be viewed from the perspective of various modes of participation. In political science, political participation is mostly divided into conventional and unconventional. Summing up a large number of references, Grasso (2016:17) states that conventional participation includes voting, joining a political party and volunteering, donating money and contacting politicians. On the other hand, unconventional political participation implies signing petitions, boycotting products, participating in protests, and occupying public spaces and joining environmental organizations.

Research of political participation in Croatia was always aimed at the participation of specific groups such as the youth (Ilišin 2004, 2005; Kovačić and Dolenec 2018; Kovačić and Vrbat 2017), women (Leinert Novosel 1997; Štimac Radin 2007), or students (Ilišin 2014; Vujčić 2000). Besides these, in the past few years there has been an increasing number of research connecting participation and the development of different media. Among these are papers dealing with the relationship between media and political participation (Vozab 2016), social networks and political participation (Pavić and Šundalić 2015), and the Internet and political participation (Bebić 2011).

## **Data and Methods**

Data used in this analysis are from *International Social Survey Programme – module Role of Government V* (2016)<sup>1</sup>. Data for Croatia was gathered using a *face-to-face* questionnaire in July and August of 2017 with the total of 1026 respondents and the response rate of 29,2%.

## ***Dependent variables***

Political behaviour could be broadly conceived as a concept that includes individual's behavior in regard to the political realm, but also as a concept that takes into an account orientation to action which consists with the individual expectations, evaluations and identifications of the political processes. For the purpose of this article we use the concept of political behavior as a broader term that consists of individual's interest in politics, political efficacy and political participation. Interest in politics as a single-item indicator consists of the question "How interested would you say you personally are in politics?" while respondents could evaluate their answer on a five-point scale that ranged from "very interested" to "not interested at all". Political efficacy consists of

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<sup>1</sup> ISSP Research Group (2018): International Social Survey Programme: Role of Government V - ISSP 2016. GESIS Data Archive, Cologne. ZA6900 Data file Version 2.0.0, doi:10.4232/1.13052

four-item indicators that were evaluated on a Likert type five-point scale that ranged from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”. As mentioned previously, political efficacy consists of two dimensions – internal and external. External dimension of political efficacy was evaluated through question in which respondents were asked to assess to what extent they agree with the following statements: “People like me don't have any say about what the government does”; “People we elect as MPs try to keep the promises they have made during the election”; “Most civil servants can be trusted to do what is best for the country”. Internal political efficacy was evaluated through the question “I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our country”. As an indicator of formal political participation we have used a single-item indicator through which respondents were asked the following: “Did you vote in the last parliament elections held in September of 2016?” Their political participation on this question they could report though “yes, I did vote” and “no, I did not vote”.

### ***Independent variables***

Neo-Weberian class analysis empirically is grounded on the Erikson-Goldthorpe-Portocarero (EGP) class schema from 1979 (Erikson, Goldthorpe, and Portocarero 1979) and since then its theoretical principles have contributed to development of subsequent cognate schemes like CASMIN, United Kingdom's NS-SEC and the European Socio-Economic Classification – ESEC (Connelly, Gayle, and Lambert 2016). For that matter ESEC was developed as a new social class schema for the purpose of EU comparative research since it uses International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO)<sup>2</sup>, which is a harmonized classification used across the EU for reporting occupational statistics (Harrison and Rose 2006; Rose, David; Harrison 2010). New and improved version of ESEC was introduced as part of ESSnet project under Eurostat

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<sup>2</sup> ISCO classification is also used in ISSP modules as part of standard code for background occupation variable.

supervision in 2011-2014 period and is called European Socio-economic Groups (ESeG) (Anon 2014; Franco 2016; Tjldens 2016). Rational for ESeG is to divide the overall population to socio-economic groups which are coherent to an extent using a criteria of the autonomy in employment and the human capital (Holý and Strašilová 2015). ESeG groups on 1<sup>st</sup> level of division are: ESeG1-Managers, ESeG2-Professionals, ESeG3-Technicians and associate professional employees, ESeG4-Small entrepreneurs, ESeG5-Clerks and skilled service employees, ESeG6-Industrial and agricultural employees, ESeG7-Less skilled workers, ESeG8-Retired persons, ESeG9-Other non-employed persons. Based on the detailed instruction how to construct a social class scheme using ESeG principles (Tjldens 2016), we have constructed a scheme using ISSP background variable of employment and work status. For the purpose of our analysis in this paper we have used a 3 class variant: 1-Higher salariat (ESeG1+ ESeG2); Intermediate class (ESeG3+ ESeG4+ ESeG5); Working class (ESeG6+ ESeG7). Innovation with ESeG in comparison with previous cognate schemes is that it includes retired persons in the analysis since they are coded using the same 1<sup>st</sup> level division logic (from ESeG1 to ESeG7). In our analysis retired persons are also included since being a part of a certain social class in Neo-Weberian context of market provision of life chances continues after the retirement. As socio-structural and socio-demographic variables we have employed gender, age groups, education level (primary, secondary, tertiary), place of living (urban-rural), and personal income (see Appendix Table A1.)

### ***Data analytic strategies***

The study uses ordinal regression for the purpose to model the dependence of a polytomous ordinal response on a set of predictors (independent variables). In Tables 1 and 2 regression analysis are presented in order to explore the effects of the main independent variables on interest in politics and on political efficacy (internal and external). In each of the models it is possible to

see the effects of class position and interest in politics and political efficacy. In Table 3 we have employed logistic regression on respondent's voting since a dependent variable is dichotomous. In the first model the effects of class position are analysed with background independent variables (gender, age, etc.). In the second model we have added interest in politics and political efficacy (here these indicators are treated as independent predictors) to explore if voting as a practical aspect of political behaviour is under the influence of interest in politics and internal political efficacy. To have the overall insight into the each of the indicators used, either as dependent or independent variable, we have done univariate analysis (frequencies and percentages) presented in appendix table (Table A1.). Number of respondents in the data set is 1026, but since the ESeG analysis omits students, unemployed, persons with disabilities and persons outside the labour market the total number of respondents is 814. In addition, analysis has further restricted the number of respondents to those with scores on ESeG variable, as well personal income variable, thus having 750 respondents included in multivariate analysis.

## **Results**

An interest in politics is one of the fundamental indicators of the basic insight into how political citizens are understood, therefore the distribution of interest reveals a lot about the structure and potential of the people for public and political action. The analysis of the answers to the question about the level of interest in politics, measured by the Likert type scale, reveals that only 5% of the people are very interested, 15.9% are interested, 32% are moderately interested, while almost half of the questioned answered that they are not interested or not very interested in politics. After we gained a basic insight into the overall interest in politics, the next step was checking the effects of class position, gender, age, personal income, education and residential status on interest in politics. Regarding this, we constructed a model, shown in the Table 1, which

clearly illustrates that besides age, gender, and place of living, class position also strongly effects the interest in politics in the way that those respondents in higher salariat tend to show a greater interest in politics than those being members of working class. Interest in politics is also under the effect of socio-demographic differences in Croatian society in a way that men express bigger interest than women do. In addition, there is a clear pattern that interest in politics grows with person's age since younger respondents express much less interest in politics in comparison with those older than 50 year of age. Structural difference can be observed when place of living is taken into an account. Being interested in politics seems to be more of an urban characteristic since those living in big cities or suburbs of big cities express higher interest. Differences among personal income do not sketch a clear picture except the finding that those with no personal income report less interest in politics then do those in the highest income grade.

[Table 1 here]

Another segment of political behaviour analysed was political efficacy. As stated above, since the literature on political efficacy in Croatia is rather limited, it is necessary to show the answers distribution that was the foundation for this construct. Political efficacy was operationalized through four questions: (1) people like me have no say about what the government does, (2) I have a good understanding of political issues, (3) MPs try to keep promises, and (4) most civil servants can be trusted. The answers distribution shows that two thirds of the subjects do not think that people like them have any say about what the government does. Detailed analysis shows that none of the predictors effects, except education (those with the highest attained educational level express more political efficacy then do those with primary educational level), the evaluation of the statement "people like me have no say about what the



government does”. Most people express their disenfranchised attitudes in terms of having no say about what the government does. This attitude is persistent regardless of explored predictors.

Furthermore, one third of the citizens considers that they have a good understanding of political issues, another third neither agrees nor disagrees with the statement, while the final third does not consider that they have a good understanding of political issues in the country. Unlike the previous segment, here the analysis shows differences concerning subject attributes. Thus, Table 2 clearly shows that men tend to estimate to have a good understanding of political issues more than women do. Age is also a significant predictor – internal political efficacy grows with age. Class belonging in model 2 also shows significant effect. Those belonging in working class tend to think less that they have a good understanding of political issues then do those in middle or higher salariat class. Distribution of personal income also presents significant effect. For those having higher personal income (in the highest income grade) internal political efficacy tends to be also higher.

[Table 2 here]

A dose of pessimism is also apparent when answering the question about MPs keeping their promises, because as much as 80% of the subjects do not feel that members of Parliament are fulfilling their promises, as opposed to 7.3% who agree that they do. The last segment, dealing with the trust in civil servants, follows the same distribution of its predecessor, revealing a huge distrust of public service as 67.6% of the subjects do not agree with the statement that most civil servants can be trusted, while 11% of them consider the statement to be true. These two statements were also introduced into the model encompassing gender, age, education, residential status, personal income and class membership, however, the results have shown that the overall distrust towards politicians and civil servants is present regardless of age, gender, education, or

for that matter class position. Some differences could be observed concerning place of living (for those living on outskirts of a big city) and for those having the lowest level of income, but since the pseudo  $R^2$  is quite low it could be said that external political efficacy (measured through all three indicators) is symptomatically low in Croatia.

One of the dimensions of political behaviour regarded in this paper concerns the **formal political participation** measured by the participation in the last elections. As far as descriptive indicators are concerned, 66.8% of the subjects claim to have voted in the past elections, while 33% abstained.

Taking into account that elections remain the most important mechanism of democracy, we wanted to discover the predictors relevant to voting in the elections. In first model we have included all independent variables used so far in the analysis, while in the second model we have expanded them with interest in politics and internal political efficacy. In model 1 age, education and class position show significant effect on respondent's voting. Therefore, in the last elections there was a greater participation of older people and those more educated. Gender show borderline significant with so far detected pattern. Class belonging indicates that those in higher social class participated more in last elections.

[Table 3 here]

Everything shown above makes it completely apparent that the research question about the role of class as a predictor of individual segments of political behaviour is justified when political efficacy and interest in politics are concerned. Analysis has shown that class membership clearly determines one's interest in politics and "an individual's perceived ability to participate in and influence the political system" (Yeich and Levine 1994:259) in the way that members of a higher

class are significantly more interested in politics and consider their political participation more important for the political game. Precisely because of the importance of choice, we decided to expand the list of independent variables (model 2) to include the components of interest in politics and internal political efficacy. The resulting model shows that if the model, besides socio-structural, socio-demographic and socio-economic characteristic, includes personal interest in politics and internal political efficacy, we can observe that class membership loses its predictive significance and only age, education, place of living stay effective on voting. Besides that, interest in politics is the most robust predictor of voters turn out. Internal political efficacy does not have an effect on voting, but moderate correlation (Kendall's tau<sub>b</sub> .375;  $p < 0.001$ ) between interest in politics and internal political efficacy indicates that internal political efficacy mediates through interest in politics the effect on voters turnout.

## **Conclusion**

In contemporary societies with expressed inequality in wealth distribution, and thereby inequality in access to services, the role of social science is to analyze but also to warn about problems resulting from that inequality. Numerous sociological and anthropological papers clearly illustrate that class membership has a significant influence on an individual's health (Lachman and Weaver 1998), educational outcomes (Archer, Hutchings, and Ross 2005; Lareau 2000; Reay 2006), (un)employment (Rifkin 1965) and other aspects of their social lives. One of those aspects is surely politics. Although there is plenty of literature dealing with explaining individual political phenomena resulting from social class membership, this approach is still poorly utilized in Croatian political science and political sociology. It should be mentioned that the Croatian Gini coefficient is on the level of the European Union, but in a more detailed analysis it is evident that rising inequalities in salaries indicate a general inequality rise in post-

transition capitalist period of Croatian society (Bićanić, Ivanković, and Kroflin 2018). When taken into account measure like Human Development Index (HDI) and Inequality-adjusted HDI inequalities seem to be on a rise (Dolenec, Domazet, and Ančić 2014; Domazet, Dolenec, and Ančić 2012). Besides this, Croatia is faced with inequality with regard to citizens' residential status and income in the field of education (Kovačić and Horvat 2016; Pužić, Doolan, and Dolenec 2006), availability of digital services (Krištofić 2007), income (Nestić 2009) and so on. Precisely in order to see whether class is a predictor of one of the segments of political reality, in this paper we analyzed the role of class membership in explaining some of the most important segments of political behavior. Analysis has shown that in Croatia, class membership is a predictor of interest in politics and political efficacy, i.e. that the members of a higher class show greater interest in politics and asses that they have a better understanding of politics. Class *per se* does not have a direct effect on voter turnout, but it is mediated through political efficacy and interest in politics since voting is mostly under the influence of personal interest in politics.

These findings could be placed into the context of class politics representation through the activities of political parties and addressing class issues. Research has shown that in Croatia about 43% of citizens belong to the working class, which is the highest percentage when compared to the other three classes in Croatian society (see table A1.). On the other hand, in autumn of 2018, there were 160 active political parties registered in Croatia, 20 of which are parliamentary. In the general political discourse parliamentary political parties do not emphasize the working class *per se*. This is done by only a few new coming minor parties through sporadic media appearances of their members. Part of the reason lays in the post-communist experience during which “class” as a term, and specially working class, “appeared illegitimate because of associations with the old regime”, while the discourse of “normality” brought the neoliberal

agenda in economic and political realm thus disregarding the class perspective of society either in public or academic discourses (Ost 2015). If we add to this the results of the analysis from this paper, showing that higher classes have more interest in politics, have a better grasp of it and in the end participate more in the formal version of politics, it clearly opens the space for possible political contestation on class politics and specifically to address issues of possible subjectivization of working class.

All this leads to the conclusion that in Croatia inequality has various facets while class inequality in politics is being one of those facets, and that it is necessary to introduce class perspective to the analysis of political phenomena, especially political behavior. From the political perspective, Croatian society exhibits quite high level of external political inefficacy, low level of internal political efficacy and almost half of population not interested in politics. If contemporary democracies aim to increase political participation and increase political competency of its citizens, as most experts advocate, one of the ways is definitely by taking into an account the class perspective of political behaviour. This paper has shown that is necessary for society in general, and politics in specific, to tackle with the overall distrust in politics and with high level of disinterest in politics. Part of the challenge lays in the fact, that from Neo-Weberian class analysis most of the people in Croatian society belong to working class, a social class that tends to be less interested in politics because they feel less competent to understand political issues. The quality of democracy certainly depends on the interest in politics, and a significantly lower interest in politics among a numerically superior group of citizens is a peerless indicator to the political elites that politics needs democratizing by investing into the political capacity of the working class.

Since this paper, because of its limitations, leaves numerous questions unanswered, the authors hope that it will serve as an incentive for other social scientists to place a greater focus on the class dimension in their work, with the ultimate purpose of a more complete understanding of Croatian society and politics in the European context.

Appendix Table

Table A1. Socio-demographic characteristics, interest in politics, political efficacy, voting in elections.

	F	%	Mean	Std	Association of ESeG (Kendell's tau)
<i>Interest in politics</i>			3.48	1.191	.143**
Very interested	51	5.0			
Fairly interested	163	16.0			
Somewhat interested	331	32.5			
Not very interested	194	19.1			
Not at all interested	278	27.3			
<i>Political efficacy – People like me have no say about what government does</i>			1.87	1.085	-.003
Strongly agree	488	47.6			
Agree	339	33.1			
Neither agree nor disagree	87	8.5			
Disagree	70	6.8			
Strongly disagree	41	4.0			
<i>Political efficacy – Good understanding of political issues</i>			2.85	1.141	.137**
Strongly agree	105	10.3			
Agree	344	33.6			
Neither agree nor disagree	264	25.8			
Disagree	217	21.2			
Strongly disagree	93	9.1			
<i>Political efficacy – MPs try to keep promise</i>			4.14	0.969	-.022
Strongly agree	19	1.9			
Agree	55	5.4			
Neither agree nor disagree	139	13.5			
Disagree	360	35.1			
Strongly disagree	448	43.7			
<i>Political efficacy – Most civil servants can be trusted</i>			3.86	1.033	-.023
Strongly agree	19	1.9			
Agree	101	9.9			
Neither agree nor disagree	212	20.7			
Disagree	366	35.8			
Strongly disagree	325	31.8			
<i>Voting in elections</i>					.081*
Yes	670	65.3			
No	333	32.5			
<i>ESeG</i>					
Higher salariat	170	20.9			
Middle class	292	35.9			
Working class	352	43.2			
<i>Gender</i>					-0.62
Male	485	47.3			
Female	541	52.7			
<i>Age</i>			44.91	16.678	-.053
18-29	232	22.6			

30-39	183	17.8			
40-49	177	17.3			
50-65	313	30.5			
66+	121	11.8			
<i>Educational level</i>					-.429**
Primary level	17	1.7			
Secondary level	810	78.9			
Tertiary level	199	19.4			
<i>Place of living</i>					.183**
A big city	340	33.1			
The suburbs or outskirts of a big city	81	7.9			
A town or a small city	211	20.6			
A country village	394	38.4			
<i>Personal income</i>			3641.77	2431.76	-.267**
No income					
Up to 1.200 HRK per month, net	110	11.8			
1.200-2.000 HRK	46	4.9			
2.001-3.500 HRK	96	10.3			
3.501-5.500 HRK	230	24.6			
5.501-7.000 HRK	253	27.0			
7.001-9.000 HRK	110	11.8			
More than 9.000 HRK per month, net	50	5.3			

\*p<0.05;\*\*p<0.01



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Table 1. Interest in politics<sup>a</sup> and its correlates – ordinal regression

		Model 1
<i>ESeG</i>	Higher salariat	-.796***
	Middle class	-.121
	Working class	0
<i>Gender</i>	Male	-.391***
	Female	0
<i>Age</i>	18-29	.945***
	30-39	.858***
	40-49	.673**
	50-65	.063
	66+	0
<i>Education</i>	Primary level	.862
	Secondary level	.199
	Tertiary level	0
<i>Place of living</i>	A big city	-.364*
	The suburbs or outskirts of a big city	.645*
	A town or a small city	-.193
	A country village	0
<i>Personal income</i>	No income	1.402*
	Up to 1.200 HRK per month, net	.168
	1.200-2.000 HRK	-.053
	2.001-3.500 HRK	.435
	3.501-5.500 HRK	.306
	5.501-7.000 HRK	.334
	7.001-9.000 HRK	.911*
	More than 9.000 HRK per month, net	0
Cox and Snell R <sup>2</sup>		.130
Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup>		.137
N		750

\*p&lt;0.05; \*\*p&lt;0.01; \*\*\*p&lt;0.001

<sup>a</sup> Answers: (1) very interested; (2) fairly interested; (3) somewhat interested; (4) not very interested; (5) not at all interested.

Source: ISSP 2016 - "Role of Government V" - ZA No. 6900.

Table 2 – Political efficacy and its correlates – ordinal regression

	<i>People like me have no say about what government does<sup>a</sup></i>	<i>Good understanding of political issues<sup>a</sup></i>	<i>MPs try to keep promise<sup>a</sup></i>	<i>Most civil servants can be trusted<sup>a</sup></i>
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
<i>ES</i>	Higher salariat	-.676**	-.124	-.016
	Middle class	-.423**	.078	.238

	Working class	0	0	0	0
<i>Gender</i>	Male	.043	-.711***	-.034	-.156
	Female	0	0	0	0
<i>Age</i>	18-29	.400	1.140***	-.241	.084
	30-39	.419	.919***	-.105	.174
	40-49	.127	.578*	.004	.192
	50-65	.180	.183	.191	-.059
	66+	0	0	0	0
<i>Education</i>	Primary level	2.267***	.302	-.464	.053
	Secondary level	.300	.021	-.305	-.099
	Tertiary level	0	0	0	0
<i>Place of living</i>	A big city	.053	-.173	.008	-.184
	The suburbs or outskirts of a big city	-.189	.081	1.051***	.890***
	A town or a small city	-.114	-.192	-.262	-.299
	A country village	0	0	0	0
	No income	-1.224	1.717*	.257	-.394
<i>Personal income</i>	Up to 1.200 HRK per month, net	-.292	1.170*	-.844	-1.387**
	1.200-2.000 HRK	-.598	.832*	-.612	-.496
	2.001-3.500 HRK	-.630	.933**	-.344	-.451
	3.501-5.500 HRK	-.409	1.084***	-.342	-.288
	5.501-7.000 HRK	-.236	1.067**	-.569	-.625
	7.001-9.000 HRK	-.728	1.339***	-.735	-.694
	More than 9.000 HRK	0	0	0	0
	Cox and Snell R <sup>2</sup>	.035	.127	.040	.048
	Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup>	.038	.134	.044	.051
	N		750		

\*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01; \*\*\*p<0.001

<sup>a</sup> Answers: (1) strongly agree; (2) agree; (3) neither agree nor disagree; (4) disagree; (5) strongly disagree.

Source: ISSP 2016 - "Role of Government V" - ZA No. 6900.

Table 3 – Logistic regression of voting predictors<sup>a</sup>

	Model 1					Model 2				
	$\beta$	s.e.	Wald	sig.	Exp( $\beta$ )	$\beta$	s.e.	Wald	sig.	Exp( $\beta$ )
<i>ESeG</i>	.258	.128	4.032	.045	1.294	.175	.134	1.709	.191	1.191

<i>Gender (male)</i>	-.331	.170	3.774	.052	.719	-.224	.177	1.596	.206	.799
<i>Age</i>	-.299	.066	20.366	.000	.741	-.229	.070	10.679	.001	.796
<i>Educational level</i>	-.592	.237	6.246	.012	.553	-.540	.244	4.906	.027	.583
<i>Place of living</i>	-.121	.067	3.290	.070	.886	-.142	.069	4.211	.040	.868
<i>Personal income</i>	.000	.000	2.699	.100	1.000	.000	.000	3.191	.074	1.000
<i>Interest in politics</i>						.383	.083	21.418	.000	1.467
<i>Political efficacy – Good understanding of political issues</i>						.087	.084	1.068	.301	1.090
<i>,Nagelkerke R2</i>			.078					.134		
<i>N</i>					750					

<sup>a</sup> Answers: (1) yes, I did vote; (2) no, I did not vote.

Source: ISSP 2016 - "Role of Government V" - ZA No. 6900.