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Otherring in political lay thinking: A social representational approach to social order

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The present chapter argues that political lay thinking is embedded in representations of social order. In its most basic sense, the notion of social order refers to the norms, rules and laws which define our “living together” as a group, as a community or as a society. Our general claim is that political lay thinking is best grasped when it is rooted in the basic connectedness and sociality of human experience (Brewer, 2004; Doise & Staerklé, 2002), expressed through the notion of social order. Humans, necessarily, live together, think together, and act together as members of social groups. They form communities of interdependence and cooperation, but these communities are also marred by conflict and widespread inequalities. Thus, lay political thinking is analysed in relation to the political organization of the community people live in.

Based on social psychological theory and research, I will argue that lay political thinking is shaped, to a large extent, by widespread representations of social order to which individuals refer when taking a political stance. These current representations of social order among the public are investigated in relation to evolving views of morality and immorality, of free market thinking and individual responsibility, of perceptions of social and cultural diversity and heterogeneity, and of conceptions of social inequality and hierarchical class structure. This thinking on social order is analysed as reflecting, on the one hand, a need to grasp “what is going on” in a complex and often chaotic world, by endorsing representations which convey the impression of stability, predictability and well-defined certainties. On the other hand, individuals are motivated to actively intervene in the organization of their political community by adopting political attitudes in line with their ideal social order. This motivation, however, may easily take on perverse forms, for example in terms of stigmatising attitudes and scapegoating of supposedly deviant groups and individuals.

On the institutional level, the social order of contemporary societies is to a large extent defined by government interventions which regulate the relations between individuals and groups

within nations. This takes place most prominently in state institutions concerned with social welfare and with control and sanction. The main purpose of the chapter is to bring together, from a perspective of societal political psychology, multiple representations of social order and attitudes towards such social and disciplinary government action.

I will first outline a social representational approach to social order and then describe some of the significant historical and representational changes in terms of social order and institutional regulation that have occurred during the last decades. I will then describe “othering” as a key process in the justification of social arrangements and present a model of lay conceptions of social order destined to heuristically organize the analysis of everyday political thinking. Examples of empirical survey research will illustrate how social representations shape thinking on social order, in particular with respect to the role of othering and the stigmatisation of subordinate minority groups. Thereby, I highlight the role of social representations in ideological processes promoting maintenance of social status quo or advocating social change (Howarth, 2006).

Social representations and social order

While Social Representations Theory and research has since its beginnings been concerned with important societal phenomena, such as mental health (Jodelet, 1991), science and new technologies (Wagner, 2007), risk management (Joffe, 1999), prejudice and stereotypes (Joffe & Staerklé, 2007) or human rights (Doise, 2001), social order as such has not been studied from the perspective of social representations. This is surprising to the extent that social representations have been viewed, since their inception as a theoretical concept in 1961 by Serge Moscovici, as cultural and symbolic devices enabling communication and organising social relations (Doise, 1990). Social representations are not “external” to individuals, in the sense that they would exert an “influence” on them. Rather, people’s thinking is based on representations without which they could not communicate with each other. Social representations organize social relationships to the extent that they provide meaning to difficult-to-understand events, thereby enabling effective communication. They provide symbolic reference points for members of the society, expressed for example, as “values”, “ideas”, “arguments”, or “norms”. Much like social norms, for example, they have a prescriptive function, which informs group members of the “done thing” in a given context.

But their scope is wider than just prescribing appropriate thought and conduct in a given context. Social representations are a central component of social order itself. In order to make a social organization stable and legitimate, social representations defend and sustain a particular form of social order, and thereby exclude other, competing forms of social order. The stability of a social order can never be taken for granted, because alternative ways to organize the society always exist, especially in democratic societies. Historically and anthropologically, humans have come up with an amazing number of ways to arrange their communities. These range from

loyalty-based tribal organizations to ancient empires calling for discipline and submission, from medieval feudal systems to oppressive kingdoms, from communist, totalitarian and authoritarian dictatorships to contemporary individualistic societies with their distinctive forms of liberal submissiveness (Beauvois, 1994). Each type of social order defines a specific balance and relationship between individual members and their groups. Some forms of social order, for example, focus on the duties of the individual and its subordination to the collective interests of the group, whereas others value individual rights which have priority over community rights. It is because of this very diversity that social order is a highly political concept. Notwithstanding propaganda talk about the necessity of consensually endorsing a given social order, any order may be contested; and under some circumstances, discontent with a given order gives rise to powerful and sometimes successful movements promoting new forms of social order as exemplified in political protest and sudden revolutions.

A stable social order is necessarily based on “hegemonic” representations (Moscovici, 1988) which define how a society ought to be run and organized. Social representations play a pivotal role in providing legitimacy to a given social order and to policies destined to implement this order. In order to provide an example of such a hegemonic representation, we now turn to a description of social control as a social representation, along with the historical changes which have given rise to the current forms of institutional social control.

The “culture of control”: Representational changes of social order

An analysis in terms of a societal political psychology requires an account of the political and ideological context which leads to particular forms of hegemonic social representations. Changes in the way Western societies handle crime and poverty are a paradigmatic example of a historical and cultural development in which new forms of institutional regulation are legitimised by novel representations. These are based on a circular process in which representations lead to the implementation of policies and in which, conversely, new policies gradually shape representations. Indeed, during the last decades, contemporary societies have undergone profound changes, both in terms of transformation of government intervention in people’s everyday lives and in terms of social representations and cultural values providing legitimacy to these new policy developments. Social programmes, for example, have been cut back in virtually all countries with an effective welfare state, accompanied by rising levels of meritocratic and individualistic thinking (Taylor-Gooby, 2001). Similarly, the criminal justice system has become tougher and more repressive, a development reflected in more punitive attitudes among the public (Wacquant, 2004).

Social, cultural and political developments have given rise to a world where existential certainties have crumbled, where identities, hitherto taken for granted, are ever more difficult to construct, where self-centeredness has become a key cultural value, and where social thought

seems to develop more and more along deep social divisions and cleavages (Young, 1999; 2007). The gradual development of a “culture of control” (Garland, 2001) exemplifies those changes. The most flagrant institutional manifestation of this development is the unprecedented rise of prison populations across Western nations. This is true first and foremost in the USA, which has taken place without a clear relationship to actual degrees of crime. But the culture of control goes well beyond this punitive surge at the level of the criminal justice system. Rather, representations of social control penetrate today all aspects of our social organization. Let us point out some of its central elements. Crime and delinquency have become much more important in our everyday lives than they were a few decades ago. Dramatised, delinquency is omnipresent in the media which disseminates images of a deprived and depraved youth, accused of having lost normative reference marks which are thought to guarantee an orderly public life (Castel, 2007). The media publishes spectacular, yet exceptional stories, and generously relays collective moral outrage towards such crimes. Delinquency has become a “normal” social fact with which we need to learn to live with, the general public having acquired an awareness of crime hitherto unimaginable (Salas, 2005). As a result, fear and subjective vulnerability are widespread: feelings of insecurity have become a political issue in and of itself, which develop independently of actual crime levels, disconnected from social realities which could justify it.

The “new punitiveness” representation (Pratt, Brown, Hallsworth, Brown & Morrison, 2005) signals a paradigmatic shift in the way societies conceive of their delinquents. After WW II, criminal justice policies were firmly based on principles of rehabilitation and reinsertion of offenders. There was a widespread belief in the efficacy of “social engineering”, suggesting that individuals who have “deviated from the right path” could be rehabilitated with appropriate institutional intervention. Such efforts of reinsertion were done with social assistance, therapy and sometimes forced psychiatric interventions, as vividly illustrated in the cult films of the beginning of the 1970’s, “One flew over the cuckoo’s nest” and “Clockwork Orange”.

For a variety of reasons, however, the efficacy of state and government intervention became more and more questioned since the 1960’s. Rising levels of individualism, demands of lowering government costs and complaints of ineffectiveness of state institutions, both social and penal, have all contributed to this major shift in perspective. As a result, the criminal justice system has focused, quite suddenly, on risk prevention rather than on rehabilitation of offenders. Supported by collective moral outrage, offenders are not only judged for their misdeeds, but also for the potential risk they represent and symbolize to society. With the development of the consumer culture, one important role of private and public security forces has become to safeguard the economic sphere from people who are seen as disturbing the orderly activities of the market place. Therefore, people who pose a potential threat to the foundations of a consumer-based culture were to be controlled and eventually excluded from the domain of economic exchange (Wacquant, 2004). “Zero-tolerance” policies which severely punish even minor



offences illustrate this principle which consists of mastering the risks of the economic system in order to protect the interests of economically dominant groups. Growing electronic surveillance of public space is also an expression of this new paradigm which aims at securing a social order favourable to the sphere of economic activities, thereby purposefully ignoring the origins of delinquency.

Penal policies are now justified in terms of protecting the “centre of society”, filled with hard-working and orderly citizens, from its periphery, inhabited by unruly masses that more often than not are excluded from the activities taking place in the centre, be they economic, cultural or political. The image of depraved suburbs representing a threat to the centres of major European cities such as Paris or London neatly captures this logic of perceived danger and suspicion which leads to tighter control and repression of “peripheral groups”, in particular the poor, immigrant groups and youth living in these suburbs (Castel, 2007). It is indeed a well-established criminological fact that criminal sanctions are today disproportionately applied to members of subordinate minority groups (Young, 1999).

The criminal justice system has also become more expressive, symbolised in the rise of the emblematic figure of the victim, another feature of the culture of control. Moscovici (2005), for example, has argued that within 20 years, between the beginning of the 1980’s and the new millennium, minority groups, hitherto perceived as deviating from common norms and values, have become to be seen as victims of historical injustice and structural inequality. In the same vein, crime has taken up a role in representations of social order such that we easily perceive ourselves as potential victims, and that we think and act accordingly. Consider, for example, the policy initiatives by French president Nicolas Sarkozy. Known for his tough stance toward public disorder and unruly behaviour, he routinely refers to victims, sides with them, and appeals to tough sanctions in order to provide justice to victims. In this movement, victim rights have supplanted the rights of the offenders, a central feature of modern criminal law.

Politically, these developments can be traced back to neoconservative movements which have shaped both welfare and penal policies during the last two or three decades. Here, neo-conservatism goes hand in hand with neo-liberalism, another ideology which has put institutional “reform” on its flags, by attempting to cut back welfare services and by promoting “active” welfare policies rendering public support conditional upon integration in the labour market (Goul Andersen, Clasen, van Oorschot & Halvorsen, 2002). Both ideologies, neo-conservative and neo-liberal, are based on compatible, if not similar representations as to the calculating nature of individuals. They feed the same anxieties stemming from dangerous and free-riding individuals, they refer to the same stigmatising stereotypes in order to justify their policies, and they use the same recipes to identify risk and attribute the responsibility of social problems to individuals rather than to their own policies which create the very situation they are supposed to address (Garland, 2001). In sum, these two ideologies justify themselves by promoting social exclusion,

of immoral and deviant people in the case of neo-conservatism, and of losers and free-riders in the case of neo-liberalism. Put otherwise, both neo-conservative and neo-liberal social orders require scapegoats to sustain themselves.

This brief account of recent changes in the domain of social control suggests that on the social and cultural level, the meaning of delinquency, crime and poverty has been deeply transformed. This is to say that social representations related to social order and to justice have undergone profound changes. From a widespread acceptance of a policy goal aimed at including poor and deviant members back into the group, we have moved to a situation where it seems normal to exclude them, both symbolically through stigmatisation and physically through imprisonment or even death penalty (Young, 1999).

Othering and the justification of social order

With respect to the resources and rights granted to members of a society, social order is never neutral. Unless we assume a completely egalitarian order, which is difficult to imagine, any given social order provides both material and symbolic advantages to some parts of the citizenry while disfavours others. Without prejudging the reasons for these inequalities, some groups are in more favourable positions with respect to their wealth and resources, some groups have more power than others in collective decision making, some groups have to fight for their rights whereas for others rights are granted without question (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). The political question at hand concerns, of course, the regulation of these inequalities which characterize contemporary societies to various extents.

One form of regulation is the justification of inequalities by those who find themselves in a position to take advantage of existing social arrangements (Zelditch, 2001). Without entering the debate when and why members of subordinate groups (who are more likely to find themselves on the losing side of inequalities) also support the status quo (see Jost & Banaji, 1994, Jost, Pelham, Sheldon & Sullivan, 2003), social groups develop strategies to persuade other members of the legitimacy of the way their society is organized. A major strategy of providing legitimacy to social order is based on classical liberal democracy, which stresses the principle of individual equality in terms of civil and political rights. This political individualism leads to the justification of inequalities on the basis of the assumption of individual responsibility, blaming those who are unable to take advantage of a free market society for their own misfortunes. Yet, it is well known that formal granting of individual rights cannot compensate historical or structural inequalities of contemporary societies, based in particular on gender, ethnicity and social class (e.g., Isin & Wood, 1999; Jackman, 1994).

I argue that in fact most strategies destined to provide justification for existing social arrangements are based on some form of “othering” of those who are portrayed as threatening a stable or harmonious social order. Othering is an act of strategic stigmatisation such that social

categories are singled out as being different (Joffe, 1999) and, in the case of threat to the social order, as inferior or dangerous (Duckitt, 2001). Subordinate others who are perceived as not fitting into society are excluded in order to affirm the legitimacy of the values and norms of one's own group. Edward Said (1978), in his book *Orientalism*, has extensively demonstrated how colonial powers, France and England in particular, have othered Eastern populations. This served not only to validate their policies of domination and colonization, but also to justify the social order within their respective societies, based on the imaginary superiority of the Western virtues of self-control and self-government.

Alleged threats to social order are associated with social categories which are depicted as deviating from supposedly common norms and values. The preferred, though not exclusive targets of this othering strategy are groups situated on the very bottom of the social hierarchy, for example illegal immigrants, drug addicts, welfare beneficiaries, and poor people in general. Their conduct, their values and their life style are deemed unacceptable, thereby endangering a social order which precisely is based on the idea of an imagined consensual social order in which all members are expected to respect and endorse common norms and values. Representing a consensual target of "downward" comparison (Young, 1999), threatening groups constitute symbolic reference marks which display what is acceptable and what is unacceptable in their society (Becker, 1963; Marques, Páez & Abrams, 1998). This process of stigmatisation of low status categories is therefore a strategy of justification of existing social arrangements. Stigmatized groups are scapegoats to whom responsibility is attributed for many of the problems a society has to face. As an example, we can think of political campaigns suggesting that immigrants are at the origin of crime and disorder, depicted as jeopardizing an otherwise peaceful and orderly society. The representational threats to social order are thus the product of a political strategy destined to maintain social hierarchies.

The othering process can be viewed as mirroring societal values of self-control, self-reliance and individual autonomy (Joffe & Staerklé, 2007). In order to provide legitimacy to those individualistic values, people promote and endorse representations which associate non-respect of these values to socially undesirable low status groups. "Outsiders" in Becker's (1963) terms, these groups are labelled as deviating from established norms. The perception according to which these groups threaten the social order is thus at the origin of their stigmatization, much like the punitive treatment reserved since old ages to alleged internal enemies of a group, in particular thieves, cheaters and traitors (Neuberg, Smith & Asher, 2003).

Thus, political thinking about social order is likely to be based on representations involving social antagonisms between, on the one hand, those social categories which are deemed to represent the bedrock of the social organization in which people live or want to live, and, on the other hand, the social categories which threaten "their" social order. I argue, therefore, that to the extent that any social order needs to be justified by means of strategic representations of threat

to this social order, representations of social order are necessarily construed on the basis of othering processes. Othering thereby becomes a process of justifying and creating social order.



A model of lay conceptions of social order

Citizens living in contemporary societies have to deal with a multitude of competing values and models of social organization (Young, 2007). Societal regulation relying on principles of social control and repression, for example, is but one of a possible model of social order, albeit one that, as we have seen, has become clearly more important during the last decades. Since current political and social debate constantly refers to competing models of social order, it is essential, when studying lay thinking based on representations of social order, to take heed of this pluralism. Accounting for this pluralism conceptually allows for the inclusion of alternative modes of social order. It thereby opens up possibilities for social change.

Any given organization of a group or a society can always be disputed; this principle, in addition to representations of social order themselves, lies at the heart of the present approach to a societal political psychology. Even though some representations are hegemonic or dominant in nature, their endorsement by members of a society is far from consensual. All representations, hegemonic and other, refer to common and shared knowledge which individuals and groups refer to when taking up a stance, often as a function of their position in social hierarchy (Lorenzi-Cioldi & Clémence, 2004). Representations thereby make up a network of social and political meanings which social actors make use of in political communication and debate (Doise, Clémence & Lorenzi-Cioldi, 1993).

In order to systematize lay thinking on social order, I have developed a model of lay conceptions of social order. This model as well as its empirical foundations are fully developed elsewhere (Staerklé, Delay, Gianettoni & Roux, 2007). The model distinguishes four types of social representations of social order: *Moral order*, *Free market*, *Social diversity* and *Structural inequality*. Each of these types describes a set of representations derived from a particular kind of organization of a political community, along with its main modes of regulation of social relations, its privileged forms of institutional regulation, and its core antagonisms. These antagonisms form the representational basis of the othering process which is thought to underlie justification of different types of social order. By specifying an emblematic antagonism justifying each type of social order, the model aspires to describe exemplary ways of stereotypical thinking about social order, thereby describing the principles which guide lay political thinking as a function of each conception of social order. In line with classical work on social representations (Doise, 1990; Moscovici, 1961), I thereby posit a homology between social and cognitive regulation, the “social” being the political organization of a community. Let us now look at each of these types of social order.

In the conception of **Moral order**, lay thinking follows along the lines of the principle of morality. Social relations are expected to be organized as a function of conformity with established norms and values. Much like in Talcott Parson's functionalist sociology and in Amitai Etzioni's conservative communitarianism, social order is explained with citizens' respect for common values: the good citizens are those who represent our values, whereas those who disrespect them, with deviant and disorderly behaviour, are categorised as "bad" citizens. This division between conforming, "good" people and non-conforming, "bad" people gives rise to an othering process by which deviants are categorised as the main threat to the social order. Consequently, the main mode of institutional intervention is disciplinary and repressive: bad subjects must be controlled and sanctioned. The conception of moral order reflects a traditionalist view of social relations, since it stresses the duty of group members to conform to conservative values of morality, self-reliance and discipline. It provides meaning to a "dangerous world" (Duckitt, 2001) by identifying the sources of insecurity and danger. It is therefore akin to authoritarian modes of thinking, characterized by endorsement of dominant group norms, intolerance of deviance, and submissiveness to authorities (Duckitt, 1989).

The **Free market** conception, in turn, reflects political thinking on the basis of economically liberal principles. Social relations are thought along meritocratic principles and are judged as a function of individual performance and success. Individuals are expected to engage in competitive relations with each other and endorse the equity principle of distributive justice according to which retributions, in form of salary for example, should be proportional to contributions and personal investment (Walster et al., 1978). Free market thinking assumes that the basic human motivation is self-interest, one of the most influential cultural norms in contemporary Western societies (Miller, 1999). Accordingly, state intervention is expected to be minimal, as it is perceived as limiting or hindering free market activities. The threat to a social order governed by free market principles stems from individuals who do not respect the equity principle: free-riders and "losers". People who misuse welfare benefits are a particularly likely target as well as welfare beneficiaries in general. They are suspected to take advantage of other members' hard work and thus to be a burden to other group members rather than contributing, on their own, to the well-being of the group. Free market othering is thus targeted at "losers", construed as being different from "winners".

Table 1

Model of lay conceptions of social order

	<i>Belongingness & Identity</i>	<i>Social position</i>
<i>Normative conformity</i>		
	MORAL ORDER	FREE MARKET
Principle of categorisation	Morality	Performance, Success
Principle of social regulation	Conformism	Equity, Self-Interest
Othering	"Good" vs. "Bad"	"Winners" vs. "Losers"
Institutional regulation	Disciplinary state	Minimal state
<i>Ascribed group membership</i>		
	SOCIAL DIVERSITY	STRUCTURAL INEQUALITY
Principle of categorisation	Social heterogeneity	Status, Power
Principle of social regulation	Categorical differentiation	Inequality management
Othering	Ingroup vs. Outgroup	Dominants vs. Subordinates
Institutional regulation	Group rights	Redistributive state

The conception of **social diversity** differs from the two preceding conceptions to the extent that political thinking relies upon ascribed group membership and an *a priori* distinction between social groups rather than between groups defined by individual conduct (as is the case for the divisions between "good" and "bad" people and between "winners" and "losers"). It thereby provides a conceptual framework for accounting for lay thinking on social heterogeneity and multiculturalism, in both positive and negative terms. On the policy level, group rights (or cultural rights) are at stake in this conception. If the two former conceptions, moral order and free market, formally rely on individual rights granted irrespective of group membership, the conception of social diversity accounts for situations in which social groups, both minority and majority, claim rights in the name of their group (see Isin & Wood, 1999). This conception is more complex than the conceptions of moral order and free market, because group differences can be regarded as either positive, for example in multiculturalism and in movements defending rights of particular groups, or negative, as in racist and discriminatory thinking and behaviour. The othering process thus concerns the construction of categorical or essential differences between groups defined with physical, cultural or historical qualities which have become politically meaningful. According to social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), such thinking based on group membership is likely to develop in contexts where people strongly identify with their group and where their social identities are salient. In the case of a positive view of intergroup differences, the social order is based on recognition of ethnic, sexual, linguistic or religious difference. To the extent that group membership is officially recognized as the reason for unequal

treatment and discrimination, this difference provides the basis of affirmative action policies and group rights. In the case of a negative view of intergroup differences, however, the social order is based on exclusive group membership in the (ethnic) majority group of a society. Accordingly, the threat to such a group-based order stems from categorical otherness, represented in particular by ethnic and national outgroups, foreigners, immigrants and asylum seekers.

In the final conception, lay political thinking is structured by perceived class difference, that is, by **structural inequalities**. Here, social relations are thought to be determined by patterns of class-based inequality resulting in a social hierarchy of status and power. These class differences are seen as the result of social reproduction and inherited privileges rather than as the outcome of individual strivings (e.g., Bourdieu, 1979). The main political issue in this conception concerns the management of inequalities in the form of redistributive policies, in particular tax policies and social welfare programmes. This conception is therefore mostly concerned with social rights which are supposed to grant individuals decent and dignified living conditions (Roche, 2002). The social cleavage characteristic of this conception is the distinction between underprivileged, subordinate groups on the one hand and privileged, dominant groups on the other. Much like in classic Marxist analyses, these groups are seen as being in a competitive relation of negative interdependence with each other: the demands by low status groups directly threaten the well-being of the high status groups. Again, this conception is complex to the extent that structural inequalities can either be perceived as legitimate and fair, or on the contrary as illegitimate and unfair. When the inequalities are seen as legitimate, individuals are likely to endorse strategies of justification of these inequalities, by asserting some kind of superiority of those in privileged positions or by promoting “legitimizing myths” (e.g., economic individualism, the belief in a just world) which are destined to provide a rationale for the superior position of the dominant groups (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). In this view, a hierarchical social order dominated by powerful groups is threatened by organized groups which defend egalitarian principles and which aim to attenuate the social hierarchy, for example trade unions. By extension, the threat stems also from low status groups actively defending their rights in general. In case inequalities are deemed illegitimate, however, individuals are likely to oppose inequalities and to defend redistributive policies which enhance equality between groups.

It should be emphasised that while the four conceptions represent four formally independent ways of thinking about social order, political lay thinking is likely to be shaped by specific combinations of these conceptions. The moral order conception, for example, is easily associated with a social diversity perspective, for example when conservative movements promote repression of criminal conduct by targeting immigrants as the main source of insecurity.

The four conceptions are also related to each other to the extent that they are organized as a function of two crossed, underlying dimensions, the combination of which gives rise to each

of the conceptions. The two conceptions in the top row of the model, moral order and free market, have in common that, at least in theory, ascribed membership in social groups is irrelevant, as they both emphasise the importance of conformity of individual conduct with hegemonic norms and values: traditional and conservative for the conception of moral order, meritocratic and individualistic for the free market conception. They therefore rely on a form of individual justice (Azzi, 1992) which disregards pre-existing groups and social inequalities, focusing instead exclusively on individual conformity with established norms defined by dominant groups. We therefore conceive of these two conceptions as being regulated by a normative requirement of rallying around common norms which are expected to be binding for all members of the society. In both cases, normative conformity is thought to ensure cohesion of the group and thus to provide the basis of a stable and legitimate social order. The downside of this requirement is, as already mentioned, that the othering of those who do not respect these values is not only inevitable, but constitutive of the social order. Whereas the neo-conservative movement is based along the ideological lines described in the moral order conception, the neo-liberal movement, in turn, follows the principles of the free market conception. An implication of a social order based on supposedly consensual norms and values is that any attempt to propose alternative solutions will be suppressed, by either considering their proponents as deviating from common norms, or as losers unable to sustain themselves. Thereby, opposition is immediately transformed into deviance which leads to the consideration that the moral order and the free market representations of social order can only consolidate and justify existing social hierarchies.

Since they are based on competing group norms and collective interests, the two conceptions in the bottom row, social diversity and structural inequality, make contestation and social change possible. Both conceptions rely on relationships between groups defined with ascribed criteria, that is, group members do in most instances not choose whether they belong or not to the group. In the social diversity conception ingroups and outgroups are seen as defending specific identities, values and traditions. Here, the defence of group rights becomes a tool for recognition and social change. In the structural inequality conception, dominant and subordinate categories collectively defend their material interests. The quest for a more equal society and the fight against structural inequalities is voiced for example through the defence of classical redistributive mechanisms on which modern welfare states are based. Thus, maybe somewhat paradoxically, only conceptions relying on *a priori* defined antagonisms between social categories may further equality and inclusive citizenship.

Finally, the four conceptions of social order can also be classified as a function of the type of resources that are at stake in them and the corresponding motivations which underlie human conduct. Moral order and social diversity are both based on belongingness and identity needs. Individuals strive for respect as good group members and judge other group members as a function of their conformity with ingroup norms (moral order), or they seek to construct a positive

collective, group based identity through which they differentiate themselves from other groups (social diversity). In neither of these two conceptions are social status and wealth formally relevant, since individual thought and conduct are seen as driven by identity rather than instrumental needs. In the other two conceptions, free market and structural inequality, however, social position is reflected in both of their social divisions, between winners and losers, and between dominant and subordinate groups. In contrast with the two former conceptions, they are then more based on the assumption of the primacy of instrumental motives, both on the individual and the collective level.

Empirical illustration: Social and disciplinary regulation as a function of othering

To empirically illustrate some of these proposals, I present results of a survey study on the legitimacy of the Swiss welfare state. This survey is based on a representative sample of 769 respondents drawn across four cities; two from the German-speaking and two from the French-speaking part of Switzerland (see Staerklé et al, 2007, for a detailed description of the data). In order not to overload the text, the methodological rationale of the various techniques will not be developed in detail (the techniques and their use in a social representational approach are presented in Doise, Clémence & Lorenzi-Cioldi, 1993).

The analyses to be presented are meant to demonstrate that the four othering strategies defined by our model are related to different views of social and disciplinary government responsibilities, thereby providing justification for different types of social order. I will first present results involving the four types of othering, which are targeting non-conformists (moral order), free-riders (free market), immigrants (social diversity) and egalitarians (structural inequality). The survey questionnaire included four items to assess each of these forms of othering, with response scales ranging from 1 to 6. These items were submitted to a principal components analysis which yielded four factors. Table 2 presents a simplified account of this analysis, along with the items used to assess each of the four othering dimensions in the order as defined by their loadings on each factor.

The first factor, accounting for 16.1% of the variance after rotation, groups together the four items measuring social diversity othering. Factor 2 (15.3% of explained variance) is defined by items assessing moral order othering, while measures of free market othering load on the third factor (14.7%). Factor 4, finally, is identified by the questions on structural inequality othering (14.2%). This exploratory factor analysis thereby suggests the existence of four relatively independent dimensions of othering and thereby provides support for the model of lay conceptions of social order.

Table 2
Principal components analysis on othering strategies

	Factor 1 (16.1%)	Factor 2 (15.3%)	Factor 3 (14.7%)	Factor 4 (14.2%)
	Social diversity othering	Moral order othering	Free market othering	Structural inequality othering
<i>Othering target</i>	<i>Immigrants</i>	<i>Non-conformists</i>	<i>Free-riders</i>	<i>Egalitarians</i>
1	Welfare benefits should be granted to Swiss people in the first place	Switzerland is likely to witness more violent and chaotic mass protests	Welfare beneficiaries have chosen to sponge off the society	Associations of women's rights are useless
2	The government should favour Swiss people	Switzerland loses its moral values, because a good education is no longer a priority	Welfare beneficiaries lack will and motivation	Trade unions are useless
3	Right to vote for foreigners (rev)	Switzerland becomes less safe, because street delinquency is rising	Withdraw welfare benefits from people who have abused them	Anti-globalisation associations are useless
4	Switzerland loses its identity, because too many cultures mix up	Switzerland loses its moral values, because homosexuality has become so normal	There is too much abuse in the welfare benefits system	Antiracist associations are useless
Predictors (Linear regression)				
<i>Sex</i>				Male
<i>Age</i>	Older generations	Older generations	Older generations	Older generations
<i>Education level</i>	Low	Low	Low	Low
<i>Nationality</i>	Nationals			Nationals
<i>National ID</i>	High	High	High	High
<i>Rel. deprivation</i>		High		Low

In a second step, composite scores were calculated, by aggregating the four items for each dimension (Cronbach's alphas > .72). In order to investigate the social origins of othering strategies, these four scores were each submitted to a linear regression analysis, with sex, age (three age groups), education level (compulsory schooling, apprenticeship, professional school and university), nationality (Swiss vs. foreign origin), national identification (low vs. high) and

relative deprivation (based on four measures of perceived likelihood to *become unemployed, to have difficulties making ends meet, to need welfare benefits, and of not being up to new workplace requirements*). Again, I only present a simplified view of the findings: table 2 presents the significant effects of these four analyses for each othering strategy at $p < .05$.

The results show that being part of older generations, a low education level and a high national identification consistently predicted endorsement of all four othering strategies. As for age, the 50 to 65 year old generation supports othering more than the younger generations, reflecting the idea that older generations are more likely to discredit non-conformists, free-riders, immigrants and egalitarian social movements, possibly because older generations have been socialized in the relatively consensual and culturally homogeneous post-war context where welfare benefits were low or inexistent (Young, 1999). On the basis of our results, however, it is not possible to know whether this effect is an age or a generation effect.

Education level yielded the strongest effects on othering strategies. In all instances, individuals with a low level of education (compulsory schooling and apprenticeship) show higher support for othering strategies. In social psychological research, it is well established that education decreases explicit prejudice (e.g., Wagner & Zick, 1995), but there may be many reasons for this effect. On the one hand, higher levels of education may lead to the use of more subtle forms of prejudice, compared to more overt and blatant forms of prejudice which may be more acceptable in low education contexts (Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995). Education in different fields of humanities may also foster sensitivity to values of tolerance and non-discrimination, thereby leading to an “enlightenment effect” and a genuine decrease in prejudice. Another explanation based on ethnic competition suggests that individuals with a low education level would be more prejudiced because they feel a competitive threat stemming from the presence of immigrants, accused of “taking away our jobs” (Esses, Jackson & Armstrong, 1998; Green, 2007).

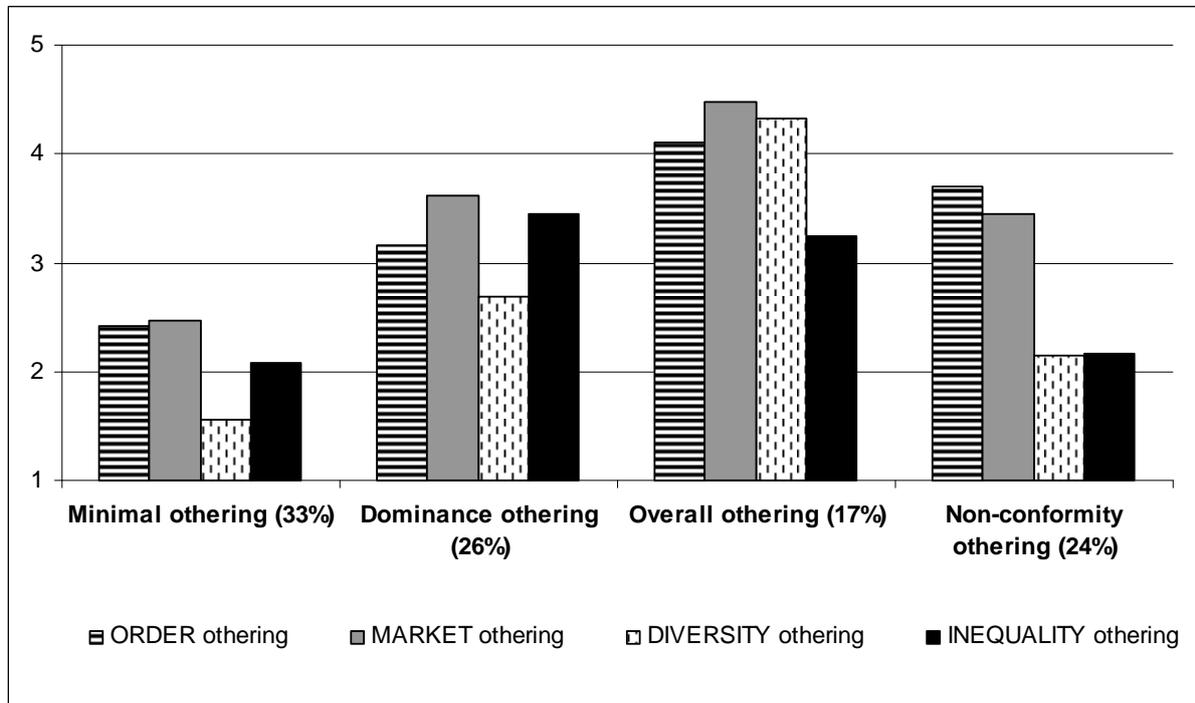
The finding that national identification increases endorsement of the four types of othering suggests that highly identified individuals feel particularly compelled to justify social order on the basis of othering of non-conformist and outsider groups. Thereby, they promote forms of social order which are regulated, respectively, by conformity, individual responsibility, national homogeneity, and an imagined equality of the national community.

Moreover, the findings show that males are more prejudiced against egalitarian groups (maybe as part of a dominant group’s strategy to preserve its privileges), and Swiss citizens show stronger othering of immigrant and of egalitarian groups than citizens with foreign origin (as a strategy of ingroup favouritism). Relative deprivation, finally, is the only factor which leads to opposite strategies of othering: *high* relative deprivation gives rise to othering of non-conformity (the feelings of economic vulnerability may be transformed into demands of traditionalism and corresponding othering of non-conformity), whereas *low* deprivation leads to othering of

egalitarian groups (again as a strategy to preserve the “privilege” of being in a economically secure position).

Figure 1

Typology of othering strategies (K-Means cluster analysis)



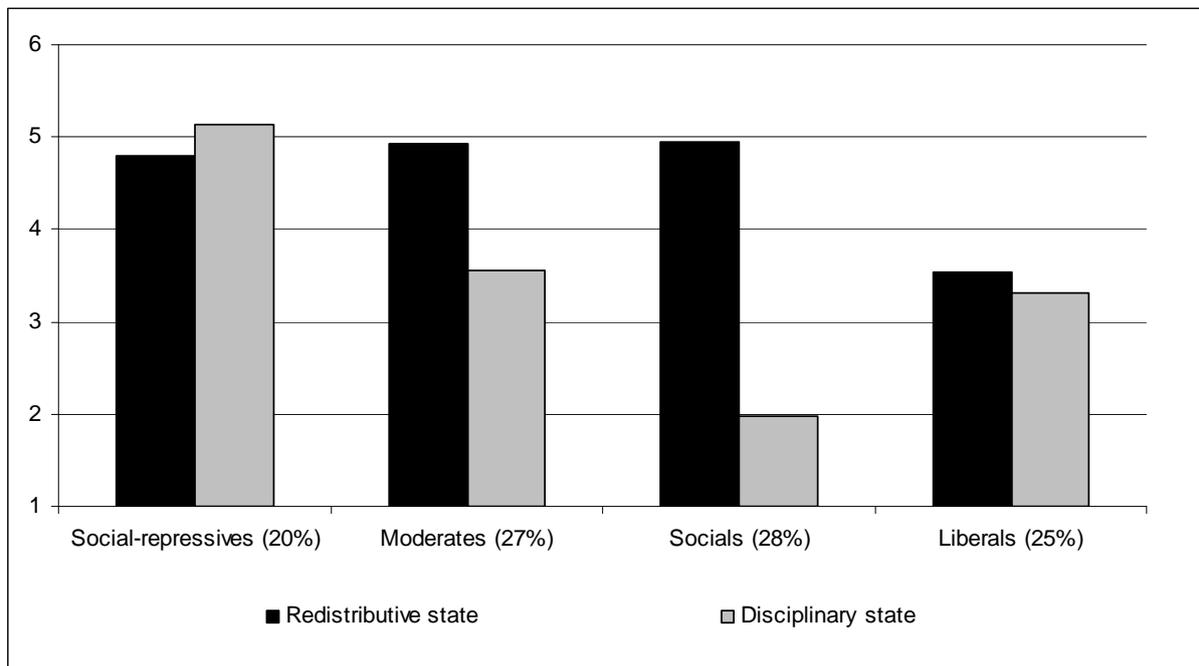
In the next step, the four othering scores were submitted to a K-means cluster analysis in order to generate groups defined with typical patterns of othering (Figure 1). Four typological groups were requested. The procedure yields a first group, labelled *Minimal othering* (33% of respondents) which is characterized with the lowest means on all four othering scores. On the other end, another group, called *Overall othering* (17% of respondents), most strongly endorses three out of four othering strategies, the fourth one, inequality othering, being slightly below the mean of this score of a third group, termed *Dominance othering* (26% of respondents). This latter group most strongly endorses othering of egalitarian groups and is also strong on market othering. This group is thus seen as being particularly supportive of othering strategies destined to justify material inequalities. The final group features strong othering of the two conceptions based on normative conformity with consensual values, moral order and free market. Hence, this group is associated with *Non-conformity othering* (24% of respondents), especially motivated to discredit individual deviance and value violation. This typology will be used in the final analysis which will bring together othering strategies and conceptions of institutional regulation of social order.

A similar procedure was used with the two main modes of institutional regulation which were discussed earlier, namely redistributive and disciplinary government intervention. The

measure of redistributive intervention (Cronbach's alpha = .82) was based on nine items proposing a variety of political initiatives to alleviate class differences (e.g., *increase of welfare budget, no further cuts in welfare spending, tax increases for the rich, control of tax fraud by the rich, minimal salary for workers*). The measure of support for disciplinary government action, in turn, was created with four policy initiatives (*increase of police presence in the street, extension of the use of CCTV, stronger control of public demonstrations and harsher punishment of drug addicts*, alpha = .82).

Figure 2

Typology of attitudes towards government regulation (K-Means cluster)



These two scores were then also submitted to a K-means cluster analysis in order to produce a typology of respondents with respect to these two basic responsibilities of government intervention (Figure 2). The results show less variation for the redistributive score, compared to the disciplinary score, as three out of four groups support for redistributive policies is not significantly different. Yet, these three groups are clearly differentiated as a function of their support for disciplinary policies. A first group is labelled the *Socials*, since they support redistributive policies while rejecting almost completely the disciplinary measures (28% of respondents). On the other extreme, a group called the *Social-repressives* defends with equal vigour both types of government intervention (20%). A *moderate* group is located in-between these two groups (27%). A final group is defined by a low level of support for redistributive policies (with respect to its high overall mean), and with a moderate support for disciplinary policies (25%). This group—the *Liberals*—is then associated with economic liberalism, both

concerned with individual responsibility and thus opposition to redistribution, and with a moderate support for law and order politics.

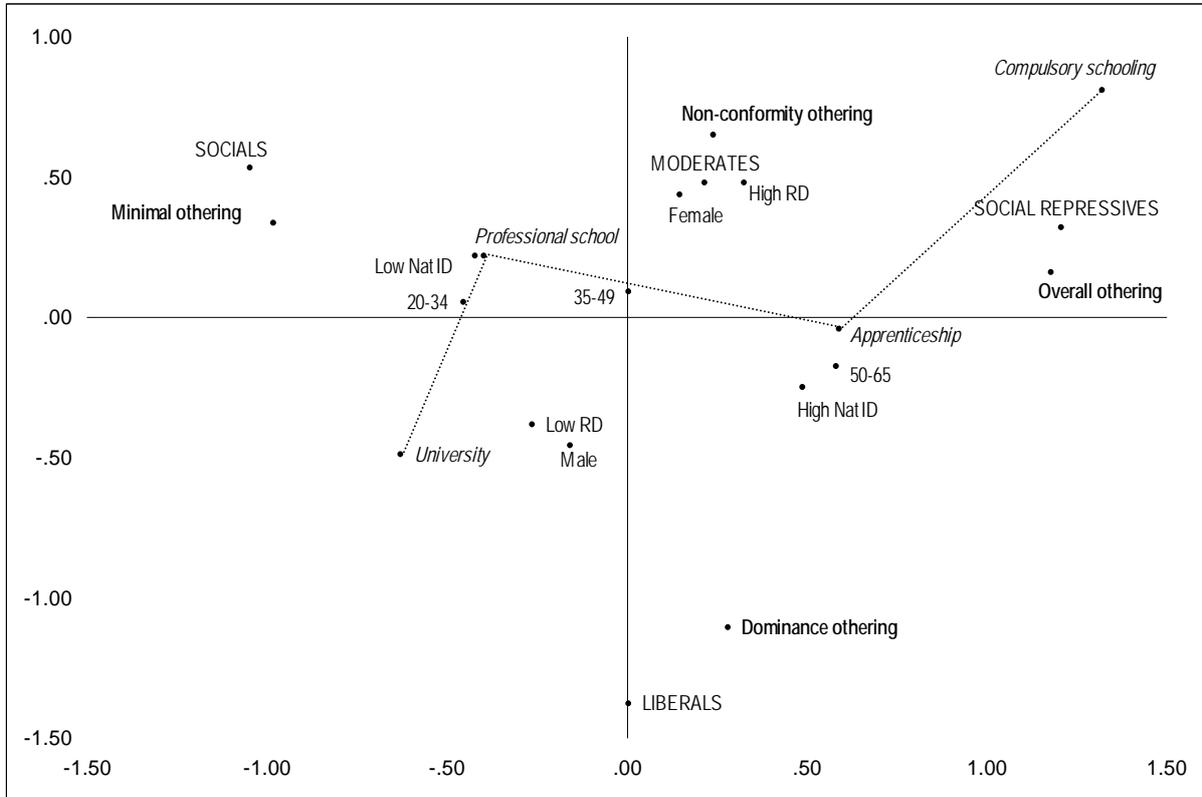
The final part of this empirical illustration brings together the different elements presented up to now. In order to do so, a factorial correspondence analysis was carried out, yielding a graphical representation of social categories and their relationships with each other (Figure 3). The analysis includes the two typologies as well as the six social indicators discussed above. The first, horizontal dimension accounts for 30% of the variance, and opposes, on the left hand side, the *Social group* and the *Minimal othering group* to the *Overall othering group*, closely associated with the *Social-repressives*, to the right hand side. In between, but clearly on the right side of the midpoint, we find the *Moderates* which are located next to the *Non-conformity othering group*. The *Liberals* and the *Dominance othering group*, finally, are also located next to the middle of the first dimension. This first dimension is therefore structured as a function of the extent to which (a) othering is a feature in representations of social order and (b) social order is based on disciplinary government action. Confirming the findings discussed above, this first dimension is most clearly related to education level, age and national identification.

Whereas a redistributive outlook (represented by the *Socials*) is associated with minimal othering, individuals defending both social and disciplinary intervention are those who most strongly endorse othering strategies. This is a significant finding to the extent that it shows that a strong support for welfare policies can go together with stigmatising conceptions of social order, but only if these social attitudes are accompanied by disciplinary attitudes. The key for understanding this result is to be found in the demographic composition of the social-repressive group, mainly composed of low-status, deprived individuals with a low or very low level of education.

It appears, then, that low social status gives rise to a particularly pessimistic and menacing outlook on social order which calls for strong government intervention in order to address perceived injustice and threat (see Bourdieu, 1979). This finding can be related to feelings of “ontological insecurity” (Young, 1999), a sense that normative reference marks and principles often contradict each other, leading to difficulties in the construction of identities in the muddle of competing social values. More and more people, especially in low status positions, find themselves in situations of unpredictability characterising insecure life courses. Such ontological insecurity gives rise to the search for clear lines of demarcation, crisp boundaries of social groups, both in terms of the othering of deviants and in terms of culturalist notions of ethnic and racial differences. Our findings suggest that ontological insecurity is also reflected in support for extensive social control, since social control harks back to predictability and certainty, and to prevention of risk and insecurity. Essentializing social groups, granting them a fixed and unchanging position in our representations can therefore be seen as a coping strategy against feelings of insecurity.

Figure 3

Factorial correspondence analysis on typologies of othering and government regulation, with social anchoring



Note: Othering typology in boldface, government regulation typology in capital letters, dotted line showing linearity of education level (in italics)

The second, vertical dimension (24% of explained variance) opposes, on its lower side, dominance othering and a liberal, non-redistributive stance towards government responsibilities, to the three other forms of othering, associated with the three patterns favouring redistributive government intervention. This dimension is thus mainly defined by contrasting views on redistributive policies, contested by high status positions (University degree, males and low relative deprivation) and supported by low status positions (females, high relative deprivation and compulsory schooling). High status groups presumably oppose redistribution not only because they “don’t need it”, but also because they are motivated to promote a social order in which they are have the advantage. It can be argued, then, that this second dimension reflects an antagonism grounded in the position occupied by respondents in the social hierarchy.

Overall, these findings highlight the idea of a close relationship between othering strategies and attitudes towards government intervention and thus towards policies destined to implement given forms of social order. A redistributive form of social order is the least prone to be justified with representational exclusion of social categories, mostly supported by weakly

patriotic “middle-class” respondents (e.g., teachers, health care workers) who arguably constitute the social categories who have mostly benefited from the development of the welfare state during the post-war period (Garland, 2001). Individuals with the lowest levels of education find themselves in the most precarious positions in society; they are most prone to develop perceptions of a chaotic and disorderly society which gives rise to a social order that not only sanctions deviants and free-riders, but which favours nationals over immigrants and which, unhappily, discredits the actions of associations defending the rights of low-status groups. At the same time, these social categories also strongly support redistributive policies. A moderate conception of social and disciplinary government responsibility is most strongly associated with the othering of deviant and non-conformist groups, mostly defended by females and individuals with a strong sense of relative deprivation. Finally, and unambiguously, an economically liberal stance opposing redistribution goes along with the disrespect of egalitarian groups, favoured by the most educated and the least vulnerable high status categories.

Conclusion

In this contribution, I have proposed an approach to societal political psychology based on the notion of social order. I have highlighted the need to consider the political and ideological context which gives rise to particular forms of social order, sustained by hegemonic social representations. As the institutional backbones of the current social order, two broad forms of government regulation have been described, social and redistributive on the one hand, disciplinary and repressive on the other. These two types of state intervention are justified in complex ways by representations of social order. In our model of lay conceptions of social order, four emblematic modes of political thinking have been described based on the concepts of moral order, free market, social diversity and structural inequality. Our survey findings have provided empirical evidence that each of these four lay conceptions of social order is justified with specific social antagonisms which define the othering of social categories perceived to constitute a threat to social order. The results also showed that low status individuals, and in particular those with a low level of education, find themselves in the most vulnerable positions in society. This leads them not only to endorse multiple othering strategies, but also to support both social and disciplinary state intervention in order to address their precarious situation.

Such an approach to societal political psychology accounts for lay political thinking by relating it to wider ideological processes which mould current forms of social order. In this view, individuals are foremost motivated by their desire to participate in the shaping of social order. This is based, on the one hand, on the norms and values conveyed by their membership in social groups and their position in the social hierarchy and, on the other hand, on their own stance towards legitimizing representations. This social order thinking rests largely upon the differential meanings attributed to the inevitable social cleavages and antagonisms, between good and bad

people, between winners and losers, between members of their own group and of other groups, and between dominant and subordinate groups. Group representations, stereotypes and prejudice thereby play a central role in the formation of political attitudes. They also determine whether individuals either strive to consolidate and justify existing social arrangements, or whether they endorse ideas and representations supporting social change. Evidencing the contexts, the processes and the motivations which lead individuals to engage in either direction is one of the key tasks of a societal political psychology.

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