Word count: 7007

1 Introduction

Over the past few decades, cross-national studies on social class and redistributive preferences have predominantly centered on individual class positions (Lindh and McCall, 2020). Recently, however, a growing body of research has begun to focus on how the class profile of social networks influences redistributive preferences (Lee, 2023; Lindh et al., 2021; Paskov and Weisstanner, 2022). Additionally, social classes tend to form segregated networks according to the homophily principle, understood as the higher chances of forming social ties with others with similar characteristics (McPherson et al., 2001; Otero et al., 2021). Although prior evidence has shown that class-based network segregation —as the proportion of network contacts from the same class relative to an individual's class position— can undermine attachment to society in highly unequal societies like Chile (Otero et al., 2022), there is still limited understanding of how being embedded in a homogeneously class-based network impacts attitudes toward inequality and redistribution in cross-national perspective (Otero and Mendoza, 2023). Contributing to this debate, this research first aims to investigate the extent individual-level relationship between class-based network segregation and redistributive preferences. Furthermore, cross-national comparisons indicate that class-based network stratification strengthens in societies with high economic inequality, which in turn drives wider social distance between classes (Otero et al., 2023; Pichler and Wallace, 2009). Against this backdrop, the present study seeks to contribute to understanding how cross-national differences in income inequality act as a moderating factor in the relationship between class-based network segregation and redistributive preferences.

While segregation may deepen existing class divisions in redistributive preferences (Paskov and Weisstanner, 2022), little is known about how income inequality shapes this relationship. On the one hand, research on the class-attitude link suggests that income inequality is crucial for understanding how class relations—i.e., the social and political distance between classes—translate into redistributive demands, as it reflects the state of class struggle in contemporary capitalist societies (Curtis and Andersen, 2015; Edlund and Lindh, 2015). A consistent finding is that the upper classes tend to be more supportive of redistribution in contexts of high inequality, whereas the already high redistributive demands of the lower classes remain relatively stable, regardless of inequality levels (Dimick et al., 2017; Sachweh and Sthamer, 2019). On the other hand, it is well-documented that income inequality affects

social relations, reinforcing stratified access to social activities and widening the distance between classes. In such conditions, the upper classes tend to be more socially active and maintain more diverse networks, while the lower classes become increasingly inactive and segregated as inequality rises (Lancee and Van de Werfhorst, 2012; Otero et al., 2023; Pichler and Wallace, 2009). However, current research efforts have primarily examined the impact of income inequality moderates the relations of social class on either social networks or redistributive preferences. Thus, this study aims to address two key questions:

(1) How does class-based network segregation influence redistributive preferences?

(2) To what extent does economic inequality moderate the relationship between class-based network segregation and redistributive preferences?

In this research, I use a sample of 31,694 individuals from 31 countries, drawn from the 2017 International Social Survey Program (ISSP). This dataset offers unprecedented cross-national comparative data on social networks, social class, and attitudes toward redistribution.

2 Theoretical views on class, social networks, and redistributive preferences

2.1 Class divide in redistributive preferences

Over the past few decades, research on political attitudes in industrialized societies has consistently highlighted the significance of social class as a key driver of public opinion (Lindh and McCall, 2020). Social class, in this context, not only reflects individuals' labor market relations but also their economic interests and moral perspectives regarding the role of the market and the state in the distribution and redistribution of resources (Svallfors, 2006). Redistributive preferences refer to the support for policies and mechanisms aimed at reducing economic inequality by redistributing wealth and resources (McCall and Kenworthy, 2009). These preferences encompass views on taxation, welfare programs, public services, and other government interventions designed to transfer resources from wealthier individuals or groups to those with fewer resources (García-Sánchez et al., 2022).

Empirically, the class divide in redistributive preferences is well documented (Brooks and Svallfors, 2010; Curtis and Andersen, 2015; Langsæther and Evans, 2020; Lindh, 2015). Class-

based explanations of redistributive preferences have predominantly focused on individuals. According to self-interest-driven theories, economic resources or risk exposure explain why working classes with fewer resources and greater job insecurity tend to support redistribution more than the upper classes (Meltzer and Richard, 1981; Rehm, 2009). Furthermore, while material interests often dominate in conditions of scarcity, value-based motivations, such as egalitarianism, may drive stronger support for redistribution under conditions of greater security and weaken under material hardship (Kulin and Svallfors, 2013; Maldonado et al., 2019).

Other approaches emphasize the role of social relations in the workplace, which can imprint normative views that ultimately shape political opinions due to the significant time people spend at work (Oesch, 2006). For instance, continuous and diverse social interactions in interpersonal service roles can foster empathy and reinforce egalitarian values (Kitschelt and Rehm, 2014). Conversely, vertical oversight in managerial positions and the emphasis on autonomy in self-employed roles often bolster self-interested and conservative political views (Oesch and Rennwald, 2018).

Given this context, studying the connections between social classes from a network perspective offers a comprehensive way to understand redistributive preferences beyond the individual level. By focusing on network ties, the collective dimension of between-class relations is brought to the forefront, emphasizing that social ties encompass both social and economic resources (Lin and Dumin, 1986), which serve as the foundation for communal action (Weber, 2011, pp. 57–59).

2.2   Class relations and social networks

Theoretically, class relations can be understood as the structure of social ties between different classes within the broader social system, represented by networks spanning various social strata (Blau, 1977). Research in social network literature consistently demonstrates that homophily—the tendency for individuals to associate with others who are similar—is a structured and persistent feature of social relations (McPherson et al., 2001). For instance, friendships and family ties often display homogeneity in terms of social status or demographic characteristics, while more distant ties tend to connect individuals to different social groups, thereby contributing to network diversity (Diprete et al., 2011; Lazarsfeld and Merton, 1954). Moreover, it is well established that socialization preferences play a role in forming segregated networks (Homans,

1951; Visser and Mirabile, 2004). However, this research aligns with the prevailing view that attitudinal similarity within networks arises primarily from structural contact opportunities shaped by the class composition of social ties, rather than from homophilic preferences for socializing with like-minded individuals (Feld, 1981). Thus, to investigate the implications of networks for redistributive preferences, I propose distinguishing between two closely related— but distinct—perspectives on how class-based networks are structured. First, *network diversity* refers to the degree of connectedness to dissimilar ties (e.g., different occupations or activities), representing access to diverse resources within social networks (Lin and Dumin, 1986). Thus, refers to the dispersion of an attribute tie (alteri) within the network, independently of the characteristic that an individual has (ego) (Otero and Mendoza, 2023). Related studies such as Pichler and Wallace (2009) and Lancee and Van de Werfhorst (2012), have argued that variety participation in formal organizations increases the chances of upper classes forming more diverse social connections. In contrast, the working classes show a more homogeneous participation repertoire. Similar patterns emerge in network socioeconomic composition, where the upper middle classes maintain more prestigious and diverse networks than the working classes (Carrascosa, 2023; Cepić and Tonković, 2020). However, I argue that while diversity accounts for the dispersion of an attribute within the network this approach lacks an anchor position that allows to address segregation more precisely.

By contrast, the perspective adopted in this study is *network segregation,* defined as the pattern of contact primarily with people of the same characteristics. The focus is on the similarity between the class position of individuals (ego) and their network ties (alteri). Therefore, it is conceptually closer to homophily and has been empirically examined through network homogeneity (Otero et al., 2021). Some studies have suggested that property-based boundaries are far less permeable than authority-based ones in the formation of cross-class ties. For example, Wright and Cho (1992) suggests that class interests tend to widen the social distance between proprietors and manual workers, while the intermediate position of supervisors and their more frequent contact with manual workers make cross-class friendships more likely. Similarly, Otero et al. (2021) identified a U-shaped pattern of acquaintance network segregation in Chile, where the middle classes (e.g., lower managerial professionals, clerks, and manual supervisors) exhibit lower network homogeneity. Likewise, segregation is most prevalent on both ends of the class structure, particularly among the lower classes. They argue that segregation in the lower classes is often driven by limited life chances and reduced social participation, while upper-

class segregation is largely explained by self-selection—a practice that reinforces privileged positions, which can coexist with a broader range of social connections (Otero et al., 2021). Given this context, one theoretical implication is that experiencing segregated class-based networks may be related to class differences in redistributive preferences. However, whether such segregation—empirically understood as network homogeneity—intensifies or mitigates class differences in these preferences remains a question to be empirically addressed.

2.3   Network segregation and redistributive preferences

In addition to individual class-based explanations, the argument that social ties have implications for attitude formation is not precisely new. More specifically, two approaches have discussed the role of social relations in redistributive preferences: reference groups and class-based networks. The first approach states that perceptions about economic inequality rooted in social comparison processes with reference groups could explain the formation of redistributive preferences (Condon and Wichowsky, 2020). This hypothesis can be traced to the studies on class images and perceived class conflicts (M. D. R. Evans et al., 1992; Kelley and Evans, 1995). The argument posits that people form their beliefs through family, friends, and coworkers' experiences instead of the whole society, which is described as an availability heuristic that systematically biases inferences about inequality based on the homophily of these reference groups (M. D. R. Evans et al., 1992, p. 467). Therefore, inferences about the social world are linked to the degree of segregation in the immediate social environment of a person, which influences the intensity and character of the information that ultimately shapes inequality perceptions (Mijs and Roe, 2021). Accordingly, experience sharing in conversations with socioeconomically diverse networks has been proven to contribute to the accuracy of the images of income and wealth inequalities compared with people in more segregated networks (Summers et al., 2022). Nevertheless, I argue that this body of research has been mainly focused on the cognitive dimension of preference formation through inequality perceptions rather than straightforwardly addressing the claimed influence of network segregation on redistributive preferences (Cansunar, 2021; García-Castro et al., 2022). This research adopts the second approach, which suggests that social networks provide a comprehensive picture of the class relations that contribute to group identity formation and internalization of social norms (Kalmijn and Kraaykamp, 2007). Specifically, it has been argued that redistributive preferences are influenced not only by individuals' social class but also by the class positions of their network ties

(Paskov and Weisstanner, 2022). Thus, opinions can either align or divide through social influence processes depending on the class positions of contacts and the level of network segregation (Lindh et al., 2021). These arguments reflect the notion that classes are characterized as collectivities with varying degrees of cohesion and solidarity, comprising asymmetric status-based interactions related to material resources, cultural practices, and political preferences (Morris and Scott, 1996). Following Sachweh (2012), social integration can be impeded in societies with few opportunities for contact between different social classes, creating an "empathy gulf" that hinders individuals from understanding others' lifestyles amid rising inequality. Consequently, segregated interactions may lead individuals to perceive the lives of different classes as more distant and undermine feelings of social integration (Sachweh, 2012). Thus, segregation can potentially diminish social cohesion as it exacerbates perceptions of others as strangers which in turn reduces empathy and solidarity (Otero et al., 2022). Although both approaches share the theoretical assumption that social networks contribute information (*availability heuristic*) and affect attitudes (*social influence*). I argue that an advantage of the network perspective is that it has been more effective in defining the structural position of network ties, and has more directly addressed the relationship with redistributive preferences. How do network ties affect redistributive preferences? The class position of surrounding family members, friends, and acquaintances affects support for redistribution, as these ties are a source of social influence whose impact can be amplified in segregated social networks. In principle, political attitudes are connected to class interests and norms as they are primarily - but exclusively - socialized in the family of origin during childhood and early adulthood. For instance, Lee (2023) shows that individuals with network ties to the upper class through parental connections tend to support redistribution and progressive taxation less than those from working-class family backgrounds. Moreover, since households share risk based on the class position of their members, redistributive preferences are shaped not only by family background but also by the class positions of partners. For example, Paskov and Weisstanner (2022) indicates that working-class ties bolster redistributive preferences, whereas ties with the upper class decrease them, with the effects becoming more pronounced when the class positions of individuals, partners, and parents form a more homogeneous network. Beyond family ties, Lindh et al. (2021) found that friendship and acquaintanceship ties to the managerial class are associated with lower redistributive preferences compared to ties with the sociocultural and working classes. Hence, this suggests that individuals tend to adjust their attitudes based on the class position of their contacts (Lindh et

al., 2021). In summary, I expect a weak direct association between network segregation and redistributive preferences. This is mainly because network homogeneity - as the proportion of similar class network ties - does not distinguish between anchor class positions and refers to the overall degree of segregation. Conversely, I hypothesize that the association of network homogeneity with redistributive preferences is conditional on social class as homogeneous social networks should reinforce attitude similarity (*segregation hypothesis*). Specifically, I propose that greater network segregation in the lower classes is associated with higher redistributive preferences, whereas greater segregation in the upper classes is related to lower redistributive preferences. Therefore, the first hypothesis is as follows:

> H1: *The greater the network segregation in the lower (upper) classes, the higher (lower) the redistributive preferences.*

2.4 Economic inequality as context for class-based segregation and redistributive preferences

The literature on the role of economic inequality on (1) the class-attitude link and (2) social relations have been independently developed.

Theoretically, studies on economic inequality, social class, and redistributive preferences show varying class reactions to rising inequality. Political economists suggest that high-income individuals are far from being monolithic in their redistributive preferences, motivated by concerns about inequality's adverse effects (e.g., crime), leading to altruistic support for redistribution (Dimick et al., 2017, 2018; Rueda and Stegmueller, 2016). Conversely, the moral economy literature in sociology explains affluent differences through evaluations of distributive justice regarding resource allocation procedures (Liebig and Sauer, 2016). At the same time, studies on income inequality and social cohesion have argued that unequal societies strengthen barriers to trustworthy social connections. Neckerman and Torche (2007, p. 344) noted that marginalization is linked to reduced participation in social life, exacerbated by greater inequality. Also, rising economic inequality erodes social relations by reducing social trust, which underpins mutual understanding and collective solidarity (Kragten and Rözer, 2017). Conversely, it is noted that societies with low inequality and comprehensive welfare states enhance civic and social participation, increasing generalized trust and reducing social conflict (Uslaner and Brown, 2005). Similarly, it has been argued that social participation can nurture higher

chances for cross-class interactions and motivate more egalitarian attitudes, being upper-class citizens who support stronger collective solidarity through government redistribution in more cohesive communities (Yamamura, 2012).

Empirically, it has been shown that affluent groups are more responsive, perceiving that rising inequality affects the overall opportunity structure and social mobility chances (Sachweh and Sthamer, 2019). Also, higher perceived inequality of opportunity among the upper classes can motivate support for redistribution as a matter of procedural justice (Kim and Lee, 2018). In contrast, low-income individuals view ascribed characteristics as more crucial in constraining opportunities, irrespective of current income inequality (Sachweh and Sthamer, 2019). Similarly, Edlund and Lindh (2015) argue that in unequal societies with residual welfare states, social class lacks significant political meaning, weakening distributive conflicts around traditional working-class organizations (e.g., unions). Thus, stronger support for state-organized redistribution among the upper classes can be attributed to their greater awareness of the incentives and societal consequences of income inequality (Curtis and Andersen, 2015; Svallfors, 2006). At the same time, cross-national comparative evidence indicates that stratified access to social activities and networks is reinforced in unequal societies. For example, Pichler and Wallace (2009) demonstrated that class differences in civic and family network participation are exacerbated in unequal societies. Similarly, Lancee and Van de Werfhorst (2012) found that income-based stratification in civic participation increases with inequality. Also, Otero et al. (2023) found that economic inequality enhances interdependence among cultural, economic, and social capital, which results in stronger stratified chances for cross-class interactions. Thus, in unequal societies, the upper classes can navigate diverse social settings while maintaining their distinct positions, whereas the lower classes remain marginalized and segregated due to others' choices (Otero et al., 2021, p. 24). Against this backdrop, there are at least three emerging theoretical implications regarding the role of income inequality in shaping class-based networks and redistributive preferences. The first implication suggests that income inequality plausibly leads to greater segregation, driven by reduced participation and lower social trust. However, it is important to note that resource interdependency seems to exacerbate social exclusion for the lower classes, while the upper classes may experience greater cohesion, fostering stable or even reduced segregation in more unequal societies. The second implication is that the relationship between class and attitudes weakens in highly unequal societies. In such contexts, the upper classes tend to show increased support for redistribution, contrasting with

the relatively stable preferences of the lower classes. Furthermore, in egalitarian societies with more comprehensive welfare states, class-based distributive struggles are more institutionalized allowing class positions to be more closely tied to political conflict, as the institutional framework enables better articulation of interests. The third implication is that as inequality rises and the class divide in redistributive preferences narrows, the influence of class-based segregation on redistributive preferences may similarly diminish. In more unequal contexts, where the link between class and attitudes weakens, homogeneous class-based networks may lose their strength as class positions become less significant. Therefore, I expect income inequality to weaken the interaction between network homogeneity and social class. Specifically, I hypothesize that the conditional relationship between network homogeneity and social class at the individual level will be less pronounced in the context of higher income inequality (*mitigation hypothesis*). Given these considerations, the second hypothesis is as follows: > H2: *The greater the income inequality, the weaker the conditional association of network segregation by social class with redistributive preferences.*

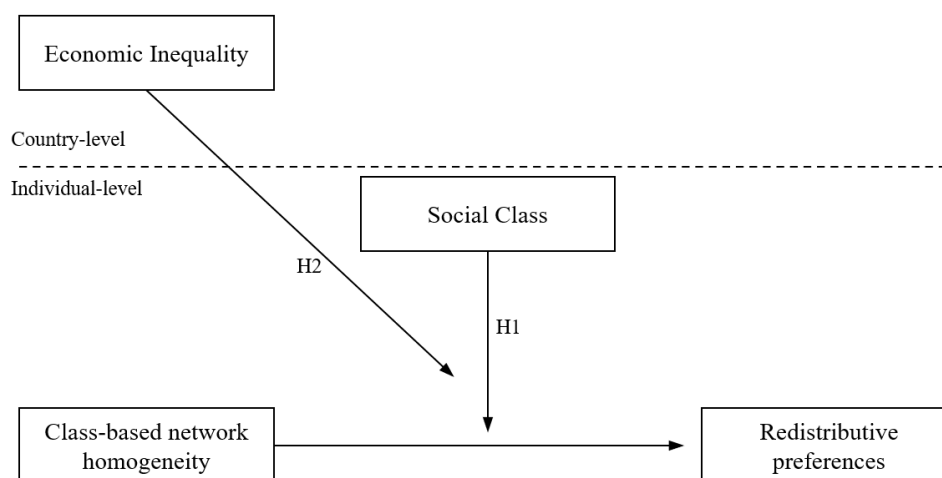A simplified framework of the hypotheses is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Hypotheses at country and respondent levels

3   Methodology

3.1   Data

The primary data source for this study is the "Social Networks and Social Resources" module of the International Social Survey Program (ISSP) (ISSP Research Group, 2019). The

ISSP provides a nationally representative probability sample of the adult population in each participating country without substitution. Each country administers a carefully adapted questionnaire to ensure the cross-cultural validity of the data and enable meaningful comparisons between countries. The questionnaire includes sections on social networks, attitudes toward economic inequality, and demographic and socioeconomic background characteristics. The complete sample comprises 47,027 observations across 32 countries. However, after reviewing the required information and applying listwise case deletion, the final sample used in the analyses consists of 31,694 observations from 31 countries [1].

3.2   Variables

Dependent variable

I use two indicators to measure redistributive preferences. The first indicator corresponds to support for government redistribution and it is measured by the item: "It is the responsibility of the government to reduce the differences in income between people with high incomes and those with low incomes." The second indicator is egalitarian preferences and it is measured by the item: "For a society to be fair, differences in people's standard of living should be small." Both indicators use a five-point Likert scale with the following categories: 'Strongly agree' (1), 'Agree' (2), 'Neither agree nor disagree'(3), 'Disagree' (4), and 'Strongly disagree'(5) (r = 0.62). Following Svallfors (2013), I reverse-coded, averaged, and normalized the indicators in a 0 to 100 index, where higher values reflect stronger redistributive preferences.

Independent variables - individual level

To measure social class, I employ the Erikson-Goldthorpe-Portocarrero (EGP) class scheme (Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1992). The EGP scheme is one of the most consistent and validated measures for social class positions in comparative research and has demonstrated its validity in both industrialized and late-industrialized societies (Barozet et al., 2021; G. Evans and Graaf, 2013). Therefore, information about occupations, self-employment status, and the number of employees is used to classify respondents into six class positions. Following previous research, a simplified version of the EGP class scheme that collapses three classes is employed (Edlund, 2003; Sosnaud et al., 2013). Specifically, this version distinguishes among the Service Class (higher and lower managerial and professionals), Intermediate Class (routine nonmanual work-

ers and self-employed), and Working Class (manual supervisors, skilled and unskilled manual workers) [2] (see Table A3 in the Appendix).

I employed the position generator as the basis for the class-based network homogeneity measure. This instrument has been widely used in social capital studies and follows an ego-centered approach where is assumed that social ties to different hierarchical positions in the social structure provide access to social resources (van der Gaag et al., 2008). The position generator employed included a list of ten occupations. Here, occupations are presented to the respondent in a grid that allows them to declare whether they know (or not) a person who performs that occupation. The tie can be classified into four groups, defining tie to this person as a "Family or relative," "Close friend," "Someone else I know," or "No one." With this information, the first three categories are coded as 1 to represent the presence of a tie ("Knows") and 0 as the absence of a connection to a person with that occupation ("Does not know"). Subsequently, all declared ties were summed to represent the total number of occupations known by the respondent.

Subsequently, following Otero et al. (2023) I classify occupations into three status positions that resemble Goldthorpe's class positions based on the International Socio-Economic Index of Occupational Status (ISEI) (Ganzeboom, 2010). The classification is as follows: lawyer, executive of a large firm, and human resource manager are categorized as *higher* positions (ISEI range: 68-85); school teacher, police officer, and nurse are classified as *medium* positions (ISEI range: 48-63); and car mechanic, bus driver, hairdresser, and home or office cleaner are considered *lower* positions (ISEI range: 17-38).

Given the above, I adopt established procedures in the literature for measuring homogeneity in ego-centered networks (Völker, 2022). Regarding class segregation, Otero et al. (2022) classified occupations from the position generator into three class positions to compute the proportion of similar ties based on social class, thereby measuring class-based network homogeneity.

I calculate the number of ingroup ties according to the respondents' class position and divide it by the total number of known occupations. This measure represents the proportion of similar social ties within the personal network, where a value of zero indicates complete *heterogeneity* (i.e., all ties are different), and a value of one indicates complete *homogeneity* (i.e., all ties are similar). Substantively, higher values reflect a greater social distance from

other social classes in society.

A set of control variables are considered in the estimations. First, the number of social ties is included to ensure that the association between network homogeneity and redistributive preferences is independent of network size. Second, socioeconomic characteristics are incorporated into the models, as they represent the current social status through income, education, and labor market status (Häusermann et al., 2015; Kitschelt and Rehm, 2014). Third, given the gender-based class inequality in economic resources (Waitkus and Minkus, 2021), age differences in terms of values and socioeconomic vulnerability (VanHeuvelen and Copas, 2018), and the role of family support provided by partners (Edlund, 2003), gender, age, and marital status were included as control variables in all models.

Independent variables - country level

To measure economic inequality comparatively, I use the Gini index (post-taxes and transfers) from the World Income Inequality Dataset (WID) (Alvaredo et al., 2022). Additionally, I incorporate two contextual variables as controls in the multilevel regression. First, employing Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in constant 2017 USD (PPP) ensures that economic inequality estimates remain consistent regardless of economic conditions (UNU-WIDER, 2023). Second, following Edlund and Lindh (2015), I include a measure of the welfare state that conceptually captures both its overall size and redistributive capacity based on taxation and spending levels. This approach provides a more accurate representation of the welfare state's impact by incorporating a broader range of services and reflecting the actual outcomes of welfare policies. Empirically, I compute a normalized indicator on a scale from 0 to 100, which combines (i) tax revenue as a percentage of GDP (ILO, 2022), (ii) welfare generosity as total governmental spending as a share of GDP (ILO, 2022), and (iii) the current level of redistribution (Solt, 2020).

3.3   Methods

I employ multilevel linear regression models for accounting by the hierarchical structure of the data given that individuals are nested within countries. The analysis begins by estimating a null model with a random intercept to reflect this nested structure. This initial model assesses the intraclass correlation, revealing that 13.5% of the variance in redistributive preferences can be

attributed to differences between countries. Subsequently, models including the individual level factors are estimated to examine the association between network homogeneity and social class to test Hypothesis 1 [3]. Following this, country-level variables are included in the estimations by incorporating random intercepts and random slopes for network homogeneity and social class. This model tests Hypothesis 2 by estimating a three-way cross-level interaction to determine whether income inequality moderates the interaction between network homogeneity and social class. In the latter models, individual-level variables are group-mean centered (CWC) to mitigate collinearity issues between lower- and higher-level predictors and to avoid spurious cross-level interaction coefficients (Aguinis et al., 2013). Additionally, all country-level factors are standardized (z-scores) to facilitate comparability in the estimations (Hox, 2010). All the models are estimated employing the `lme4` package in R (Bates et al., 2015). [4]

4   Results

4.1   Descriptive cross-country comparison on class, network segregation, and redistributive preferences
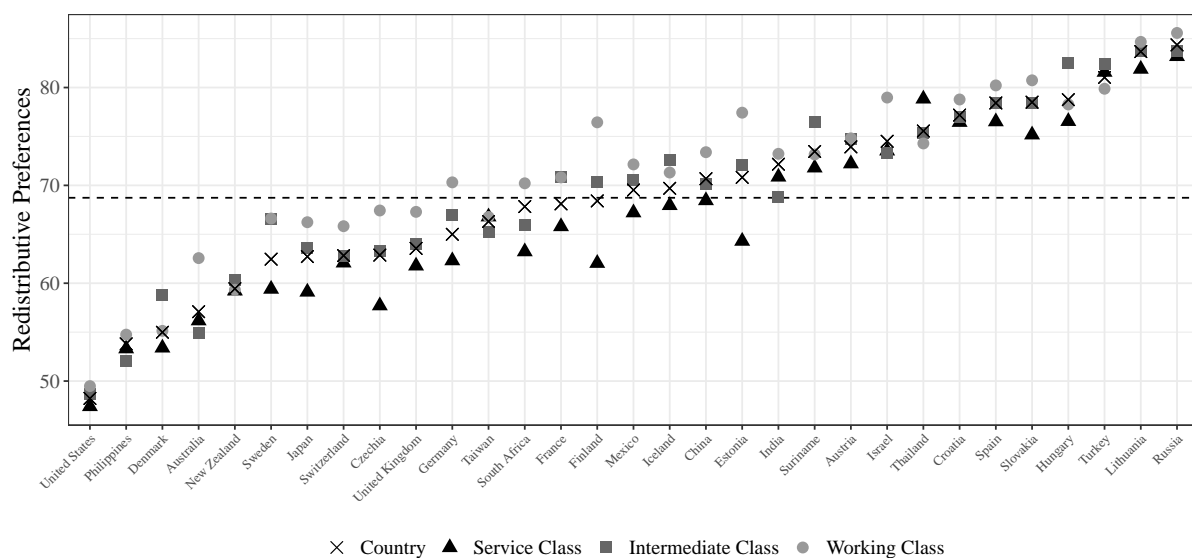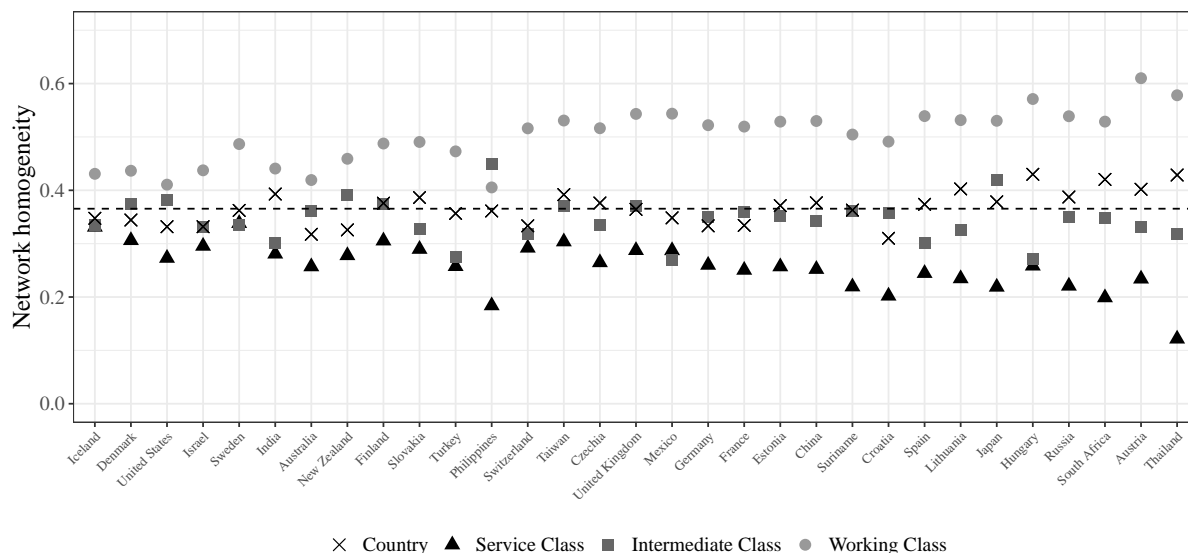

Source: International Social Survey 2017; weighted descriptive statistics; figure report country averages in redistributive preferences by social class

Figure 2: Cross-country differences in redistributive preferences by social class

Figure 2 depicts the differences in redistributive preferences across countries and social classes. As expected, the working class shows higher redistributive preferences compared to the intermediate and service classes in most societies. Notably, there are also some differences between

the two extreme cases. For instance, the working class exhibits similar redistributive pref-
erences compared to the intermediate class in the United States, although both classes have
higher preferences than the service class. Conversely, the general trend of stronger preferences
among the working class persists in Russia, but the preferences of the intermediate class are
much closer to the service class.

Source: International Social Survey 2017; weighted descriptive statistics; figure report country averages in network homogeneity by social class

Figure 3: Cross-country differences in network homogeneity by social class

Regarding network segregation, Figure 3 shows that between-country variation in network
homogeneity is relatively low, whereas class differences are quite distinguishable. On the one
hand, a general pattern is that the working class demonstrates high network homogeneity in
most countries. On the other hand, the service class generally exhibits less segregation com-
pared to the intermediate and working classes. In addition, homogeneity in the intermediate
class tends to be close to the average of each country between the lower and upper classes.
Despite that in some societies these differences do not show the same escalated distribution of
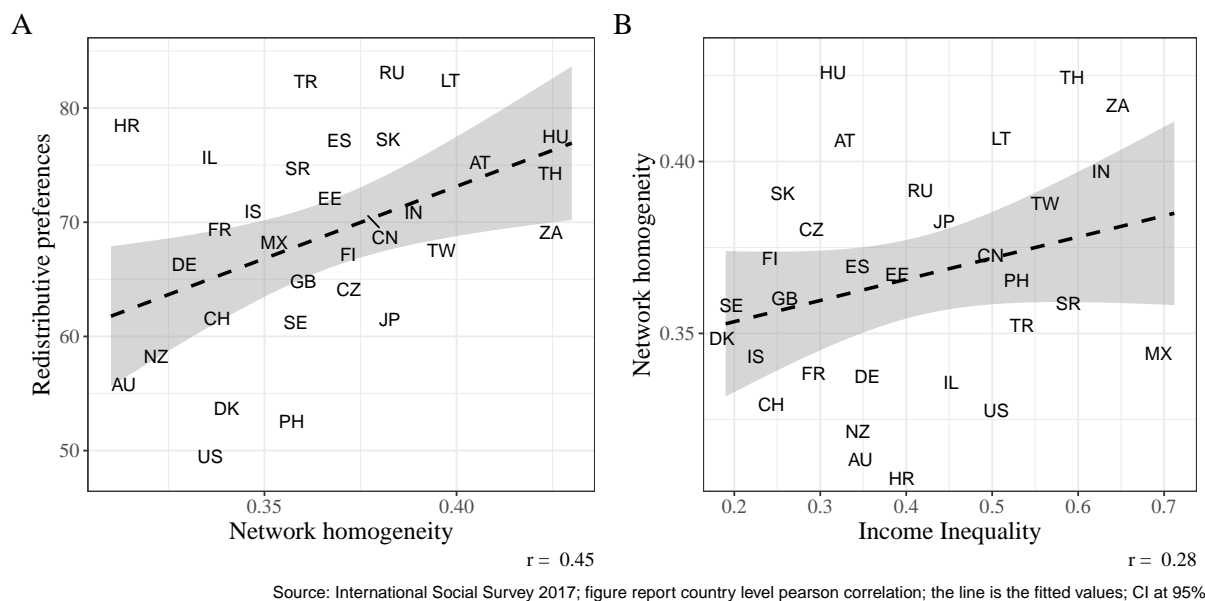homogeneity by social class, the general pattern holds true.

Figure 4: Relationship between income Inequality, network homogeneity and redistributive preferences

   Regarding the country-level relationships, Figure 4 depicts the correlation between network homogeneity, redistributive preferences, and income inequality, which is the main societal characteristic of interest. Panel A shows a medium positive association between network homogeneity and redistributive preferences ($r = 0.45$). Consistent with the previously described distribution, higher levels of network homogeneity are driven by the highly segregated networks of the working classes. Thus, in countries where network homogeneity is high, this is likely to reflect greater social segregation among the working classes, which in turn drives higher redistributive preferences. Panel B illustrates a positive but relatively weak association between income inequality and network homogeneity ($r = 0.28$), suggesting that in more unequal countries, class-based network homogeneity is also higher. Additionally, the differences in network homogeneity between the working class and the service class increase in countries with higher income inequality ($r = 0.30$; see Figure A1 in the Appendix). Therefore, income inequality not only increases overall network homogeneity but also widens social distance between social classes.

4.2   The segregation hypothesis on redistributive preferences

The results regarding the relationship between class-based network homogeneity and redistributive preferences using multilevel models are shown in Table 1. Model 1 shows that in-

Table 1: Multilevel models for network homogeneity and redistributive preferences

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Class-based network homogeneity	2.82 (0.54)***	1.43 (0.55)**	−7.45 (1.11)***
Network size		−0.32 (0.05)***	−0.25 (0.05)***
Social Class (Ref.= Service Class)			
Intermediate Class			−0.82 (0.60)
Working Class			−0.21 (0.63)
Homogeneity x Social Class			
Homogeneity*Intermediate Class			8.74 (1.64)***
Homogeneity*Working Class			10.35 (1.45)***
Controls	No	Yes	Yes
BIC	289891.64	289409.95	289319.54
Num. obs.	31694	31694	31694
Num. groups	31	31	31
Var: Country (Intercept)	77.98	80.39	77.07
Var: Residual	493.00	483.94	482.07

Note: Models include sampling weights.
Standard errors in parentheses. ***$p < 0.001$; **$p < 0.01$; *$p < 0.05$; ·$p < 0.1$

dividuals embedded in homogeneous social networks are more likely to support redistributive policies. In Model 2, the introduction of control variables and network size slightly reduces the effect of homogeneity. These results differ from previous findings, where being more segregated is associated with less attachment to society (Otero et al., 2022) and stronger support for redistribution in more cohesive communities (Yamamura, 2012). [5]

Moving to hypothesis 1, the interaction terms of network homogeneity and social class in Model 3 show that compared to the service class, homogeneity increases redistributive preferences in the working and intermediate classes. To illustrate this result further, Figure 5 depicts that the changes in redistributive preferences from low to high homogenous working and intermediate class networks are quite mild, where the differences in redistributive preferences go from 69.8 to 72.8 and from 69.4 to 70.47, respectively. In contrast, the changes in redistributive preferences in homogeneous services class networks are more pronounced, changing from 70 when homogeneity is at its lowest point to 62.8 in fully homogeneous networks.

These results confirm previous findings on how social influence processes through class-based network ties affect attitudes in the economic domain (Lindh et al., 2021; Otero and Mendoza, 2023). Additionally, they echo previous arguments on how sharing similar class positions with partner or family ties tends to intensify redistributive preferences depending on individual class positions (Lee, 2023; Paskov and Weisstanner, 2022). Altogether, these results provide evidence in favor of the *segregation hypothesis* (H1), where the class differences in redistributive preferences become wider as network homogeneity increases.
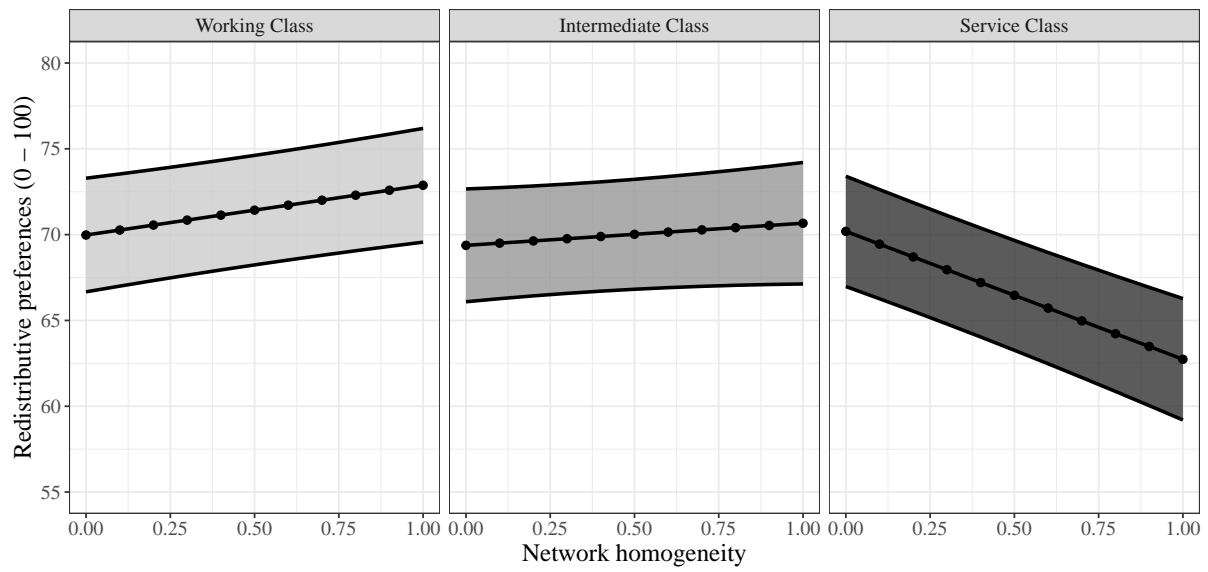
Figure 5: Interaction of network homogeneity and social class on redistributive preferences

4.3   The mitigation hypothesis on network segregation and redistributive preferences

Table 2:   Multilevel models for income inequality, network homogeneity and redistributive preferences

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Class-based network homogeneity (CWC)	−0.79 (1.05)	−0.79 (1.05)	−0.82 (1.05)	−7.60 (1.43)***
Social Class (Ref.= Service Class)				
Intermediate Class	1.53 (0.51)**	1.52 (0.51)**	1.52 (0.51)**	2.27 (0.53)***
Working Class	3.26 (0.76)***	3.24 (0.76)***	3.22 (0.77)***	3.44 (0.73)***
Macro-level factors				
Income inequality (Gini index)	0.09 (1.74)	−0.69 (1.76)	0.84 (1.74)	1.91 (2.02)
GDP/capita		−2.82 (1.55)·	−5.58 (1.72)**	−5.26 (1.75)**
Size of the welfare state			5.74 (1.76)**	4.38 (1.79)*
Homogeneity x Social Class				
Homogeneity*Intermediate Class				8.99 (1.65)***
Homogeneity*Working Class				10.88 (1.51)***
Homogeneity x Income Inequality				4.26 (1.49)**
Homogeneity x Social Class x Income Inequality				
Homogeneity*Intermediate Class*Income Inequality				−6.58 (1.58)***
Homogeneity*Working Class*Income Inequality				−5.11 (1.35)***
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
BIC	289374.24	289378.87	289381.23	289369.56
Num. obs.	31694	31694	31694	31694
Num. groups	31	31	31	31
Var: Country (Intercept)	87.85	77.49	89.37	78.07
Var: Country Homogeneity	20.28	20.35	20.67	21.75
Var: Country Intermediate Class	4.48	4.53	4.42	4.34
Var: Country Working Class	13.40	13.35	13.46	11.43
Cov: Country (Intercept), Homogeneity	12.94	9.88	16.63	10.70
Cov: Country (Intercept), Intermediate Class	−4.59	−3.62	−12.76	−7.45
Cov: Country (Intercept), Working Class	−14.79	−12.05	−21.86	−16.07
Cov: Country Homogeneity, Intermediate Class	−5.65	−5.55	−5.61	−5.28
Cov: Country Homogeneity, Working Class	−7.84	−7.74	−7.87	−6.71
Cov: Country Intermediate Class, Working Class	7.23	7.24	7.21	6.06
Var: Residual	480.42	480.41	480.42	479.39

Note: Models include sampling weights and individual level controls centered within cluster (group mean).
Standard errors in parentheses. ***$p < 0.001$; **$p < 0.01$; *$p < 0.05$; ·$p < 0.1$

Table 2 presents the results of the multilevel models for income inequality. First, Model 1 shows that there are no substantial differences in redistributive preferences between societies with different levels of income inequality. Subsequently, it can be seen in Model 2 that in societies with higher economic prosperity, redistributive preferences are lower regardless of the differences in income inequality between countries. At the same time, Model 3 indicates that in countries with more encompassing welfare states, redistributive preferences are higher, independently of income inequality and economic prosperity. More simply, higher redistributive preferences are observed in countries with more generous welfare states.

Finally, Model 4 incorporates a three-way interaction to determine whether the conditional association of network homogeneity to social class on redistributive preferences is moderated by income inequality. The results suggests that higher economic inequality weakens the interaction of network homogeneity and social class. To better illustrate this result, Figure 6 depicts

how the interaction of network homogeneity and social class is gradually mitigated as income inequality increases. In this regard, the left panel in Figure 6 illustrates that when inequality is low, the conditional association of network homogeneity and social class on redistributive preferences is more pronounced than in the center and left panels that respectively represent contexts of middle and higher income inequality.

When taking a closer look, the differences in redistributive preferences between the working and service classes are smaller when network homogeneity is low, regardless of income inequality. Besides, higher network homogeneity is associated with larger class differences in redistributive preferences when inequality is low but progressively becomes smaller as income inequality increases. These results resonate with previous studies that have argued that the upper classes are more sensitive to income inequality, whereas the working class shows relatively stable attitudes regardless of the contextual levels of income inequality. Here, the results jointly suggest that network segregation matters in contexts of low and middle economic inequality but loses relevance in contexts of high inequality.

The results resemble previous studies that have highlighted how the upper classes are more prone to support redistribution in unequal contexts (Dimick et al., 2017; Edlund and Lindh, 2015). First, I found that network homogeneity intensify anti-redistriutive attitudes as network homogeneity increases in the service class. Nevertheless, income incequality has a role in activating this association which follows a similar pattern than individual class-positions. Overall, the results presented above support the claims of the *mitigation* hypothesis (H2), where the wider class divide in redistributive preferences in homogeneous class-based networks weakens as income inequality increases.
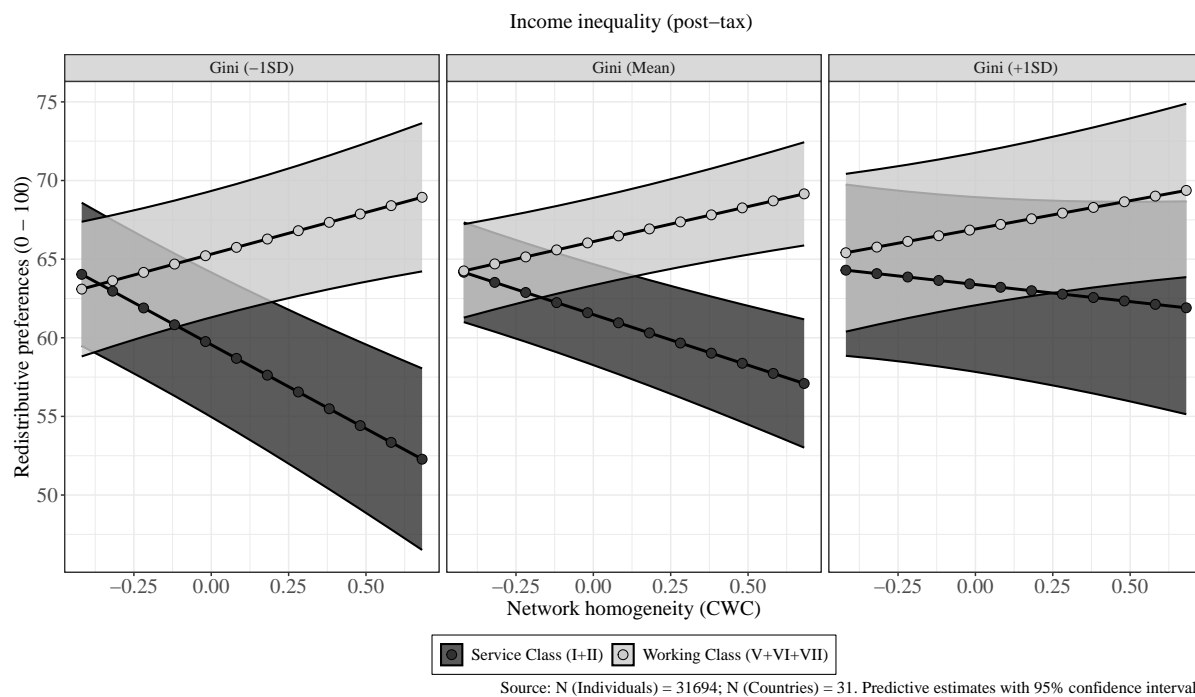
Figure 6: Three-way interaction of network homogeneity, social class and income inequality on redistributive preferences

5   Discussion and conclusion

This research examines how class-based network segregation is associated with redistributive preferences and how income inequality mitigates this relationship from a cross-national perspective (Lindh et al., 2021; Paskov and Weisstanner, 2022). In contrast, to the claimed detrimental direct association of network segregation on attachment to society (Otero et al., 2022), my first finding suggests that network segregation is rather conditional to social class in the case of redistributive preferences than directly prejudicial. Here, I evidenced that higher network homogeneity in the working class increases redistributive preferences, while homogeneous networks in the service class reduce support for redistribution.

Theoretically, my first hypothesis was that the study of class differences in redistributive preferences should not only consider individual class positions, but the structure of social networks as sources of preference formation. Hence, my finding supports the claims that social influence and particularly segregation in interpersonal networks strengthen class differences in redistributive preferences (Lindh et al., 2021; Paskov and Weisstanner, 2022). Also, these results support the idea that low cross-class connections can reduce collective solidarity as they limit awareness about the lives of other classes (Blau, 1977; Otero et al., 2022). Furthermore,

the claimed 'empathy gulf' is more evident in how the service class is less willing to act against inequality as a collective commitment when they are highly segregated in homogeneous upper-class environments, in contrast to the increasing redistributive demands of the marginalized working class (Otero and Mendoza, 2023; Sachweh, 2012).

Besides the individual-level findings, my second hypothesis was that economic inequality mitigates the conditional association of network homogeneity by social class and redistributive preferences. The results from the multilevel models indicate that income inequality indeed *mitigates* this relationship. In other words, the role of network segregation observed in the interaction of homogeneity and class is less pronounced in highly unequal societies. Particularly, the most notable differences in redistributive preferences are observed in homogeneous service class networks. In contrast, preferences in homogeneous working-class networks are relatively unaffected by inequality.

Theoretically, I understand economic inequality establishes the field for class-based political conflict that is consequently crystallized in attitudes toward redistribution (Edlund and Lindh, 2015). Also, I conceive class relations as networks of social connections between social classes (Blau, 1977). In this approach, social influence is linked to redistributive preferences as it offers an explanation on how class positions make attitudes more intense as segregation increases (Lindh et al., 2021). However, I evidenced that this prevails mostly in societies with low and middle levels of income inequality.

In this regard, I interpret the observed weaker interaction between homogeneity and class in unequal countries in two non-exclusive ways. First, social networks become more stratified as inequality increases, increasing the cross-class contacts and lowering network homogeneity mainly in the upper class. Here, it could be possible that higher social integration through social ties towards the intermediate and lower class positions can increase empathy and motivate solidarity towards other social classes and express greater support for redistribution. Second, an additional possible explanation could be that class homogeneity reinforces the class divide in contexts where social classes have a stronger political meaning reflected in wider class differences in redistributive preferences. In this way, as class relations become more segregated, so does the class divide in redistributive preferences. Besides, an important related fact is that unequal societies have smaller class differences mainly because of the higher redistributive preferences in the upper classes. Thus, the consequences of segregated class relations on redis-

tributive preferences become mild as the class divide in political attitudes also loses strength in unequal societies.

The contribution of this study can be summarized as follows. First, I demonstrated that class-based network segregation can reinforce the previously documented class divide in redistributive preferences. Unlike previous studies focusing on cross-class contacts, the attention to network homogeneity allows us to observe how different social classes react to inequality in more segregated contexts in societies with different levels of income inequality. Second, the inclusion of diverse national contexts provided the opportunity to scrutinize the role of income inequality as a relevant contextual factor that mitigates the association between network segregation and redistributive preferences. This comparison is relevant because it allows us to observe how resource inequality also provides a context for class relations which, in turn, has an expression in their attitudes towards redistribution.

However, this study has certain limitations. On the side of the dependent variable, a two-item index comprises a rough proxy for redistributive preferences compared to more detailed questions on taxes or welfare policies. Additionally, the position generator employed is limited in accurately representing a class scheme, particularly in the self-employment and authority dimensions. Thus, recognizing these measurement limitations, the results should be interpreted cautiously. Finally, causality is also a limitation when employing cross-sectional data. Theoretically, contact opportunities between classes and sociability preferences jointly drive network composition. Therefore, I recognize that the endogenous nature of class positions, network structure, and attitudes imply difficulties regarding causal claims.

Future research should include more fined distinctions in measuring attitudes by including established questions on attitudes toward specific welfare policies or willingness to pay taxes as redistributive measures. Additionally, class-based social networks can be better assessed by incorporating other aspects of the market situation of network ties, such as self-employment status or workplace authority. Finally, longitudinal analyses can contribute to disentangling the temporal relationship between class, networks, and political attitudes.

Notes

[1]Slovenia is excluded from the study because the measure of support for government redistribution, specifically "It is the responsibility of the government to reduce the differences in income between people with high incomes and those with low incomes," was not available in the dataset.

[2]Self-employed farmers (IVc) are grouped in the self-employed class, while agricultural labor (VIIb) is in the working class.

[3]Supplementary analyses employing alternative income inequality measures show that the results are robust when using the Inter-decile (D9/D1) and the Top 10/Bottom 50 ratios. Additionally, I classified countries into low, middle-low, middle, middle-high, and high-income inequality groups based on quintiles according to the Gini index. Hence, I used country-fixed effects regressions to control for the cross-country differences and observed and unobserved societal characteristics. The results are consistent with the multilevel estimations.

[4]I employed the Restricted Maximum Likelihood (REML) method because it adjusts the estimation of standard errors for small sample sizes and provides better estimates of variance components in the context of cross-national data (Bryan and Jenkins, 2016).

[5]After including individual social class, the association between homogeneity and redistributive preferences loses strength and significance (see Appendix A3).

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A Appendix

Table A1: Multilevel models for network homogeneity and redistributive preferences

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Class-based network homogeneity	2.82***	1.43**	−0.66	−7.45***
	(0.54)	(0.55)	(0.60)	(1.11)
Network size		−0.32***	−0.30***	−0.25***
		(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Female (Ref. = Male)		1.94***	2.23***	2.18***
		(0.25)	(0.26)	(0.26)
Age		0.07***	0.08***	0.08***
		(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Year of Education		−0.23***	−0.12***	−0.09**
		(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Household Income (Ref.= Tertile I)				
Income (T2)		−2.29***	−2.11***	−2.06***
		(0.36)	(0.36)	(0.36)
Income (T3)		−4.95***	−4.51***	−4.30***
		(0.36)	(0.37)	(0.37)
Income (No information)		−4.11***	−3.88***	−3.76***
		(0.39)	(0.39)	(0.39)
Not in paid work (Ref. = In paid work)		−0.13	−0.21	−0.21
		(0.31)	(0.31)	(0.31)
Has partner (Ref.= No partner)		−1.15***	−1.06***	−1.04***
		(0.26)	(0.26)	(0.26)
Social Class (Ref.= Service Class)				
Intermediate Class			1.54***	−0.82
			(0.33)	(0.60)
Working Class			3.18***	−0.21
			(0.37)	(0.63)
Homogeneity x Social Class				
Homogeneity*Intermediate Class				8.74***
				(1.64)
Homogeneity*Working Class				10.35***
				(1.45)
Controls	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
BIC	289891.64	289409.95	289358.32	289319.54
Num. obs.	31694	31694	31694	31694
Num. groups	31	31	31	31
Var: Country (Intercept)	77.98	80.39	78.27	77.07
Var: Residual	493.00	483.94	482.86	482.07

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. ***$p < 0.001$; **$p < 0.01$; *$p < 0.05$; ·$p < 0.1$
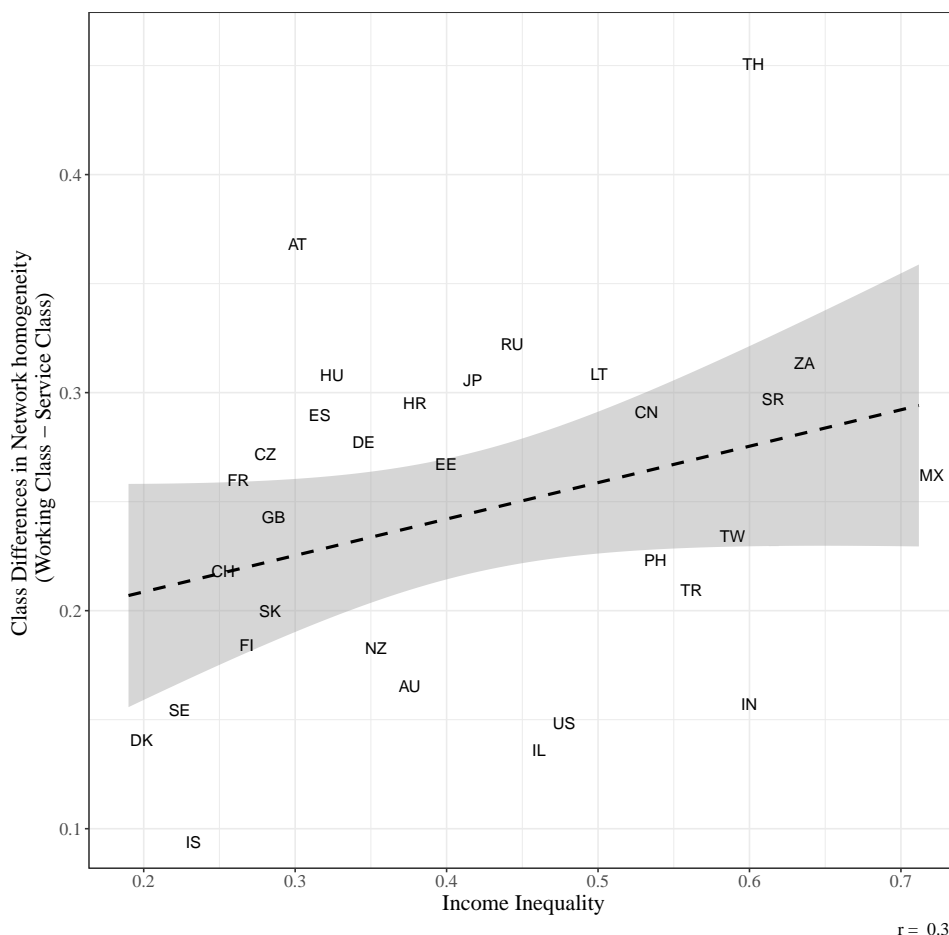
Figure A1: Relationship between income inequality and class differences in network homogeneity

Table A2: ISEI scores assigned to occupations included in the position generator instrument

Occupation	ISEI	%
Higher-status positions		
Lawyer	85	45.9
Executive of large firm	70	46.8
Human resource manager	68	50.6
Medium-status positions		
School teacher	63	73.0
Police officer	54	57.0
Nurse	48	70.7
Lower-status positions		
Car mechanic	38	58.3
Bus/lory driver	36	71.3
Hairdresser/barber	32	56.1
Home or office cleaner	17	66.7

Note: N = 31,694

Table A4: Values per country for the country-level variables

Country	N	Network Homogeneity	Income Inequality (Gini Index)	GDP/capita in $1000	Size of the Welfare State
Croatia (HR)	859	0.310	0.37	27.15	75.38
France (FR)	996	0.320	0.27	44.58	98.10
Australia (AU)	940	0.320	0.37	48.40	53.51
New Zealand (NZ)	768	0.321	0.36	42.29	53.62
United States (US)	1,051	0.331	0.49	60.11	46.38
Israel (IL)	1,018	0.332	0.47	39.12	52.37
Switzerland (CH)	960	0.333	0.26	69.10	42.97
Germany (DE)	1,362	0.336	0.34	53.07	78.61
Denmark (DK)	722	0.345	0.19	55.36	93.82
Iceland (IS)	1,012	0.348	0.24	55.64	84.19
Mexico (MX)	676	0.348	0.71	19.72	19.20
Philippines (PH)	1,019	0.356	0.55	8.12	4.70
Turkey (TR)	827	0.357	0.55	27.91	37.40
Suriname (SR)	519	0.358	0.61	18.28	10.97
Sweden (SE)	903	0.362	0.22	51.95	85.22
United Kingdom (GB)	1,338	0.363	0.28	46.37	62.65
Estonia (EE)	814	0.372	0.41	33.82	58.39
Finland (FI)	827	0.373	0.26	47.57	100.00
India (IN)	840	0.374	0.61	6.18	15.84
Czechia (CZ)	1,149	0.377	0.27	38.82	65.07
Spain (ES)	1,381	0.378	0.33	39.53	64.31
Japan (JP)	902	0.378	0.43	41.51	52.75
Slovakia (SK)	1,053	0.380	0.27	30.06	64.10
China (CN)	2,385	0.382	0.52	14.24	33.92
Russia (RU)	1,174	0.385	0.43	25.93	46.15
Austria (AT)	1,083	0.385	0.31	54.17	86.83
Taiwan (TW)	1,610	0.394	0.58	47.57	0.00
Lithuania (LT)	721	0.400	0.49	33.76	47.43
South Africa (ZA)	1,426	0.414	0.63	13.86	29.68
Hungary (HU)	844	0.427	0.33	29.50	80.67
Thailand (TH)	515	0.429	0.61	17.42	10.14

Note: N = 31,694; Source: ISSP 2017, WID, WIID and ILO. Variables in original scale

Table A3: Level of aggregation of social class

EGP-6	N	%	EGP-3	N	%
Upper Service	4,832	15.2	Service	13,365	42.2
Lower Service	8,533	26.9			
Routine nonmanual	5,890	18.6	Intermediate	8,041	25.4
Self-employed	2,151	6.8			
Skilled working	8,799	27.8	Working	10,288	32.5
Unskilled working	1,489	4.7			

Note: N = 31,694