Middle East – Topics & Arguments

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Middle Class

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Middle East – Topics & Arguments

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EDITORIAL

Caught in the Middle? On the Middle Class and its Relevance in the Contemporary Middle East

Karolin Sengebusch, Ali Sonay

Keywords: Middle Class; New Middle Class; Area Studies; Globalization; Theory

Are we once again "embarrassed" (Wright 3) by the middle class?[1] Recent academic and public debates about the middle class have been reignited by the global financial crisis of 2008 and the Arab Spring, as well as by the global Occupy movement and further popular upheavals in Greece, Spain, Turkey, or Brazil, with their discursive convergence to the global logic of precarity (Glasius and Pleyers 554). This is reflected for instance by the importance of social justice in these protests (558). Moreover, several recent works have discussed middle classes of the Global South (Banerjee and Duflo; Darbon; Heiman, Freeman, and Liechty; López and Weinstein; Watenpaugh). Thereby, the term is used both "as a concept and as a practice" (López and Weinstein 1): that is, as an analytic category, and as a descriptive term without analytic substance.

Most of traditional theorization on middle class is based on empirical data from the "West." Therefore, it is a matter of debate if the concept can also be meaningful for analysis of Middle Eastern societies. A new strand of scholarship has developed the concept of a "global middle class," which has a strong basis in the Global South. These scholars have highlighted how processes of political and economic globalization have created common labor conditions, lifestyles, and identities, thus constituting a global form of the new middle class (López and Weinstein), particularly in "global cities" (Heiman, Freeman, and Liechty; Castells; Sassen).

Having created new opportunities around the globe, the logic of neoliberalism[2] promotes the middle class as an aspirational and normative notion that includes democracy, freedom, individualism, and consumption. Thus, the middle class constitutes an "ideological and social construct upon which the neoliberal state rests its political legitimacy" (Heiman, Freeman, and Liechty 18-19; Kandil 201). Some literature also points to ambivalent facets within these processes. Being aspirational on a global scale, middle classes also suffer from negative side effects of globalization processes. Several authors have stressed the "alienation and disconnection of the global middle class from […] political and economic elites" (S. Cohen, *Searching* 108), along with a "constant anxiety" and "feelings of insecurity that infuse middle-class subjectivities around the globe" (Heiman, Freeman, and Liechty 20).

Regarding the MENA region, Asef Bayat's concept of the "middle class poor" and Farhad Khosrokhavar's notion of the "would-be middle class" very aptly reflect

this consideration (Bayat 265; Khosrokhavar 61). Both argue that since the economic reforms of the 1980s that fostered liberalization and privatization, a new societal segment has emerged. This segment consists of individuals who are well-educated and cosmopolitan, and would hence expect a middle-class life. However, marginalized either by unemployment or precarity, that aspiration's negation resulted in the group's widespread participation in the Arab revolts (Bayat 265).

Thus, analyzing the middle class in the Middle East and North Africa represents an important undertaking for grasping the region's modern history and ongoing transformation processes. In order to understand the middle class' current societal stance, a historical perspective is needed. This issue's contributions bring to mind how notions of modernity, such as rationality, emancipation, progress, and liberalism in the region, entrench themselves in post-colonial state-society relations (Watenpaugh 304). The ambivalence of these relations has manifested itself in the authoritarian state's provision of material concessions to particular segments of society, including the expansion of educational facilities and a guarantee of work, in order to enable modern middle-class living. In return, however, restraint in political organization was illiberally expected (300). The entailing institutional weakness of the middle class resulted in the increased ability of elites to co-opt middle class segments, thus displaying a pragmatic attitude to state power, when this proved beneficial. Taking the societal consequences of these policies into account, Zubaida—while reinforcing Bayat's and Khosrokhavar's reasoning—elaborates appropriately that "[m]ass higher education produces a proletarianized, poorly educated intelligentsia, poor and resentful, directing its 're-sentiment' against the Westernized elites, seen as agents of cultural invasion" (qtd. in Watenpaugh 301). It was this social group of "proletarianized […] intelligentsia" that constituted large parts of the social basis of two important political movements, namely the Arab nationalist movement and the Islamist movement. The dynamics of the Arab Spring hint at a rupture of these configurations in state-society relations. This issue of *Middle East – Topics & Arguments* will contribute to an understanding of this rupture.

Concomitantly at a second level, the issue's focus offers an opportunity to revisit the contemporary understanding of the middle class in academic theorization. Since the beginning of social sciences, the concept of *middle class* has been interpreted in myriad ways (López and Weinstein 1).

Since materialist theorization by Marx and Engels, the middle class was rather conceptualized as a "mediating class in the Aristotelian sense" between the capitalist class and the proletariat (Glassman 105). The middle class—or "petty bourgeoisie"—was expected to merge eventually into the proletariat, due to its financial weakness vis-à-vis the capitalists (Heiman, Freeman, and Liechty 10).

Going beyond the concept of the middle class as a mere "mediating class," scholars have defined the middle class through positivist economic criteria such as a certain income, a certain consumption rate or certain professions. However, Pierre Bourdieu has prominently pointed out that classes should not be defined by just one criterion, such as occupation. Bourdieu mentions other features that are also associated with social classes, including gender, age, and ethnicity; and the availability of social, economic, cultural, and symbolic capital. He concludes that it is not the sum of these features that defines a class, but rather the "structure of relations between all the pertinent properties" (Bourdieu 100). Others have followed him in asserting that both material framework and cultural practices are constitutive for modern middle classes (Heiman, Freeman, and Liechty 8-9). Interdependencies between these material and cul-

tural aspects of *middle class* are another topical matter of research.

Even though profession is no sufficient *analytical* criterion for the concept of *middle class*, authors still point to professional groups when *describing* middle classes. As indicated, the middle class is not homogeneous. The middle class Marx and Engels introduced was composed of small businesses, farmers, and artisans; nowadays we also find bureaucratic and technocratic staff such as government officials, managers, and educational personnel among the middle class. Taking into account these transformations in the configuration of the middle class, its more recent segments are often referred to as a *new middle class* (Heiman, Freeman, and Liechty 10). However, this *new middle class* is not limited to certain professions, but includes members of traditional occupations—"old middle class professions"—and the unemployed (S. Cohen, *Searching* 91, 95). What is considered more important to analytically grasp the *new middle class* are its members' own practices and discourses, in order to understand how middle classes are signified (López and Weinstein 19). The *new middle class* is characterized as well by nonmaterial demands which have begun to be articulated in postindustrial settings, questioning the contemporary societal relevance of class in a traditional sense. Contrarily, traditional "class struggle," before emergence of a *new middle class*, involved a labor movement made up of class-conscious activists. The class dimension is much less visible in *new social movements*—i.e. movements fighting for the environment, for peace, or for women's rights—whose members "do not see themselves in terms of a socioeconomic class" (J. Cohen 667). But this does not imply that the "new" segment of the middle class has retreated from social struggles altogether: Even though it refuses to *act as* a class, it is the *new middle class* that builds the basis of post-material *new social movements*—that is, an overwhelming majority of new social movement activists belong to the new middle class (J. Cohen 667; Offe 831-32; Inglehart).

Even beyond its participation in *new social movements*, the middle class's relevance for social and political change remains a topic of debate. With regard to the MENA region, it has been argued that the *new middle class* was hardly mobilizable because "it lacks the heroes and the experience of mass positive change" (S. Cohen, *Searching* 109). On the other hand, as already mentioned, observers have noticed great middle class participation in the Arab revolts, and Islamist movements have long recruited their members from among the middle class.

In this context, we follow López and Weinstein (10) in questioning the view conceiving of Western modernity and its entailing generation of a particular middle class as normative model, while considering middle classes in other world regions as non-original projects. Instead, we aim at understanding *middle class* in the MENA region as a non-exceptional concept and practice, reflecting also global patterns of contemporary societies, while keeping in mind historical specificities of the Middle East.

Notably, the *middle class* is largely defined in a negative way: that is, not by telling us what the middle class is, but rather by telling us what it is not. In contrast, this issue of *Middle East – Topics & Arguments* seeks to provide more precise definitions. Therefore, we deem it essential to critically consider the concept of *middle class*. One aim is to reflect on the emergence and formation of the middle class; another is to reflect on the term itself. Moreover, this issue aims at discussing how the term has already been used in Middle Eastern studies. These approaches are meant to shed light on the term's complexity, and its analytical and normative connotation.

Even though Arab middle classes are—due to their visibility in the Arab revolts—a frequent matter of public dis-

course, the *category* has rarely been addressed in scholarly discourse. Therefore, in this issue of *Middle East – Topics & Arguments*, we intend to combine analytical examinations of the concept *middle class* with empirical studies about Middle Eastern middle classes, both as actors and as objects. This purpose rests on the observation that the term *middle class* has come to the center of a number of recent academic debates about the region, many of which focus on the middle classes' role in the Arab Spring (Ouaissa, "Blockierte Mittelschichten"; Maher; Traboulsi). By considering the latter question (in Challand's and Ouaissa's contributions to the "anti/thesis" section) along with various other matters, this issue of *Middle East – Topics & Arguments* aims at providing a more comprehensive perspective on the region's middle classes. The issue examines cases from several Arab countries and links actors labeled as "middle class" to a range of practices including charity, education, and political protest.

It is important to note that the term's appropriateness in relation to nonindustrial countries including the MENA region is disputed. Some scholars, including Dieter Neubert in this issue, argue in a general sense that other categories of social structuring are better suited to draw an appropriately nuanced picture. Some point to competing dimensions of social structuring in the region, including religion and tribal affiliation. This underlines the necessity of differentiating between segments of the middle class. However, as current scholarly and journalistic debates show, the term nevertheless features prominently. *Middle East – Topics & Arguments* is thus dedicating an entire issue to it, in order to foster a more informed and analytically sound debate.

The papers collected in this issue reflect the controversies outlined above and focus in particular on sociological questions. Both conceptual and empirical questions are covered throughout.

The first section of the issue, entitled "anti/thesis," is dedicated to debating controversial questions. Here, Benoît **Challand** and Rachid **Ouaissa** contribute short opinionated papers on the question: "Has the Middle Class Been a Motor of the Arab Spring?" Challand rather negates the question. He argues that the constellation of actors in the uprisings of 2011 was too complex to be reduced to the middle class. Also, he reminds us of instances where middle class segments had a regime-stabilizing effect, or followed undemocratic agendas. In contrast, Ouaissa underlines a crucial role for the middle class in the Arab Spring. His twist is to understand the middle class not as a driving force *per se*, but as the central group of supporters for a political force. Consequently, he conceptualizes competition between political blocs as a fight for the support of the middle class.

In the "meta" section of this issue, which features trans-regional theoretical contributions, Dieter **Neubert** asks, "What is 'Middle Class'? In Search of an Appropriate Concept." The paper examines the current state of research with a special emphasis on the Global South. Neubert juxtaposes socioeconomic approaches to an analysis of middle class with lifestyle-oriented approaches. He points to the fact that respective approaches build on theoretical concepts which differ tremendously and result in myriad sub-sections within a not-so-coherent global middle class. Consequently, even though *middle class* is a ubiquitous concept in political and scholarly discourse, he challenges the concept altogether and suggests to rather adapt the notion of *milieu*.

The analytical term *milieu* and its link to *class* are also reflected in the "close up" section. In her paper "Pierre Bourdieu: Transformation Societies and the Middle Class," Eva **Barlösius** paints a portrait of the important sociologist, whose concepts of *class* and *milieu* are abundantly present in research on social differentiation. Barlösius describes Bourdieu's development of

Karolin Sengebusch

is a research associate in the department for Middle Eastern Politics at the Center for Near and Middle Eastern Studies at Marburg University. She holds an MA in political science and Middle Eastern studies from Leipzig University. Her research interests include participation, political protest, democracy, individualization, Lebanon and the European Union.
email: karolin.sengebusch@uni-marburg.de

theories across his own life trajectory. She argues that development of his most important concepts was inextricably linked to his experiences in Algeria. It was with relation to both Algeria and France that he elaborated on the painful incoherence of *class* and *habitus* which can occur during times of social transformation.

Bourdieu's thinking on social stratification provides a basis for Sina **Birkholz**'s paper, "Struggles of Distinction: Young Women Constructing Their Class Identity in Egypt's Americanized Milieu" Building on interviews with female students of the prestigious private American University of Cairo, she examines practices of positioning the self within society. In this social context, belonging to the middle class is first of all a matter of discursive distinction. It constitutes a crucial component of social identity, which seems to form curiously irrespective of economic status.

In his contribution "Public Education: A Route into Lebanon's Middle Class in the 1960s and Early 1970s," Youssef **Zbib** also addresses educational institutions. He shows how the expansion of public schooling increased demand for teachers, and consequently led to growth of a professional middle class.

Shana **Cohen**, in her study on "The Politics of Social Action in Morocco," examines professional practices of social sector employees and the impacts of these practices on the broader structure of society. Doctors and teachers are engaged in social action, shaping decisions on how to distribute public goods, thus interacting with recipients from lower classes. Cohen argues that these professional practices are no longer guided by identification as "middle class," but by the capacity to circumvent institutional rules. From this perspective, the social work in question has a very political quality.

Collectively, the papers resonate with recurrent points of contention. All authors assert that the term *middle class* represents an ever-present, yet under-specified concept. Several authors proceed to suggesting refinement. Some articles discuss the possibility of dividing the *middle class* into two parts, one of which is closer to the upper and the other closer to the lower class. Thus, Ouaissa refers to Paul Amar's distinction between a "business-oriented" and a "frustrated" middle class, while Birkholz cites her interview partners as discerning an "upper middle class" and a "lower middle class." Birkholz and Neubert even depart from the strict concept of class, in calls for employing concepts of *milieu* rather than *class*. Another recurrent theme is the role of education in the formation and practices of the middle class. Three papers touch on education, but from different angles. Education is looked at both from the perspective of students and the perspective of teachers. It is analyzed as an arena for middle class participation for teachers (Cohen), as a means of milieu reproduction for students (Birkholz), and as a tool of social upward mobility for teachers (Zbib). From all these perspectives, authors agree that education is crucial for the formation and definition of *middle class*—but that its actual impact seems manifold, depending on context. A third theme addressed in several articles is the role of the middle class in political and social transformation. The role of the middle class in the Arab Spring is the topic of Challand's and Ouaissa's contributions. In addition, the matter is brought up in the papers of Zbib and Cohen. Cohen frames distribution practices of doctors and teachers as instances of middle class participation that take place not only at the level of open political contestation, but also at the level of everyday practices.[3] Finally, Zbib's results imply that teachers, whom he counts as belonging to the middle class, are the object rather than subject of societal transformation.

As the empirical studies in this issue have shown, the term *middle class* is so significant for actors on the ground that they even use the term to refer to themselves. However, notwithstanding this

Ali Sonay

is an associate with the research network "Re-Configurations: History, Remembrance and Transformation Processes in the Middle East and North Africa" at Marburg University. He holds an MA in political science, Islamic studies, and economics from the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg. Social movements, urban space and politics, and political thought in the Middle East—particularly in Egypt, Turkey, and Syria—comprise his field of study.
email: ali.sonay@uni-marburg.de

ubiquitous descriptive use, the conceptualization of *middle class* leaves us with a number of open questions.

How can we make sense of the widespread use of "middle class" as a self-referential label? Informants and interview partners cited in this issue's articles seem to rarely refer to themselves as upper or lower class. Both middle class members and politicians use the term in a decidedly positive way (Heiman, Freeman, and Liechty 7, 17-19). Technically, they could just as well have chosen identities based on milieu, lifestyle, tribe, et cetera. Therefore, while being "in the middle" seems desirable, as outlined by Birkholz, it would be still interesting to explore the matter of why people choose to refer to themselves in terms of *class*.

Then, the category of *class* seems to be oversimplified. If we follow the argument that the notion of *class*, and in particular *middle class,* need refinement, how can an analytical alternative be found? Is *milieu*, a concept defended by several authors in this issue, the ideal solution?

Another remaining challenge is: How to delineate the middle class from other classes or from other categories of social structuring? In particular, relations *between* different classes in the Middle East are understudied. In this issue, vertical relations between classes are assessed from rather different angles: They are analyzed with relation to solidarity (Cohen), in the framework of clientelism, and from the perspective of elite legitimization (Ouaissa). However, the agency of upper and lower classes in these vertical relations remains to be assessed.

Moreover, how do cross-class family ties impact the formation and the relation of classes? As middle classes have grown tremendously over past decades, many members of the middle class are children of the lower class.[4] Thus, we can expect strong personal relations transcending class borders. These family ties and their impact on class relations and class delineations are further issues that deserve attention.

This issue does not provide answers to these questions, but rather emphasizes the need to continue the discussion. We hope they inspire further exploration.

Notes

[1] Erik O. Wright's remark refers to the long-lasting neglect of the middle class' significance in capitalist societies by Marxist theory.

[2] Neoliberalism is "not an established theory, rather a widely used phrase in both scientific and non-scientific discourse on economic liberalization since the 1980s and its purported political and social consequences" (Neugebauer). For the scope of this editorial, we understand "neoliberalism" as the avoidance of "government regulation, exorbitant public spending, and high tariff barriers to international trade" (Steger and Roy 19) resulting in individual practices mentioned above.

[3] The argument of the political relevance of everyday practices is reminiscent of Asef Bayat's theory of "non-movements."

[4] We thank Ivesa Lübben for generously sharing this observation and her insights on social mobility within the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood with us.

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ANTI/THESIS

Has the Middle Class Been a Motor of the Arab Spring?

The section "Anti/Thesis" juxtaposes two rivaling positions on a controversial issue related to the topic in focus. Due to the number of recent academic debates which address the role of the middle class in the Arab uprisings, this issue's "Anti/Thesis" is dedicated to the controversy around the argument which casts the middle class as "motor of the Arab Spring." While Benoît Challand argues that the constellation of actors in the uprisings of 2011 was too complex to be reduced to the middle class, Rachid Ouaissa understands the middle class not as a driving force per se, but as the central group of supporters for a political force.

THESIS: The Misunderstandings about the Role of the Middle Classes

Rachid Ouaissa

Keywords: Middle Class; Rentier States; Revolution

Revolutions and revolts often result from an unfortunate and not always predictable chain of historical accidents. Established for more than 200 years, studies on revolutions from various disciplines have demonstrated that, as a rule, revolutions are condemned to failure. The success or failure of these revolts and revolutions depends on the stability and/or strength of intermittent alliances forged between the groups and social classes supporting the cause. In turn, these alliances depend upon whether the often conflicting interests of the involved actors collide, or whether some agreement can be found. It is in this interaction between the subjective desires of the actors and the objective structures they act in that the contradictory role played by the middle classes becomes clear. The middle classes stand between two warring, irreconcilable strata or classes: on the one side there is the ruling class, striving to maintain its position of power and acquired privileges; on the other, there is the deprived and marginalized subaltern seeking to bring about radical change or reform, using violence (Fanon) or subversive methods (Bayat). In such moments, the middle classes become at once the object and the subject of revolutions. They are a subject because their desire for advancement makes them ready to seize opportunities, and fear of social decline amongst various segments within the middle classes turns them into the main actor of revolts; and they are an object because the outcome of the revolts depends on which political actors succeed in mobilizing the support of these middle classes, or at least broad sections thereof.

For instance, French colonialism in Algeria came to an end because, from the mid-1950s, the middle classes sided with the "damned of the earth" and because de Gaulle's plans to tie Algeria economically

to France and provide the middle classes with opportunities to advance by consolidating industrialization (Plan de Constantine) came too late and proved ineffective.

The conflict between "Rabia al-Adawiyya" and "al-Tahrir Square" is in fact a struggle to mobilize the disoriented Egyptian middle classes. President Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood have failed to offer a clear prospect for the middle classes and are thus now resorting to a mystical-religious project ("al-Adawiyya"). In contrast, the military guarantees protection, security, and stability. The ongoing bloody conflict in Syria is to be interpreted along precisely the same lines: as a discursive battle between the regime and the rebel groups, each trying to gain the support of the middle classes.

The main argument of this paper is that the Arab middle classes are the principal agents and supporters of the protests, yet they do not possess the structural leverage necessary to force through radical regime change. In contrast to the European middle classes that originated in consumption-oriented industrialization, the Arab middle classes' genesis is rent-based consumption, and they are thus more fragmented. Because of their socio-economical origin, the Arab middle classes continue to be susceptible to rent access and ideological discourses.

It is not easy to determine which groups make up the "middle" of a society, and it is even more difficult to do so empirically (Gay; Burris; Savage et al.). The heterogeneity of the middle strata and its ambivalent political role are well documented in literature. A distinction is drawn between "old" and "new" middle classes (Liaghat). While the old middle classes cover urban merchants and the self-employed, the new classes are made up of technological professions, and those employed in bureaucracy, education, and the service sector—designated as comprising a "professional middle class" (Robinson). The political behavior of various segments of the middle classes, and thus with it options for forging alliances, depends on the economic substrate in which they are embedded: "The new middle class segment is said to be sympathetic to the working class. The old middle class segment shows a more conservative tendency; and the marginal middle class segment expresses a desire for collective action" (Hsiao 5).

While this class is distinguished from the working class and the bourgeoisie, it is perceived, however, as being a class without a character of its own; a class whose advancement is not directly the result of struggle between labor and capital, but whose members are to be seen more as the beneficiaries of this struggle. The advancement of this class depends primarily on regulatory mechanisms of the state or the ruling class. The transformation or the rise and crisis of the middle classes depend on the relationship between the state and the market. The middle classes are characterized by a degree of "moral economy." Their members insist on security, justice and distribution, but they are also welfare-oriented. Ideologically, the middle classes are characterized as adhering to socially conservative-religious values, are hardworking and economically prudent (Earle). This simultaneously material and conservative-religious attitude makes them attractive for various actors of power, such as the military and religious groups.

Historically, Western middle classes are the result of intensified industrialization and *consumer-oriented* production. The middle classes became capable of acting on and negotiating their interests because the aristocracy was eager to increase its surplus. This attempt to increase surplus went hand in hand with an intensification of investment, which in turn depended

upon supporting measures promoting consumerism amongst broader strata of society. Such an intensifying of industrialization and thus also consumption entailed generating employment for broader sections of society. This raised political demands and fostered the participatory will of these sections. In British history, this newly gained power of the middle classes led to the Reform Act of 1832.

Politically, it is often emphasized that the middle classes are of major importance for processes of democratic transformation (Pickel 138). But middle classes cannot be characterized as democratic *per se*, as they can also support extremist and fascist movements. In his article "Panic in the Middle Class," Theodor Geiger showed how economic insecurity can lead to extremist behavior and attitudes amongst the middle classes. In 1930, wracked by crisis, the middle classes contributed significantly to Nazi electoral success. Lipset termed this "extremism of the center." Numerous examples from Asia show that democratization is not always the main goal of the middle classes. As long as a decent income and prestige are secure, the middle classes are prepared to accept authoritarian regimes. For the upwardly-mobile middle classes in Asia, a democratic development is not the primary objective—they are more interested in state-controlled liberalization (Schwinn 213). In such cases, the desire to move upward and the fear of falling down the social ladder determine the logic of action for the middle class.

It is certainly somewhat problematic to directly compare the middle classes in Arab or non-Western societies to those in Europe, and more in-depth empirical research is needed. Nevertheless, I consider a comparison of the historical circumstances and structural conditions to be revealing, particularly for identifying contradictory political roles played by the middle classes.

Historically, the Arab middle classes have remained imprisoned in two specific structural conditions: colonialism and rentier structures. Since the mid-nineteenth century in the Arab world, their opponent was not a ruling national aristocracy, but rather the colonial powers. These powers were solely concerned with exploiting resources on their periphery, showing no interest in establishing capitalist structures and generating viable industrialization. From the outset, the middle classes emerging out of the few modernized industrial sectors that were fruitful for the colonial undertaking were marginalized politically. After World War I, these marginalized middle classes became the main pillar of nationalist movements and the anti-colonial struggle. With the end of colonialism, the middle classes—or at least a segment thereof—assumed power. In this constellation, there was thus no struggle between the middle classes and a ruling class, for the ruling class was part of the middle classes. This marks an important difference between Western middle classes and those in post-colonial societies. The middle classes in industrialized Europe were forced to fight for their participatory rights and democracy. This was only possible because they had gained a beneficial position for negotiating their interests through intensification of profit-driven industrialization. In contrast, post-colonial and respectively Arab middle classes gained the political legitimacy to accumulate economic surplus through the role they played in the struggle for liberation. Participation in economic surpluses through political positioning alone is known as a "rentier mentality." Although the segment of the middle class in power developed into a separate "class" for itself, the broad middle class remained however a kind of organized clientele of the ruling class. Structurally, the middle classes in Europe have an economic origin, whereas in the Arab world their origin is political.

Rachid Ouaissa

teaches Near and Middle Eastern Politics at the Center for Near and Middle Eastern Studies at Marburg University. His main fields of research are the political, economic, and societal developments in the MENA region since the nineteenth century, the rise of Islamist movements in the region, and questions of rentier states. Since February 2013, he has been spokesman for the BMBF-funded project, Research Network "Reconfigurations: History, Remembrance and Transformation Processes in the Middle East and North Africa."
email: ouaissa@staff.uni-marburg.de

The middle classes in Europe are oriented toward profit, those in the Arab world on ensuring rent.

In the Arab world, an ideology establishing a firm identity for the middle classes is particularly important because the mechanisms enabling them to secure their position by exploiting their property and assets as a source of accumulation, generating greater income, are limited; mass consumerism and an economy driven by property and investment are lacking. In such societies—Egypt being a prime example—alignment to one camp or another running along cultural-oriented agendas (nationalism versus Islamism) is of great importance to the middle classes.

The Arab middle classes have become a medium of grand ideologies. Up since the 1930s, they were the support base for Arab socialism and nationalism, as well as political Islam. The crisis befalling the rentier state and the forced *infitah* policies, entailing implementation of grave structural adjustments in the 1970s and 1980s, resulted in a split in the middle classes and a turn away from the state. With the state retreating from its welfare obligations, the middle classes were divided into a marginalized segment gravitating toward the lower classes, and a business-oriented segment supporting the incumbent regime while demanding further reform. While the former segment seeks to dislodge the ruling regime, acting under the label of the religious discourse of justice and anticorruption, the latter is prepared to make a pact with reformers within the regime. This segment is hoping to share in the growth afforded by globalization under fair competition opportunities guaranteed by the state.

In reference to Egypt, Paul Amar distinguishes between a business-oriented middle class that however rejects globalization, and a frustrated middle class:

> […] [A] coalition around nationalist businessmen in alliance with the military—a military which also acts like nationalist middle-class businessmen. This group ejected the "crony globalisers" and "barons of privatisation" surrounding Gamal Mubarak. […] The Muslim Brothers represented frustrated, marginalized elements of the middle class. (18)

The Arab Spring is the result of accumulated frustration from these two segments, with their varying demands and expectations. The regimes were neither willing to reform—and so satisfy the demands of the business-oriented classes—nor were they able to meet the demands of the marginalized. The motto of the revolts—'*aish, karama, adala ljtima'iyya* ("bread, dignity, and social justice")—expresses the minimal consensus between the revolting segments of the middle class. For the low segment, '*aish* is the most important demand; for the business segment, the main concern is to establish *karama* and *adala ljtima'iyya*.

The outcome of the Arab revolts ultimately testifies to just how difficult it is to unify the divergent voices and demands into a joint political message, and how broad sections of the middle classes are willing to find a consensus among factions within the regime, far removed from any demand for democracy. In this way, the middle classes are contributing to reconfiguration of the regime.

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Has the Middle Class Been a Motor of the Arab Spring?

The section "Anti/Thesis" juxtaposes two rivaling positions on a controversial issue related to the topic in focus. Due to the number of recent academic debates which address the role of the middle class in the Arab uprisings, this issue's "Anti/Thesis" is dedicated to the controversy around the argument which casts the middle class as "motor of the Arab Spring." While Benoît Challand argues that the constellation of actors in the uprisings of 2011 was too complex to be reduced to the middle class, Rachid Ouaissa understands the middle class not as a driving force *per se*, but as the central group of supporters for a political force.

ANTI-THESIS: The False Question of the Middle Class

Benoît Challand

Keywords: Arab Revolts; Social Classes; Lower Class; Transnational Capitalism; Methodological Nationalism; Rent

Scholars of revolutions or of so-called democratic transitions all face the thorny question of what specific role classes play in the reshaping of political and social systems at critical junctures. Often the middle class is seen as a necessary stepping stone on which new alliances are forged, and thus becomes an essential "ingredient" for political change.

In this short text, I would like to offer a different view than that offered in the *Thesis* section. My argument is that it is both misleading to expect, and difficult to identify, a clear role for the middle class in complex events such as those of the Arab uprisings. Furthermore, the transnational ramifications of class-making are so significant in the Arab Middle East that it becomes impossible to locate or pin down a clear role for the middle class within domestic borders. One is forced instead to adopt a larger, regional and international focus to understand how, and which classes are differently involved in these moments of upheaval. The specificities of Arab political and economic systems force us thus to transcend any too-narrow methodological nationalism. I will therefore concentrate on two sets of arguments: the first questioning normative expectations around middle classes, and the second pointing at external factors such as economic rents and the existence of a transnational bourgeoisie whose span of action and influence is not limited to domestic borders. Let us start with normative views accompanying discourses on the middle class.

There are many interpretations of what role class plays in the making and unfolding of revolutions. The danger is to selectively examine moments when the middle class appears a key component in leading political change; one could, however, select other episodes of such rebellions that

shed a less favorable light on middle classes. With regard to the Arab uprisings of 2011, some of these analyses force parallels with European history and try to defend the view that the middle class has been a motor of the Arab Spring. If by this we mean to assess whether the middle class was a *trigger* and essential component of the wave of protests, it is hard to argue against such view. Revolutions have by and large been bourgeois events—and the original moment of the Arab uprisings fits this pattern, with vast sections of the middle class (though not only) in the early months of 2011 taking to the streets for their first time—from Sanaa to Tunis, and from Cairo to Manama. Indeed, even in the latter case, where revolution is usually described in simplistic terms of a Shiite-Sunni divide, the initial protest in Bahrain included not just the disgruntled local Shiite population, but also segments of the Sunni middle class as well as organized labor (Achcar 162; Lynch 136-37). Without the support of (at least) portions of liberal professions and middle class, no revolution is likely to occur—and this has been the case in all Arab countries in 2011.

If, however, we are asking whether the middle class has supported a *continuous effort* toward more social justice and a structural change in the pattern of economic and political redistribution, it is obvious that the middle class has not at all been a motor for the Arab uprisings. Two series of episodes can substantiate this claim. On the one hand, a look at the role of lower classes in these revolts shows the complex and overlapping composition of political activism. On the other, recent events—like those in Egypt during the summer of 2013—cast doubt on the automatically positive expectation (in terms of transition and democratization) that is often attached to middle class.

In the first series, it is obvious that the marginalized and lower classes are the ones willing to exert political pressure to keep the motor of the Arab uprisings going, so to say. Think of Tunisia, where youth and "marginalized Tunisians" were pivotal in contributing to the second phase of protests, after Ben Ali had departed the country when the second Qasbah protests in February and March 2011 forced acceptance of the fall elections and the drafting of a new constitution (Gana 18). Think of Yemen, where *akhdām* ("lower caste servants"), disenfranchized groups in the north, and excluded portions of the south pushed for realization of a similar national dialogue after the departure of Ali Abdullah Saleh (Finn; Carapico 102-10). Similarly, it is youth activists of differing social backgrounds who since March 2011 have called for an end to political divisions in Palestine. At the end of 2011 in Egypt, when it became clear that the police state was still pulling the strings even after the fall of President Mubarak, the November street battles—such as those of Muhammad Mahmoud street—belonged to the lower segments of Egyptian societies, not the *twitterati* that were so central in January and February of the same year. Alliances have surely been formed, but not just between incumbent elites and the middle classes: shared pressures between lower and middle classes also need to be included in our comparative analyses of the Arab uprisings.[1]

The second series of episodes, casting a less positive light on the involvement of the middle class, stems from the end of President Morsi's power tenure in summer 2013 and post-*Rabia al-Adawiyya*[2] events. To say, as my colleague does in his *Thesis*, that both the military and Brother Morsi have tried to court the middle classes to forge alliances, is to take away from the middle class its agency and comprehend this vast social group as a monolith and as simple passive weight that both sides have tried to push on its side of the balance. Let us not forget that some sizable portions of the middle class, in particular

its "liberal" segments (precisely the segment supposed to lead in the opening of autocratic systems in mainstream democratization theories), have taken an anti-liberal stance in supporting the military crackdown of August 2013. Supporting emergency measures and the massive curtailment of civil rights (freedom of expression, discriminate detention of members of the Brotherhood, and, as of March 2014, a string of massive death sentences), as has been the case in Egypt in the last nine months, is not likely to hasten reform towards more social justice and human dignity. The same charge of non-inclusion can be leveled against the Brotherhood's neo-liberal middle class, which has pushed neither for more economic enfranchisement, nor for more social justice while Morsi was in power.

Emerging from these short discussions is the view that middle class involvement in these uprisings presents a mixed balance sheet, with positive and negative contributions to a revolutionary transformation.

Let us now turn to the second part of the argument, namely the existence of external factors and the need to avoid the traps of domestic analyses only. Of interest here is the existence of variegated forms of rents and the existence of a transnational bourgeoisie in the process of making clearly identifiable social classes. All this contributes to making quite a unique configuration in the Arab Middle East.

To understand this specificity and avoid essentialist narratives of Middle Eastern exceptionalism, a historical understanding of class formation in the region is necessary. In large part, I follow the argument that has been made elsewhere and is relayed here by Rachid Ouaissa (257-77). Indeed, a look at the social history of the Arab Middle East demonstrates that the making of the middle class has not been connected with the development of industrial production or to tax enfranchisement, as was the case in Europe. Instead, it has been mostly based on rent economies, the latest manifestation of which is the rent attached to foreign aid and to a life geared toward individual consumption. He is thus absolutely correct in maintaining that the Arab middle classes have not been able to develop any meaningful instrument to push for structural changes in the 2011 uprisings, and thus their engagement with these uprisings has been motivated by a worldview that is based in this individualistic lifestyle (273), and the resilience of an organized clientele around ruling classes.

But one also needs to insist on a recent externalist explanation of the rather superficial involvement of the middle class in the follow-up to the revolts. The focus in many of the approaches taken in political science and sociology on the subject tends to reinforce a bias toward methodological nationalism—that is, the a priori selection of variables relating uniquely to internal political or sociological processes. For example, if the bourgeoisie (be it the "would-be middle class" of Khosrokhavar [60-91], or the "middle class poor" of Bayat [44]) is described as defective, this is due to the nature of the political system (autocracy), or to internal divisions created by political Islam. In other words, all these accounts privilege internalist processes of political change (a view reproduced in the *Thesis*' article with its focus on the making and unmaking of local alliances). What these explanations fail to recognize is that the process of class formation is connected as much to external factors as to internal ones. Sandra Halperin noted long ago that the systematic crushing of left-radical groups during the Cold War led to massive out-migration of the middle class, skewing the balance between different classes and thwarting the emergence of vivid class consciousness (a key ingredient to class participation in political processes).

Benoît Challand

is trained as a sociologist and historian, with degrees from SOAS (London) and the European University Institute in Florence (Italy). He is professor of Contemporary History at the Université de Fribourg (Switzerland). Over the course of his academic career, he has taught at universities in New York (NYU, New School for Social Research), Bologna, Pavia, and Bethlehem. Benoît Challand studies the impact of foreign assistance on Palestinian civil society and the shift of donors' policies after the Arab uprisings; he has also published peer-reviewed articles on the criminalization of Islamic charities, the history of international aid, and European identity. He has published four books on topics ranging from civil society in Palestine to political theory.

It is here that an analysis of the middle class needs to engage with regional and international influences. If rent is generally associated with oil, one needs to look not only at the rent provided by international aid (Egypt, Palestine, Jordan have received vast amounts, both from the USA and from the EU), but also at the increasing flow of Gulf capital into countries such as Egypt, Tunisia, and Palestine. Adam Hanieh has powerfully demonstrated that the traditional divisions of state versus society—or a vision of class formation limited to national borders—fail to capture the vivid and massive influence that transnational non-state actors (e.g. global capitalist classes)[3] play in shaping the future of Arab politics. We can see examples of this influence in Egypt (with the plug being pulled on the Muslim Brotherhood this past summer by some of that capitalist class fearing loss of control over their assets and joint investments with the Egyptian military), but also the reconstruction of Libya, and part of the fate of Tunisian and Palestinian politics. Hanieh uses a felicitous description for this intermingling of class formation, in the high degree of Gulf capitalists' investments in other Arab countries as "the Gulf bourgeoisie" becoming "an internal bourgeoisie into Egypt" (139).

We have now a transnational bourgeoisie playing a political (conservative) role that is often unaccounted for. Be it in Palestine with President Abbas and some of his network who made their fortune in the Gulf (Rabbani); be it in Libya with past interim Prime Minister Mahmoud Jibril whose connections in Kuwait, Lebanon, and Qatar helped him become a key figure of Libyan transition (Prashad 138-40); or anti-Brotherhood sentiments expressed by the checkbook diplomacy of the Saudi family or from the United Arab Emirates, one can see that not only state rents shape and undermine the prospect of more democratic change in the region; but also that a powerful capitalist class, international in its composition and outlook, is failing the Arab uprisings' genuinely popular aspiration for political change and economic reform in order to preserve its own interests and investments in other countries.

In that sense, questioning the role of an evanescent middle class is misleading. What needs to be assessed is the flow of three different rents: oil rent in its different forms, non-oil rent that is transnational (and mostly intra-Arab) and that has deep capitalist imbrications in the national economies of countries that are part of the "Arab Spring," and the bureaucratic degeneration linked to foreign aid. This last aspect can be connected to a critique of institutionalized or NGO-ized civil society, which might be seen as having a detrimental role in terms of class formation. Indeed, NGOs all too often focus solely on their economic and institutional survival, and reproduce a middle class disconnected, paradoxically, from lower classes and popular aspirations they are supposed to help and represent through social work (Challand, *Palestinian Civil Society* 185-88, 192-98; "The Counter-Power" 275).

Instead, we should look for motors of the Arab uprisings in the less institutionalized type of activism, and in the revolutionary capacity of different groups and classes to come together. These processes have been termed "de-sectorialization" (Bonnefoy and Piorier), or intersectionality. The latter term (Challand, "Citizenship") allows us to reflect on the relevance of regional and external factors, such as rent and migration, and how these intersect with internal factors to influence the dynamics of various national uprisings. Finally, this term also reminds us that change will only come from the combined efforts of both the lower and the middle classes, separate from the state bourgeoisie and transnational capitalists' interests in maintaining a truncated social contract.

Notes

[1] For a general discussion on the role of lower classes in keeping revolutions alive, see Chibber, esp. chap. 3-4.

[2] *Rabia al-Adawiyya* is the name of the square in Cairo where pro-Morsi supporters built an encampment after the massive June 2013 protests organized, among others, by the *Tamarod* ("rebel") movement. The military violently overtook the square mid-August 2013. A very polarized debate emerged in Egyptian society as to whether the use of extreme violence (victims were in the hundreds) was justified or not.

[3] I prefer using the plural "global classes" to show the variety within.

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META

What is "Middle Class"? In Search of an Appropriate Concept

Dieter Neubert

In the current debate the middle class of the Global South is identified as a new group of consumers and it is seen as the carrier of democratic values and societal progress. But we know that protagonists of a liberal democratic opposition as well as followers of radical religious groups and supporters of the conservative authoritarian regimes are all part of the middle class. Obviously the middle class is not homogenous. Is the concept of middle class useful under these conditions? Are concepts of socio-cultural differentiation such as milieus or lifestyles applicable in the Global South even when cross-cutting elements like religion and ethnic identity play a much more important role than in Europe?

Keywords: **Middle Class; Social Structure; Milieu; Lifestyle; Socio-Cultural Differentiation**

Currently two debates with reference to developing countries refer to the term *middle class*. At the one side in development economics, the middle class is praised for its potential in consumption and economic development. At the other side, the discussion on current processes of democratization—for instance in the aftermath of the Arab Spring, or in processes after the wave of democratization in the 1990s—the middle class is seen as a (potential) carrier of liberal and democratic values. Altogether, middle classes are presented as drivers of economic and political change. In these debates, middle classes are situated in the "middle of the society" with a middle income and middle societal position, and authors refer to a background in education and claim that they are oriented toward the future and economic savings. At the same time, middle classes are seen as the backbone of civil society. This is linked with democratic and liberal orientations. Against this background, two questions arise. First, who constitutes the middle class and how can we define it? Being in the middle of the society is a very open definition (Darbon; Melber 115). Secondly, is there really a homogenous middle class, or are there in fact many middle classes? At least for the Global North, there have been doubts since the 1980s as to whether this homogeneity still applies. And the current political debates in the Middle East and North Africa also point at massive value differences in the middle classes of these countries. Therefore, I argue here for a more elaborated understanding of middle class that not only considers socio-economic criteria, but also socio-cultural differences between people with a similar socio-economic position. These socio-cultural variations do not simply follow ethnic or religious differences, but are rather represented by differing lifestyles with shared values and shared views of life, conceptualized as social *milieus* (Bourdieu; Flaig, Meyer and Ueltzhöffer; Mitchell).

An answer to both questions must refer to the current debate on middle classes in the Global South (1) as well as to approaches analyzing social differentiation with respect to concepts of middle class in the social sciences (2). This makes up the background for answering the question of whether there is one or many middle classes in the Global South (3). Based on general sociological approaches from the Global South, a first step toward a concept for capturing middle class diver-

sity in the Global South through *milieus* is presented (4).

Thus the focus will be on a conceptual discussion for the analysis of middle classes. Therefore, the relation between middle class and civil society mentioned before cannot be discussed in detail. When we compare civil society and middle class, we see that both concepts are directed at seemingly the same portion of society. Civil society does overlap with middle class—yet the categories are not identical. Not all members of the civil society are part of the middle class. The classical working class in industrialized societies cannot be subsumed under *middle class*, but is rather organized through strong civil society associations: trade unions. In contrast, small community-based organizations (CBOs) in developing countries made up of subsistence farmers or landless people form part of civil society—but many members of CBOs do not belong to the middle class. At the same time, not all members of the middle class are organized into civil society organizations or support these kind of associations. A considerable part of the middle class is non-political and not active in political processes or even interested in politics. Yet when we look at civil society associations, many activists and leaders have a middle class background; this also holds true for trade unions. Members of civil society associations often choose leaders that have a middle class background. An active civil society would hardly exist without a strong middle class.[1]

The Current Debate on "Middle Class" in the Global South

The definition of *middle class* is widely discussed in development economics. The dominating criteria defining *middle class* is income and/or consumption. *Middle class* in this sense refers to socio-economic differentiation. There are two different approaches; one approach tries to identify middle classes relative to their specific countries and societies, like Birdsall, Graham, and Pettinato do. The second approach tries to capture the *middle class* at a global or continental level, and discusses their role in economic and/or political development with specific reference to their role as important (global) consumers (e.g. African Development Bank [AfDB]; Kharas; Milanovic and Yitzhaki). Easterly refers to a "middle class consensus" as an important factor in economic development. The existence of a "middle classness" is even assumed from a neo-Marxist perspective. However, this middle classness includes not only aspiration toward upward mobility and economic success, but also "anxiety and the desire for a feeling of security and belonging" (Heiman, Freeman and Liechty "Introduction" 8). But despite this common middle classness, Heiman, Freeman and Liechty underline the existence of "critical differences arising from divergent histories, colonial traditions, and political-economic formations" (7).

Authors interested in a global or at least regional middle class for their definitions refer to selected poverty lines from countries of the Global North and South. The resulting definitions vary between $2 to $10 per day (ppp[2]) (Banerjee and Duflo 4), to $2-13 (Ravallion 446), $2-20 (AfDB 2) or even $10-100 (Kharas 9). Those following a relative approach with a country-specific definition define the middle class in relation to the median per capita income (75-125%) (e.g. Birdsall, Graham and Pettinato 3) or as falling within the middle quintiles of income distribution (2nd, 3rd and 4th quintile [Easterly 10]).

There is clearly a lack of consensus regarding a socio-economic definition of the middle class. Named thresholds have been chosen more or less arbitrarily (Ravallion 446). In some of the concepts, the middle class is divided into two or even three strata. Banerjee and Duflo define two groups ($2-4 and $6-10) (4) while Ravallion discusses $2-6 and $6-13 (448). The African Development Bank divides the scale from

$2-20 into three strata: $2-4 is the floating class, $4-10 the lower-middle class, and $10-20 the upper-middle class (2).

The size of the middle class depends on its definition. Concepts that use average income or quintiles automatically identify a *middle class* without asking whether the lives of people in that group differ clearly from that of other groups. Especially the definition via quintiles fails to capture a change in size including advancement and descent; it informs only about (changing) income levels within the quintiles. The definitions that use fixed thresholds or lines to divide the middle class from the poor and the rich are much better in capturing changes and up- or downward movements. The upper limit of $10 (Banerjee and Duflo 4), $13 (Ravallion 446), or even $20 (AfDB 2) per day per capita seems at a first glance to be quite low. But this does capture large parts of societies in the Global South. The $0-20 line includes ninety-seven percent of the population of the Global South (data for 2010).[3] Besides different socio-economic definitions of the middle class, authors agree that there is a growing middle class with a large demand for a variety of goods. It is this purchasing power that leads to identification of middle classes as drivers of global economic demand with influence on global economic development (for a critique of this position see Melber). This growth is mainly propelled by the rise of middle classes in developing countries, where a considerable group advances out of poverty and joins the middle class. But a large part of this group continues in an insecure position, with still-limited possibilities of consumption. The term "floating class" used by the African Development Bank for the lowest stratum of the middle class ($2-4) describes quite well their position just above the poverty line, but still in a precarious state.[4] Yet they do have some means, which they use for investment in education, health, or small businesses (Banerjee and Duflo 9,18).

Identification of a socio-economically defined middle class has no direct implication for political processes. The middle class may be conservative to protect its minor privileges, or it may under different circumstances be political active and push for change (Darbon 51; Heiman, Freeman and Liechty, "Introduction" 11). This openness regarding differing political positions can be observed in current Middle East political processes or in processes of democratization in Africa and South America. We have observed since the 1990s that the middle class is nurturing competing political groups.[5] This leads to the question of whether social sciences perhaps offer more differentiated concepts for the analysis of middle classes.

Sociological Concepts of "Middle Class"

The idea that a particular *class* shares a common political orientation goes back to Karl Marx's "class analysis." Karl Marx identifies classes based on the ownership of the means of production, which constitutes a common class interest. For him, capitalist societies are marked by two dominating classes; on the one hand the "capitalist" or "bourgeois" class that owns the capital, and on the other hand the working class that controls the means of labor. Middle classes played a minor role in this concept, as they were seen as "petty-bourgeoisie" and therefore as a supplement to the "bourgeois class."

A further step was made by Max Weber, who not only identified more classes, but also extended his analysis to include socio-cultural differences presented by social ranks with different patterns of livelihood and particular values (Weber 177-80, 531-40). This combination of socio-economic and socio-cultural elements is at the core of the more recent concept of "class analysis" that has been presented by Bourdieu. Like Marx, he speaks of a "bourgeoisie" and a "working class," but underlines that to be part of a certain "class"—especially that of the "bourgeoisie"—one needs

to have access to different forms of capital: economic capital, cultural capital, and social capital. According to Bourdieu, members of a particular *class* have a certain way of behavior, a specific *habitus*. This link between class and socio-cultural backgrounds is captured by his concept of *milieu*. Therefore, each class represents also a particular socio-cultural *milieu*. The important point in Bourdieu's analysis is that socio-cultural differentiation follows socio-economic differentiation.[6]

In sociology after World War II, the term *class* received a different twist. Whereas in Marxist and neo-Marxist (e.g. Bourdieu) concepts *class* was a theoretically grounded concept related to control over means of production, in descriptive studies of social structure *class* is understood as "a particular socio-economic stratum defined by professional position, education, and income." The three criteria are linked to each other, but not in deterministic way. All these concepts imply that social position is more or less directly linked to socio-economic position and influences consciousness and/or values and attitudes.[7]

Differences between rural and urban settings are also considered in the more elaborate concepts of social structure. The discussion is of particular social conditions or livelihoods. This includes differing access to technical and social infrastructure in rural and urban settings—ranging for instance from access to health services, to education, or to transport (Hradil, 144-57). Aside from these particularities, the debate still uses the term *middle class* in a way that implies the existence of a more or less homogeneous class or stratum.

More recent studies in the USA and Europe create doubts as to existence of "the" middle class. In addition to socio-economic strata defined by income, professional position, and education, these studies examine values on the scales of tradition/modernization and individualization/re-orientation to identify different *milieus* characterized by the combination of socio-economic position and values. Values are mainly reflected by consumption patterns and viewed as part of a shared lifeworld, conceptualized as social milieus. Social milieus are seen "as subcultural entities within a society that capture people with a similar view of life and way of life" (Flaig, Meyer and Ueltzhöffer 55, translated by Dieter Neubert). These milieus became important for market research, like the widely used Sinus Milieus (see figure 1).

In this concept, the value orientation in a certain socio-economic strata may vary and some of the milieus cut across socio-economic strata. These milieus are different from the milieus in Bourdieu's theory. Whereas Bourdieu's milieus are linked to a certain class in the Marxist sense, this approach highlights the fact that "value orientation" may vary even under the same socio-economic conditions and also for people with similar education and professional position. At the same time, the socio-economic position remains significant. Economic means define the possibilities of consumption. But the way these possibilities are used varies. Membership to a certain milieu is thus the result of individual decisions and not determined by socio-economic position or socio-economic background.

The Sinus Milieus are only one prominent example for a range of studies in a similar line of thought. However, these studies use various criteria for definition of milieus, and hence identify different milieus (e.g. Vester; Schulze; for a recent overview see also Rössel and Otte). A similar study on US lifestyles (Mitchell) identifies nine different lifestyles and emphasizes that these may be found in similar socio-economic conditions. This has also been applied to European countries (Mitchell 174-96). However, the lifestyles are organized into a kind of hierarchy of ascending psychological maturity (Mitchell 26-27, 31-32).

The study of such lifestyles and milieus reached its height in the 1990s. Besides providing insights, these studies also faced limitations. To the present day, a sound theoretical grounding for construction of different milieus or lifestyles is lacking, and the concepts based on Bourdieu's theory are not flexible enough to capture true empirical diversity. Typologies of milieus or lifestyles developed in different studies overlap, but do not match up for comparison. It is questioned whether the values orientations behind the lifestyles are rather linked to social action (Hermann; Otte). Whether this theoretical gap can be closed remains an open question. The strength of these studies lies in an awareness of and empirical access to the plurality of socio-cultural distinctions at a social structure level. Milieu approaches show that simple socio-economic categories are unable to capture the socio-cultural diversity of social structure. Their empirical usefulness, however, represents one important reason that these concepts continue to be used intensively by market research.

The question of socio-cultural difference has also been researched through an ethnographic approach with a focus on the individual subject (subject-centered milieu research, Rebstein and Schnettler 53-

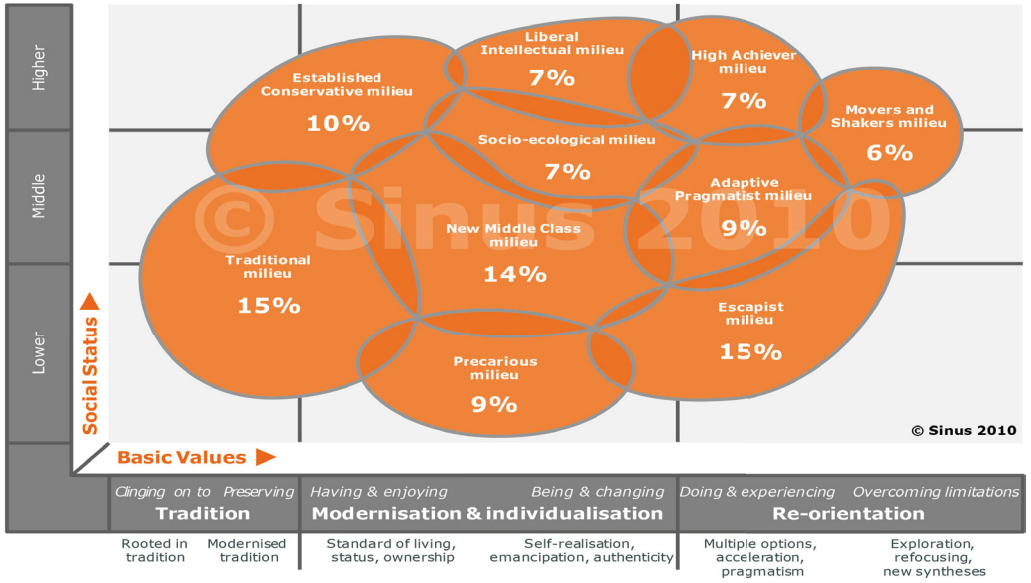

Figure 1: Sinus Milieus in Germany 2011
Source: Chart. *Sinus Milieus in Germany 2011.* Sinus Markt und Sozialforschung GmbH. Heidelberg: Sinus Institut, 2011. Web. 14 Feb 2014 <http://www.sinus-institut.de/fileadmin/dokumente/Infobereich_fuer_Studierende/Kartoffel_Studentenversion_2010_engl.jpg>

55). The topic is so-called "micromilieus," or "small lifeworlds," like a football club or a small neighborhood (Zifonun and Cindark, "Segregation"; Zifonun, "Integration"). These small lifeworlds are only part-time, and people may participate in different, small lifeworlds that even have contradicting values and norms. Whereas the Sinus Milieus approach points to general socio-cultural differences in society as a whole and describes general social structure, the subject-centered approach of small lifeworlds focuses on differences at the level of the individual (Rebstein and Schnettler 56).[8]

One vs. Many "Middle Classes" in the Global South

Against the backdrop of this general debate, since the 1960s a number of attempts have been made to analyze the positioning and role of the middle class, trying to reflect the specific situation in the Global South. In many of these countries, the working class was small or even non-existent. Classical Marxist analysis

was not able to capture this. In a post-colonial setting, the state was not only the primary political actor, but also the carrier of economic development—as provider of infrastructure, as entrepreneur, and as recipient of development aid. The state also controlled the private sector via licensing, price controls, and export and import regulations. This offered those in control of the state access to state resources.

This led to the introduction of the concept of *state class*, which included political elites, and higher- and mid-level administrative staff who profited from and controlled state resources (Elsenhans, *Staatsklassen*). Members of the state class not only earned their salaries, they also received extra payments and favors from the private sector and used their influence to gain access to profitable licences and other economic activities. The state became the main source of income and economic control. Whereas top politicians comprised a small part of the elite, mid-level staff represented a considerable part of a still-small middle class. Other middle class members, such as small- and medium-sized landowners and owners of small- and medium-sized enterprises, were mostly ignored or seen as *petty bourgeoisie*. Employees of the formal sector were defined as working class.

German sociologist Berg-Schlosser presented a detailed analysis of Kenya's social structure in the 1970s using two dimensions. The first was control over the means of production (in the Marxist sense) through private landownership, private capital, economic control over means of production (e.g. management), or political control. The second dimension referred to the main source of income: capital, capital and labor, labor, or no regular income. This led to an elaborated structure involving large landowners, capitalists, managers, and a state class living off of capital or control over capital at the upper end of the society. In this scheme, the middle class (or petty bourgeoisie) lives off capital and labor on self-owned farms as agrarian bourgeoisie, through enterprises as non-agrarian bourgeoisie, or as mid-level, white-collar employees ("salariat"). The working class lives off labor as proletarians or as quasi-proletarians ("proletaroids"); these are agrarian "proletaroids" (smallholders) and non-agrarian, self-employed "proletaroids" (small and micro-entrepreneurs). At the lowest level of society, those without regular income form a sub-proletariat (Berg-Schlosser 315-18).

This type of analysis (Elsenhans; Berg-Schlosser) focuses on the similarities of *class* and implies more or less clearly separated classes (or groups). But it ignores that many families at all levels of society combine various sources of income as state employees, owners of land and enterprises, and employment in formal non-enterprises (Neubert, "Kulturelle Differenz" 182; Smith, Wallerstein and Evers).

The more recent publication "The Global Middle Classes" (Heiman, Freeman and Liechty) follows a neo-Marxist line of thought and attributes recent growth of the "new" middle classes to changing modes of production (with a new international division of labor) and to the possibilities and capitalistic necessities of mass consumption in neo-liberal capitalism. These "new" middle classes then join the "traditional" middle classes that emerged together with state-driven development in the Global South (Heiman, Freeman and Liechty, "Introduction" 12), or *state-class* in Elsenhans' terms.

The concept of *strategic groups* tried to analyze processes of socio-political change in developing countries and referred loosely to Marxist class analysis (Evers and Schiel). *Strategic groups* are groups that base their existence upon access to a certain set of resources, e.g. economic, ideological, or religious. According to this concept, social change is driven not by a certain *class*, but rather by social groups that share access to useful

resources, which might include people from different economic strata.

The idea of strategic groups reminds us that socio-political coalitions can be formed across different socio-economic substrata. When we look closer at societies of the Global South, socio-cultural differences become apparent. They are neither determined by socio-economic position, nor by the political economy. The most obvious cultural differences are marked by religion or ethnicity, which often cut across socio-economic strata and represent important means of political mobilization. Examples are conflicts between different religious and/or ethnic groups, e.g. in Lebanon (Christian, Druze, Shi'ite) or Iraq (Sunnite, Shi'ite, Kurd), ethnic-religious parties in Mauritius, or between the Islamic north and the Christian south in Nigeria, or political mobilization along lines of ethnicity e.g. in Kenya, Zimbabwe or Zambia. Ethnicity and religion play a role in the socio-cultural diversity of middle class in any given country. Therefore, the idea of a global middle class must be challenged. Even if we can identify a growing group in the socio-economic strata of the middle class with an interest in the same consumer goods, their lifestyles could differ considerably.

And if a national power struggle is organized along ethnic or religious lines, it is not a given that ethnic and/or religious factions share the same values. For example, only a minority of Nigerian Muslims supports the radical Boko Haram movement. And in Kenya, the debate on a new constitution in 2010 focused on the question of whether abortion should be allowed in special cases, or should remain forbidden. Churches and ethnic traditionalists contested this (limited) right to abortion. Women's rights activists, supported by liberal-minded sectors of civil society, supported the new regulation. Both camps cut across ethnic and religious lines (Daniel and Neubert). This strongly implicates further value differences behind general patterns of political mobilization. For instance in Kenya, a group of young professionals has been identified that shares relatively liberal norms of sexuality, altered gender roles, and a certain distance from traditional family values (Spronk). These young professionals are part of the (upper) middle class; yet the majority of that socio-economic stratum adheres to traditional sexuality and family values. Another example are the sapeurs of the Republic of Congo (Brandstetter; Friedman 157). This is a group of young males likely belonging to the lower middle class, who spend most of their money on high-fashion, designer clothes (often second-hand, but still quite expensive) seeming to be well beyond their financial means. To live this lifestyle, they have to abstain from consumption of other goods and amenities. This group is only a small fraction of the lower-middle class, the majority of which is struggling to assure survival of their family and educate their children. These two extreme examples demonstrate how different lifestyles are present in the same economic strata. The important point is that differences in lifestyle and values neither follow strictly ethnic or religious cleavages, nor socio-economic divisions.[9]

Towards Concepts That Capture Middle Class Diversity in the Global South

The question is now: How can we make use of existing conceptual and theoretical debates to capture current social changes and emerging differences in lifestyle and values in the Global South? A simple application is hardly possible; not only due to differing levels of consumption, but also because of cultural diversity. However, we may use concepts developed in Europe and other parts of the world as a kind of inspiration to examine differences in lifestyle or at the level of milieus that do not equate to simple socio-economic differences. Until now, hardly any empirical studies on diversification of milieus in countries of the Global South exist.[10]

Based on still unsystematic knowledge from a recently started study on Kenya[11], some first examples of how these milieus might look like may be proposed (Stoll and Neubert):

- The *milieu of young urban professionals* (already described by Spronk), marked by individual career orientation, late marriage, single households, partying as leisure, stylish clothing, importance of city life, weak ties to countryside, and being ethnically mixed.

- A *religious milieu* oriented toward religious norms, family values, leisure time as family time, abstaining from alcohol and partying, hard-working, oriented toward economic and professional success and upward social mobility.

- A *neo-traditional milieu* marked by ethnic identity and "traditional" values, strong ties to their (rural) place of origin, importance of rural landownership, ethnically homogenous social networks.

- A *milieu of those struggling* not to fall back into poverty, with the family held in high regard and oriented toward access to decent employment in spite of challenges and setbacks.

This short sketch provides an idea of how milieus in Kenya might be described. But this preliminary structure of milieus is a work in progress and not at all comprehensive. In addition, it must be kept in mind that milieus often differ between different countries. For a proper analysis, we need empirical data upon which to base systematic criteria to describe milieu differences. As a starting point, it is possible to use already existing milieu concepts.

The basic advantage of the Sinus concept of milieus is its scale from traditional to modern, and individualization to re-orientation. However, this is far too general to be applied in the different cultural context of Kenya, or in any other country of the Global South. Therefore, this comprehensive scale as well has to be deconstructed.

A return must be made to the original building blocks employed in developing the scale, which were different clusters of values and lifestyle such as aim in life, social conditions, work/performance, concept of society, family and partnerships, leisure time, general orientation, and ideals (Flaig, Meyer and Ueltzhöffer 71, translated by Dieter Neubert).

A second approach to apply milieu analysis to the Global South references the world value survey applied not only in the Global North, but also in the Global South.[12] In the world value survey, two different scales are used to capture value differences. The first dimension goes from traditional to secular-rational values (equivalent to the traditional/modern and individualization/re-orientation scales of the Sinus Milieus). The second dimension captures materialist/post-materialist values, and reaches from survival (over well-being) to self-expression (Inglehart and Welzel, "Changing Mass Priorities" 554; Inglehart, *Modernization*). In an international comparison, this division shows that post-materialist values gain importance once survival and well-being are secured (Inglehart and Welzel "Changing Mass Priorities" 554). At the same time, the two-dimensional model helps in analysis of whether or under what circumstances post-materialist values play a role.[13]

When wanting to capture the particularities of different Global South societies, these concepts must be developed further. The already mentioned examples of the young, unmarried sapeurs of Congo, and the young and childless yuppies of Nairobi, point to the fact that some of the lifestyles of milieus are restricted to certain phases of a lifecycle. We may assume that those who establish a family with children change their lifestyle. (Similar changes in the life-

cycle are known for Germany.) At the same time, some lifestyles need a certain purchasing power for their performance. These lifestyles may be present as a kind of aspiration, but not as a current practice.

One option to addressing changes over a lifetime is to include questions on individual value changes e.g. concerning consumption, leisure or morals in the past, and expected changes in the future. Not only future aspirations are covered by these expected changes, but also more generally attitudes towards career and family values as well as actual behavior, such as investment in further education, financial saving for old age, investment in housing, etc. In addition, future aspirations also help to identify the existence of "post-materialist" values (in the sense of Inglehart). Inclusion of the dimension of time with reference to past and the future aspirations also helps to capture individual social mobility and the social dynamics triggered by radical social change.

The dimension "traditional to secular-rational values" in the world value survey and the Sinus dimensions "traditional/modernization and individualization/reorientation" include values referring to the political system. In the Sinus concept, direct implications to preferences concerning political parties are made (Flaig, Meyer and Ueltzhöffer 144), while in the world value survey traditional authority is opposed to rational legal authority (Inglehart, *Modernization* 345). Even when liberal democracy remains unmentioned directly, both concepts imply its close links to a rational-legal authority. But the reality of political movements in the Global South is more complicated. The authoritarian regimes of the Middle East that were contested or even deposed in the Arab Spring claim(ed) a legal authority based on a "modern" rationality. At least a part of the opposition groups combined a claim for democracy with religious concepts. In some African countries, democracy is combined with jurisdiction of traditional authorities, such as chiefs or councils of elders (e.g. Ghana, South Africa, Namibia, Uganda). And in Libya, a strong faction claims an influential role of sheikhs in the new political system, and refers at the same time to democracy. In these examples, we can observe competition among different socio-political models such as democratic liberalism, authoritarian patrimony, neo-traditionalism, theocracy; and at least in Latin America, socialism (Neubert, *Competing Orders*, see also Klute and Embaló). They cannot be captured by a simple dichotomy between "traditional-authoritarian" and "modern-democratic."

In addition, not only the ongoing conflicts in the Middle East, but also conflicts in other regions underline that these models have supporters across various socio-economic strata. At the time, in many cases the leaders of the conflicting groups originate in the middle class.[14]

Another peculiarity of the Global South has to be considered. Due to high spatial mobility across borders and continents (as labor migration and/or migration for education), a considerable part of the population has experienced living abroad or has at least linkages to the diaspora. Milieus may thus reach across borders and continents.

Finally, we have to be aware that we cannot take the existence of more-or-less separated milieus for granted. Application of the socio-structural milieu concept implies that people can be situated in a certain milieu that captures the primary elements of their value orientations and lifestyle, at least for a certain phase of their life. But the previously mentioned subject-centered milieu analysis of part-time lifeworlds offers another interpretation. People may simultaneously belong to different part-time lifeworlds with different value orientations, without a clear preference for any one milieu. In the end, deciding whether socio-cultural and socio-economic differentiation can be captured better

Dieter Neubert

is professor of development sociology at University of Bayreuth. His research areas include sociology of Africa (including social structure), sociology of violent conflicts, social change, and development policy. His regional research focus is Africa, particularly East Africa. He has also conducted research in Southeast Asia (Vietnam and Thailand).
e-mail: dieter.neubert@uni-bayreuth.de

by "large scale milieus" or "part-time milieus," or by a combination of both concepts, remains an empirical question.

Conclusions

The current interest in the debate on *middle class* directly demonstrates the limits of our knowledge. We are merely at the beginning of interest in middle class(es) of Global South countries. But the notion of class is misleading. Patterns of consumption and lifestyle differ within a class, and in the political realm we observe competition among different groupings, each with their own particular political, cultural, and social attitudes. These variances are not simply determined by socio-economic differences, or ethnic and religious attachments—nor are they completely independent from this background. Analysis of the interplay between socio-economic position, lifestyles, and differing religious and ethnic belonging—and analysis of the resulting more-or-less stable groups—is an empirical and conceptual task. The concept of *milieu* that has been presented here is one attempt to capture socio-economic along with socio-cultural differences. It promises a better understanding of the growing societal plurality of the Global South than application of a class concept. However, every study on milieus should be aware of shortcomings, such as limited theoretical grounding and a certain fuzziness on definition of the different milieus leading to differing descriptions of the same society, depending on criteria used, in the countries of the Global North. Regardless, comparing limited knowledge on societies in the Global South through the identification of milieus supports a more sophisticated discussion that prevails over the simple concept of socio-economic class.

Notes

[1] This topic needs more attention. Examples for this kind of study referring to the Middle East are Clark and Nasr.

[2] PPP means "purchasing power parity" and puts per-capita income in relation to country-specific costs of living.

[3] Calculated with World Bank data: <http://iresearch.worldbank.org/PovcalNet/index.htm?>

[4] However, also members of higher strata of the middle class may fall back to poverty when they lose their source of income because social security is very limited.

[5] For an overview on Africa see Neubert ("Competing Orders").

[6] The notion of different forms of capital has been applied in development studies including the concept of livelihood analysis without reference to Bourdieu's theory. This concept was mainly used to analyze the situation of poor people and not the middle class (Carney).

[7] At least in the German debate, the use of the term *strata* refers to this kind of descriptive concept, in contrast to the Marxist *class* concept.

[8] For an overview on concepts of *milieu* see Zifonun (forthcoming).

[9] Of course there are many more ethnographic studies on middle-class lifestyles. But in many cases, a certain socio-economic or ethnic homogeneity is implied (e.g. Freeman; Oppong; Stichter; Srivastava).

[10] There are ethnographic studies on consumption (e.g. Friedman; Hahn; Hendrickson; Prestholdt), but they focus on selected groups.

[11] The study "Middle Classes on the Rise" conducted by Erdmute Alber, Lena Kroeker, Dieter Neubert and Florian Stoll is part of the project "Future Africa. Visions in Time," supported by the German Ministry for Science and Education.

[12] Even when the world value survey is used to compare value differences at the level of different countries and not for intra-country differences, we may refer to its categories.

[13] For example, parts of the Indian middle class positions itself against materialist values (Fadae, in preparation).

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→ [14] Important data on political attitudes can be obtained by Afrobarometer <http://www.afrobarometer.org/>, Asianbarometer <http://www.asianbarometer.org/>, Arabbarometer <http://www.arabbarometer.org/> or Americas Barometer <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/index.php>.

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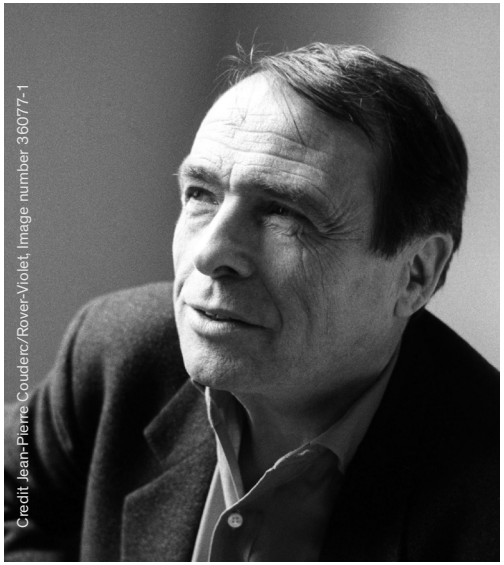
CLOSE UP

Pierre Bourdieu: Transformation Societies and the Middle Class

Eva Barlösius
(Translated by David Antal)

This article reconstructs Pierre Bourdieu's œuvre from his interest in transformation societies. The focus is on fundamental change in the objective structure of societies, a common characteristic of all three he treated in depth—Algerian in the 1950s and French in the 1960s and late 1900s. Bourdieu asked what uncertainties and miseries people feel when their *habitus* is overtaken by rapid change in objective structure. He concluded that their experience often results in a hysteresis effect and a split *habitus* and that members of the middle class in particular, because of their uncertain position in the social structure, suffer from both phenomena.



Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002), French sociologist in March 1993

Keywords: Bourdieu; Algerian Society; Habitus; Middle Class; Trajectory

Algeria – The Key to Bourdieu's Opus

Pierre Bourdieu ranks indisputably as one of sociology's classic figures. His work stands out in the compendia of sociological theories, the rankings of the discipline's leading thinkers, and university syllabuses everywhere (Barlösius, "Klassiker im Goldrahmen"). When it comes to understanding the body of literature produced by a mind of this caliber, two questions have proven especially apt: what issue underlies the many individual studies uniting them into an œuvre? And what experiences drove its author?

For Pierre Bourdieu the correct answer to the second question is clear: his years in Algeria (1958-1960). It was there, as he later wrote himself, that he underwent a profound intellectual conversion from a Parisian philosopher to an ethnologist and sociologist. It was also there, while investigating Algerian society, that he developed his most important concepts, which became the groundwork for his entire sociological contribution. They include the concept of *habitus*, which came to him through his studies on Algerian workers and peasants. These encounters also went a long way to shaping Bourdieu's empirical conception of social class, particularly that of the middle class, although the term scarcely appears in his study of Algeria. This influence accounts especially for the import Bourdieu attributed to the role that occupational qualification plays in the assignment of social class.

For Bourdieu, the characteristic that most clearly differentiated Algerian and French society at that time was presumably Algeria's vast labor surplus and the great ensuing arbitrariness in who was given a job. He observed that formal schooling and occupational training were essential if people were to escape the randomness of income and that regular income was the

first step toward comprehending that the future is modifiable. The significance of occupation explains much of the reason that Bourdieu used it as the key category of social classification in his later empirical studies, such as *Distinction* and *The Weight of the World*.

Another important concept Bourdieu drew from his work on Algeria was life trajectory. Arguing that a livelihood must first be secured in order then to focus its activities consciously on the future, Bourdieu derived both his critique of a rational concept of action and his concept of a *life trajectory* based on meaningful interpretation. As he learned in Algeria, people cannot take considered action and try to shape the future rationally until they have a grip on the present (Bourdieu, "La Hantise du chômage").

Unlike the second question, the first one—whether Bourdieu's complete opus is based on a question underlying all of his studies—cannot be answered so definitively. As with every great body of literature, Pierre Bourdieu's œuvre can be reconstructed from various questions. The fact that it can be understood from a new or different angle again and again ranks it among the classics. Sometimes the ensuing interpretations may seem overwrought. This impression is certainly not true of the perspective this paper takes on Bourdieu's writings on transformation societies. He, himself, used that term to denote societies undergoing a profound transformation. He focused on the accompanying fundamental changes in socially created and legitimated behavioral dispositions—that is, on the challenges to habitus. Looking at the studies by Bourdieu in this light makes it apparent that each of the three societies he treated in depth was going through transformation and that this facet was precisely what piqued his interest. His studies on Algeria traced the transition from a largely precapitalist, peasant society to one forced into capitalism by colonialization (Bourdieu, *Outline*; *Algeria*). In *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*—his major analysis of French society of the 1960s—he showed that the typical middle class life trajectory, which guaranteed social ascendance via the educational system, had become fragile. Lastly, in *Weight of the World: Social Suffering in Contemporary Society*, his point was to illustrate the symptoms of misery that were caused by the dissolution of occupational and socio-structural modes of recruitment in the wake of the French government's turn to neoliberal economic policies.

In all three cases, Bourdieu described change in objective structures such as that in economic processes and government institutions. However, he concentrated mainly on asking what uncertainties and miseries people feel when their habitus is overtaken by rapid change in objective structure. This experience may be due to their having landed in a social position so unlike their previous experience or expectations that their habitus does not fit the changed objective conditions in the new class of trajectories. Bourdieu called this phenomenon the *hysteresis effect*, meaning the inability to process and evaluate historical, but also individual, crises according to previously formed categories of perception, appreciation, and comprehension that are linked to one's social origins. Or, the experience may arise because people become caught in the maelstrom of occupational and socio-structural crises of reproduction, entrapment through which a future of certainty and security once promised by society is dragged into uncertainty and vulnerability. The result is inner tension—a cleft, or split, habitus (Bourdieu et al.). The dispositions, expectations, and self-demands rooted in it stem from the past and are incompatible with present social structures. What characterizes habitus, its harmonization with the social world without explicit harmony, is lost. In its stead contradictions and discrepancies open up and are reflected deep within the individual. They

are experienced as personal tragedies and not as what they are, namely, discontinuities and contradictions ensuing from changes in life trajectory, especially from social transformations.

Bourdieu's Life Trajectory

Such experiences were by no means unfamiliar to Bourdieu himself. He experienced and described his path in life as one determined by many different transformations. He could not foresee the consequences that the multiple changes had on his life trajectory, such as those from the countryside to the city, from a lower middle class background to intellectual circles, from philosophy (the most prestigious discipline) to sociology (which has the lowest scientific reputation in the academic hierarchy, as Bourdieu scoffed) (Jurt 11). They called upon him to distance himself socially and culturally from his origins, instilling him with a perpetual feeling of strangeness (Barlösius, *Pierre Bourdieu*). Despite Bourdieu's oft-stated reluctance to describe his course in life, in the end he finally did so. For many years he declined to write an autobiography because an enterprise like that would bring about the "biographical illusion" that the life trajectory follows a coherent line and that all the steps and turns are meaningfully interrelated. Everything Bourdieu did in sociology, including his autobiographically conceived *Sketch for a Self-Analysis*, was aimed at dispelling such biographical illusions, which ignore the discontinuities and social contingencies in life as it is actually lived.

In that work he drew on his own sociological concepts to reflect on his intellectual development, particularly the road he traveled to sociology, through France's elite schools. Time and again he cited his experiences in Algeria as what blazed the trail for his understanding of the sociologist's trade. He spent the years from 1955 to 1960 there, first in military service, then as an assistant at the University of Algiers, where he began studying the peasant society of the Kabyle people. The work was foreign to him, both thematically and methodologically, for he had planned to write his dissertation in philosophy on the time structures of emotional life. What culminated from this was instead his writings on Algerian society, *Algeria 1960: The Disenchantment of the World*; *Le déracinement: la crise de l'agriculture traditionnelle en Algérie*, written with Abdelmalek Sayad; salient parts of his *Outline of a Theory of Practice*; and myriad essays.

The peasant society in the Kabyle region was not as alien to Bourdieu as one might expect. On the contrary, it proved to be familiar, for it reminded him of the rural society in which he had grown up. His father had come from the peasant milieu and worked as a postman in the secluded village of Béarn, which Pierre had left while still a schoolboy to go to boarding school in Pau, the nearest town. From there the young Bourdieu had gone to Paris to attend the preparatory class of the famous Lycée Louis le Grand and then eventually entered an elite institution of higher education, the École Normale Supérieure. He had experienced the long road from a small, solitary locality to the intellectual center of France not only as geographical distance but also, primarily, as a journey dissociating him from his own cultural and social origins. It was his Grand Tour into the intellectual and social unknown. He discovered that the Kabylie and his original homeland had much in common. He may have been an outsider to the peasants in the Kabylie, but they were not so to him. When he wrote about the uprooting of the Kabyle peasants, it was therefore from the viewpoint of what to him had become remote proximity. In retrospect, he said of these years that Algeria "enabled me to accept myself" (qtd. in Schultheis and Frisinghelli 48). The period in Algeria and his research on peasant society there helped him to come to terms with his feeling of strangeness in Parisian intellectual circles. It helped him complete his march

through the elite French institutions successfully—from the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) to the zenith, the Collège de France.

Transformation of Precapitalist Peasant Habitus

Turning to the three transformation societies, I will now address change in economic structures. What contradictions and discrepancies does it create in habitus and how does it devalue and even destroy the life path and social position that society used to promise? The essays in *Algeria 1960* began with the more or less intact traditions of the precapitalist economy framing the rural milieu of peasants. In these studies, Bourdieu asked which transformations the rural milieu was exposed to by the capitalization of the economy, which was often brutally imposed by the colonial power. His sociological intention was to present examples demonstrating that economic structures and habitus do not change in the same rhythm, that behavioral dispositions by no means adapt automatically to a new economy, and that economic and social disparity are the reasons why.

In his work on the Algerian transformation, he was able to show the methodological and analytical power of the habitus concept empirically for the first time. He juxtaposed it with the claim surrounding the concept of *homo economicus*. Bourdieu countered that economic practices do not derive from such a theoretically conceived ideal, that they are instead determined by "real man, who is made by the economy" and that this man practices "economic rationality" (Bourdieu, *Algeria* 2) consistent with his class condition. The concept of habitus is designed to illustrate precisely that stance.

> [The] practices (both economic and non-economic) of each agent have as their common root the relation he objectively maintains, through the mediation of his habitus which is itself the product of a definite type of economic conditions, with the objective and collective future which defines his class situation. (2)

This quotation defines some of the hallmarks of the habitus concept, the principal ones of which I explicitly repeat because they often receive too little attention. Habitus does not determine the practices; it sets forth forms of practice but not specific action. It is the product of societal and economic structures and of a collective history—an understated aspect in the above quotation, which mentions only the collective future. An additional matter is the use of the habitus concept in sociology. Bourdieu repeatedly stresses that he is concerned with a methodological use of habitus as a mediating concept. Methodologically, habitus "enables us to get beyond the abstract oppositions between the subjective and objective, the conscious and the unconscious" (92). In other words, sociology need not remain theoretically stuck in these oppositions; it can empirically study how they interact in social practice (Barlösius, *Pierre Bourdieu* 45-76).

Transition to a capitalist, urbane world requires a sweeping transformation of precapitalist peasant habitus. It is not just the economic practices that have to change, as presumed in the concept of homo economicus, but the noneconomic ones as well. That shift calls for a change in the schemes of perception, appreciation, and comprehension rooted in habitus. They include "amicable agreement," the only convention acknowledged by the peasant world's "ethic of honour" and the only one based on "good faith" (Bourdieu, *Algeria* 14). It proves absurd if measured by the yardstick of economic rationality. The schemes also encompass notions of the future that require practices based on cyclical time to yield to practices that assert a future constructed by calculation (8). Whereas production by the peasants is keyed to the farming year, which informs their understanding of time and the fu-

ture, the capitalist economy is marked by a "much longer production cycle" and "presupposes the constitution of a mediated abstract future, with rational calculation to make up for the absence of an intuitive grasp of the process as a whole" (10). If amicable agreement or notions of cyclical time continue—for they are habituated and highly valued—a hysteresis effect will arise as the new economic processes overtake traditional habitus.

A person cannot deliberately decide to dispense with the schemes of perception, appreciation, and comprehension that are rooted in habitus. Nor can a person exchange them for others that are adapted to the code of the capitalist economy and, in particular, for those that permit long-term planning of the future. It was imperative to Bourdieu that his studies of Algerian transformation society were able to document empirically that actors beneath a certain level of economic security are unable to respond by embracing the future and projecting their life trajectory into it. To do so, they must have job security and at least a minimal level of regular income. Because most of the people he observed lacked these two essentials, they slipped into a split habitus. They learned that their practiced mode of social and economic reproduction was no longer in step with the times. But their class situation made it impossible for them to appropriate a fitting mode of action, which necessitates investment in formal schooling, occupational training and, hence, time. That investment constitutes the core feature of the habitus that characterizes the emerging middle class in Algerian society. This attribute leads to the next transformation society, France in the 1960s.

Middle Class Life Trajectory

In *Distinction,* Bourdieu also studied the question of what the consequences are when an enormous discrepancy grows between past and the present conditions of existence, or, which amounts to the same thing, between a social trajectory and the modal (typical) trajectory for the group in question. He focused on the protection that afforded the sociostructural reproduction of the middle class. Its members place great importance on the educational system because they acquire from it the cultural capital that gives them access to the occupations that safeguard the sociostructural positioning of their class.

The repeated mention of the middle class in the previous passages invites explanation of what Bourdieu takes social class to mean and why he finds the concept so significant. To him it is above all a product of social struggle against inequalities and injustices (Bourdieu, "Social Space and the Genesis of Groups"). He carries this contested social past within him at all times. Discussion of whether and how sociologists are to apply the concept therefore always has a political quality (Bourdieu, *The Social Structures*). By describing a social relationship, the term social class ensures that the relational nature of social reality is ever present in the mind—an advantage for sociology. That presence, according to Bourdieu, is precisely what recommends its use in the discipline. One of his basic assumptions is that "the real is relational," so "one must think relationally" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 228). Social class indicates a sociostructural position relative to other positions and thereby determines relational place within it.

However, the fixed association of social class with social struggle also complicates things for sociologists. They must beware of building on preconceived assumptions about the social world. Bourdieu avoids the problem by distinguishing empirically between "objective" ("theoretical" or "logical") social classes and "real" social classes. The objective social classes are "the set of agents who are placed in homogeneous conditions of existence imposing homogeneous conditionings and producing homogeneous systems of dispositions capable of generating similar practices" (Bourdieu, *Distinction* 95). The real social

classes are relationally "defined by the mutual exclusion, or distinction, of [social] positions" (Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations* 135), for the sociostructural positioning follows from it, with occupation playing a highly prominent role.

In *Distinction* (1984) Bourdieu underlines that "the modal trajectory is an integral part of the system of factors constituting the class" (104). Trajectory is understood to mean more than just the temporal sequence of phases in life. In particular, it also contains the idea that a person has a notion of his or her own position in the social world, that is, the position that one strives to achieve for oneself and that seems to be promised by society if one meets the corresponding requirements. For the middle class of postwar French society, these requirements consisted, as previously mentioned, of investing in education and acquiring educational degrees in order to strive for an occupational position commensurate with membership in the middle class. But in the 1950s and 1960s the country's once sociostructurally closed educational institutions were opened not only to members of the middle class but increasingly also to the working class and the peasant milieu. The change resulted in the inflation and, ultimately, a devaluation of educational degrees. Describing this process, Bourdieu commented that "the dialectic of devaluation and compensation thus tends to feed upon itself" ("Social Space and the Genesis of Groups" 129). It takes time to develop a habitual grasp of the sociostructural impacts that the devaluation of educational degrees has on a person's envisioned life trajectory. The habitus of the middle class, characterized as it is by reliance on educational capital as the mode of reproduction, encouraged the members of those classes to cling to outmoded educational paths. They did, thus producing a hysteresis effect. The habitus of the middle class preprogrammed them to see themselves as a generation cheated of its future (Bourdieu, *Distinction* 139).

Symptoms of Misery

In *The Weight of the World: Social Suffering in Contemporary Society*—the third transformation society—Bourdieu and his research group inquired into the discontinuities and contradictions caused by the neoliberal invasion. *The Weight of the World* presents a number of biographies, primarily from members of the middle class who, because of changes in economic structure and the realignment and dismantling of government institutions, had fallen upon hard times that they could perceive and describe only as misery. As with the work Bourdieu had done on the other two transformation societies, his study of neoliberalism was less about material distress than about the misery that grows from being thrown into a life trajectory that triggers massive contradictions in habitus. These analyses were similar in another way as well: It was important to Bourdieu to emphasize that misery is subjectively perceived inferiority, just as material need is real and deep. Because this sociostructurally relative misery is anything but absolute poverty, it cannot be qualified; compared to people's justified expectations of their life, it is disillusioning and ends in bitterness. These symptoms of misery originate in the objective contradictions that were embedded in the structures of the labor market, the public education system, social and integration policy, and many other areas in the course of the neoliberal turn. They produce incompatibilities between the mandate of institutions and the resources that the government provides to meet it.

When the state's objectives are thwarted, however, the actors employed in the institutions—usually members of the middle class—feel the failure to be their own. This response of government employees leads to a growing conflict within them, from this they find themselves straddling two systems of demand and representation. At work, in schools, in suburbs, and in social work, they are confronted with daily exi-

Eva Barlösius

is Professor of Sociology with a focus on social inequality and social structural analysis at the Leibniz University of Hanover. For several years she has been working on and with Bourdieu's theory of habitus and social space. Her current research interests include the sociology of food, social science studies and the sociological conception of public services and infrastructure. She is the coordinator of the Master's Program on "Science and Society" at the Leibniz University.
email: e.barloesius@ish.uni-hannover.de

gencies compelling action and intervention for which they have neither the resources nor the instruments. They are therefore bound to fail in their effort to meet the state's responsibility. At the same time, these employees are representatives of the state, are perceived as such, and thus stand locally for the power that is held responsible for the misery. They have to unite both dimensions in their person, an objectively impossible feat. "What could really change the situation [they are] being asked to change does not depend on [them], whereas what does depend on [them] cannot really change anything" (Bourdieu et al. 190). This paradox is not addressed in society; rather, it is displaced into their job. It is thereby subjectified, that is, internalized deep inside their person. They must cope with "the lie of the institution," (424) and therein lies the root of their misery.

Middle Class: Hysteresis Effect and Split Habitus

In all three transformation societies habitus is being overtaken by the structural processes of change. The actors are doing everything correctly according to their habitus. They are observing their honor code, investing in their education, and going about their assigned occupational tasks responsibly. Nevertheless, their situation is tough. What they have in common is that they experience their failure personally and that it is not possible for them to make sense of it in terms of what lies behind it: economic structural change combined with a devaluation of their past life trajectory and what used to be their socially and economically protected and respectable position within the social structure. In the three transformation societies that Bourdieu studied, it is presumably no coincidence that members of the middle class are the ones suffering most from the hysteresis effect and split habitus. The middle class is that social class consisting of "grey areas, ambiguously located in the social structure, inhabited by individuals whose trajectories are extremely scattered" (Bourdieu, *Distinction* 106). Yet it is often also the one from which the groups driving processes of social change are recruited. Its sociostructural position may be well provided for, but in the web of class structure, the middle class is forever embattled and under constant pressure to prove its legitimacy. For the struggle over social recognition and symbolic capital rages with particular intensity at the center of society—the place of incessant change, continual differentiation, and pronounced aspirations for distinction.

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FOCUS

Struggles of Distinction: Young Women Constructing Their Class Identity in Egypt's Americanized Milieu

Sina Birkholz

In urban Egypt class is omnipresent in structuring people's lives and the social sphere as well as being operative in self-description. For understanding an individual's position within the horizontally and vertically stratified society, however, the usual distinction of three classes needs to be refined. Based on biographical interviews, I reconstruct what my interviewees consider their "Americanized Society" and try to grasp their self-categorization as *upper middle class*. In line with much of Bourdieu's thinking on social stratification, I treat their self-positioning as upper middle class as a form of discursive categorization which can only be understood if contextualized by the negative image of "the poor" and "the rich." The Americanized Society, on the other hand, can best be conceptualized as a milieu where different classificatory principles intersect.

Keywords: **Upper Middle Class; Milieu; Youth; Egypt; Westernization; Cosmopolitan Capital; Distinction**

Introduction[1]

With the January 25 uprising in Egypt, the international spotlight was on Cairo's bilingual youth with an upper (middle) class background. *Time Magazine* went so far as to call them "The Generation Changing the World." Calling these young people who purportedly organized the revolution—all of whom belong to the upper and upper middle classes—a "generation" clearly had the potential to conceal the class-exclusive perspective of the observer and the role that class played or did not play in the January 25 uprising. This article[2] makes a contribution to a better understanding of social stratification and identity in Egypt. It goes beyond the usual tripartite class scheme by describing a specific milieu, the "Americanized Society" (AS), and draws attention to the discursive politics of class-making.

The core empirical data on which this article's argument is built is drawn from twelve biographical interviews conducted in February and March 2011 with female students from the American University in Cairo (AUC).[3]

The interpretative interview analysis based on the reconstruction of narrative identity posed a puzzle: while a considerable number of my interviewees could have been seen as belonging to the Egyptian (economic and cultural) elite, the majority of them were eager to position themselves as members of the Egyptian upper *middle class*. In addition, a collectivity labeled the "Americanized Society" was clearly identity-relevant. In this article, I will put forward the following interpretations: in line with much of Bourdieu's thinking on social stratification, I treat the self-positioning as upper middle class as a form of discursive categorization which can only be understood if contextualized by the negative image of "the poor" and "the rich." The AS on the other hand can best be conceptualized as a milieu where different classificatory principles intersect.

Contemporary Egypt: Divided by an Unseen Economic Cleavage?

There is considerable agreement in academia that social stratification is omnipresent in structuring life, social relations, and space in Egypt (Barsoum; Bayat; Bayat and Denis; Denis; Raymond). Usually, this stratification is captured by the term "classes" (see for example Armbrust; Barsoum; De Koning; Ghannam, *Remaking*; Haeri; Ibrahim).[4] At the same time though, various economic and social developments since the *infitah,* the "open door policy," have changed the socioeconomic map of Egypt. Thus various academics have felt that the classical tripartite scheme has become deficient for mapping Egyptian society. They emphasize that, in particular, the middle class had been affected by the now "incongruous […] [r]elations between education, occupation, and income" (Ibrahim 105). The increased difficulties of the middle class and the traditional elites to reproduce themselves as class is blamed on the privatization of education (Barsoum; Awad; Ibrahim; see Bourdieu, *Unterschiede* 221-37) and the decline of the public educational sector (Ibrahim 106; Handoussa et al. 46; De Koning). The consequence is a widening gap that runs through the middle class and splits Egyptian society in two halves: those in the upper segment are called the "cultured classes" (Barsoum), the "cosmopolitan classes" (De Koning) or simply the "dominant classes" (Haeri). According to Bayat, we see a society drifting apart, divided by a "social cleavage […] unseen in Egypt's post-colonial history" (165). Armbrust, more concerned with the subjective and symbolic dimensions of class (-making), concedes that middle class "does not correlate with a material standard of living" (107). Rather, he sees the striving for higher education and the distinction from lower and upper class as defining feature of middle class identity (107-08). My interview partners also perceive Egypt as a "class-based" (Mariam) society, and they speak openly about the restrictions this produces for individuals (Noor; Samira; Laila). When the majority of my interview partners label themselves as members of the upper middle class, they also seem to confirm the idea of the rift dividing the country. At the same time, however, they are adamant to dissociate themselves from "the elite" or "the top classes." And to further complicate matters, several of them identify strongest not with any class but with a social collectivity termed "the AS." In order to understand those empirical phenomena we need an approach that pays attention to the symbolic dimensions of social stratification and the discursive production of distinction and division.

Theoretical Foundations: Class, Lifestyles, and the Politics of Class-ification

When it comes to conceptualizing "class" in social sciences Karl Marx and Max Weber are usually enlisted as the two earliest theoretical reference points. Most of the more recent theories on social stratification[5] still build on those early classics—be it in terms of affirming or critiquing them. In the context of this article, the most relevant distinction between the two theorists' notions of class is the *foundation* of social stratification. While in Marx it is primarily an economic theory (Wright; Burzan 15; Vester 125), Weber, too, treats "class" as deduced from economic factors[6] but complements it with the concept of "status" ("Stand," see "Wirtschaft" 179). By his introduction of status, partially defined by lifestyle ("Lebensführungsart") and values (179), Weber captures to a certain degree the *symbolic* dimensions of social stratification and provides a fruitful foundation for the later development of *lifestyle* concepts. Yet, as "Weber's comments on class are rather fragmentary" (Breen 34), the interrelation of the symbolic and economic in class and status remains problematic (see Vester 125). As a consequence, Bourdieu casts his seminal work *Distinction* as "an endeavor to rethink Max Weber's opposition between class and *Stand*" (*Distinction* xii).[7] Bourdieu emphasizes

that "the material (or 'economic') and the symbolic […] should not be viewed as alternative types of stratification giving rise to different types of social collectives" (Weininger 84). Instead, the "symbolic dimension" (Wacquant, "Symbolic" 3) and the "cultural dimension of lifestyles" (Burzan 135) become integrated in Bourdieu's class analysis. Consequentially, Bourdieu considers individuals to be positioned in society following from three factors: their amount of economic, cultural and social capital, the structure (i.e. the composition) of their capital, and their long-term trajectory within class relations (Bourdieu *Distinction,* "Ökonomisches Kapital;" Weininger; Burzan). All of these elements, in particular the "conversion rate" (Wacquant, "Symbolic" 4; Bourdieu, *Unterschiede* 202) between capital species[8] are the object of continuous struggles. The three-faceted social space does not have any "natural" internal boundaries, it is through "constant, reciprocal acts of social classification" (Weininger 99) that social collectivities are produced. Two modalities of producing difference and drawing group boundaries are a) the "pre-reflexive 'play' of the habitus" (102) resulting in different lifestyles, and b) what Weininger calls "discursive[9] categorization" (104). Lifestyle (as an assemblage of practices) is an expression of a person's location in society, mediated through the habitus (Weininger 90; Burzan 135-36). "Discursive categorization" refers to the discursive dimension of group politics:

> Principles of division, […] function within and for the purposes of the struggle between social groups; in producing concepts, they produce groups […]. What is at stake in the struggles about the meaning of the social world is power over the classificatory schemes and systems […]. (Bourdieu, Distinction 480)

This is true also for classes, thus the importance of "class-ification struggles:" "Systems of classification would not be such a decisive object of struggle if they did not contribute to the existence of classes […]" (480). Weininger concludes that "any social collectivity is the result of the combined symbolic acts of self-classification and classification by others that are applied to its members (and, therefore, also, to those who are excluded)" (99). While *Distinction*[10] clearly focuses on class-based classification, Bourdieu's concepts do not foreclose consideration of the importance of "other forms of domination" or "other stratifying factors—including gender, age, region, […] ethnicity" (Weininger 108).[11] Due to this openness and the distinction of three capital species, Bourdieu provides a toolbox that can also be connected to the concept of "intersectionality" which has emerged mainly from gender and feminist studies (e.g. Arrighi; Becker-Schmidt; L. Weber; Degele and Winker; Winker and Degele). This is important within the framework of this article, as empirical manifestations of *intersectionality* clearly surface in the interviewees' narrative identity construction: in particular, it is the intersection of their specific age, gender, and class which results in considerable restrictions for their movement in physical and virtual space and their self-expression.

Notwithstanding the openness to include other stratifying factors, when applied to my interview material one weakness of Bourdieu's approach lies in the central role given to *occupation* in the (re) construction of social space and for understanding stratification. All of my interview partners are students, and their future occupation is not known. All of them describe considerable lifestyle differences if they compare themselves to their parents. The assumption that those "youths'" or "dependents'" class belonging could be deduced from that of their parents (as is usually done in the study of class) is unsatisfactory. The need to find a concept that

fits the inductively developed category of AS eventually lead me to adopt the concept of "milieu" which treats age and values as defining characteristics of a social collectivity (see the paragraph on *The Americanized Milieu* below for more details). To combine "class," "lifestyle," and "milieu" in one analysis is unorthodox insofar as it combines various generations of the study of social stratification. One core argument of diversifying theories of social inequality/stratification in the last decades has been that society becomes more individualized, and in a sense more complex. Thus, the "classical" forms of social collectivity—namely class and family—were losing importance for defining an individual's position and identity. The concepts catching vertical stratification have thus been replaced by concepts like milieu, lifestyle, and others that focus on horizontal stratification.

My research on Egypt indicates that these two types of stratification are not mutually exclusive: Egypt's society is still (or even increasingly) marked by strong vertical stratification. At the same time, though, we can observe a diversification of lifestyles, and the formation of social collectivities that are distinct from each other primarily on the horizontal level.

I argue, therefore, that vertical concepts like class and horizontal ones like lifestyle and milieu can be complementary rather than substitutionary. To further complicate things, the material and ideational dimensions are simultaneously involved in producing social stratification. In that sense, in my interviews "class" receives importance as a category of first order construction, i.e. it figures in my interviewees' everyday construction of meaning. Research is, in my opinion, well advised to be aware of those two dimensions and their complex interplay.

The purpose of this article, to reconstruct the AS (as part of horizontal distinction), to locate it within vertical stratification, and to understand (material and ideational) processes of classification is very much in line with Bourdieu's research agenda. Yet, in addition to choosing "milieu" as a concept, I also part with Bourdieu as far as the empirical access point to those phenomena is concerned. For my research, individual persons' "narrative identity construction" in biographical interviews served as the observable empirical phenomenon. While I used existing literature and available data to contextualize my results, the focus was clearly on communicative interaction and practices of discursive classification on the micro-level.[12]

The identity concept[13] used here is located in the interactionist and social constructivist tradition. While the work of Mead, Goffman, and Berger were foundational for this thinking about identity, in my analysis, I drew most strongly on the concept of narrative identity put forward by Lucius-Hoene and Deppermann ("Narrative Identity;" *Rekonstruktion*). Identity is then considered, on the one hand, a flexible product of self-reflective individuals. Its construction is at the same time conditioned by power structures, by cultural frames of meaning, and by a person's resources defined by her location in sociocultural and historical context (Lucius-Hoene and Deppermann, *Rekonstruktion* 49-50).[14] As such, it can be seen as "a phenomenon that emerges from the dialectic between individual and society" (Berger and Luckmann 195).[15] Language is a medium central to interactive identity work, and narration constitutes a form of communication that has particular power for identity construction and meaning making (Lucius-Hoene and Deppermann, *Rekonstruktion*; Wenzler-Cremer 68-69). The presentation and enacting of narrative identity in a biographical interview is bound by the normative power of "social scripts and templates" (Baddeley and Singer 198) and narrative mechanisms. The resultant co-produced text provides

an empirical access point to study individuals' identity work, their attempts to come to term with the structural limits, and the concrete application of their resources in the specific socio-historical context. Positioning analysis[16] has been one of the analytical tools for approaching the text. The resulting reconstruction of narrative identity enabled the teasing out of categories of difference that are employed by my interviewees in their struggles for distinction and is thus particularly apt to show discursive categorization at work.

The Background of This Article and Its Empirical Foundation

The upper middle class/upper class youth,[17] had caught my attention long before the revolution. What I was primarily interested in, however, were neither issues of class nor issues of political change. At the outset of my research, I was interested in understanding how individuals cope with what I perceived to be contradictory macro-trends and corresponding practices in Egyptian society. These larger socio-economic orientations can be circumscribed by the terms Westernization and Re-Islamization (or "turning West" and "turning East," Werner). I consider both variants of globalization[18] that shape the public sphere and people's behavior and ideas in Egypt (Bayat; Werner). By analyzing people's narrative identity construction I am able to gain some understanding of the relevance of those macro-trends for individuals. I assumed that students from AUC would be exposed to both trends to a high degree. AUC can be called "Egypt's most liberal institution" (Bayat 147). Nonetheless, my own experience in Egypt and the observations of Bayat (147) and Mehrez indicated that both trends, Westernization and Re-Islamization, shape student life and interaction at this institution which is frequented by students from a variety of sociocultural backgrounds (103-04). While in that sense AUC's students are a "potpourri" (104), their *socioeconomic* location is more homogeneous: AUC takes on the formation of Egypt's elite.[19] In that respect, it originally competed with another secular institution of higher education, Cairo University. However, with the decline of the public educational sector as a consequence of the *infitah* (Ibrahim 106; Handoussa et al. 46), AUC's importance has increased to such a degree that, today, Mehrez considers it "*the* [emphasis added] institution responsible for forming the affluent Egyptian elite, both male and female" (95). At the core of this formation are "a dual commitment to liberal arts and Arabic language and culture" (93). Being a "Western" institution "at the center of the elite education market" (95), AUC has become the target of both high hopes and severe suspicion. On the one hand, it provides its students with the cultural capital necessary for professional success in the Egyptian job market (Barsoum), presenting a near unique "window to the global future" (Mehrez 95). On the other hand, it is perceived as "a repositor[y] […] of colonial influence and domination" (94). The contestation surrounding AUC is, therefore, not a simple reflection of major socioeconomic trends in Egyptian society, such as privatization and the decline of the public sector. It also touches upon the (discursive) struggles surrounding issues of nationalism, (neo-) colonialism, globalization and modernity. Peterson poignantly sums up this symbolic position of AUC:

> […] the American University in Cairo (AUC) represents to many Egyptians all the best and worst aspects of modernity. It is the pinnacle of academic excellence but also of elitism. It represents wealth and social mobility but also Westernization and loss of authenticity. (97)

The contradictions outlined here by Peterson clearly reflect on my interviewees' identity construction. They are highlighted by the fact that my sample split into two halves,[20] as far as their trajectory into

AUC is concerned. While most of my twelve interviewees were accepted into some kind of financial reduction scheme by AUC,[21] six of them had been awarded a full scholarship. The scholarship was based on merit, and is awarded annually to one person per governorate. The fact that they were "not from Cairo" (Samira) but from "a little bit conservative communit[ies]" (Mariam) was of central importance to those women's identity construction. In terms of their self-presentation, they formed a stark contrast to the other six women who could be considered part of AUC's classical elite clientele. The latter live with their families in traditional up-scale neighborhoods like Heliopolis, Mohandeseen, and Dokki or in gated communities in 6th of October City.[22] They are dressed more or less casually, in a Western style, frequently refer to Western (pop) culture to describe their own preferences for cultural consumption, and have (comparatively) liberal norms as far as sexuality is concerned. It is them who identify with what one interviewee has called "my Americanized Society" (Yasmine). The scholarship recipients, on the other hand, stay in university dorms, they dress more conservatively, and adhere more strictly to conservative values. And even though they are far removed from their home communities, these constitute an important reference point in their autobiographical narrations, allowing them to construe themselves as mediators between two worlds. These differences notwithstanding, what unites a majority of my interviewees is their self-positioning as "upper-middle class" and their awareness of their society's stratified nature.

The Americanized Milieu: Living a "Completely Westernized" Lifestyle

"*We are* completely Westernized, and I mean, when I say we, me and my friends, because this is something collective … *we are* completely Westernized. Completely Americanized, living in a *very* oriental society" (Rana).

Being part of the AS means pursuing a "Westernized" or "Americanized" lifestyle. A similarly central feature is the sharing of certain values and norms, in particular in reference to gender, sexuality, and convivial behavior. This focus on values indicates that the AS can be most appropriately described as a *milieu*, i.e. a social group who shares a lifestyle, norms and values, a certain outlook and way of interacting with the (social) environment, and that is distinguished by increased likelihood of interaction or communication.[23] Being part of a milieu is usually also seen as depending on factors such as education and age.

For my interview partners, a defining part of being in the AS is to participate in certain activities. Together with their peers they spend their free time in venues that are linked to the imaginary of the West and that allow engagement in conspicuous consumption. These are places like the Western-style coffee shops such as Cilantro or Beano's; music clubs and bars like Cairo Jazz Club, that serve alcohol and usually play a mix of music from American and Egyptian pop to all kinds of electronic music; or the "hippie-style" beach camps between Taba and Nuweiba where consumption of legal and illegal drugs seems not to be unusual; the gigantic shopping malls such as City Stars presenting a huge variety of restaurants and shops; gyms and sports clubs with exclusive membership where there are Cross-fit and Yoga courses on offer; bowling alleys and multiplex cinemas. Besides frequenting those semi-public spaces (see below on exclusionary mechanisms), the Americanized also frequently meet at private houses—often without the supervision of parents or other relatives. Their consumption practices comprise material as much as (pop) cultural products, ranging from all sorts of music and music videos to TED

talks, American sitcoms, branded clothing and accessories, to Facebook and YouTube.

What most of those venues have in common is that the norms usually regulating gender and sexuality in the public sphere are suspended. Detailed analysis of my material showed that the norms my interviewees see themselves contrasted with in the more socially conservative Egyptian society can be clustered around three imperatives for women: chastity, dependence, marriage (Birkholz, "Identities" 196-202). Women need to protect their chastity, which starts with the reputation, being dependent on her outward appearance and her behavior. Both should be "decent" and "modest," and avoid catching attention. For protection and provision the ideal Egyptian woman should rely on others (namely the men in the family, the boyfriend/fiancé or the husband). They should build their life around a striving for marriage and motherhood. While this might sound stereotypical, it represents the expectations my interview partners feel confronted with. In the AS, however, they feel free to dress as they like; wearing skirts, t-shirts, or spaghetti tops is not frowned upon. Also, interaction between men and women feels less regulated to them—in both a sexual and a non-sexual way. On the one hand, casual interaction between youth from the opposite gender represents a crucial feature of this milieu. Interaction between men and women has acquired a degree of normalcy that desexualizes certain practices. E.g. kissing a guy on the cheek or hugging him is claimed to be a normal form of a greeting between friends—without any sexual connotation attached to it. On the other hand, having a boyfriend is also perceived to be the norm rather than the exception. Similarly, the American "idea of dating" and the ideal of complementary partnership seem to be widely shared:

> The whole Westernized thing. But that's because of me that's because I'm in that culture of Egypt, that society … where we're a bit influenced by the globalization part and so on. Where some of us accept the idea of dating and then we accept the idea of being exclusive. And then you take some time to go through the whole 'I'm gonna meet your parents' and then the whole steps that you see in … shows, American and other places, we're kind of accepting it more […]. (Nadia)

How far sexual contact goes largely depends on the individual but there seems to be a shared boundary which Nadia expresses most poignantly, and which my other interviewees individually confirm: "The whole physical part changes from one person to the other. [In] my society a lot of the people, the whole physical part, we do whatever we want but we don't have intercourse."

Other practices that have become the norm in the AS but are perceived to be at odds with the more conservative segments of the Egyptian society are smoking and drinking (by both boys and girls). How much these practices have become the standard in the AS becomes most evident when Reem, an AUC student who in many regards shares the outlook and lifestyle of the AS, feels the need to distance herself from smoking and drinking which she perceives as the behavior peers at school and university would expect.

Furthermore, religion is treated as a private matter that falls squarely into the realm of private decision making. As a consequence, even for those who consider themselves devout Muslims, wearing a veil is not a preferred form of expressing their religiosity. In clear renunciation of what Bayat has termed "public piety," they reject the idea that outward appearance provided a cue to religious identity, and affirm religiosity as an inward affair (Birk-

holz, "Identities" 220-30). Furthermore, the Americanized's outlook is shaped by supposedly Western values such as fun and freedom, appreciation for diversity, acceptance of difference and tolerance, open-mindedness, and a more independent position of young people.

While most of my interviewees construe themselves as tolerant and open to diversity, they feel pressure to conform to a supposedly homogenous society. They are under the impression of constant surveillance and tight social control by "the people" and their gaze that might detect any potential transgression of norms of morality and public order. In order to freely enact their norms and express their lifestyle according to their values, the Americanized need segregated places.

Drawing the Material and Symbolic Boundaries of the Americanized Society

Successful access to the aforementioned venues and products that ensure an Americanized lifestyle is dependent on both economic and cultural capital. Before describing those mechanisms, I want to draw attention to age as a factor that conditions membership in the AS. The aforementioned spaces and lifestyles are very much constituted by age in the sense that they are associated primarily with a certain age group that can roughly be defined as "youth."[24] While this is typical for a milieu, exclusion based on economic, cultural, and social capital applies to most kinds of stratification concepts. For Egypt, it is important to note that cultural capital, in particular the specific form "cosmopolitan capital,"[25] is today also largely dependent on economic capital. The aforementioned decline of the public educational sector and its association with traditionalism, conservatism and a certain degree of xenophobia means that high-quality education satisfying global standards can only be obtained from private institutions. The private international schools and the international universities, like AUC and GUC (German University Cairo), equip their students with "familiarity with globally dominant, First World repertoires and standards" (De Koning 9) and "mastery of globally dominant cultural codes" (6). Besides being more or less internet-savvy, proficiency in English—in the best case spoken without an Egyptian accent—constitutes *the* central element of cosmopolitan capital and it is essential not only for access to upper (middle) class circles but also for success on the private and internationally oriented segments of the job market (De Koning 160; Haeri; Barsoum; Mehrez 103). While most Egyptian university graduates today speak some English or other foreign languages, the term "bilingual" has come to designate all those who have from an early age on been exposed to costly international education. Even though the term bilingual is not meant entirely literally, it points to the strong identification of the "bilinguals" with their second language and culture, and it helps to distinguish them from those who learned English at a public university. This renders understandable why Nadia, who on various occasions emphasizes her Westernization, highlights that being able to speak English *without an Egyptian accent* "totally affected my life."

Beyond the boundaries drawn by cosmopolitan capital, the exclusion can be enforced through other means. Lifestyle and habitus are relevant when bouncers decide whom to grant access into Cairo's nightclubs and bars. Restaurants introduce minimum charges to guarantee the economic capital of their customers, or even adopt the policy that after a certain time of day, when the evening business starts, women wearing a headscarf have to leave the venue. It is worth noting that those exclusionary practices are not limited to the Americanized milieu. The development of gated communities is generally seen as a means of the upper classes

to craft socioeconomically homogenous spaces (Abaza; Ghannam, "Promise").
For the AS, material and symbolic strategies of exclusion serve to protect the specific lifestyle and constitute the boundaries of the milieu in a vertical hierarchy, i.e. against those from a lower class. Their effective exclusion means that from the viewpoint of the Americanized no major, explicit conflicts arise between the classes. They note the constant need to adjust their behavior in reaction to this "dichotomy" of values, and complain about the inability to dress and behave everywhere in the same way they do in AUC, but beyond this annoyance, the difference does not cause any open friction *as long as* you know when and how to change repertoires:

> And there are a lot of people who are like me. But you have to deal with the rest of the society … at lots of points in time you know. People who don't share the same … way of thinking … and these are the majority in the country, so you're gonna have to deal with them at one point or the other … so it's good if you can. And I can. I mean I can deal with people who think in a way that is completely different than me and I would be fine with that. I would know what to avoid, what not to, so it's fine. (Rana)

Yet, this lifestyle and the respective values distinguish the members of the AS also from people with similar socioeconomic background, often their parents or siblings. While they principally have access to the Americanized lifestyle in terms of capital volume and structure, they are not part of the milieu as far as their values (and in some cases their generation) are concerned. And while "the people's" gaze creates an atmosphere of social control, it is family and peers who are not part of the AS who try to *enforce* more conservative norms. One reason for enforcing the triad of chastity, dependence and marriage, is to maintain the *impression* of a (upper) middle class identity and to avoid the pitfalls of elite identity. It is here exactly where class and gender intersect as forces structuring my interviewees' lives. In order to underline this argument, let me show, why middle class identity seems attractive—and elite identity is not. This will also help to locate the milieu AS within the larger social space and understand the struggles of distinction and categorization.

Being Middle Class in Egypt: Avoiding the Pitfalls of a Morally Aloof Elite

Corresponding to some scholarly perspective on the middle class (Armbrust 108; Bourdieu, *Unterschiede* 205-06; MacLeod xv; Weininger), my interviewees define middle class as *what it is not* much more than by what it is. As Armbrust poignantly puts it:

> The presumed decadence of both the poor and the rich brackets middle class identity. The poor are suspect because of their 'failure' to adjust their lives to modern institutions, the wealthy for a rootless cosmopolitanism at the opposite end of the socioeconomic spectrum. Thus failure to 'get with the program' is marked by presumed backwardness in the case of the poor, and for the rich, by inauthenticity tainted with foreignness. To be middle class is to refuse both extremes. (108)

The striving to be acknowledged as middle class is very similar to what Peterson describes as the struggle to strike "the right balance between authentic Egyptianness and Westernized modernity" (104). It is around the issue of (middle) class that the perceived opposition of modernity and tradition, Westernization and Egyptianness becomes articulated. The negative images held by some of my interviewees about "the rich" and "the elite" clearly illustrates this.

The scholarship holders draw quite an unfavorable picture of the "extremely rich" (Samira) when describing their own or their home communities' perception. The rich are suspicious because of their rootless cosmopolitanism and their strong ties to *barra,* "the foreign/outside of Egypt." The ambivalence vis-à-vis the elite seems to reflect society's post-colonial sentiments and a strong ambivalence to foreign culture and power. On the one hand, "the richer you are, the more respected you are" (Mariam), while on the other hand, the rich are distrusted as their wealth is taken to indicate immorality. They are seen as non-religious, non-traditional, "they have no ethics" (Mariam) and eventually are not bound by the country's legal and society's ethical roles. Their immoral behavior in terms of sexuality is where their behavior supposedly overlaps with that of the poor. But while the poor have no other choice ("because when you are poor you can do anything to get food," Eman), the rich act in that way simply because their status alone immunizes them so "they don't have to go strict by our rules" (Eman).

> You know, when you have the money, you do whatever you want. So no one would stop you and tell you 'what the hell are you doing?' Especially we were in a regime that if you crossed the road when you should not, and when you drive on a speed that you should not, if you have sometimes hit someone by the car and you are able to escape with it because you do have the money. So why wouldn't you do something that's outside of the traditions? (Eman)

Eventually, combining all these features, the "extremely rich" are portrayed as traitors, completely detached from Egyptian culture and the country's woes (Mariam):

> They are not Egyptians from our perspective. Not Egyptians not in nationality but in the culture, the life they never tasted, what it means not to be able to eat what they want to eat in a day. They never tasted what it means that the salary of your father is not exactly enough to complete the expenses of this month. They don't know what … even being near to poor is. (Eman)

Yet, as already indicated, this suspicion towards other classes runs both ways: Abaza has already observed the "obsession of the rich in Cairo […] to push away the unwanted poor as far as possible" (256). This coincides with the criminalization of poverty which constitutes a nearly global trend (Harders; Singerman and Amar; Wacquant, "Penalisation"). The informal settlements on the fringe of Cairo (*ashwa'iyyat*) are construed as "the Hobbesian locus of lawlessness, extremism, crime, and poverty" (Bayat and Denis 15). The poor are constructed as an uncivilized, unrefined counter-image to the elite.

Doing Middle Class Identity in Narrating Your Self

It is against this backdrop that (upper) middle class as a category for identity construction becomes attractive. While most of my interviewees use indexes associating them with middle class, the need to distinguish themselves explicitly from the "elite" seems pressing mostly for the AS.

The observed convergence of the upper classes notwithstanding, all of the regular AUC students and two of the scholarship holders clearly identify themselves as upper *middle* class. All my interview partners distinguish themselves from lower classes, by portraying themselves as modern, open-minded, and "cosmopolitan savvy" (De Koning 47). Theoretically, their educational capital has been asserted upfront as them being AUC students was a reason for my approaching them as interview partners. In addition, in doing an in-depth, biographical interview in *English* lan-

guage, they were already *performing* as someone who belongs to the cultured classes. Nonetheless, my interviewees explicitly mentioned and highlighted their English language skills. Noor even emphasized that her former peers at Cairo University also "have the same level of English [as AUCians]–globalization is doing its job." Most of those from communities other than Cairo also underline that they would not be able to go back because they could no longer deal with the "mentalities" and "close-mindedness" there, and because there were no adequate jobs available in other cities. At the same time, they frequently portray themselves as "mediators between local and global" (De Koning 47).

The regular AUC students make it a point that they are not the elite, and not elitist. They distinguish themselves from what they see as the upper class by various means. They emphasize that the upper class was disposing of still more economic capital: they "have private jets […] a car per person, those are upper class. They have […] villas in every shore area in Egypt for example. We're not like that," Reem states. She continues with a typical middle class categorization: "So I would say that we put all our money in education rather than in houses or cars and stuff." While various interviewees concede that they "are living a luxurious life" (Naima), they stress that they "are not millionaires" (Naima) and "we can afford traveling a lot and all that but at the same time it's not like we drive a Porsche. So we're not one of these people. We only have one car that my mum and me share. It's not too lavish of a lifestyle" (Lamis).

They also make it a point to distinguish themselves in terms of attitude. They are not part of "the rich kids that don't care" (Rana). Rather, they are very much engaged, also in various civil society activities that are meant to enhance one's own learning experience and contribute to society.[26] They portray themselves as eager to learn, as people who value education, and who are thankful for the privileges they enjoy. Other than those AUC generations who have only known the new desert campus, they have not spent their entire life in a "bubble" (Yasmine; Lamis). They are not "elitist" (Lamis), they do frequent *sha'bi* ("popular")[27] venues and they respect people from different economic backgrounds. In terms of culture, and lifestyle, they are well-versed also in traditional and local repertoires (however constructed tradition and locality might be).

While the young women seem to have a stake in not being associated with the elite, their values and practices (as described above) clearly set them apart from those outside of the AS. Their wish to distance themselves from the elite, however, does not go so far to compromise those values. Their parents, brothers, and potential husbands seem to care a lot about the implications of being associated with the upper class. Yasmine's mother, for example, tries to enforce strict traditional gender and family norms in an attempt to save her daughter from the moral corruption of Americanization and to reassert the importance of tradition and authenticity. While there might be other explanations, a detailed reconstruction of Yasmine's narrative identity construction plausibly shows that one motive for her mother's behavior is class-related (see Birkholz, "Identities"). Given that the family belongs to the particularly despised nouveaux riches, the mother's focus on authenticity, tradition, morality, and rejection of anything "American" can be understood as enacting the own middle class-belonging in face of ongoing class competition (Willems 105). The fear of downward mobility and not being accepted by the traditional families might increase the need to distinguish one's own family from the rootless, uncultured

Sina Birkholz

is a researcher at the Institute for Interdisciplinary Research on Conflict and Violence at Bielefeld University. In the international project "Violence, Research and Development," Sina coordinates cooperation with Egypt and leads the research line "Justifications and Legitimacy of Police Violence," focusing on processes of political (de-) legitimization. Sina studied Political Science and Psychology at Augsburg University (Germany) and the University of St. Andrews (Scotland). She wrote her graduation thesis on "Identities at Crossroads: Young Muslim Women in Post-Revolutionary Egypt." Sina has spent more than two years in Egypt, among other things doing research on women, youth, and their role in the revolution.

nouveaux riches who are perceived as the "embodiment" of "possessive individualism" (Bayat 159-61). For projecting the image of a *cultured* middle class, women and their reputation are endowed with particular symbolic importance. This shows the entanglement of class and gender (re) production with discourses about the nation and modernity. The roots of women's specific position in these reach at least as far back as the 19th century: the early struggles for an "indigenous definition of modernity […] took shape around the woman question" (Booth xxviii). The fear that "a superficial sort of Westernization [w]as ruining Egyptian womanhood—and threatening the identity and survival of the nation" (xxviii) has a long-standing tradition in Egypt and makes itself felt in the struggles for class positions until today.

Reflections on Concepts of Social Stratification in Light of the Empirical Material

This article has attempted to reconstruct the AS as it figured in my interview partners' narrative identity construction. It also showed that it is possible to understand this social collectivity conceptually as a milieu whose boundaries are drawn by lifestyles and various material and symbolic exclusionary mechanisms. Furthermore, it has tried to shed light on the politics of classifying oneself as middle class in Egypt, and on the way discursive (self-) categorization attempts to produce affiliation with this class and distinction from the elite. As such, this article is also an appeal for paying close attention to various theoretical and empirical intersections.

On a theoretical and conceptual level, it indicates that concepts focusing on the horizontal or the vertical level of social stratification need not be mutually exclusive. The AS milieu is clearly relevant to understanding the interviewees' position in society. At the same time, class—and the struggles of distinction revolving around class-belonging—is also an important element of people's narrative identity construction. In addition, those vertical dynamics are also relevant in locating the AS milieu within overlapping lines of distinction and for understanding its exclusionary practices. Rather than treating class and milieu as alternative concepts, it's advisable to treat them as complementary. This is particularly true for societies like Egypt where individualizing tendencies exist alongside strong collective identification and economic division.

Furthermore, the analysis has shown that in order to understand struggles of distinction both first and second order constructs—in our case categories of daily practice and scientific categories referring to class—need to be taken into account. In the study of social stratification, the reconciliation of objectivist and subjectivist, i.e. realist and nominalist, concepts that Wacquant ("Symbolic" 4) took to be realized in Bourdieu's work, is needed to understand the complex interplay of processes of meaning-making, discourses and material realities.

Finally, the analysis has also highlighted the need for truly intersectional studies that do not focus almost exclusively on one factor (class) while only cursorily touching upon the others (gender, age, region). The narrative identity construction of these young women has shown not only that gender, age, and class overlap in their positioning but that they all relate in different ways to larger discourses about modernity and Egyptianness. A desideratum for future research is thus not only to provide a theoretical and methodological framework for analyzing those complex interrelations (Winker and Degele as well as L. Weber offer a starting point) but also to understand the implications for political processes and for ongoing conflicts about Egypt's national identity.

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→ Notes

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[2] This article draws on (see Birkholz, "Identities"). Many aspects that can only be touched upon in this text are treated in more detail there. Whenever I feel that it would be a particularly important source for understanding the analysis behind an argument, I reference the text specifically.

[3] Of course, my contextual knowledge acquired through various long-term stays and other research conducted in Egypt was indispensable for this interpretation.

[4] While being empirically very rich, providing invaluable insights to Egyptian society, many of the anthropological studies do not offer a thorough discussion of class as theoretical concept.

[5] Today, class theories are considered as only one type of theory in the larger field of studies on social stratification (e.g. Grusky) or social inequality, as the German terminology has it (e.g. Burzan).

[6] Weber does consider an individual's skills and economic resources. Both, however, matter only in so far as they have a value on the (job) market.

[7] This is not to say that Weber was the only, or singularly important, influence on Bourdieu. For further elaborations on Bourdieu's theoretical and conceptual sources see Wacquant.

[8] I am employing the translation that Wacquant usually uses in his writings on Bourdieu.

[9] In this article, "discursive" refers to verbal expressions while indicating the constitutive power of discourses as "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak" (Foucault 54). See also p. 4 on the discursive production of groups.

[10] In Bourdieu's own writing, the focus afterward clearly shifts to gender as a central category, and according to Wacquant ("Symbolic" 9) also to ethnicity, disguised as the occupation with "region, immigration, and the treatment of foreigners," influencing people's life chances.

[11] Note that within our framework all of these—class, gender, age, region, race etc.—can be understood as sociostructural categories objectively positioning individuals in a constructed social space, *and* as discursive classificatory principles. This is equivalent to the distinction made by Winker and Degele between gender as a structural category and as a process (they add, however a third dimension of reading gender, which is the ideological level). Consequentially, Wacquant understands Bourdieu's approach to class as a reconciliation of objectivist and subjectivist, realist and nominalist conceptions of class ("Symbolic" 4).

[12] This corresponds with one element of the research agenda on intersectionality laid out by Winker and Degele: "Im Fokus stehen erstens Prozesse des Klassifizierens (und nicht ihre Ergebnisse) und zweitens Interaktionen auf der Mikroebene (und keine gesellschaftlichen Strukturen auf der Makroebene). Dabei ist Geschlecht neben u.a. Rasse, Nation, Religion, Beruf eine Kategorie, über die sich Menschen definieren, an der sie ihre Identität, verstanden als Verhältnis zu sich selbst, festmachen." (19-20)

[13] For a more detailed discussion of identity and narration see Birkholz, "Identities" 75-86.

[14] To this extent, Bottero's criticism that recent approaches to identity were focusing too much on the discursive nature of identity, thereby treating identity as "relatively independent of social position," (5) does not hold true for the identity concept put forward here.

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→ [15] As such, it is close to Bourdieu's concept of habitus (Liebsch). Nonetheless, in contrast to some scholars I consider it insufficient to reconstruct the habitus primarily on the basis of interview material. The habitus cannot be separated from the idea of embodiment. In my understanding, Bourdieu constructs habitus as a theoretical concept constituting the link between the observable lifestyle and the individual's class location. For the debate on the empirical applicability of habitus see Bottero; Davey; Reay.

[16] My usage of terms such as "self-positioning" or "to position" is influenced by positioning analysis as a tool to analyze text. See Birkholz, "Identities" 79-83 for the underlying understanding of "positioning."

[17] The choice to interview women only was due entirely to practical considerations. From my previous experiences in Egypt I had concluded that for me the kind of interview conversation I was hoping for would not have been possible with a considerable number of young Egyptian men.

[18] For a definition of globalization and the differentiation from Westernization see Appadurai; Saalmann, Schirmer and Kessler; Spiegel. Westernization is for example evident in the "intensified transnational communication in form of Western products and the corresponding narratives and imagery streaming into Egypt" (Werner 7; see also Peterson 103). It is also visible in people's consumption practices and leisure activities (Bayat 165).

[19] This seems to be the case in particular for undergraduate students. Conversations with students and professors from AUC indicate that the socioeconomic background of the graduate students is different in so far as they mostly stem from a more modest economic background.

[20] After the selective sampling (Rosenthal 86-87) I used the snowballing technique to find my interview partners, and relied on previous contacts as gatekeeper.

[21] According to my interviewees, a reduction of tuition fees can be based on need, on merit, or on the parent's status as AUC employee.

[22] The choice of neighborhood is not exclusively economic. A family's tradition and attachment can also play a role in the decision to stay in neighborhoods like Dokki, Manial, or Mohandeseen. For lower classes, Ghannam demonstrates the importance of attachment and of the fear to loose one's identity by moving elsewhere (*Remaking* 78-79). It is interesting to note that none of my interviewees' families had yet moved to the more recently constructed gated communities like "Beverly Hills City, Dreamland, Gardenia Park, Katameya Heights, and Hyde Park" whose English-language advertising openly appeals to those who aspire to a "Western" lifestyle ("The Promise").

[23] As there is no agreement as to how lifestyle and milieu shall be defined and delineated from each other, I decided to craft my own definition by combining the definitions put forward by Burzan; Hradil; Rössel; Schulze; and SIGMA.

[24] See Birkholz, "Confronting" for a discussion of the concept "youth."

[25] The following paragraph on cosmopolitan capital and education draws equally on Barsoum; De Koning; Haeri; Mehrez.

[26] For charity as a marker of middle class identity see De Koning 47; Rehbein 182.

[27] The adjective derives from the word *el-sha'b* for "the people." The English translation "popular" is not able to convey the negative connotation that *sha'bi* often has in Egypt. "Proletarian" might be a more adequate translation.

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Public Education: A Route into Lebanon's Middle Class in the 1960s and Early 1970s

Youssef Zbib

In Lebanon during the 1960s, public education became more accessible to members of the lower classes and different sectarian denominations, after a time when education had been, to a large extent, a privilege of upper- and middle-class Christians. This paper examines the socioeconomic conditions of public school teachers as a result of this process. Using Bourdieusian analysis, I argue that these teachers used cultural capital acquired through free education to become part of a rising professional middle class. To a large extent, these teachers' definition of their own social positions and roles was a result of their individual histories and internalized values.

Keywords: Lebanon; Education; Middle Class; Bureaucracy

Introduction

In 1962, Melhem Saliba—the son of a communist stonecutter—started teaching at the public school in his predominantly Greek Orthodox village of R'it in mid-Beqaa, eastern Lebanon. He studied for two years at the public *Dar al-Mu'allimin al-'Ulia*, or Higher Institute for Teacher Formation, after obtaining his *brevet* diploma, a qualification given by the government for passing an examination at the ninth grade. The school, which had been built in the 1950s, offered no classes beyond the elementary level, and had only three rooms. In 1966 the school director, who was from another town, decided to leave and arranged that Saliba replace him, "even though such a position required *wasta* ("political connections")," as he mentioned in an interview.

Saliba's teaching journey is indicative of a wider process that took place in Lebanon during the 1960s. Though the government never became the primary provider of education, public schools developed significantly between the years 1958 and 1970, challenging the hegemony of private sectarian institutions over education. Whereas these establishments, which were mostly founded in the nineteenth century, benefitted mainly middle- and upper-class Christians, public schools gave people from lower classes and different sects more access to education—something increasingly seen in the 1960s as a necessary asset for employment ('Āmel 25).

I will focus my analysis on one of the implications of this process—the socioeconomic conditions of public school teachers—mainly because the availability of free education was a self-feeding process. The public school network provided free education to a large number of people from rural backgrounds and with limited economic means, and then turned a large

number of them into new bureaucrats to staff its own apparatus.

By looking strictly at the objective conditions of teachers, such as income, one could generally describe them as part of a lower-middle class composed of "technocratic, managerial, and technical groupings that do not owe their existence to private property" (D.L. Johnson, 22). My focus, however, is directed at the process of these teachers' socialization.
The testimonies used as empirical data in this paper were gathered from interviewees who come from a rural background, and became educated through public schools roughly from the 1950s to the early 1970s. All except one then earned a living by teaching, mostly in public schools.
The empirical findings that I have collected do not allow for description of public school teachers as "an actual class, in the sense of a group, a group mobilized for struggle" (Bourdieu, "The Social Space" 725). While an organized union movement did develop during the period under study, qualitative and quantitative data beyond the scope this paper can include is needed to determine if and how teachers were mobilized into such a *class*, as described by Bourdieu. The interlocutors, however, perceived themselves to a large extent as having acquired a higher social position thanks to formal education they received in public schools. The educational system gave them an official legitimacy that granted them access into a salaried group of professionals. Such access would otherwise not have been available. In their new social positions, they acquired social prestige by virtue of their professions and had better economic means (economic capital) in comparison to others in the communities from which they came.

I argue that, through public formal education, individuals like Saliba were able to increase their level of education, or what Bourdieu calls their *cultural capital*, and improve their social standing (for the terms *field*, forms of *capital*, and *habitus*, I refer to Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 97-225). Cultural capital can be substantiated into economic capital—in other words, these teachers had secure jobs with steady incomes thanks to their formal education. But it can also provide "an individual with embodied social attributes that confer 'distinction' upon the individual and legitimacy upon the hierarchy of social inequality and the stratification of taste" (Moore 446).

But the social roles and positions acquired by the interlocutors, and arguably larger numbers of people who shared their objective conditions, were also actively shaped by personal choices and motivations. Their practices took shape through a dynamic and reciprocal relationship among their dispositions and preferences they had acquired within their families or at school (habitus), and social factors regulating their lives, such as the official definition of a teacher's role or the wage offered to her by the government (field) (Bourdieu and Wacquant 127). The importance of Bourdieu's theoretical formulation in this study is that it transcends the dichotomy between objective social factors and individual agency. As we will see in more detail, while going through the process of acquiring new social positions, individuals often effaced the lines that the government drew in providing subsidized education and employing teachers.

Before going any further, a few notes on the methodology I have used are necessary. My use of Bourdieu's concepts of class and capital to analyze socio-historical events in Lebanon relies on previous applications of these concepts on societies outside of France (Robbins 2004). Schayegh has also used these concepts to study the rise of Iran's middle class in the early twentieth century and its relation to modern medical

knowledge ("The Social Relevance of Knowledge").

Interviewees come from Muslim Shi'ite and Christian Greek Orthodox families; however, they did not mention their sectarian affiliation as an element of their identity. While I maintain that sects are not monolithic sociopolitical groups, and sectarian affiliation cannot be automatically translated into social position, it is important to note the following, which is relevant to the study of social mobility: Before the civil war that erupted in 1975, Shi'ites were mostly rural and the last to benefit from the Lebanese political patronage system. This radicalized the Shi'ite community and made it the main tributary for leftist parties (M. Johnson 6). As for the Greek Orthodox community, little attention has been directed toward its rural component. Salibi, for example, stressed that the urban mercantile bourgeoisie was mostly Greek Orthodox (213). M. Johnson also states that being rural is part of the imagined identity that fuels the Maronites' "romantic nationalism," as pitted against the Sunni's and the Greek Orthodox's urbanism (185).

Narratives were gathered through semi-structured interviews. My use of these oral testimonies is informed by Schumann's analysis of autobiographies as historical sources, which understands personal accounts to not be "transparent records of the past" (177). These narratives are not mere descriptive biographies. With the variation that the medium of recording here is not personal writing, I understand these testimonies to be shaped by the interlocutors' "patterns of world- and self-perception or rather by their social habitus" (Schumann 179). Through these micro-histories, I hope to elucidate how both private and public factors interplayed to make the social experiences of these individuals an inherent part of the process of expanding the public education network.

But before taking a closer look at these teachers' lives, I will put this process into economic and political context, as well as discuss numbers and facts relevant to it.

Public Education as Part of State Intervention

By the time President Fouad Chehab came to power in 1958, Lebanon—unlike other postcolonial Arab states—had not engaged in eroding the influence of foreign educational institutions (Roucek 439-44). Most of these had been established by French, British, and American Christian missions in the nineteenth century (Bashshur, *"al-Ta'līm al-'āli"* 42-43), and they thrived because they fulfilled the ambitions of Christian communities to climb the social ladder (Khater 135). These institutions were left to operate freely after withdrawal of French troops in 1946 (Dueck 104-107).

Laws established during the French mandate after 1920 gave all religious communities the freedom to foster their own schools. Christians continued to benefit from a traditional network of religious schools, while Muslims relied on the newly rising government schools (Bashshur, *"al-Ta'līm al-'āli"* 43-45), in addition to a limited number of private schools inspired by their Christian counterparts, such as the Sunni *al-Maqased*, founded in 1878 (Schatkowski 20), and the Shi'ite *'Amiliyya*, established in 1929 (Atiyyah 149). Public schools, however, did not develop enough to meet popular need (Traboulsi 94; Dueck 92), which was still the case in the 1950s (Mughniyyeh).

The expansion of public education in the 1960s took place within the wider framework of Presidents Chehab's (ruled between 1958 and 1964) and Charles Helou's (ruled between 1964 and 1970) adoption of central planning and greater public spending, which amounted to a relative interruption of the *laissez-faire* approach (Traboulsi 138). Chehab was elected as a

compromise president after the short 1958 civil war, sparked by Maronite President Camille Chamoun's attempt to renew his mandate, which angered the largely Muslim opposition. The conflict also had social dimensions, since Christians dominated the middle classes and economic elite (Schayegh, "1958 Reconsidered" 432; Traboulsi 128-37).

Schayegh argues that political crises in 1958 and 1959—by relying on central planning—triggered a "single, region-wide process" of overhauling the state system in Lebanon, Syria (as part of the United Arab Republic), and Jordan. This process aimed to achieve social stability and stand against interference from neighboring countries ("1958 Reconsidered" 423). In Lebanon, the state had little control over the economy, and social services were being offered by either individuals or charity foundations (Issawi 285). Chehab attempted to narrow socioeconomic gaps by "adapting the free economy of Lebanon to minimum social requirements"(Salibi 223).

The government commissioned the IRFED, or *Institut de Recherche et de Formation en Vue de Développement Intégral et Harmonisé,* to determine the socioeconomic needs of Lebanon (Schayegh, "1958 Reconsidered" 431). This was a French organization specialized in promoting development in decolonized states. A main challenge to development mentioned in the first IRFED report was the wealth gap between different social strata, as well as between Beirut and the countryside (*Institut* 17-19). To offset these imbalances, the report suggested both planning and state intervention as the optimal way for "integral development" (20). One of the pressing social needs in the 1960s was the expansion of educational services. Typical of the post-World-War-II era, Lebanon was witnessing a population boom (Murr 90). The population size in 1959 was estimated at 1.6 million—half of which was younger than the age of twenty. Social contrast was also very sharp, despite what was perceived as healthy economic growth; 9% of the population lived below the poverty line and 40% was classified as poor (*Institut* 93).

Political patrons harnessed support in the countryside during the 1960s by fulfilling popular demands for roads and schools (Mughniyyeh). Who controlled this vital resource was also a matter of local political contention: In the northern Christian city of Zgharta, the Duwaihis withdrew their children from school in protest against the opening of a government secondary

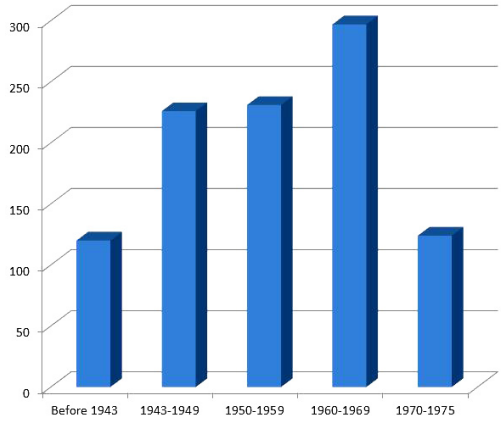

Figure 1: Yearly distribution of the total number of primary and intermediate state schools established in Lebanon.
Source: Adapted from Labaki, Boutros. *Education et mobilité sociale dans la societé multicommunautaire du Liban: Approche socio-historique.* Frankfurt/M.: Deutsches Institut für Internationale Pädagogische Forschung, 1988. 134-36. Print.

school in a district controlled by another influential family, the Franjiehs ("'Āl Duwaihī").

Of the 903 public primary and elementary schools known to be built in Lebanon from that mandate until 1975, at least 26% were built between 1960 and 1969 (Labaki 134-36, see Figure 1), and only seven of these schools were built in the capital Beirut—less than in any other area of Lebanon (See Figure 2). Between the academic years 1959-60 and 1970-71, the total number of students at all levels in state schools

increased from 276,704 to 732,681 (Bashshur, "The Role of Education" 50), an increase of 165%. These schools, however, did not accommodate more students than private schools (See Figure 3). A breakdown of the student population in state schools according to religious affiliation, which dates from 1960, shows that Muslim students made up 65% and 62% at primary and elementary/secondary levels, respectively (Labaki 136).

Hence, a surge in public education in the 1960s produced the following outcomes: Relative to previous years, the state built a large number of schools to accommodate its growing young population. This expansion mainly benefitted Muslims, and more generally the population outside the privileged areas of Beirut and Mount Lebanon. However, despite the proliferation of state schools, the government never became the main provider of education; private schools continued to accommodate the majority of Lebanon's students, and there were no reports of subjecting these schools to further control by the government. Furthermore, the government was still subsidizing charity schools, most of which were confessional (Atiyyah 139). But even if the government never became the sole provider of education, its development of public education infrastructure provided impetus for the development of the teaching sector, which had a clear impact on class structure.

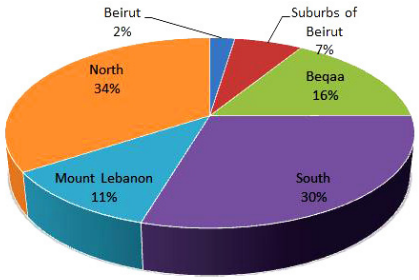

Figure 2: Regional distribution of primary and elementary state schools built between 1960 and 1969.
Source: Adapted from Labaki, Boutros. *Education et mobilité sociale dans la societé multicommunautaire du Liban: Approche socio-historique.* Frankfurt/M.: Deutsches Institut für Internationale Pädagogische Forschung, 1988. 134-36. Print.

New Opportunities Shaped by Personal Choices

In 1959, Khuri surveyed the northern town of Amyun, and reported that the class of "needy poor," which comprised traditional peasants and sharecroppers, was shrinking (37). He noted, in contrast, the rise of a lower-middle class—which included many teachers. After World War II, salaried professions were replacing private property as the main source of income for middle classes in the Middle East (Halpern 50-52). The bureaucracy in Lebanon was in fact

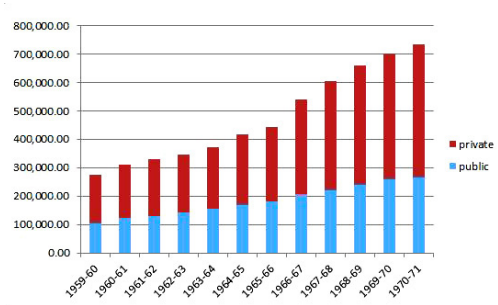

Figure 3: Evolution of the number of students per school type.
Source: Chart. Al-Markaz al-tarbawi li-l-buḥūth wa-l-inmā'. *Al-Iḥṣā' al-tarbawi 1969-70*. Beirut, 1970. 16. Print.

expanding, as the state increasingly relied on it to implement its policies. The number of civil servants (not including the police) increased from 5,421 in 1947 to 14,800 in 1953, and to 17,562 in 1958, then jumping into the range of 26,000 to 30,000 in 1966 (Hudson 303-304).

The total number of public school teachers grew more than threefold between the academic years 1958-59 and 1970-71 (see Figure 4); yet private schools continued to employ larger numbers of teachers, as well. Part of the explanation behind the surge in the number of public school teachers, especially at the primary level, could be that teaching required little qualification. Out of a total of 4,435 teachers who taught at the primary and intermedi-

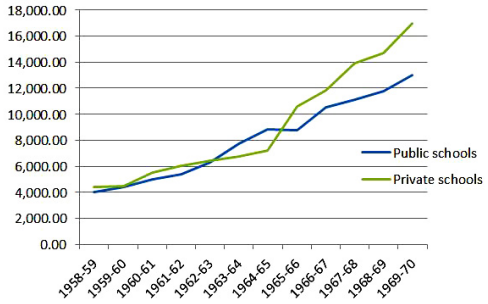

Figure 4: Variation in the number of public and private school teachers.
Source: Chart. Al-Markaz al-tarbawi li-l-buḥūth wa-l-inmā'. *Al-Iḥsā' al-tarbawi 1969-70*. Beirut, 1970. 20. Print.

ate levels combined, during the academic year 1970-71, around 87% had either a primary or an intermediate school certificate—and 2% did not even have a primary school certificate. Only 11% had university degrees or qualifications from teaching institutes, and hence could teach at intermediate levels (*Wizārat al-Tarbiya* 21).

To become a secondary school teacher, a candidate who obtained an official ninth-grade certificate could enroll at the Higher Institute for Teacher Formation and get a full scholarship. After graduation, the teacher would be compelled to work at a government school for five years (Asmar 20-21).

In comparison to other government employees, the rank of a teacher was somewhere near the bottom of the civil-service scale. Secondary school teachers complained that they had to study for the same number of years as judges and public-sector engineers, and yet were paid woefully less (62). In 1965, for example, the maximum monthly salary of a secondary-school teacher, including benefits, was 1,400 Lebanese pounds ($467), while that of a public-sector engineer could reach 2,407.50 Lebanese pounds ($802.50), and that of a judge 3,025 Lebanese pounds ($1,008) (61).

Between 1953 and 1966, during which time the living cost in Lebanon increased by 101%, the minimum and maximum salaries of secondary-school teachers increased by 72% and 31%, respectively (94). In comparison, during the same period, classified judges enjoyed a raise of 110%, which exceeded cost of living increases (95). Both elementary and secondary school teachers went on several strikes during the presidency of Fouad Chehab, through which they were able to improve their working conditions (141-42).

But beyond mere income, testimonies of veteran teachers employed by the expanding government educational sector give a more nuanced picture of their socialization. In the remainder of this section, I will present these testimonies to highlight the most important personal and objective factors that marked each of their social experiences. Bourdieu argues that "just as no two individual histories are identical so no two individual habituses are identical" (*Sociology in Question* 46). All interviewees confirmed that teaching could offer its practitioners a relative improvement in social standing. But individual experiences show that these teachers actively sought to define their own social role and position—some more actively than others.

Salwa Sa'd, from the Shi'ite village of Kaifoun in Mount Lebanon, studied in the 1960s at the local public school, but had to commute to the provincial center of 'Aley to finish her baccalaureate in 1970 because her village lacked a secondary school. She then obtained a bachelor's degree in education from the Lebanese University (LU) and taught chemistry at public schools. Sa'd did not emphasize acquiring a higher social status through teaching—yet she did not hesitate to say during an interview: "Everything I have, I owe to public education." She said she could not have enrolled at a private school because her parents could not afford it, and that she owed the economic security she has enjoyed to teaching in the public sector.

While she did not stress the social capital acquired through teaching, Sa'd emphasized that she was able to have more access to economic capital thanks to her education.

Interlocutors who lived through an earlier period as both students and teachers in the government sector—a period during which qualifications were rarer—emphasized more how education and teaching were a source of prestige.

Munir Mughniyyeh, who hails from the southern Shi'ite village of Tar Dibba, humorously likened being a teacher to being the president of the republic, or even the conqueror of Constantinople. Mughniyyeh had to move with his family to the provincial center Tyre, where he enrolled in several public and private schools in the late 1940s, because the school at his village was very mediocre. Mughniyyeh taught for one year in 1954 at *al-Maqased* before studying law, and his two brothers, who are now deceased, also taught for a few years in the 1960s at public schools. Reflecting on how scarce formal education was, Mughniyyeh believed all three of them had been able to teach because they obtained baccalaureate degrees. Mughniyyeh's new elevated socioeconomic status replaced one that was fading away; his family, which had traditionally produced prominent Shi'ite clerics in South Lebanon, could no longer rely on the diminishing profits of land ownership.

While Sa'd and Mughniyyeh suggested that they benefitted passively from the expansion of educational services, other interlocutors pointed to a more active role in defining their social status and role in their communities—albeit, different interlocutors had different motives.

Elias Trad from Deir al-Ghazal witnessed the transformative period of government education in the 1960s. However, he downplayed the effects that the teaching institutions had on his professional and social development. Trad stressed that his personal ambition was the main drive of his career, as he moved from teaching at the primary level to becoming a lecturer in English language at LU, before he died in 2012. He studied at his village school, then started teaching at public schools in the Beqaa province in 1969 after obtaining his *brevet* and passing the civil service examination. Trad mentioned that although people demonstrated respect toward teachers, they knew that the latter did not possess high qualifications. Trad continued his studies and obtained a baccalaureate, then studied at LU, where he obtained a PhD.

Certain interlocutors became an integral part of developing education in their own communities. Rafiq al-Debs, a colleague of Melhem Saliba (whom we encountered in the introduction), hails from the neighboring village of Deir al-Ghazal, also predominantly Greek Orthodox. Holding a ninth-grade *brevet* diploma, al-Debs passed an examination at the Civil Service Council, the government body responsible for appointing bureaucrats, and started teaching at R'it's primary school in 1963. A year later, he moved to the school in his own village, which had been built in the 1950s. Financially, al-Debs described his living conditions as very favorable. He started with a salary of 202 Lebanese Pounds ($67) "which could afford the best life for a family," then was happy to get got a raise of 25 Lebanese Pounds ($8) in less than a year.

Regarding his community's perception of his status, al-Debs stressed that people treated teachers with utmost respect. But there was something more than financial security and social status that pushed al-Debs to continue his work. He described teaching at public schools as a noble, altruistic profession, saying that he

refused lucrative offers to teach at private schools because he believed he should work to keep public schools superior. Al-Debs said that he and his colleagues did everything they could to provide the school with what it needed, especially additional rooms as it grew every year, doing more than was required of them by the government.

These examples all attest to an amelioration of socioeconomic status thanks to public institutions, where the interlocutors acquired free tuition and then an opportunity for employment, whether temporarily or throughout their entire lives. But two examples stand out in showing that individuals' social experiences could significantly differ despite similar objective conditions. This reflects how individual agency and internalized values are intrinsic parts of the process of shifting social positions.

While al-Debs and Trad steered clear of dissident action, and were active in a conformist manner, the following two interlocutors defied the government through political activism in the educational field. But while they both held similar ideological beliefs, they reacted in different ways, which produced clearly distinct outcomes in their lives.

Melhem Saliba described his family's social level as "below the middle" (*dun al-mutawassit*). His father was a worker at the local quarry but also as a *mukhtar*, an elected official responsible mainly for maintaining a record of residents. This gave the family social status that was not provided by economic capital. Saliba's father was a member of the Lebanese Communist Party (LCP), and he himself was a member of the party before he turned eighteen.

Like al-Debs, Saliba worked at the village school while it was still expanding. He stressed the fact that he worked in order to improve the school for the benefit of the "families of workers." He strived to secure a new building, and volunteered with other teachers to give seventh-graders extra lessons for free to help them pass the official certificate examination. Students whom he taught and who obtained the ninth-grade official *brevet* certificate were able to move out of the village and start teaching in nearby towns. Another source of pride for Saliba are the "dozens of doctors and engineers who consider themselves the sons of this school."

During the turbulent years of the early 1970s, Saliba engaged in several strikes—he claims to have been the only director in his district to call for a strike, which aimed to increase teachers' salaries and guarantee their right to organize, as well as improve curricula. He paid a "heavy price" for his labor activism, as he was one of 309 teachers to be suspended for ten months in 1973, without compensation. He retired in 2004 after working in two other schools.

Saliba studied in the provincial center Zahleh and was one of the few who had received formal education. He said, however, that he never boasted about being a teacher, despite his humble social background; because for him, teaching was first and foremost a venue for serving his village. His modesty, however, suggests that it was expected of him to boast of his new profession, in celebration of becoming a civil servant and superseding his father's status of manual laborer. Saliba's testimony shows that he has incorporated the values acquired from his political upbringing as a communist into his career, and this remained an integral part of his socialization experience and shaped the way he approached teaching.

Sa'dallah Mazra'ani, another communist activist, followed an academic path that was supposed to lead into teaching. However, he chose not to teach upon graduation from university—unlike Saliba, who

Youssef Zbib

is an editor and translator at the Institute for War and Peace Reporting. In 2011, he obtained an MA in Middle East Studies with distinctions from the University of Exeter. His independent research is focused on modern and contemporary Arab and Iranian history.
email: youssef.zbib@gmail.com

claims he never missed a day of teaching. Mazra'ani recounted that he enrolled at the LU's Faculty of Education in 1969, mainly because it involved a scholarship that covered his living expenses in Beirut. This allowed him to dedicate time to student activism, which led to his becoming the head of the student sector in the LCP, then the secretary general of LU's student union. He had dropped another option to take a scholarship to study in the Soviet Union. This had been available to him because he came from a family that traditionally adhered to the LCP.

After finishing his studies at the Faculty of Education, he extended his enrollment for a year by delaying his final thesis, then enrolled at the Faculty of Literature and obtained a master's degree in Arabic literature. As it was obligatory to serve as a teacher after graduation, Mazra'ani was trying to delay the end of his studies because that would also entail the end of his role as a student activist. When he was finally appointed as a teacher in the southern town of Marj'ayun, the war had started in 1975, and the government's grip had loosened enough for him to evade taking up his teaching duties—even though, as he said, he could have asked to be transferred to a safer location. Mazra'ani's career continued along the lines of political activism during the war, as he took a growing role in the LCP's media organizations, until he became the vice secretary-general of the party in 1998.

Both Mazra'ani and Saliba's experiences show that people at the receiving end of the expansion of public teaching participated in shaping the state-led process to suit their needs and visions, while at the same time altering their position in the socioeconomic hierarchy.

Conclusion

The social impact of expanding public education should be read contrapuntally, as both directed by the state and shaped by individuals' personal histories and choices. Some of the social agents I have examined here actively partook in the actual expansion of the educational sector and went beyond roles officially set out for them.

The government engaged in this process in the 1960s to not only staff its own growing bureaucracy, but also as a response to popular demands that understood the value of education in social betterment. Teachers were part of a new, salaried middle class—but upon further examination, their socialization experience shows that individuals at the receiving end were not conditioned only by socioeconomic determinants imposed by the state, such as the salaries it offered or the cultural value it attached to their role.

Trad's account of his career evolution stressed the importance of social prestige, which he sought to increase by relying on his own "ambition." As for Saliba and Mazra'ani, they both defined their social roles through political mobilization, which was nurtured and fueled by their upbringing in communist families. But while one saw teaching as almost sacred, the other avoided it. Each one of these interlocutors exhibited social practices that were the result of a dynamic intertwining of their habituses, and the social fields in which they acted.

This study could be complicated to include experiences of individuals from urban communities or other sects, or focus on how gender interplayed with the pursuit of social elevation through acquiring cultural capital during the 1960s. Much remains to be discussed about how students of public higher education consciously engaged in their own battle to acquire educational services suitable to social mobility (Mazra'ani). Yet in this brief review, we can see that teachers actively molded their own social roles and positions in part by projecting their internalized values and aspirations.

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The Politics of Social Action in Morocco

Shana Cohen

This paper analyses the attitudes of public sector professionals toward work in order to understand how a neoliberal policy orientation in Morocco has affected the relationship between social identity and political practice. The paper suggests that policy reforms have undermined the association between social identity and the nation-based social and political purpose of public institutions and instigated new dependence in self-identification and political practice on relations with low-income service users. Professionals no longer act to preserve a conceptual identification like the *middle class*, instead finding political and social meaning through demonstrating the capacity to defy institutional rules and policy expectations of behaviour.

Keywords: Morocco; Middle Class; Social Action

Introduction

About a year before she resigned, the head of a paediatric unit at a public teaching hospital in Rabat told me, "I recognise my limits. I can't do budget management or accounting. I am a clinician. I have a way of working that doesn't function here. They want me to leave, so I st bay. I am not good value for money. It's true—I am a very bad money manager." She then explained that with her specialisation, Type A Diabetes, it was very difficult to practice quality medicine and be cost effective, so she chose the former over the wishes of hospital administrators to pursue the latter.

> It costs a lot for each consultation for Diabetes. I tell them [the administration] that my meetings with patients are around preventative care and not consultations, which aren't free [60 MAD at the time of the research in 2009]. Therefore, I don't bring any money to the hospital. Moreover, people who were seeking treatment in the private sector come to me instead, and the hospital pays for them too.

A paediatrician at another hospital echoed the unit head's comments, stating:

> We hear [from the hospital administrators] that we are not here to practice social work [*faire le social*]. Sometimes, they want us to charge for consultations. But when I see that patients can't pay, I don't ask for the fee. They, the administrators, want the money but that isn't my profession, it is not the way I see things.

She added, "We see cases that are dramatic. The family has given everything for the patient to come here."

Drawing on qualitative research conducted since 2000,[1] this paper analyses the attitudes of professionals in the public sector toward their work in order to understand how a neoliberal policy orientation in Morocco has affected the relationship between social identity and political practice.[2] Specifically, the paper suggests that policy reforms since the eighties[3] have undermined the association between individual social identity and the nation-based social and political purpose of public institutions[4] that characterised pre-market reform in Morocco. Instead, re-structuring and priorities based on now internationalised principles of institutional reform[5] have instigated new dependence in self-identification and political practice on relations with largely low-income service users.

Under reforms, particularly over the past decade, public institutions have arguably changed from signifying national progress

to serving the "poor."[6] Reflecting on the national education policy of 2009-2012,[7] labelled "Programme d'Urgence," one teacher that I interviewed remarked, "They [the Ministry] haven't talked about the fact that most of the students in state schools are poor."

This change in institutional purpose has in turn altered the intertwined political meaning and socio-spatial framework (see Badiou) of working as a professional in public services from affirmation of social status to the combined marginalisation of professionals and service users. Teachers, doctors, and nurses no longer situate their work in relation to a conceptual identification like *middle class* within a nation-state but rather pursue their own individual material security and, for some, existential meaning in their immediate and tangible support to patients and students subjected to poverty and discrimination. These professionals identify themselves through their ability to succeed, often in collaboration with colleagues, in spite of institutional rules and policy expectations of behaviour.[8]

This paper first draws on ethnographic research to examine the current relation between social identity and political practice amongst professionals working in public education and health in Morocco. In the second section, the paper suggests how studying public services has implications not only for understanding political and social change under neoliberalism and in Morocco specifically but also for linking academic research with improving the effectiveness of services. The attitudes and behaviour of the professionals interviewed indicate that policy and programmes should move beyond universalised concepts and related methods like "participation" and "empowerment" that tend to segregate service users from those delivering the services, ignoring the reality of the front line. Rather, new policy and programmes could more accurately reframe public services as combined social and political opportunities situated in relations between the two groups.

The Political Significance of Social Action in Morocco

Judith Butler writes of subject-formation:

> Indeed, if it is precisely by virtue of its [the subject's] relations to others that it is opaque to itself, and if those relations to others are precisely the venue for its ethical responsibility, then it may well follow that it is precisely by virtue of the subject's opacity to itself that it sustains some of its most important ethical bonds. (22)

In the past, professions like teaching or medicine offered the promise of economic security and the status of possessing a skill needed to advance the "nation" (Cohen), or the bases for a coherent social identity vis-à-vis other social groups.

Inversely, the "opacity" of self-identity amongst these professional groups today is the consequence of a decline in public regard for state institutions like hospitals or schools.[9] Self-identification is instead derived from personal insecurity and work increasingly encompassing the complex needs of low-income service users, setting up the possibility for Butler's *ethical bonds*. For instance, one teacher spoke of two of her students who obviously did not have enough to eat before coming to school. "I can't expect the same level from them, when they haven't eaten—or a student who is being hit at home—from other students." However, dependence on lower-income groups for signifying social identity does not necessarily mean responding ethically to their needs. It means that individuals, sometimes influenced by their peers or directors, have to make a choice to respond ethically or to refuse, which is manifested at its worst in corruption and absenteeism. The teacher who observed that the Ministry had "forgotten" about the poverty of students said, "Some teachers are very motivated in their craft. They participate in clubs after school. I give free supplementary courses for motivated students dur-

ing a free period." She then added, "Others are not motivated at all. They expect rote learning, they don't show up, they insult the students."[10]

The obligation to make a decision makes the individual practice of their profession political, in that this decision acknowledges or rejects personal responsibility to challenge the poverty and exclusion of others. Likewise, it is a choice whether to maintain the integrity of their profession, even if policymakers and administrators are undermining this integrity through lack of investment and respect.

One project manager working with state schools asked:

> Why were teachers so motivated before versus now? There used to be just one manual, no materials, to teach with. And they didn't have a good salary. Now, they want to add to their salary and that is where they are motivated. And I say, why have you chosen this profession? No one imposed this path on you. You have to recognise the sacred value of this profession, that children are like play dough in your hands and when the door of the classroom closes, it is just you with the students and no one from the Ministry.

On the other hand, a doctor working in a gastroenterology unit stated, "I am happy to do a service for patients who don't have money. It is true that it is medicine at a basic level. There aren't enough nurses, technicians or equipment." Another gastroenterologist, working in a teaching hospital, commented, "I like the social side of the public hospital […]. I could earn three times more in the private sector but the mentality is more commercial." At the end of the conversation, she summed up with: "We aren't here for the conditions [of the hospital]. We have chairs that are twenty years old, not luxury. We take care of our patients." Her unit head also emphasised his humanistic regard of the profession, claiming:

> Me, I could not work in the private sector. When I practice medicine, I see a patient who has need of me to cure him. I cannot profit from that. He does everything to come to see me—he gathers money from his family, friends to come to be treated. I cannot profit from that; I have to practice my trade […]. I have done some replacement work but I was not at ease with it. In the private sector, they view a patient as a client who pays. When they see a patient, they see how much this person can pay them. If the person can pay everything, then the patient receives good treatment until the end. If he doesn't have the means, he pays what he can and then the doctor sends him to the public sector.

Amongst the interviewees, responding to the demands of patients or students was associated explicitly with transcendent values—whether universal human rights or the recognition of human dignity inherent in Islam, rather than nation-based notions of citizenship. For example, a nurse who worked in the same gastroenterology unit at the teaching hospital remarked, "It is only humanity as a motivation here. It is only the humane side and our religion that pushes us to do the work that we have here."

The most prominent practical effect of adopting an ethical position in the research was to mobilise resources through social networks, the assistance of former patients, and contact with international NGOs able to offer equipment. The unit head of the gastroenterology unit had built up a bank of medicine through monetary donations from former patients and others to bring medicine via friends in Europe while several nurses in his unit worked around restrictions on equipment usage to offer patients tests out of hours. The now retired paediatrician relied upon a former patient to help run a support programme for families of children with Type A Diabetes and the retired head of another paediatric unit had

worked with an American NGO to bring equipment to his unit. Likewise, several teachers mobilised clothing and school materials for low-income students and a senior teacher had set up classes for deaf students through an NGO supported by Handicap International. The teacher had been posted to another school so rushed from his new position every afternoon to oversee the project.

The two extremes of material responses to the decline of public services, social action and absenteeism/corruption, evoke the need for new policy strategies that address how institutional cultures can provoke such different kinds of individual behaviour. Writing about managing shared resources, Elinor Ostrom states:

> We posit three layers that affect the decisions of an individual to cooperate in a common-pool situation: their own identity, the group context in which decisions are being made, and whether the situation is repeated and it is possible to use reciprocity and gain a reputation for trustworthiness […]. Individual values are not sufficient, however, to solve all common-pool resource problems. Without institutions that facilitate the building of reciprocity, trust, and trustworthiness, citizens face a real challenge. (2)[11]

Should Policy Account for Motivation?

Tendler and Freedheim, in a study of community nurses working in Ceara, Brazil, challenge what still remains mainstream thinking that poor performance in the public sector, whether related to corruption, weak training, or otherwise, requires turning to private sector options and laying off workers. They write:

> When agents talked about why they liked their jobs, the subject of respect from clients and from 'my community' often dominated their conversation—much more, interestingly, than the subject of respect from supervisors or other superiors. The trust that was central to the workings of the health programme was inspired by quite mundane activities […]. 'She is a true friend,' a mother said of the health agent working in her community. 'She's done more for us than she'll ever realise.' (1784)

In fact, the authors found that the trust cultivated with clients and the larger community was so significant in inspiring quality performance that it was hard to differentiate its effects from external performance monitoring (1785).

Yet, in Morocco, reform of public services has focused on structural reform rather than social relations or support,[12] highlighting now universal themes of cultivating private investment, subcontracting, introducing fee payments and expanding health insurance coverage, encouraging competition, improving training and education, and so on.[13] Protests against marketisation of services by staff have, nonetheless, been rejected as in other countries,[14] denigrating the motivation of professionals. For example, an article in *Le Matin*, the newspaper representing the viewpoint of the Palace, dismissed protests from medical staff in the public sector about encouraging private investment:

> It is not a secret to anyone that the health sector is among the most corrupt in Morocco (without stigmatising those who are honest). Isn't the preponderance of corruption and bribery in the sector proof that a good number of staff in the public sector (once more, not to generalise) already do 'commerce' with the health of our citizens?

The author argues that this behaviour is the result of monopoly, as doctors or nurses can charge what they like because they know patients have no other choice. Yet, if some of the hospital staff members remain honest, is it appropriate to justify privatisation because monopoly encourages exploitative behaviour? I suggest that the research on professionals in Morocco shows that approaches to reform should consider how policies affect the social role of institutions, and thus the so-

cial identity of staff. For example, critiquing teacher unions and administrators together, a teacher in her early fifties from a family of leftist politicians longed for the state to raise the level of professionalism and restore respect to the institution. She attributed the absenteeism and inadequate performance of her colleagues not only to the lure of profit in extra private work but also to low morale brought on by issues largely unaddressed by national policymakers, from innovations in pedagogy to greater learning support for students. She explained:

> The problem in teaching is not just material. I stopped going on strike because the unions only talk about money. There is no mention of pedagogy. We must take more interest in our craft. For sure, the conditions in schools are not good. There are too many students per class. But we need to improve our image and that can be done through demonstrating that we care about teaching.

Moreover, for a few of the professionals interviewed the focus on budget management only heightened a sense of resistance. The (now retired) head of the paediatric unit at the teaching hospital thought that public health reform meant getting rid of doctors while adding managers and clerical staff "who spend their time on computer games and painting their nails. Doctors never meet except to talk about money, which is all the administrators care about." She openly despised her administrative supervisors, whom she claimed "want to increase the number of patients for the budget without reflecting on the quality of work. How are we going to treat all of these people? Do we have the means to treat them?" She also commented that she and her colleagues

> did their job in spite of increasingly difficult working conditions, where human and material resources are reduced to the extreme […]. It is always satisfying when we can note positive results in an adverse context. Sometimes these results even seem miraculous.[15]

Discussion of the social dimension of public services has overwhelmingly focused both within development studies and amongst international aid agencies on input from service users. Academics have argued for greater attention to "participation" in governance and designing programmes (Evans; Wright; Hicky and Mohan) in order to democratise decision-making.[16] Perhaps the most holistic approach to supporting service user input has been that of "empowerment," derived from Amartya Sen's human capabilities approach, which attempts to match agency with opportunities. International agencies like the World Bank, NGOs, and a number of national governments, particularly India, have integrated rights-based legislation[17] with widening opportunities for jobs, health, education, among others. The principle is that building "assets" amongst marginalised groups will—for instance, specific training, matched by opportunities—lead not only to greater material resources but also, as Deepa Narayan puts it in a World Bank report, the ability "to make choices and then to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes" (10).[18]

As with the *Le Matin* article, the failure to deliver "empowerment" is blamed in good part on public sector staff. Remedies for this failure include methods like scorecards on service delivery. Cited in an Asian Development Bank study on empowerment, a center in Hyderabad collected "the views and perceptions of users about the ability of health services and the perspectives of the staff of the health centers" (29). Once collected, the scorecards revealed "dissatisfaction with staff behaviour and working style, hours of operation and availability of medical personnel, and overall weak responsiveness" (29).

Though the scorecards' leading to better attitudes and service quality should certainly be regarded as positive, the problem of dissatisfaction with staff points to a

Shana Cohen

is the Deputy Director of the Woolf Institute in Cambridge. The Institute specialises in the study of relations between Jews, Christians, and Muslims from a multidisciplinary perspective. She is also an affiliate lecturer with the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Cambridge. Her research interests include community activism, public institutions and social change, and international social policy.
email: sc736@cam.ac.uk

more profound issue of neglecting constructive social relations between service users and professional staff.[19] Scorecards segregate, labelling one group as problematic and giving the other power to "reform" it.

If social relations between professional staff and service users are important to delivering quality services, then how should they be addressed in policy? More fundamentally, how can the services of public institutions be conceptualised so as to encourage constructive behaviour and discourage practices like corruption and absenteeism? I suggest three ways of rethinking public institutions and improving service quality. First, the language of "public services" should be revised to reflect the mutual participation and benefit of different social and economic groups. Rather than one social group, i.e. professionals, providing services to another primarily low-income group, a hospital or school would be reframed as a means for all stakeholders to achieve social meaning and political significance as well as better health and education.

Secondly, the conceptual and practical focus on social relations means shifting away from a vertically-oriented dynamic whereby policymakers and staff respond to feedback, like scorecards, from low-income service users, to cooperation and collaboration on the front line, similar to the mobilisation of resources by doctors, teachers, and sometimes service users. Finally, the emphasis on the front line implies recognising practical constraints on delivering quality services and acting upon them. As one nurse in the gastroenterology unit in the teaching hospital commented:

> You do the work even with the constraints in front of you. The patient has nothing to do with the salary. You are obliged to do the work necessary. This is a patient who perhaps came from far away. He is far from his family. You have to make up for that. And you have to be responsible at the same time for the material side of things, sterilisation, and so on […]. The social services here are negligible. We need a social worker for each ward. But there aren't any.[20]

The recognition of these constraints would logically entail granting more decision-making power to professionals, like the nurse, and service users over the allocation of resources. More profoundly, this shift would make cooperation and raising the authority of the different front line actors a primary objective of institutions in order to improve service quality and "efficiency," for example, greater attention in the front line leading to better after care at home and less chance of regression. Institutions would then be represented less by their modes of governance than by collective action for shared benefit.

Conclusion

This paper has analysed social action amongst professional staff in public health and education and makes the argument that both constructive and negative behaviour are due to institutions no longer linking vocation with collective social purpose. The paper suggests that policy should respond by reframing the social role of institutions as bringing together different social groups for shared benefit. This reframing not only addresses the social consequences of neoliberalism as a policy approach; it also means offering an alternative.

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→ Notes

[1] The research consisted of several parts: First, I have worked extensively with non-governmental organisations since 2000, and a number of these are run either by former or current public sector staff or their purpose is to support education or health. Thus, I have been exposed to some of the challenges facing public services in Morocco. Secondly, I received three grants (Leverhulme Trust, University of Sheffield Internal Grant, and American Institute of Maghrib Studies) to conduct research over a six-month period in 2009, during which I ended up focusing on the transformation of public services under neoliberalism in Morocco. The third is ongoing research into how policy affects the social role of institutions and how, inversely, front line service delivery can inform policy.

[2] See Koenraad Bogaert for a more general analysis of the relationship between neoliberalism and political transformation in the region.

[3] Structural adjustment and market liberalisation began in Morocco in 1983.

[4] A study by Haut-Commissariat au Plan in Morocco on the attitudes of youth ("Les jeunes en chiffres") found that for young men and women (ages 15-24), household was by far the most important area (46.2%), followed by religion (23.9%), work (11.4%), and then national progress (10%) (66).

[5] Writing about the universalisation of higher education policy in a comparison of reform in Morocco and Egypt, Kohstall remarks, "It is remarkable how the discourse on higher education has changed and is now jam-packed [with] wording from the international agenda for higher education reform, from accreditation to benchmarking and quality assurance to ranking. A common language has emerged that shapes university administrators and faculty members alike when they apply for international funding. This is probably the most important side-product of a type of reform that otherwise has not yet lead to tangible results in the improvement of teaching and research." (107)

[6] See a White Paper by Dr. Alaoui, the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Health in Morocco for a summary of the direction and purpose of health sector reforms, which focus largely on governance, decentralisation, insurance coverage, and recruitment and training. The overriding orientation of his paper, as well as reforms in education and social development, is to ensure greater access by low-income populations, particularly in rural areas. This orientation follows the World Bank Millennium Development Goals, as well as aid agency priorities, but regardless of the merit of this objective, it leaves out completely the notion of public schools and hospitals as serving all of the population.

[7] See "Programme d'Urgence 2009-2012" of Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur.

[8] Despite his focus on the motivation of protesters across the globe, Zygmunt Bauman's identification of desire for tangible and immediate change as the inspiration for action could refer both to doctors manipulating administrators to avoid low-income patients paying fees or teachers pursuing extra income. They both embrace "the locality and press[ing] it close to one's breast" (16) and are spurred on by the "knowledge that the governments in the form in which they have been squeezed by the 'global forces' are not the protection against instability but instability's principal cause" (16).

[9] Describing the decline of public education in Morocco, Rim Battal writes in the online magazine *Yabiladi*, "The absenteeism of teachers is only a symptom. You have to go further than that. What can we expect from a teacher who earns a miserable wage? Most skip their classes between four and six in the afternoon to tutor individual students or to teach in the private sector. The teachers diagnose a number of problems like lack of resources, ramshackle infrastructure and dirty and dilapidated buildings, lack of furniture and equipment, classrooms that are overcrowded at many levels, undisciplined, indeed aggressive students."

An article on interns ("Médicin au Maroc") in the public health system, who were striking at the time for medical insurance, echoed the pervasive demoralisation indicated amongst teachers, quoting Ayoub Halfya, the then president of the association of medical interns as saying: "We work ninety hours a week, sometimes we do forty-eight hours on call that are not paid, all for a pathetic salary, that doesn't match the rise in the cost of living." An anonymously quoted intern was more direct, stating: "Our salaries are […] largely insufficient […]. Over time, I have come to see that you have to be rich to study medicine. I earn 3,500 MAD a month and my parents still have to help me. I can't pay for my rent, a car, and all of the daily expenses with so little. At twenty-eight years old, one becomes very angry. One starts to want to

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→ set up in the private sector, where, with my specialisation, I can earn much better than in the public sector. But the set up costs a lot, and there too, the assumption is you have the means to do this."

[10] Boutieri views the dichotomies and hierarchies in public education, exemplified in language skills (French and Arabic primarily), as a precursor to the disaffection expressed across North Africa during the Arab Spring, because the school is an original source of limiting opportunities and establishing socio-economic difference. She writes that in Morocco today, "educational anxiety emerges as socio-cultural critique. The circumvention of public education through privatisation, parallel schooling, corruption, or charity—all responses to this anxiety—is telling of a radical uncertainty about how to plan the future of the next generation" (445). She adds that this anxiety cannot be remedied through conventional reforms, stating: "By claiming that what appears as a sudden move to the streets [the Arab Spring] may in part be a gradual result of a collective disengagement from the public school as a space of empowerment and integration, I emphatically reorient our attention away from the technical diagnostics of international policymakers and toward the political nature of all learning." (445)

[11] For more information see Ostrom.

[12] A World Bank article on educational reform in Morocco lists as the priorities governance, decentralisation, and infrastructure. Management of human resources are regarded as key to 'effectiveness' "because they exercise a considerable influence on the performance overall of schools. The minister has launched a massive strategy to promote the career plans and mobility of teachers with the aim of directing them to where their competence will be the most useful." The language is notably and not surprisingly utilitarian and individualist, again obscuring the necessarily social dimension of teaching.

[13] See Royaume du Maroc, "Stratégie Sectorielle de Santé 2012-2016."

[14] For example, teacher strikes in 2011 in the UK over pensions were criticised by Michael Gove, the Minister for Education. He said of the strikers (which included, unusually, head teachers): "They want mothers to give up a day's work, or pay for expensive childcare, because schools will be closed. They want teachers and other public sector workers to lose a day's pay in the run-up to Christmas. They want scenes of industrial strife on our TV screens. They want to make economic recovery harder—they want to provide a platform for confrontation just when we all need to pull together" ("Gove Appeals to Teachers"). The heads of the teaching unions responded to government criticism by remarking how much they would prefer to be practising their profession. The head of the university lecturers union (UCU) remarked, "Our members are unlikely militants and would much rather be in the classroom than on the picket line" ("UK Schools Disrupted by Pension Strikes").

[15] She eventually retired in frustration in 2012.

[16] *Participation* has also been criticised within development studies for only superficially acknowledging service users while carrying on with pre-determined policies and specific projects (Cooke and Kothari).

[17] The Asian Development Bank report provides more detail on the practice of empowerment: "A common form of empowerment is through *rights-based entitlements,* which are enforceable rights enshrined in the legal framework or national constitutions with specific roles and responsibilities of implementing authorities as well as criteria for beneficiary eligibility and procedures for identification. There are two types of rights-based entitlements: First, the right of eligible citizens to specific services; and second, the right to information, which is an instrument to ensure that citizens can influence the fulfillment of their rights to services. In both cases, it is the binding obligation of the state to ensure that eligible citizens receive the specific entitlement being guaranteed." (22)

[18] Citing Sen and others, the Asian Development Bank study on empowerment defines the approach as: "People should be free to choose what they want to do, have the functional ability to put those choices into action, and have an enabling environment that allows them to actually perform those actions." (20)

[19] For more information see *Oxfam Briefing Paper* 125.

[20] The same anonymous intern quoted in the article ("Médicin au Maroc") about the interns' strike in Morocco made similar comments: "The public hospital in Morocco lacks resources. Like myself, many of my intern or resident colleagues are obligated to do the tasks of the nurse or nurse's aide because of a lack of personnel. It is up to us to change the sheets, clean the sick who are immobile, push the guerneys. In some services, there is a nurse for ten sick people, which is [simply] not enough, and suddenly it is the doctors who have to contribute to remedying the situation, and this isn't OK. Above all, it tires us out and takes over the time when we are supposed to be curing patients."

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Editorial Team
Karolin Sengebusch, Ali Sonay,
Alena Strohmaier

With the Assistance of
Alexa Bartelmus, Doris Decker, Stefan Schulte

Student Assistants
Esther Groeber, Alexandra Schmitz

Issue Advisor
Rachid Ouaissa

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