



Elusive revolt: The contradictory rise of middle-class politics¹

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Abstract

What lies behind the amalgam of liberalism, elitism, anti-capitalism, and fascistic elements in today's street politics? This essay analyzes this mixture in light of the shifting class locations of middle strata. Intensified business dominance has not only proletarianized some middle strata but has led to a dry life for even the privileged ones. Middle classes are now taking to the streets to reclaim their specialness. Their exact agendas might not be identical throughout the globe, but a kindred spirit of creativity and aestheticized occupation unites disparate geographies of revolt. Liberal and radical analyses of the wave of revolt miss its most significant characteristics, which only a re-theorization of the new petty bourgeoisie can capture. The essay outlines a research agenda that would explore the multiple dimensions of middle-class formation, as well as the post-capitalist trajectories that might (or might not) result from further politicization.

Keywords

Capitalism, middle class, neoliberalism, new petty bourgeoisie, revolt

The world is waking to a new era of mass politics. The ghosts of incomplete revolutions, all the way from 1848 to 1979, are haunting the globe. A particular genie, the unpredictable middle strata, will continue to upset many hopes in the coming years. Sanguine and unidirectional investments in the 'new middle classes' have upheld these strata as the true bearers of democracy, post-materialism, the free market, and tolerance. Such false hopes peaked in the 1980s, but they still cloud minds.

Only a critical revival of the debates on the new petty bourgeoisie and 'contradictory class locations' can allow us to come to terms with the variegated set of new middle-class

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dispositions (collectivistic, elitist, individualistic, fascistic, anarchistic, etc.). Those debates subsided after the 1980s, leaving their place to barren beautifications, which came in liberal-right and left-wing cloaks, promoting these strata as liberal-democratic or 'New Social Movement' actors.

Rather than explaining the timing and outcome of each revolt in this wave, this essay seeks to grapple with the following question: if the 21st century is going to be a middle-class century, as both sanguine and cautious analysts have noted (Therborn 2012, pp. 15-17), what are the promises and perils as this class resorts to street politics? The revolts in the US, Southern Europe, North Africa, Turkey and Brazil were not *just* "new middle class" revolts, but the massive participation of this class was a significant factor. There were certainly cases that broke this global pattern of middle class predominance. The participants of the 2011 revolt in Britain were mostly unemployed youth without political purpose. There seems to have been very little middle class participation in these events (Tester 2012, p. 5). Hence, this wave mostly consisted of "multi-class revolts with new petty bourgeois characteristics."² The new petty bourgeoisie, the heart and mind of these movements, is a class defined by partial (and "rational") control over production, consumption, and exchange. The uniqueness of the revolt wave has much to do with the new petty bourgeoisie's specific class locations, which are marked by subordination to the bourgeoisie and domination over the proletariat.

What matters is not simply the numerical weight of the middle classes in the post-2009 wave. As well as documenting their heavy involvement in some of the revolts, the essay emphasizes the wave's originality, promises, and dangers (as induced by middle class predominance): What is really *unique* about this wave? Here, the re-emergence of the middle strata as a class is among the most significant dynamics. What elements of this revolt wave are most instructive regarding its promises and limitations? Again, the variegated middle class practices and dispositions that characterized the revolts provide a core part of the answer.

The following section gives an overall (but by no means exhaustive) account of the recent revolt wave, focusing on the global novelties that new middle class predominance brought about. This is followed by a section that explores four cases in depth to empirically highlight the (shifting) weight of middle class participation and its contradictory ramifications. Subsequently, I argue that the most prevalent (liberal and radical) approaches can neither account for the contours of this participation nor explain its political ambivalence. I outline a research agenda (based on a re-theorization and re-historicization of the new petty bourgeoisie) to address the shortcomings of these approaches. The essay finally speculates on whether the rising mass politics could take us in a postcapitalist direction, as some of the analysts and participants of the recent wave believe.

An ambiguous occupation of the commons

Heavy new petty bourgeois participation in and leadership of the post-2009 revolts reinforced (but did not singlehandedly create) the disorganized (not really 'leaderless') and unfocused tendencies of post-1979 revolt. Entertainment, carnivalesque aesthetics, and politics were linked innovatively.

The most spectacular revolts of this wave were anti-commodification, but not directly anti-capitalist. They were anti-commodification in form: they reclaimed public services

and public goods such as main squares against the onslaught of the market. The common style, occupation, rightfully became the name of one of the revolts, but the word 'Occupy' came to be associated with more than one of these uprisings (e.g. the Turkish uprising has come to be called 'Occupy Gezi' in Anglophone circles). The partially common content was based on the malaises of global marketization (real estate bubbles, soaring housing prices, and the overall privatization-alienation of common urban goods).³

However, the restrictions of the common style were homologous with the blind spots of the wave's middle-class content. Occupations of workplaces, factories, poor neighborhoods, and industrial towns remained secondary to the emphasis on the main square; when they were carried out (as frequently in the case of Egypt's industrial towns Mahalla and Tanta), they were quite disconnected from the heart of the revolt.⁴ The forms of popular empowerment and direct democracy on occupied territory (assemblies in Greece, Spain, and Turkey; the 'people's mike' in the US) empowered the articulate, hyper-educated new middle classes more than anybody else. If lower strata never truly came to power in 1848, 1871, 1905, 1917, or 1949 either, the revolt waves of 1968 and 2009 incorporated them much less in directly democratic experiences.

Southern European and American revolts were direct responses to the financial meltdown. In Greece, a crony capitalism unevenly integrated into Europe garnered police violence, as well as debt pressure and threats from the EU, which all impoverished the youth (Memos, 2010). The bursting of the real estate and financial bubbles in the United States and Spain brought to the fore young people's job insecurity, high unemployment/semi-employment, low wages, and bad housing conditions (Charnock et al., 2012). Similar to Greece, the Spanish middle classes' living standards and expectations were artificially boosted by European integration, and then suddenly busted by a quick return to the ethics of austerity.

Despite tendencies of proletarianization among the middle classes of advanced capitalism, the American Occupy in particular featured a distinctive new middle-class character. The brevity of the American protest cycle in comparison to the Southern European ones was, among other things, based on its narrower class base. (The American) Occupy transformed public discourse on equality, led to withdrawals from the major banks, initiated the politicization of a generation, and also resulted in some local victories (e.g. stopping of some foreclosures, a New York City millionaires' tax, etc.). In that sense, its middle-class activists indeed fought for the general interest. Nevertheless, their claim to speak for the 99 percent rang hollow.

In North Africa, Western-supported dictatorships and their neoliberal development programs collapsed. Unlike in the case of the US and Turkey, industrial labor was a crucial part of the story, but the new middle classes still played a huge role in the revolt. Tunisia was a neoliberal heaven. It was the IMF's poster child. Some argued that it was home to the most professionalized middle class with the best life chances in the whole Arab world. In terms of education and good job prospects it was doing better than the non-oil-rich countries in the region. And women's status was incomparable to any other Arab country. Tunisia also boasted stable national growth, fluctuating between 3 and 6 percent. There was no serious crash after the 2008 crisis. However, regional inequality, police brutality, and corruption and crony wealth remained troubling features. As a response to these,

middle-class youth as well as organized labor occupied the town squares until the downfall of Ben Ali. 95% of lawyers went on strike in early January 2011.

Tahrir protests were more heavily dominated by the new middle class. Even though the working class played a role in Egyptian revolt overall, its participation was more concentrated in industrial towns. The urban poor occasionally marched from their neighborhoods to Tahrir without, however, changing the political and ideological make-up there. This was the kernel of the contrast between the Tunisian and Egyptian processes: while in the former organized labor was a central force, it never defined the revolt's agenda in the latter. The difference in class composition was arguably one of the factors that led to different outcomes in Egypt and Tunisia. This gives us all the more reason to focus on the variable of middle-class predominance in popular revolt and its possibly iniquitous consequences.

Turkish revolt presented a mirror image of Greek and Spanish revolt, as it was precisely neoliberalism's (flat and flattening, crudely economic) successes rather than its failures that bred frustration. The intensifying conservatism of the ruling neoliberal elite also fueled the outrage, but it also introduced elite-secular elements into the revolt, thus diluting the occupation's anti-neoliberal thrust.⁵ Neither Turkey nor North Africa experienced the staggering slump that advanced capitalisms suffered after 2008, rendering futile any 'rising expectations'-based explanation of middle-class anger.

After the summer of 2013, the global wave gradually subsided. But more interestingly, the new turns in the wave took it in a more right-wing (though still predominantly middle-class) direction. This was most obvious in the cases of Egypt (of June 2013), Venezuela, and Ukraine. The Egyptian middle class pushed for a coup d'état; the Venezuelan middle class for the toppling of a left-wing government; and the Ukrainian middle class for integration with the EU and the replacement of fallen oligarchs for the reigning oligarchs.⁶

In other words, if the middle classes revolted all around the globe, they did so for different reasons. Their degree of demographic and ideological predominance within the revolt also varied. Proletarianized middle-class fractions constituted the core of the leadership and the mass of mobilization (especially) in American Occupy. It seems that they constituted (at most) the leadership, but not the constituency in Spain and Greece. In Turkey, it was rather the privileged fractions of the new middle class who put their stamp on the revolt; they were heavily involved in Brazilian revolt too. But in both countries, different stages and locales of revolt were either more or less marked by the privileged fractions (Singer, 2014). In contrast to these liberal or liberalized cases (where aspects of liberalism and neoliberalism were among the targets), the Iranian middle class clearly dominated the 2009 revolt with a liberal agenda (Harris, 2012).

This global intermingling of elitism and populism, left-wing and right-wing politics, ultra-aestheticization of revolt and alleged 'vandalism' can be partially traced back to the volatile class bases of the 2009–14 revolt wave (as well as to world-systemic dynamics, see Tuğal, 2013). However, I will argue that the centrality of the new middle class was one major reason why this revolt wave was thoroughly ambivalent. Before going more deeply into a theoretical re-evaluation of this class, I will first delve into four of the cases to provide yet more evidence of middle class predominance and the resulting political ambiguity.

The contradictions of the new street politics

This section will more closely analyze the contradictory nature of four of the links in the revolt chain. The American, Turkish, Tunisian, and Egyptian middle classes all put their stamps on the uprisings. One of these cases is from the core of world capitalism, another from the semi-periphery, and yet two others are from the periphery. However, despite all of their differences, astonishing parallels run through them, which hint that a truly global class politics is in the making. The contradictoriness of these revolts manifested itself not primarily in the demands formulated (as they often tended to avoid concrete demands), but in the composition of the revolters, their *de facto* demands (such as the toppling of the Egyptian dictator Morsi through a dictatorial coup), their discourse, and their “pre-figurative” style. The common egalitarian style – a collectivistic occupation of the Commons that prefigured (or lived and anticipated) the world to come, rather than demanding it – was unintentionally coupled with class distinction.

Tunisian revolt remained the most sustained (not only in the body of the Arab spring, but the global revolt chain overall, perhaps with the exception of Greek and Spanish revolts, two other loci where middle class predominance seems to be less marked). As the rural poor protests were relayed to (the capital city) Tunis (partially through the work of communist university students, union leaders, and professionals), more and more middle class actors participated, but the poor and the working class persisted as essential actors.

Nevertheless, the second link in the North African chain, Egypt, brought in a different kind of middle class participation. Here, the middle classes controlled the uprising’s symbolic and strategic heart, Tahrir square. Partially as a result of this, political demands eclipsed socioeconomic demands in the revolt’s mainstream (whereas the reverse was the case, and occasionally the political and economic were blended, in Egyptian working-class towns such as al-Mahalla al-Kubra and al-Tanta). Because of the overall disorganized tendencies of the global revolt wave, concrete demands were formulated only rarely. But whenever they were, these demands were political. Tahrir activists insisted on including social justice among the Egyptian revolution’s core goals and slogans. Yet, over the course of two years, the only concrete demand that flowed from this was the application of a more generous minimum wage.

A more nefarious result of middle class domination manifested itself during 2013. A petition campaign that lasted for several months (“Tamarod”) demanded the removal of the dictatorial and neoliberal president Morsi. The campaign appealed to wide sections of the citizenry and seemed to be cross-class. Behind the scenes, however, its organizers harbored an initially well-hidden pro-military agenda. The predominantly middle-class Tahrir demonstrations in June made this agenda much more explicit and openly called for a military intervention, despite protests from a handful of left-liberal and socialist organizations. The result was the termination of the revolutionary process.

Recent research reveals the stark class differences between the Tunisian and Egyptian revolts. Beissinger, Jamal, and Mazur (Forthcoming) underline that both revolts were predominantly middle-class, but the Egyptian one depended on a much more restricted (and professional) coalition. Professionals constituted 17.4% of demonstrators in Egypt and only 4.7% in Tunisia. Only 4.1% of the Egyptian demonstrators were manual

laborers, compared to 10.5% in Tunisia. Most strikingly, the largest category of Tunisian protesters was the unemployed (21.6%). By contrast, the largest segment in Egypt was the government employees (21.4%),⁷ compared to only a meager participation by the unemployed (5.1% of the demonstrators). The heavier working-class participation in Tunisia can be taken as one of the reasons why the protest wave was more sustained and less open to authoritarian demands.

Anti-capitalism was much more solidly on the agenda of the Southern European and American revolts. But what did this anti-capitalism entail concretely? Could it really lead to a postcapitalist transformation? The American Occupy movement attacked the economic system that favored 1% of the population over the rest. However, it cautiously avoided mapping out the alternative. Instead, most of its participants insisted that their practices on occupied territory (first, Zuccotti Park in New York, then other places throughout the country) anticipated (in anarchist/autonomist language, “prefigured”) the egalitarian world to come. Throughout the United States, activists collectively planted trees, cooked, and built libraries. Medical and legal services were provided free of charge. Childcare and security were collectivized. Moreover, activists attempted to prevent the formation of hierarchies internal to the movement through practices such as the “People’s Mike.” In short, the occupation attempted to build a de-commodified world shorn of hierarchies.

Nevertheless, not only the leaders, but also the participants of Occupy were mostly white, educated, and relatively better off. Perhaps global revolt was least multi-class in the American case, with professionals and educators (some of them certainly proletarianized) constituting 70% of the participants at one point in the movement. A comprehensive survey conducted during a labor and immigrant march in New York (on May 1, 2012), where we would expect to see a more working class and less white population, is truly telling (Milkman et al 2013): About 29% of the marchers had household incomes between \$100,000 and \$199,000, compared to around 17% of all New York City residents. Moreover, whereas around 29% of the city’s residents had incomes below \$25,000, this was true of only around 8% of the marchers. Non-Hispanic whites too clearly predominated (62% of marchers and 33% of New Yorkers). Even in a primary loci of Black radicalism (Oakland, California, historically the center of Black Panther activities), whites predominated, with occasional Hispanic participation when immigrant issues were emphasized.

For an uprising that claimed to represent 99% of Americans, this was certainly an embarrassment. The restricted participation reflected regime success as much as movement failure, since post-1980 American administrations have systematically disorganized labor and imprisoned and isolated minorities, leaving the new petty bourgeoisie as the most politicized class. However, the movement’s middle-class dispositions (such as the denial to perceive oneself as privileged, that is, the rejection to think *analytically* in terms of class) did not help in overcoming the racial and class barriers. The restricted democratic content was reproduced in the limits of prefigurative revolt: While hierarchy was denied in principle, the white, educated males retained power in decision-making and defining the agenda (Milkman et al 2013).

The Gezi protests in Turkey also brought together proto-communist (or better yet, “proto-communard”) tendencies and class-driven exclusion. Many activists named the

occupied Gezi Park “the Taksim Commune,” referring to the Paris Commune as its prototype. The park boasted shared meals, collective childcare, a library, and a free clinic. Basic necessities (such as food, water, clothing, and Turkish tea) were voluntarily redistributed among the occupiers. Cleaning was collectively organized. Nevertheless, as other activists pointed out, this was a premature comparison, since (unlike the Paris Commune) Gezi did not attempt to organize collectivist production. Furthermore, statistics showed that the occupiers came from privileged sectors of the population.⁸ According to one research report (Konda 2014), 12.9% of the occupiers held post-graduate degrees (compared to only 1.4% of Istanbul’s and 0.9% of Turkey’s population). Compared to Istanbul’s general population, white-collar private firm employees, “free lancers” (such as doctors and lawyers), and students were over-represented in the park (15% vs. 8%, 5% vs. 1%, and 37% vs. 7% respectively). Workers were under-represented (6% vs. 15%). Most strikingly, *one third* (32.1%) of the occupiers hailed from Istanbul’s three wealthiest districts (Şişli, Kadıköy, Beşiktaş), which together constitute less than 7% of the total population.⁹

Whereas the occupation triggered multi-class protests all over Turkey,¹⁰ the organizational forms it brought into being spread only to middle-class districts. More concretely, sub-proletarian neighborhoods (Alibeyköy, 1 Mayıs, Okmeydanı, Gazi, etc.) followed Gezi’s lead in taking to the streets. Yet, protesters held crowded assemblies only in Istanbul’s two wealthiest districts (Kadıköy and Beşiktaş): After Gezi was evicted in mid-June 2013, its prefigurative style survived only among the (relatively) privileged. Kadıköy and Beşiktaş residents modeled these assemblies on the “forum”’s first held during the last few days of the Gezi occupation, which were in turn inspired by the recent Spanish and Greek participatory assemblies. The content followed on the heels of the class composition. The socialist organizations involved in the Kadıköy and Beşiktaş assemblies strove to take the protests into a more anti-capitalist and pro-working-class direction. However, many of the citizens who spoke at the mike insisted that not much could be expected from the poor: first, they were ignorant; second, the Islamic government was buying them off through distributing coal and food. A clear “us and them” rhetoric dominated the assemblies. Correspondingly, (along with socialist organizations) professionals’ associations were the most influential in shaping the protests: labor organizations were near-to-absent in this regard, in clear contrast to the Tunisian case.

The American and the Turkish cases taken together, it can be clearly seen how one form of participatory democracy can disempower less privileged strata. Moreover, not only the belittling content of the words spoken, but also the long hours of discussion (without the formulation of any programmatic goals and demands) rendered the protests less sympathetic among broader popular sectors. This specific predisposition to politics (where the *pleasure of debate* trumps the formulation of *demands*) should be added to the political markers and makers of class that Bourdieu (1984, chapter 8) has studied.

In the carnivalesque atmosphere of the revolt wave, yet more elements of distinction were added to the indulgence in debate. Perhaps this was most observable in the Turkish case, the aesthetic innovations of which have been widely noted. The staging of ballet, classical music, and opera in Gezi, alongside the dancing (during clashes with the police) and the frequenting of bars around Taksim (during breaks from the clashes), no doubt

contributed to the revolt's exceptional festivity. Yet, this aestheticization of street politics also fostered new venues for distinction through entertainment. Moreover, the stylish protests also enabled the right-wing press to denounce them as the new favorite pastime of the elite. The aestheticized atmosphere of the revolt (with its unavoidable class character) turned out to be a double-edged sword - one edge facing the dominant order and the other the popular strata.

Towards a revised theory of the new petty bourgeoisie

The combination, in unevenly shifting doses, of anti-capitalism, elitism, autonomism, and liberalism in the very center of the 2009 revolt wave is mind boggling. We cannot crack the code of this combination without understanding the structurally and ideologically contradictory locations and orientations of the new petty bourgeoisie. This section will offer a few insights for a revised analysis of the new petty bourgeoisie, even though a fully novel theorization pertinent for the 21st century will have to await more sustained theoretical discussion and further research on the fractions of this class.

Polanyi (1944) argued that during the age of classical liberalism, the aristocracy rose to the occasion and came to defend 'land' (and by implication nature) against commodification. Yet, it was also a staunch defender of its own privileges and therefore prone to authoritarian (and ultimately fascistic) responses to commodification. The new middle class, rather than the remnants of the aristocracy of yesteryear, occupies a similar contradictory position in our age. In the case of Turkey, it has stepped up to the defense of shared urban space (and the urbanized nature within); in the Western cases, it fought against the commodification of money (by challenging the commodification of debt); in the Arab cases, it directly challenged authoritarianism, while frequently bringing in the issue of labor.

Still, given its (unevenly distributed) privileges, we cannot be certain about what kinds of political solutions this class will support in the future. Frameworks that do not recognize how central the contradictoriness of middle-class positions is – whether of the left or of the right, whether optimistic or pessimistic about middle-class politics – cannot get us far in understanding the politics of the 21st century. The darker (elitist, authoritarian, anti-lower strata, occasionally fascistic) side of new middle-class politics was most visible in the later links in the chain (Venezuela and Ukraine), but it was far from absent in the anti-commodification revolts.

Mainstream analysts of the current revolt wave also emphasized its middle-class core, but missed the non-liberal dimensions of middle-class orientations. Foremost among them was Fukuyama's (2013) analysis:

[H]igher education levels correlate with people's assigning a higher value to democracy, individual freedom and tolerance for alternative lifestyles. Middle-class people want not just security for their families but choices and opportunities for themselves. Those who have completed high school or have some years of university education are far more likely to be aware of events in other parts of the world and to be connected to people of a similar social class abroad through technology.

Families who have durable assets like a house or apartment have a much greater stake in politics, since these are things that the government could take away from them. Since the middle classes tend to be the ones who pay taxes, they have a direct interest in making government accountable.

While such analyses use the word ‘class’, they actually deny the relevance of class as a *relational* category. ‘Middle’ in Fukuyama’s description does not denote those who are dominated by the ‘upper’ and dominant over the ‘lower’, but rather flatters a sort of ‘normal’, ideal citizen who is an educated property owner. This ‘normal’ citizen also displays the most desired liberal characteristics: tolerance, a yearning for mobility and freedom, etc. More journalistic accounts come off as analytically much thinner, though they reach the same political conclusions. For instance, *The Economist* lumps middle-income people and businessmen together, and uses the category ‘middle class’ to refer to them (interchangeably with the category ‘bourgeoisie’). Still, whatever it is called, the characteristics of this class are same as in Fukuyama’s analysis: a consistent desire for freedom and other liberal values.¹¹

Radical analyses of the current wave of revolt constitute a mirror image of these liberal analyses. Many radicals emphasize ‘graduates without job prospects’, rather than the middle classes, as the main carries of revolt. Another favorite category is that of the ‘precariat’, a concept that is sometimes overstretched to include the disadvantaged sectors of the educated youth.

Paul Mason, arguably the most emphatic analyst in this vein, argues that these precarious but educated actors freely mix with other classes; they have a strong analysis of power and the tools to transform power structures; live in an environment where ‘truth moves faster than lies, and propaganda becomes flammable’; are ‘not prone to traditional and endemic ideologies’ (such as Labourism, Islamism, etc.) and reject ‘hermetic ideologies of all forms’. These youth not only fight for but also live and experience the ideal world (they are prefigurative by nature, it would seem): ‘horizontalism has become endemic because technology makes it easy: it kills vertical hierarchies spontaneously’.¹²

Manuel Castells (2012) echoes some of Mason’s key arguments. Even though he initially recognizes that people of all walks of life participated in the revolt wave, most of his actual analysis emphasizes the downtrodden (including the semi-employed middle classes). He sidelines the decisive participation of more privileged strata. Consequently, he focuses on the horizontalist, autonomist, and leaderless aspects of the revolts and downplays their hierarchical and inegalitarian dimensions.

Liberal accounts miss the noncapitalist or even partially anti-capitalist dynamics of revolt, while radicals exaggerate the power and potential of ‘graduates without a future’. Radical analyses bring an old Marxist (and ‘conflict theory’) fallacy back in under non- or anti-Marxist guise. The prominent conflict theorists in the American tradition, C. Wright Mills and Dahrendorf, insisted (just like many orthodox Marxists) that the ‘white collar’ workers and professionals were a part of the working class.¹³ Radicals replace the word youth for the working class, but draw the same misleading political conclusions. The graduate with no future becomes the new False Messiah.

Against these two predominant approaches, Göran Therborn draws attention to not simply the multi-class nature of the wave, but to the novel weight and contradictory

stamp of the new middle classes on the events. Therborn underlines how the middle classes are either strongly democratic or anti-democratic depending on the situation. Their socioeconomic predispositions are not easily predictable either: While mostly the main carriers of consumerism, they occasionally join forces with popular forces against business interests (Therborn 2012, pp. 18-19; Therborn 2014, p. 11). Pondering the post-Mubarak Egyptian situation shortly before the catastrophe of June 2013, Therborn thus prophetically emphasized the ‘weakness of middle-class rebellions, even in their strongest and most radical form’.

Drawing on the works of Nicos Poulantzas and Pierre Bourdieu, I will call the ideologically predominant class in the contemporary global protest wave the new petty bourgeoisie.¹⁴ The most salient disposition of this class is neither simply tolerance (as in mainstream accounts) nor horizontalism (as in the current radical accounts). The key new petty bourgeois tendency is rather the monopolization of skill and the concomitant ‘ideology of the ladder’, contradictorily married to democratic and collectivist ideologies. The aestheticization of politics is among the core tendencies of this class and features prominently in the regimes it has an influence on (such as interwar fascism; see Benjamin). Poulantzas and Bourdieu allow us to see the *multiple potentials* of this class, rather than celebrating its members as the heroes of liberal democracy, autonomy, or any such high ideal.

In *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism*, Poulantzas takes petty bourgeois ideology as a contradictory ‘ensemble’. The tendency of this class is to be anti-capitalist, but through reformist routes. It fears proletarianization, and therefore stands against revolution. It calls for anti-authoritarianism, decentralization, anti-hierarchical struggles; but at the same time it strives to preserve its hierarchical position and authority over the proletariat. Its understanding of social justice is based on the availability of promotion: the ideology of the ladder. This class is individualist. It worships power, even though it does not understand political power. This is almost the reverse image of the new radicals’ ‘graduates without futures’. Both accounts integrate elements necessary for a complete understanding of the new petty bourgeoisie, but they exaggerate certain tendencies.

Poulantzas also notes reverse petty bourgeois tendencies, without completely appreciating them: the cult of violence; a contempt for the problem of organization; anti-state reactions and anarchism. These orientations go against the worship of power, but Poulantzas does not spell out how the co-existence of such tendencies within the same class is possible. Furthermore, the conclusions he draws from these further and deeper contradictions are fallacious. The petty bourgeois, he insists, are ‘devoid of autonomous long-run political expression [since they are] symmetrically opposed to the attitudes that previously determined them, i.e. [their revolt is] still determined, in its opposition, by bourgeois ideology’.

The structural-relational approach that both Poulantzas and Bourdieu adapt in this regard should be the basis of any sound theory of the new middle class. The logic of calling this class the new petty bourgeoisie rather than simply the new middle class is based on the way bourgeois aspirations heavily influence its dispositions; even most of its *revolt* is positively or negatively shaped by these aspirations. However, *most* does not mean *all*. Even if heavily shadowed by its bourgeois aspirations, this class does have the potential to develop an ‘autonomous long-run political expression’. This possibility is

too hastily denied by both Poulantzas and Bourdieu, which requires us to also incorporate theorists who have made more of truly distinct new middle-class dispositions (such as Szlenyi, Wright, and Gouldner). In other words, *most* of the characteristics of this ambitious class are inevitably determined by the bourgeoisie's yardsticks: the petty bourgeois is the one who strives to obtain bourgeois status without (usually) having the means to do so. Nevertheless, *the petty bourgeoisie is Janus-faced*, even if the face that gazes at the populace is less enchanted. Not only being dominated by the bourgeoisie, but also the (mostly undesired) contact with lower strata infuses this class with (weaker) feelings and demands of solidarity and collectivism (even though under normal circumstances the fear of sinking down into them outweighs these feelings). As Konrád and Szlenyi have emphasized, their autonomous politics can even contribute to the establishment of a post-capitalist society.¹⁵ In other words, the new middle strata harbor even more contradictory tendencies than Poulantzas realized; the complexity of their dispositions could even put the category 'new petty bourgeoisie' into question.

These specific problems with Poulantzas' approach to middle strata should be evaluated within the context of the strengths and weaknesses of his overall theorization of class. Poulantzas' most important contributions to the theory of the new middle class are twofold. First, he allows us to recognize that petty bourgeois ideology (and politics) is a contradictory ensemble; second, he emphasizes that the exact composition of this ideology will depend *a lot* on the coalitions this class will engage in (an insight completely lost on Bourdieu and most other theorists of the new middle classes). What Poulantzas misses overall, though, also concerns us here: 1) a broader class picture that does not emerge just from the point of production; 2) possible collectivist, non-individualist tendencies within the new petty bourgeoisie (that do not necessarily originate from relations in the workplace, but from other *social connections* of petty bourgeois actors). These two shortcomings are exactly where Bourdieu helps us.

Indicators like income, education, occupation, upward or downward mobility, even broader concepts like relations to the means of production can only be indices, emphasizes Bourdieu (1984, chapter 2 and *passim*). What we have to put in the center, then, is the new petty bourgeoisie's relation to other classes – not only within the process of production but within the broader 'social space'. What define class are not measurable characteristics, but rather classification struggles through which actors distinguish themselves from each other (even if certain characteristics have to be measured to get a concrete sense of the overall social space). The bourgeoisie monopolizes and controls property, as well as certain skills and aesthetic sensibilities. The petty bourgeoisie aspires to this or that element of the mentioned monopolization. It is therefore always marked by pretentiousness (not always a counterproductive attribute according to Bourdieu). The proletariat is, by definition, excluded from this game.

The operational definition of the new petty bourgeoisie I will develop below draws on both Poulantzas and Bourdieu. Still, before moving on to the definition, it should be noted that Bourdieusian theory too has its limits as well as strengths, as seen in its application to the current revolt wave. In his analysis of the (Turkish) Gezi Revolt, Wacquant argues that the primary motivation behind the uprising was the cultural elite's

will to preserve its cultural capital (and hence its distinction from both the business class and the working class) in the face of urban commodification.¹⁶ This is a crucial Bourdieusian insight in that it sheds light on the centrality of aesthetic innovation during the revolt. This we would be unable to understand based solely on Poulantzas' (and other neo-Marxists') point of production-based definition of class. However, Bourdieusian analysis is also misleading to the extent that it underrates the revolt's truly post-capitalist potentials (and therefore its contradictoriness).¹⁷ The re-theorization of the new petty bourgeoisie will therefore have to encompass not only an expanded definition of class, but also political and world-historical contextualization of class politics.

The new petty bourgeoisie is defined in this essay in its (contested) distinctions from the bourgeoisie, the traditional petty bourgeoisie (artisans, shopkeepers, and small farmers/landowning peasants), and the proletariat. It is a class that has *partial control* over production, consumption and exchange (not only of goods and services in the economic sense, but, to a greater degree, of meaning, aesthetics, etc.¹⁸) Some of its fractions might have partial/individualized ownership too, though such restricted ownership (the distinguishing element of the traditional petty bourgeoisie) is not its chief characteristic. Another way to put the same point: a defining feature of the new petty bourgeoisie is (reliance on) 'expertise'. This magical word (with its scientific and rationalistic connotations) also underlines what differentiates it from the old petty bourgeoisie, while at the same time pointing to the two classes' kindred economic-ideological determinations (craftsmanship; belief in art, autonomy, etc.; and the guilded nature of their skills and social standing).

Occupation (like other indices) is an imperfect indicator, but in order to measure membership in this class, surveys and other instruments can include the following: the old professionals (engineers, doctors, dentists, lawyers, pharmacists, academics, accountants, etc., most of whom constitute the relatively more privileged members of this class);¹⁹ medical and social service employees, mid- and low-ranking administrators, and media professionals (the 'new' new petty bourgeoisie of the 20th century); and some of our age's 'new professionals' riding the high tide of neoliberalization (financial experts, real estate sector employees, etc.), whose privileges and distinctions are open to much contestation.²⁰

Since the monopolization of modern and rational skills is at the core of the new petty bourgeoisie's distinction, the proper definition of these is decisive: Struggles over what exactly constitutes a rational practice determine whether an individual (or class fraction) is pushed into the ranks of the proletariat or the traditional petty bourgeoisie. Hence, neither solely survey-based approaches nor theoretical imagination can settle whether a restaurant owner, a café owner, etc., should be classified as a new petty bourgeois or a traditional petty bourgeois.²¹ This classification itself is a stake in the struggle.

Many members and fractions of this class live with higher or lower risks of losing control over their privileges (e.g. low-level 'administrators' might get downgraded into 'secretaries'); and hence the continuously contested nature of its boundaries with the proletariat. Therefore, education level, income, and even occupation cannot be taken as perfect criteria with which to decide class belonging; objective analysis would have to remap the class structure based on each local-historical context.

The new petty bourgeoisie into a class: From new social movements (back) to street battles

This subsection is a first foray into the re-historicization of the new petty bourgeoisie, which has to accompany any systematic re-theorization. A central question we have to answer is: why did disparate social segments that could have remained as strata distinct from the bourgeoisie and proletariat, but not necessarily a class, start to have distinguishable forms of politics too? One of the core processes that distinguish the politics of our time from that of Bourdieu and Poulantzas is the excessive politicization of even the most privileged sections of the new petty bourgeoisie. Unlike in the 1960s and 1970s, it is no longer necessarily the least privileged ('proletarianized') sectors of the new petty bourgeoisie that are prone to radical politics. And to make things more complicated, some of these just-politicized privileged sectors are not sinking into the proletariat; and hence their politicization does not create a situation where new petty bourgeois politics becomes revolutionary left-wing politics. Rather, they develop a distinct voice of their own and solidify the new petty bourgeoisie into a class, possibly disrupting other potential routes, such as the emergence of a new proletarian politics that could articulate proletarianized sections of the new petty bourgeoisie.

In the West, the street battles of the 1960s featured the 'misrecognition' of fighting a proletarian class war. Under the influence of Marxism, the new middle class denied itself: it wanted to reimagine itself as a substitute for the proletariat (as in Marcuse's theorization of the youth as the new bearer of the negative dialectic). The failure of the 1968 Revolution gave way to a sectional politics of the new middle class, organized in venues such as environmentalism, feminism, anti-war politics, LGBT issues, AIDS activism, etc.

The scholarly proponents of these movements celebrated them as harbingers of the end of economic determinism, crude Marxism, and class-based politics. We were now in an era of identity politics or new social movements. Some scholars also realized that an expansion of the middle class was a precondition for the flowering of these new movements. But still, these were not class movements, according to the predominant theorization of the 1970s through the 2000s, even if their core participants and leaders were almost exclusively from the middle classes.²²

In light of the return of class politics at the end of the 2000s, we can look at this 'interregnum of class' with fresh lenses. This period is comparable to the era that precedes the emergence of the proletariat as a class: this was the pre-1830 era where there were sectional battles fought by workers, but without any of them perceiving themselves as belonging to the same group of people at national and global scales (Przeworski, 1977). In parallel fashion, the sectional era of middle-class politics is now (potentially) over and the new petty bourgeoisie is emerging as a feisty class.

A full exploration of the factors that have molded these strata into a class will require further discussion and research. Here, I will restrict myself to a few observations, while recognizing that there are some crucial yet unresolved questions. The most important of these unsettled issues are: the relative weight of more privileged strata within the new petty bourgeoisie as a whole; the fluctuations of their insecurity and distinctions in comparison with the proletarianized fractions of the same class; and the trends of growth

and contraction of the new middle class as a whole when compared to the working class.²³ As important as these transformations are the disorganization of the proletariat and the parallel (intellectual and political) overinvestment in the middle class. Fukuyama's, the World Bank experts', and *The Economist's* analyses should be seen as part and parcel of the formation of disparate strata into 'the middle class' (cf. Przeworski, 1977). However, the relative importance of such interventions in comparison to more economic processes has yet to be determined by future scholarship.

With these reservations in mind, we can still advance some bold hypotheses. The aggressive accumulation of capital, which had promised a consumer heaven to broad strata for three decades, ended up widening the gap between the established/emergent bourgeoisies and the new petty bourgeoisie, as well as impoverishing the new petty bourgeoisie's quality of life. Nevertheless, for many fractions of the latter this was not straightforwardly economic impoverishment (and proletarianization). At least some fractions can still expect (or at least dream of) a future with promotions, better homes, and nice vacations; yet even these fractions are threatened by neoliberalism's excessive destruction of nature and common spaces. The threat is 'material', but not so in the sense of involving cash, food, and prices (the narrow definition of the term 'material' as understood by mainstream scholarship).

The quality of life argument I am advancing in regards to these more privileged fractions certainly echoes the post-materialism thesis of yesteryear (Inglehart, 1971), though distinct in many regards. First of all, what is at stake today consists primarily of *material* issues: unlike the post-materialism theorists, we can no longer assume that a significant portion of the population has resolved its material wants and can now put identity and meaning issues at the center of its politics. Unlike under welfare capitalism, material and identity politics fuse into each other. But more importantly, the argument advanced in this essay is based on a relational thesis, where the opposition of the new middle classes to the bourgeoisie is the key (whereas 'quality of life' concerns did not emerge as anti-business issues in the post materialism literature).

This anti-business middle-class mood is so pervasive that it is even captured by mass entertainment, where the rebels are no longer the common people of realist film (as in *Battleship Potemkin* or *1900*), but highly skilled professionals (see, for instance, *Matrix* and *Avatar*). The Warner Bros-produced and Lego Group-endorsed *The Lego Movie* is a prime example of how an absorbed version of middle-class revolt extends even into children's popular culture.

'Lord Business' has built an extremely monotonous city with standardized buildings and mind-numbing entertainment that entralls workers, who sheepishly follow (Lego-inspired) instruction manuals in every step they take. The petty bourgeoisie (called the 'Master Builders' in the movie) are either locked up in the infamous 'Think Tank' or pushed to organize and practice their skills underground. In a city where manual-dictated actions are further reinforced by 'Micromanagers' and surveillance cameras, they can no longer exercise their creativity out in the open. We see many instances of professional originality throughout the film, as the Master Builders create magnificent vehicles and buildings out of simple Lego pieces (while fighting the police). At the end of the movie, they decide to mobilize the workers against Lord Business (who actually hides himself behind the façade of the caring 'President Business'). In an unexpected turn of events,

Lord Business gets a soft heart when an unskilled worker reaches out to him. This ‘least qualified’ construction worker, Emmet, had accidentally found himself as the leader of the Master Builders due to a (well-meaning but awkward) priest-intellectual’s false prophecy (which had promised the coming of a character called the Special who would defeat Business). In the process, however, Emmet had also discovered that he indeed was extraordinary. Encouraged by his newfound confidence, he convinces Lord Business that the latter also is a skillful builder. The petty bourgeois-led worker revolt is rendered unnecessary as both business and labor come to understand that they are all special. Everybody is a master builder deep down inside.

The movie emphasizes the material aspects of the ‘new’ new petty bourgeois grievances: inability to practice professional creativity; the monotonous standardization of built space; and excessive business and state control on the middle class (on their skills, their city, and their trade). It also dramatizes latent bourgeois fears regarding middle class revolt and shows a way out, even if clumsily (as the movie’s crudely psycho-analytic final scenes are its weakest). Still, unlike in the mid-19th century, the ruling classes are not quite ‘trembling’ before this (cute and entertaining) specter. All the major media outlets (with the exception of Fox Business Network, a particularly panicky wing of the bourgeoisie) celebrated *The Lego Movie* despite its overtly anti-business tone. A substantial historicization of middle class politics will have to trace the development of the themes dealt with here not only in mass entertainment, but also high culture. Moreover, even the blurring of the boundary between high and popular culture might be an indication of the rebellious rise of this class (as a Janus-faced class with partially bourgeois, partially popular aspirations), not only of a change in the logic of capital (pace Jameson).

In short, fundamental transformations in middle-class life shed light on why some of its fractions today resort to class (rather than sectional or issue) politics. Intensified neoliberalization now threatens not only the new petty bourgeoisie’s social standing but even its meaningful relations to life (social ties, friendship and kin networks, enjoyment of common spaces, the fruitful expansion of its skills and creativity, the reassuring feeling of being ‘special’, etc.).²⁴ Moreover, insecurity for even some top experts, the looming collapse of the economy as such, etc., allow privileged sections of the new petty bourgeoisie to catch glimpses of a common fate with the populace and rise up as its (occasional) leaders. Still, does the new petty bourgeoisie really have the capacity to transform society in a sustained way? The next section lists some reasons to doubt this.

The new petty bourgeoisie and its others: Bloc formation and post-capitalist transformation

The post- 2009 revolt wave harbored some anti-capitalist dimensions, even if these were intermixed with egalitarian ones, as the previous sections have indicated. In Zuccotti, Tahrir, Taksim, and countless other parks and places, the middle strata in the heart of this multi-class revolt wave collectively built communally shared lives. Moreover, they did so via experimental and (at least intentionally) anti-hierarchical techniques. The practical, though macro-historical, question becomes: could some of these anti-capitalist tendencies help pave the road to a postcapitalist society?

This section will point out the necessity to link the re-theorization of middle strata back to an analysis of other classes and their coalitions, since new petty bourgeois practices (despite their potential contributions) cannot culminate in postcapitalism if left to their own dynamics. A renewed focus on the petty bourgeoisie should therefore not divert attention away from the other participants of this global revolt wave: elements of the bourgeoisie, the proletariat and the sub-proletariat. The task for future research is to lay bare the different class fractions that participated in the post-2009 wave (as well as their ethnic and religious-sectarian make-up), their intensity of involvement, and their contradictory investments in the revolt. Only such differentiated analysis can get us to the core of what is sustainable and what is doomed to remain ephemeral in this global wave.

Such a scholarly analysis would also have immense political significance. The primary struggle in capitalism, some have argued, is not that between the working class and the business class. The more likely carriers of the transition to a post-capitalist society are groups with contradictory locations. This was the case in the transition to capitalism itself: the ‘new class’ of that era (the bourgeoisie), rather than the subordinate class (the peasantry), was the main agent (Wright, 1985: 89–91; cf. Konrád and Szelenyi, 1979; cf. Gouldner, 1979).

I argue that blocs (and their organizers) rather than classes are the true agents of transformation.²⁵ Today’s new class might indeed be one of the keys to postcapitalist transformation, but it cannot act alone in this regard. What is more, there might be many well-founded reasons to suspect Marxist and neo-Marxist hopes regarding the transformative potential of the proletariat, but we could find even more reasons to suspect the middle class.

New petty bourgeois groups will be on the search to restore their privileges through capitalist or statist means whenever they have the opportunity, as seen in the collapse of Eastern European statism, which led to liberal capitalism rather than socialism. Abandoning his earlier hopes that Eastern European intellectuals and experts would push society toward a new formation that would be neither capitalist nor statist, Szelenyi (2002), along with many others, came to realize that middle strata’s interests might be in line with certain varieties of capitalism as much as with a more democratic socialism. Building on and expanding this insight, we can argue that the new petty bourgeoisie might or might not support post-capitalist transformation (or, for that matter, liberal capitalism, Third Way politics, or quasi-fascist regimes) depending on the trajectories of its particular fractions, world-historical context (including the uneven but combined development of ideological climates), its particular alliances, and the balance of forces in specific countries.

In other words, no single class has a *given* interest in post-capitalist transformation. Class interests are refined and redefined through political processes and class realignments. New petty bourgeois actors, therefore, can contribute to post-capitalist transformation only if they are disciplined through a process of bloc formation, in their interactions with the proletariat and other subordinate groups. Nevertheless, the new petty bourgeoisie might have a lot to contribute to such postcapitalist blocs, as their autonomist and egalitarian dispositions attest (even if these tendencies are partial and contradictory). In sum, the “proto-communard” practices in Tahrir, Zuccotti, and Gezi

have taught us an important lesson: despite their thoroughly commodified lives, the middle strata still have anti-capitalist tendencies, even if the sublation of their anticapitalism into a sustainable postcapitalist path will require articulation with other classes. In light of these comments, we can hypothesize that the sustenance of the uprising in Greece resulted (partially) from the relatively smaller weight of the new middle class in street politics, which rendered it more receptive to anti-capitalist input from subordinate strata.

If we accept that only blocs (rather than single classes) have the potential to transform society in a post-capitalist direction, the question then becomes: does the new petty bourgeoisie have the potential to be the *leader* of such a post-capitalist bloc?

Hegemonic potential

This brings us back to the question that Poulantzas answered too hastily: Can the new middle classes have a project and program of their own? In the recent revolts, they have asserted their own interests as the interests of the public ('We are the 99%'). As in the case of bourgeois hegemony, the popular acceptance of such a claim would be impossible if it didn't express a restricted truth. In this case, this truth has a simple core (even if the layers of that core are multiple and complex): the middle classes are at the forefront of the fight against the commodifications of debt, nature, and urban space in an age where the proletariat can no longer organize itself and lead the rest of society.

The concept of 'the new petty bourgeoisie' draws attention to the fickleness of this class's tendencies to represent the public interest (as it has a strong potential to benefit from commodification and therefore the tendency to restore its alliances with the neoliberal world order). By contrast, concepts such as the 'NMC professionals', 'the New Class', 'intellectuals', and 'experts' (or simply 'the new middle classes') draw attention to the will of this class to dream of and insist on a society based on hard work, reason, and fairness. The resistance against the commercialization of public spaces and services is at the core of the new middle class's truly anti-capitalist potential; yet this potential cannot spontaneously lead to postcapitalism (cf Therborn 2014, p. 14). Therefore, both conceptions (the new petty bourgeoisie vs. the new middle class) integrate elements of a complex truth, and hence there cannot be a perfect concept to capture these strata. I still want to emphasize some serious limitations of this class's hegemonic potential in the current context to prevent any overinvestment in it (and its revolt).

First, due to its increasing aversion to organization and collective discipline, the 'new' new petty bourgeoisie is further devoid of the capacity to offer programmatic ways out of the crisis of capitalism (such tendencies already tarnished the 'new' middle class of the 1960s and therefore the 1968 revolt, but they are much starker now). The class fraction in question is much more likely to erupt and then draw back in inconsistent shock waves. Second, due to its intensified consumerism, the class as a whole has even more entrenched stakes in the reproduction of capitalism when compared to the 1970s and 1980s. Third, as its potentials are extremely self-contradictory, spontaneous, bottom-up formation of this class is unlikely to lead to programmatic and consistent paths for post-capitalist transformation. Its self-conscious embrace of its post-capitalist tendencies can only come after an injection of consciousness from the outside. Yet, due to its amplified

autonomism and anarchism, this class is very likely to resist any quasi-Leninist injection. Certainly, these are quite broad generalizations, and only a sustained research program that focuses on the fractions of this class could ascertain in what ways these orientations are distributed within the new petty bourgeoisie (i.e. whether they are more or less intense in its more privileged versus proletarianized fractions; among the new or the more established professions; and across generational, ethnic, religious, and national divides).

Despite these caveats, it is possible to envision a post-capitalist society which is characterized by the class struggle between the new petty bourgeoisie and lower strata. The first revolutionary step to reach such a society would be through the disempowerment, marginalization, and subordination of the bourgeoisie (and not necessarily its total annihilation). This could only come through a deepening world economic-political-military crisis, as a result of which the new petty bourgeoisie would become convinced that bourgeois hegemony is no longer in its interests (but even during the worst crises, such a break-up with the bourgeoisie would not be possible without sustained political work to realign this class with the lower strata).

Moreover, what would characterize this post-capitalist society would not be a carefully managed transition to a classless society (as in classical schemas of transition from socialism to communism), but possibly a stretched out class struggle between new privileged strata and subordinate strata. This much was already established by the debates of the 1970s and 1980s (especially through the works of Ivan Szelenyi and Erik Wright). What we now need to realize, however, is the strong liberal-capitalist and at times conservative (even reactionary) tendencies of this class (as noted by the theorists of ‘the new petty bourgeoisie’ and relatively neglected by the others).²⁶ Active, incessant political work would be needed in post-capitalist society to organize the lower strata, raise their levels of education and technical ability, and thereby gradually erode the privileges of the new petty bourgeoisie. It is not clear at this point whether the transition from such an expert-hegemony-based post-capitalist society to a classless society could be relatively evolutionary or would require further revolutionary struggles.

Notes

1. I would like to thank Robert Brenner, Susan Watkins, Perry Anderson, Güven Bakırzeker, and two anonymous *Thesis Eleven* reviewers for their comments and contributions.
2. While it might be true that most of these revolts were multi-class rather than simply middle-class, as Jack Goldstone (2011) and Richard Seymour (2013) have emphasized, this should not obscure the importance, creativity, originality, and dangers of new middle class input.
3. For an exploration of this common thread across several countries, see the special issue of *European Urban and Regional Studies* (2013; vol. 20, issue 4) on the protest wave.
4. There were certainly attempts to connect them (Clarke, 2014), but for a variety of reasons none of these got institutionalized.
5. For early signs of these, which only got stronger as the revolt unfolded, see Cihan Tuğal, “Occupy Gezi: The Limits of Turkey’s Neoliberal Success,” *Jadaliyya*, June 4, 2013. http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/12009/occupy-gezi_the-limits-of-turkey%E2%80%99s-neoliberal-succ
6. Even if the Ukrainian protests were clearly to the right of the initial revolts of the global wave, their social bases and agendas shifted frequently. The Kiev protests evolved from a neoliberal,

pro-EU middle-class revolt to an anti-authoritarian multiclass one (with increasing working-class participation after January). Yet the organizational and ideological influence of the far right remained a constant (Ishchenko, 2014).

7. For the dynamics behind heavy participation by government employees, see Kandil (2012).
8. Gould (1995) has argued that the Paris Commune was not as proletarian as it was once believed to be either, but there are good reasons to doubt this argument (see Ted Margadant in *The Journal of Modern History* 70/3 (1998): 710-12 and Kim Voss in *International Labor and Working-Class History* 52 (1997): 186-88). Yet, even if we are to believe his findings, the Paris communards do not come across as privileged as their counterparts in Taksim.
9. These numbers, which come from a survey-based report by one of Turkey's most established research institutions (Konda), have to be handled carefully: Konda's operationalization of strata is quite different from the one I will offer below (a point which also applies to the Tunisia-Egypt research cited above).
10. Yörük and Yüksel (2014) found out that when we look at the protests that spread all over Istanbul (rather than just at the Gezi occupation), we find a more representative class map. Nevertheless, Konda's (2014, pp. 39, 45) second survey conducted throughout Turkey (as a supplement to its Gezi Park-focused first survey) indicates that farmers, workers, the retired, housewives, and *esnaf* (shopkeepers and tradesmen) – and the *lower income brackets overall* – were more likely to think that “the protesters were wrong from the beginning” and “the police made no mistakes.” Scholars who downplay the middle class predominance in the Gezi explosion give little weight to these and other similar information conveyed by the two Konda surveys.
11. See: ‘The new middle classes rise up: Marx’s revolutionary bourgeoisie finds its voice again’, *Economist*, 3 September 2011. Available at <http://www.economist.com/node/21528212> (accessed 10 August 2015).
12. See: Paul Mason, ‘Twenty reasons why it’s kicking off everywhere’, *BBC blogs*. Available at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/newsnight/paulmason/2011/02/twenty_reasons_why_its_kicking.html (accessed 10 August 2015). The author made these comments in the rosier days of the Arab spring, before half of the Egyptian professionals bowed to the ‘vertical authority’ of the (Muslim Brotherhood’s) Guidance Bureau and its ‘hermetic ideology’, and much of the other half got carried away by the ‘lies and propaganda’ of the old regime. Also see Mason (2013).
13. This overextension of the category of “the working class” is popular among Turkish Marxists, some of whom see the June 2013 protests as a proletarian revolt. For instance, see the prominent academic Korkut Boratav. “A Matured Class Based Contumacy . . .” *sendika.org* June 28, 2013. <http://www.sendika.org/2013/06/korkut-boratav-1-evaluates-the-gezi-resistance-a-matured-class-based-contumacy/>
14. However, both scholars have quite problematic definitions of this class. See below for the sketches of a new definition, which breaks away from Poulantzas’ productivist definition of class.
15. Though this requires a lengthier discussion, it should be noted that there are some problems with using the label intellectuals and/or experts as the primary category for these strata of modern society (as Szelenyi, Mitchell, and others do). First of all, by focusing almost exclusively on knowledge as the determining criterion of belonging, this label diverts attention away from a core disposition of the new middle class: its insecurity, which emerges from being sandwiched in between the bourgeoisie and proletariat, and its related obsession with promotion and fairness (and fairness in promotion). Second, like the more optimistic liberal analysis of the middle class, the label attributes some *consistency* to the overall dispositions of

- middling strata, even if it is not as *optimistic* about them. See below for a further discussion of the struggle over expertise in the making of this class, which is admittedly crucial.
16. See: Loïc Wacquant, 'Inequality, Marginality, and Social Justice in the City', Boğaziçi University, Hrant Dink Memorial Lecture, 17 January 2014. Available at: <https://archive.org/details/LoicWacquantInequalityMarginalityAndSocialJusticeInTheCity> (accessed 10 August 2015). For further Bourdieusian analysis of middle class participation in Gezi, see the essays in Öğütle and Göker (2014). For a somewhat different angle, see Keyder (2013).
 17. Wacquant also notes that the 'cultural bourgeoisie' has become the true bearer of resistance against economic and political capital after 1980, as the proletariat (now mostly re-created as the precariat) is disarmed. This is an important point, but remains a restricted insight unless it is contextualized within a broader conceptualization of the *political making* of class dispositions.
 18. Even though the definition offered in the four paragraphs that follow relies on Bourdieu in its emphasis on distinction/classification, aesthetics, and monopolization, note that it still differs considerably from the exact definition of new petty bourgeois fractions as developed by Bourdieu (1984, chapter 6). Also see footnote 20.
 19. A direct survey question regarding occupation can miss some important differences among these sectors, as some practitioners of these trades can be on their way to becoming small employers (bourgeoisification) or undistinguished workers (proletarianization).
 20. Note that this essay's tentative operationalization of the new petty bourgeoisie is much closer to Erik Wright (1985) than to Poulantzas or Bourdieu, even though Wright avoids this concept. Poulantzas' operationalization is highly flawed due to his insistence on defining the proletariat solely based on manual labor (which leads him to classify many actors with neither control nor ownership of the means of production as petty bourgeois). Bourdieu's operational fallacy is concentrated in his France-inspired inclusion of intellectuals, artists, and professionals in the upper class (an approximation which is possible only when socialism or post-capitalist statism has made inroads into capitalism; hence the partial applicability to the France of the 1960s, but the irrelevance for today).
 21. Bourdieu's classical example in this regard is an art shop owner who strives to have herself recognized as an artist rather than a shopkeeper.
 22. For a review of the literature on the class basis of new social movements, see Steinmetz (1994). In terms of the arguments of this essay, what matters is not the class composition of all the sympathizers of new social movements, but which class had *organized* impact on them. In contradistinction to much of the leftist movements of the 19th and early and mid-20th century, organized labor had no sustained influence on these movements.
 23. For instance, for data that put into question the mainstream argument that the new middle class is expanding in the case of Turkey, see Bahçe and Bahçe (2012).
 24. I elaborate on these social, and still partially 'material', grievances against neoliberalization in Tuğal (2013).
 25. For a discussion of this point, see De Leon et al. (2009). We further elaborate how our arguments in the cited article build on but differ from Gramsci, Laclau, and others in De Leon et al. (2015).
 26. The first dire (and perceptive) warning regarding domination by this class came from Bakunin, although he also exaggerated the consistency of this class (and its capacity to act as a group), a tendency which the theorists of the new petty bourgeoisie have systematically avoided. For a comprehensive genealogy of this tendency, see Szelenyi and Martin (1988).

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