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Specificities of middle-class structuration in Russia

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Abstract

This article deals with class analysis as a sociological research programme. Investigating the most important structural changes in contemporary Russia, it shows the relevance and limits of the explanatory potential of class research. Class analysis is a highly complex process involving many different conceptual levels and research strategies. A very basic distinction has to be made between class position and class situation. Class position has to do with the relations of ownership and domination within production. The concept of class situation refers to more concrete phenomena: the reproduction situation and working conditions.

The Russian transition has intensified sociological studies on class structure, but these studies are significantly inspired by a rather essentialist approach to class identity, consciousness, and habitus of classes. The middle class is assumed to be in its essence legalistic, disciplined, and full of entrepreneurial spirit. We challenge these studies by analysing the structuration process of classes by taking into account the concrete levels of class situation and forms of organization and consciousness. In Russia, class positions do determine the life chances, but interest formation in politics is not determined by clearly distinct forms of class consciousness or class-based organization activity.

Keywords: class theory, comparative analysis, transition, citizenship, welfare

Introduction

Social classes are large groups of people with a similar position in the structure of a society. In a very fundamental sense, managers resemble other managers, workers resemble workers, doctors resemble doctors, and farmers resemble other farmers. Largely, all modern societies are also quite similar. There is no society that offers long-term career prospects to factory workers or cashiers and not to holders of Master's degrees. There is no society where labourers live longer than managers. Life opportunities and perspectives are related to social status.

Globally, the differences are immense: at one end of the scale, there are the super-rich, who manoeuvre billions of dollars. The wealthiest individuals' assets are worth more than the Finnish state budget. At the other end of the scale, an illiterate Indian person is living in the

middle of a roundabout, selling roasted chestnuts to stay alive. The population of the world is around seven billion. According to statistics, around one billion people are living in relatively wealthy societies, where the annual income per capita is around EUR 6,000. Five billion people are living on an annual income of less than EUR 1,000. In the middle of the scale is the middle class, around one billion people globally, with the largest groups being the middle classes of Eastern Europe, the growing China, and Russia. Global inequality should be kept in mind, even though social classes do not play a role at the global level.

At the national level, however, social classes have played a significant political role. ‘Bourgeois parties’, ‘agricultural people’ and the ‘labour movement’ are traditional concepts of the Finnish political scene. ‘The working class is revolutionary or it is nothing,’ Communist books used to proclaim.

In classical political economy, all fundamental social divisions were closely tied in with basic economic categories, with land ownership, capital, and wage labour: these were the categories that formed the basis for the main social classes. Class analysis was an integral part of economic analysis. For Marx, social classes appeared as bearers of different economic categories, but of course in Marx’s case, this analysis unfolded into a critique of political economy (Marx 1974). In Marxist theory, the capitalist mode of production is based on an indirect form of societal labour and on the exploitation of the working class. Labour is indirectly social because social needs are always mediated by the markets. The working class is exploited because it generates surplus value that at once makes possible the production of capital and the reproduction of class relations. The working class shall be a new revolutionary class, showing the way in the process of social change towards the abolition of the capital relation. From this point of view, economic classes were also key categories of political analysis: class interests determined the nature and dynamics of political processes.

As well as ruining the ideological appeal of Marxism in the eyes of Western intellectuals, the collapse of Soviet communism effectively undermined the ideological significance of the concept of class. Jan Pakulski and Malcolm Waters (1996), for instance, suggest that the ideological interest on the political right has turned towards moral and ethical questions, while on the left the focus has shifted to questions of gender, ecology, citizenship and human rights (Pakulski & Waters 1996). They argue that class analysis must now be thrown overboard and replaced by studies of status positions and their underlying cultural meanings. Postmodern society is a status bazaar where people can choose between a wide range of different identities based on cultures and consumption (Pakulski and Walters 1996: 114-131; see also Pahl 1989).

This chapter challenges the view arguing for the death of classes and deals with class analysis as a sociological research programme. Investigating the structuration of classes in contemporary Russia, it shows the relevance of class research. On the other hand, the chapter proceeds to discuss the role of the welfare state for class research. My intention is to show anomalies and problems in class analysis as well. They do not ruin the research problem, but they underline the relevance of a multilevel scope logic of class analysis for showing the explanatory power and the limits of class research.

Classes and class analysis

Traditional class research rhetoric revolves around different kinds of contrasts: Marx versus Weber, class differences in grade versus qualitative differentiation, class struggle versus co-operation between classes. Our theoretical approach challenges such an approach, and the main argument is that the traditional rhetoric of contrasts is misleading. It is mainly a distinction strategy within the field of class analysis itself. From this perspective, nothing appears definite and undisputed. Rather than starting from traditional contrasts, we want to show that there are many significant and solid empirical results on which everyone can agree. Furthermore, the field of class analysis is open to conceptual innovations and new results from other sociological research programmes. This does not mean to say that there are no theoretical disagreements, unsolved problems, or anomalies.

Class analysis consists not only of drawing maps of the class structure and of slotting people into different classes and counting the proportions they represent. This is merely the first step and certainly not yet sufficient to establish whether the classes only exist in the researcher's typology or whether they actually exist in social reality. If class analysis were this kind of statistical exercise, it really would not have any relevance whatsoever (for an example of shallow critique, see Piirainen 1997).

The scope logic of class analysis, developed by the Finnish Class Project, represents an effort to create a comprehensive analytical strategy in class research. It draws from the class analysis by E.O. Wright, however taking it further by noting the importance of autonomy as a class criterion. The scope logic of class analysis also utilizes the Giddensian structuration thesis by applying it to the life-situations of classes and also takes seriously Bourdieu's key ideas of class habituses when analysing the different aspects of social action by social classes (class interests, willingness to act). In this manner the levels of analysis are systematically taken into account. From this it follows that class analysis is a highly complex process which involves many different conceptual levels and research strategies. A very basic distinction which needs to be

made is that between class position and class situation (Kivinen 1989, Blom et al. 1992). This distinction is implicit in all class analysis, but it has been tackled explicitly in the studies of the Finnish Class Project (cf. Wright 1990). Class position has to do with the relations of ownership and domination within production. The concept of class situation, then, refers to more concrete phenomena: the reproduction situation (income, education, labour market position) and working conditions. Studies of class organization and class consciousness cannot base their explanations on class structure without an analysis of class situation.

Class interests cannot be identified without taking into account class situation. For example, in order to analyse the potential interests of the Russian middle class today, we have to start out from its concrete and historical living conditions. Class interests are not objectively given within the structure of capitalist or 'socialist' societies. It is precisely the historicity and contextuality of interests that constitutes one of the biggest challenges to class analysis today.

Social classes have often been taken to represent not only their own specific interests but also the common, universal good. For Hegel, the bureaucracy that served the state was a universal class, for Marx the working class which bore the burden of universal suffering represented the future of the relations of production. The new middle class has been described as consisting of technocrats and bureaucrats, but also as the intelligentsia. Thus, this group of people may be seen as representing either 'good' or 'evil'.

Gouldner and the new middle class

Alvin Gouldner presents one of the most comprehensive interpretations of the new middle class. He observes that many social scientific grammars start out from the assumption that the powerful are good and the weak bad. However, Gouldner adds that moral goodness and power do not necessarily go hand in hand. There is good reason to ask what kinds of interests and moral endeavours the new middle class actually represents.

Gouldner identifies several different conceptions of the new (middle) class:

1. The new class as benign technocrats. John Kenneth Galbraith, for example, views the new class as a new historical elite already entrenched in institutional influence which it uses in benign ways for society. It is more or less inevitable and trustworthy (Galbraith 1967, Bell 1973, Berle and Means 1932).
2. The new class as master class. Old revolutionaries such as Mikhail Bakunin and Jan Wacław Machajski saw the new class as another moment in a long-continuing circulation of historical elites, as a socialist intelligentsia that brings little new to the world and continues to

exploit the rest of the society as the old class had, but now uses education rather than money to exploit others (cf. Shatz 1989).

3. The new class as old class ally. Talcott Parsons (1939) viewed the new class as a benign group of dedicated ‘professionals’ who will uplift the old (moneyed) class from a venal group to a collectively oriented elite and who, fusing with it, will forge a new genteel elite continuous with but better than the past.

4. The new class as servants of power. Maurice Zeitlin, Noam Chomsky and other critical sociologists understood the new class as subservient to the old moneyed class which was held to retain power as it always did (Chomsky 1969, Zeitlin 1974).

Gouldner regards views completely leaving aside the old ruling class based on capital ownership as problematic. The new class is not unequivocally in power or unequivocally a servant of power. Rather, there is a tension between the bourgeoisie and the new middle class which both Parsons and Zeitlin fail to conceptualize. However, Gouldner says that the options open to the new class include overthrowing the old ruling class. This cannot be a static view. The numerical growth of the new class and the growth of its influence have to be taken into account. Chomsky underestimates the current power of the new class; Galbraith exaggerates it. Both Galbraith and Parsons share the weakness that they fail to see how the new class promotes its own genuine egoistic interests and power.

Gouldner is very cautious as far as the promotion of collective needs is concerned. He says the new class does take an interest in the promotion of collective needs, at least transiently. Although the new class is elitist and selfish and applies its special knowledge to further its own interests, it may still be ‘the best card that history has presently given us to play’.

Gouldner himself regards the new class (he is reluctant to use the term middle class, even though traditionally one would here refer precisely to the new middle class) as an embryonic new ‘universal class’. Comprising both the technical intelligentsia and the intellectuals, the new class covers bearers of knowledge. However, the new class is profoundly flawed as a universal class. It is elitist and self-seeking and uses its special knowledge to advance its own interests and power, and to control its own work situation. However, it is not bound to the same rationality and morality as the capitalist class and can therefore (at least transiently) contribute to collective needs. It is definitely more powerful and independent than Chomsky suggests, but it is not in power alone: the power of the new class is growing, which has to do precisely with professionalization (Gouldner 1979: 5-8, Joutsenoja 1992).

Gouldner's attempt at a dynamic analysis of the position of the new middle class, tracing at once the tensions inherent in its interests, is a definite step forward compared to ahistorical and simplistic postulations. It is by no means unproblematic, however: how much can one really say about the role of the new middle class in general terms, without exploring the nature of the 'general needs' of each particular society? This line of thinking needs to be further pursued by looking at the power resources of the new middle classes, their professionalization, and processes of class relations.

The most unique contribution of Gouldner's theory is its emphasis on the specific rationality and limitations of the new class. Gouldner says very little in this connection about the working class, but his perspective can be complemented with Paul Willis's idea of the specific epistemology of the working class (Willis 1979). This implies that class consciousness is not about certain contents of consciousness, but above all about different ways of cognitively grasping the world and about different forms of rationality. Hence, we have within wage labour two different societal realities. Bourdieu's concept of habitus is the most sophisticated effort to systematize this argument.

Middle-class and class analysis in Russia

Starting from the class structure in this book, we analyse the structuration of inequality in contemporary Russia. However, the analysis is not based on some kind of ahistorical class interests grounded on mere theoretical constructions. Rather, the interests are studied based on a concrete analysis of class structure and class situation. Consequently, this chapter addresses the following questions: What is the situation, internal divisions, and organization of the middle class in Russia? What are the life chances and perceived concrete interests concerning the preferred welfare model? How does the welfare regime reproduce class structure and the structuration of class situations?

The Russian transition has intensified sociological studies on class structure. The formation of the middle class has been particularly in the focus of the Russian sociologists. This approach has been significantly inspired by a rather essentialist approach to class identity, consciousness, and the habitus of classes. The middle class is suggested to be in its essence legalistic, disciplined, and full of entrepreneurial spirit. Theoretical discussions in Western sociology on special and non-benign interests of the middle class have not been broadly discussed in Russia (see however e.g. Chernysh 2008). Russian class research tends to be rather empiristically oriented, constructing multidimensional stratification models and opinion scales. Apart from in some totalizing new openings disregarding previous class research without showing its

anomalies (Kordonsky 2008), in most cases the class analysis is restricted to defining the limits of the class, at best added with hypothetical constructions on class interests. (See e.g. Gorshkov et al. 1999, Grigoriev and Maleva 2001, Gorshkov et al. 2008, Golovljanitsina 2009; cf. a more developed view Shkaratan 2008, Shkaratan, Injasevskij and Ljubimova, 2008. On essentializing cf. especially Grigoriev and Maleva 2001, Gorshkov 2009, Anikin 2009; as a more developed view see Radaev 2003).

This limited scope is challenged in this article. Instead, the structuration process of classes is analysed in concrete terms taking into account the levels of class situation and forms of organization. It is especially important to understand the neglected connection between class structuration and the formation of the welfare regime.

In advanced capitalist countries, a distinction is customarily made between two different middle classes: the old and the new. The old middle class refers mainly to small entrepreneurs and farmers; the new middle class comprises bosses and experts, i.e. managerial and professional groups. The distinction dates back to Karl Kautsky, who distinguished between the petty bourgeoisie and the *neue Mittelstand* (Kautsky 1899).

In Russia, the weakness of the middle class was discussed even before the Revolution. It was pointed out that the bourgeoisie in Russia was fairly small, and the same was said of the professions: doctors, lawyers, engineers, and teachers (Balzer 1996). Strictly speaking, this was not quite true, however, because these professional groups had a strong representation among Russian liberals. Besides, Russia had its intelligentsia, and that certainly was not an insignificant force.

In state socialist societies there was of course no middle class based on ownership. In some people's democracies there were independent farmers, but their holdings were very small; the majority had no more than 10 hectares of land. Russia, by contrast, had neither independent peasants nor an urban petty bourgeoisie. After more than 60 years, entrepreneurial groups have been revived with the process of privatization. The discussion here focuses on the middle class which in the West is traditionally known as the new middle class, but which in Russia is 'old' in the sense that it has inherited its locations from the Soviet era.

The tumultuous evolution of the class society in post-socialist Russia

With regard to contemporary Russia, we have witnessed a rather chaotic privatization process which first through so-called spontaneous privatization allowed the old managerial elite or nomenklatura to capture most of the property to be privatized. This was followed by a deliberate

government policy to create a new entrepreneurial class of capitalists who took over the biggest natural resources and related production facilities and created financial institutions to manage with this stage of privatization. A partial renationalization or bureaucratization of property took place when the strategic parts of the Russian economy were put into the hands of hand-picked members of the elites that surrounded President Putin. In this process, however, also a kind of a new entrepreneurial middle-class was created, adapted to the new market economy conditions.

However, the actual middle class in Russia is still rather small compared with the middle classes in the West. In a comparative perspective, a striking feature has been the large share of a wage-earner middle class consisting of doctors, teachers, lawyers, and engineers without the autonomy that the middle class possesses in the West. We have also previously shown that the professional interest organizations representing different classes are weak (Kivinen and Li 2012). The new market economy has eroded the traditional Soviet role of provider of social benefits, and the trade unions have had difficulties finding their new role as defenders of their members' interests against the employers (Olimpieva 2016, Crowley, Ashwin and Kozina 2013, Vinogradova, Kozina and Cook 2012). This development was mainly an unintended result of uncontrolled development, not so much the result of some systematic reform process.

The erosion of the old classes' power resources had also eroded the old welfare system by the end of Putin's first term. The strengthening of the middle class under the current Russian conditions seems not to enforce public services but rather private services, and the middle class seems politically to have organized itself into the party of power, *United Russia*. The working class is too weak in its interest representation and seems not to have enough resources to put forward its own model. The new system is taking shape, and although it has not been stabilized yet, there are reasons to expect that eventually an outcome will be a liberal model of a welfare state, a poor man's version of the US model.

Our data provides us with possibilities to study the structuration of the middle class in various aspects of the reproduction situation (house ownership, education, incomes, social benefits) as well as in working conditions.

How to analyse the middle class

The key strategic solution in my own work (Kivinen 1987, 1989) is to link up class theory with the sociology of work. In the conceptualization of collective power resources at the level of the labour process, it is essential that we do not content ourselves with the simple juxtaposition of two subjects (as in classical Marxist analyses), but also take into account the power resources possessed by the new middle classes and the related forms of organizing the 'relations in

production'. This leads to the discovery that 'mental labour' is no simple concept, but comprises different forms involving different kinds of power resources, strategies, and historical processes. A crucial role in the analysis of the power resources of the new middle classes is played by professionalization. Indeed it is precisely in relation to 'professional autonomy' that all other forms of mental labour should be characterized.

Although the position and situation of middle classes in the Soviet Union were in many ways dependent on their relationship to the nomenclature and to the party apparatus, it would be far too simplistic to suggest that these class groups simply served the nomenclature (Zaslavskaya 1992). We need instead to look more closely at the underlying processes of class relations.

The processes of class relations that lie behind different forms of mental labour can be conceptualized as follows:

- Professionalization
- Evolution of managerial hierarchies
- Evolution of scientific-technical occupations
- Separation of clerical work from management and degradation of its content
- Development of caring as a specific form of wage labour, its professionalization
- Changes occurring in the position and qualification requirements of skilled workers
- Position of small firms in the economic structure and the development of distinctive forms of organization (e.g. paternalism)

To construct an adequate picture of class relations in Soviet socialism and contemporary Russia, we first of all need to ask how these processes differ in socialist and capitalist societies. It is only once this question has been addressed that we can move on to the interests and special nature of the middle class.

Most people in market economies are wage-earners. The upper class living entirely on income from capital is small in all countries, around 1% of the wealthiest people. However, not all wage-earners belong to the working class. This dilemma was first detected in the early 20th century. Consequently, we began to talk about the old middle classes, meaning business owners, and new middle classes, meaning more highly educated wage-earners in managerial positions, with better living conditions than the working class. During the 20th century, the latter group outnumbered the old middle class. Initially, the old middle class mainly consisted of farmers, but this social class has decreased to around 2% in the most developed countries. Urban business owners represent less than 10% of the population in practically all developed countries, with

small business owners focusing on various fields. In Finland, agricultural people represented as much as 15% of the population in the 1980s, but their proportion has decreased to around 3%, in line with the trend in other developed capitalist countries. The division of wage-earners into the middle and working classes raised the question of the political role of the middle classes. What types of interests is the wage-earning middle class promoting?

There is a never-ending selection of literature on the middle classes and the concept of middle class. One thing, however, is clear: the new middle classes consist of three main groups, which I like to call 'bosses', 'priests' and 'engineers', to keep things simple. Bosses are managers, from supervisors to executives. Priests have mastered the mysteries of modern societies through their high level of education, and the engineering professions are primarily related to the development of modern technologies. These constitute the core of the upper middle class or new middle classes. In addition, modern societies have a large number of marginal groups whose living conditions partly resemble those of the middle class and partly those of the traditional working class. For example, care workers usually have a high level of education, but their salary levels are not higher than the average salary of the working class.

With regard to Russia, there are usually high hopes for the middle class. It is seen as a counterforce to the Putin administration that will eventually drive Russia towards European modernization and democracy. Does this hold true?

The basic idea that informs our analysis of the middle classes is that the working class proper consists of those wage-workers who have become alienated (in a strong and empirically unambiguous sense) from their work. This refers to such wage-workers who have no decision-making authority concerning their work organization, either on investments, tools, and equipment or basic working methods. Secondly, the working class do not even have control of their work in the sense of being able to plan the product of their work or even the performance of the job. Middle-class wage-earners comprise those groups who have had the power resources they need to safeguard their autonomy. Strong middle-class groups include professionals, managers, and engineers. Skilled workers, workers in care and reproduction and certain autonomous groups in clerical jobs have less power resources and features of a middle-class position. A special kind of autonomy is retained in capitalism by employees in small companies as a result of the less advanced technologies and division of labour in these work organizations. Does this hold true?

The Soviet middle class

According to its official narrative, the Soviet Union was a society ruled by the working class. The February Revolution of 1917 was followed by a ‘proletarian revolution’ by the Bolsheviks, which put an end to exploitation and inequality between social classes. The private ownership of production factors was discontinued, and it was believed that social classes had also ceased to exist. It is true that there no longer were classes based on ownership. However, social positions are not people. While the bourgeoisie had been defeated, the former bourgeois continued to exist as people. In fact, they were called *byvshie*, which means ‘former’. It was not easy belonging to this group. Social status was marked on passports and had a significant effect on people’s lives.¹ The children of the former bourgeois had no access to higher education, the party, or even the pioneer movement. The working class, or the proletariat, was the centre of the moral universe in society, and other social classes were considered to deviate from the proletarian virtues. The proletariat’s qualities were considered to include:

- Unpretentiousness
- Loyalty to the party
- Integration into large organizations
- Discipline
- Collectivity

As opposed to the proletarian virtues, the other social classes had vices. The bourgeoisie were seen as hedonistic, calculating, and cruel. The aristocracy were considered prone to snobbery and experimental lifestyles. Farmers were seen as instinctive and carnivalesque, and small business owners – the ‘petty bourgeoisie’ – were considered to be something of a self-serving force of nature. As early as the 1920s, the Communist Party was prone to seeing threats of inappropriate class effects everywhere. Some of these were actual effects, such as those arising from the ties of the working class to the countryside. However, any ‘deviation’ or lifestyle could be classified as bourgeois or petty bourgeois.

In reality, Russia had never actually had the type of proletarian habitus that the Bolshevik policy was postulating. While the ‘holy proletarian’ was supposed to be disciplined, organized, and hard-working, actual workers turned out to be peasantly, restless, and carnivalesque, in addition to being heavy drinkers. The ideal class and real life did not match.

Even though the bourgeois had been eradicated as a social class, the Soviet Union was by no means ruled by the working class. The party elite, or the *nomenklatura*, became the new ruling class. During the Stalinist administration, this social class increasingly began to recruit new

members from among itself. Children of the party elite became new members of the party elite. Due to Stalin's purges, the people kept changing, but the social status of the elite remained unchanged, with added privileges. The Soviet Union of the Stalin era was far from equality, and Stalin frequently attacked excessive egalitarianism. In people's daily lives, the nomenklatura remained a distant reality until the end of the Soviet Union – *oni*, those people somewhere out there. It was one of the strongest taboos of that society, something definitely not to be discussed publicly.

However, beginning in the 1930s, new elements began to emerge in the class structure. When Stalin criticized excessive equality, he was actually appealing to new social forces generated by modernization based on Bolshevik industry and organizations. In politics, these new social forces were not allowed to be defined in terms of class concepts, but they were new middle classes – that is, various experts and managers. They were large groups generated by aggressive industrialization and the expansion of education and bureaucracy – they were our people, 'our intelligentsia'. For example, the number of engineers grew sixfold and the number of managers grew tenfold during the first three five-year plans. The new middle classes continued to grow after Stalin's era, but increasingly from among themselves. Middle-class children inherited middle-class jobs. At the same time, however, privileges related to salaries were reduced. (see Dunham 1976, Millar 1985.)

Until the end of the Soviet Union, the status of the middle classes was affected by the fact that they were not entitled to safeguard their interests through organizations of their own. In the West, middle-class organizations – or professions, such as medical and legal associations – were able to determine the number of students admitted to educational institutions in their fields, in addition to having a significant effect on salary levels and job descriptions. Such rights did not exist in the Soviet Union. In terms of occupational structure, the Soviet Union seemed quite similar to Western countries. In reality, however, the position of the middle classes was considerably weaker in the Soviet Union than in the West. Their income was smaller than that of many working-class groups, with no career development opportunities or opportunities to make use of their education in working life. (Paretskaya 2013.) In other words, a wage-earning middle class emerged during the Soviet era, but their living conditions and income level did not materially differ from those of the ordinary working class. The new middle classes never developed into an independent political force.

A potential middle class in the new Russia

While the working class had been seen as the driving force in society in the Soviet era, politicians and social scientists put their hopes in the middle class after the collapse of socialism. Suddenly, it was politically incorrect to talk about the working class, in much the same manner as in the United States. The transition of Russia fundamentally changed class relations. Private ownership, which had been morally indefensible, became a virtue and the driving force of development in society. Large production plants from the Soviet era were privatized rapidly – very much so. While it had taken more than three decades to privatize coalmines in Thatcher's Great Britain, the Russian coalmines were privatized in three weeks. The following graph illustrates how the Russian oil industry developed from a sector dominated by a single state company into 15 private corporations in just one year.

Figure 1 – Consolidation of the oil industry 1992–2006 - about here

Source: Kivinen 2012

The situation was paradoxical for the middle classes. After the Soviet Union, the society had a large number of highly educated people, but the position of the middle classes weakened during the tumult of the transition in the 1990s. It can even be said that the middle class shrunk. State salaries were left unpaid, and people had to work two jobs – professors driving a taxi for extra income were not just anecdotes. If you happened to be in the right place at the right time, you could make a fortune on exchange rate changes alone. Today, Moscow has the second-highest number of billionaires in the world, after London. Many of the billionaires in Moscow have a background in the former nomenklatura, but their ranks also include people who were involved in illegal trade in the Soviet Union. Most of the production plants were privatized within the inner circle. In other words, within the middle class, the bosses usually had it good, while the priests and engineers had it worse. The strongest performance was recorded for the energy sector, which represents only 1.5% of all employment.

At the same time, sociologists enthusiastically delved into the composition of the middle classes. The assessments varied, and the criteria often seemed random and vague. There were attempts to define the middle classes in terms of various aspects, from consumption to the private sector, without paying much attention to the fact that there was a considerable body of very exact theoretical discourse and empirical research related to this theme in the West. In Finland, we have empirical material on class structure and changes in class circumstances from 1991, 1998, 2007 and 2015. The special features of Russia continue to include an extensive potential middle class. This means people who, based on their educational backgrounds, should belong to the middle class, but whose living conditions continue to resemble those of the working class. However, according to our latest empirical studies, this potential middle class is clearly improving its position, even in terms of working conditions. During the Putin era, their career development opportunities have increased, particularly their opportunities to make use of their education and professional skills in working life. Differences in salaries between classes have stabilized. In other words, the formation of the Russian middle class is related not only to the level of consumption, but also to more fundamental structures in working life.

The Soviet Union created a sort of moral universe around the virtues of the working class. Today, hopes are put in the middle class. In sociology and discourse in Russia, the middle class is believed to be:

- Law-abiding
- Highly adaptable to social change
- Persistent
- Entrepreneurial
- Individualistic in the right way

In the West, this list is supplemented by the idea that the middle class is highly prone to demanding democracy.

Operationalising contemporary middle class

Our argumentation above has proceeded along two main tracks. We have tried to demonstrate that, as in the West, the question of the alienation and autonomy of labour in the Soviet Union was a crucial distinguishing dimension between the middle class and the working class. On the other hand, we have also tried to show that the middle classes in the Soviet Union had far less resources to protect their own positions than is the case in advanced capitalist countries.

There are three points we would like to make: first of all the operationalization of class theories is a difficult and demanding task, because there is such a huge number of occupations and professions in modern society. It is understood that it took John Goldthorpe and his colleagues a couple of years to establish which occupations can genuinely be operationalized as occupying middle class positions on the criterion that the real labour process involves decision-making authority and autonomy. Secondly, although there may be differences in how individual occupations are classified, there is in fact a rather broad consensus of opinion on the basic structure, whether we start out from John Goldthorpe's or Erik Olin Wright's or my own class theory. In particular, there is broad agreement on the position of professional and managerial groups. Not even the critics of class analysis deny the role of professionalization or 'credentialism' (Pakulski 1993). Thirdly, although different kinds of operationalizations lead to somewhat different conclusions about the sizes of class groups, the picture that emerges when we proceed to analyse the structuration of class situation and consciousness is in the end rather similar. The only theories that differ from the mainstream (and that in empirical terms appear more or less untenable; see Kivinen 1989: 164–197) are those that deny the significance of professional and managerial positions and that define the middle class as consisting of such groups as state workers (Projekt Klassenanalyse 1973).

Our operationalization of the class structure is grounded in the following premises:

- The hard core of the new middle classes consists of all types of professional, scientific-technical, managerial, or administrative-bureaucratic autonomy, regardless of managerial status. In addition, people in leading positions of office work are included.
- By contrast, care workers, skilled workers and small enterprise autonomy types as well as those in performance-level autonomous office jobs constitute a contradictory class location in the middle ground between the core of the new middle classes and the working class (cf. Kivinen 1987: 195).

In this operationalization, autonomy serves as a class criterion in two different ways. Firstly, occupations are classified as autonomy types on the grounds described above. Secondly, membership of the core of the new middle classes has required at least unambiguous medium autonomy on the following scale:

- 1) High, unambiguous
- 2) High, probable
- 3) Medium, unambiguous
- 4) Medium, probable
- 5) Low
- 6) None

Autonomy has been measured with three different questions concerning product design, performance design, and genuine problem-solving in the work process. These dimensions are combined into a measure of autonomy by weighting the product design and problem-solving components on the basis of rules of deduction borrowed from Wright's original theory of autonomy. The professional and managerial groups included in the core of the middle class are thus groups who possess this kind of real autonomy (Kivinen 1989: 295–296).

New processes of class relations

New property-based classes were born again in Russia during the rapid and dramatic privatization process. In fact, many or even most of the future so-called oligarchs were *not* part of the former nomenclature. They had made use of the market opportunities since the late 1980s by starting their cooperatives, trading whatever was possible. (Schimpfössl 2018.) These new 'NEPmen' were originally speculators and swindlers, who utilized the absence of a general rule of law in late-Soviet and early new Russia era, especially legislation that would regulate financial and economic activities. If one was endowed with entrepreneurial spirit and had enough luck and energy, small fortunes could be made easily in several ways in late-Soviet and early new-Russian times. These included, for instance, collecting huge profits by currency

speculation in the era of hyperinflation; releasing worthless ‘shares’ in investment funds in which the public was rushing to invest; working as a middleman for managers of state property, especially buying cheaply state-owned raw materials at artificially low domestic prices and selling them illicitly to foreign markets at export prices, with sometimes several hundred per cent profits. The money so collected was used to become even richer, buying or collecting with false promises large amounts of privatization vouchers from the population into voucher funds and thus becoming shareholders of, or totally taking over, formerly state-owned companies. The shares in these companies were sold by the State Property Committee at prices that were ridiculously low, enabling the future oligarchs literally to steal the property of the state.

As a consequence, a kind of quiet revolution in ownership structure took place by or around the mid-1990s. The new owners started to replace the old managerial elites, the rent-seeking ‘red barons’, who had based their success on state subsidies of non-competitive production rather than on market-oriented entrepreneurship. Early on, these future oligarchs had entered the banking and stock market sector in order to administrate their operations, with licences received from the state authorities on the basis of personal connections and corruption. If they were lucky with contacts with corrupted politicians and bureaucrats, their banks became ‘authorized’, through which state bureaucracies financed regional or other state economic and social programmes, including the salaries of public workers and civil servants. The back-stage idea of this arrangement was that instead of paying the money out to the objects they were meant for immediately, the unregulated system enabled the banks to use these huge amounts of transactions for short-term currency and other speculations and collect huge profits.

By the mid-1990s the oligarchs found their firm allies in the market reformers around President Boris Yeltsin, who were then in power in main government positions relevant to economic policy. After several failures in getting rid of the old conservative managerial elite, and not satisfied with the rather small-scale achievements of voucher privatization, the market reformers were now interested at any price in privatizing state property as fast as possible. The ideological purpose was finally to get rid of the threat of communism’s return, without paying any attention to what this enterprise would mean for the population at large or democratic values at stake. The final innovation that materialized this ideology was the so-called loans-for-shares approach; that is, auctions that were organized to sell out the most lucrative natural resources and main state companies to the hand-picked group of oligarchs. (Cohen 2009: 153.) Formally the banks received the shares of the state companies for safekeeping in exchange for a loan to the government. As the bankrupt government, according to the plan, did not pay back the loans, the banks had right to sell the shares, which they did. But they sold the shares cheaply to

themselves via covered operations. In this way, a handful of oligarchs took over the largest and most lucrative state-owned enterprises and resources, including those dealing with oil, metallurgy, pulp industry and so on. As Becker and Vasileva (2017: 89) note, ‘Overall, contrary to the intentions of the reformers, Russia’s privatization program did not create a full-fledged liberal market economy, but rather implied two waves of patrimonial asset appropriation by well-connected insiders in the context of a weak state’.

A third change in the ownership structure started with President Vladimir Putin in the early 2000s. He first made a deal with most of the oligarchs that they would not interfere in politics too much; the too ambitious ones were either put in jail or driven abroad. (Åslund 2019.) This development, which was understood by many Western analysts and scholars as an authoritarian move, as it touched the property rights of the new capitalist class, was generally welcomed by the Russian people (Sakwa 2014). At the same time, the new ruling elite under Putin emphasized the necessity to re-establish the great power role of Russia, which naturally led to the conclusion of tightened control over so-called strategic or sensitive sectors, such as raw materials and energy. The new approach that was introduced has been called ‘renationalization’ or ‘state capitalism’; the state enterprises started to buy attractive private companies either at a high price, or the sale was forced and therefore the price was low. While many oligarchs have, at least so far, remained in these companies, others have been forced out, especially in the energy sector. The *siloviki*, that is, people from the security structures, as well as other people close to the Putin administration, were installed to lead many of the main Russian enterprises. (Åslund 2007, Zygarsky 2016.) Thus, what was labelled oligarchic capitalism became what is currently labelled bureaucratic capitalism (Shevtsova 2007). Yet the private sector is predominant, contributing around 33% of GDP in 20016 (Di Bella, Dynnikova and Slavov 2019), and even critics of the current renationalization claim that Russia ‘became a market economy after a couple of years of transition, with no significant reversal,’ and that its ‘economic freedom holds firm’ (Åslund 2007: 277, 280).

Russia’s peculiar class structure

The table below shows that during the period of economic growth and stabilization, middle class positions increased quite significantly. More people belong now in the middle-class groups than in the working class. Currently the most successful contributors to the middle class are the financial sector, trade services, education, and construction. The group is evenly divided between the state and private sectors of the economy. It is symptomatic that the ‘consumption’ middle class of 2015 incorporated groups of regional or federal officials as well as members of law enforcement that had been previously absent from it. The proportion of the authorities

including local and federal officials as well as law enforcement reached the figure of 5.7% of the entire group. (Chernysh 2020, forthcoming). Our results on work situation show that the potential middle class has become a real one and the distinction between working class conditions of life.

Table 1 – The Russian class structure 1998-2015 (%) [about here](#)

When we take into account the growth of inequality (Figure 2) measured by the Gini Index, and also the regional differences in Figure 3, we can suggest the following conclusions concerning the relevance of income differences in contemporary Russia. First, the growing differences in the Gini Index should not be interpreted as a polarization of society, nor does it indicate growing relative differences between classes. The growing inequality during the Putin and Medvedev regimes seems to be due to *regional differentiation* instead. Second, the relative differences between the middle class and working class seem to have stabilized. They have a strong structuring effect on life perspectives in conditions that are characterized by paid and chargeable welfare services and a lack of progressive taxes. Third, the relative differences between classes may be less significant for the working-class experience in Russia than the growth of real incomes and consumption possibilities. To some extent, the transition situation is in this phase similar to the development in Western Europe after World War II as Ulrich Beck (1986) pointed out in that case.

Figure 2 – Gini coefficients in Russia 1980-2015 [about here](#)

Source: Novokmet, Piketty and Zucman 2017ⁱⁱ

Figure 3 – Russia’s richest and poorest regions about here

Source: Rosstat

The structuration of the class situation also has, anyhow, other dimensions which we are able to analyse using our survey data. Table 3 is shown here as an example of the indicators concerning working conditions. It shows clearly that the ‘potential middle class’ improved its position significantly during Putin’s period. Consequently, this group seems to be in the process of receiving a real middle-class position. But the table also shows (and all the other indicators show the same thing) that the improving corporate governance is a real phenomenon in contemporary Russia, touching all wage-labourers in everyday life. This underlines the thesis above that the absolute improvement may be more significant than the relative differences in contemporary Russia. On the other hand, this improvement seems to have stopped during the slow economic growth between 2007 and 2015. A striking change seems to be in the mobility in the labour market. As many as half of wage-workers have changed their job during that period. This may indicate that the concept of the ‘precariat’ has become most relevant in contemporary Russia.

When we analyse organizations and consciousness of classes, the differences seem to be almost non-existent. From the point of view of traditional Western class research based on expectations concerning Western Europe, this is a major anomaly. Although the differences between objective life chances are clear in Russia between the middle class and the working class, this does not seem to determine the organizational activity or the attitudes. The irrelevance of class-based activism requires further analysis. One notable aspect in the results is that the attitudes are, by Western standards, leaning rather clearly on traditional leftist expectations concerning the role of the state in economy and welfare. However, Western-type social democratic political forces are very weak and actual policy practices are leaning on neo-liberal practices more than on any kind of leftist ideology. Nor do attitudes seem to be linked with the public/private distinction. This seems to falsify Cameron Ross’ argument that this would be the most fundamental division within the Russian middle class.

Table 3 – Welfare attitudes in different classes (%) about here

The reality of the living conditions of the middle class

What do the middle classes think about legality in a severely corrupt society? Undoubtedly, the habitus of the middle classes includes a respect for common rules. On the other hand, as better-off customers, middle-class groups have better means to deal with corruption than the ordinary working class. After all, corruption often means slowing down services intentionally and providing a quicker service to those who are willing to pay. As professionals, many middle-class groups operate in sectors where the boundary between legal and illegal private services is blurred. Patients paying for every procedure in hospitals do not necessarily even see the difference. With regard to the Russian elite, the traditional '*krugovaya poruka*' operating method means that a mutual awareness of misconduct is preventing all parties from speaking out. (Ledeneva 2014.) This is probably also quite common in middle-class professions with deep-rooted corruption. This phenomenon has even been documented. Recently we could see in the Finnish television a documentary about a Russian judge who accepted bribes and was eventually convicted: 'I was supposed to get a five-year sentence, but I bribed the judge and got only two years. Soon I can start practising my profession again.' Even though all political forces, from Putin to the opposition, condemn corruption, mechanisms of this type make it difficult to imagine that the middle class would unite to promote social change.

Long-term life plans are a feature of the American middle class, as the cost of education and insurance-based healthcare require members of the middle class to make lifelong investments in their children's education and their own health. Couples start saving towards their children's education during pregnancy. In the Nordic countries, where society provides a wide selection of free services for all social classes, there are no such fundamental differences between classes in terms of life plans. In Russia, expectations stemming from the Soviet era continue to be deep-rooted, and the state is still expected to provide services.

Table 4 – Middle-class welfare attitudes within the state sector and private sector (%) about here

Members of the middle classes may fare slightly better than members of the working class in a society that is largely based on private risks. The middle class also has better opportunities to pay for private services. (see Rytönen, Pietilä 2012.) In fact, this is a major difference in interests between the working and middle class in Western societies. The working class promotes public welfare services, whereas the middle class is geared towards private schools and private healthcare. In Russia, this trend has progressed quite far. In the West, there is a

circle around social democratic parties and those working in the welfare sector. Social democrats promote the welfare state, and members of the middle class working in the welfare state vote for social democrats. This type of circle is lacking in Russia, and the current middle class does not have similar interests; and there is no social democratic party in Russia. However, the Fair Russia Party is an observer party of the Socialist International, and even the United Russia Party has social-conservative think tanks that are leaning towards the Nordic model.

With regard to enterprise, Russia has a smaller number of private business owners than any other former socialist country in Eastern Europe. The entrepreneurial spirit is stronger among the wage-earning middle class and the working class than it is in the Nordic countries, but starting a business is difficult in Russia. European societies with a strong state structure, such as France and Germany, are market economies with a high level of public control. In Russia, the endless bureaucracy continues to make it difficult to start a business. In other words, Russia has a large potential middle class, but continues to have a low number of private business owners. The entrepreneurial spirit in Russia is not being realized.

Conclusions

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia was a society where all social classes were weak. Privatization gave new life to the ownership-based bourgeoisie, and certain groups of experts and managers became stronger in the process. During Putin's era, the position of the middle classes has improved clearly in terms of both working life and consumption. The development of market-based education and healthcare has increased the differences between the living conditions of the working and middle classes.

This trend, however, was not created by the Russian middle classes. Political groups in Russia are very little, if at all, based on social classes, and Russian politics lack a strong tradition of safeguarding interests. The middle class in major cities has grown stronger during the Putin era, and has also been most critical of the Putin administration. Traditionally, issues related to democracy are secondary to those related to livelihood and order for Russians. The recent protest movements against mock democracy have resonated best among the middle classes.

However, we should be wary of generalizations that automatically and self-evidently see middle-class groups as torchbearers for democracy. Many members of the middle classes are joining the United Russia Party for the career opportunities. Many are considering moving abroad instead of demanding democracy.

Classes must be examined within the historical process of their formation. There is no awareness, or historical mission of the middle classes that is directly related to class position and inevitably leads to democracy. There continue to be criticism, thoughts, and ideas, and the ruthlessness of the power vertical and the clumsy changes of presidents irritate people. But there is no clear, self-evident route to stronger opposition organizations. After the demonstrations, the members of the middle classes return to their respective realities, with no common organization. It is still possible for members of the middle class to retreat from politics into their private lives or embark upon high-flying careers in the footsteps of the elite. All this is in plain view.

However, *classes are not major actors in Russian social policy*. They may have different interests, but there is not much of a democratic class struggle in the Nordic sense (Korpi 1983). *Class agency is weak*. Traditional agency-based social policy analysis would analyse the structural preconditions of Russia's welfare choices starting from the class structure. However, social classes do not seem to be particularly interesting if they are considered simply in terms of abstract social divisions. In a quantitative analysis, the class structures of advanced capitalist countries seem to be almost identical, and any non-historical talk about interests does not seem to carry very much credibility. It is only when we turn our attention to the specific causal mechanisms and cultural constructs related to social classes that they begin to seem more interesting; it is only on this kind of basis that we can begin to define class interests more concretely and historically (Kivinen 2015). In Russian conditions, a class-based explanation would be highly misleading, because we have already previously shown that the importance of social classes in struggles over social welfare has been very limited and the existing tripartite structures remain weak because of the faint position of trade unions. (Olimpieva 2016, Crowley 2002.) However, social policy affects the life chances of various classes in different ways. Social policies not only reflect but also reproduce stratification outcomes, in terms of power as well as class and other forms of inequality. As Wood and Gough (2006) put it, 'social policies shape political divisions and alliances, and usually reproduce them through time'. However, this should not lead to class reductionism. In addition to class, we have to take an intersectional approach and seek to understand how other categories, such as gender, ethnicity, religion, ability, sexuality, age, and generation intersect with welfare-related questions and contribute to possibly systematic inequalities in ill-/well-being. Such questions are of the utmost relevance from the welfare regime perspective.

When Russian sociologists have sought the middle class, this effort has had a strong ideological bias (cf. Remington 2010 and Crowley 2015). Soviet society was ideologically constructed on

the ‘sacred working class’, expressing all kinds of moral virtues, but in 1990s Russia this idea was replaced by an idealized middle class. Now this class was supposed to be the harbinger of the new capitalist Russia, being law-abiding and entrepreneurial. Empirical reality did not match this idealized belief at all. First of all, concentration on the middle class was disproportionate to the empirical reality. In fact during the 1990s the salaried middle class was declining. Gerber and Hout (2004), analysing social mobility in Russia, found 30% more downwards mobility than upwards mobility from 1990 to 1998. However, the new wage-labouring middle-class positions have been growing stronger during the Putin regimes, having been in decline during the first ten years of transition. But our empirical analysis shows that the core of the middle classes is still less than 20 of the population, far from being the majority. In fact, most of the Russian analyses end up with similar figures.

On the other hand, our results do not confirm the critique arguing that looking for the middle class in Russia is like hunting the Loch Ness monster. Middle-class groups are real, although they are not the majority. In fact during the last decades the inequality between the core of the middle classes and the working class in terms of incomes, education, and working conditions is quite similar to that in developed Western societies. Life chances are structured in class terms and the contemporary neo-liberal welfare model seems to enforce rather than eliminate these differences.

Some prominent Russian sociologists make the point that Western class theories do not fit Russia. For example, Kordonsky argues that ‘imported theories’ show Russian society as in a distorted mirror. He suggests that a specific form of post-Soviet Russian estate hierarchy exists as a dimension of stratification that Western theories do not take into account (Kordonskij 2008: 24-40). Tikhonova argues that given certain Russian peculiarities, such as the unity of political power and property ownership and the inequalities between regions and economic branches, Russia’s social structure does not correspond to neo-Weberian or neo-Marxist models of class. She argues for a distinct multidimensional class model based on each individual’s access to nine different type of resources (Tikhonova 2008). These critiques remain theoretically amorphous because of their vague conceptualization of class analysis. Theories are criticized without specifying the criteria for their explanatory power and without concrete empirical anomalies. Thus the approaches suggested by Kordonsky and Tikhonova are not able to specify what class positions explain and what exactly is similar and different in the Russian structuration of class.

Yet the major specificity, and indeed quite a surprising anomaly – as we have shown – is that no differences at all are empirically observable in class consciousness, organization, and class

agency. The attitudinal questions on welfare, politics, and religion tend to be quite similar in all classes. All Russian citizens put their hope in state-organized welfare. Religious commitment has dramatically increased in all classes and reliance on institutions does not differ in terms of class at all. This is an astonishing specificity of Russia regarding structuration and relevance of classes. It is not evident why this is the case, but we can suggest four explanations.

First of all, absolute changes in Russian transition society may have been much more significant for the experiences of wage-labouring classes than the development of class differences. This may be true even in conditions of growing inequality. First the 1990s crisis hit all, almost irrespectively of class position. When the economy then started to grow rapidly from the beginning of the new millennium, new consumption prospects opened up not only for the middle class but for the working classes as well. Of course, the standard of living remained lower than that of similar classes in the West. Yet, in comparison with the Soviet years and the crisis in the 1990s, the improvement was deeply felt. It may even be the case that small absolute improvement is more significant for the worst-off than the relatively more substantial change in the middle classes.

As the second aspect, Yeltsin was not completely lost when he was speaking about millions of new property owners. This was highly incorrect with regard to enterprises but – as we have shown – home ownership concerns more than 90% of the population. This complicates the relationship between class position and long-term life chances.

The third explanation is the highly atomized social reality. This individualization concerns both the middle and working classes. Atomization and weak organizational participation is linked with many phenomena, some of them mentioned by Tikhonova and Kordonsky: individualization dating back to the Soviet years and enforced by individualization of risk because of neo-liberal social policy, vast regional differences, and differences between industrial branches, lingering intersectional problems of monotowns, complex relations between enterprises, the public sector, and civil society. When this reality is linked with the frail position of trade unions and weak tripartite representation, the power resources of the working class do not make much difference. The middle classes are, on the other hand, co-opted by career prospects and influencing possibilities in professional structures. Traditional agency-based social policy analysis would analyse the structural preconditions of Russia's welfare choices starting from class structure. However, classes are not major actors in Russian politics or policy choices. They may have different interests, for example in terms of taxation and educational policies, but there is not much of a democratic class struggle in the Nordic sense.

The fourth aspect is the new conservative turn: a hegemonic project that addresses the issues in terms of order, security, tradition, patriotism, and religion. Even the Communist Party is within the outer layer of the conservative bloc.

As Michael Mann points out, 'The masses comply because they lack collective organization to do otherwise, because they are embedded within collective and distributive organizations controlled by others' (1986: 7). The power of the organized elite cannot be resisted by the atomized majority.

On the other hand, the elite-driven political process seems to lead to comprehensive resistance as well. Russian society is not politically divided by classes; rather the conflict potential exists between the neo-liberal and authoritarian elite and the vast majority of the population with strong demands for more social justice and collective responsibility. Finally, we should not forget that in an open market-based society, there is diffused extensive power of cultural and commercial consumers. This is one potential element of resistance and backlash in the contemporary hegemonic conservative project.

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ⁱ see Chernysh's article in this monograph

ⁱⁱ Permission to use figure obtained from T. Piketty by email on 12 November 2019

Figure 1 – Consolidation of the oil industry 1992–2006

Figure 2- Gini coefficients in Russia, 1980-2015

Figure 3 – Russia's Richest and Poorest Regions

Table 1 – The Russian class structure 1998-2015 (%)

Class /Year	1998	2007	2015	Total
Core of the middle class %	23.1	26.0	29.6	27.1
N	345	313	857	1515
Margin of the middle class %	15.8	23.8	25.8	22.7
N	236	286	747	1269
Working class %	61.2	50.2	44.6	50.3
N	915	605	1292	2812
%	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total	1496	1204	2896	5596

Table 2 – Change in the possibility to use skills according to class and year (%)

Year 1998	Core of the middle class	Margin of the middle class	Working class	Total
Worsened	20.2	23.5	28.2	25.5
Unchanged	45.4	48.0	60.3	54.6
Improved	34.4	28.6	11.5	19.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	282	196	685	1163
Year 2007				
Worsened	2.8	6.3	5.9	5.1
Unchanged	39.8	47.2	62.5	52.4
Improved	57.5	46.5	31.6	42.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	181	159	307	647
Year 2015				
Worsened	3.5	1.3	5.0	3.7
Unchanged	51.9	59.3	77.3	66.1
Improved	44.6	39.4	17.7	30.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	231	236	436	903

Table 3 – Who should take care of children according to class (%)

	Core of the middle class	Margin of the middle class	Working class	Total
Citizens	46.0	41.5	42.2	43.0
Private firms	1.1	0.7	0.8	0.5
Municipal authorities	14.2	12.7	11.4	12.5
Regional authorities	8.3	6.5	8.5	7.9

Federal authorities	28.6	34.4	33.6	32.4
Hard to say	2.4	3.8	3.7	3.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	829	786	1442	3057

Table 4 – Who should take care of children according to type of organization and class (%)

State	Core of the middle class	Margin of the middle class	Working class	Total
Citizens	45.5	43.6	42.8	43.7
Private firms	0.3	0.3	0.7	0.5
Municipal authorities	12.7	12.4	13.2	12.8
Regional authorities	8.2	4.2	7.0	6.6
Federal authorities	31.2	37.5	33.6	34.0
Hard to say	2.1	2.0	2.7	2.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	292	307	554	1153
Private				
Citizens	45.5	40.2	41.3	42.0
Private firms	0.3	1.7	0.7	0.9
Municipal authorities	13.8	12.0	10.4	11.6
Regional authorities	8.7	8.3	9.3	8.9
Federal authorities	28.7	33.3	33.7	32.5
Hard to say	3.1	4.4	4.5	4.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	356	408	837	1601
Other				
Citizens	45.5	41.7	41.9	42.7

Private firms	0.3	1.1	0.7	0.7
Municipal authorities	13.3	12.2	11.5	12.1
Regional authorities	8.5	6.6	8.4	8.0
Federal authorities	29.8	35.1	33.6	33.1
Hard to say	2.6	3.4	3.8	3.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	648	715	1391	2754