

## Call for Papers

### The Middle Class in World Society

Institute for Social and Economic Change, Bangalore/India

December 16-17, 2016

An International Conference sponsored by the World Society Foundation

Recently, there has been growing interest in the middle class by development agencies and international organizations. For example, both the World Bank and the OECD published studies claiming that there is an emerging middle class in countries of the global South. The Economist even alleged that over half of the world's population belongs to the middle class. These and similar findings are based on different and controversial definitions of the notion of a middle class. Furthermore, these income based definitions represent a highly fractionalized group.

In a broader sociological, economic and political perspective, however, middle class is more than just a part of the population that lives above the poverty line and has a certain consumption potential. Sociological definitions of the middle class are less focused on how much its members own, but rather on what they own (means of production, high human capital) and what their beliefs and interests are. While old notions of middle class focused on self-employed people in commerce and craft (petty bourgeoisie), newer definitions included highly educated professionals. It is on these definitions that most of the literature on the relation between the middle class and economic development are based. In the tradition of modernization theories, socio-economic development is seen as a pre-condition for the formation of an open class system with a middle class sufficiently large to foster the democratization of society (Lipset 1959, Huntington 1967). Barrington Moore's (1966) famous dictum summarizes this perspective: "No bourgeoisie, no democracy." However, in a world-system and global studies perspective, middle classes emerged during colonialism and served in post-colonial societies as "comprador bourgeoisies", merely sustaining an unequal international division of labor that causes exploitation and underdevelopment (Frank 1966, 1978; Amin 1974). In times of destabilization, middle classes may opt for authoritarian or even fascist regimes, out of fear of social decline.

Considering current developments in the social structure of world society (e.g., the rise of some Asian countries, the devaluation of educational certificates, the increasing diversity and complexity of economic, social and cultural middle class profiles, the increase of insecurity, vulnerability and precariousness within parts of the middle and lower-middle strata, both at the semiperiphery and the core of the world-system), it is time to reconsider the notion of middle class and its link to socio-economic development and global transformations.

With this call for papers, the World Society Foundation encourages researchers to investigate into changes in the size of the middle class, its socio-structural features (occupation, education, religion, ethnicity, gender), regional distribution, organizational capacity and political influence. Issues that may be addressed by papers include (but are not limited to):

- Recent changes of the size or regional distribution of the world's middle class, inspired for example by the work of Milanovic and Yitzhaki (2002) based on the world income distribution, differences and similarities between world regions.
- Central shared cultural, social and political views, and life styles of the middle class in relation to classical (e.g., Marx or Weber on class consciousness) or newer sociological perspectives (e.g., central values of the world society).
- The relevance of the third sector and especially of INGOs for the emergence and development of the middle class, its social composition (e.g., age, gender) and outlook.

- The effects of different sectors of the rural and/or urban economies on the social basis of national and/or transnational middle classes and its impact on democratization, poverty reduction and/or welfare production.
- Effects of different forms of governance, political power as well as of different forms of ownership and mobility of means of production on the vulnerability of the middle class.
- The effects of neo-liberal reforms (labor market reforms, social security and social policy reforms) and of the global financial and economic crisis on the middle classes.

The above list is not exhaustive. Highest priority, however, will be given to papers that combine a general theoretical discussion with new empirical findings. It especially encourages papers with a focus on Asia and Africa that relate to older empirical findings on Latin America. These papers may be based on new comparative research as well as single-case studies, and on qualitative as well as quantitative research methods. In any case, paper proposals should give a very clear indication of the research methods, data sources and analytical tools to be used.

**Venue:** The Conference will be held at Institute for Social and Economic Change (ISEC), Bangalore, India. The ISEC is an All India Institute for Interdisciplinary Research and Training in the Social Sciences, established in 1972 by the late Professor V K R V Rao to create a blend of field-oriented empirical research and advances in social science theories leading to better public policy formulation. For more information please check out the web site of ISEC at <http://www.isec.ac.in/>.

**Submission Procedure:** Interested applicants wishing to present original research should send their abstract to the [wsfconference2016@isec.ac.in](mailto:wsfconference2016@isec.ac.in). The first page of abstract should include the title of the paper, all author(s) names and affiliations as well as present address (including e-mail address). The abstract should not exceed 1000 words and it should include the issues/theories, research methods, data sources and analytical tools to be used. The Organizing Committee of the Conference and the World Society Foundation's Board will evaluate the abstract proposals and ask successful applicants to elaborate their proposals into full papers (25-30 pages, but no more than 8000 words) in English. Notification of acceptance or refusal of abstracts will be given before June 15, 2016. We strongly encourage authors to discuss the implications of their findings for future global social integration and for existing theoretical perspectives on global social change. The deadline for delivering full papers is August 31, 2016.

*Important dates:*

Abstract submission:	May 15, 2016 (Indian Time)
Acceptance/rejection notification:	June 15, 2016
Submission of full papers (to: <a href="mailto:wsfconference2016@isec.ac.in">wsfconference2016@isec.ac.in</a> ):	August 31, 2016
Final Paper Acceptance/rejection notification:	September 15, 2016
Conference:	December 16-17, 2016

**Conference Fee:** There is no conference fee.

**Accommodation, travel and visa support:** Accommodation, visa and travel support will be provided for one author per accepted full paper using the most economical travel route.

**Conference language:** The conference proceedings will be in English; no simultaneous translation will be available.

**Publication:** Outstanding conference papers will be published in a conference volume.

**Organizing Committee:** K.S. James (ISEC, Bangalore), S. Madheswaran (ISEC, Bangalore), Daniel Künzler (University of Fribourg), Christian Suter (University of Neuchâtel), Patrick Ziltener (University of Zurich).

**Conference Sponsorship:** The main sponsor of the conference is the World Society Foundation (Zurich, Switzerland). For information on the World Society Foundation and its activities, please check out the web site: <http://www.worldsociety.ch/>.