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Navigating Polycentric Governance from a Citizen's Perspective: The Rising New Middle Classes Respond

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Abstract   A global growth in the middle class is anticipated to influence development choices and the evolution of domestic polities associated with a 'rising' South. Responding to the local effects of a multipolar world order will add to a citizen's existing need to navigate national polycentrism. Exploration of this citizen-centric phenomenon introduces a new, comprehensive analytic framework that combines public with private governance, the latter categorised as modern, traditional and virtual. These categories are used to compare and contrast events of mass activism in Brazil and Turkey. It is argued that electronically networked agency played a significant role in people's navigation involving scale, mobilization and self-organisation. In addition, a polycentric analysis suggests that a stronger middle class 'voice' for public accountability may be offset by processes that privatise domestic governance, reflecting what is happening internationally.

Une croissance mondiale dans la classe moyenne est supposée influencer les choix de la coopération au développement et l'évolution des systèmes politiques nationaux associés à un Sud « montant». Le besoin de répondre aux effets locaux d'un ordre mondial multipolaire s'ajoutera à la nécessité actuelle pour un citoyen d'évoluer dans un contexte de polycentrisme national. L'exploration de ce phénomène centré sur le citoyen introduit un nouveau cadre analytique complet qui combine gouvernance publique et privée, cette dernière étant classée comme moderne traditionnelle et virtuelle. Ces catégories sont utilisées pour comparer et contraster les événements d'activisme de masse au Brésil et en Turquie. Il est soutenu que la possession d'un vaste réseau électronique joue un rôle important dans la capacité des gens à évoluer dans ce contexte, telle que la mise à l'échelle, la mobilisation et l'auto-organisation. En outre, une analyse polycentrique suggère qu'une mobilisation plus forte de la classe moyenne en faveur d'une responsabilité publique peut être annulée par des procédés qui privatisent la gouvernance nationale, reflétant ce qui se passe à l'échelle internationale.

Introduction

Evidence is mounting that the 'Rise of the South' is challenging decades of mono-centric international governance, premised on the political, military and economic dominance of Euro-America (UNDP, 2013). Less visible is that the worldwide scale of an emerging polycentric power arrangement, with its potential outreach to 'everywhere', has long been paralleled within nation-states. At this smaller, 'globally nested' scale, the aspirational forces stemming from growth in the numbers of a middle class, recently abetted by mass connectivity, are enabling new forms of collective action towards multiple sites of being governed. Prevailing domestic power arrangements are being challenged, pushing authority to be redistributed, making a country's governance more polycentric, as in Kenya's new devolutionary Constitution or, reactively, less so as in Russia, both with uncertain long-term outcomes.

This article adopts a discursive approach to explore what a citizen's eye view of being polycentrically governed domestically means, within the context of an expanding number and geographies of 'new' middle-class actors. It does so by deploying an original, comprehensive analytic framework to categorise polycentrism in the authority that citizens encounter day to day. A civic agency perspective on their behaviour is provided by a political lens of civic-driven change (CDC). This combination is comparatively applied to public disorder in Brazil and Turkey as indicative examples of socio-political processes stemming from an expanding middle class in 'representing' the effects of globalisation on internal economic differentiation, heightening demands for better governance.

A growing middle class is chosen because of its anticipated influence on development choices, on the evolution of domestic polities, and on the nature of governance associated with emerging polycentricism in the global order (UNDP, 2013, p. 14). Middle-class expansion is related to significant, rapid economic growth in emerging economies in the Global South, particularly in Asia. These changes are attributed to democratic reforms in countries like South Korea, Thailand and Taiwan, even though other parts of the same middle class have managed to keep hierarchies and elitism in place: 'the new rich' in Asia, as Robinson and Goodman (1996, p. 3) have dubbed them, 'appear as likely to embrace authoritarian rule, xenophobic nationalism, religious fundamentalism and *dirigisme* as to support democracy, internationalism, secularism and free markets' (for China, see Chen and Lu, 2011). Where an increase of this class will lead, for example in terms of its values, is far from certain. Nevertheless, whatever the future of middle-class values, it will be necessary to navigate governance emanating from many locations in society.

To explore what this could mean, an innovative contribution of this article is to combine an approach to socio-political analysis – CDC – with a novel framing of polycentric governance, applied from the perspective of middle classes in two middle-income countries that are growing and gaining from the economics of globalisation.

The following section argues in favour of systematically expanding the dominant state-centric notion of governance as a public affair to include private sites of authority, and hybrids between the two. The analytic approach to 'navigation' explained in the section 'Navigating Governance from a Citizen's Perspective' derives from work on CDC as a way to view citizens' agency in socio-political processes (Fowler and Biekart, 2013). The initial 'citizenship' framework is then narrowed and explored from a problematised notion of a middle class, chosen for its anticipated role in directing local and global processes as it (rapidly) expands in and beyond emerging powers, especially China and India (Kharas and Rogerson, 2011). In the section 'Emerging Middle Classes – Characteristics and Prospects', comparisons of activism in Brazil and Turkey illustrate what viewing governance 'from below' can look like. Conclusions point towards an expanding 'repertoire of navigational aids' that people self-initiate as 'transforming activisms', as well as a potential contradiction between strengthening citizens' voice and an erosion of accountability for public affairs when governance is privatised and hybridized. It also recognises the need to test and modify a more inclusive construct of polycentric governance as an addition to the political analytic repertoire.

Polycentric Governance in the Networked Era – Towards a Citizen's Eye View

The notion of polycentricism in governance is largely attributed to the publication in 1969 of a seminal article by and the subsequent life work of Vincent Ostrom (McGinnis and Ostrom, 2011). The concept connotes multiple centres of decision making about and over the public domain, associated with some form of authority to do so. Originally, polycentricism brought an explicit

recognition of overlapping jurisdictions, with examples in the management of watersheds and distribution of water resources downstream. It initially concentrated on governance as a task and property of public administration under some form of democratic political mandate. When provision of public services expanded to include the contracting of non-profit organisations, the perspective evolved towards a multi-organisational networked view. There was also an opening out of this analytic framework towards reforms in systems of governing that were producing supra-national bodies, while simultaneously applying the principal of subsidiarity to decision rights and decision making at local levels. The European Union is a notable example of such a process (Ostrom, 2005).

We argue that this, still essentially state-centric, evolution of polycentricism merits further broadening by introducing a complementary perspective of citizens who are the subject of any system of governing, democratic or otherwise. In other words, it can be useful to structurally complement, but not replace, a public authority framing by adding a citizen's eye view to the notion of polycentric governance and its day-to-day navigation. Figure 1 introduces a framework for doing so.

A Comprehensive Approach to Polycentric Governance

Public governing involves the authority to make decisions that influence people's lives as constituent members of a polity.[1] This population can include citizens as well as non-citizens of the country concerned, such as illegal immigrants, refugees or those who are stateless, whose (non-voting) presence usually has political effects – such as xenophobia – generating governance issues.

Exercising authority over public and private affairs is satisfied in two principle ways, typically through formal and informal institutions. Formal governance usually relies on statutory instruments of a nation-state, which bind citizens to non-discretionary rights and obligations. Variations could recognise semi-autonomous geographies, such as the Basque region. Informal governance arises from people's acculturated or voluntary ascription of authority outside of public bodies. Between and connecting the two are institutionally hybrid sites and forms of applying authority.

This section begins exploration of a comprehensive approach to polycentric governance that draws on existing perspectives, such as legal pluralism and non-state transnational rule-making, seen in co-regulation between businesses and for-profits. After a brief review of public authority, it delves more deeply into possible private sources of authority and governance.
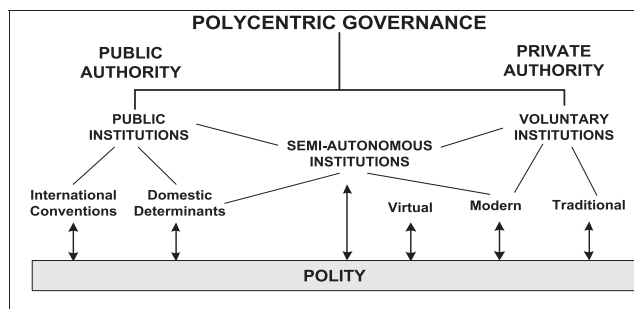

Figure 1: Polycentric governance: A citizen's perspective

Public authority and public institutions

Public governing is a necessity. In a Weberian sense, a pre-conditional backdrop to governance of any type is one of a nation-state as first among equals. Many factors determine the make-up of public governance.[2] A *conditio sine qua non* to be legitimate is the competent application of a rule of law, but this 'regulatory quality' can vary significantly. In principle, all people – as citizens or not – within the legal jurisdiction of a nation-state are subject to its statutory rights and obligations. The content of public authority applied to governance typically stems from historical domestic processes and needs, as well as self-determined compliance with international agreements, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child and workplace standards set by the International Labour Organisation.

Implementation of rules and policies, as well as ensuring adherence to decisions relying on statutory governance, is provided by myriad public institutions and features of public administration – civil servants, police, local and national tax collection and licensing authorities being significant – allied to nested, multiple levels of political-administrative hierarchy: wards, constituencies, (sub) districts, provinces, regions, nations, states and so on (for example, Bagayoko, 2010). But public governance is exercised in relation to the politics of time and place. In much of daily life, politics and public administration conspire in less than obvious ways, requiring insightful self-steering of a citizen's agency to get something done about the conditions they face. Such navigation is often through an intermediary lubricating the relational wheels, often as a form of micro-corruption undermining accountability (Blundo and Olivier de Sardan, 2006). The general point is that a person's agency towards public authority is seldom straightforward, demonstrating significant discrimination against women (Mies, 1999) as well as on the basis of skin colour, ethnicity, caste, class, religion and sexual orientation.

The propensity for and tolerance of corruption as one much-observed quality variable complicates a citizen's agency towards sources of governing. Moreover, today's urbanisation means that – for most of the world's population – interaction with public governance is mostly through their dealings with municipal councils, their bureaucracies, and elected or appointed officials that run them. Where, for example, party affiliations of urban governance differ from those of national government (as is the case of the Western Cape in South Africa), citizen's navigation can be subjected to contrary interpretations of rules driven by political games, competition and one-upmanship.

Be that as it may, the complications of a citizen's agency towards public authority are not the sole source of being governed. The following section illustrates and discusses other locations of decision authority in life that people must selectively and – voluntary or otherwise – contend with.

Private authority and voluntary institutions

While often less visible, of importance for governance day to day is people's voluntary creation of, claims on, and implicit or explicit self-ascription of authority to non-public entities. Three major categories can be distinguished: those tied to processes of modernity; those allied to socio-cultural traditions, faiths and identity relationships; and those linked to associating with the interests of others, increasingly seen in followership activities that are 'authorised' by networked virtual communities. We look at each in turn, starting with modernity, populated by for-profit and non-profit entities.

Modernity A first, often overt and far-reaching, sub-category and example of modernised private governance emerges from ways in which businesses deal with the externalities they create.

Private governance is defined as the 'non-governmental institutions that govern – that is they enable and constrain – a broad range of economic activities in the world economy', and 'serve functions that have historically been the task of governments, most notably that of regulating the negative externalities of economic activity'.(Mayer and Gereffi, 2010: 1; in Knorringa, 2014)

Consumers and producers are subject to – and governed by – how market actors choose to (mis)behave in terms of the 'externalities' they cause in society, both near and far. Be it for reasons of long-term strategy, short-term competitive tactics, or reputational protection and social legitimacy, for-profits can choose and are choosing to alter their behaviour towards voluntary norm compliance, which can reshape economic landscapes in pro-social ways. For example, to avoid multiplication of effort, Knorringa (2014) reports that Nike, Starbucks and Walmart have formed a platform to agree on social standards to be applied in their supply chains.

Movement towards for-profit adoption of socially mediated values follows a Norm Life Cycle model. Early movers, or 'norm entrepreneurs', take on a socially responsible innovation seen in fair trade initiatives. When a critical mass of adopters is reached, norm adjustment cascades through the system to eventually a 'new normal' stasis, which may gain legislative underpinning (Knorringa, 2014, p. 370). In this type of adjustment to public space, in parallel to consumer choice, citizen navigation implies that a polity must judge and guide how profit-seeking private agents are interpreting what it means to be socially responsible.

Within modernity, another sub-category of private governance is forms of voluntary association that function autonomously from public bodies, yet exert themselves in the public sphere. In analysing the evolution of private governance with transnational dimensions, Pattberg (2005) identifies and connects the micro and macro factors involved.

Microlevel conditions contain the problem structure and organizational resources because these are dependent on the specific issue area and the actors involved. Macrolevel conditions relate to large-scale transformations in the structure of the international system as well.(Pattberg, 2005, pp. 597–598)

In doing so, he examines schools of thinking that can be classed as varied responses to a perceived decline of the nation-state, animating structural movement in the locations of authority in a globalising economy. The nature of movement is influenced by the relative positions and power of business and citizens' associations, with a dualistic neo-Gramscian perspective of civil society exercising counter-hegemonic demands for corporate accountability on the one hand while, on the other, aiding and abetting hegemonic stabilization by elites required for efficient capitalist reproduction. Because their effects can be transmitted everywhere, the geographic 'centre' of private transnational governance is of minor consequence. Examples below illustrate what – from a citizen's perspective – this sub-category of private governance can look like.

To further the public good by private means – hence reducing demands on their budgets – governments are prone to offer tax advantages to foundations, similar forms of philanthropy, charities, faiths and non-profit organisations more broadly. Recent ultra-modern examples are mega philanthrocapitalist entities, exemplified by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (Edwards, 2008). They are often only one 'blurry' step removed from corporations because of a non-distribution constraint, preventing allocation of resources to owners and governors (Bromley and Meyer, 2014). With seldom a legal requirement for public involvement, by and large the governance of such set-ups is a closed affair. Resembling self-selected oligarchies, boards appoint board members in their own image. National jurisdictions determine minimum rules of legitimate disbursement, transparency and accountability. For non-profits, legally binding international compliance is seldom applicable. At best, non-profits can choose to conform to voluntary codes of conduct accompanied by oversight mechanisms without statutory power, which has to be exercised nationally. The situation for corporations is similar (for example,

LEAD, 2012). The potential for citizen oversight on the private authority being exercised is not very high. Even having some form of public process to appoint those who govern is no guarantee of probity, as the following example illustrates.

In extreme instances, self-created non-profit bodies take on an authority that compels governments to act in certain ways, the Federation of International Football Associations (FIFA) being a, perhaps exceptional, example. FIFA is a non-profit organisation established under Swiss law governed by nominees from national and regional football associations that elect office bearers. Until recently, the organisation enjoyed tax advantages that abetted a lack of transparency, enabling the type of corruption associated with patronage available to FIFA's long-standing president, Sepp Blatter (now classed as a 'politically exposed person'[3]). FIFA shuns any government interference in its (inter)national functioning, while dictating terms on which a country can host the World Cup. At such events, FIFA takes the authority to determine which commercial sponsors inhabit economic exclusion zones around stadiums; causes forced evictions to construct stadia of dubious later economic merit; and requires impunity for FIFA staff from tax and other laws where 'its' World Cup is staged. The game's governance lacks an ethical dimension, seen in the 'summary justice' treatment of Louis Suarez who bit an opponent.

Another example of private governance is control over the internet. A recent ruling of the European Court of Justice allows 'the right to be forgotten' by requiring information accumulators like Google to not show links that are 'inadequate, irrelevant or no longer relevant unless there is a preponderant public interest' when requested (*Economist*, 4 October, p. 61). Navigating the commercial power of private information in the public domain, and other privacy issues associated with the internet, is likely to be an increasing citizen preoccupation. The general point is that challenging or changing authority may mean confronting systems of poorly accountable private governance, bordering on impunity.

Endogeneity and tradition   A different source of private authority can stem from deep-rooted cultural-ethnic social formations that people are born into, which function as age-old systems of governing that are/need to be respected. This extant reality is capturing the attention of legal pluralists who are debating the developmental implications of interplay between exogenous/modernised and endogenous legal systems (for example, Tamanaha, 2011, p. 1).

Institutionalised and legalised forms of endogenous governance can be found in the Constitutional recognition of (relatively) self-governing chieftaincies and kingdoms seen, for example, in South Africa, Ghana and Uganda. However, such governance is typically exercised through a less visible multitude of 'non-registered', self-organised, self-supported organisational arrangements. These entities make up the dense fabric of associational life, with self-determined decision rights and authority that members adhere to. They are not necessarily benign. For example, local self-organised security arrangements provided by vigilantes such as the Sungu Sungu in Kenya and Tanzania can employ extrajudicial punishments.[3] They function alongside mutually supportive community-based child care systems and voluntary provisions of a place of safety for women escaping domestic violence. The general point is that, from a citizens' point of view, what you (can) choose to belong to typically comes with a responsibility to accept – be governed by – decisions that are already made, otherwise the associational set-up will not work, negating the value of belonging.

Most visible in the private field of tradition are the many old and new faiths and sects, with adherents and followers who ascribe authority to their leaders according to rules that would seldom be classed as democratic. Appointments from within the religious elite and by them is a

common practice, making a believer's agency towards authority a risky affair requiring skill and determination, seen, for example, in gaining redress for child abuse by Catholic clergy.

Virtuality   A third category of private governance is 'virtual', stemming from people creating 'authority' by a voluntary self-ascribed followership, typically by joining social media sites (Shirky, 2008). The collective ideas, ideals and motivational momentum that can emerge are shown to have significant effects across society. Net-enabled mass communication is altering the relationship between leaders and followers in favour of the latter, through both quick elevation and quick removal of mandate and associated authority. Physically embodied but politically 'virtualised' parties (for example, the Five Star movement in Italy and The Pirates Party in Germany) are emerging as challengers to the prevailing and failing systems of European democratic rule that may or may not be sustained by an active followership.

There is now a power of private organising without organisation that is consciously intended to have an impact on the public arena and its decision-making processes. There is a technology-based widening opportunity for 'virtual', fluid, transient and 'subterranean' (Kaldor and Selchow, 2012) citizen navigation in public affairs. This engagement – occurring outside of formal systems of political parties, elections and so on – is demonstrating an impact on statutory governance. In doing so, this assertion is prompting regime responses of misinformation, censorship and surveillance designed to curtail civic agency, limiting navigation to what those with power deem to be 'acceptable' issues (Morozov, 2013).

In this sense, the Internet is but the latest in a history of communication technologies (print, telephone, mobile phone) transforming the ways in which people can share knowledge and collaborate; in turn, in new ways, this disrupts socio-political arrangements. The technology to do so is best treated as a system-enabling actor to be understood in its own right, rather than just as a neutral 'tool'.

Blends and hybrids

Reference has already been made to hybrid or blended forms of authority between public and private (for example, Billis, 2010). The 'plural' application of modern and traditional jurisprudence has already been alluded to. Often, these two categories of governing can be merged or blended by laws that 'delegate' public authority to self-governed entities, while circumscribing the powers they enjoy – a form of semi-autonomy '… without democratic accountability through a direct chain of political delegation' (Maggetti, 2010, p. 1).

These set-ups provide an 'arms length' citizen relationship with a government's implementation and oversight of public policies. Examples are politically autonomous 'regulators' of potentially monopolistic service providers – energy, water, rail transport and telecommunications. The price that citizens pay, the rules for changing suppliers and so on are governed by such semi-public, supposedly impartial, bodies. In addition, there are entities that regulate and protect the interests of professions associated with medicine, architecture, law, education and so on. Mass media are a complicated example (in terms of self-regulation) of how to ensure freedom of information, avoidance of political capture and manipulation, yet where redress from misreporting is notoriously difficult to achieve. The scope for citizen influence and pathways to ensure accountability are often opaque, tenuous and tedious. A general point is that a citizen's life is subjected to 'hybrid' authorities that are often semi- or non-transparent, and are not as resilient against political manipulation as their status might imply.

From this expanded appreciation of governance, a challenge is to apply a citizen's eye view of agency and navigation of the powers involved. The next section describes a way of doing so.

Navigating Governance from a Citizen's Perspective

Analysis of citizen action directed at socio-political change has adopted a variety of frameworks and perspectives. In development studies, a frequent frame of reference has been civil society with its contending interpretations (for example, Glasius, 2010). However, concentrating on agency expressed through visible associational life often obscures the underlying drivers of a polity's energy. Moreover, Western universalism has tended to treat civil society as either a non-normative, enumerable category, or as if its functions are solely directed at pro-social objectives (for example, Salamon and Sokolowski, 2004). Both are questionable assumptions: 'uncivility' was more or less ignored in favour of civility, a serious flaw (Dekker and Evers, 2009). To address these shortcomings, starting in 2007, a research programme on civic agency created a systematic, citizens' approach to the enquiry of socio-political processes in relation to power and governance, known as Civic-Driven Change (CDC) (Fowler and Biekart, 2013).

CDC provides four lenses with focal points through which citizen navigation of polycentricity can be viewed, together with a lens to observe power. After critically discussing what it means to be middle class, we apply these civic agency lenses to comparisons of the – apparently similar – trajectories of large-scale activism seen in Brazil and Turkey.

Citizen Navigation

Drawing on a set of working propositions, using four lenses, CDC is a way to interrogate empirical cases of socio-political processes (Biekart and Fowler, 2012; Fowler and Biekart, 2013). These four are as follows.

The politics of belonging
CDC relies on a rights-based understanding of political agency: *inclusive citizenship*. This usually ascribed (but sometimes acquired) identity is simultaneously individual and collective. An amalgam of citizenship and other identities configures the socio-political terrain of power relationships, which can be imagined in terms of peaks of power acquisition, schisms and canyons between groups, and flows of relational rivers that both connect and divide. As noted in the introduction, a polity can contain non-citizens as well as citizens, itself a signifier of (not) belonging with political effects (Gaventa, 2006).

The politics of action
A CDC lens focuses on *civic agency* for good or ill throughout all realms of society. A CDC perspective is therefore not institutionally 'located' – it is not 'owned' by civil society, as is often assumed with citizens' action. In whatever they do, people's agency contains 'political' choices that co-determine how a society thinks, feels, functions and evolves. What becomes 'political' on the streets, in the media, in the economy and in systems of governance emerges from how power has been gained, distributed and controlled. Consequently, a CDC lens does not focus on the mechanics of politics, such as voting. Rather, it identifies a domain of change where (enough) people decide to alter the society they live in as a conscious act. People's individual and collective agency combines past experience, an imagined future and a real-time assessment of the effort and risk involved in changing things locally or globally.

The politics of scale
The Tahrir Square rebellions and similar events across the world illustrate another core feature of a CDC lens: *scalability*. A CDC analysis is applicable at local, regional, national and global level.

This feature is valuable when change processes span multiple horizontal (networked) and vertical (hierarchical) aggregations of civic agency, socio-political arrangements, and the different types and sites of governance and authority. For example, the governance landscape shows growth in voluntary self-regulation to make organisations more accountable without the heavy hand of legislation. The women's movement works locally and globally to end gender-based violence. The UN Global Compact for Business and the impact of transnational citizen networks on multi-lateral institutions involve micro to macro scaling of civic agency, most actively in responses to environmental concerns. Transitioning from one scale to the next is often complex, introducing unanticipated dynamics and outcomes as 'emergent' properties (Wheatley and Frieze, 2012). For example, a Guy Fawkes mask became a multi-country signifier of the emergence of a transnational scale of solidarity consciousness across multiple sites of civic disobedience comprising unrelated groups and alliances.[4]

The politics of knowledges and communication
A fourth CDC political lens is attention to the fact that civic agency is shaped by autonomy over 'knowledge power' in two significant ways. One is to recognise that the multiple knowledges that inform people's agency have often been subjected to 'epistemic violence' by post-Enlightenment colonial power (Icaza and Vázquez, 2013). Focusing on the ability of people to use their own knowledge with open communication – a sensitive issue for autocratic regimes – is therefore a crucial ingredient of applying a CDC view (Gumucio-Dagron, 2009).

The development of a CDC lens has required a corresponding systematic way of examining power relations from the perspective of civic agency.

Practical power analysis   Power can be appreciated in terms of types, with, for, over and within (Gaventa, 2006), as well as their relative (in)visibility (Lukes, 2005). Combining these into a matrix can disaggregate power as an interactive property that can be collectively generated and applied (Fowler and Biekart, 2013). They include, for example, a 'power from within' that shows up in reflexive elements, such as questioning compliance with externally imposed rules and norms; choosing to gain and deploy capacities to act in the public sphere associated with activisms; and self-selecting what 'belonging' means and its interpretations towards 'the other', which can feed intolerance, uncivility and conflict.

In reflecting on the polycentricity of power in relation to systems of governance with no one actor (able to be) in charge, Torfing *et al* (2012) argue for 'interactive' rather than hierarchical arrangements. Their proposition reflects a type of multi-stakeholder initiative configured to engage a plurality of actors, interests and types of authority interacting towards common objectives. Those involved do so by bringing together resources and ideas that will reform the 'rules of the game' that governance systems apply. Interactivity is premised on non-linear, process-based collaboration that connects, inter alia, to complexity in scaling. Interactive governance invites interesting questions about the value and nature of gaining political mandates from a polity, and being held accountable for the exercise of power in practice. Critically, the discussion in the section 'Polycentric Governance in the Networked Era – Towards a Citizen's Eye View' suggests that the already weak potential that citizens have to navigate polycentric governance in their favour may be further attenuated by complications inherent to interactivity of multiple sites of authority. An example is inability to reconcile institutionally inconsistent performance metrics and time scales.

An expanded view of governance and the application of CDC as an analytic tool provide the framework to examine cases of civic agency. For reasons given in the introduction – their

anticipated force in shaping the world's development – we have chosen to do so from a problematised notion and position of an expanding middle class in what are referred to as emerging economies.

Emerging Middle Classes – Characteristics and Prospects

The UNDP Human Development Report (2013, p. 3) makes much of the fact that the middle class in the South overall, and Asia in particular, will become a larger proportion of the world's purchasing and consuming population. Estimates posit an increase in the middle class from 30 per cent of the world population today to 52 per cent in 2020. In doing so, the report relies on a Brookings Institute norm (Kharas and Rogerson, 2011) of a daily disposable income level of 10–100 PPP$ per person (Purchasing Power Parity dollar as of 2005). This figure is arranged against an international income poverty threshold of US$1.25 per person per day. Setting a global figure, even corrected for PPP, has potentially seriously misleading drawbacks identified by Milanovic and Yitzhaki (2001). They show that blocks of continents exhibit significant differences and reference points for what middle classness means and how it is experienced.

Correspondingly, there are context-specific variations of thresholds where, for example, the 'floating middle class' in Africa has incomes of $2–4 per person per day (Ncube *et al*, 2011) but are prone to fall back below the international poverty threshold. This invites the idea that vulnerability is a better measure (Lopez-Calva and Ortiz-Juarez, 2011) of when a person is or is not truly 'embedded' in the middle class. This view is also articulated by Birdsall *et al* (2013) in their analysis of a 'struggling' middle class in Latin America. Alternatively, it is argued that a more secure indicator of middle-class growth is when consumption turns to non-essential products and services, with car ownership advanced as a suitable proxy (Dadush and Ali, 2012).

Putting definitional issues and measures aside, using household surveys involving 13 countries, Banerjee and Duflo (2008, p. 26) tease out how expenditures patterns alter between different income categories, urban and rural. Their conclusion is that having a steady, well-paying job is probably the most pertinent feature of middle classness, as is the fact they have fewer children, while spending much more on them. Both feed a sense of control over the future. In other words, there is a qualitatively significant aspirational element in being middle class that can drive the energy required to make inter-generational expectations real in terms of what society should be and do, and with more resources, including free time, to do so.

Our exploration gives attention to what a growing middle class as a proportion of the whole leads to in terms of societal effects. For example, studies of the behaviour and effects of an expanding middle class in countries of Latin America show that increased income plus time brings voice, allied to better access to information and sharper demands on what a state should do (Loayza *et al*, 2012, p. 9). But voice for what? Already at issue is the global affordability and the ability of a country and of nature to satisfy the lifestyles of the existing middle class. Fulfilling expectations as a new middle class grows in numbers and stakes its claim is likely to be problematic. Consequently, it is reasonable to anticipate that adjustment to their expansion will be accompanied by (local) dissent, placing numerous sites of governance under stress. One increasingly significant source of tension is technology-enabled because middle classes are better able to compare their situations – political systems, material assets, health, recreational options and so on – with others near and far.

According to research by the Pew Foundation, a person's ability to gain access to information is being accelerated by the positive relationship between income per capita and use of communications technology (Pew Foundation, 2014a). For example, other countries are

outstripping the United States when it comes to using social media sites and texting (Pew Foundation, 2014b). An interpretation is that there is an unprecedented middle-class 'surge'. Their political assertions in emerging middle-income countries are strong reminders that the middle class drives history, but with less certainty about its direction. The spread of materially aspirational majority populations (whose food and shelter are assured) across Asia, Latin America and even Africa creates hopes and concerns shaping the future in ways that are hard to predict and will not necessarily be rooted in Western values.[5]

The uncertain translation of the civic agency associated with the 'movement of an expanding middle' into public space and its different sites of governing is already being played out in many countries (Biekart and Fowler, 2013). As this middle class increases in absolute size, and in proportion to the total polity and learns to assert itself, it is far from certain where their divisions will be, what allegiances they form and where their civic energy will be applied. One option is that they will model the elite, gaining as much as possible from the current economic system – reinforcing business as usual. An alternative could be to reject the volatile, riskier and questionably sustainable role models that the West has to offer, by searching for more transformative pathways, such as *Buen Vivir* in Latin America or embracing a social solidarity economy (UN-TFSSE, 2014). As a more culturally plural, polycentric world order takes hold, other variants might try to recover and take forward historical social legacies that lie deep in personal and collective identities of citizenship, nationality, race, gender, faith, ethnicity, old rivalries and so on. An issue, therefore, is the direction taken by a 'middle majority' in terms of the future it aspires to, where networked and 'virtually' governed forms of collective action are coming to the fore. CDC described previously is used to explore what may be happening in two countries.

Navigating Polycentrism from the Middle: Brazil and Turkey

Two examples elaborate and explore citizens' encounters with polycentric governance under conditions of large-scale civic unrest. The approach compares the – apparently similar – trajectories of popular activism seen in Brazil and Turkey. Contrasting processes of civic agency in these emerging economies located on different continents allows for relative examination of socio-historical contexts within a polycentric framework.

Both socially disruptive processes started with agitation against a discrete issue of public policy, which broadened in agenda, gained in the politics of scale, while changing class composition as the politics of belonging and the power of being with others evolved in response to repressive state action.

Civic protests in Brazil and Turkey emerged almost in the same period (May–June 2013), and in similar ways, even though they had no direct relationship with each other. The Turkish protests could be understood as a local response to the Arab Spring. But this would probably not do justice to the diversity of the demands being voiced: reversal of Erdogan's closure of political space, an end to corruption and more respect for freedom of expression. The trigger was the intended destruction of Gezi Park in Istanbul, escalating to major street protests led by middle-class groups against the advent of an authoritarian democracy. Similarly, one can consider the Brazilian protests as an eventual middle-class response to continuation of a left-wing government after Lula had been succeeded by Dilma Rousseff of the same Workers Party (PT). The initial trigger was mounting opposition to public spending, such as the infrastructure of the impending World Cup football competition, leading to a much wider demonstration against government performance and integrity. Later, FIFA's lack of accountability to supporters fanned the flames of public dissent when ticket pricing and allocation was announced. In both cases, electronically

networked agency played a significant role in sourcing the real-time knowledge and providing the communication required for mobilization, self-organisation and citizen's self-governance in terms of forming and following collective decision making with anticipated risks of physical injury. We will examine both examples to illuminate active middle-class engagement with polycentric governance at scale.

The wave of protests in Brazil started in June 2013, after a small group rallying against public transport hikes in Sao Paulo was brutally beaten up by the riot police. This demonstration had been organised by the (left-wing-oriented) *Free Fare Movement*, whose members gave it a private authority to act and voluntarily followed its decisions by coming back the following days, again being beaten up by the police in a naked display of 'power over'. Journalists initially reported rather negatively about the protest (against the price hike of bus fares by nearly 8 per cent) as being out of proportion to the decision taken by the agency governing public transport pricing. But when the mobilizations gradually attracted more and more people, and journalists were beaten up as well, public opinion started to shift. Soon protests became broader, also visible on television and social media, rapidly spreading to other cities in Brazil. By early July 2013 a 'power with' affinity of collective disaffection bridged differences of social groups, helping scale to gain hold. Over a million people were daily taking to the streets, initially lower-class workers, students and young urban unemployed, but later also students with young professionals from the employed middle classes who voiced their disagreement with price hikes for public services beyond transport alone. Agitation against authority became multi-focused, with FIFA providing a private site of unaccountable authority invoking public anger, attracting international attention and pressure to lower ticket prices. Saad-Filho (2013) notes that, in a politics of belonging, the composition and focus of the protests changed as soon as mainstream television stations and mass media started to take over the lead, trying to de-radicalise the movement and drawing in different crowds. The protest soon became more 'white' and middle-class based with demands related to the FIFA World Cup, gay rights, legalization of drugs, abortion, and more in general a rejection of the PT government of President Dilma Rousseff. In addition to private governance, four sites of governance in public decision making were under threat: the city council; the transport agency; public service agencies and the national assembly.

Ignition of the protests in Turkey was in a way similar. In Istanbul in late May 2013 a small group of environmentalists staged a picket line objecting to the destruction of Gezi Park, situated at the corner of centrally located Taksim Square, in order to construct a shopping mall. Police used tear gas to disassociate the peaceful protestors, but they came back in larger numbers as the message spread via social media, especially Twitter. This expansive reaction was also caused by the decision by the conservative Erdogan government that state-controlled television stations were to ignore the protests and instead broadcast other programmes, such as a documentary on penguins, and cooking classes. This regime behaviour further fed a politics of belonging and solidarity, propelling self-mobilisations, including broader demands ranging from freedom of press (with people dressed as penguins), to redressing income equality, gay rights, women's reproductive rights, and the right to consume alcohol and the right to get together and to disagree with the elected government. A politics of scale arose from diffusion of agitation throughout a crowd of students, young professionals, football hooligans, and feminists, Kemalists, nationalists, Kurds, LGBT activists, sex workers and anti-capitalist Muslims who took to the streets in one of the largest manifestations of public dissatisfaction seen in recent years in Turkey (Özgüler, 2013, p. 10). Popular protest towards multiple sites of governing included the city council, the state media, the security services as well as the telecommunications regulator. Twitter can be singled out as particularly important in enabling rapid scaling and inclusion of a wide diversity of citizen

groups and their interests, manifest in 'followership', from private sources of governing, such as the lawyers association, which were pre-existing and erupted in protest.

The more striking commonalities between the protests in Brazil and Turkey can be summarised in three points. First is that civic energy started with activators who were soon faced with police repression. The application of aggressive public governance stimulated an unfolding into a diverse and substantial protest impetus – a non-movement movement – which was neither dominated nor steered by any political party. This characteristic reflects the dynamics of latent disaffections feeding a 'contagious' politics of belonging, emphasising the demand for voice. Both the Turkish and Brazilian cases embody a hardly pre-meditated, communication-enabled momentum accelerating the politics of action. They exhibit impulsive protests similar to the expanding rebellions during the Arab Spring, which had no clearly defined programme or discourse other than resistance to current government behaviours and policies. The eventual core of the protesters were predominantly young middle-class professionals and/or students, combined with a variety of sector-specific dissenting groups, which led to a broad array of demands, without any particular individual leadership being emphasised. In both countries it also represented the largest and broadest popular revolt since the end of military rule in the 1980s.

A second common element was that this protest movement 'from the middle' demanded a change of public policies that were pushing both old and new middle-income groups into a struggle to retain their economic position. Here the politics of scale mattered. What started as local capital city issues quickly broadened to acquire regional and national urgency. An example is the resistance to paying more income tax in a setting in which corruption of (local) government bureaucracies was flourishing. Both the Lula and Erdogan governments were tainted by corruption scandals that were not properly prosecuted. Such laxity fed a sense of elite impunity, which has proven to be one of the key sources of civic activism, similar to the wave of popular protest against nineteenth-century global capitalism analysed by Polanyi. The economic rise of BRICS had increased the income of an impoverished layer of poor generations, creating expectations for better living standards of the population as a whole, including more accountable government.

That Erdogan managed to keep the 'silent' minority to support his AKP party is also because of his control over the mass media, which condemned the left and neutralised the more extreme right. His response can also be interpreted as a strategy to undermine the efficacy of the private authority of the exiled cleric Fethullah Gülem,[6] as can his transfer of military and security officials to disempower the armed forces – perceived as Gülem's followers and guardians of a secular public authority.[7] In Brazil, the PT governments of Lula and Rousseff were actually better able to disarm the political right by strengthening the state and simultaneously preventing the more radical left from taking advantage of the popular protests.

Even though differences between the effects of large-scale activism can be seen in Brazil and Turkey, a third common element was the role of the media as actor, illustrating the combined politics of action-oriented knowledge and its communication outside of state control. Erdogan believed he could defuse the protests by ordering his TV stations to ignore them, for some reason wrongly assessing the vast impact of social media. As soon as his party won the local elections in March 2014, Erdogan announced a decision to block Twitter, Facebook and YouTube, as these were undermining his position. Here we can see again how different sites of governance were overlapping, as the media became an aid to citizen navigation of authority because it was not controlled by Erdogan. The same goes for Brazil, where privately owned TV stations joined the protest movement, contributing to its rapid expansion, but also to its depoliticisation as soon as the government gave in and overruled the local public transport price hikes. Social media also were used widely for people to contact each other, to convene somewhere without having a clear

organisation and to march in a particular direction without a clear plan. This spontaneity probably took political perspective out of the protest, which therefore also illustrates the potential downsides of non-strategic, activist engagement with polycentric governing.

To summarise, mapping CDC across different sites of governing suggests that, albeit with different specificities, in both cases the behaviour of public and private authority interplayed to turn pre-existing disaffections into unruly middle- and multi-class agency. For Turkey, the politics of Twitter communication and the politics of belonging to Fakir Gulem's branch of Islam weighed most heavily. For Brazil, the international politics of 'belonging to football' added to the local medias' shift in the politics of communication towards, rather than against, the protesters' causes. A CDC appreciation of citizen interfacing with polycentric governance exposes similar effects of secular and religious authority, with scaling attributed to media, both old and new.

Conclusions

This article has explored what a citizen's eye view of being polycentrically governed domestically means, within the context of a growing proportion of middle-class actors across the world's geographies. It argues in favour of broadening the state-centred framework for governance analysis towards a citizen-centred standpoint. It does so from a 'futures' perspective, informed by propositions in the literature that people's improved material conditions will enhance their 'voice', strengthening demands for accountable public governance – access to information, no corruption, no vote rigging, adherence to the rule of law, bureaucratic and corporate sensitivity to rights, and so on. In doing so, a polycentric framing with a political lens provided by a CDC analysis illuminates a possible contradiction, namely, that growth in the governance demands of middle-class voice and agency is occurring when authority over the public realm is being hybridized and privatised in ways that, at first glance, are eroding peoples' potential to gain accountability of authorities for the rules and decisions that they experience in daily life. This supposition merits further investigation.

The two cases illustrate that the effects of communication technology are likely to make past eras and examples of middle-class growth a poor guide to how the socio-political forces they contain will drive society forward, for whose benefit, and with what values. For example, will emerging middle classes exert mass agency through internet 'clicktivism' rather than on the streets (Morozov, 2014)? Will significant numbers want to pay more for 'sustainably' produced commodities or a fairer income for poor, primary producers, or search the web for the cheapest deal? The jury may be out, but whatever the answer it seems reasonable to assume that sentiments towards being governed 'fairly' will remain as a source of civic energy and navigation towards more complicated locations of authority.

Civic activism in Brazil and Turkey show the indeterminate socio-political dynamics that can emerge from polycentric governance in terms of unanticipated alignments across expanding middle-class groups, as well as with lower classes and the poor. This study encountered common factors in the protests in Brazil and Turkey: a latency of issues where spontaneous protest about one escalated to many; the lack of political party involvement; a middle-class realization that it – rather than the state – would have to pay for the implementation of its demands; and the autonomous role of (social) media.

These particular cases point to significant interactions between the scaling of the politics of belonging and the technology-enabled politics of knowledge and communication circumventing state-mediated information. They show how assertions of civic power are directed at, but also informed by, multiple types of governing and institutional locations of authority.

Finally, connections between and layering of power associated with overlapping systems of governing become transparent: ostensibly autonomous entities are simply politically overruled or intimidated. Both cases suggest a middle class aspiring to what could be alluded to as 'middle-class values', where polycentricity provides a non-normative framework for analysis without taking this interpretation to be normal or inevitable.

Notes

1. For current purposes we treat governance as the exercise of decision-making authority over public and private space and affairs. More loosely, following Lasswell, cited in McGinnis and Ostrom (2011, p. 170), 'governance determines who can do what to whom, and on whose authority'.
2. We treat institutions as socially stabilising but inherently conflicted and dynamic patterns of collective human behaviour that are guided by emergent rules, norms, beliefs and configurations of power types in actor relations.
3. http://www.refworld.org/docid/52a7305f4.html (accessed, 9 July 2014).
4. *Economist*, 4 November 2014. http://www.economist.com/blogs/economist-explains/2014/11/economist-explains-3
5. Op-ed, *Wall Street Journal*, 18 July 2013, by Alan Murray, President of the Pew Foundation.
6. http://www.meforum.org/2045/fethullah-gulens-grand-ambition (accessed 20 August 2014).
7. http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=63453 (accessed 20 August).

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