

What it takes to compare non-core movements: a world-systems perspective. Two cases from contemporary East Central European movements

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Abstract

The paper joins the discussion initiated by Interface editors on the relationship between core and non-core movement knowledges, from the perspective of one of the research traditions on social dynamics in different global locations: that of world-systems analysis. From this perspective, the paper points out that since capitalism as a global system has no political unit corresponding to its scale, the local politicization of global processes tends to translate long-term systemic effects into short-term, local political concepts. Due to this translation, local political concepts, core or non-core, do not tend to contain the full systemic analysis of their context, a situation leading to parallels and contradictions between critiques born at different points of the global process. The paper maintains that the “dialogue” between such different conceptualizations often happens via concepts that are generalized from specific locations, reflecting power relations encoded in global hierarchies. Regarding contemporary mobilizations, the paper contrasts the narrative on democratic anti-austerity movements challenging the neoliberalization of “democratic capitalism” with the historical context and present forms of East Central European movements. The paper argues that new movements in ECE integrate in long-term historical patterns of global integration characteristic to the region. Comparing Hungarian and Romanian cases, it demonstrates how an analysis that follows local constellations of systemic integration can situate differences of present movement claims amongst trajectories of systemic integration. For a discussion on non-core perspectives, this perspective’s contribution emphasizes that beyond differences of context, or epistemic domination, the question of global comparison between movements is also the question of conceptualizing global interaction, which may point to an analytical task additional to a dialogue between core and non-core perspectives.

In a period of economic crisis, and a consequent global volatility of socio-political structures, to reconsider the relationship between social movements (and their theories) across various global locations seems to be a timely and relevant effort. As editors of the present issue note, a new attention towards SMS theory beyond the dominantly US background of the sub-discipline recently appeared within SMS (Cox and Fominaya 2013, Poulson et al. 2014, Hayes 2014, Gagy 2015, MacSheoin 2016). Authors of new calls for broadening the perspective of SMS theory point out a structurally based “institutional parochialism” within SMS (Poulson et al. 2014), which obstructs the

understanding of movement types that have not stood at the center of paradigm formation in the history of SMS theory (MacSheoin 2016), and excludes from view the existing historical body of their theorization.

Non-core perspectives on movements: a question of history

While new calls for bringing back a global perspective to SMS are necessary, as proved by the evidence authors bring for parochialism, the understanding of social movements from the perspective of global social dynamics is not without its own (global) history. Traditions of thought on imperialism (Luxemburg and Bukharin [1924]1972, Lenin [1917] 1963), uneven and combined development (Trotsky [1930] 2010), anti-colonialism (Fanon 1963), post-colonialism (Chakrabarty 2009), decolonialism (Grosfoguel 2007), articulation of modes of production (Rey 1973), dependency theory (Frank 1979), world systems analysis (Wallerstein 1986), global anthropology (Wolf [1982] 2010), Gramscian international political economy (Cox 1983) or recent discussions on global history (van der Linden 2008) all include theoretical frameworks for thinking social movements from the perspective of global dynamics. In all these examples, the perspective and stakes of asking the question of global connections are embedded in moments of social, intellectual and institutional struggles.

How previous waves of knowledge production on movements are incorporated in (or excluded from) canons of SMS across time is a contextual question, not unrelated to what Hayes (2014) or MacSheoin (2016) call the interaction between global structure and SMS theorization. The result is a system of boundaries within existing knowledge that changes through time. Also, as SMS is organized around a thematic focus, rather than a specific social theoretical approach, its divisions and continuities with other branches of social thought are not necessarily argued on the theoretical level. The recent acknowledgement of structural-economic factors, i.e. capitalism, in movement formation (della Porta 2015, Hetland and Goodwin 2013, cf. Barker 2013), is one such instance. There has been a rather swift shift away from the previously widely accepted idea that movements are not conditioned by external circumstances (McCarthy and Zald 1977). This happened not through a revolution in how movements are theorized, but rather thanks to the empirical push of economic claims being raised, once again, by mass movements in the West. The global proliferation of movements with similar claims also spurred a debate about how to conceptualize the relationship between different contexts of new movement waves.

Earlier concepts of movement waves (Shihade et al. 2012, Della Porta and Mattoni 2014) cycles (Tejerina et al. 2013), continuities (Juris 2012, Castaneda 2012, Polletta 2012) or diffusion of movement repertoires and frames (Della Porta 2012) have been employed together with reevaluations of what a wave, cycle or "family of movements" (Ancelevici et al. 2016) may mean in a wider conceptualization of connections between social structures across the globe. The

framework of Varieties of Capitalism has been used to make sense of social conditions for the emergence of movements (Biekart and Fowler 2013, Beissinger and Sasse 2014, Bohle and Greskovits 2012), while the return of material claims in the new anti-austerity movements encouraged researchers to experiment with "bringing back" class analysis in the understanding of movements (Barker 2013, Della Porta 2015). Contributions of the research tradition that conceives of movements as elements emerging from a long-term, structured interaction within the history of the capitalist world-system (eg. Hopkins et al. 1989, Silver 2003) have been also gaining attention within these debates (eg. Silver and Karatasli 2015, Smith and Wiest 2012), due to the renewed interest in structural connections among different movement locations.

As various existing paradigms of thinking social movements in relation to capitalist social structures are invited into discussions within SMS simultaneously, some parts of existing traditions are emphasized, while others necessarily are object to simplification, selective attention, or oblivion. In the long term, this selectivity seems to be less an exception than a recurrent characteristic in the global dynamics of social movements and social movement theory. Editors of *Interface* have intensively reflected on the position and responsibility of SMS in relation to the social relations and collective efforts it engages with. Relations between academic and movement-based theorizing, as well as between different usages of knowledge produced in various socio-historical moments, have been addressed in a contextual approach on movements' intellectual history (Barker and Cox 2002, Cox and Nilsen 2007, Cox and Fominaya 2009, Cox 2014). *Interface*, a journal connecting academic and movement knowledge-making, was born from that approach (Wood et al. 2012). It is a perspective that acknowledges and emphasizes the shifting positions and registers intellectuals' talk on social movement takes. This issue's call returns to Bonaventura de Sousa Santos' concept rooted in the alterglobalization movement, "ecology of knowledge" (Santos 2009, cf. Pleyers 2004), to initiate a field of discussion across social movement knowledges. Lately, Laurence Cox (2017) drafted an agenda for empirical research as a contribution to the creation of such a field: a mapping of the intellectual diversity in social movement studies, to broaden the empirical base for an institutional and intellectual self-reflection and dialogue between movement-related knowledges.

Responding to a call for dialogue between core and non-core perspectives, I will make an argument based on one of the traditions which have dealt with social movements' global embeddedness. It is the tradition of world-systems analysis, spanning from Wallerstein's seminal books (Wallerstein 1974, 1979, 1980) through decades of debates and further research that followed them (e.g. Lee 2010). What this tradition makes visible in social processes is defined by the historical constellation of knowledge and politics it was born from. It was an international moment when the academic left turned towards the integration of anti-colonial and dependentista thought, to produce a global understanding of capitalism for a globally relevant left, an ambition propelled by the Stalinist disillusionment and the global mobilizations of 1968. While the institutional

and political outreach of the approach grew smaller with time, its potential for understanding of social processes as processes of global capitalism produced a considerable body of research. Today, as questions of social structure and global capitalism come to the center of attention again in discussions about social movements, this body of knowledge can be a valuable intellectual resource.

Core and non-core politics in world-systems perspective

The main heuristic principle of the world-system approach is to take the whole scope of social interactions as the basic unit of social analysis. For the modern period of global history that basic unit of social analysis is defined as the historical development of the capitalist world system. This is a dynamic, interconnected process, in which various regimes of economic, social and political organization are connected on a global scale of accumulation. Within the system-wide accumulation, positions of center, semi-periphery and periphery are differentiated, according to typical constellations of functions within the accumulation hierarchy. These positions do not denote geographical regions, and may shift, through time, from one region to another. Such shifts have been analyzed, for example, in terms of shifts of hegemonic positions across hegemonic cycles of historical capitalism (Arrighi 1994) or the dynamics of semi-peripheries raising to new core positions (Chase-Dunn 1988). While they are conceived as systemic positions that can be characterized by the systemic functions concentrated there, 'core', 'semi-periphery' or 'periphery' do not denote closed social systems that would contain their own characteristics. On the contrary, the meaning of these notions is given by the way they denote functions fulfilled in system-wide processes in different positions. Since these functions move together with the dynamics of the whole system, they cannot be understood through generalizing descriptions for 'core', 'semi-peripheral' and 'peripheral' societies. The practical task of analyzing social processes in these positions requires tracing local dynamics of systemic integration through history.

In a similar manner, nation-states and institutionalized interstate relations are conceived as historically changing political infrastructures of systemic interactions that happen across nation-state territories. Consequently, state politics are not conceived as following from intra-state social relations, as in approaches which compare state politics and state societies on a one-to-one basis. In the process of capitalist integration, local positions become positions occupied within the capitalist world-system, and systemic relations are performed within local societies. As Cardoso and Faletto (1979) formulate it: the penetration of external forces reappears as internal force. In their struggles, local actors act according to interests and conditions that are defined by positions relative not only to each other, but also relative to their world-systems context. From this perspective, the task of analyzing social positions, alliances and political projects within one polity becomes the task of articulating their wider relations along the lines of world-systemic integration. This is a historically substantive analysis, taking into consideration specific local

constellations of systemic integration and their recurrent transformations across the cyclical reorganizations of the global economy.

A specific point the world-system tradition makes is that the capitalist world-system does not have a political unit that would correspond to the whole range of systemic interactions (Wallerstein 1986, Arrighi 1997). Instead, through its historical development, political relations came to be formalized in political units of nation-states, smaller than the range of interactions that define their internal processes. Peter J. Taylor (1982), in an attempt to draw the lines of a political science based on a world-systems background, differentiated between “real” relations that bind processes within political units to world-systemic dynamics, and the “ideological” sphere of state politics. This sphere is ideological in the sense that it politicizes local tensions born from system-wide processes by translating them into political concepts limited to the spatio-temporal range of state politics. Thus, momentary local constellations in long-term systemic processes are typically conceptualized in terms of local causes and solutions, and short-term frameworks of ongoing political struggles. Political ideologies do not reflect the full scope of the processes they react to, but rather project momentary ideological visions that universalize particular perspectives of interest coalitions within the given situation. They present effects of long-term processes as short-term political stakes, tuned to the form of temporary coalitions they are tied to.

In line with the above considerations, world-systems scholars do not conceive of social movements as arising from social relations within state units which could be compared to each other on a one-to-one basis. Instead, when looking at waves of mobilizations, they consider the position of movement actors within cyclical dynamics of the whole system (e.g. Wallerstein, 1976; Hopkins et al., 1989; Arrighi et al., 1990; Smith and Wiest, 2012; Chase-Dunn and Kwon 2011, Silver 2003, Silver and Karatasli 2015). Silver’s (2003) demonstration of how transformations in global production are followed by transformations of labor organization throughout modern history is one illustrative example. As she points out, struggles for labor’s social rights appear wherever capital builds out major industrial structures, yet their lasting success depends on the point of the product cycle they appear in. In core positions, where new and profitable technologies appear at the beginning of the cycle, industries are able to accommodate labor’s demands and keep their profit margins for longer periods. In more peripheral positions where the same technologies arrive in a later point of the product cycle (moving away from labor pressure in core locations), the same type of movements can be less successful, due to the lower profitability of their later position in the system-wide product cycle. According to changing relations between labor mobilizations and movements of capital, this line of analysis differentiates between three types of movements. The first are struggling for gaining labor rights in new industrial surroundings (where capital moves into). The second are movements that seek to maintain rights that were once gained but are newly withdrawn due to a fall in profitability (where capital moves out from). The third is a growing scope of movements that evolve in environments where a large pool of active labor meets a constant scarcity of

employment possibilities (where capital bypasses) (Silver and Karatasli 2015, Karatasli et al 2011).

Silver and her colleagues' analysis illustrate the limitations of understandings of labor movements based on short-term periods and local effects of systemic processes. The conclusion that 'old' labor movements are a thing of the past (an idea that deeply influenced the conceptualization of movement research after 1968) was generalized from the globally singular situation of the stabilization of the postwar Fordist pact in core regions. Today, as labor movements and other types of economic claims appear in the Western world again, earlier conceptualizations of relations between socio-economic structures and movements are brought back in their understanding. This move often duplicates the localized, short-term bias of the previous period, as it proposes solutions for present problems based on previous movement agendas formulated in a previous systemic moment. Ideas for industrialization and unionization in the US, expecting similar results at the end of the US global hegemonic cycle as at its beginning, are one such example (e.g. Sanders 2015, Corbyn 2017). Another effect of the same time-space bias is that labor movements across the globe are compared to the paradigmatic success story of the core Fordist experience within the US hegemonic cycle. The irony of this comparison is that this success has been made possible by, and is limited to core positions within the boom period of the hegemonic cycle.

There is a larger genre of comparisons that contrasts paradigmatic core successes to a row of non-core 'failures' that lead to local societies not achieving levels of welfare and democracy similar to core societies. This genre compares different local elements of a global process while masking their interconnection through the universalization of one local experience over the other. This type of epistemic dominance (or Eurocentrism) of social knowledge produced in the core, serves to legitimate hierarchies within the global system, and has been widely criticized by postcolonial and decolonial approaches. When comparing contemporary movements, to go beyond the dominance of core paradigms in comparative approaches, basic notions of conceptualizing political movements – such as state, social classes, or sovereignty – need to be reformulated in order to be suited for the analysis of systemic interactions. The role of state infrastructures in global accumulation, the extent of sovereignty experienced by local citizens, or the class constituency of local polities varies largely across global positions. Concepts and narratives, that theorize relations between such elements according to the Western experience, are permanently used to describe non-core situations. However, this usage reflects historical structures of epistemic and real domination (as well as local struggles using resources crystallized within those structures), rather than transparent descriptions of the global processes that constitute them.

The ambition to establish a dialogue between social movement theories based on different global experiences runs against this deeper problem of epistemic dominance within global hierarchies. What are constituted as political values on one end of global processes, are conditioned by material processes that produce

situations contradicting those values at the other end of the same process. For example, in the present opening towards structural factors in SMS, which aims to interpret anti-austerity movements and new populisms in a globally comparative manner, the Western experience of postwar “democratic capitalism” (Streeck 2014, Fraser 2014) has been used as a reference point that can set the stage for a debate on why and how it is being dismantled. However, from a systemic perspective, the possibility of democracy within post-war global capitalism has been necessarily limited to specific segments of the whole system. As Samir Amin (1991) notes, the idea of democracy in fact denoted the accommodation of social and political rights within Western democracies. On the peripheries, where global capital’s reserve army was concentrated, the same system engendered dictatorships that executed the demands of the world market, and were occasionally shaken by social explosions against them (Amin 1991, 87). If democracy has been historically limited to the core of the global economy, while the same systemic processes that made it possible engendered repression and violence in peripheries, can it be introduced as a universal political value into a global discussion? Undoubtedly, it is introduced in ongoing struggles by varying structures and interests. However, in such situations concepts are universalized based on globally specific conditions. This practice reflects not the systemic meaning of these terms, but rather applications of conceptual resources born under unequal epistemic conditions. This understanding shapes the way the world-systems tradition reads debates between social movement theories coming from different global contexts.

An example for comparison: the fracturing of anti-systemic movements

Beyond movement actors’ positions within systemic cycles, the world-systems perspective emphasizes the position movements’ strategic contexts occupy within the politically fractured scene of the state system globally. From the perspective of movement history, one main aspect highlighted by this focus is the fracturing of anti-systemic movements across global positions. In the world-systems tradition, anti-systemic movements are defined as arising from and going against pressures generated by the functioning of the capitalist world-system (Arrighi 1990). In the history of the capitalist world-system, movements that addressed such pressures in a secular and political manner arose together with the formation of modern states and modern secular state politics. Addressing state power, they contested two aspects of systemic pressures: of capital on labor (socialism and communism) and of the interstate hierarchy in the world economy (national liberation movements). Politically, these movements formulated different vocabularies and narratives, which clashed in ideological debates. While they appeared as mutually exclusive on the ideological level, their differences were based in the different strategic environments provided by different systemic positions within the same global process (Arrighi et al. 1990).

In core states, workers' movements could rely on the social power of industrial labor and the institutions of political democracy, and followed a social-democratic strategy. In semi-peripheral locations, characterized by the lack of democratic institutions, as well as unemployment and social misery instead of a strong industrial labor base, it was the communist strategy of a vanguard party that prevailed. Finally, national liberation movements mobilized colonial populations in alliance with local elites against colonial domination. After more than a century of political institutionalization of anti-systemic movements since 1848, all three types of anti-systemic movements achieved state power, yet the same motion put them in the position where they needed to fulfill requirements of the world economy in order to maintain state power. Social-democratic, communist and national-liberationist governments followed development agendas that internalized the contradictions of unequal development within their own societies, and collided with each other within the global system. Mutual criticisms of the three anti-systemic streams pointed at the coercive nature of communism, the capitalist compromise of social democracy, the ineffective and compromising nature of national liberation governments, and (from the national liberation perspective) the Eurocentric and colonialist nature of both social democracy and communism.

From the end of the 1960's, as the overaccumulation crisis of the post-1945 economic boom began to be felt globally, all three types of governments that arose from anti-systemic movements lost their hegemony, and were challenged by new counter-movements. The state power structures of old anti-systemic movements, once objects of struggle and criteria of victory, themselves became targets of criticism by new movements.

The criticism of old movements and state power was amplified by the 1968 movement cycle globally. Later, much of this criticism was reincorporated into the new ideologies and governance techniques of neoliberalism in the eve of full-fledged financialization of the post-war hegemonic cycle. Transnational movements which aimed to forge an anti-systemic position vis-a-vis this stage of global capitalism, such as the alterglobalization movement in the 2000's, built on that criticism, as well as on non-core criticisms of the Eurocentrism of Marxism. It proposed a constant, horizontal dialogue between experiences born in various points of the global system, instead of universal strategizing for power (Day 2005). However, this type of organizing could not produce an organizational power that could pose significant challenge to global power structures.

The model of the Occupy movement, applied widely in anti-austerity movements after 2008, relied on the tradition of the alterglobalization movement in its horizontal ideologies and networked organization, further enhanced by new communication technologies. In the past few years, many new anti-austerity movements developed formal political organizations (Gerbaudo 2017, Fominaya 2017). These movements operate in the context of a more evolved hegemonic crisis, systemic reorganization, increased misery, and social upheaval. In the process of their formation, elements of repertoires and

infrastructures of earlier movement forms, as well as reactualizations of earlier anti-systemic ideologies, coexist with present systemic pressures and strategic constellations.

That today's movements tend to seek influence over state power in order to further their aims is similar to previous hegemonic crises (Silver and Slater 1999). Meanwhile, social trajectories across the present crisis vary widely across systemic positions. As Milanovic (2011) illustratively pointed out, the winners of income redistribution between 1988 and 2011 can be found within the emerging middle class of China, India, Thailand, Vietnam and Indonesia, and the global top 1%, situated in North America, Western Europe, Japan and Oceania. Those who lost the most relative to their earlier positions are working-class and lower-middle-class populations of core economies (groups still richer than the emerging non-core middle class). As several studies pointed out (Guzman-Concha 2012, Anderson 2011, Biekart and Fowler 2013, Gagyi 2015, Poenaru 2017), new anti-austerity movements, dominantly thematized by a globally networked middle class, feature similar repertoires and slogans, but fit into different social currents, alliances and interests within the same systemic reorganization. Within those trajectories, the narrative that explains new movements by the neoliberal rolling back of the welfare state, and consequent downward mobility/precarization of middle class constituencies (e.g. Fominaya 2017) applies predominantly to Western contexts, and leaves other global contexts unreflected. To address the issue of a potential dialogue between different global cases, in the following section I raise several points regarding how dynamics of new mobilizations in ECE can be included in a comparative framework within a systemic approach – and what that would imply for theoretical frameworks built on Western cases

New movements in ECE: some tools for systemic comparison

In left conceptualizations of the post-2008 movement wave, the narrative of a decline of “democratic capitalism” (Streeck 2014, Della Porta 2013, Katsambekis and Stavrakakis 2013, Fraser 2014, Mouffe 2014) has become a consensual point of reference within SMS. This narrative, inspired by the historical experience of Western postwar welfare societies, does not describe non-core experience throughout the same global capitalist cycle, where postwar capitalist regimes have not included social and political rights. In the case of new movements in post-socialist countries, the same framework is applied as a universal reference. However, the story of democratic welfare disrupted by neoliberalization does not apply to post-socialist situations where political democratization arrived together with neoliberal measures. In post-socialist countries, the “decline of democratic capitalism” narrative is combined with the earlier post-Cold War narrative of democratization as catching up. The latter narrative poses “democratic capitalism” as a developmental aim that has not (yet) been reached, which is constantly in danger of a “democratic backslide” (e.g. Swinko 2016). The conceptual tools provided by these two narratives, coming from core-dominated discourses born in different historical

constellations, have been combined in various ways to understand present processes in ECE (Pleyers and Sava, 2015), as well as to express movement claims. In a global comparative perspective however, local variations of these political frameworks need to be analyzed in their interconnections with trajectories of social mobilities and political alliances within systemic integration.

For such an analysis of movements within ECE, some analytical foci would be the following. One characteristic of semi-peripheral positions is that of political coalitions around development ambitions for a global mobility from semi-peripheral to core positions. Contrary to the normal story of everyone catching up with the core of the global economy through time, implied by modernization theory (Rostow, 1960), the world-systems tradition demonstrates that in a global economy built on mechanisms of hierarchical polarization, semi-peripheral development meets the limits of an adding-up problem. Set against that background, permanent semi-peripheral efforts towards global upward mobility appear less to be flowing from the objective possibility of catching-up, but rather to be born from, and locked into, the polarization inherent to the global economy. What Arrighi (1990) calls “developmentalist illusion” refers to such development ambitions following from structural positions and interests of their proponents within the global competition. The “developmentalist illusion”, in this sense, does not refer to “illusion” as a mistake in cognition, but as a real structural and ideological effect, a fact of internal-external relations at work in semi-peripheral elites and their coalitions, tied into pressing relations of global competition.

A structural analysis of political programs within such situations would start from assuming that the process of capitalist integration, in its various historical phases, produces social groups with interests for and against the given historical form of integration, and that those groups’ efforts have their repercussions on the process, both through political and non-political means. Political ideologies, understood as negotiated projections produced within temporary inter-group coalitions within and outside the nation-state, would be expected to change together with the dynamics of systemic integration, while expressing long-term effects of integration in short-term terms of momentary political conflicts.

In terms of politicization of structural processes, a major determinant factor in ECE has been that its economic dependence from the cores of the global economy has been accompanied (and often articulated) by more immediate hierarchical relations to neighboring powers. Along the lines of economic dependence, political dependence announced itself in the form of hegemonic spaces of maneuver for the various horizontal and vertical alliances of local groups. As Andrew C. Janos (2000) demonstrated, throughout the modern period, ECE politics followed the political lines inscribed by global and regional hegemony, with deviations following from local conditions. To what Janos calls the “feigned compliance” of elites (Janos 2000: 411), we can add the positions of contender or anti-systemic interests, also conditioned by configurations of economic and political dependencies. Within this dependent space of maneuver

for local politics, external dependencies can work both as constraints and resources along the lines of vertical alliances.

How to place middle class movements within that context? A typical historical feature of middle class formation in East Central Europe, similar to other semi-peripheries (Arrighi 1990) is the relative scarcity of middle class positions available through economic activities, compared to core societies. A related characteristic is the state-bound nature of middle class formation – both in the sense of middle class interests in state policies, and in the more direct sense of middle-class positions available within the state administration (Stokes 1986). Another characteristic is that middle-class positions available locally do not provide life standards equivalent to those of central middle classes. As Janos (2000) notes, frustration under the double conditions of limited and state-bound middle class formation historically had the effect of recursive efforts to translate middle class economic ambitions into political entrepreneurship. The alliance and conflict structures in which this structurally conditioned developmentalist illusion of middle classes is formulated into political projects vary according to dynamics of social reorganizations across phases of integration.

Cycles of revolt followed by alliances with power structures have been described as a recurrent characteristic of ECE middle classes throughout modern history (Szelényi and King, 2004). Mobilizations of 1848 were fuelled by middle estates squeezed out by large estates in a competition for grain export markets – a social group that later got integrated in state bureaucracies. Early 20th century mobilizations on right and left were connected to surging unemployment among intellectuals and bureaucrats. After the consolidation of socialist regimes, middle class dominance in socialist power structures has been a classic point raised by critics of socialist ideology (e.g. Konrád and Szelényi 1979). By the end of the 1960's, a new wave of discontent and criticism began, as the new socialist middle class met its mobility limits within the system. This criticism, formulated from first Marxist, then third-way, and finally liberal terms at the moment of the regime change, was followed by a new phase of middle-class formation within post-socialist structures (vis-a-vis a downwardly mobile socialist working class). By the end of the 2000's, middle class mobilizations started to raise political claims again, and seek state protection from what they see as a loss of social position and security. Throughout these cycles, a long-term structural tendency towards emulating middle class life standards of core countries seems to manifest itself in phases of political struggle in times of crisis, and in phases of coalition-making with elites in times of conjuncture. In both phases, the possibilities to achieve core life standards remain limited, a limitation that leads to further cycles of mobilization.

How exactly the developmentalist illusion inscribed in the status of non-core middle classes is activated within the alliance and conflict structures of local integration, is a question of actual historical constellations. In the following, I provide a brief overview of integration contexts in the case of new middle class movements in Hungary and Romania, in order to show how the analytical

perspective presented here can connect long-term tendencies of local middle class politics to changes in local social-economic regimes of global integration within the global crisis, and to the local political-ideological vocabularies that provide politicized conceptualizations of crisis effects.

Within the various trajectories of East Central European countries across the socialist and post-socialist eras, Hungary and Romania seem to have repeatedly given contradictory answers to similar world-economic and geopolitical pressures. Hungarian and Romanian socialist regimes reacted differently to the global crisis of the 1970's, and the specific challenges it posed for catch-up industrialization projects of the region (raising energy prices, increasing need for hard currency and export pressure, declining terms of trade with developed countries, and finally, raising debt). In Hungary, the socialist government put in place after the 1956 revolution substituted forced industrialization and ideological control with material legitimation and market reforms. Its reaction to the 1970's crisis was driven by liberal measures, unsuccessfully challenged by the orthodox branch of the party, a path that laid the base to the fastest market liberalization in the region after 1989. In Romania, centralization and forced industrialization survived destalinization, and were coupled with partial independence from the Soviet Union and an early opening towards Western economic partnerships. When the effects of the crisis began to be felt in the form of external debt, the Romanian regime chose to pay back debt with extremely severe conditions of austerity, in order to avoid liberal reforms proposed by lenders, and to maintain the centralized industrial model its power was based on. While in Hungary market reforms within socialism produced a large technocratic middle class with considerable power and material benefits, the Romanian regime coupled extreme centralization of power and symbolic popular outreach with the marginalization (and often, stigmatization and harassment) of intellectuals. In Hungary, the regime change provided opportunities for former technocrats to rearticulate their positions within market liberalization. This dominant line of post-socialist politics was represented politically by the alliance of Socialist and Liberal parties proposing neoliberal reforms, opposed by a dominated fraction of competing elites proposing protected and state-aided development of national capital. In Romania, the first post-socialist government, set up by second-tier party members, continued previous policies of protectionist industrialization, serving as a program of state-aided national capitalism in the new context of a market economy (Ban 2014). Intellectual opponents saw this new line as the continuation of communism, interpreted as a political alliance of dictatorial power and lower classes against educated strata striving for occidental development. This symbolic continuity was marked in 1990 by clashes between miners brought to Bucharest by the socialist government, and intellectual demonstrators who questioned the legitimacy of elections.

In Hungary, the liberal development model (based on FDI in the 1990's, and credits in the 2000's), was exhausted by the mid-2000's. Problems of debt service were coupled with a political crisis by 2006, when violent street protests broke out in response to a leaked speech of Socialist prime minister Ferenc

Gyurcsány, in which he admitted having lied to the people about economic opportunities. Protests staged people's disillusionment with the promises of liberal development after 1989 in the vocabulary of the nationalist opposition. The two-thirds super-majority gained by nationalist party Fidesz in 2010 was built on this interpretation of the crisis. However, as Fidesz engaged in a politics of power centralization and state-aided development of national capital, waves of protests followed, dominated by local middle class actors connected to previous liberal cultural and technocratic infrastructures. Thus, since the austerity wave following the 2008 crisis arrived to Hungary in the form of Fidesz policies for national capitalist development, post-2008 protests took the form of anti-Fidesz demonstrations. Their main political line followed agendas of liberal middle class actors, yet it also contained elements of opposition to Fidesz's anti-poor policies. While street demonstrations dominated by middle-class liberals dominate the foreground of oppositional publicity, far-right opposition party Jobbik and neo-nationalist movements like that of forex mortgage debtors constitute a significant segment of political opposition.

In Romania, post-socialist national protectionism lost hegemony by the mid-2000's, a process aided by NATO and EU accession. In 2006, as part of preparations for the EU accession, president Traian Băsescu made a symbolic alliance with anti-communist intellectuals, setting up a commission to produce a report based on which he would officially condemn the communist system. Intellectuals' anti-communism became part of the legitimating ideology of the upcoming era of liberalization. Liberalization started a major inflow of FDI, credits, and infrastructural takeover by Western companies. Management positions established by new investments, as well as corporate outsourcing in the ICT industry engendered a growth in middle-class technocratic positions in big cities. This drove a class-based urban transformation which went together with squeezing out former urban worker constituencies (Petrovici 2012, Petrovici and Poenaru 2017). The waning of FDI inflow and the austerity wave that followed after 2008 activated demonstration waves dominated by this new post-socialist middle class. As Petrovici and Poenaru (2017) point out, this wave gained a political edge after 2013, integrating in a sharpening conflict between Socialists' national protectionism losing ground, and technocratic liberalism gaining power. Within this conflict, new middle class demonstrations allied with the liberal narrative that opposed Western-oriented, enlightened, educated strata to the political alliance of Socialists (remnants of communism) and their uneducated, poor electorate. Regarding the direct interests of the new urban middle class, this narrative condemned Socialists' protectionist and redistributive policies, which favored national capital, rural administrative technocracies and the poor instead of urban professional middle classes directly benefiting from corporate FDI. In contrast to the Hungarian case, in Romanian mobilizations, liberal values were coupled with explicit anti-poor statements.

This very short overview of the two cases shows that although new mobilizations in both countries used slogans and repertoires of Occupy-type movements, their integration into social and political transformations engendered by the global crisis was different from what has been described as democratic anti-austerity

movements reacting to the neoliberalization of “democratic capitalism”. In both cases, a long-term tendency of regional middle classes to politicize status claims during crisis periods was expressed in political mobilizations that interpreted the effects of the 2008 crisis as a developmentalist backslide. Due to differences in the paths of integration constellations in the two cases, new middle class movements reacted to different structural opportunities and political vocabularies. Political concepts like “left” and “right”, “Socialist” and “Liberal”, “European” and “national” bore different meanings in the two cases, to the extent that comparing attitudes towards notions like “Socialism” or “Europe” in the two cases on a one-to-one basis would miss the main stakes of middle class actors’ integration within crisis processes. In Hungary, demonstrations were positioned on the “left” of the local political spectrum, expressing commitment to “European democracy”, and opposed the nationalist government who performed the cuts after the crisis. In Romania, demonstrations’ momentum benefited the liberal faction of political elites, a position that opposed the Socialist party and its voters (depicted as the barriers to European development), yet was identical to the governments who did most of the post-2008 cuts. While Hungarian movements criticize current anti-poor policies, in Romania new demonstrations express anti-poor stances. In terms of political reactions to position shifts, middle class constituencies of the new mobilization wave are differently embedded in current transformations of integration constellations. In Hungary, they protest position losses following from politically motivated changes in state-based infrastructures. In Romania, the urban professional middle class, benefiting from FDI inflows, requests state policies that continue to benefit their positions, maintaining a liberalization scheme that, at the same time, disfavors poorer and rural strata.

Conclusion

Regarding the question of a dialogue between movements in various global positions, this article emphasized that local effects of global systemic interactions tend to become politicized through ideological projections of temporary alliances, which translate systemic processes to short-term and localized political causes. Through the example of the fracturing of anti-systemic movements of the 20th century, it illustrated how differences of positions within world economic cycles lead to differences and conflicts in the conceptualization of revolutionary causes.

Turning to the question of contemporary movements in ECE, the paper emphasized that beyond similarities to what has been conceived as the post-2008 wave of anti-austerity and pro-democracy movements, differences of integration into crisis processes also need to be taken into account. It specified several aspects of the region’s world-economic and geopolitical integration, including renewing programs for global mobility to core positions, and the “developmentalist illusion” encoded in the structural position of local middle classes. The paper suggested that present mobilizations dominated by middle-class constituencies integrate in long-term patterns of local middle-class

politics, producing politicized status claims in times of crisis. However, through the example of new mobilizations in Hungary and Romania, the paper also demonstrated that the way such long-term ambitions are activated today depends from specific local constellations of global integration. The paper showed that while movements in both countries interpret effects of the 2008 crisis in terms of a developmentalist backslide, the specific trajectories of socialist and post-socialist regimes throughout the same phase of global “downturn” after the 1970’s (Brenner 2003) engendered different structural and political contexts for the expression of middle class claims in contemporary mobilizations. It also pointed out that, according to movements’ local embeddedness, political concepts of “democracy”, “left”, “right”, or “neoliberal” are linked to different structural-political nodes in the two situations, with contradicting conclusions regarding relations to the poor.

While, on the one hand, this points at the limitations of a comparison of the two cases on a common ground established by the narrative of democratic decline through neoliberalization, on the other hand it illustrates a potential for understanding relations between locally embedded struggles as relations between local constellations of systemic processes. In terms of analytical method, this type of approach emphasizes the relevance of historical detail in the analysis of systemic interactions, as opposed to ideal types or narratives that pose certain constellations (e.g. of modernization, democracy, or anti-austerity movements) as universal models.

What follows from this perspective to the question of comparison and dialogue between movements in different global locations is that the politics and knowledge expressed by movements is not necessarily informative in terms of how they are related within global social processes. On the one hand, political conceptualizations of local constellations tend to differ or exclude each other across global positions, due to differences of position, experience and interests, as well as of local opportunities for coalition-making. On the other hand, since political conceptualizations of local constellations conceive of systemic processes in short-term and localized idioms tailored to temporary political alliances, their understanding of global processes does not constitute, or add up into, a general framework on the scale of the systemic interactions they are structurally connected by.

In practice, the latter problem is typically “solved” through political frameworks overlapping along relations of dominance or coalition-making. Santos’ concept of “knowledge ecology”, proposed in line with the principle of “no global justice without cognitive justice”, proposes to solve that problem through giving voice of the whole diversity of social experience across the globe. Regarding that question, the contribution of the world-systems perspective is that adding non-core perspectives to core perspectives, or criticizing the latter by the former may not be enough to solve the problem of dialogue across global positions. If political conceptualizations born from localized constellations of systemic integration do not contain the systemic scale of their interconnectedness, a

debate between them can hardly produce an understanding of that broader systemic aspect.

In this sense, the answer provided from a world-systems perspective to this issue's question may seem to downplay the potential of global dialogue. However, its contribution is also motivated by the aim to understand movements in relation to global interconnections without generalizing one movement context over the other. The difference from a perspective focused on dialogue – or, hopefully, the contribution to it – rather consists in the classic gesture of materialist analysis to use impersonal, methodical analysis of structures to circumvent limitations of phenomenological experience.

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