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"...there's always a class war going on."

- Noam Chomsky
What role does class play in the mobilization of the Syrian revolution?

Photo by Syrian Revolution Memory Project

A project by Jan Buthaina Shaheen Hestmann, and Sunna Reitov Korpe
1. Introduction

The shocking emergence of the Arab uprising in 2010, that we mainly followed through an exploding worldwide media coverage, aroused our interest to focus on mobilization in our project. Thereby, it is not our intention to generalize the mechanisms of the different social movements within the Arab uprising. In Tunisia and Egypt, for example, the regimes have been overthrown by the masses of protesters within a short period. In Syria there is a different situation. Already more than three years have past since the first demonstrations in February 2011 and the Assad regime is still in power, fighting brutally against large parts of Syrian society that wants to see the regime fall. Within this long period the mobilization has changed, non-violent protests have become more and more overshadowed by armed fights. Our project's goal is to elaborate on the mechanisms of mobilization within the Syrian revolution.

The Syrian writer and political researcher Yassin Al-Haj Saleh states in his article “The Syrian Common: The Uprising of the Working Society” that “[...] (t)he Syrian uprising has a class-related character that is perhaps more prominent than what has emerged in other Arab uprisings” (Al-Haj Saleh, 2011). Al-Haj Saleh's assumption inspired us to focus on the term class within the Syrian society. In Al-Haj Saleh's opinion class has played a crucial role in the mobilization, as he calls it an uprising of the “working society” (ibid). Therefore, we want to elaborate the mobilization within the Syrian revolution from a class perspective. We see many other approaches, such as sect, religion and ethnicity dominating a Western discourse in terms of the uprisings within the Arab spring, also in the case of Syria. These circumstances, as well as Al-Haj Saleh's assumptions, motivate us to elaborate the mobilization based on a class approach. Further, we witness that the concept of class has become increasingly outmoded in recent decades in Academia. The anthropologist Bjorn Thomassen argues that in social and political sciences socio-economic conditions, the basis for a class approach, are replaced by “[...] cultural factors, similarly, class is replaced by ethnicity and cultural and religious identity” (Thomassen, 2007: 17). He views this as actually problematic, as he considers class configurations or ‘status groups’ are extremely important in order to understand these new political identities (Thomassen, 2007: 18). Being, of course, aware of the cultural diversity within the Syrian society, we agree with Thomassen's claim. We view class as an essential factor in order to understand mobilization within the Syrian revolution. Therefore, this project aims at examining the concept of class as a mobilization factor. Thus, our research question is the following:

What role does class play in the Mobilization of the Syrian revolution?
1.1 Introduction to Syria's class background and mobilization

In reference to our research paper, we have opted to elaborate on our question's components: class, mobilization and revolution in order to show the role of class in the mobilization in the Syrian revolution. We have adapted to call it revolution, to which we offer an elaboration in the end of this chapter.

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the historical background of class within Syrian society. To do so, firstly, we elaborate on the relevance of the term class in Syrian society. Secondly, a brief historical description of class division in Syrian society will be offered, basically during the period of Ba’th ruling party. Further, we offer a brief introduction to the mobilization in Syria since 2011. From the next chapters in our project, we will demonstrate the relationship between class and mobilization in Syrian society, and how class plays a role in mobilization in Syrian revolution.

1.2 The relevance of the class concept to Syrian Society

Historically, Orientalist scholarship claims that class is a Western concept, and is related to Europe’s evolution from feudalism to mercantile and industrial capitalism, and thus can not be applied to the Middle East (D. Schad, 2002). Geoffrey D. Schad, a historian, argues that historically the population in the Middle East viewed society in non-class terms, but society was divided anyway into the rulers and the ruled1 (D. Schad, 2002). Several criteria were operative within this complex stratification. However, wealth was conditional for high status or be part of the elite (D. Schad, 2002) Thus, based on the “traditional” Middle Eastern understanding of social stratification, then a justification to use “class” as a category of analysis is to be applied on Middle Eastern societies. (D. Schad, 2002). Syria is a country, which lies in what European geopolitics terms “the Middle East”. Thus, the social stratification mentioned above, or the class concept is applicable to Syrian society. This project adopts the standpoint of D. Schad and views class as an analytical category in Syrian society in order to understand the cultural diversities2 in such a complex society.

---

1 There was a complex stratification encompassing an elite made up of notables (A’yan): government, military and religious offices; merchants (tujjar); descendants of noble lineages (asraf); high ranking ‘ulama’; middle ranking other merchants, artisans and lower ‘ulama’ including professionals and government officials; lower class ‘amma’ - commoners and finally the urban masses ‘al-fugara’ - the poor (D. Schad, 2002).

2 The main religious communities in Syria are: Sunni Muslims (74 %), Alawites (12 %), Druzes (3 %), Greek Orthodox Christians (10 %), the last 1% is Isma’ilis, Yesidis and Jews (Reuters, 2012). While the principal ethnic groups are: Arabs (90, 3 %), Kurds, Armenians and others, 9, 7% (Maunder, 2012 & infoplease.com).
1.3 A brief description of class division in modern Syrian society / Ba’th party in focus

Before the Ba’ath party came to power, the country was divided “[...] on sharp class lines between the ruling landed and commercial oligarchy, a rising radical middle class, which came to dominate the army, and an aggrieved peasantry [...]” (Hinnebusch 2012, 96). So, the class division represented in the existence of different classes, mainly; the ruling class, ruled class and an emerging middle class. It is not our purpose to elaborate on this at the moment, but we mention it only to give a background to class structure, which existed before Ba’ath Party, since mobilization has been taking place under the Ba’th party represented by an Assad family, who are Alawi (van Dam, 1979: 86). We mention that they are Alawi solely because it is helpful for the demonstration of the class division and it has changed.

Until the 1950s, Alawis cultivated the fields of middle- and upper class Sunni Muslims and Christians, while they were treated under bad conditions, related to the class they belonged (Batatu in Antoun, 1991: 7). The peasant Alawis worked for the Sunnis who are middle and upper class. There is a suppression aspect because the Alawis were not treated well by the upper Sunni class. However, when Ba'th coup took place in 1963, it brought a new elite into power that was characterized by a rural background (Batatu in Antoun, 1991: 7). This was due to the fact that Hafez Al-Assad became the first Alawi president “[...] in Syria’s history, who is of peasant extraction” (Batatu, 1999: 193). He built up an army of Alawite officers (Maunder, 2012) by recruiting Alawis who live in remote rural areas and employing them in the army (van Dam, 1979: 39-43). Thus, the position of Alawis who cultivated the fields of Sunnis have been changed by transferring them from rural labour to army employment.

1.4 The influences of Ba'th party's economic reforms on class division

After the success of the Ba'th coup many peasants all over the country strongly believed that the Ba'th party was “their party and truly represented their interests” (Batatu 1999, 181). Even though, the Ba'th party introduced several economic reforms in the following decades, that benefitted the bourgeoisie instead and not the peasants. By mentioning these reforms, we elaborate the growing gap of class in Syria, that is induced by the increasing wealth of the bourgeoisie on the one hand and the increasing poverty of the working class on the other hand.

The Assad family, that belongs to the Alawi sect (van Dam, 1979: 86), tried to create a ruling class
by using sectarianism as a political device (Al-Haj, 2014). They did so when Hafez Al-Assad built up an army of Alawite officers and dismissed Sunni officers. (Maunder, 2012) Also, he established an alliance with Sunni Muslims bourgeoisie (Maunder, 2012, van Dam, 1979: 101), by supporting their trade and investment (Maunder, 2012). This initiative created “[...] an advance guard of an elite or class coalition [...]” (Maunder, 2012). Therefore, the Ba’th party is supported by the bourgeoisie and the upper class today (Maunder, 2012). Following the reforms of the “land redistribution”, many peasants ended up with holdings, which were not enough to support a family (Maunder, 2012.) Therefore, in addition to their peasantry work they had to find wage labour in the industry sector (ibid). That is why during 1970-1982 a vast increase of the working class was established. In 1991, “The Investment Law Number 10” of 1991, that opened up new areas of the economy to private capital (Maunder, 2012), privileged the cooperating business class to a larger extent. This resulted in a situation where “[b]y the mid-1990s [...] “an upper class has emerged both greater in number and wealthier than the bourgeoisie of the pre-Ba’athist era” (Maunder, 2012). In 2000, Bashar Al-Assad, the son of Hafez, became the new leader of the Ba'ath party. He followed his father's politics by implementing reforms such as privatization in the health system, privatization of state lands and cutting of corporation tax, which benefitted the rich and overlooked the poor. People were against the new rules on privatization, as it only helped the rich upper class (ibid). Apart from that, the Assad regime was seen as corrupt to many of the Syrian people, and people therefore showed their anger against the regime through protests (ibid). There was a developing dissatisfaction in Syria, which have paved the way to the Syrian uprising.

1.5 Background: the uprising that turned into a revolution

In March 2011 in the city of Deraa, a couple of young schoolboys drew graffiti with anti-regime slogans on a wall, using slogans from the revolutions in Egypt and Tunis. This resulted in kidnapping and torture of the young boys by the local police. In Deraa, this caused huge demonstrations (Filiu, 2011: 88 and Al-Jazeera, 2011), which led to thousands of people from different cities in Syria to demonstrate, showing their solidarity with Deraa, and their anger of the regime (Leenders in Beinin, 2013: 249). This was the beginning of the Syrian uprising (Filiu, 2011: 88 and Al-Jazeera, 2011). However, the earliest protest took place in mid-February in the Hariqa square in Damascus, where masses of Syrian people demonstrated for liberty, “In mid-February, hundreds of Syrians staged a spontaneous protest against security forces after policemen assaulted a young man in the Damascus’s Old City, the Dubai-based all4Syria reported” (Middle-east-online, 2011). To get an improved understanding of the demonstrations in Syria, a short introduction to Syria’s economy, sects and classes will be explained below.
1.6 A description of the ongoing process of mobilization

Already during the beginning of the protests in Syria, people created “[...] slogans, banners, choreography, and rich tactics [...]” (Leenders in Beinin, 2013: 249). The slogans and banners were developed during the uprising, and made the demonstrators maintain an encouragement of their protests (Leenders in Beinin, 2013: 248). In the beginning of the Syrian uprising the demonstrators saw the regime’s “[...] repression or threat as a cause for mobilization instead of submission [...]” (Leenders, 2013: 274). This could be discussed as having an extremely important role during the Syrian uprising, as the idea of mobilization could be understood as one of the most important factors in the Syrian uprising. The mobilization, which occurred in Deraa during the early stages of the Syrian uprising, was seen as challenging to the Ba’thist regime (Leenders, 2013: 274). One explanation of the mass mobilization could be that people mobilize when they feel that their human rights are taken away from them, and when they experience that they are threatened on “[...] the public good [...]” (Beinin, 2013: 28). People were not treated equally and grievances in the society had existed for several years, and flared during the revolution. Considering this, grievances, inequality and the torturing of the young schoolboys in Syria was seen as a violation of human rights, which led to demonstrations in the country. All this could be seen as that the Syrian people had been fed up with the regime, and felt that they had to speak their mind through demonstrations. During the uprising, people have been protesting in order to fight for their human rights against the Assad regime (Beinin, 2013: 25). People from different backgrounds, whether it was religious, cultural or sectarian participated in the Syrian uprising. The uprising has attracted both people from the lower and upper middle-class, or working class as this project will demonstrate in the following chapters.

1.7 The term revolution

Ziad Majed defends the Syrian revolution by stating: “[...] The term “revolution” must continue to be used. It is no exaggeration to state that Syria’s revolution is one of the most important[...]” (Majed, 2013: 9).

By quoting Majed on insisting to continue to call it the Syrian revolution, we adapt Majed’s perspective that what has been happening in Syria since 2011 is a revolution. In fact, it is a revolution of the marginalized and the poorest supported by educated people (Cam Mazen, 2012 & Al-Haj Saleh, 2011) against the Assad ruling class. Nevertheless, we are aware that other terms can be also called to describe the Syrian situation since 2011. For instance, according to conflict studies,
the situation in Syria can be defined as “the Syrian conflict”. This is due to the fact that it is a 
violent conflict, which has caused death and injury of people, as well as it has made many Syrians 
internally displaced within Syria and refugees to neighboring countries and other countries.

We have examined the use of the term “revolution” in both Arabic and English contexts. We have 
discovered that “Thawra”, the Arabic word, has been used more often in Arabic contexts more than 
“revolution” in English contexts. Thawra has a traditional and a contemporary definition. The 
traditional defines revolution as when people with a leadership revolt in order to change the ruling 
“class” by force. While the modern defines revolution by the change committed by people through 
its tools aiming at changing the ruling regime (Shibil, 2011). However, “Thawra” also has a 
common and popular definition which revolves around people rising up against a repressive regime 
(Shibil, 2011). In the Syrian context, the term Thawra is used by people to describe the revolt 
against Bashar Al-Assad ruling class. In 2011 people rose up against the ruling Assad family. They 
protested peacefully on the streets but they were treated brutally. Gradually, more people joined the 
protests demanding their freedom from such a repressive regime. Since 2011, the Syrian revolution 
has grown greatly according to the various revolutionary activities which have been taking place. 
Al-Haj Saleh emphasizes the greatness of the Syrian revolution by asserting its several and diverse 
components, which include different life aspects and domains in Syrian society. These components 
revolve around for example the protests phenomenon and the place where they take place, and the 

social engagement. There is a military component, which is represented by the dissidents from the 
regular army. There is also a political component, which includes the organizations that support the 
revolution, and the cultural one, which consists of artists and writers. In addition to that, there is the 
media component, which offers an alternative media coverage (Al-Haj Saleh, 2012).

Thus, we adapt strongly the term Thawra to describe what is happening in Syria.

2. Methodology

In this project, we have chosen to use literature and sources by native Syrian intellectuals and 
activists, as well as from academics. We have used theoretical concepts to examine the role of class 
in the mobilization of the Syrian revolution. Consequently, we have used these theoretical concepts 
in order to analyze the economic and cultural dimensions of class and its role in mobilization. All of 
the literature has been classified into primary and secondary literature. The primary sources include 
literature from Syrian intellectuals and activists, where we have used the following, Mazen Cam 
Almaz, Yassin Al-Haj Saleh and Fidaaldin Al-Saed Issa. In addition we have also used Ziad Majed,
who is a Lebanese political researcher and assistant professor. The secondary sources include literature from academics such as, Bassam Haddad, Raymond Hinnebusch, Geoffrey D. Schad, Adam Almkvist, Donatella della Porta, Bjørn Thomassen and Reinoud Leenders. We used primarily sociologists, anthropologists and political scientists.

2.1 Methodology of theory

We have examined different theoretical concepts to understand the Syrian mobilization from both a cultural and economic perspective. We have used Resource Mobilization Theory (RMT), Social Movement Theory (SMT), Charles Tilly and J. Craig Jenkins. We have examined the theory of class according to Marx and Engels and elaborated it through Mike Hout, Clem Brooks, Jeff Manza, Clark and Lipset and D. Schad.

Initially we have used Marx’ and Engels’ conceptualization of the class concept, followed by a discussion of the claims for the uselessness of the use of the term class. Then, there is a discussion of the efficiency of the class concept, which leads to a contemplation of the cultural dimension of class. Here we use della Porta’s concept of “eventful protest” and Thomassen’s elaboration on Victor Turner’s sequential structure of social life, and his theorization regarding identity politics. In the last section of the theory, an elaboration of RMT and SMT is made.

2.2 Methodology of the analysis

In the first part of the analysis, we analyze the economic liberation and business networks in relation to class issues and marginalization in Syria. On the basis of Marx theory of class we analyze texts from analytical texts by Bassam Haddad and Raymond Hinnebusch. In the second part we analyze the Facebook page the Syrian Revolution 2011 and a YouTube video on the basis of della Porta’s “eventful protest”, and Thomassen’s elaboration on Victor Turner’s sequential social life, and his definition of “Identity Politics”. On the basis of their theoretical concepts, we analyze an interview with the Facebook page’s administrator, Fidaaldin Al-Saedd Issa. In order to analyze the Facebook page administrators’ and members’ class background we use Mazen Cam Almaz and Yassin Al-Haj Saleh. Furthermore, we use D. Schad’s theoretical concept of social class. In the third part, we analyze LCC as a case study, and some selected quotes from interviews according to RMT and SMT. We have used Reinoud Leenders, Charles Tilly and Jenkins to support RMT and SMT. In this chapter we provide the theoretical framework of our project. We have chosen to select and use a wide range of relevant theoretical concepts related to class and mobilization from
different sociologists, anthropologists, and historians, hoping to draw a comprehensive picture to the way class is conceptualized in Social Science.

To elaborate the analysis, we have included different articles and interviews about the Syrian revolution. This is to give an insight to, how the Syrian revolution is portrayed in media and from Syrian intellectuals’ and activist’s and academics’ perspectives. This provides a more nuanced insight into how the Syrian revolution is understood and interpreted, as seen from different angles.

2.3 Delimitation to literature

By making choices of which literature we have used in this project, a delimitation of literature has been made. As we decided focusing on the role of class in the mobilization of the Syrian revolution, we were keen to allocate literature, which includes class aspects. We developed our project from a sociological point of view. Therefore, we made delimitations concerning other approaches as those in global politology literature. We have chosen to use Syrian writers, intellectuals and activists in order to provide a native perspective in the mobilization of the Syrian revolution. We chose articles from individuals who have experienced the nature of the regime, as we think it is important to give a native view to the revolution. An example of a native Syrian intellectual and activist is Yassin Al-Haj Saleh, who was a political prisoner in the regime prisons for 16 years. He was arrested in 1980, while he was a medical student and was imprisoned for his membership in a left-wing organization. Yassin Al-Haj Saleh is often called the conscience of the Syrian revolution (opendemocracy, 2014). Moreover, we have used very limited selection of Arabic sources, such as a short article on social classes in Syrian society by the Syrian writer Mazen Cam Almaz. This has been helpful in order to be able to analyze to which class the protesters belong to. Besides, we have selected YouTube videos, where we have used slogans in Arabic that were in the videos. We have chosen Arabic sources, because we thought it is interesting to take some literature directly from the native language, where the revolution takes place. In addition to that we wanted to use sources, which are directly from Syria, without being translated into English spoken media. The reason why we did this is that one of the group members is an Arabic speaker and has lived in Syria, and therefore has experience and knowledge about the situation from within the country. In this way, she has been used as a resource to the advantage of the project.

2.4 Source criticism

In the following section we give examples of alternative theorists, which we could have used in this project. We have used Marx, because he is the fundamental sociologist on class theory. We could
have chosen Weber as he also identifies economic criterion to class as important, but also adds status as a second criterion for stratification. Besides that, the term “middle class” in Weber’s theory is a very different social strata category than the Marxist term ”Bourgeoisie”, which links class strictly to its relation to the means of production. Marx was prior to Weber in conceptualizing the class concept, as he spelled out “[…] two great classes: Bourgeoisie and Proletariat” (Marx and Engels 1848, 14). Moreover, we have limited ourselves to use Thomassen's and della Porta’s theoretical concepts in “eventful protest”, and “identity politics” in analyzing the cultural dimension of class in mobilization. This is due to the fact that della Porta’s approach to protest event is drawn on an actual protest in Italy, and Thomassen has written articles on revolutions. Thus, their work on protests and revolution has helped us examine the cultural aspect of class in the mobilization of the Syrian revolution. An option could have been to use Garbi Schmidt’s article on “‘Grounded’ politics: Manifesting Muslim identity as a political factor and localized identity in Copenhagen”. In this article Schmidt uses concepts such as identity politics and applies it on cultural related demonstrations. However, Schmidt’s research is focused on asserting religious identity, whereas della Porta’s and Thomassen’s research is more focused on protests related to mobilization.

Jenkins and Tilly is used in this project as main theorists to Resource Mobilization Theory and Social Movement Theory, as they are both essential to these theories as well as that Tilly’s conceptualization of contentious politics is crucial when writing about demonstrations and revolutions as well as it fitted well to the case of the Syrian revolution. We could have used Sidney Tarrow, as he’s theory is on collective challenges, where he discusses the challenges against elites. Moreover, we could have used McCarthy and Zald, instead of Jenkins as they also have emphasized Resource Mobilization Theory.

3 Theory
This chapter provides the theoretical framework for our project. We have opted to select and use a wide range of key relevant theoretical concepts related to class and mobilization from different sociologists, anthropologists, and historians, hoping to draw a comprehensive picture to the way class is conceptualized in Social Science.

In order to understand the role of class in the mobilization of the Syrian revolution, we have divided this chapter into three main parts. This part revolves around Marx’ theory of class and its insufficiency. This part includes theoretical concepts derived from sociologist Marx and Engels’ perspective on class, which focus solely on economic aspects of class. Moreover, in this part we will discuss how the “economic criteria” are not sufficient to understand the concept of class. We
will discuss here, as well, different aspects of class drawing of different sociologists. The second part focuses solely on concepts, which show the cultural dynamics of mobilized people. We will demonstrate this by drawing on the theoretical concept of “eventful protest” theorized by Donatella della Porta, professor of political science and political sociology. At the same time, this part will draw on theoretical notions from anthropologist and social scientist Bjørn Thomassen. We will deal with Thomassen’s elaboration on Victor Turner’s sequential structure of social life, as well as “identity politics”. The third part draws on relevant concepts driven from Social Movement Theory (SMT) and Resource Mobilization Theory (RMT). We will discuss here the Professor of Sociology, J. Craig Jenkins’s concepts in relation to RMT and Charles Tilly, sociologist and historian, according to SMT. Using all these three parts to our theory serve as a complementary approach for our project. We rely on the fact that Marx offers the basis of the traditional class theory. Whereas, della Porta and Thomassen help us understand the cultural dynamics to constitute social groups. Marx’s theory, and della Porta’s and Thomassen will complement each other to show both the economic and cultural dimensions of class (this is to be shown in the analysis). SMT and RMT concepts help us understand the mobilization aspect of the Syrian revolution.

3.1 Marx’ theory of class and its insufficiency

3.2 Class within Marx and Engels’ conceptualization

In order to examine the role of class in the mobilization in the Syrian revolution, We rely on Marx’ tradition theory of class. The idea of splitting up of the society into “two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other – Bourgeoisie and Proletariat” (Marx and Engels, 1848: 14) builds the foundation of the Communist Manifesto. As Marx and Engels outline in the introduction on Bourgeois and Proletarians: “The History of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle” (Marx and Engels, 1848: 14).

According to Marx, social organization is built upon a system of economic production. Hence, Marx defines class by “[...J any aggregate of persons who play the same part in the production mechanism” (Clark and Lipset, 1991: 398). On the basis of this conceptualization of class, one can say that the Syrian society is divided into two hostile camps: the Bourgeoisie as represented by the elite ruling class and business class on the one hand, and the Proletariat as represented by the vast majority of the Syrian population, i.e. the working class, on the other hand.

Marxist class stratification identifies “classes as differentiated according to the means of production” (ibid) in “(1) capitalists, or owners of the means of production; (2) workers, or all
those who are employed by others; (3) land-owners, who are regarded as survivors of feudalism” (Clark and Lipset, 1991: 398).

Marx argued that the working class share the same economic objective characteristics based on their relation to means of production. Marx’s focus and main interest were the emergence of class consciousness among the working class. He aspired to see the working class create a sense of shared class interest (ibid) and engage in the struggle with the Bourgeoisie class. In fact, Marx’s theory of class is based only on the economic criteria to class. Clark and Lipset stress that “[...] the dilemma of Marxist theory of class is the dilemma of every other single-variable theory” (ibid), which means that Marx’ ideas of class-consciousness and shared class interests are founded exclusively on economic interests (ibid).

3.3 The weakness of Marx’ theory of class as being based solely on “economic criteria”

Weber identifies economic interests only as a special case within a larger category of “values” (Clark and Lipset, 1991: 398). Beside the economic criteria, Weber suggests status as a second criterion for stratification (Clark and Lipset, 1991: 399). For Weber, status is either the negative or positive perception of people to each other and it might range from wealth, religion, race, physical attractiveness to social skills (Clark and Lipset, 1991: 399). Thus, status implies something to do with the social positions of individuals in society, rather than the economic gain (ibid).

3.4 The Relevance of class; different tendencies with and against class

This chapter will focus on scholarship that makes an argument for the less important role of social class within present social struggles. Simultaneously, this chapter will focus also on scholarship that argues for the continued relevance of class. In this way, what follows offers commentary on arguments for both the utility and lack of utility of class in the social sciences.

3.5 Claims for the uselessness of utilization of class

In their article “Are Social Classes Dying?”, the sociologists Terry Nichols Clark and Seymour Martin Lipset discuss the increasingly outmoded concept of class, and that the analysis of class has grown inadequate in recent decades as new social differences have appeared (Clark and Lipset, 1991: 397). In their article Clark and Lipset stress that “[...] class-based analyses have declined
[...] and new social differences have emerged” (Clark and Lipset 1991, 397). That is why we seek to offer in the following sections other arguments which support that the concept is class is still important to understand the complexities of societies.

3.6 Claims for the usefulness of utilization of class

Sociologists Mike Hout, Clem Brooks and Jeff Manza reject Clark and Lipset's claim that social classes are dying. They argue that “class-based stratification continues to be a central factor in social stratification” (Hout, Brooks, Manza, 1993: 259-261). At the same time they agree on the assumption that conceptions of class have grown more complex in recent decades, but claim at the same time, that Weberian theories of class also admit this complexity without negating the existence of classes (Hout, Brooks, Manza, 1993: 262). They claim that class is a necessary concept for sociology (Hout, Brooks, Manza, 1993: 261). Their most significant contribution to the argument is that class refers to a person's relationship to the means of production, and it is an important determinant of an individual's income, wealth and social standing (ibid). They argue also, that social inequalities and the growing extreme poverty, or the so called “new poverty” (Hout, Brooks, Manza, 1993 quoting Markland, 1990: 263), and the wealth controlled by the bourgeoisie in societies are symptoms of existing social class structures (Hout, Brooks, Manza, 1993: 262-263).

Returning to the argument that class is still relevant to sociolog, we have selected some other arguments from Bjørn Thomassen. He adheres to Weber’s theories and recommends the examination of the socio-economic groups, i.e., in Weber’s terminology “status”, who hold specific world-views, as well as, to understand under which conditions these world-views can spread them in society (Thomassen, 2007: 17).

3.7 Social Class

D. Schad’s argues that class includes, above economic criteria, criteria of common assumptions, beliefs, and forms of action (D. Schad, 2002, quoting Hobsbawn, 1996) and a common style of life, where he argues that all these criteria are cultural ones (ibid). Furthermore, D. Schad provides a significant definition to social class by stating that they are “a group of persons sharing the same relationship to productive property, and also sharing such cultural and behavioral characteristics as to make them identifiable as a collective body” (ibid). Hence, the world views, in Thomassen’s terminology, which a certain social group enjoys, are the cultural and behavioral characteristics in D. Schad’s sense, which form a social group.
In this project, we adapt the arguments of both Thomassen and D. Schad. In this way, we suggest that class has, in addition to the economic criterion mentioned above, a cultural criterion. Our project lines up with the arguments of D. Schad, whose work is aligned with the historian Hanna Batatu and finally, Marx, that class is “in essence, an economically-based formation, though it ultimately refers to the social position of the constituent individuals or families in its varied aspects” (D. Schad, 2002 quoting Batatu, 1979). Although, D. Schad criticizes Marx’ limitation to the economic sphere and claims, that in order to make the concept of social class more useful, we must think of non-economic criteria as well (D. Schad, 2002). Moreover, this project asserts that class positions are not fixed but “[...] something that happens in human relationships” (D. Schad, 2002 quoting Thompson, 1966 and Batatu, 1997) and that “[...] a class structure is in principle not characterized by fixity” (D. Schad, 2002 quoting Batatu, 1979). Class is fluid and dynamic. Class develops as people move up and down the scale of classes, where they attain either higher or lower status as a consequence of the economic, political and social circumstances change (D. Schad, 2002).

In conclusion, Hout, Brooks and Manza claim that even the nineteenth-century models of class were replaced by “more complex, multidimensional models of class” (Hout, Brooks, Manza, 1993: 270), which follows that class and class-based inequalities are not dying, but rather, continue to play an important role in sociological research (ibid).

### 3.8 Cultural dynamics of mobilized people

This part will deal solely with theoretical concepts which show the cultural dynamics of mobilized people. In this part, we will demonstrate the cultural dynamics of mobilized people by drawing on the theoretical concept “eventful protest” (della Porta, 2006: 28) theorized by Donatella della Porta, professor of political science and political sociology. At the same time, this part will draw on theoretical notions—from anthropologist and social scientist Bjørn Thomassen. We will deal with Thomassen’s elaboration on Victor Turner’s sequential structure of social life (Thomassen, 2012: 689, quoting Turner, 1988: 91) and identity politics (Thomassen, 2007: 4) will support della Porta’s concept of “eventful protest”.

### 3.9 Eventful protest

This section will define protest, event, eventful protest, and viewing protest from “dependent variable” to “independent variable”, and manifestations of eventful protest.

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3 A dependent variable in sociology and other social sciences is the effect, the phenomenon affected or changed by
3.10 Protest

Protest is defined in the sociology of social movements as “[...] resource of the powerless [...] they depend for success not upon direct utilization of power, but upon activating other groups to enter the political arena” (della Porta, 2006: 28 quoting Lipsky, 1970: 1). Protests give voices to people without power to be heard by using the channels of the mass media. Protest groups are able to attract attention of the public opinion by organizing public demonstrations or innovative symbolic initiatives (della Porta, 2006: 28).

3.11 Event

Events are defined as a “[...] relatively rare subclass of happenings that significantly transform structure [...]” (della Porta, 2006: 29, quoting Sewell, 1996: 262). Thus, events revolve around taking actions which would change structure and might bring a social change and ultimately bring out somehow social cohesion. Della Porta combines the concepts of “protest” and “event” and calls them “protest events”, which she further argues, are important for social movements (della Porta, 2006: 29). She criticizes the fact that protest events are studied as aggregated collective action, meaning that in social movement studies, protest has been treated as a “dependent variable”, and explains this in relation to political opportunities and organizational resources. (della Porta, 2006: 28). Moreover, she argues that protest has been regarded as the main repertoire of action of social movements (della Porta, 2006: 28). This is the reason why she wants to focus on the emergent character of protest itself, as explained below (della Porta, 2006: 29).

3.12 Eventful protest – transformation feature

Following the historical sociologist William H. Swell (1996), della Porta prefers to call protest event, “eventful protest” (della Porta, 2006: 29). At the same time, she draws on both teleological and experimental temporalities and attaches event to temporality, “eventful temporality”, in order to stress the power of events in history (della Porta, 2006: 29). Returning to our definition of event in that they can “[...] significantly transform structure [...] then eventful temporality” is a conception which takes into account the “[...] transformation of structures by events” (della Porta, 2006: 29, quoting Sewell, 1996: 262). Eventful protests have transformative effects due to the fact that they transform structures by either empowering new groups of actors or re-empower groups that already exist in new ways (della Porta, 2006: 30, quoting Sewell, 1996: 271). Moreover, della Porta argues that other actions or phenomena. Independent variables are those factors, activities and other phenomena that change or affect the value or level of a dependent variable (ehow.com)
that “eventful temporality” can develop to “transformative events” when they lead to structural change in society and become turning points in social movements (della Porta, 2006: 30). They have the power to increase the level of mobilization (della Porta, 2006: 30, quoting Hess and Martin, 2006: 249).

3.13 Protest from “dependent variable” to “independent variable”

In social movements studies, protest has been mainly considered as “dependent variable” and explained on the basis of political opportunities and organizational resources (della Porta, 2006: 27). However, della Porta looks at protest as an “independent variable”. She does so by examining the internal dynamics and transformative capacity of protest as a general phenomenon rather than as a specific event (della Porta, 2006: 30). Thus, she does not examine what produces protest, but at the “byproduct” of protest itself (della Porta, 2006: 30). This means she examines protest in both general and particular terms. Firstly, in general terms, she suggests, that it is worth paying attention to “some expressions of conflict as producers of social capital, collective identity and knowledge” (della Porta, 2006: 30). Thus, protests can produce social capital, which can be interpreted as social networks and cooperation between different individuals and groups. In the course of the protest, people develop a collective identity, a sense of belonging to the protest group, which della Porta asserts is necessary for collective action (della Porta, 2006: 31). Secondly, she examines dynamics of protest in particular terms, arguing that it is worth reflecting on what makes protest eventful, a task she suggests be undertaken through an examination of the theoretical developments of the “cultural and symbolical dimension of social movement” (della Porta, 2006: 31, quoting Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta, 2001; Flam and King, 2005). Protests/revolutions involve cultural ideas and values about the meaning of social existence (Thomassen, 2012: 698). Shared perspectives and cultural characteristics held in common by members of a certain social group both define that group and allow it to act collectively. Protests/revolutions also imply a symbolic struggle. According to Thomassen, symbolic struggle is manifested by who has the legitimate right to power (Thomassen, 2012: 698). During a protest/revolution, people aim to delegitimise the existing, dominant order so that they can legitimise themselves as they create a new order (Thomassen, 2012: 697).

3.14 Manifestations of eventful protest

In reference to the above-mentioned consideration that some protests can be turning points, a number of manifestations can be noticed in “eventful protest”. Firstly, “new tactics are experimented with”. Tactics are planned actions which represent routines that are emotionally and morally important to people (della Porta 2006: 31, quoting Jasper, 1997: 237). Protesters start by
planning their protest, where emotions and morals are involved. This planning of the new tactics can be perceived as the *breach* phase—or rupture of the established orders—in Turner’s sequential structure of social life, which requires emotional stimulation (Thomassen, 2012: 689, quoting Turner, 1988: 91). Thence, protesters at an eventful protest are emotionally involved by the planned actions they are experimenting with, and thus break the established repressive norms and orders. The second manifestation of *eventful protest* is the creation of feelings of solidarity and the strengthening of organizational networks (della Porta, 2006: 30, quoting Hess and Martin, 2006), which lead to collective actions (della Porta, 2006: 30, quoting Morris, 2000). Thus, consequent to the planned tactics, protesters aggregate in order to organize their eventful protest. It is worth mentioning here that della Porta challenges the classical view of looking at resources in social movements. In effect, she argues that during the course of protest, protest can be viewed not only as an instrument of putting pressure on decision makers, but also as a resource of solidarity (della Porta, 2006: 31). For Syrian protesters, protests have represented both instruments for collective pressure for the overthrow of the regime, and arenas in which a sense of community is formed. Protesters experience solidarity with each other by being part of one collective body against a tyrant regime. This solidarity manifestation of eventful protest can be conceived as taking place in the *crisis* phase in Turner’s sequential structure of social life. Turner explains that, in a crisis situation, “*sides are taken and power resources calculated*” (Thomassen, 2012: 689). According to Turner, for protesters who gather in solidarity with one another with the collective aim of overthrowing a tyrant regime, their organizational networks would range from rational actions to more romantic ones, expressed by deeds or words (Thomassen, 2012: 689, quoting Turner, 1988: 91). Moreover, the resource of solidarity referred to by della Porta is also described by Victor Turner in the term *communitas*, where protesters experience a feeling of having a collective identity, of belonging to each other—or as Turner spells out “[…] as axiomatic source of human bonding, it is the social will” (Thomassen, 2012: 690, quoting Turner, 1988: 91). Solidarity/Communitas is thus carried out by protesters who are involved in a *popular movement by the “masses”* (Thomassen, 2012: 690) against a regime they want to overthrow. Communitas is very central in the crisis phase due to the fact that it turns hierarchies upside down, because being in a crowd offers the opportunity for individuals to rid of inequalities of everyday life (Thomassen, 2012: 692, quoting Canetti 1984: 18). Thus, when protesters with divergent social and educational backgrounds experience communitas, they become a united collective body whose members are all equal, share the same value, and have the same aim. The last manifestation which della Porta mentions of the eventful protest is that sometimes public outrage at repression develops (della Porta, 2006: 30, quoting Hess and Martin, 2006). As a result of both the solidarity, organized networks, and actions taken by protesters, a contagious element of rejecting the tyrant regime might develop nationwide and gain more support
by the populace. One can deduce that the crisis phase by Turner is also applicable in this context, due to the fact that Turner suggests that crisis is contagious (Thomassen, 2012: 689, quoting Turner, 1988: 91).

3.15 Identity Politics

This section is included because it provides support for the theoretical concepts elaborated on by both della Porta and Thomassen above. Thomassen defines identity politics as a phenomenon in which “political claims are made on the basis of some kind of cultural identity” (Thomassen, 2007: 4). Examples of identity politics are ethnic and religious wars, multiculturalism, minority rights and that people have the freedom to be who they want to be (Thomassen, 2007: 6). Identity politics revolve around the allocation of values and the process of the moralization of these values (ibid). Thus, a particular social group’s common values, its world-views, and its pursuit to assert their identity is the core of “identity politics”.

In summarizing della Porta’s mechanism of examining eventful protest, one can conclude that according to her conception of eventful protest, the internal dynamics and transformative capacity of protest is where she sets her focus. In addition, in her analysis, she adopts the assumption that many protests are characterized by having cognitive mechanisms, considering a protest as an arena of debates; relational mechanisms, which are manifested in a protest network; emotional mechanisms, which is shown in the advancement of solidarity (della Porta, 2006: 30 – 32). Finally, in summing up Turner’s approach on the sequential structure of social life, his work could provide help to readdress questions involving social and political change in large-scale settings (Thomassen, 2012: 698, quoting Eistenstadt: 1995).

3.16 Resource Mobilization Theory

In the following section, there will be a presentation to Resource Mobilization Theory, and selected parts of Charles Tilly’s theory of social movements.

In J. Craig Jenkins Resource mobilization theory and the study of social movements, he states that Resource Mobilization Theory (RMT) is an alternative way of analyzing social movements (Jenkins, 1983: 527). Firstly, the development of RMT is described as “[...] extending the polity theory to deal with different states and regimes, including the development of neo-corporatism” (Jenkins, 1983: 527).
In the 1960’s there was a reorientation towards the study of social movements (SM). Traditionally the central problem in SM was the explanation of individual participation (Jenkins, 1983: 528). There were sudden increases in individual grievances, which occurred by pressures of fast social change, such as in theories of mass society theory, relative deprivation and collective behavior theory. These theories assume that participation in movements are rare (Jenkins, 1983: 528) and some of them consider movements’ actors as irrational. This is what movements 1960’s challenged (ibid).

The movements in 1960s stimulated a shift in theoretical assumption and analytical emphasis by formalizing the RMT of SM (Jenkins, 1983: 528). RMT of SM sees the actions of movements as rational, and understand the goals of movements to be defined by conflicts of interest built into institutionalized power relations (Jenkins, 1983: 528 & 530). Formation and mobilization of movements depend on the availability of resources, and the success of a movement has to do with their strategic factors and in which political processes in which they are involved (Jenkins, 1983: 528 & 530).

Traditionally, social movement theory was interested in why movements form, which theorists argue it occurred due to “[...] sudden increases in short-term grievances created by the “structural strains” of rapid social change” (Jenkins, 1983: 530). Whereas resource mobilization theorists argue that grievances only play a secondary role in social movements, and that grievances form as a result of structural conflicts of interest, which are “built into social institutions” (Jenkins, 1983: 530). Furthermore, they claim that movements have to do with “long-term changes in resources, organization and opportunities of collective action” (Jenkins, 1983: 530). However, grievances are seen as necessary in the formation of social movements (Jenkins, 1983: 530).

As the name indicates, RMT is about resources, specifically, which resources people have as they mobilize. The resources are material, communicative and cultural and they all vary based on how people in organizations mobilize their resources within a social movement. Jenkins states that theorists of RMT have viewed social movements as an expansion of “[...] institutionalized actions and have restricted their focus to movements of institutionalized change that attempt to alter “[...] elements of social structure and/or the reward distribution of society”” (Jenkins, 1983: 529).

According to Jenkins, RMT theorists furthermore state that social movements have the capacity to organize previously unorganized groups into organized groups ”[...] against institutional elites (Gamson 1975: 16-18), or represent the interests of groups excluded from the polity” (Jenkins, 1983: 529).
Jenkins uses the schema of the resources of mobilization by Jo Freeman, a political scientist, to explain the relationship between social movements and particular assets. Freeman’s schema revolves around that capital, understood as money, facilities and capacity of communication, has an impact on the formation of movements, as well as the supporting group(s) (Jenkins, 1983: 533). One could argue that money can make it easier to spread a statement both within and outside a social movement, and that one’s communicational means and facilities can help enlarge and improve a social movement, and empower its statement.

3.17 Charles Tilly: Social Movements

Charles Tilly, sociologist and historian, argues that there are three pillars of social movements; campaigns, repertoires and WUNC displays, which is an acronym standing for “worthiness, unity, numbers and commitments” (Tilly, 2004: 3 & 4). The first pillar, which is campaigns, refers to “[...] a sustained and organized public effort making collective claims on target authorities [...]” (Tilly, 2004: 3). In a Syrian context, people have claimed rights revolving around justice and the overthrow of a repressive and corrupt regime (Al-Haj Saleh, 2011).

The second pillar is repertoires of contention (ibid). This is established through the use of combinations of different forms of political action, such as “[...] public meetings [...] rallies, demonstrations, [...] statements to and in public media [...]” (Tilly, 2004: 3) which all are techniques of mobilization. This, too, can be seen in the Syrian context. During the uprising, demonstrations and rallies were some of the actions in the country (Leenders, 2013: 279). Tilly argues that varieties of actions can be performed, so an event can become a social movement.

The third pillar is WUNC displays. WUNC displays may, for example, revolve around participants of social movements’ behavior, appearance and diversity; their banners or badges; and the substance and the number of supporting participants (Tilly, 2004: 4).

Bjørn Thomassen, however, criticizes Tilly’s view to social movement by stating that: “[...] there is a cultural dimension to revolutions that has been relatively neglected in the comparative approaches of Tilly (1978) [...]” (Thomassen, 2012: 698). Thus, one can interpret that Tilly doesn’t make much space for the aspect of culture, as he is more interested in how movements evolve and in which way they act. Tilly’s focus is more on the essential fundaments in movements, than the cultural aspect of why movement’s form. However, Tilly uses the idea of the public forming of a
movement against authorities, so there is still an underlying social idea of why movement’s form in his theory of social movements.

4 Analysis

4.1 Introduction

In the following section, we will analyze different primary and secondary sources by using our selected theoretical concepts mentioned in the chapter on theory. This analysis begins with analyzing Bassam Haddad’s business networks supported by Raymond Hinnebusch’s elaboration on the domination of the capitalists and social polarization. Moreover, this chapter offers an analysis of the Facebook page of the Syrian Revolution 2011, a YouTube video of a Friday’s protest as a case study and the Local Coordination Committees as a case study.

1. Analyzing business networks and economic liberation in relation to class struggle and marginalization

According to our chapter on theory, we want to analyze the class aspect of the current Syrian uprising. Even though we criticize traditional Marxist theory on class for focusing only on economic aspects and insist that there are more crucial values relevant to the Syrian revolution, we are aware, that economy is an important factor. We include Bassam Haddad's approach on political economy within the state, which outlines that both economy and class matter. According to Haddad, more focus should be put on the political and economic context in the last decades in Syria instead of recent events of the revolution (Haddad 2012b, 114).

Firstly, we introduce Bassam Haddad's analysis of business networks in Syria in relation to traditional Marxist class theory. We analyze the division of Syrian society in Bourgeoisie and Proletariat, referring to Haddad as well as to Raymond Hinnebusch. Secondly, we analyze Hinnebusch's elaboration of the domination of the capitalists and social polarization on the basis of Marxist class theory. Thirdly, we compare Haddad's and Hinnebusch's analysis with Hout, Brooks and Manza's understanding of class-based stratification that we used in our chapter on theory. These

4 Bassam Haddad is Director of the Middle East Studies Program and teaches in the Department of Public and International Affairs at George Mason University (pia.gmu.edu).

5 Raymond Hinnebusch is professor of international relations and Middle East politics and director of the Centre for Syrian Studies at the University of St. Andrews, Scotland (https://risweb.st-andrews.ac.uk)
three first points are analyzed as being motives for the mobilization of the Syrian revolution. To make this clearer, fourthly, we analyze the Syrian writers’ Yassin Al-Haj Saleh and Cam Almaz interpretations of the Syrian revolution on the basis of Marxist theory. Finally, we conclude with an analysis of a YouTube-video to point out the economic factor in the Syrian Revolution.

4.2 Haddad's analysis of business networks

At the beginning of the analytical writing of Haddad, it is notable that he does not see state or class power as the only relevant variables for business networks that became crucial for the revolution (Haddad 2012, 15). He stresses that the business networks he uses for describing economic changes in Syria can be understood better by focusing on individuals rather than classes, as “[…] networks cut across classes, identities, and various corporate interests […]” (Haddad 2012, 14). Even though he tries to put less weight on the class aspect while elaborating business networks, we read a strong influence of class theory in his writings. Due to his limitation on economic criteria, and further on stratification, we see a similarity between his approach to business networks and Marx theory of class. However, Haddad cannot deny the influence of class within outlined business networks. Although network analysis is the dominant explanatory variable in his study, he outlines, that also other approaches, like class, could be seen as influential (Haddad 2012, 15). He even assumes that class concerns could be the raison d'être for emerging networks, but also stresses, that interactions within these networks could acquire individual character over time (ibid). We agree with Haddad that the situation in Syria shows that class is not the only crucial variable. However, class has been a necessary fundament for establishing such business networks that privilege some and excludes a big part of the Syrian society from economic growth and wealth. We analyze such a process of privileging and exclusion as a motive for people to mobilize and chant that the Assad family has robbed the country.

4.3 Domination of the capitalists

Examining the core of Haddad's analysis of business networks, we find several issues, such as the domination of the politicians and capitalists (Haddad, 2012b: 123), as well as the increasing poverty and social polarization (Haddad, 2012b: 119). We analyze Haddad’s approach on the basis of Marxist theory, which revolves around the existence of two classes; Bourgeoisie and Proletariat (Marx and Engels, 1848: 14). However, we analyze here Haddad’s approach according only to Marx’ Bourgeoisie class which is represented by the politicians and the capitalists. The politicians
represent the Syrian ruling class of Assad and the capitalists represent the traders and industrial class or the business class. Moreover, Haddad argues that the business class, represented by the urban Sunni, cooperate with the Assad family ruling class, and both form what Haddad calls “[…] informal and crony-like state-business networks […] giving rise to what is called the 'new rentier bourgeoisie' in Syria […]” (Haddad 2012, 2). The term rentier capitalism is commonly used in Marxist discourses, describing an economic monopolization by the elite (Democratic Underground, 2012). In the Syrian case, the Assad family and business class accumulate capital and the rest of the population become poorer.

4.4. Dividing Syrian society in capitalists and workers, or: winners and losers

Haddad identifies these two cooperating classes, the capitalists, represented by the urban Sunni on the one hand, and the Assad family ruling class on the other hand as “the winners” of the economic changes within the last decades. “The losers” of the economic changes are identified as ordinary workers (Haddad 2012, 2), or in Marxist terms, the Proletariat. Here we have a society clearly divided by class. Even though Haddad prefers talking about individual relationships rather than class division, this examination becomes highly fitting to traditional Marxist class concepts represented in Bourgeoisie and Proletariat. Haddad names the actors within these political-economic relations (i.e. relations between ruling class and capitalists or the business class) as a “new elitism” (Haddad, 2012b: 118). He analyzes their actions as supportive to a small group, while “[…] the overwhelming majority of the population […] does not view this in positive terms, as public provisions, jobs and welfare dwindle” (Haddad, 2012b: 118). Thus, the Proletariat becomes the losers in Syrian society through the exclusion from the economic growth. The overwhelming majority of the population is seen as the suppressed population in Marxist terms. Expressing their dissatisfaction through protesting against “the thieves”, as we manifest below, can be analyzed on the basis of a rising class-consciousness based on “objective characteristics” and a “sense of shared […] interests” of the Proletariat (Clark and Lipset, 1991: 398). Thus, the overwhelming majority of the Syrian population, the Proletariat, has the same shared objective characteristics as they have the same relationship to the productive property, and they have shared interests to revolt against the repressive ruling class. Moreover, it is relevant to our elaborated class approach, that Haddad sees middle classes disappearing through the economic developments (Haddad, 2012b: 119). The common term of the middle class, that is assuming the existence of at least more than two classes, is challenging the Marxist idea of only two divided hostile camps. Its disappearance can be assumed as a recurrence to the Marxist scenario.
4.5 Economic liberation liberating only the upper class

Examinations by Raymond Hinnebusch support our theory on class division based on economic terms and make the claimed suppression of the majority of the population, and further the motives for mobilizing, more obvious.

Haddad's interpretations of the domination of the capitalists as well as social polarization, or the identification of winners and losers in the Syrian society, are also stressed by Hinnebusch in his research paper “Syria: from ‘authoritarian upgrading’ to revolution?”, where he describes the economic reforms by the government which have lead to capital accumulation and economic growth, but neglect equality and distribution (Hinnebusch, 2012: 101). While managers of banks and businesses earned high salaries, subsidies, that kept low-income citizens from falling into extreme poverty, were cut. Additionally, in the rural areas, the government cut subsidies to farmers and other agricultural workers. While decreasing support of the government for the agricultural sector, combined with the terrible drought of 2007-2010, which finally led to agricultural decline, economic liberalization benefitted the Syrian business class. Also, real-estate business led to an immense increase housing costs, causing families who had lived in low-rent properties for decades to become homeless (Hinnebusch, 2012: 102).

Hinnebusch's paper has a clear focus on class division. He describes the business class as a “[...] powerful social force which [...] had no interest in a democratization which could empower the [...] “working class” [...] to block economic liberalization” (Hinnebusch 2012, 103-104). This goes along with Haddad's analysis of business networks and adds explicitly the working class.

Hinnebusch’s description of this preferential treatment of the business class over the working classes by the Syrian regime can be analyzed according to Hout, Brooks and Manza's claim that “class-based stratification” continues to be a central factor in social stratification (Hout, Brooks, Manza 1993, 259-261). The wealth, controlled by the Bourgeoisie, leading to inequalities and extreme poverty, are symptoms for existing social class structures (Hout, Brooks, Manza 1993, 262-3). Thus, based on Hinnebusch’s mentioned description, one can analyze that the growing wealth is dominated by the business class, as a result of the economic liberalization introduced by the regime. This has led to inequalities between the classes, and increasing poverty in Syrian society.

Taking their claim in consideration, while examining Haddad's and Hinnebusch's analysis of Syria's economic transformation, we can clearly state that class is a crucial factor in Syria that creates
extreme wealth and extreme poverty and results in a big gap in the middle. Such a gap can be analyzed as a strong motive for the mobilization; we will draw on in more detail below.

4.6 The marginalized

The two Syrian writers, Yassin Al-Haj Saleh and Mazen Cam Almaz, support our claim, that class is a crucial factor within the Syrian revolution. We refer to their analysis of the revolution as a revolution of the working society (Al-Haj, 2011), the poor and marginalized (Cam Almaz, 2012). According to Marxist theory, the working society, the poor and the marginalized can be analyzed as the suppressed working class. This working society or working class has revolted against the society of privileges and power (Al-Haj Saleh, 2011), which is the ruling class and its alliance “the business class” in Syrian society.

Cam Almaz states that the Syrian revolution is generally a class of the marginalized groups of the Syrian population, and the poorest regions in Syria (Cam Almaz, 2012). Al-Haj Saleh expresses this point by stating that “the uprising spread in the towns and municipalities that have suffered marginalization, unemployment and poverty” (Al-Haj Saleh, 2011). According to our theory, we consider this revolt of marginalized working society, in terms of Marxist class theory, as the working class. Further, Cam Almaz argues that the other class, which stands in opposition to the class of the marginalized and poorest, is the richest one, which is represented by the head of the Syrian regime (Cam Almaz, 2012). According to our theory, we consider this opposing ruling class, in terms of Marxist class theory, as the Bourgeoisie.

4.7 Conclusion

We conclude, that the economic aspect is crucial to the Syrian revolution. We agree with Haddad, that the start of the uprisings cannot be understood without looking at the economic development in Syria in the last decades, led by an exclusionary crony state-business network. More explicit than Haddad we want to outline the relevance of class within these economic developments. We also understand Haddad's writings as supporting our class approach, even though he prefers to talk about networks. For a stronger support to our class approach we used the other above-mentioned authors, who make the importance of class in the Syrian case obvious. Finally, different to Haddad we don't want to focus only on economic aspects when explaining the motives of mobilizing the Syrian revolution. We also strongly imply a cultural dimension, an approach that is entirely skipped by Haddad, which we are going to analyze in Part Two of our analysis.
4.8 Analyzing a protest video: “Haramiyye” -“Thieves”

Finally, in order to show, that the analyzed economic aspects also echo in the slogans used at the demonstrations, we want to analyze a YouTube-video that shows the very first demonstration within the Syrian revolution, located in Damascus in front of a police station. Hundreds of Syrian demonstrators had come to protest against local police. They condemn a recent event, where four policemen beat up one Syrian citizen. This protest is seen at the very beginning of the Syrian uprising in 2011.

We see the protesters in front of the police station chanting “Haramiyye” and “L'sha'b l'suri ma bienzal”. “Haramiyye” means “thieves” whereas “L'sha'b l'suri ma bienzal” means “Syrian people won't be humiliated” (YouTube 2011A,00:00-01:00).

Especially the “thieves”-slogan is useful to be analyzed within an economic class aspect as it functions as enforcement to the protests. It shows that the people feel betrayed by the ruling class and therefore started to mobilize. We assume the people, who are chanting “thieves” are part the working class, not a part of the business class or ruling class. This video, and especially the slogan “thieves” demonstrates the idea of two hostile camps, divided by social stratification and growing poverty of the working class. The term of “thieves” also fits with the business networks, above described as “crony-like” by Haddad, as we consider that the term “crony” is commonly linked with corruption. Yassin Al-Haj Saleh endorses our assumption by stating that ”[…] the frequent condemnation of “thieves” in its slogans points to a social anger” (Al-Haj Saleh, 2011), which dominated working society against the society of privileges and power, which accuse it of being backward and sets itself as a superior to them (ibid).

4.9 Analysis of the Facebook page of the Syrian Revolution 2011

Facebook page - The Syrian Revolution 2011

It is worth starting this analysis with a quote by Ziad Majed, a Lebanese political researcher and assistant professor, that: “Syria’s Internet and Facebook is made of flesh and blood” (Majed, 2013). Taking this quote as a starting point for this section, we follow Majed’s quote. We will manifest in the analysis below how the Facebook Page, the Syrian Revolution 2011, establishes casual communication and cooperation from among the page’s users, without which it would be difficult to deal with the obstacles of real life (Majed, 2013).
This section firstly begins with the definition and the function of the Facebook page. Secondly, an analysis of the Facebook page administrators’ and members’ class background will follow. Thirdly, an analysis of the Facebook page.

4.10 Definition and function of the Facebook page

The Facebook page, “The Syrian Revolution 2011” (In Arabic it appears to read the Syrian Revolution 2011 against Bashar Assad), is a social media page and is administrated under the Syrian network www.TheSyrianNetwork.net. It appears on this page that it has 899,091 likes and 28,692 are talking about this on 30th of April 2014 (The Syrian Revolution 2011). The page is issued in Arabic and provides news feedback in relation to the developments of the Syrian revolution. Thus, one can read news, reports, and see photos and videos regarding the Syrian revolution. In a telephone interview with the page’s administrator conducted by Adam Almkvist⁶, Fidaaldin Al-Saedd Issa, a Swedish citizen, states that the page’s task includes acting as an “[…]/information platform source” that media such as Al-Jazeera, CNN, BBC, Al-arabiya can use (Almkvist, 2011). Equally important is that this page has played a role in helping mobilize people to protest on the ground, as we will explain below.

4.11 An analysis of the Facebook page administrators’ and members’ class background

It does not appear anywhere to which class administrators and members of the page belong. Issa lives in Sweden, however because his father was a Syrian activist, Issa’s family was kicked out of Syria 35 years ago (Almkvist, 2011). Thus we can assume to which class his family belongs on the basis of an analysis conducted by, Mazen Cam Almaz, a Syrian writer, in an article entitled: “The Social Classes in the Syrian Revolution” (Cam Almaz, 2012). Cam Almaz argues that sections of the middle class have supported the revolution and thus enjoy a high degree of morals towards it. He considers that these sections of the middle class represent educated and political technocrats who formed the historical Syrian opposition before the revolution, and through the revolution this opposition has realized its existence and its rhetoric (Cam Almaz, 2012). Thus, taking into consideration Cam Almaz’ class analysis, we can analyze that since Issa’s father was an activist and Issa himself is an activist, they may belong to sections of the middle class who represent educated

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⁶ Adam Almkvist is a freelance journalist and a project assistant for the Syrian Research Project at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Lund University, Sweden (joshualandis.com)
and political technocrats and because of their activism they were thrown out of the country. Due to Issa’s activism, the Syrian regime has televised his name calling him a traitor to his country; he has also received letters from the regime about its knowledge of where he and his family live (Almkvist, 2011).

In order to analyze to which class the members of the Facebook page belong to, Cam Almaz offers a good argument. He argues that the poorest and most marginalized groups in Syrian society have formed the revolted masses. In addition, Yassin Al-Haj Saleh argues “[...] that the revolution brings a multitude that was despised and isolated from public life, together with sectors of active youth and intellectuals from the educated middle class” (Al-Haj Saleh, 2011). On the basis of both Cam Almaz and Saleh’s arguments, one can analyze that the members of the Facebook page, who are parts of the Syrian revolution, belong to both the marginalized and poorest groups of the lower class and to sectors of active youth and intellectuals from the middle class. Moreover, according to Marx’s theory of class, the mentioned lower class and middle class fall under the category of the Proletariat class.

4.12 Mobilization by the help of the Facebook Page

The Facebook page, the Syrian Revolution 2011, has been recognized as the most influential social networking tool in the mobilization of protesters against the Syrian regime (Almkvist, 2011). Upon asking Issa about this influence, Issa confirms by stating:

“The Facebook page is indeed the most influential (i.e. in the mobilization of protesters against the Syrian regime) [...]” (Almkvist, 2011).

We will analyze this quote in respect to the theoretical concept of social class. D. Schad defines a social class, beside economic criteria, as a group of people who share common assumptions, beliefs, forms of action (D. Schad, 2002 quoting Hobsbawm, 1996), and a common lifestyle (D. Schad, 2002). These criteria fulfill the cultural dimension of class and make this group a collective body (D. Schad, 2002). Accordingly, Issa’s above mentioned quote can be analyzed as that the protesters form a social class who have common assumptions and beliefs, which make them have a collective identity, which in turn makes them form an action collectively and be mobilized against a repressive regime of the ruling class of Assad family.
Moreover, the mobilization of this social class via the help of the Facebook page can be analyzed according to della Porta’s approach “protest event” or as she prefers to call it “eventful protest” (della Porta, 2006: 29). In fact, one can analyze that this Facebook page is an event in itself, which is influential in the mobilization of the protesters. It contributes to the Syrian revolution by helping mobilizing people from the same social class, who have a collective identity, and who act collectively and organize protests aiming at transferring the structure and bringing about a social change in the Syrian society. Issa puts it simply by stating: “People down there (in Syria) are positive and determined to protest” [...] “everyone wants to see change in Syria, old people, women, housewives, Christians and Muslims” (Almkvist, 2011). Furthermore, these protests organized by the help of the Facebook page are “[...] resources of the powerless, they depend for success not upon direct utilization of power, but upon activating other groups to enter the political arena” (della Porta, 2006: 28 quoting Lipsky, 1970: 1). On the basis of this, one can analyze that these protests are resources of the Syrian protesters who, during the rule of the repressive regime before the revolution in 2011, were not politically active (Al-Haj Saleh, 2013), because of the lack of the participation in political culture.

In fact, it is worth putting Al-Haj Saleh’s analysis of the working society and society of privileges and power in perspective herewith (Al-Haj Saleh, 2011). Al-Haj Saleh argues that Syrian protesters belong to the working society which have protested and revolted against the society of privileges and power (Al-Haj Saleh, 2011), where the former society is the working class, and the latter is a tyrannical regime of the Assad ruling class. Accordingly, the participation in protests have empowered groups of the working class of Syrian people and made them politically active, where their voices can be heard by using the channels of the mass media (della Porta, 2006: 28). This empowerment is manifested in the following quote by the mass media channel Al-Jazeera: “The slogan for this Friday's demonstrations was chosen after a fierce online competition among activists. Each week, the main Syrian Revolution Facebook page posts a poll and calls on Syrians to choose among different slogans submitted by the major activist groups” (Al-Jazeera, 2011).

Al-Jazeera’s quote manifests the power of this “eventful protest” of the Facebook page, and gives voices to the protesters of the working class to be heard by the dissemination of protesters’ news, reports, videos and photos, due to the fact that the Facebook page also functions as a platform of information to mass media, as mentioned above. In the light of the above quote from Al-Jazeera, this mass media has contributed in giving a voice to protesters of the working class by publishing an article on the naming of Friday’s protests, which the Facebook page carries out by posting a poll and calling on Syrians to choose among different slogans.
This process of posting and calling can be analyzed in relation to the transformation feature of the protest as della Porta calls it “eventful temporality” (della Porta, 2006: 29). della Porta calls it so to stress the power of events in history. In fact, this “eventful temporality” of posting and calling to vote for a Friday’s name for the Syrian protests, is an embodiment of a democratization process. This process transforms the Syrian society’s structure from a society where power belonged to the ruling class, to a society where power emerges from the working class. The transformation is manifested by changing the structure, by the use of this “eventful temporality” of voting for a Friday’s name for the Syrian protests, where “eventful temporality” develops to “transformative events”, due to the fact that these transformative events have the ability to increase or decrease the level of mobilization (della Porta, 2006: quoting Hess and Martin, 2006: 249).

In fact, the Facebook page has actually increased the number of people who are protesting against the ruling class. It has done so both by helping to organize the working class of protesters on the ground (as mentioned above) and by mobilizing more people to vote for the Friday’s names of the Syrian protests. If we take some figures to prove our analysis of this, it appears in the first year of the revolution, that the voters counted up to 14,861 Facebook users in the week of September 16th, 2011 (thewire, 2011), whereas voters counted up to 30,000 users in the week of April 14th, 2012. (Al-Jazeera, 2012). Furthermore, the fans of the Facebook Page themselves have required a democratization of the naming of the Friday protest. This is what Wael Tamimi, a Syrian journalist with the BBC’s Arabic Services, stated in an interview: “In the earlier days or month of the uprising, the name was chosen by the admins of the Syrian Revolution page on Facebook, so the people did not used to vote on the name of the Friday. But actually, they complained to the admin. They told him, “We want a democratic Syria, so you have to give us a chance to vote for the name of the Friday.” And actually, the admins of these pages responded positively” (BBC, 2011).

Furthermore, these protests as empowering protesters can also be analyzed in the light of what Thomassen argues to be a symbolic struggle over the legitimate right of power (Thomassen, 2012: 698). The mobilization, helped by the Facebook page, aims ultimately to delegitimize the existing order of the Assad ruling class, which does not represent the masses in Syria, as well as to legitimize the protests as carriers of the new order of the masses they represent. Thus, mobilized protests by the help of the Facebook page contributes in transferring the power from the autocracy of the Assad ruling class to democracy of the masses.

4.13 Cooperation between the Social Class of the Facebook page and protesters
This is manifested through the coordination between the social class (defining it as mentioned above, a group of people having common perceptions and beliefs, thus acting as a collective body) of the Facebook page’s administrators and people on the ground. A quote by Issa manifests this: “We guide young people down there (on the ground). When we called for a Friday demonstration, people take to the streets – everyone follows. We determine the dates of the demonstrations with the help of people on the ground.” We have people down there filming, collecting information on deaths, etc. Our business is not just about organising the protests” (Almkvist, 2011).

We can analyze this quote according to della Porta’s “eventful protest” approach, in relation to her argument that protest should be dealt with as an independent variable, meaning that protest is to be examined by looking at the “by product” of the protest, rather than what produces the protest (della Porta, 2006: 30). Thus, in the above quote by Issa, one can analyze that the online coordination and internet networking among the people working on the Facebook page and the people on the ground in Syria, is a “by product” due to the fact that this eventful protest of the Facebook page is in itself a producer of firstly social capital, collective identity and knowledge (della Porta, 2006: 30).

The social capital is manifested by the social networking and cooperation between the Facebook page and the different individuals and groups on the ground in Syria, who all have in common a sense of collective identity and thus perform together a collective action by protesting against the tyrannical regime of the Assad ruling class. Secondly, the Facebook page is a “by product” because it is a producer of knowledge (ibid). This knowledge is produced by the cooperation between the people on the ground and the Facebook page in the sense that the former provides with films, information on the revolution, photos, reports, videos etc., and the latter involves in the dissemination of them through the Facebook page. We can say that the Facebook page has two layers, the first is the people on the ground that organize protests on a local level; and the second is the online community which helps the protesters get a sense of connectedness to the larger body of protests throughout Syria (BBC, 2011). A cyber activist in Damascus expressed it well by saying: “[...] we help people on the ground to stay connected”. “We help the people in Deraa, for example, to know that they're not alone in their demonstrations” (BBC, 2011).

4.14 YouTube video with a Friday’s protest as a case study

In order to offer an empirical and lively picture of the cultural dimension of the Friday protests in Syria, we have chosen a YouTube video with a Friday protest to analyze it as a case study, as it is shown below. Thus, the following section begins firstly with an introduction to the selected
YouTube video, then an analysis of the YouTube video on the basis of Thomassen’s theoretical definition of “Identity Politics”, and finally an analysis of the video on the basis of della Porta’s theoretical concept of “eventful protest’s mechanism” and “Turner’s sequential structure of social life”.

4.15 Introduction

In line with the analysis above about the Facebook page in relation to naming of Friday protests, we find it relevant to analyze a video of one of the protests in order to manifest the power of the cultural dimension of the protest. It is an attempt to convey the strong feelings on the ground. The name of the Friday protest we have picked up to analyze is called “Jumi’ta madoun hatta isqat alnizam”, “the Friday of “we are on the way to overthrow the regime”. The YouTube video is filmed in Al-Hule, a town close to the city of Homs. The video displays the protesters, the masses holding each other, singing, chanting, dancing and clapping for freedom, the Syrian Revolution and the overthrow of the regime (YouTube, 2011B: 0:00-3:03). One of the chants is: “shufu il hurriye mahlaha”, “See how beautiful freedom is”, and another says: “Yallah irhal ya Bashar”, “Come on, get dismissed Bashar” (YouTube, 2011B: 1:14-1:18).). They also hold up many slogans, where it reads “Jumi’ta madoun hatta isqat alnizam” as a signature (YouTube, 2011B: 2:01).

14.16 “Identity Politics”

We will analyze the YouTube video on the basis of Bjørn Thomassen’s definition of identity politics. Thomassen states that identity politics is where “[...] political claims are made on the basis of some kind of cultural identity” (Thomassen, 20007: 4). Empirical examples of “identity politics” are, among other things, the freedom to be who you are (Thomassen, 2007: 6). According to the above-mentioned video, one can analyze that the protesters’ identity is centered around their shared world views which are voiced by their political claims. Protesters collectively want to be free from a repressive regime, which has circumscribed their right to live and act freely in their country. Thus, during the Friday protest, the protesters collectively express their political claims by way of chanting and singing for freedom from the ruling Assad regime. Moreover, in order to point out what class these protesters belong to, we borrow Al-Haj Saleh and Cam Almaz’s interpretations of class structure in the Syrian mobilization in order to point out this theory. Cam Almaz states that the marginalized and poorest sections (Cam Almaz, 2012), and Al-Haj further states that the sections of the educated middle class of the Syrian society carry out the Syrian uprising (Al-Haj Saleh, 2011). Thus, we can assume that these protesters belong to the working class in Syria. Consequently, both
their political identity represented in their desire for freedom and their shared economic class background makes them form a particular social class. They yearn to overthrow the Assad regime, which has suppressed their freedom and their political and social rights to participate in their society.

14.17 New tactics and Breach

In reference to della Porta’s “eventful protest”, one can analyze the aforementioned case study according to “[…] new tactics are experimented with”. Tactics are planned actions which represent routines that are “emotionally and morally” (della Porta. 2006: 31, quoting Jasper, 1997: 237) important to people (ibid). The protesters of the Al-Hule protest begin by experimenting with new tactics i.e. planning their protest. They form a social class that has common perceptions and beliefs (D. Schad, 2002, quoting Hobsbawn, 1996), and where their emotions and morals to plan this protest are involved. All of this makes them enjoy a collective identity. In fact, to support this analysis, which is carried out according to the new tactics taken or the planning of actions for protests, we find it worth here connecting these new tactics or planned actions with Turner’s sequential structure of social life breach (Thomassen, 2012: 689, quoting Turner, 1988: 91). Breach in this protest of Friday is represented by the rupture of the established orders, (ibid) of the repressive regime, prevailing in the Syrian society. Hence, protesters in the Al-Hule protest planned this protest as a collective body, where their world-views, emotions and morals were the driving engine behind this effort. These protesters form a particular social class, that is, people who plan a protest in order to manifest their political claim because they yearn for freedom since their freedom has been taken away from them because of the repressive practice of the Assad regime that has been in power for such a long time.

14.18 Solidarity, Organizational Networks, Crisis, Communitas

Secondly, the approach of eventful protest offers another mechanism that we can use to analyze the above-mentioned case study: the creation of solidarity feelings and the strengthening of organizational networks (della Porta, 2006: 30, quoting Hess and Martin, 2006) as all as the collective actions, are signaled (della Porta, 2006: 30, quoting Morris, 2000). After protesters, who hold the same worldviews embodied in their political claims for freedom from a repressive ruling class, planned their action of protest. Now they are ready to perform together and realize the planned action, as a collective body, they act collectively and realize their planned protest. Thus, on the basis of della Porta’s mechanism of the manifestation of solidarity feelings, one can analyze that
protesters experience solidarity to each other by becoming a collective body against a tyrannical regime that represents the ruling class. This social class of protesters plans, organizes and take collective action. United, they protest as a collective body during the course of the Al-Hule protest. This very action is the embodiment of the “resource of solidarity” theory (della Porta, 2006: 31). The social class of protesters of Al-Hule does not represent the only instrument for collective pressure to overthrow of the repressive ruling class, but also arenas in which a sense of community and solidarity among the protesters is formed. In fact, we find it relevant to supply the solidarity mechanism of della Porta’s eventful protest with Turner’s sequential structure of social life. This is termed as the crisis phase. Turner states that in a crisis situation “[...] sides are taken and power resources calculated” (Thomassen, 2012: 689, quoting Turner, 1988: 91). One can analyze that protesters of Al-Hule have taken the side of the Syrian Revolution, thus they converge in solidarity with each other, as a collective body, to perform a collective action in order to overthrow the tyrant (in this case, the ruling class regime of the Assad family). Moreover, protesters’ actions and organizational networks would range from rational actions to more romantic ones, expressed by deeds or words (ibid). On the basis of this, one can analyze that the action of Al-Hule protest displayed on the YouTube video shows a collective action of protesters who have demonstrated organizational networks manifested in rational actions. They did this by for example organizing the protest of Al-Hule, in cooperation and solidarity with other protest networks nationwide, as it is called Friday protest of the Syrian revolution and it is organized in many places all over Syria. Simultaneously, this video presents the collective “romantic actions” that the protesters have organized, which shows their emotions by expressing them through deeds. For example, in the YouTube video we see people holding each other, dancing “Dabke” (an Arabic social and collective dance) together, singing and chanting “yalla irhal ya Bashar” - “Come on, leave (or step down) Bashar” as a unit. They express emotions of anger and insist on Bashar’s downfall. In effect, their collective action and choice of songs and chants manifest their demand, insistence and yearn for freedom as they perform a collective action and dance, clap, sing and chant “shufu ilhurrie ma hlaha”, “See how beautiful freedom is”. This shows their insistence and political claims to have their right to be free from the repressive regime of the Assad ruling class.

Furthermore, a concept, which is worth mentioning in this context of solidarity and crisis, is communitas. As Turner points out this is: “[...] an axiomatic source of human bonding, it is the social will” (Thomassen, 2012: 690, quoting Turner, 1988: 91). Communitas is an evident and unquestionable bonding seen in the example of the Al-Hule protests. In the video, one cannot help but notice that protesters have experienced this phenomenon as a social class, by being together in protest against the ruling class. In fact, communitas is central in the crisis phase due to the fact that
it turns hierarchies upside down (Thomassen, 2012: 692). Protesting offers an opportunity to individuals to get rid off the inequalities of everyday life (Thomassen, 2012: 692, quoting Canett, 1984: 18). In our case study, protesters have supposedly different social and educational backgrounds, and in the course of the protest they experience communitas/solidarity, and become a united collective body. In this collective body, they are equal and share the same perceptions and act collectively in order to gain their political claims in the realization of a remove of the repressive ruling regime.

**14.9 Crisis Develops and is Contagious**

Finally, della Porta suggests that “[…] sometimes public outrage at repression develops” (della Porta, 2006: 30, quoting Hess and Martin, 2006), while Turner states that: “crisis is contagious” (Thomassen, 2012 689, quoting Turner, 1988: 91). One can analyze, on the basis of this, that the Al-Hule protesters collective actions carried out in solidarity and organized rational and emotional actions, might develop and mobilize more people across Syria, it might be contagious and gain support from the populace in Syria.

**14.15 Conclusion**

The above analysis is an attempt to explain the cultural dimension of class within the context of the protests taking place in Syria. Both the Facebook page of the Syrian Revolution 2011 and the YouTube video of a Friday protest have been analyzed according to our theories on the cultural dimension of class, mainly della Porta’s “eventful protest” and Thomassen’s approach to identity politics.

**14.16 Analysis of LCC case study**

**Analysis on Local Coordination Committees of Syria**

We have chosen to analyze Local Coordination Committee of Syria (LCC) as a case study within a class as well as a mobilization context. To do this, we have selected three texts from LCC’s website. We analyze these texts on the basis of relevant theories from our theory chapter. This analysis will begin with a definition of the LCC, the staff’s background, and finally analyze it from mainly Resource Mobilization Theory and Social Movement theory’s perspectives.

**14.17 Definition and role**

LCC is a peaceful network with 70 different groups, with media and street activists that are all
linked to grass-root organizations in Syria (carnegieendowment). LCC has played an important role in the mobilization of the Syrian revolution, as they have organized numerous peaceful protests against the Assad regime, since the beginning of the Syrian revolution in March 2011. It has also established an information platform, where they provide information on the Syrian revolution to both the Arab and International media (ibid). Moreover, LCC has mobilized demonstrations in local communities throughout Syria, which means that they have greatly influenced the Syrian revolution throughout the country. Furthermore, LCC has operated as a voice for a peaceful democratic state, where all Syrians are considered to be equal. Their goal is to generate the downfall of the Assad regime, through the revolution (ibid).

14.18 Staff’s background

The staff working for LCC has several “[...] different ethnic, religious, and class backgrounds [...]” (carnegieendowment), and is a combination of young journalists from Syria and human rights activists (ibid.).

As specified earlier in the analysis, Cam Almaz states that the marginalized and poorest sections of the educated middle class of Syrian society carry out the Syrian uprising (Cam Almaz, 2012 & Al-Haj Saleh, 2011). Thus, it can be concluded that the groups of people who gathered to protest against the Assad regime are primarily from the working class, who feel that they were suppressed by the powerful regime (Al-Haj Saleh, 2011).

14.19 LCC’s resources

As indicated in the theory chapter, Freeman states that capital (money and communication), has an influence on movements (Jenkins, 1983: 533). Even though LCC does not have a big capital, it has managed to arrange demonstrations through their huge communication network, which has played a big role on their success. According to RMT, we can analyze that LCC is institutionalized through its webpage. Moreover, LCC uses its human resources as they have people from different backgrounds and hereby we can assume different classes, working at LCC. The resources, which are mentioned by Jenkins are, as written in the theory, the following: material, communicative and cultural. One could argue that LCC as been able to use all of the above mentioned resources in an influential way. Even though their material resources are very limited, it has been able to use to communicate to strengthen networking to organize protests in Syria.
As mentioned in the theory chapter, RMT sees actions of movements as rational and they have goals. This can be transferred to the mobilization of the Syrian revolution and LCC’s struggle for peaceful demonstrations in Syria. Based on RMT, we analyze that the mobilization of the Syrian revolution is rational, they are aware of their actions when they network and mobilize. Also, its actors have a specific goal represented in overthrowing the regime. Thus, because of LCC’s communication resources, the people have taken to the streets expressing their dissatisfaction with the regime. LCC’s effort seems to have succeeded since they have mobilized people, from mainly the working class, all over Syria, even though their material resources are little (carnegieendowment). Although LCC gets the least funding in Syria due to their non-violent policy and their non-religious association, they have still managed to affect Syrian society in several parts of the country (carnegieendowment). Furthermore, a criterion from which to judge LCC’s success could be the strategic factors and political processes they have employed; as per Jenkins’ terms. LCC’s strategy is to exist in several cities (carnegieendowment), and thereby be a more widespread network. Their political statement is clear: a free Syria, which should be fought for without the use of weapons. A non-violent revolution, which it hopes will lead to a democratic Syria (LCC, 2011B).

14.20 LCC’s manifestation of “repertoire of contention” and WUNC Displays

Tilly’s “repertoire of contention” is, as explained in our theory chapter, a combinations of political actions such as “[…] public meetings […], rallies, demonstrations, […] statements to and in public media […]” (Tilly, 2004: 3). As mentioned above, LCC uses its voice to make statements to the media prior to and during a demonstration. Moreover, Tilly draws on the support of a movement and also its strategy and network (Tilly, 2004: 7). In the case of LCC, one can analyze that seen from the demonstrations the support for LCC is huge, which has helped to the continuation of its network. Seen from the think tank Carnegie Endowment for International Peace’s perspective, the network of LCC is its key issue (carnegieendowment). This is seen as its core as it makes LCC more powerful in the continuing Syrian revolution. In one of the several protests, which LCC has referred to on their website, they mention that the revolutionaries in the demonstrations see themselves as one. They want to build up a Syria where all people are equal. In a class aspect this can be seen as a huge criticism of the Assad regime, which supports better opportunities for the business class, as stated earlier in our project (LCC, 2013).

LCC’s vision is mentioned in one of their statements: “The new Syria will be a republic and a civil state that belongs to all Syrians, and not to an individual, family or party. It will not be inherited
from fathers to sons. All Syrians will be equal in rights and duties without discrimination” (LCC, 2011B). Analyzing this quote on the basis of Tilly’s “repertoire of contention”, one can note that this building of a democratic Syria is a manifestation of LCC’s political actions, which are in opposition to the regime’s wishes. LCC is practicing its contentious politics by stating on its website its political vision. It is clear that LCC wishes a democratic Syria, where all Syrians are to be treated equally, no matter which class, religion or sect they belong to.

In Tilly’s theory of WUNC displays, unity is the second display. As stated in the theory, this is when participants in demonstrations use unity, in the way of using banners, songs and chants during demonstrations. To analyze the Syrian demonstrators according to this theoretical mechanism, we use the term “unity” from Tilly’s WUNC displays. Two of the most common chants were ““Suriya, wahid, wahid, wahid! (“Syria is one, one, one”)” (Leenders in Beinin, 252: 2013) and the most used chant, “Allah, Syria, freedom, and that's it” (Leenders in Beinin, 253: 2013) which was an antonym to a chant which supporters of Bashar Al-Assad used, that goes “Allah, Syria, Bashar and that’s it” (Leenders in Beinin, 253: 2013). Moreover, the demonstrators use costumes, if one uses Tilly’s term (Tilly, 2004: 4), where they put on suits and uses banners to show that they are citizens from the middle-class (Leenders in Beinin, 252: 2013).

14.21 The political vision of the LCC

In order to understand the motives of the LCC actors of the mobilization of the Syrian revolution, and to put them in a class context, we are analyzing the text “Vision of the Local Coordination Committees for a political solution” published by the LCC three months after the uprisings in Syria started. They claim: “The way the regime is currently handling the protests is exactly what caused demonstrations to spread in the first place: Security forces detaining, torturing and killing citizens; The army – instead of being deployed in occupied Syrian land – has been put in confrontation with the people it’s supposed to protect; Playing the invalid card of sectarianism – thinking people will fall for it; And using national media outlets to demean the revolution and incite targeting peaceful protesters” (LCC, 2011A).

This part of the LCC's vision, describing the early spread of the demonstrations, shows a clear picture of two hostile camps, as Marx’s theory of class stresses. On the one side, there are the “citizens”, the “people”. On the other side there is the “regime”, supported by the “army” and the “security forces”. According to our theory, we conclude that the “citizens”, the “people” are the Proletariat and the “regime” is the ruling class, being part of the Bourgeoisie.
We consider that the LCC calls sectarianism as “the invalid card”. Therefore, we can assume that other values than sectarianism, such as economic values, can be seen as motives for mobilization. This assumption is supported by LCC's claims for the need of giving back power to the unions (LCC, 2011A). This goes along with Haddad, who states, that trade unions, peasant federations and labour organizations were undercut by the state in 1980s and 1990s (Haddad 2012b, 119). Further, the LCC criticizes the government's protection of unfair and unjust economical and political practices and call them unacceptable (LCC, 2011A). This critique describes well the economic transition, named as “crony-dominated market” by Haddad (Haddad 2012b, 123). This situation supports our claim, that social classes within Syrian society are crucial factor. As we state in our theory, the social inequalities, including growing extreme poverty, so called “new poverty” (Hout, Brooks, Manza 1993 quoting Markland 1990, 263) and further the “persistence in the high levels of wealth controlled by the bourgeoisie in these societies” are symptoms of existing social class structures (Hout, Brooks, Manza 1993, 262-3).

Though, different to Haddad, the LCC does not only focus on economic aspects in its vision. They implement cultural aspects as well, as our approach provides, by claiming: "Syrians are all equal in rights and duties; none is privileged or stripped from his/her rights due to his/her ethnic, religion or sect. All of Syria’s cultural and religious groups shall be respected and based on equality and citizenship; none is privileged over the other"(LCC 2011A, viewed 6th may 2014).

This part of the text supports our assumption on the importance of considering multilayered values beside the economy. This was previously stressed in our theory chapter through Weber’s example. According to our theory, besides the economic criterion to class, Weber adds status. This includes wealth, religion, race, physical attractiveness, social skills and bureaucracy. By mentioning all of Syria's cultural and religious groups and claiming their equality, the LCC are not only focusing on economic criteria in a Marxist perspective but also adding more values, as the Weberian approach of multilayered values assumes.

15 Discussion

In this chapter, we firstly discuss the importance of class in relation to the mobilization of the Syrian revolution. Secondly, we show the cultural diversity in Syrian society in relation to mobilization. Thirdly, we discuss how the alliance of the ruling class and business class has led to a
collapse of the value of the working society. Fourthly, we reflect on the rights gained through the mobilizations as well as distinguishable ongoing achievements.

15.1 The Alliance of Classes against the Bourgeoisie

Al-Haj Saleh stresses the importance of class in relation to the mobilization of the Syrian revolution by claiming that it has a “class-related character” (Al-Haj Saleh 2011). He states that “(t)he Syrian uprising brings together the lower sections of the middle class and attracts partners from the educated and professional middle class” (ibid). Throughout the project, we have identified those “lower sections of the middle class” and their partners from the “educated and professional middle class” as the working class. For example, those belonging to the educated middle class are represented by major figures within the LCC. They include human right activists, lawyers, journalists and filmmakers. Therefore, we stress that class is a fundamental basis for building up a mobilization within Syrian society. People from the working class or in Al-Haj’s term “working society” (ibid) have been mobilized because they share both economic and cultural criteria common to a to class. They belong to the working class and they have a common goal represented by the overthrow of the regime represented by the ruling class. There is a traditional Marxist theory class division here namely: the Proletariat and the Bourgeoisie. Nevertheless, class theory has become more complex as we are facing different social strata categories, that offer a multitude of classes. However, we can still argue that the existence of two hostile camps of the working class against the ruling class is uniting the process and the aim of mobilization.

15.2 Cultural Diversity and Class Division

We are aware that Syrian society is heterogeneous in terms of ethnic and religious backgrounds, as we stated in our introduction. Al-Haj Saleh states that the mobilization through class “[...] speaks to a diverse spectrum in Syrian society in terms of orientation, culture, religion and sect” (ibid). As we can notice, such a diversity of different backgrounds is uniting the Syrian people to get mobilized through class. This goes along with the LCC's accusation that the regime is trying to play “the invalid sect-card” in order to divide Syrian society (LCC, 2011A). The regime has used the card of sectarianism in order to divide the society on a sect basis. This misleads to think that the society is divided by sects and not by class. In fact, it is class, among other things, that has caused the mobilization of Syrians. Al-Haj Saleh calls it the “[...] rebellion of working society, par excellence, against the society of power and privilege” (Al-Haj Saleh 2011). So, the Syrian people have revolted against the class of the Assad regime, which have practiced its absolute power in
suppressing Syrians.

15.3 The Alliance of a Privileged Minority – Exclusion of the Working Class

To offer a better picture of the Bourgeoisie, or “society of power and privilege” we have mainly referred to Bassam Haddad's analysis of business networks that describes the alliance of the Ba'th regime and the business class. Al-Haj Saleh argues that the Ba'th party has built its internal politics during its rule to Syria on four values “[...] loyalty and power” [...] “affinity and privilege” (Al-Haj Saleh, 2011). In fact, what has mattered to the Syrian regime is that people show loyalty to the ruling class rather than showing work values. Besides, the rewarding of “affinity and privilege” goes along with Haddad's claim of “crony-like” business networks that are excluding the majority of the Syrian society. In addition, the Assad regime has made economic reforms which have only served the interests of the ruling and the business classes. Reforms which have made the business class or the “traders and industrialists” in Cam Almaz's terms accumulate more capital (Cam Mazen, 2011) and grow wealthier. Reforms which have resulted in growing poverty within the majority of Syrian society. So, the Ba'ath party's four mentioned values (loyalty, power, affinity and privilege) have replaced the value of work in Syrian society. Such a politics has led to the collapse of the value of work and the value of the working society as a whole (Al-Haj Saleh 2011). This growing social divergence as a whole can be seen as an initial motive for the mobilization by the working class. The people have mobilized in order to show their dissatisfaction of the tyrannical regime’s practices over the last four decades. Thus, people have mobilized while having a common goal which is represented by the overthrow of the regime.

15.4 Rights gained through Mobilization

Al-Haj Saleh views such a mobilization to protest as necessary for people to acquire their rights back. For instance, people are participating in building up a political culture, which was absent during the repressive rule of Assad. Through mobilization people have experienced “[...] independent organizing and independent free speech and initiative” (Al-Haj Saleh, 2011). They can practice their rights as citizens and engage in organizing protests, and in expressing their political opinions. People have revolted due to the fact that they have experienced deprivation from their fundamental political and social rights under the repressive rule of the Assad family. They were excluded from participation in the different social and political life domains as human beings and citizens. This deprivation process is a “human rights infringement and a deliberate act of exclusion”
(Paoletti, 2010: 19). In addition, demanding the autonomy of the unions (LCC, 2011A), that were forbidden by the regime (Haddad, 2012b: 119), is an example of the insistence of gaining the basic political and social rights back. Moreover, when people participate in expressing their anger and dissatisfaction through mobilization it is a way to give a voice to people and empower themselves (Al-Haj Saleh, 2011).

15.5 Distinguishable Achievements of the Mobilization

In his article “The Syrian Revolution and the Question of Militarization” Majed characterizes the actors within the mobilization as groups of people, who have the same worldviews to topple a repressive ruling class and gain freedom. It is through the mobilization that the Syrian people have acted collectively and achieved extremely distinguishable and revolutionary milestones (Majed, 2011). The achievements include firstly the destruction of the barrier of fear (Majed, 2011) from a repressive ruling class represented by the Assad family. In Syria, before the revolution, people did not dare to criticize the ruling class nor even joke about it, otherwise one could have ended up in jail and gotten tortured. However, the revolution has broken this fear barrier of the ruling class and people have dared, among other things, to criticize, to make satire about the Assad rule, and to protest frequently. Secondly, the revolution has achieved the reconstruction of the public space (Majed, 2011) which is demonstrated by “contentious politics” such as holding meetings, taking to the streets, as well as writing, reading and publishing about the situation in Syria (Majed, 2011). Before the revolution, one would definitely have gone to jail on that ground. Thirdly, the revolution has continuously expanded popular participation by having different geographical parts of Syria joining the demonstrations (Majed, 2011). Fourthly, the revolution has transformed a virtual social networking space, such as Facebook, into a large “sit -in for revolution” (Majed, 2011), where people form their collective identity through discussion, agreement and disagreement (Majed, 2011); and where this networking space surpasses the Syrian borders and takes on a global dimension. In this way, the social class of people sharing the same perceptions and beliefs expands beyond Syrian borders to include people living around the globe. The protests that among others has been arranged on Facebook, with the use of “events”, has played an important role in the mobilization of the protests, as it has been a tool to collect thousands of people from all over Syria to particular demonstrations. The social networking space has a powerful effect in the way that it allows everyone who has access to the internet to take part in which demonstrations there will be. Furthermore, it is a tool to arrange when, where and how it will happen, so all protesters are aware of what a particular demonstration will include. The Internet in general, and social media in particular, have improved “the power of the weak and enabled the masses to confront the power of
the few" (Langman 2013, 517).

16 Conclusion

The purpose of this project was to examine: What role does class play in the mobilization of the Syrian revolution? The Syrian case stands out among the region’s recent uprising, especially in light of the fact that it is an on-going struggle began over three years. Also, the geopolitical position of Syria, as well as its ethnic and religious diversity, makes the Syrian revolution unique. In our project, we examined aspects of class within the revolution, which is not commonly featured in Western public discourse nor in academia, but it is indeed in writings by Syrian natives. The idea with this project was to further develop an idea by the Syrian writer and political researcher Yassin Al-Haj Saleh, who describes class as an important factor for mobilizing the Syrian revolution.

In order to understand the role of class in Syria, we started our project by examining the concept of class and its relation to Syrian society, especially under the rule of the Ba’th regime. We identified the establishment of a Bourgeoisie consisting of the Assad family as a ruling class and the urban Sunni as business class. We analyzed Bassam Haddad in order to understand the business networks between the Assad family ruling class and the urban Sunni, a system that excluded the majority of Syrians thereby creating an impoverished class.

Our analysis of LCC’s position papers has made it clear that the mobilization of the non-violent protesters within the revolution is not based on religious or ethnic attempts, but on freedom and equality of the Syrian people. LCC’s claim that the regime is playing the “invalid card of sectarianism” supports our argumentation. After analyzing developments in Syria in recent decades, we conclude that the inequality Syria is facing right now is mainly based on economic factors. This assumption is confirmed by analyzing academic writings on Syrian economy by Haddad and Raymond Hinnebusch. In addition to the texts published by the LCC, we can see that the use of the term “thieves” by the very first protesters in Damascus in February 2011 suggests an economic foundation to the movement.

Through Jenkins, we analyzed that LCC has used their resources of networks as well as their cultural knowledge about the situation in Syria in a comprehensive way that has shown to be influential to the Syrian mobilization.
These studies confirm the reasoning behind our research question and the utility of Marx’s understanding of class division, as we see a division in a small, wealthy Bourgeoisie and a poor, marginalized working class. Nevertheless, we are aware that it is not enough only to use Marxist theory in order to explain the Syrian situation. It is merely a useful concept that requires amendments. As we already stressed in our discussion of theory, Marxist class theory is limited to the economic dimension and lacks a cultural one.

Therefore, we extended our theory to Weber, who sees economy as only one value beneath others, and adds status. In order to expand Weber's approach, we added Thomassen's elaboration on Victor Turner’s sequential structure of social life and the concept of “identity politics”, in addition to della Porta's concept of “eventful protest”. We identify that the mobilization of the protests, in which the LCC has played an important role, the Facebook page and events like weekly elections of the Friday slogans play an important role to unify social class, a collective body with shared values and actions. By putting this “bottom-up” uprising at the center of our project, we can easily understand the Syrian case more as a revolution of the suppressed masses, than as a civil war between two coequal camps. We conclude with our basic argument that the Syrian revolution was fundamentally based on and built up by the mobilization of a peaceful popular movement comprised of the marginalized and supported by the educated. This is, in Marxist terms, the working class, and who are fighting in the end for equality and fundamental change within Syria’s political system.
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