Manfred Hettling, Bürger, Bürgertum, Bürgerlichkeit (english version)

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Bürger, Bürgertum, Bürgerlichkeit (english version)

by Manfred Hettling

A Basic Historical Concept

From the time the term Bürger emerged in antiquity until the transition to modernity, the core of its definition has referred to a polity’s political configuration. Since the eighteenth century, however, a complex array of political, economic, and cultural conditions have been integrated into the concept. When the term arose historically in ancient Greece in the classical period, it described the community of those who lived together in the city within a specific legal form: the "body of citizens" that lived within and under the conditions defined by a specific political constitution. This special form of community was characterized by the fact that, in the "society of citizens" (Greek: koinōnia politikē; Latin societas civilis), all legitimate members governed and were governed at the same time. This is what distinguishes the society of Bürger from other forms of rule, which distinguish categorically between the rulers and those who are being ruled over. Historically, the beginnings of the term citizen can be identified in Greek antiquity. Regionally, it spread from the beginnings on the Greek peninsula to Rome and the Roman Empire by way of medieval town and city privileges to other European cities and then in the course of state building in the early modern era to the emerging nation-states and to North America.

The term Bürger thus refers to a basic historical concept, both territorially and historically, which developed in "old Europe" and referred to political configurations and political participation. Since the eighteenth century, the term has been expanded to include social and cultural dimensions and only as a result of this development has it also become a characterization of one's own or other people's way of life. This extended connotation meant and means that the term can be adapted to fit new situations, but it has also promoted the formation of new political and polemical confrontations. The dissemination of the term beyond the "West" can also be interpreted as an indication of its persistent potential. The American War of Independence against British rule in the eighteenth century and the French Revolution of 1789 underlined the concept's potentially
anti-authoritarian and revolutionary dimensions. During Japan’s reform process, which began in the late nineteenth century, the term and its derivatives were, in contrast, adapted to modernize and stabilize traditional rule.[3]

Before an analysis of the phenomenon itself can be undertaken, first the term Bürger and its semantic tradition must therefore be examined. In this text, a more precise understanding and a diachronic survey will be developed by examining encyclopedia definitions of the term Bürger. In a second step, the term Bürgertum will be considered as a social formation that did not emerge until the late eighteenth century and arose from the "Bürgerstand" (estate of the Bürger) and through the integration of new occupational groups. The integration of these diverse middle classes to yield a specific social formation – one that generally was conscious of itself as a social phenomenon, developed strategies for distinguishing itself from those above and below, and yet had permeable boundaries in both directions – was based, thirdly, on a unique cultural model of Bürgerlichkeit, the way of life of the Bürger.

**Bürger as a Fundamental Historical Concept Referring to a Political and Social Constellation**

In analyzing historical concepts, it is useful to distinguish between analytical approaches, on the one hand, and, on the other, the function of a concept as a self-description or a description used by others. The semantics of the term Bürger and the sphere of meanings associated with it as well as the fundamental structures of the relationships they refer to have grown, like the rings of a tree. We can discern three historical epochs, as simplified ideal-types in the Weberian sense, in which various analytical dimensions were formed.

Since antiquity, the political dimension has been the constitutive and essential element of the term Bürger. The term denotes a specific form of political rule and a society organized on the basis of legal principles, in which citizens who are equal can articulate and pursue their political and social goals.[4] In antiquity, the citizen was unequivocally bound to the clearly delineated sphere of the city’s authority, the Greek polis and the Roman civitas. Sharing in political authority was constitutive for the citizen, but the prerequisites were subject to change. In Aristotle’s definition, the citizen’s participation in political rule in the polis is linked to his authority in the oikos, the "household", and thus to his powers over other people such as women, children, slaves, and unfree people. Moreover, it is connected to his being freed from the obligation to participate in any economic activities. A citizen’s political autonomy is thus founded in a presumed state of economic autarky.[5] The polis citizen of antiquity and the medieval citizen of a town as well as the modern citoyen of 1789 or the twentieth-century "citizen of the state" are merely various manifestations of this political relationship. This relationship has remained attractive and spread in modern times far beyond the occidental sphere where it first appeared.

In the Middle Ages, economic dimensions were added to the term’s meaning. "Work" now also became a constitutive element, because Bürger, in contrast to the feudal aristocracy, were defined not only by the privileges granted to those who live in towns and cities but also by their commercial activities.[6] In medieval towns and cities, Bürger were generally merchants and artisans. Consequently, work, as an activity that could be exploited economically, was integrated into the understanding of the term Bürger in a positive sense. The living space of the Bürger in towns was defined by the area ruled over by the Burg or castle.
Etymologically, the German word *Bürger* is related to "Burg" (Middle High German *burc*, *borg*, *burg*, referring to a manor or fortified town and metonymically used to denote people who lived there) as a spatially delineated, relatively small area of authority, especially as distinguished from rural society with its completely different patterns of rule. This Middle High German tradition came to dominate in German, and adoptions of Latin vocabulary were irrelevant.[7] But not all the inhabitants of a town were referred to as *Bürger*. The term continued to be applied only to those residents who enjoyed a special legal status.[8] In the medieval social order, rights and obligations were always distinguished according to estates and were assigned to individual, distinct subgroups. The right to be a *Bürger* of a town generated the collective protection of the town for each individual; it opened up opportunities for owning property and earning a livelihood, entitled individuals to participate in political activities and, in most cases, obliged them to contribute to defending the town.[9]

Since the eighteenth century, the modern term *Bürger* has come to include a further dimension: the cultural forms that shape the life of a community, the institutionalization of these forms, and the ways in which people are constituted as subjects. Reference to the culture or ways of life of the *Bürger* has become meaningful only with the appearance of this dimension.[10]

In the context of the emergence of absolutism and state building in the early modern period, the semantic field related to the terms *Bürger* and citizen were extended. This reflected the appearance of an uniform group of subjects under a central sovereign power, and the process in which the societas civilis in the Aristotelian sense, which encompassed all areas of public life, evolved into the separate entities of the state and civil society (in German bürgerliche Gesellschaft, in French société civile). In political theory, the *Bürger* was now no longer the bearer of political power in the societas civilis sive res publica but instead was reduced to the "subject" of a state and the "Bürger" of a town or city on the subordinate local level.[11] This abolishment of differences between the estates by means of a bond to the sovereign was a key step towards the creation of political equality within the state for those who were to become "Staatsbürger". The process in which the *Bürger* thus became linked to the state first denoted the subject, and it was accompanied by a parallel process of political devaluation (loss of rights of political participation), which also abolished the old links to the city's *Bürger*.

During the Enlightenment era in France, the polemical tone of debate sharpened, paving the way for the distinction drawn between *bourgeois* and *citoyen*. Originally synonyms referring to the inhabitants of a town, the two words began to diverge in the second half of the eighteenth century with respect to their spatial (*bourgeois* as the inhabitant of a town or city, *citoyen* as the inhabitant of a state), social (*bourgeois* as a wealthy town dweller who employed others, whereas *citoyen* did not address...
economic aspects), and political dimensions (the citoyen held rights on the level of the state). In Germany, the terms did not take on such opposing meanings; instead, around the middle of the eighteenth century, the subject (in the state) and the Bürger (in the societas civilis) existed side-by-side and were taken for granted. Johann Heinrich Gottlob von Justi, for example, identified obedience, the willingness to pay taxes, loyalty, and subordination of self-interest to the greater good as the virtues of a good Bürger.[12]

The transformation of the Bürger who participated in ruling over the town into a passive subject of the state meant that the concept of the Bürger lost the dimension of political participation. In the long term, as debates in the early modern period focused on legal conceptualizations of the state, this led to human beings and Bürger being granted inalienable rights that protected individuals (who had previously been denied political power) from state interventions.[13] As the concept of the citoyen became charged with revolutionary connotations in France in the wake of the events of 1789 and also took on new meanings with respect to philosophical and legal concepts of the state formulated by Kant and others, citizens' legally guaranteed freedom became the foremost goal to be pursued by the state, displacing the promotion of happiness by the authorities of earlier definitions. This meant that the political dimension was once again more closely linked to the term Bürger, albeit now at the level of the state. Controversies over definitions of voting rights thus became processes of negotiation in society about the economic (census, three-class voting rights), social (head of household, self-employment), or cultural (education) prerequisites for guaranteeing individuals' rights to be heard as Bürger within the state. Universal citizen rights precluded simple legal discrimination of the kind that had characterized citizen rights since antiquity.[14]

The semantics of the term Bürger is always also an expression of the self-understanding of a certain part of the population. Whether this segment differed from all others by virtue of legal, social, cultural, or political criteria varied in both European traditions and in the present. Until well into the eighteenth century, legal and political criteria dominated the concept of the Bürger in the European tradition. Since the transitional period (Sattelzeit) around 1800, the central axis defining the concept has gradually shifted away from legal aspects. The fading of the old term Bürgerstand (Bürger estate) and the appearance of new words such as Bürgertum, bourgeoisie, middle classes are indications of this shift. Although this legal foundation is still present in the concept of citizenship (Staatsbürger) because of the universalization of the term it is no longer a central element.[15] As a description of others and in polemical usage, the term is not used primarily to distinguish this group from the world of the nobility and the estates, as was the case in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Rather, it marks the border, from within and without, to military-heroic ways of life and forms of estatism and authoritarianism (generally by emphasizing the terms civilian and civil society). Moreover, a critique of Bürger as bourgeois, which has a socialist tinge, and resentments against what is consider bourgeois in the public sphere continue to exist up to the present day. As a result, since the eighteenth century terminology referring to the Bürger includes the dimensions of political and legal authority, economic and social aspects, and the cultural aspects of identity and world views. Use of the terms in the social and political spheres, however, generally focuses on specific aspects and areas; this is what renders the concepts so flexible and ambiguous and means they lend readily themselves to polemic use.[16]
In the course of state building in the early modern period, the rights associated with political rule were increasingly concentrated in the hands of the sovereign, transforming citizens into subjects. Simultaneously, the differences which were conceptualized as associated with the estate one had been born into and fixed as rights became less significant. The “bürgerliche Gesellschaft” or bourgeois society could then be interpreted in political theory as a system of needs that was not associated with domination (Hegel) or as a bourgeois class society shaped by production relations (Marx).

In many respects, nineteenth century bourgeois society was a “transitional society” on the threshold between the persistent estatist past and the challenges posed by democracy. Social rather than legal inequality became the decisive factor determining an individual’s position in society during the transitional period from the mid-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century. Since Marx, social differences took center stage in the critique of bourgeois society. The universalistic-egalitarian perspective on human beings “rubbed off” on the citizen, so that any persistent social inequality had to be justified and was easily used to mobilize people politically to oppose bourgeois society. The transition from the bourgeois society of premodern times that was political per se (societas civilis sive res publica) to post-revolutionary modern and economically-determined bourgeois society thus radically transformed the framework for both the linguistic means of representing the citizen and his actual historic manifestation. Two questions remain to be addressed: Who is in fact a Bürger, and what is it that makes an individual one? In Germany, these questions are especially difficult, since all distinguishing features always make use of the same word.

One final issue in this context is whether or not the society of Bürger was founded on a hierarchically structured separation of women and men. In the political order (societas civilis sive res publica), active participation was the prerogative of men. In the eighteenth century, as the term Bürger was extended to incorporate socio-cultural dimensions and the society of Bürger was transformed, new options for women emerged. Although participation in the political sphere was denied women in most countries until the twentieth century, women became active Bürger in cultural and social spheres long before they gained access to politics. Whether the traditional model of bourgeois society was called into question fundamentally and superseded by women’s emancipation or this change was instead an example for the capacity of the bourgeois model to be reformed and transformed remains a controversial topic to this day.
The Bürger in German Encyclopedia

Encyclopedia entries are sources that can reveal the core elements of the meaning of the term Bürger and offer opportunities for retracing shifts in meaning diachronically. Encyclopedia from the eighteenth century focused on the estatist tradition and the status of town Bürger (Bürgerrecht or citizens’ rights) and made distinctions between the Bürger and the subject.[21]

Beginning with the revolutionary watershed around 1800, this was complemented by definitions that took up an egalitarian position opposing the nobility and asserting legal equality, posited at first resolutely and in later encyclopedia editions with more restraint. In its 1819 edition, the renowned Brockhaus encyclopedia described the bourgeois with a terminology that was in part quite modern as a "class large in numbers, which perceives all freemen as belonging to it" ("eine zahlreiche Classe, welche alle Freien unter sich begreift"). But it went on to emphasize the character of free birth and, in this respect, remained obliged to the older, more traditional understanding of the term.

Of fundamental significance in this period was the integration of the educated into this definition.[22] In the eighteenth century, educated individuals were considered to be a separate estate and, within the university, fell under the jurisdiction of a separate court system that existed beside the courts for town Bürger.[23] Now, those with higher education (professors, clergy, jurists, etc.) were considered part of the broader and more heterogeneous group of the "Bürgerlichen", which, by the nineteenth century, also included, as a matter of course, craftsmen, merchants, and other members of mid-level commerce, trade, and industry. With this shift, terms like the German word Bildungsbürger or educated bourgeoisie to refer to part of the entire group of the bourgeoisie have gained meaning;[24] albeit, it should be pointed out that the term emerged after World War I and did not come into more widespread use until after World War II.[25]

During the late Imperial period in Germany, the differences between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie were at times addressed, albeit rather in passing. Lasting traces of the occurrences of 1918 as a political watershed can hardly be discerned in descriptions of the term Bürger in German encyclopedia. The term appears most often in the context of the universalization of legal status to become citizens’ rights, which takes on a more central role in this period. The older definition centering on the status of town citizenship is mentioned as part of the historical background. What is remarkable is that, with the Weimar Constitution of 1919 and the establishment of equal rights on the level of the state and municipalities (abolition of class and census voting rights on the municipal level and the level of the Länder in Germany), legal status is not assigned greater significance. Rather, the encyclopedia entries for the first time
make mention of cultural aspects to define the unique characteristics of the Bürgertum, which is referred to as an “estate” (Stand).[26] In other words, the processes in which legal definitions became less significant and cultural qualities played a greater role in marking distinctions occurred simultaneously – an indication of the constitutive dialectics of equality and difference in bourgeois society.

In encyclopedias published under the National Socialist regime in Germany, the legal status of a person in relation to the community or to the state continued to be mentioned as the core of the definition of the Bürger. At the same time, however, these texts criticized the way in which Bürger of the state and "Volksgenosse" ("national comrades", used by the Nazis to refer to those considered ethnic Germans) had become increasingly separate concepts, whereas they saw the Bürger as naturally belonging to the people as a whole. Consequently, the Nazis political-normative goal was to overcome the bourgeois way of life ("Lebensform") within the National Socialist "Volksgemeinschaft" (community of the people).[27]

In the German Democratic Republic (GDR), no distinction was made between Bürger and inhabitants. "Bürger in terms of today’s laws (also referred to as Bürger of the state) are the inhabitants of a municipality or a state" was the definition published in the 1972 edition of the popular encyclopedia Meyers Neues Lexikon in East Germany. The article referred to "socialist Bürger rights" as including political rights, personal freedom, and the opportunity to develop one's personality according to individual capabilities, free from repression and economic dependence. The text asserted that these rights had been realized in the GDR by limiting private property and ending the domination of monopoly capital.[28] According to this definition, private property, considered otherwise to be a core element of bourgeois society, now had to be eliminated as a precondition for realizing individual freedom and the development of individual personalities. By defining the Bürger politically in terms of citizens’ rights (without property rights), the social dimension of the Bürger was excluded in the GDR.[29]

In the Federal Republic of Germany, Bürgertum as a social class proved to be "difficult to delimit", as the West German encyclopedia Brockhaus noted in its 1952 edition.[30] Traditional characteristics such as residence in a town, ownership of real estate, economic independence, specific occupations, and a higher level of school education were for the most part no longer typical of the bourgeoisie. Socially, the bourgeoisie was a broad and heterogeneous conglomerate of middle classes and was, according to Brockhaus, in fact a middle class ("Mittelstand"). Use of the term Bürgertum, the text noted, was nonetheless warranted, because a specific lifestyle, a frame of mind, and a class ethic that could be termed bourgeois and that were manifested in how people lived and dressed, in their manners, in family life, in education, and in cultural affairs were still very much in evidence. Due perhaps to end of the Adenauer era or the anti-bourgeois furor of the emerging protest movements of the 1960s may have been the reason why the optimistic final paragraph of the article in the edition from 1952, which forecasted the survival of the bourgeois lifestyle, was weakened in the version published in 1967. The prognosis now was that the ethos of the Bürgertum would not be "completely destroyed". Ten years later, in the period of West Germany’s social-democratic-liberal coalition government, the article appeared in a radically abridged version without historical background. This text asserted that the historical significance of the Bürgertum as a progressive force had ended in the nineteenth century, when the working class
assumed this role; nonetheless, the lifestyle of the Bürgertum still existed and was influential as a norm and goal for achieving higher social status.\[31\]

The image of the Bürger presented in the most recently published encyclopedia editions has become increasingly diffuse. On the one hand, familiar politically charged elements continue to be reproduced, for example in references to the “tradition of the emancipatory-revolutionary Bürgertum”, which was presented as a point of reference for modern countercultural movements.\[32\] On the other hand, such descriptions are linked to a narrower socio-historical understanding of the Bürgertum, which is described as a “social class”. These encyclopedia articles ignore a number of problems that result when Bürgertum is reduced to its social dimension. First, the much larger group (in quantitative terms) of people with average income and status are left without a place and a definition, since they are neither workers nor farmers or nobility. Second, while it can be asserted on a normative level that material assets are a key criterion for definitions and differentiation, it cannot be proven empirically. And third, reference to the bourgeois lifestyle as a common denominator and integrative element draws on phenomena that are at least as heterogeneous as the social traits of Bürger.

**Bürgertum as a Social Formation**

The term Bürgertum did not emerge until the nineteenth century, in competition to the older term, the estate, and originally referred to shared conceptual or political traits rather than to a socio-cultural unit. In contemporary usage, however, the term is generally understood as a collective term for an agglomeration; it is a collective singular noun that refers to various social formations of the middle classes. Defining the Bürgertum is not easy because of the complexities and difficulties in differentiating the phenomena's socio-economic and cultural dimensions. In German, the term emerged not as a the result of a political and social strategy that aimed to understand and describe societies in terms of class categories but “rather as an expression of the rejection of perceiving society in terms of ’class’".\[33\] This tension underpins all later efforts to determine the status of the Bürgertum socio-historically. Modern social history was unable to resolve this tension between concept and reality, despite all efforts to formulate theories and definitions to date.

In attempting to identify the Bürgertum, historiography must answer two questions. First, what social segments are generally considered to represent the Bürgertum? And second (and this is the more difficult question), what bonds together the various subgroups defined in terms of social history together to form the common social formation called Bürgertum? In other words, what does the Bürgertum have in common and what distinguishes this social formation from others?

The first question only appears to be easy to answer at first glance. In the eighteenth century, a wealth of new occupations took shape as the estate order eroded. Thanks to specific resources – in particular, knowledge, expertise in specific fields, a special understanding of work, the use of property for economic activities, and also the willingness to defer consumption – these new occupations acquired genuine areas of activity and, as a result, opportunities for generating income. Outside the realm of the older estate order and its social and power hierarchies, higher social status was reached more quickly than heightened
political status. Examining the functions of representatives of these new occupations reveals that they can be referred to as "neue Bürgerliche", despite the fact that they not infrequently but by no means as a rule also probably held town citizen rights. As different as the educational background and property holdings of these people were, they shared ex negativo the trait of neither wielding estatist power (which, put simply, was the privilege of the nobility), nor were they landowning or landless peasants or employed by others.

Social historians have undertaken repeated attempts to address this conglomerate analytically. The problem is perhaps best outlined in the words of Rainer Lepsius, who noted that Bürgertum generally refers to "a number of heterogeneous occupational groups, who are delineated by exclusion of those that don’t belong: nobility, clerics, peasants, and workers. Those who are left over then make up the Bürgertum." The problem of a definition remains, since the criteria for not-belonging differ: what do the nobility and workers, for example, have in common? Every categorization of bourgeois subgroups ultimately leads to the addition of two divergent traits: one is the economic independence of urban classes, which includes the broad spectrum of self-employed craftsmen, merchants, traders, entrepreneurs of various kinds, capital pensioners, and professionals; the second is the professional qualification of public servants and white-collar workers, which, like those in the professions, had an academic education but were not self-employed. But this widespread additive definition via property and education brings several serious problems with it, since real estate ownership is not defined in this context as former of property associated with the Bürgertum and education is not equated with a qualification in a specific occupation, such that a distinction would have to be made between academic and non-academic qualifications. In particular the close bonds between German civil servants and the state raises the question of whether and to what extent German civil servants were to be considered part of the Bürgertum and what consequences this would have for our understanding of the concept.

The more detailed and precise socio-historical descriptions and classifications become, the more difficult it is to pinpoint what is bürgerlich about these subgroups. In historical research, the challenge of providing definitions was often avoided by referring to ensembles of occupational groups and by drawing on Max Weber to distinguish specific segments of the social formation of the Bürger as classes of property, as an economic class and as a social class. In individual cases, this was successful. But ultimately, the Bielefeld research group (Sonderforschungsbereich Sozialgeschichte des neuzeitlichen Bürgertums: Deutschland im internationalen Vergleich, 1986-1997) failed to realize its mission of analyzing Bürgertum as a "class". One positive outcome of the Bielefeld project was the fact that it emphasized the heterogeneity of the Bürgertum rather than its class character and analyzed, at least in part, that heterogeneity. Class thus has become a category in studies focusing on the Bürgertum alongside others such as religious denomination, culture, domination, or towns and cities. Last but not least, this work has produced empirical evidence to disprove ideological postulations about a purportedly bourgeois class standpoint.

Research has often focused on an indistinctly determined spectrum of classes of ownership and economic classes and on class status, frequently within the context of local studies. In the course of such work, the significance of the rights of Bürger in a town or city and the associated traditions, which remained
relevant until well into the nineteenth century, were discovered. One of the most influential town studies (which was not part of a large-scale project) addressed the bourgeois upper class in Basel and linked innovative social history analysis with cultural history. In West Germany, a project lead by Lothar Gall that pursued similar questions shaped the perspective on "The Bürgertum and the town" in the nineteenth century. This analysis addressed the transition from town Bürgertum to modern Bürgertum, a frequently drawn-out and arduous process. In contrast to this work, a number of studies examined individual occupational groups. Subgroups from the spectrum of the economic bourgeoisie and the academic bourgeoisie were investigated without considering in particular the overall conditions for cohesion within the Bürgertum as a whole. Researchers at Goethe University in Frankfurt am Main choose a distinctly different route. Here, Bürgertum was explicitly conceptualized not as a modern phenomenon but rather as a transitional phenomenon in the transition to modernity. The aim was to analyze the Bürgertum not as a "construction of abstract strata", but rather as a "real collective" in each of the towns investigated, with a special focus on similarities and differences. To this day, the formation of social classes – in the Weberian sense of an inter- and intragenerational transition between classes – has been studied significantly less often in German research on the Bürgertum. The density of studies centering on sub-formations differs considerably. Depending on the assumed historical and political relevance, entrepreneurs appear to be more significant for the respective nation-state than craftsmen. Depending on the availability of sources and the extent to which these groups organized themselves and pursued their own political interests, the numbers of existing studies differs. At the same time we can now observe a tendency to use the term Bürgertum in the plural form and refer to various different Bürgertümer. This neologism only masks the unresolved problem of definitions to a certain extent, for any plural differentiation must be based on a common constitutive characteristic, a singular phenomenon.

Three characteristics of historical longitudinal analyses of the Bürgertum should be noted that have not been addressed frequently to date. Without considering these conditions and their influence on the formation of the bourgeois middle classes, diachronic studies convey an abbreviated perspective and can easily lead to interpretations of purported decline. In such narratives, a uniformity and cultural conformity of the Bürgertum in the nineteenth century is generally assumed rather than actually proven empirically; this uniformity is then seen as eroding. Historical analyses that address the changing forms of the bourgeoisie from the nineteenth century until today remain quite rare but are clearly more useful.

First: If we seek to identify social and economic commonalities of the Bürgertum in the nineteenth century, then quantitative differences can be found – albeit not as a sharply delineated criterion for a definition – with respect to economic independence and self-employment. The majority of members of the bourgeois in the nineteenth century lead a way of life that was based on economic independence and an associated lifestyle marked by self-reliance, dealing with risks individually, and an appreciation of freedom and personal achievement. What the word "majority" means here can only be demonstrated with any degree of reliability by pointing to the results of local studies. Social structure analyses within the framework of town studies that focus on the nineteenth century generally reveal that the "merchant" was the most widespread social type encountered. This is understandable, considering the fact that the term
referred not only to the kind of hanseatic merchant who traded on a large scale
with overseas customers epitomized by characters in Thomas Mann's novel *The
Buddenbrooks*. For the most part, these were prosperous but hardly
exorbitantly rich businessmen, and especially in the textiles sector, production
and trade were frequently in the same hands. In this sense, the merchant who
was economically independent, generally rooted in the local economy, and who
owned property but was not rich *per se* was the average type of (urban) *Bürger*
in the nineteenth century.\[^{50}\]

The educated bourgeoisie (*Bildungsbürger*) were a smaller group in quantitative
terms than the merchants, but they were considerably more active in presenting
themselves in the public sphere and more influential in shaping perceptions and
interpretations. It would be only a slight exaggeration to interpret some of their
self-staged presentations as a habitus and rhetoric of protest against the
stability and self-satisfaction of those who were economically independent.
Possible examples are Goethe's work *Wilhelm Meister* or Stifter's *Nachsommer*.
The latter begins the life narrative of a *Bildungsbürger* with the sentence "My
father was a merchant" and goes on to describe a life that unfolded outside the
realm of mercantile interests and constraints, in which the spectrum of
possibilities available in the bourgeoisie world was laid out in an ordered and
regulated fashion.

This was also the aim of Lothar Gall's classic argument about the "classless
bourgeois society of 'median' forms of existence". For Gall, however, this was
not meant so much in a socio-historical sense but rather addressed the
expectations of bourgeois liberals in the German *Vormärz*, the period preceding
the 1848 March Revolution. The pre-industrial middle class society, structured
around occupational groups, expected that social reforms and political
emancipation would lead to a general dissemination of this bourgeois society. As
a preindustrial and prerevolutionary movement, this bourgeois entered into what
was at least a very ambivalent relationship to industrial modernity, which had
far-reaching consequences.

*Second*: If one considers the social composition of the *Bürgertum*, this
quantitative predominance of the economically independent disappeared towards
the end of the nineteenth century. As industrialization reached its height, the
rise of white-collar workers (and civil servants) began; after World War II, it
accelerated and its influence was heightened by the simultaneous decline in the
relative numbers of workers among those pursuing paid employment. Since
then, the category white-collar worker has become so generalized that it is
basically meaningless, but contemporary surveys do not offer more
differentiated categories. This generalized spread of the white-collar worker is
easily described in quantitative terms, whereas its socio-psychological effects are
difficult to determine.\[^{51}\]

Any long-term analysis of the *Bürgertum* in the twentieth century must address
this shift. For on the one hand, it increased the heterogeneity within the
traditional bourgeois occupational groups, so that the question of the
commonalities defining the *Bürgertum* became even more pressing. More
importantly, the majority of bourgeois occupational groups in the twentieth
century was composed of white-collar workers and civil servants and thus of
people who were not economically independent. How this social shift has affected
the classic bourgeois values such as personal independence is a topic that calls
for further research.
Some researchers have attempted to address this problem and have defined and the Bürgertum as an elite phenomenon and nothing more. These approaches explicitly or implicitly interpret the Bürgertum as "Großbürgertum", however that might be defined; as an ensemble of property owners and (employed) individuals with management positions. For the twentieth century and especially for the period after 1945, there are only a few studies that consider the Bürgertum from the perspective of social history; instead, lifestyle, milieus, and shifts in values are the questions most frequently addressed. The majority of historical studies tend to take a long-term perspective, analyzing bourgeois culture since the early nineteenth century and then integrating developments since 1945 in a brief survey. It is only more recently that work concentrating on the Federal Republic of Germany aims to examine more closely what characterizes elements of lifestyle, behavior, and specific values as bourgeois. Conceptually, distinguishing the bourgeois from other social forms has been challenging. In contemporary societies, defining specific lifestyles as characteristic of the nobility, peasants, or the proletariat or determining how they shape society is hardly possible. Recent work therefore tends to declare discrete elements of behavior to be "bourgeois" and to then examine them more closely.

However, the results are seldom linked to a special bourgeois social formation. Sociological research on lifestyles has defined, empirically analyzed, and described a plethora of diverse milieus and lifestyles. While this is interesting as a means of elucidating contemporary phenomena, this work often remains fails to critically assess the blind spots linked to the period in which it is undertaken. In recent years, work focusing on both social structure analysis and economic aspects has intensified. A key issue here is the material and cultural persistence of the middle class – or its threatened state. Most recently, protest articulated by the bourgeois middle class has received considerable attention. One manifestation in Germany is the emergence of the so-called "Wutbürger", a term for protesting middle-class citizens that arose in the context of mobilization against the plan to convert the central train station in Stuttgart.

Third: Since the late nineteenth century, we have also seen the rise and expansion of the welfare state, which created, especially for wage earners, a range of state or state-regulated security systems. Any long-term analysis of the Bürgertum must also take into account the establishment of state security systems and the shifts in social structure that accompanied them. Future analyses of the Bürgertum or the "middle classes" that involve international comparisons should therefore systematically investigate the influence of each type of welfare state on the development and the self-image of the middle classes in each country. The middle classes were responsible, historically, for...
promoting these changes[61] and in many cases reaped the material benefits of
the welfare state.[62] Among the questions for research could be the following:
How did the variations in the welfare state – the liberal model that promoted
private security planning and market-regulated security systems, the
conservative with its emphasis on state social security schemes, and the social-
democratic model with its principles of universality and political and social equality
– influence the formation of the middle classes in the twentieth century?[63]

**Bürgerlichkeit as a Cultural Pattern**

But what binds together these various elements to form the social unit of the
Bürger
tum? What sociation processes (Vergesellschaftungsprozesse) merge
these divergent middle classes to create social units? These processes are
grounded in interests and values that shape action.[64] One might quite rightly
raise the question of whether historical research on the bourgeoisie indeed
developed and worked with an analytical concept of the Bürger
tum or perhaps
more often relied on descriptive overviews and additive aggregations of the
middle classes. In the German context, this latter approach is all the more
tempting because the term Bürger, which has evolved historically but mostly
refers to an individual's legal status, suggests, uniformity.[65]

As efforts to define the Bürger
tum as a class proved unpromising,[66] historians
in Germany began, rather early on, to consider culture as a possible alternative,
integrative frame of reference. Did a common culture amalgamate these
"heterogeneous occupational groups" that came with diverse class interests to
become a group capable of acting as a unit? There have been and continue to be
numerous attempts to determine a canon of culture and life forms through
which the various subgroups attained and represented their mutual bourgeois
status. Among the aspects named are individual achievement, work and the
work ethic, a proclivity for rational lifestyles, self-employment, self-organization,
education, an aesthetic relationship to high culture, family ideals, symbolic forms
in daily life (table manners, clothing styles, social conventions), etc. – and
"perhaps" also political values such as a "minimal level of liberal virtues".[67]

Other notions of how to define Bürger
tich
theit theoretically were more open and
wide ranging; their orientation was directed towards bourgeois "cultural
patterns", aimed to define a "cultural habitus", and centered their investigation
on concrete contexts of social action. Such efforts were stimulated more often
than not from outside of historiography, for example from ethnology. Wolfgang
Kaschuba has suggested that Bürger
tich
theit should be sought and analyzed in
societal situations and figurations that can be named and differentiated, in
concrete social contexts of action. Hermann Bausinger has argued that
bourgeois culture should be grasped as a behavioral style, as "an interaction of
norms and forms that even includes everyday occurrences" and backed up his
argument with impressive examples but did not elucidate his argument on a
conceptual level.[68]

To date, there have been no successful attempts to describe and verify
historically the existence of such a consistent "bourgeois culture" that could
indeed integrate socially heterogeneous parts. This may be due to the success
of the bourgeois model in the "progressive democratization" of material (and
many immaterial) cultural achievements.[69] Examples are the ideal of romantic
love or, more generally, the emotionalization of the family, the importance of
bringing-up children, leisure activities, and the fact that individuality was held in high esteem.\[^{[70]}\] There can be no doubt that behavior that originated outside of bourgeois circles has been incorporated into the behavioral range of the bourgeoisie in the modern era, but even in the twenty-first century, the influence of bourgeois life in its historical manifestations is obvious. One could generalize as follows: The more *Bürgertum* is conceived of – historically and with respect to contemporary society – as a socio-economic elite with a clear and comprehensive culture of distinction, the more difficult it becomes to identify its continuity up to the present day. If however, one grasps *Bürgerlichkeit* as the result of social communication about basic issues of coexistence, then the more universalistic and open the cultural model becomes and the easier it becomes to discover *Bürgerlichkeit* in a diachronic perspective and in contemporary society.\[^{[71]}\]

Various methods can be applied to investigating bourgeois culture. One is oriented towards social “behavioral norms and modes of action”.\[^{[72]}\] This can be applied to examine phenomena and functions that can define the differences from other groups, whether visits to the opera or clothing or demonstrative forms of consumption (one example of a modern and recently universalized form could be, for example, owning a specific mobile phone model). One could also address the forms of behavior and expression that have become widespread to an impressive extent in the past two centuries – from socializing in clubs and associations to other leisure time activities to home furnishings.

A second approach perceives *Bürgerlichkeit* as a discrete cultural model, which can be described as a space and framework that offers orientation for dealing with the social complexities of life in modernity. In this context, *Bürgerlichkeit* does not draw on the mutual set of values of a social formation also forged by other integrative factors.\[^{[73]}\] This marks a fundamental difference to the nobility, which also developed a specific culture and, in the premodern era, ideally differed from other segments of society by virtue of its estatist rights, its position and function of authority, and the ownership of land and in some regions of people. The proletariat was shaped by class conditions and also formed common cultural forms of expression (proletarianism). *Bürgerlichkeit* as a cultural mode was and is, in contrast, more open, because it is not conceptualized as something associated with specific estates or classes, but rather as an overriding broader design for a social order that offered individual approaches to integration and was intended to be a normative framework for the entire society. Bourgeois society thus offered a pattern for creating an order for the whole that included all subgroups and was based on legal principles.\[^{[74]}\] As a model for order, *Bürgerlichkeit* is characterized politically by the legally regulated space for self-administration, in which divergent interests can also compete but direct domination of individuals over others has no place. Economically, *Bürgerlichkeit* is marked by the right to own land and the means of production; culturally it involves the pluralization of identificatory reference points and privileges individual options. “*Bürgerliche Gesellschaft*” is therefore a utopian goal, but one that can accommodate diverse political orders.\[^{[75]}\]

Moreover, as a cultural model in modernity, *Bürgerlichkeit* was more open and ambivalent with respect to its potential for developing or integrating different ways of life and lifestyles than the premodern “bourgeois virtues”. Because of the heterogeneous situation of those seen as *bürgerlich*, a common life model that offers unequivocal answers and modes of behavior is inconceivable. Historically, such models took shape in the eroding estatist order of the Ancien Régime and only shared the capacity to use the opportunities the market
offered by means of specific functions, of education, or special skills; they lacked common intrinsic values.

If we assume that the erosion of the estatist society is the fundamental point of reference that generated a new framework for reflection and action, then Bürgerlichkeit can be conceptualized in functional terms as an answer to the new problems this erosion generated. The Bürgerlichen were least able to draw on traditional behaviors, values, and cultural interpretations and were therefore the first to face new issues and challenges in their most radical form. Applying this functionalist perspective opens up opportunities for posing diachronic, comparative questions: What commonalities and differences offer opportunities for realizing individual life forms within a framework of self-regulation in society? Have the challenges which individuals face changed fundamentally from the earliest phase of the post-estatist and secularly-orientated world that developed around 1800 in comparison to the period of industrial modernity in the late nineteenth century and to today's globalized postmodern era? Bürgerlichkeit began to take shape as those who began to assume new functions in the declining estatist society reached understandings about their position. It is thus founded “not in a structural homogeneity but rather in cultural community”, according to Friedrich Tenbruck. This communicative space formed by Bürgerlichkeit was where inner-societal negotiations about the challenges of developing life forms and the promises and impositions of individuality took place since the eighteenth century. Questions pertaining to meaning in life were no longer answered primarily within a religiously defined space but rather in novels, in conversation, and in “convivial” contacts with those who were equally affected by these issues.

In this context, two elements are of fundamental importance for defining Bürgerlichkeit. First, the set of bourgeois values is neither closed nor is it homogeneous. Bürgerlichkeit does not offer a firmly established edifice of ideas and values that relate to one another in a stringent manner; it also lacks a central institution that monitors the purity of these tenets and sanctions deviations. Nonetheless, as a cultural system, Bürgerlichkeit is composed of a set of values and core concepts, but these are more fragmented, diverse, and contradictory than in a hierarchically ordered system. The arsenal of values proves to be highly flexible and capable of being adapted to diverse contexts. “Bürgerlichkeit” as a set of values and cultural patterns does not offer guidelines in the form of unequivocal behavioral rules that tell individuals how to lead their lives.

One means of bringing order to this conglomerate is to form contrasting pairs of values that represent alternative orientations. Bürgerlichkeit can be described in terms of these polar values, which do not unequivocally determine actions and meaning and do not serve as exclusive alternatives. Rather, they represent, but do not strictly prescribe, ideal points of reference within possible life forms. Such dominant and important pairs are, for example, property versus education (or material versus intellectual interest); self-interest versus community interest; creativity (following no purpose) versus rationality (tied to a goal) and utility; emotion versus reason; achievement (or work) versus leisure. These polar values (the list of which could be extended) can be used to describe both the ideal-typical characteristics of a bourgeois life and the typical traits of
"Bürgerlichkeit". The orientation based on these dimensions forms the ideal of the bourgeoisie, to which all subgroups have felt an obligation up to the present, despite their deviations from them in reality. For this reason, the popular dichotomies, such as the contrast of bourgeoisie and artist, which has frequently been the subject of literary representations, are not alternatives; instead, they are an expression of the heterogeneous variety and the entanglements of the bourgeois cosmos.

Second, Bürgerlichkeit also denoted the process in which individuals more or less successfully internalize and implement values through action. Learning social practices is an individualized process; in contrast to the socialization of the nobility, for example, the aim is not exclusively to practice the conventions and stance associated with a particular estate; instead, the goal is to achieve individual autonomy within socially formed frameworks. Such learning processes, which can succeed or fail, generally become visible especially when new cultural interpretations are expressed. Thus, the development of the neohumanist ideal of education around 1800 was an appropriate societal response to a specific problem: The individual processes of adopting social practices that were now required had to be open and flexible, but at the same time they had to become institutionalized, so that individuals could meet the flexible challenges of bourgeois society. The unique aspects of the neohumanist ideal of education were not the actual knowledge – in other words, the content – but rather the process of acquiring that content, the creative form of working with knowledge. As a result, the focus was on general knowledge, on the complexity and diversity of life.

"Bürgerlichkeit" was a "means of achieving self-understanding for individuals as well as understanding for all" – this was how Friedrich Tenbruck described its function, emphasizing its reflexive character, which he saw as more significant than content. This function of focusing on the communication of problems forms the basis for the enduring attractiveness and the openness of "Bürgerlichkeit" as a cultural model. Throughout all crises and challenges that it has faced internally and externally, it has proven to be astonishingly adaptable.

The Crisis of the Bürgertum and the Global Expansion of the "Middle Classes" since the Twentieth Century

In his book The Transformation of the World, Jürgen Osterhammel argued that European colonialism by no means paved the way for the emergence of an enlightened form of bourgeois life in the colonized societies. Rather, he emphasized the crisis of European Bürgertum in the first half of the twentieth century, which had "passed into the huge post-1950 expansion of middle-class societies". Since the 1980s, following China's opening for capitalism under Deng Xiaoping, the collapse of socialism in the Soviet empire, and the disappearance of almost all state-socialist regimes in Asia and Africa, this development has become a global phenomenon. This finding is likely to be uncontroversial on the factual, phenomenological level. Presumably more contested is the historical assessment of these developments and answers to the question of whether a historical concept of Bürgertum and "Bürgerlichkeit" might prove stimulating for analyzing this global trend.

First, one should recall that the middle classes – the English term is more precise here, because of the use of the term class – have also expanded quantitatively in Western societies since 1945. The decline of industrial and rural workers and
the rise of white-collar workers and of academic occupations and old and new service employment has meant that the middle classes have become the largest segment of the population in many societies. But this again raises the problem of definitions, since there are no generally accepted criteria to delimit the "middle classes" on their upper and lower borders. Surveys that address subjective perceptions in Western societies reveal that in recent years about 50% of the population in the United States, 60% of Germans, and as much as 90% of the Japanese (this last figure is from the 1980s; more recent figures are somewhat lower) see themselves as being in the "middle" of their respect society, but this does not necessarily mean they perceive themselves as Bürger. In non-Western societies, these percentages are presumably in part considerably lower, but no surveys are available to date. However, data from social science research generally determines the middle class based on income levels. Presumably, the differences between the middle classes in industrialized countries and those in threshold countries are more significant than those between the middle classes and the classes above and below them in either the industrialized or the threshold countries. The middle classes in threshold countries are much more at risk than those in industrialized states due to factors such as illness or unemployment, due to a general lack of state social security systems. Most surveys categorize whether people belong to the middle class based solely on income; criteria such as self-employment, management functions, etc. are not considered. Since threshold countries generally still have a very large and very poor rural population, even very low-level service jobs in urban agglomerations (security guard, train conductor, low-level clerical work, etc.) qualify people as belonging to the middle class. However, data on the size of the middle classes differ enormously, with estimates for global figures varying by several hundred million. Comparative global analysis of the contemporary status of the middle classes would certainly benefit from the conceptual and theoretical basis that historical research on Bürgertum can provide. Two analytical potentials, which will be outlined below, should prove useful for studying the middle classes in threshold countries. One might even argue that a comparison of today's middle classes in the emerging markets with the bourgeois as it took shape in the nineteenth century might prove more useful than comparisons with the bourgeois middle class in today's industrialized countries, since the life forms of the latter are based on assets that have accumulated over decades and on comprehensive state social security systems. It is likely that structural commonalities can be discerned within the divergent paths taken into the modernity, whether in China or India, the Near and Far East, or Latin America.

For comparative analysis, care should be taken to formulate definition criteria and the resulting descriptions of social formations very precisely. Historically, three relevant dimensions can be identified: economic, political, and socio-cultural. The "bourgeois" middle classes earmarked as representing specific constellations of economic interests have a heterogeneous internal structure and include the members of the upper middle classes and the petit bourgeoisie, entrepreneurs, investors, tradespeople, shop owners, etc. Political interests shaped by the shared rights of political participation defined the classic Bürger of the old societas civilis sive res publica. The socio-cultural dimension, in contrast, points to how "the citizen was privileged in a negative as well as a positive sense". This was generally based on a specific kind of life style and life forms as well as on special prestige values (prestige based on ancestry or occupation) and manifested itself in mutual circles for marriage and social contacts, according to
Weber’s classic definition. What is special about the bourgeoisie in Western societies is that all three dimensions amalgamated in the modern period to constitute the bourgeois middle classes. Western, European-North-American Bürgertum is thus based on the interaction of these heterogeneous factors; they have developed to differing extents and in diverse constellations to form each specific national pattern.

For this reason, it is essential that researchers not only determine the structural dimensions of an economic, political, and cultural nature that shape the formation of the middle classes but also address the specific processes of sociation (Vergesellschaftung) that possibly – but not unavoidably – integrates these heterogeneous middle classes to form social units and thus potentially also units of action "in and of themselves". These sociation processes are founded on interests and value systems. It is only when such processes take place that we can then refer to the middle classes as a formation that develops common constellations of interests, is aware of these interests, and can potentially become a formation that undertakes political action.

If we consider the contemporary situation and recent research on the global middle classes on the backdrop of these observations, then it is apparent that the numbers of those who have acquired a certain amount of material assets is on the rise in almost all countries worldwide. This is not an emerging bourgeoisie but rather a constantly growing segment of the population with specific interests and needs related to values. These groups do not practice traditional agrarian forms of production and rural lifestyles, nor do they have much in common with the industrial workforce. The interests of these people – who, in quantitative terms, are often self-employed with small businesses or low-level employees in the service sector – aim to secure material assets and the guarantees that contracts can provide; in other words, they seek legal certainty. For most, their interests are based on knowledge and therefore on opportunities for education and training. Last but not least, these people develop the need to pass on property, competence, and status positions to their own children that extend far beyond the opportunities and procedures for transferring property through inheritance in rural societies. In future, researchers will be called on to study whether, in some states or regions of the world, these middle classes undergo sociation processes and whether needs, constellations of interests, cultural forms of expression, and value systems gradually merge across national and continental borders. Then, and only then, would it be appropriate to refer to the global middle classes as a possible substrate for a “society of global citizens”. Currently, the economic, cultural, and political differences presumably far outweigh shared traits and tend to create rather than minimize differences.

Global comparative study of these rapidly and constantly growing middle classes should not only focus on identifying and describing income and assets as well as lifestyle phenomena, in particular consumption. While these factors are most easily tracked systematically and compared, this data lends itself only to surveying commonalities that pertain to outward appearances. If specific patterns of lifestyle (as defined by Weber) are considered, other dimensions come into view. Among the possible questions to be addressed are: What possibilities and expectations exist with respect to political independence and participation? To what extent is education valued as a specific sphere for acquiring global knowledge and to what extent does pertain not only to occupational training and knowledge that is useful in occupational and economic
contexts? Have families assumed or preserved a role as an internal emotional space without representing a dominant formation such as clans or tribes? Have urbandity as a life form and a plurality of values and norms emerged? Only such shared practices in social life – which have been outlined here with a few, by no means exhaustive examples – can form a basis for potentially perceiving these heterogeneous middle classes as a common societal formation.

The appearance and the internal character of the middle classes in each of these countries are influenced by various factors and national circumstances. Besides the economic order – put simply, the extent to which a capitalist market order is dominant – as one factor, there are five further spheres that, I would argue, are especially decisive:

a) What institutional and legal conditions does the state create or make possible? Here, the legal system and the educational system occupy central positions, since they have impacts on the key interests and values of the middle classes. A functioning legal system secures property and contract freedom; qualified educational institutions are essential for creating status opportunities based on achievement.

b) What possibilities exist for political participation through self-administration? The articulation and realization of interests are bound to institutions that promote the sociation of groups and create space for monitored self-regulation of needs. Frequently underestimated forms of local self-administration form the key arena for action in this context. In many regions in which the wealthy middle classes are undergoing enormous expansion, opportunities for gathering experience in political self-administration remain highly limited.¹⁹⁴

c) What class position do the middle classes occupy in each of these countries? The European tradition defined as the "middle" of society and, as a result, the self-image of the middle classes regarding their basic political and social constellations is shaped by the ambivalent boundary shared with those above and the efforts to mark distinctions separating one from those below. In most regions of the world in which the new middle classes are expanding, the question arises whether such frontline positions also exist with respect to those above the middle class. What determines who belongs to the higher class and does it include capitalist property owners with large holdings, political elites in the state apparatus or the military or functionaries in political parties? And what are the goals and challenges in marking distinctions towards those in lower positions?

d) What significance does it have for the formation of the middle classes that today – perhaps with the exception of some Muslim societies – women are also economically and politically active members of society who can own capital and the means of production, acquire qualifications and educational certificates and degrees, and become political leaders?

e) Finally, the crucial and yet seldom explicitly addressed issue of the significance of religion should be considered. Max Weber highlighted the groundbreaking potential of Protestantism. Bernhard Groethuysen, in contrast, emphasized that dissociating oneself from religious prescriptions was a precondition for the genesis of a bourgeois life view.¹⁹⁵ From these starting points we should then examine the impacts of specific socialization patterns and value systems, as they are associated with Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, and the various forms of Christianity found in Africa and Latin America.

The middle classes should not be reduced to a global enrichissez-vous. Such a
perspective reproduces the socio-economic blinders that have become so widespread since Marx' critique of the bourgeoisie (not the Bürgertum!) and has been so misleading. The perceived need for a reliable legal framework, political stability, cultural diversity, and opportunities for individual development are older and deeper in their origins and bind people together more intensely than mere socio-economic goals — and they have been shown to be attractive beyond their historical source in old Europe. Whether the growth of the middle classes leads to social units that can also develop into forces for political action is something that remains to be seen. In any case, these processes are worth studying — another reason why the Bürger continues to be a highly topical subject.[96]

Translated from the German by Paula Bradish.

Footnotes

1. ❧ In German, the term "Bürger" was and is ambiguous and can refer to estatist, legal, political, economic, and socio-cultural aspects depending on the context and can also legitimate both equalities and inequalities. In English there are various terms that are commonly used in different contexts (citizen, burgher, burgess, freeman). Historically, "citizen" was generally applied to the legally free inhabitant of a town or city who was thus able to act politically; however, the word has always also been used to denote all residents of a town. In this respect, the English terminological tradition of the word citizen is closer to the modern concept of general participation of individuals as a legally equal member of a state collective, whose political participation is not distinguished according to economic or social criteria; the contemporary terms are the citizen in English, the citoyen in French, and in German the Staatsbürger. On the various semantic and terminological traditions, see Reinhart Koselleck et al., Drei bürgerliche Welten? Zur vergleichenden Semantik der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft in Deutschland, England, Frankreich, in: Jürgen Puhle (ed.) Bürger in der Gesellschaft der Neuzeit, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991, pp. 14-58.


5. ❧ Citizens with political rights in Athens classic era were by no means all those who received a pension or landowners. Compensation for those who held political offices and especially for those paid for their military service as rowers on the ships of the Delian League meant that citizens without property could also participate in the polity politically and above all militarily.


7. ❧ In English and French, in contrast, a number of different terms have developed, some modifications of the Latin term civitas (in French citoyen, in English citizen) but also modernized words derived from the new defining principle, the area of rule, the "Burg", leading in French to bourgeois, in English to burgher.

8. ❧ See Koselleck/Schreiner, Bürgerschaft.

9. ❧ It should be recalled that the term "Spießbürger" was originally in no way derogatory and referred to a town's less prosperous Bürger. In Hamburg, for example, there were two kinds of rights for Bürger: To attain the higher level, an individual had to pay the sum of 150 marks and be in possession of a musket; the lower form called for a smaller payment and possession of a halberd or Spieß (spear); the weapons were to be used for military service to defend the town, which was mandatory for all Bürger. see from East to West, A Brief Comment on 16th and 17th Century Bürgerschaft: German, English, Dutch, and Scottish, 1.
Among the studies that should be noted are, on the different role models and options for actions for circumstances, for example as widows permitted to head a family business; see Andrea Löther, “Gesellschaft, bürgerliche”, in: Brunner/Conze/Koselleck (eds.), Collected Works, London: Lawrence and Wishart, p. 213; German: Karl Marx, Deutsche Ideologie, University Press 2011; The term used by Marx is “bourgeois society”: Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels, Blütezeit des Bürgertums. Bürgerlichkeit im 19. Jahrhundert, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010; Benno Gammerl, Untertanen, Staatsbürger und Andere. Der Umgang mit ethnischer Heterogenität in the Britischen Weltreich und im Habsburgerreich 1867-1918, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010.

One of the areas in which legal aspects remain perceptible is the question of legal and political opportunities for minorities; see for example Gosewinkel, Einbürgerung und Ausschließung; Gironda, Staatsbürgerschaft. – The legal basis was explicitly abandoned under the Nazi regime, which not only rejected the Bürger semantics and instead emphasized the term Volks (people) but also prioritized purportedly super-individual criteria of “race” and Volks about over legal norms.

Numerous authors have described bürgerliche society and in particular the history of the Bürgertum in categories of rise and fall, see for example Kocka (ed.), Bürger und Bürgerlichkeit; Gunilla Budde, Blütezeit des Bürgertums. Bürgerlichkeit im 19. Jahrhundert, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2009. A further example that has been influential with respect to the decline of the Bürgertum since about 1900 is Hans Mommsen, Die Auflösung des Bürgertums seit dem späten 19. Jahrhundert, in: Kocka (ed.), Bürger, pp. 288-315; and, with more emphasis on the inevitability of decline, Herfried Münkler, Der Erste Weltkrieg und das Ende der bürgerlichen Welt, Halle: Universität Halle-Wittenberg, 2015. A conceptual alternative has been presented in connection with the German terms Formwandel or Gestaltwandel (in English “change in form”), first suggested for research in this context rather in passing but with unequivocally critical reference to simplistic perspectives from social science by Klaus Tenfelde in his outline of possible fields of study for the twentieth century. See Klaus Tenfelde, Stadt und Bürgertum im 20. Jahrhundert, in: Klaus Tenfelde/Hans-Ulrich Wehler (eds.), Der Erste Weltkrieg und das Ende der bürgerlichen Welt, Halle: Universität Halle-Wittenberg, 2015. A conceptual alternative has been presented in connection with the German terms Formwandel or Gestaltwandel (in English “change in form”), first suggested for research in this context rather in passing but with unequivocally critical reference to simplistic perspectives from social science by Klaus Tenfelde in his outline of possible fields of study for the twentieth century. See Klaus Tenfelde, Stadt und Bürgertum im 20. Jahrhundert, in: Klaus Tenfelde/Hans-Ulrich Wehler (eds.), Der Erste Weltkrieg und das Ende der bürgerlichen Welt, Halle: Universität Halle-Wittenberg, 2015. A conceptual alternative has been presented in connection with the German terms Formwandel or Gestaltwandel (in English “change in form”), first suggested for research in this context rather in passing but with unequivocally critical reference to simplistic perspectives from social science by Klaus Tenfelde in his outline of possible fields of study for the twentieth century. See Klaus Tenfelde, Stadt und Bürgertum im 20. Jahrhundert, in: Klaus Tenfelde/Hans-Ulrich Wehler (eds.), Der Erste Weltkrieg und das Ende der bürgerlichen Welt, Halle: Universität Halle-Wittenberg, 2015. A conceptual alternative has been presented in connection with the German terms Formwandel or Gestaltwandel (in English “change in form”), first suggested for research in this context rather in passing but with unequivocally critical reference to simplistic perspectives from social science by Klaus Tenfelde in his outline of possible fields of study for the twentieth century. See Klaus Tenfelde, Stadt und Bürgertum im 20. Jahrhundert, in: Klaus Tenfelde/Hans-Ulrich Wehler (eds.), Der Erste Weltkrieg und das Ende der bürgerlichen Welt, Halle: Universität Halle-Wittenberg, 2015. A conceptual alternative has been presented in connection with the German terms Formwandel or Gestaltwandel (in English “change in form”), first suggested for research in this context rather in passing but with unequivocally critical reference to simplistic perspectives from social science by Klaus Tenfelde in his outline of possible fields of study for the twentieth century. See Klaus Tenfelde, Stadt und Bürgertum im 20. Jahrhundert, in: Klaus Tenfelde/Hans-Ulrich Wehler (eds.), Der Erste Weltkrieg und das Ende der bürgerlichen Welt, Halle: Universität Halle-Wittenberg, 2015. A conceptual alternative has been presented in connection with the German terms Formwandel or Gestaltwandel (in English “change in form”), first suggested for research in this context rather in passing but with unequivocally critical reference to simplistic perspectives from social science by Klaus Tenfelde in his outline of possible fields of study for the twentieth century. See Klaus Tenfelde, Stadt und Bürgertum im 20. Jahrhundert, in: Klaus Tenfelde/Hans-Ulrich Wehler (eds.), Der Erste Weltkrieg und das Ende der bürgerlichen Welt, Halle: Universität Halle-Wittenberg, 2015.


25. ↑ See Ulrich Engelhardt, "Bildungsbürgertum". Begriffs- und Dogmengeschichte eines Etiketts, Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1986, p. 189. In German the terms developed from Gelehrte/Gebildete and Gebilheitenstand in the eighteenth century to gebildete Stände/Klassen (around 1800) and gebildeter Mittelstand (the Vormärz period), to gebildetes Bürgertum (second half of the nineteenth century) to the word Bildungsbürger in the twentieth century; see ibid. There is no comparable study on the word Wirtschaftsbürger; this is also a later neologism but with earlier antecedents. Because of Mann’s critique and polemics against the “bourgeois”, this term was at the center of intensive discussions about the essence of bürgerliche society since the nineteenth century. The debate about the “spirit of capitalism” around 1900 is only one such discussion. See also Werner Sombart, Der Bourgeois, Munich: Duncker & Humboldt, 1923. Sombart’s focus is, however, the intellectual history of modern economic humans and an analysis of capitalism, not a history of the concepts and social development of the Wirtschaftsbürger.


32. ↑ Article Bürgertum, in: Meyers Lexikon online (accessed 18 February 2009; Meyer has no longer been available online since March 2009, Brockhaus since January 2014).

33. ↑ Koselleck et al., Drei bürgerliche Welten?, p. 27.

34. ↑ These new class was composed of “administrative civil servants and clergy, professors and private teachers, scholars and court tutors, syndici and magistrate jurists, judges and Landschaftskonsulenten (legal advisers to the estates), attorneys and notaries, physicians and apothecaries, engineers and manor landlords, writers and journalists, officers and directors of state companies, [...] entrepreneurs [...] who operate publishing houses and factories, protofactories and banks”, and others from the large and diffuse segment of those who earn their living by trade and called themselves “merchants”. Quoted from Hans-Ulrich Wehler, Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte, vol. 1: Vom Feudalismus des Alten Reiches bis zur defensiven Modernisierung der Reformära 1700-1815, Munich: C.H. Beck, 1987, p. 204. In this detailed and illustratory list, the merchants were missing, although they no doubt the largest group quantitatively of Bürgerliche but for which there was least reason to label them as new. In terms of the definition criteria and their own self-understanding, they were certainly among those people with specific social functions who stood outside the traditional estatist order.

35. ↑ In a precise description published in the 1940s, Percy Ernst Schramm noted this characteristic
combination of not belonging to the nobility and at the same time not enjoying the unity offered by the privileges of the town citizenry; Schramm also pointed out why the term Bürgerliche was misleading; Percy Ernst Schramm; Hamburg, Deutschland und die Welt. Leistung und Grenzen hamburgs in der Zeit zwischen Napoleon und I. und Bismarck, Munich; Callwey, 1943, pp. 35-38. Schramm’s work has been largely ignored in later research on the history of the Bürgertum.


37. ↑ Ibid.

38. ↑ This situation must be viewed on the backdrop of the traditional German agricultural structures and the rural order. In other situations, for example Switzerland, the Scandinavian countries, or North America, there was no such sharp distinction between property owners in the countryside and in cities and towns.


40. ↑ This becomes apparent if one considers the two important surveys of the history of the nineteenth century: Thomas Nipperdey, Germany from Napoleon to Bismarck, 1800-1866, Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1996, p. 236, ends his section on the bürgerliche society by asserting that a society had developed "which was strongly divided and differentiated by occupations and classes. It also retained a number of trappings from the older order". In terms of its concept, Hans-Ulrich Wehler’s book is a genuine example of social history: Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte, five vol., Munich: C.H. Beck, 1987-2008. Here, too, the pluralization and diversification of bürgerliche formations dominates. This approach is apparent in the assertion that Bürgertum is a "completely amorphous term" and an "umbrella term used in an undifferentiated way" (I, p. 203; II, p. 174). But in what follows, the social formations of the "Bürgerliche", the "Bebisitz- und Erwerbsklassen" of each sub-formation are described in differentiated terms, one after another (III, p. 112), and finally the term itself is pluralized to become "Bürgertümer"; Wehler, Deutsches Bürgertum nach 1945: Exitus oder Phönix aus der Asche?, in: Geschichte und Gesellschaft 27 (2001), pp. 617-634, here p. 619.

41. ↑ See Jürgen Kocka, Bürgertum und bürgerliche Gesellschaft im 19. Jahrhundert. Europäische Entwicklungen und deutsche Eigenarten, in: Jürgen Kocka/Ute Frevert (eds.), Bürgertum im 19. Jahrhundert. Deutschland im europäischen Vergleich, vol. 1, Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1988, pp. 11-76. According to Kocka, what was decisive for the cohesion of the heterogeneous parts were other factors such as social defenses in confronting those on the outside or bürgerliche culture.


43. ↑ For the best introduction to the research questions pursued by the Frankfurt group, see Lothar Gall (ed.), Stadt und Bürgertum im Übergang von der traditionellen zur modernen Gesellschaft, Munich: Oldenbourg, 1993; also, with work similar to that of the Frankfurt group on Bürgertum led by Lothar Gall, Hans-Walter Schuhmuhl, Die Herren der Stadt. Bürgerliche Eliten und städtische Selbstverwaltung in Nürnberg und Braunschweig vom 18. Jahrhundert bis 1918, Gießen, Focus-Verlag, 1998.


48. Mommens, Auflösung; Budde, Blützeit.

49. See for example figures on Wrocław in the 1870s, where the majority of working males with occupations that qualified them as belonging to the Bürgertum were self-employed; Manfred Hettling, Politische Bürgerlichkeit. Der Bürger zwischen Individualität und Veregesellschaftung in Deutschland und der Schweiz von 1860 bis 1918, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999, pp. 51-52.

50. See Lothar Gall, Liberalismus und "bürgerliche Gesellschaft". Zu Charakter und Entwicklung der liberalen Bewegung in Deutschland, in: Historische Zeitschrift 220 (1975), pp. 324-356, one of the most influential articles on the history of the nineteenth-century Bürgertum. But it was not until the Frankfurt project lead by Lothar Gall began its local studies that the social history was addressed; see especially from the series Stadt und Bürgertum Andreas Schulz, Vormundschaft und Protektion. Eliten und Bürger in Eltern 1780-1880, Munich: Oldenbourg, 2001; Gisela Mettele, Bürgertum in Köln. Gemeinsinn und freie Association, Munich: Oldenbourg, 1998; Ralf Roth, Stadt und Bürgertum in Frankfurt am Main. Ein besonderer Weg von der ständischen zur modernen Bürgerschaft 1760-1914, Munich: Oldenbourg, 1996.

51. The portion of self-employed persons in the commercial and industrial sector remains relatively constant at about 10%. But these figures are misleading, since they include those in agriculture. In fact, the percentage of those self-employed has declined from about one-third of all earners to currently 12%; at the same time, the relative figure for white-collar workers rose from about 7 % (1882) to 61 % (2008). From 1881 to 2008 the portion of blue-collar workers also dropped from 57 % to 27 %; see Rainer Geißler, Die Sozialstruktur Deutschlands. Aktuelle Entwicklungen und theoretische Erklärungsmodelle, Bonn: Abt. Wirtschafts- und Sozialpolitik der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2010, p. 17 (diagram), online at http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/wiso/007619.pdf; Heinz Sahner, Sozialstruktur und Lebenslagen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, in: Oscar W. Gabrie/Evenhard Holtmann (eds.), Handbuch politisches System der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Munich: Oldenbourg, 1995, pp. 43-90 (figures up to 1993).

52. Sasarin, Stadt der Bürger; Schäfer, Geschichte des Bürgertums, refers to "Kernbürger tum" (p. 128).

53. This is a tendency found in the work of Michael Hartmann, Der Mythos von den Leistungseiten. Spitzenkarrieren und soziale Herkunft in Wirtschaft, Politik, Justiz und Wissenschaft, Frankfurt a.M. 2002, including his references to "Großbürgertum".


60. Relevant in this respect are some attempts to analyze the impacts of welfare-state measures on the middle classes; this includes rather extensive comparative evaluations of the situations in Great Britain, France, and Sweden: Dagmar Hilpert, Wohlfahrtssstaat der Mittelschichten? Sozialpolitik und gesellschaftlicher Wandel in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (1949-1975), Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012.


62. See Hilpert, Wohlfahrtssstaat.


64. Lepsius, Sozialgeschichte des Bürgertums, p. 80; as a complement, one could also address the role of special actions and rituals that are significant in the process in which the heterogeneous middle classes become a specific social formation.

65. This is the starting point of research on the Bürgertum lead by Lothar Gall, which centered on urban phenomena and thus on citizen rights as a constitutive factor: Lothar Gall, Bürgertum in Deutschland, Berlin: Siedler, 1989.

here pp. 42-43 ("no estate, no class – one culture?").


69. Schulz, Lebenswelt, p. 3.


73. It should be noted here that the author of this text favors this approach; cf. Hetting, Bürgerliche Kultur.


75. Hans-Ulrich Wehler has described this utopia quite succinctly but reduces it in my opinion politically to the liberal version. Although the liberal utopia has played a central role since the nineteenth century, it is not the only possibility: Hans-Ulrich Wehler, Die Zielutopie der "Bürgerlichen Gesellschaft" und die "Zivilgesellschaft" heute, in: Lundgreen, Sozial- und Kulturgeschichte des Bürgertums, pp. 85-92.

76. Despite the undisputed complexities of social circles of the bürgerliche and the nobility especially in the Saatzeit, those who belonged to the Bürgertum played the decisive role in this process.


79. Hetting, Bürgerliche Kultur; stimulated by Eibl, Poesie; Tenbruck, Kultur.

80. In this sense, Bürgerlichkeit offers a range of answers to similarly diverse questions, just like classic religions do.


82. Examples for this are found in Hetting/Hoffmann, Wertehimmel, including how the ideal of self-employment is realized in individual life forms, sociability, and loyalty in personal relationships.


91. ↑ The *Global Wealth Report* published by the insurance company Allianz offers data on a "global wealth middle class" defined as including those whose capital assets amount to between 30 and 180 % of the global mean value of assets per capita (17 700 euros in 2013). According to the report, since 2000, 65 million people have slide down from the wealthier classes but 491 million have gained higher status. Altogether, nearly one billion people worldwide belong to this "global wealth middle class". There are significant regional differences: Since the year 2000, the portion of the total population considered to belong to this category has doubled in Latin America, increased three-fold in Eastern Europe, and seven-fold in Asia. Around 2000, 60 % of the members of the "global wealth middle class" lived in North America and Europe; today the figure is only 30 %. Allianz Global Wealth Report 2014, pp. 13-15, https://www.allianz.com/en/economic_research/publications/specials_fmo/agwr14e.html?search.query=Allianz%20OR%20Global%20OR%20Wealth%20OR%20Report%20OR%202014&search.filter=-_contentType:editorial.

92. ↑ The differences in the middle classes within the national borders of the various threshold countries should not be underestimated. There is a majority of "vulnerable middle classes" who, for example when they become unemployed, can experience a dramatic loss of social status or be forced to return to the countryside, and there are the "invisible urban middle classes who are much closer to living a global lifestyle; "vulnerable" and "invisible urban" are categories used by Popp, *Mittelschicht*.

93. ↑ Examples of descriptions from social anthropology can be found in Carla Freeman/Rachel Heiman/Mark Liechty (eds.), *The Global Middle Classes. Theorizing through Ethnography*, Santa Fe: SAR Press, 2012.

94. ↑ See for example the studies on the "Chinese" middle classes in China and Taiwan by Hsiao (ed.), *Chinese Middle Classes*, here p. 10 and pp. 234-248, which emphasize that although there are preferences for specific political values, there are hardly options for political actions outside of the Communist Party and the state.


96. ↑ Marx presented a reduced understanding of the *Bürger* as bourgeois defined in terms of "class" and at the same time was able to offer a positive interpretation of the citizen, because as a citizen, the *Bürger* was divested of his class-defined status; Riedel, *Bürger*, pp. 716-719.

**Recommended Reading**


Gall, Lothar (Hrsg.), *Stadt und Bürgertum im Übergang von der traditionalen zur modernen Gesellschaft*, München 1993: Oldenbourg
