

The Global Political Economy of the 1%

Call for Contributions

Edited by

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Important Dates

- Abstracts (250 words or less) due April 30, 2012 by email to tdimuzio@uow.edu.au
- First drafts due by November 1, 2012.

Call for Contributions

While the internationalized Occupy Wall Street movement faces many strategic and organizational challenges, one of its major accomplishments has been its ability to draw global attention to the massive disparity of income, wealth and privilege held by 1% of the population. Such attention comes amidst a relatively synchronized global financial crisis, a mounting first world debt crisis in parts of Europe and the United States and the intensification of neoliberal policies. While political science and sociological study has shed light on elites and the wealthy in the past, with some recent popular exceptions, there has been a dearth of research on the culture, politics, built environments and psychology of the global rich in the new gilded age.

To redress this gap in the literature, this edited volume calls for a more focused and engaged study on what could be called the global political economy of the 1%. Such a project could help shed light on the massive chasm between this elite class of wealth holders and the rest of the global working class – the majority of whom subsist on less than US\$2 a day and increasingly live in informal settlements as the dialectic of dispossession and urbanization continues its historical dance. Of course, it should be emphasized that a global political economy of the 1% does not preclude (and nor should it) the unavoidable social relations

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between the 1% and the 99%. However, recent literature has already enriched our understanding of how poverty, unprotected workers, and the everyday life practices of the seemingly mundane impact upon the wider global political economy. So a keen, yet non-restrictive, focus on the political economy of 1% and the global income/wealth hierarchy is welcome.

All abstracts will be accepted and reviewed with sincerity. Selections for inclusion in the volume will be evaluated on the basis of original content, coherence and consistency with the general theme as well as the necessity of creating coherent sub-themes. Sub-themes are suggested here to organize research questions but are not necessarily the themes of the volume (contingent upon contributions).

Topics and questions that could be addressed in such a volume include *but are not limited to* the following:

The Unusual Suspects: Identifying the 1%

- How far and in what ways is it possible to identify the 1%? Are they constituted by their class consciousness (and if so how?) or just statistically by the ownership of income generating assets?
- A related question to the above: How does the 1% conceptualize its own class position? What evidence is there for supporting this viewpoint? How far and in what ways can the 1% be said to have a coherent worldview?
- Can the 1% be disaggregated? Should it? Should we really be talking about the .10% or the .01%? Why? See for example: <http://krugman.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/01/19/corporate-taxes-and-the-01-percent/>
- What does the 1% look like from a geographical perspective focused on their built environments? Can this tell us anything about their politics/view of the world/and future expectations?
- Are people within the 'working class' part of the 1%? If so, what does this mean for our understandings of class hierarchy? See for example: www.theglobalrichlist.com
- Should the 99% be disaggregated? See for example Stephen Gill's sketch of global class hierarchy in *Power, Production and Social Reproduction*.

The Social Reproduction of the 1%

- What are the tactics, strategies and technologies mobilized by the 1% and its supporters in order to reproduce its class position?
- A related question to the above: What institutions, processes, policies and mechanisms help reproduce the political economy of the 1%?
- How have the debates over the 1% and the 99% been portrayed in the leading financial presses such as the *Financial Times*, *The Economist* and the *Wall Street Journal*?

- How is individual wealth in the 10s of billions justified in political/philosophical arguments? See for example 'The Undeserving Rich' in *Dollars and Sense* <http://dollarsandsense.org/archives/2010/0310alperovitzdaly.html>
- Is there a historical relationship between slavery/colonialism and the 1%?
- Braudel: is the 1% a law of history?
- How should we understand the relationship between sabotage, ownership, social positionality and the 1%?
- Are we operating with a discrete/silent 'biological' or Social Darwinian understanding of the deserving rich? Is a genealogy of this trajectory possible? What would it look like?
- How do historical narratives about the progress and the accumulation of wealth support global inequality? How have they become dominant narratives about human nature and the naturalness of capitalism?
- Does 'celebrity culture' play any role in reproducing and sustaining the 1%?
- What is the relationship, if any, between advertising, marketing and the 1%?
- What is the relationship between surplus carbon energy, capitalism and the 1%?
- Does the World Economic Forum (or perhaps other institutions) represent the interests of the 1% and if so how?
- Is there a relationship between gender, the 1% and social reproduction?

Culture, Consumption and the 1%

- Fitzgerald: Do the rich really live different to you and me?
- What are the 'new' luxuries and how are they advertised to the global rich? For example, what does a discourse analysis or political economy of *How to Spend It* look like and what can we learn from such an investigation/genealogy?
- How might we compare historical understandings of luxury/conspicuous consumption with current trends in the consumption patterns of the global 1%? See, for example, Frank's *Richistan*.
- How does art reflect the 1% or resistance to global inequality? (Damien Hurst anyone? Or maybe Banksy (other artists) as a counter?)
- The 1% within countries. For example, what is the social, political, economic and cultural and historical relationship of the 1% in [insert country/region here] to the 99%?
- How does the 1% defend itself materially (think panic rooms, private militaries etc...)?
- How are investment houses and strategic investors thinking about the emergence of a global 'plutonomy'?
- Has the language of 'class war' been appropriated by the 1%? How do the 'bonus' cultures of financial institutions operate and what are/is there any justification(s) for these schemes?

Power, Resistance and the 1%

- What are the strongest arguments against the 1% and the gross disparity of income, wealth and privilege?
- How has resistance been mobilized against the 1% and how might this be different from or similar to earlier forms of class struggle and working class internationalism?
- What new tactics, strategies and technologies might be mobilized against the gross inequality on the planet and the wealth of the 1%?
- What is the relationship between democracy, crisis and the 1%?
- Can we make the argument that there is a coherent 99%? Can such a conceptualization/slogan be used not just as a rallying cry in times of crisis but a tool to support a new political agenda and new forms of consciousness?