

The Emergent Middle Classes in Timor-Leste and Melanesia: Conceptual Issues and Developmental Significance



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Introduction

The emergence of a middle class has been identified as an important factor driving economic and political transitions in Asia and Africa. Class has been 'happening' in the broader Pacific region¹ for some time, as Gewertz and Errington (1999:2) observed of Papua New Guinea (PNG). Nevertheless, to date, little systematic policy attention has been given to questions of class. We believe that the concept of an emerging middle class provides a useful entry point for understanding significant developmental and political transformations in Timor-Leste and Melanesia and is important for informing development policies. However, in order to explore the potential consequences that an emergent middle class may have, it is necessary to first consider how such a class can be identified in the region. We have chosen to focus on Timor-Leste, PNG and Solomon Islands because these countries are undergoing comparable social and economic transitions, many of which correlate strongly with the emergence of a middle class. Such changes include rapid economic growth driven by resource booms in Timor-Leste and PNG, associated formalisation of regional economies, deepening urbanisation, increasing social integration with metropolitan powers through growing diaspora communities, changing consumption patterns, and the transformative impacts of social media following recent internet and mobile telephone penetration.

This paper has three substantive sections. First, it considers contemporary discussions of class and development in Asia and other developing regions. Second, the paper develops a multidimensional framework for identifying an emergent middle class, drawing on a range of economic, political

and social criteria. Finally, the paper uses these criteria to examine recent developments in each of three case study countries and then draws some conclusions on the developmental and political significance of an emergent middle class in the broader Pacific region with a view to establishing a longer term research agenda.

The Developmental and Political Significance of the Middle Class

The international community, including leading development agencies such as the World Bank, Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), has become increasingly interested in the developmental significance of the emerging middle classes in late developing countries (ADB 2010; Easterly 2001; Ferreira et al. 2013; OECD 2010; Ravallion 2009). Such interest reflects the apparent correlation between the emergence of middle classes and wider transformative processes of economic and political change. Emergent middle classes have been variously associated with nascent processes of capitalist consolidation (Adelman and Morris 1967; Weber 1976 [1930]), urbanisation (Boone 2012; Huntington 1968; Pye 1969; Reissman 1970), globalisation and cosmopolitanism. As an analytical concept, an idealised middle class is often understood to be at the vanguard of processes of economic modernisation and development, resulting from a combination of middle-class values and economic behaviours (consumption, thrift, entrepreneurialism) (Banerjee and Duflo 2007; Easterly 2001; Kharas 2010). Moreover, the middle class is said to be naturally politically liberal, supporting democratic



transitions and pluralism (Fukuyama 1993; Koo 1991; Lipset 1959; O'Donnell et al. 1986; Van Beuningen 2007). In this context, policy makers are interested in how to support the consolidation of a middle class through deliberate policy and institutional arrangements (ADB 2010:29–36).

More critical analysis grounded in particular country contexts (Chen and Lu 2011; Crouch 1993; Dong 1993; Jones 1998) points to more ambiguous roles for the middle classes in processes of economic and political development. Middle classes may derive political influence in developing countries by playing a role as an intermediary class (Khan 2010) that mediates processes of economic and political transformation on behalf of foreign investors, local capitalists and other elite interests. As a substantive social group in any country, the middle class may play an important role in consolidating distinctive political settlements determinative of inclusive or exclusive political orders (Barbara et al. 2014; Ingram 2014; Slater 2010).

Policy interest in the emerging middle classes has followed broader economic transitions occurring in different regions. The success of the East Asian developmental states and the general growth of middle classes in Asian countries has spurred particular policy interest among international development agencies such as the Asian Development Bank and World Bank in how the middle classes might be supported to catalyse development (ADB 2010). The identification of a burgeoning middle class with rapid economic development in many Asian countries, particularly China but also the developmental states of South Korea, Thailand, Vietnam and Malaysia, and more recently India, has spawned a significant policy literature on the relationship between the middle class and economic development, and how policy support for an emergent middle class may help catalyse economic transitions. More recent economic transitions in Africa (African Development Bank 2011) and the Americas (Ferreira et al. 2013; OECD 2010) have similarly given rise to significant policy interest in emergent regional middle classes.

To date, interest in the Pacific middle classes has largely been confined to anthropological studies (Besnier 2009; Cox 2011, 2013, 2014a;

Cox and Macintyre 2014; Gewertz and Errington 1999; Gooberman-Hill 1999; Hau'ofa 1987; James 2003; Martin 2013; Sissons 1998). Unlike Asia, the relevance of the middle classes as significant development actors in PNG, Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste has received little academic or policy attention. This is in part because the utility of the middle class as an analytical category in the Pacific has been assumed to be limited, not least because the region has been understood (by colonial administrators and local elites alike) as one split between (modern) urban 'élites' and the (traditional) subsistence 'grassroots' (Cox 2013, 2014a) — a division that cannot account for new economic aspirations or socio-economic and cultural change, except in moralistic or nostalgic terms (Dickson-Waiko 2003; Gewertz and Errington 1999; Golub 2014; Hau'ofa 1987). This pervasive regional ideology fails to capture the complexities of societal change in a region characterised by rural subsistence economies, economic underdevelopment and political clientelism; but also by rapid economic and social change, increasing urbanisation and a range of post-colonial fragilities.

One likely reason for the policy community's relative neglect of the emerging middle class in the Pacific is the narrow economic framing of the analytical category. Much policy analysis, particularly that led by multilateral financial institutions such as the World Bank and ADB, tends to emphasise the economic consequences of an emergent middle class, privileging correlations between the middle class and economic growth as the focus of study (ADB 2010; Banerjee and Duflo 2007; Easterly 2001; Kharas 2010; OECD 2010). Such analyses rely heavily on economic measures such as income, expenditure and/or consumption to identify the middle class and ascertain its consequences. Based on such measures, the Pacific fares poorly, where economies are characterised by high degrees of informality and subsistence agriculture with low per capita incomes. As such, policy literatures on the emergent middle class have not translated well into a Pacific context which is generally treated as the exception to the rule. For example, a recent major study by the ADB on economic development in the Asia-Pacific region included a special focus on the role of emerging

middle classes, but largely excluded the Pacific (ADB 2010).

There are, however, a broad range of analytical criteria relevant to the broader Pacific region, by which a middle class might be identified. Political scientists, economists and sociologists have opted for different approaches in the definition of the middle class, reflecting different conceptual interests in engaging with social class. Certainly, efforts to identify the middle class have been plagued by the ambiguity of the concept (Barnes 1995; Kharas 2010). Indeed, some have questioned the utility of the category 'middle class' as an explanatory tool, suggesting that class interests should be subsumed into more useful analytic concepts such as social movements and collective action (Barnes 1995:172–92). 'In sociological terms, a social class is expected to have a certain homogeneity of characteristics, and possibly a consciousness of its identity and role as a group' (OECD 2010:73). Sociological definitions have focused on a range of criteria such as property ownership, educational credentials (Weber 1961), employment status (Erikson and Goldthorpe 1992) and skills to identify the middle class. Historical analysis of the middle class has focused on the impact of emergent middle-class values and interests on shaping economic and political development transitions, such as Weber's (1976 [1930]) analysis of the 'Protestant work ethic'. Political scientists have also been interested in the relationship of the middle class to processes of democratic consolidation. Using a multidimensional approach that looks beyond narrow economic indicators, it becomes apparent that the concept of an emergent middle class is relevant to understanding contemporary processes of economic and political change currently underway in the Pacific.

Identifying the Middle Class? Key Analytical Categories

Though it is beyond the scope of this paper to provide a full review of debates over social class, this section identifies a practical set of analytical criteria that might be used to identify an emergent middle class in the Pacific region. An effective definition of the emerging middle class must

acknowledge both significant material differences across regional middle classes and qualitative differences in terms of middle-class values, aspirations and behaviours. It should also, ideally, account for the structural factors and distinct development contexts that give rise to quantitatively and qualitatively different middle-class formations. There is a growing recognition among policy makers that a multidimensional approach to the study of class is required, with a range of conceptual tools employed depending on the focus of the research. As the ADB's influential report on the rise of Asia's middle class put it:

... there is really no single, universally accepted definition of what constitutes a middle class. Nor is there a need for one. The definition should depend on the purpose at hand ... if the objective is to compare the characteristics of the middle class in a country to those of the poor or of the rich, or to study the middle class in a particular country over time, a relative approach or an approach based on non-income characteristics might be appropriate. (ADB 2010:13)

In this section, we draw on recent studies of the emerging middle classes in Asia and Africa that have a similar purpose in investigating social, political and developmental changes in an underdeveloped region. Modifying some of this work, we propose six analytical categories that provide a multidimensional approach to the study of the Pacific middle classes:

- 1) income
- 2) occupation, skills and education
- 3) vulnerability
- 4) self-identification
- 5) urbanisation
- 6) political participation.

Applying these six analytical categories will allow us to capture some of the important political and developmental trends that are emerging in the Pacific.

1. Income

Income measures of the middle class, arising predominantly from economic studies, draw on a range of relative and absolute methodologies that locate a middle class on income, investment

and expenditure scales (per capita incomes, per capita consumption etc. (Easterly 2001; Kharas 2010)). A number of approaches can be identified in the economic literature, reflecting differing assumptions and study objectives (ADB 2010:13). For example, the World Bank (2007) has defined the middle class in absolute terms as having incomes falling between USD4000 and USD17,000 in 2000 purchasing power parity (PPP) terms. By contrast, Banerjee and Duflo (2007) define as middle class those with per capita expenditures of between USD2 and USD10 per day (adjusted for PPP). This compares with the United States poverty line of USD13 per day and raises important questions on the utility of stand-alone income measures. Easterly (2001) used the range of the 20th and 80th consumption distribution percentiles to identify middle-class individuals, a measure that does not map well onto the study countries where, typically, 75–85 per cent of the population are believed to rely on subsistence agriculture and have minimal access to cash. Kharas (2010) has used daily consumption expenditure of USD10 to USD100 per person.

Identifying the middle class by income measures is problematic, particularly when trying to draw cross-country comparisons. As a statistical measure of the ‘middle’ which can be applied in any country context, identifying the middle class as those falling within relative in-country income ranges risks avoiding critical questions about whether middle-class incomes allow income earners to participate in middle-class lifestyles. The ability of an income to deliver a lifestyle recognised as middle class is inevitably bound to its particular socio-economic context.

Both absolute and relative income-based methodologies can be problematic when comparing the middle class across countries, particularly between developed and developing countries. Most economic definitions agree that the new global middle classes are quantitatively different from the middle classes of high-income countries. This is not only because the income brackets are much lower (an income of USD2–4 per day would be considered well below the poverty line in the United States or Western Europe), but also because these new middle classes

are emerging in very different social and political contexts (Guarin and Knorringa 2013:3). Reliance on income levels to determine class risks setting arbitrary thresholds (Burger, Steenkamp et al. 2015) that group together homogeneous cohorts of individuals without paying broader attention to life chances and other middle-class attributes and affinities. Reliance on income measures alone, while important, lacks sufficient analytical depth to provide a useful basis for interrogating the broader developmental and political significance of the middle class.

Some researchers have sought to distinguish between the ‘developing world’s middle class’ and the ‘Western world middle class’ (Ravallion 2009). Birdsall (2007) has developed a hybrid definition combining relative and absolute approaches, setting an income threshold that defines the middle class regardless of country context. She defines middle-class individuals as those consuming ‘the equivalent of US10 or more per day, but who fall below the 90th percentile in the income distribution’ (Birdsall 2007, cited in ADB 2010:5). This approach reflects an assessment that those earning below this absolute threshold ‘are too poor to be middle class in any society’ while excluding those ‘people who are rich in their own society’ (ADB 2010:5).

Income-based measures of the middle class point to the importance of economic growth in explaining the growth of the middle class (ADB 2010:15). Countries benefiting from resource-based growth, or deeper integration into global economies, are likely to experience expansion of their middle class. Research has shown that middle-class participation in regional and global labour markets has been important in generating remittances contributing to reductions in poverty, with the educated middle class better positioned to access migration opportunities and to obtain better paying jobs (ADB 2010:21).

Similarly, resource-driven economic growth across Melanesia and in Timor-Leste over the past decade suggests there is an emerging economic foundation for the rise of a middle class in these countries. Further research is required to determine whether the level and distribution of increasing national income is enabling the rise of a significant middle class. To the degree that income changes are

occurring in the Pacific region, the relatively small size of formal economies means that the number of people earning absolute incomes sufficient to support regionally significant middle-class consumption and lifestyle aspirations is likely to be small.

2. Occupation, skills and education

Sociological studies have emphasised the importance of education, occupation and skills as indicators of class position. The middle class are said to occupy a distinct place in the social hierarchy of capitalist economies, reflected in the particular jobs they hold in the service or tertiary sectors (ADB 2010:23). Middle-class occupations are generally understood to encompass professional, managerial, technical and administrative roles (Burger, Steenekamp et al. 2015). There are a range of stereotypical occupations which may be recognised as middle class, including public servants, lawyers and the medical profession. Social scientists have developed a broad range of measures that seek to categorise occupation types and use these to make assessments of the nature of social stratification in particular societies (e.g. Lambert and Bihagen 2014). Such measures recognise the interrelationships between the division of labour, inequality and occupation. These include occupational prestige, occupation-linked job characteristics such as education requirements, and income and employment status (Ganzeboom and Treiman 1996). The utility of complex occupational measures, most based on developed capitalist economies, is questionable in developing country contexts where the range of occupations can be expected to be fewer and the status and prestige differences across occupations arguably more stark. ADB research of emerging middle classes across Asia has found large variations in occupation characteristics across countries (ADB 2010:25).

Employment measures can also be used to identify the emergent middle class. Research by the ADB on the emerging middle class in Asia has found that the middle class are both self-employed and employed as wage and salary earners. However, formal wage and salary employment is the most important form of middle-class employment,

particularly for the middle and upper middle classes (Banerjee and Duflo 2007). For the lower middle classes — those earning between USD2 and USD4 per day for the ADB study — self-employment becomes increasingly important as individuals ‘buy jobs’ (Banerjee and Duflo 2007). In developing countries the core of the middle class may be based in the public sector and be heavily dependent on the state. The ADB has observed wide variations in the proportion of the middle class working in public sector employment across countries, ranging from 17 per cent in India to 74 per cent in Vietnam (ADB 2010:25). The assumption that many middle-class people are entrepreneurs is problematic in developing countries where self-employment can be a marginal and precarious activity. Scholars of China (e.g. Hsiao 2014) refer to the ‘marginal middle class’ to encompass clerical workers, street traders and sellers. In developing country contexts ‘the average middle-class person is not an entrepreneur in waiting’ and ‘[i]f they do run a business, it is usually small and not very profitable’ (Kharas 2010:10).

If occupation and skills are important determinants of membership of the middle class, then education itself becomes a decisive factor in class formation. Weber (1961) identified the importance of education qualifications as key credentials underpinning access to middle-class occupations and social status. Bourdieu (1984) has identified education as an important way by which cultural capital can be obtained, which is necessary to access membership of the middle class. Education is important as a mechanism of social formation and the production of class ideologies and values. For example, higher education has been found to play a fundamental role in processes of elite formation, nation-building and developmental leadership (Brannelly et al. 2011; Foster 1995). According to the ADB (2010:25), ‘university education is much more common in the middle class than in the poor population’, but with significant cross-country variation measured across Asia. Education is also a key mechanism by which social class is transmitted across generations (Ferreira et al. 2013). The middle class are generally more educated than the poor, and ‘are more likely to invest in the schooling of their children’ (ADB 2010:21).

The precariousness of development transitions, including in the Pacific, means that investments in human capital do not necessarily guarantee economic advancement or consolidation (Sharp et al. 2015), particularly for young people who are educated but not in regular or secure employment (Standing 2009). For example, analyses attuned to the role of education in regional class development would be sensitive to the distinction between domestic educational pathways, and scholarship-based foreign education. In many Pacific countries, access to the latter increasingly depends upon intergenerational privilege and connections, suggesting that current inequalities may become entrenched and amplified over time.

3. Vulnerability

Being middle class requires an ability to maintain social status and lifestyle options that derive from one's occupation. This, in turn, depends on successful management of risk and uncertainty, and continuity of income and employment (Sharp et al. 2015). According to Banerjee and Duflo (2007:26), 'Nothing seems more middle class than the fact of having a steady well-paying job'.

The degree to which the middle class is economically secure will reflect a broad range of factors including the nature of production but also institutional arrangements regarding employment security, labour market bargaining power and the relative scarcity of skills (Burger, Steenekamp et al. 2015). Goldthorpe and McKnight (2004) note the links between class and economic vulnerability, whereby the security of employment contracts is a significant factor influencing economic security, economic stability and economic prospects. The middle class are middle class in part because they have been able to benefit from more secure employment relationships leading to predictable income. Lopez-Calva and Ortiz-Juarez (2014) have developed a vulnerability approach to define class in which non-poor households who nevertheless face significant chances of returning to poverty cannot be considered as middle class. Their vulnerability approach sets a minimum income floor as a basis for identifying the middle class, because such a floor 'allows individuals to protect themselves from falling into poverty over time'

(Lopez-Calva and Ortiz-Juarez 2014:26). According to Burger, Steenekamp et al.,

This distinction between vulnerability and security aligns with other important divides, including the separation between financial independence and reliance and on a short and longer time horizon, which in turn has associations with savings behavior and human capital investment decisions. (Burger, Steenekamp et al. 2015:31)

The rapid growth of Asia's middle class has been characterised by a significant degree of vulnerability (ADB 2010:32). This reflects the importance of self-employment and semi-formal employment in accounting for household economic transitions, whereby the emergent middle classes are thus distinguishable from the poor but, in many cases, only just (Guarin and Knorranga 2013). Differences characterised by relatively modest income differentials may be highly sensitive to economic shocks. Following the 1997/98 Asian Financial Crisis, the number of middle-class individuals in Indonesia (earning between USD2 and USD20 per day) fell by some 4.8 million or 10 per cent (ADB 2010:32).

Middle-class responses to vulnerability may thus result in very different class-based approaches to development and politics. The ADB (2010:35) observes that '[t]he evidence strongly indicates the role that formation of stable jobs, increased education, and safety nets can play in allowing individuals to reduce their vulnerability to poverty and increase their chances of remaining middle class.' In developed economies, the middle class has responded to vulnerability through the construction of welfare states as core features of national political settlements (Esping-Andersen 1990). In the context of weak development and scarce economic resources, where the economy is characterised by a high degree of precarity, constructing effective social protection systems can be difficult (OECD 2010). In such circumstances, middle-class strategies designed to reduce vulnerability may be directed at accessing 'extra-local resources', and become a key project for middle-class individuals. This requires establishing 'dependable links to the outside world, through which one can claim access to material resources

(e.g. money, objects, travel) and symbolic ones (e.g. taste, knowledge, style)' (Besnier 2009:218).

4. Self-identification

Whereas identification of the middle class may be discerned objectively through measures of income, vulnerability and employment, it can also be assessed through subjective measures based on self-identification. This approach relies on perceptions of relative social standing and the tendency of individuals to associate with other individuals who share similar characteristics and experiences. It is important to recognise that being middle class is not the same as feeling middle class. In a 2010 review, the OECD found that only 40 per cent of Latin American citizens who identified as middle class could be considered so using conventional income measures of class (OECD 2010:74).

The ADB (2010:12) has found a wide variation across Asian countries regarding individual understandings of what forms the middle class. A significant proportion of high-income earners consistently identify themselves as middle class, as do many precarious wage earners.

Self-identification of class is nevertheless an important means of identification because it points to more symbolic and aspirational markers, such as material consumption and the nature of social participation. According to Besnier,

... being middle class is not measured in terms of whether one 'belongs' to an objectively defined grouping, but is rather a matter of whether one engages in social and cultural projects that have no particular end in sight, but that mobilise time and energy in the daily existence of those concerned. (Besnier 2009:218)

The few studies of the emerging middle class in the Pacific have tended to focus on ideational and self-identified characteristics. A number of anthropological studies have used the concept of the middle class to investigate social transformations in the region (Besnier 2009; Cox 2011, 2013, 2014a; Foster 2008; Gewertz and Errington 1999; Golub 2014; Hau'ofa 1987; Monsell-Davis 1993; Sissons 1998), not least around changing gender roles (Cox and Macintyre 2014; Dickson-Waiko 2003; Macintyre 2011; Spark

2011, 2014, 2015). These studies focus on how new social distinctions are being made on the basis of income, profession, education or cultural capital (Gewertz and Errington 1999; Golub 2014; Hau'ofa 1987). Changes in income have driven shifts in consumer behaviour in relation to clothing, food, communications, transportation and leisure. These new practices and technologies may in turn become markers of middle-class cosmopolitan connection, ownership of national identity or distinction from 'grassroots' lower classes or traditional communities (Besnier 2009; Foster 2002; Gewertz and Errington 1999; cf. Burger, Louw et al. 2015). There is also interest in the development of national identity and how this interacts with more cosmopolitan outlooks and behaviours (Besnier 2009; Cox 2011; Cox and Macintyre 2014; Foster 2002, 2008; Macintyre 2011; Spark 2014, 2015). Middle-class consumption patterns may also be symbolically important in developing countries with access to consumer goods signifying status and prestige (Besnier 2009; Foster 2002).

Subjective definitions of class raise the prospect of a potentially significant gap between notionally objective income-based measures of class and perceived social status. The aspiration to become middle class may be important in shaping unfolding economic and political transitions and emerging political settlements. In some cases, the precariousness of one's middle-class status may also be a source of tension. For example, Cox (2014a) has observed that, as the rising cost of living in PNG leaves middle-class salary earners feeling precarious, many are complaining that they no longer feel that they enjoy the benefits of citizenship available to a previous generation of educated Papua New Guineans. In other cases, middle-class aspirations may feed into broader nation-building agendas. For example, in Solomon Islands, a small middle-class leadership group was important in the decision to establish the Solomon Islands National University which had ambitious nation-building aspirations (Barbara and Walsh 2015).

While subjective, perceptions of being middle class may be significant in driving processes of economic and social change:

Arguably, the ideal for a society is not simply to have many people in the middle sectors,

but rather many people who really identify with the post-modern and non-materialistic values of the self-described middle class. If being middle-class is seen as feeling middle-class, then it is educators, opinion formers, thinkers and artists — rather than just economists or governments driven by material well-being or economic growth — who will be the agents of effective change. (OECD 2010:75)

5. Urbanisation

Emerging middle classes in transition economies outside the Pacific region have had a strong urban dimension. The growth of a middle class in Asia correlated strongly with processes of industrialisation, advances in farming technology and shifts from rural to urban-based industrial modes of production. The density of urban towns and cities supports economies of scale, divisions of labour, and technological innovations which enable higher levels of economic growth and income (Fox 2013:10). The sociology of urban communities also lends itself to forms of intense civic participation and monetised market relations, and thus supports the consolidation of middle-class values and political behaviours. ‘Urban living transforms social organisation, social values, and the role of the individual in community and society’ (ibid.). National sentiment in ethno-linguistically diverse emerging states tends to be most prominent in urban enclaves. Urban centres are typically more ethnically heterogeneous, further removed from traditional communities and authorities in the regions, and exhibit a higher degree of integration into the political, economic (and formal educational-linguistic) life of the nation-state (Leach et al. 2013). Reviewing the interest of early development theorists in processes of urbanisation, Fox notes:

Urban living was ... seen as a stimulus for the cultivation of social attitudes, beliefs, and values conducive to capitalist development, as well as a force for political consolidation and the development of nationalism. In urban areas social relations based on kinship, clan and tribe are augmented and replaced by those based on occupation, income,

location of residence and forms of recreation. Social mobility, both horizontal and vertical, is greater in cities due to the diversity of economic activities and the possibility to obtain regular waged employment. And urbanisation has long been associated with reduced fertility rates, which results in slower population growth and enhanced freedom for women as they gain more control over their reproductive cycle. (Fox 2013:11)

The urban basis of the emergent middle class is likely to support very different forms of economic and political development to those arising from the subsistence/rural economies that characterise large parts of the Pacific. Rural–urban migration from highly traditional clan societies fosters new or hybrid forms of sociality in urban centres, creating identities which are more contestable, politically, ideologically, or morally (Martin 2013). Urbanisation also results in changing political and social aspirations and thus can drive political development including the emergence of political parties. A property-owning urban middle class will engage with politics in distinctive ways, shaping how power is ordered in societies ‘since urban populations are more likely to demand systematic attention by the state to development policy, aligning spending and developing the tax base accordingly’ (Craig and Porter 2014:12). In addition, regional societies with strong restriction on foreign ownership of land may see the rise of a local ‘comprador’ class, fronting foreign investments.

Fox (2013) notes the ambiguous evidence regarding whether urbanisation contributes to or reduces political unrest. On the one hand, social proximity within urban areas may be more conducive to collective action and/or political unrest, including by making political organisation easier. On the other, urbanisation can dampen political unrest by facilitating public good provision and improving living standards, supporting social integration and unifying nationalist sentiments. Of particular relevance to Melanesia, emerging commercial, educational and technocratic middle classes are held to be instrumental to nation-building processes, emerging primarily in urbanised capital city contexts as the ‘vanguard’ of newer

cultures, removed from the localism of traditional rural areas.²

While industrialisation is limited in the Pacific, urban centres have been subject to high levels of internal migration after independence for those in search of service jobs or educational opportunity. Rural–urban migration has been a major feature of Pacific societies, and a considerable source of social tension. In colonial times, there was tight control over in-migration to towns, which were largely reserved for the colonial and commercial elites (Koczberski et al. 2001; Ranck 1977). This pattern changed dramatically with independence. According to Haberkorn (1992), Melanesia's urban population tripled from a mere 7 per cent of the region's total population in 1955 to 20 per cent by 1985, which he attributes to rural–urban migration. At current rates, he claims (Haberkorn 2008) urban populations in Melanesia are set to double in the next 25 years. In PNG, much of the recent urban migrant population has become concentrated in peri-urban fringe settlements, which have become a source of crime and sometimes social friction (Goddard 2005), although also home to many middle-class salary earners (Sharp et al. 2015). In Timor-Leste, almost half of Dili's population is composed of internal migrants, and most of this inward migration is recent (Neupert and Lopes 2006).³ Understanding the nature of urbanisation including the distinctive nature of urban political economies will be important to identifying and understanding the political and developmental significance of the regional middle class.

6. Political participation

The middle class is assumed to be socially significant in its presumed impacts on politics. While the middle class should not be understood as sharing a common ideology or having homogeneous political views and priorities, its political significance lies in part in an underlying set of values which are influential in framing local and national politics. The notion of class consensus has been raised by scholars and policy makers to distinguish the middle class as a political entity from other forms of social movements and collective action (Barnes 1995; Easterly 2001). As a social class, the middle class are potentially

politically significant because members of a social class are likely to behave in similar ways in similar situations (Barnes 1995; Standing 2009), and constitute a scaled political constituency capable of influencing local politics in ways distinct from small-scale lobby groups and civil society organisations.

Understanding class dynamics and context can therefore assist us in understanding processes of social change and development. To the degree that the middle class constitutes a substantive proportion of the population, the middle class can be expected to provide social ballast in changing societies and potentially help stabilise political settlements. The issue of scale raises important questions in the Pacific region where an emergent middle class is likely to be small.

Recent policy interest in the emerging middle classes has focused on the significance of middle-class values and their compatibility with good governance and economic liberalisation. Donor interest in the emerging middle class stems in part from concerns with political accountability, where it is assumed that middle-class self-interest ensures a strong predisposition to support capitalist production, good governance (or at least reliable contract enforcement) and political stability. In reviewing data on Asian middle-class values, the ADB (2010:26) found the 'middle class to hold significantly more progressive views in terms of openness to market competition, gender equality, upward mobility, trust, political activism, and technology than the lower class'.

One way in which the emergent middle class may be identified is in how they participate in politics, and the nature of their active citizenship (Cox 2009). In developed countries, one of the stabilising benefits conferred by a growing middle class may be its contribution to social capital. Signifiers of an emerging middle class in developing countries may be a deepening ecology of social organisations such as church groups, civil society organisations and voluntary associations. More formalised political organisation may be an important marker of political transition as the middle class moves to protect urban, material interests at the expense of traditional tribal and village affinities. As noted in the previous section,

the urban basis of the emerging middle class lends itself to more active forms of political participation.

Analyses of the Asian middle classes highlight the importance of specific developmental contexts, and situated individual case studies. Thus for example, urban Thai middle classes may oppose authoritarianism, but fear the extension of democratic power to rural citizens, who they regard as uneducated and likely to upset political settlements and sound policy formation (Laothamatas 1996). Thus, while they may act as ‘critical citizens’ (Norris 1999) — holding government to account — they may not necessarily be viewed as enthusiastic democrats. For their part, rural classes may see the state as a ‘countervailing power’ and a means of checking the economic power of higher classes (Albritton and Bureekul 2012).

The middle class may occupy key positions in patrimonial political economies in which personalised authority systems have merged with ‘impersonal elements of governance, like a legal system that demarcates the public and private domain, or an administrative code with formal criteria for staff hiring and promotion’ (Kelsall 2011:77). The middle class may also be beneficiaries of political patronage, and equally implicated in political economies in which political order is based on clientelism and corruption (Pitcher et al. 2009). Absent a developed capitalist-based middle class, political elites come from ‘intermediate classes’ comprising educated and petty bourgeoisie (Khan 2010).⁴ Political entrepreneurs from this class have leadership skills well suited to forms of development underpinning local politics. For example, educated Solomon Islanders are well placed to act as intermediaries between local communities and foreign logging companies (Hameiri 2012). This intermediary class is politically fragmented and does not share common interests focused on the viability of the capitalist economy.

Alternatively, when confronted by a more dominant economic class, middle classes may adopt more democratic attitudes making strategic alliances with working classes or peasantry (Rueschemeyer et al. 1992). Tang et al. (2009) conclude that whether the Chinese middle class

proves to be an agent of democratisation will be determined more by its perceptions of its own strategic interests in particular developmental contexts. Other case studies in Asia and Latin America suggest that middle-class attitudes to democratisation are ambiguous, especially where these classes are dependent on state contracts or employment and may be essentially oriented against political change. We anticipate being able to draw similar conclusions from our case studies in Timor-Leste and Melanesia, although in these smaller countries, political participation is more likely to be mediated through personalised patronage networks than large-scale, class-based identities.

The Middle Class in Timor-Leste and Melanesia

Drawing on the overview above, how relevant is the concept of the middle class in Timor-Leste and Melanesia? Can a middle class in these countries be clearly identified? If so, is the middle class likely to behave in ways that are developmentally and politically significant? What economic, political, social and cultural values will the middle class in each country bring to bear on their societies and the region?

The following section draws on the analytical concepts identified in the previous section to make some preliminary assessments of the utility of the concept of the middle class for understanding the developmental and political transformations in Timor-Leste, PNG and Solomon Islands. The case studies will provide a comparative basis for assessing how different middle-class values and interests emerge from distinct contexts within a similar regional setting (in contrast to normative global middle-class experiences).

Papua New Guinea

PNG is a country of extremes of wealth and poverty, with social inequality exacerbated by the recent economic boom driven primarily by the construction phase of the Papua New Guinea Liquefied Natural Gas (PNG LNG) Project (UNDP 2014). Growing resource rents have underpinned shifts in what was a highly aid-dependent state to a more regionally assertive and confident state. This is exemplified in PNG’s shift from heavy aid

dependence to its sometime role as an aid donor to Melanesian neighbours such as Solomon Islands, where PNG has funded roads and contributed to flood relief. PNG's scale, growing wealth and political complexity mean that traditional donors such as Australia and New Zealand are less able to exert a significant influence on development directions than in the past.

The resource boom has given rise to significant economic growth in other sectors, notably communications, construction and retail (Oxford Business Group 2014), enabling new forms of formal employment that are conducive to the consolidation of a middle class. Most of this growth is concentrated in Port Moresby, the national capital and PNG's largest city.

Economic development is also fuelling new forms of self-identification. Recently constructed retail centres, such as the Vision City Mega Mall in Waigani, opened by the Malaysian logging giant Rimbunan Hijau in 2011, have created new spaces where the citizens of Port Moresby may adopt consumer and leisure practices such as shopping, eating in cafes or seeing Hollywood blockbusters in a cinema that are now typical of the middle classes globally (Burger, Louw et al. 2015). Where anthropologists (e.g. Foster 2002; Gewertz and Errington 1999) have previously documented the development of class distinction in PNG through modern patterns of consumption and social life, this has been largely understood within a national framework. Contemporary developments suggest that the new middle class of PNG will have a much more global outlook in its consumer tastes and other values than before (cf. Besnier 2009; Cox and Macintyre 2014). *Stella* magazine, a successful women's lifestyle magazine initiated by a middle-class PNG entrepreneur, articulates these cosmopolitan values among a new generation of educated women (Spark 2014, 2015). New consumer orientations and tastes notwithstanding, middle-class Papua New Guinean values and aspirations are usually articulated in Christian language, particularly in its Pentecostal forms that are oriented towards global images of personal prosperity (Cox 2014c; McDougall 2013).

Since the entry of Digicel into PNG's telecommunications sector in 2007, the use

of mobile phones and other information and communication technologies have grown rapidly in urban centres and across the country, greatly expanding the possibilities of business and interpersonal communication and networking (Lipset 2013; Suwamaru 2014). Use of Facebook in PNG has increased tenfold in the past four years (Cox 2014b). Facebook and other social media, particularly blogs, have created a vibrant public sphere where much middle-class political debate now takes place (Logan 2012).

Newly built apartment blocks and suburban developments cater to some of the housing needs of the middle class in Port Moresby. Some middle-class people have enough money to invest in urban real estate, often buying land and then building housing on it. At the same time, the limited supply of land and high costs of housing in Port Moresby and other urban centres mean that many Papua New Guineans, even those in regular professional employment, live in peri-urban informal settlements, securing land in informal agreements with customary landowners (Sharp et al. 2015).

Nevertheless, the nature of economic development in PNG has a high degree of precarity. The high cost of living in Port Moresby and PNG generally is a regular lament of middle-class Papua New Guineans (e.g. Kowa 2011). Where previous generations of public servants and other professional workers could expect to have a reasonably high standard of living, including access to formal housing in the urban centres, now there is a pervasive feeling that PNG's 'working class', as middle-class wage earners are increasingly describing themselves, are missing out on the nation's economic prosperity (Cox 2014a). These complaints often take the form of critiques of corruption among the nation's leaders but, to date, have only occasionally translated into political mobilisation around specific issues.

Equally, economic development has not significantly changed the nature of political participation. Political mobilisation remains an extremely difficult task in the context of PNG's persistently clientelistic political system (Kurer 2007). For politicians, political advantage is determined not in a liberal public realm where they are called to account for their decisions but in

the securing of support from their clients through petty disbursements of cash and other incentives. The political system has a profound bias towards the rural population and many town dwellers return 'home' to the provinces to vote. Consistent with Khan's (2010) concept of the intermediary class, many professional men (and some women) consider running for office 'at home' as the end point of their careers. Few of them are successful but their engagement with the political system has historically focused on such attempts to enter the patronage system, rather than representing any distinct interests and values of the urban middle class.

In recent years, some political leaders have emerged embodying distinct middle-class values. The Governor of Port Moresby, the Hon. Powes Parkop, has introduced *Yumi Lukautim Mosbi* (Tok Pisin: 'let's look after Moresby'), an urban renewal project aimed at making Port Moresby more livable. The project has included improved public transport and children's playgrounds among its various initiatives but its most notable focus has been on the appearance of the city, particularly in cleaning up rubbish and graffiti. Part of this attempt to clean up the city has been the Port Moresby 'buai ban', a criminalisation of the important informal sector betel nut economy. The rationale for the ban is based on the need to prevent the unsightly spit and rubbish produced by consumers but also includes public health arguments about mouth cancer and nutrition. The ban reflects middle-class perspectives which associate the informal economy with criminal activity (Sharp 2013).

Solomon Islands

Unlike PNG, where economic growth is underpinning the emergence of a new middle class, in Solomon Islands constrained economic development has arguably constituted a check on the development of a middle class. On the face of it, the structural basis for an emergent middle class in Solomon Islands appears weak. One of the largest countries among the island states of the Pacific, with a population of some 550,000, Solomon Islands is an economically underdeveloped, low-income country still trying to overcome the ravages of the civil conflict (known as 'the tensions')

suffered from 1998 to 2003 (Barbara 2014). Some 80 per cent of the population relies on subsistence or semi-subsistence agriculture and fishing for their livelihoods (World Bank 2010:2). The country is struggling to develop its basic industrial and service sectors. The country is heavily reliant on primary exports, such as copra, timber, fish and palm oil. Solomon Islands has a small retail, construction and manufacturing sector within a fragile private sector that may lack the scale required to sustain a sizeable middle class (Humanitarian Futures Program 2013). Solomon Islands is highly aid dependent, and is expected to remain so for many decades. In 2012, overseas development assistance was equivalent to one-third of Solomon Islands' annual GDP, or USD300 million (World Bank 2013:12).

Solomon Islands' economic structure provides a limited foundation for an emergent middle class. There are a limited number of skilled jobs available that might be considered middle class. According to the 2009 census, there were only 43,000 formal sector jobs in Solomon Islands out of a combined total of 208,000 jobs, including informal and subsistence employment. Most formal non-farm sector jobs were unskilled. According to Curtain (2013:27): 'Only one-in-four (26 per cent) occupations are in the top three skill levels. Professionals account for nearly one-in-five (18 per cent) of the non-farm workforce. These are occupations that in most instances require a post-secondary qualification.'

While not accounting for the majority of formal jobs, public sector jobs are arguably those most likely to sustain a local middle class. While there are many low-skilled public sector jobs, securing higher level managerial jobs in the public sector is a key way of entering Solomon Islands' small middle class. Public sector jobs are highly sought after and jealously guarded once obtained, not the least because of their relatively generous benefits and continuity. Most senior public service jobs are based in Honiara, with provincial governments under-resourced (Cox and Morrison 2004).

Solomon Islands also has a small but influential 'intermediary class', comprising overseas tertiary educated professionals who work in the interstices of the state, donor and logging economies, mediating economic and political relationships,

oftentimes on behalf of international donors and international corporations (Hameiri 2012). Hameiri (2012:418) notes the emergence of a group of educated individuals ‘with networks beyond the village’ that have emerged to broker logging agreements between companies and villages, taking a share for themselves. Such individuals have the resources and social connections necessary to support middle-class lifestyles.

While much sought after, many public service jobs are nevertheless low skilled and incapable of supporting a middle-class lifestyle. It is at the higher end of the public service where public servants can begin to be considered middle class. The public sector basis of the Solomon Islands middle class suggests it will enjoy a degree of security. Indeed, the importance of public sector employment in Solomon Islands’ weak social protection framework has seen public sector numbers inflated and made efforts to reform the public service difficult. Senior public sector jobs can, however, be very precarious. Middle and upper level public service managers, along with the burgeoning number of local political advisers brought to office when their political patrons are elected, must be situated within a broader patronage economy. Obtaining high public service office can be lucrative. Many senior public servants use their position to leverage political careers (Corbett and Wood 2013). But the vicissitudes of public life also go some way to explaining the ephemeral nature of the middle class, with the economic and political fortunes of middle-class senior public servants waxing and waning with the fortunes of political patrons.

Deepening urbanisation in Solomon Islands, concentrated in Honiara which accounts for some 20 per cent of the national population, provides another, albeit limited, foundation for a local middle class (Gooberman-Hill 1999). With an annual urban growth rate of 4.7 per cent, Solomon Islands has one of the highest rates of urban growth in the Pacific (UN Habitat 2012:7). Rural–urban migration is the main force driving urbanisation in the country (ibid.:12), with the urban population estimated to be around 25 per cent of the total population by 2020 (ibid.:11). But urbanisation has been poorly managed, with urban

life for many being precarious. According to UN Habitat (2012:12), ‘rapid urban growth is evident in the prolific growth of informal settlements, peri-urban villages and the informal sector’ such that the ‘growth rate of informal settlements (estimated to be more than 6 per cent per annum) exceeds the urban growth rate’. In Honiara, informal settlements account for an estimated 35 per cent of its population.

The nature of urbanisation in Solomon Islands militates against an expansive and politically engaged middle class. Craig and Porter (2014) argue that while the urban predominance of Honiara as the centre of political and economic power in Solomon Islands should intuitively result in an influential middle class, an anti-urban political bias and an electoral gerrymander favouring the predominantly rural population — reflected in a highly clientelistic form of politics (Cox 2009) — means that most economic rents are distributed away from the capital and the emergent middle class are marginalised from substantive power. According to Craig and Porter:

the weak incentives to allocate urban citizens more resources or political power undermines the emergence of a property-owning *middle* class and impacts on how power is ordered ... Urban middle class actors, business people and public servants, are largely excluded from wider political pacting, party formation, and settlement. (Craig and Porter 2014:12)

While its economic and urban foundations may be weak, it is possible to discern important shifts in consumption patterns and values that indicate a tenuous, but nevertheless emergent middle-class identity. Most notable is the obvious impact of new internet technologies on social and cultural life. Mobile coverage has increased significantly, rising from 21 per cent in 2010 to 60 per cent in 2012 (Logan 2014), enabling increasing numbers of Solomon Islanders to engage with, or aspire to, middle-class lifestyles and values. The internet has also enabled greater access to financial services, facilitating greater levels of entrepreneurialism and improved access to the formal economy (Humanitarian Futures Program 2013:14).

The position of Solomon Islands’ middle class in the senior echelons of the public sector and business

suggests it may be politically influential. However, there is limited evidence that it is politically liberal. Middle-class public servants are more likely to be implicated in patronage politics rather than to be a highly progressive force for liberalisation and accountability. That said, internet technologies have enabled some new forms of civic participation, which may speak to a more progressive activism. Most notable is the Facebook-based Forum Solomon Islands International, whose membership is composed of an urban-based elite concerned with issues of political accountability (Finau et al. 2014; Wood 2015). This forum has become one of the few places in Solomon Islands where citizens discuss what may be called a middle-class agenda centred on issues of nation-building, political reform and development.

Solomon Islands has a middle class, but it is small, precarious and implicated in a local political economy which militates against liberal political participation. Moreover, the fragility of Solomon Islands' economy, its dependency on aid, and its limited growth prospects mean the middle class is likely to remain small. Urbanisation and the globalising impact of emergent technologies may support the emergence of a new generation of middle-class citizens, but the impact at this stage appears small.

Timor-Leste

Timor-Leste is a resource-rich but lower middle income economy in which growing state oil and gas revenues are driving processes of urbanisation, private sector development and state-consolidation. Economic growth above 10 per cent per annum from 2007 to 2012, driven by government spending of returns on USD16 billion petroleum fund, has fostered a small, urbanised and potentially fragile commercial middle class, highly dependent on government infrastructure and construction development contracts. Modest jobs growth has likewise been driven by the expansion of public sector employment, estimated at some 40,000. Timor's National Strategic Development Plan (Government of Timor-Leste 2011) cites the need for extensive public investment to promote a local business sector as a long-term development strategy. These small, emerging classes are highly

urbanised: the Timor-Leste Demographic and Health Survey 2009–10 found the top income quintile included 58 per cent of the urban population but only 9 per cent of those in rural areas (NSD and ICF Macro 2010). By contrast, subsistence farming remains the predominant economic activity of up to 75 per cent of the national population.

Timor-Leste is highly dependent on oil and gas revenue, which constitute 95 per cent of state revenue. It strongly exhibits the characteristics of a rentier state, in which the state is the prime intermediary between the oil and gas sector, and the rest of the economy. Revenues are a prime source of capital expenditure and the major driver of employment growth (Neves 2013), both in terms of public sector employment and indirectly through construction contracts. One-third of national private sector employment comes from the construction industry, estimated to provide 20,000 jobs (Neves 2013). Some 80 per cent of private sector jobs are based in Dili, with the remaining 12 districts sharing the balance. Tax collection is generally ineffective, a feature which also limits the development of some norms of political accountability between taxpayers and the state. The judicial sector is generally regarded as a weak state institution, plagued by inadequate training, judicial shortages, and translation issues making contract enforcement a slow and unpredictable process. Timor-Leste's high-cost low-skills economy is proving difficult to diversify, with economic activity continuing to centre on public sector spending of finite oil and gas revenues, raising the spectre of the 'resource curse', in which development of other more sustainable industries is neglected, and maladies such as political corruption and clientelism may be facilitated.

The government's approach to economic development relies on large-scale spending to 'fast-track' infrastructure projects and to promote development of an entrepreneurial class, both in terms of attracting foreign investors to large projects and a local entrepreneurial class to smaller projects. To this end, recent budgets have focused on infrastructure spending — mostly in the form of contracts let to the private sector — and representing some 40 per cent of the 2014 budget.

By comparison, expenditures on education (11 per cent), health (5 per cent) and agriculture (2 per cent) have been modest despite the latter sector still representing the majority of East Timorese subsistence livelihoods. A relatively small number of contractors with strong political connections, including former veterans of Timor-Leste's long independence struggle, are key recipients of state contracts. Pension payments to veterans are also a particular focus, representing 5.8 per cent of the 2013 budget, a figure which exceeded the monies spent on the security sector. Beyond this, claims that other infrastructure contracts had been proffered to less celebrated figures — with a history of involvement in civil unrest or criminal activities — led some commentators to claim that the government's strategy was to 'buy' peace (ICG 2013), to ensure stability in the short- to mid-term as Timor-Leste recovered from the debilitating 2006 political–military crisis. In sum, these developments point to a deepening urban–rural divide, and the emergence of a small but wealthy middle class, highly dependent on state largesse and with distinctly clientelistic ties to politically powerful groups, and supportive of the political status quo (ICG 2013).

Timor-Leste's new middle classes comprise several numerically small but politically significant groups, whose own recycling of state rents creates wider networks of obligation and patronage. Aside from the veterans and other favoured recipients of infrastructure contracts, these include a small commercial class, represented by the Chamber of Commerce. The wealthiest among these groups own properties in Timor and also in 'prestige' locations like Bali. Among this group, sometimes overlapping, are the 'old' Chinese business class of Timor that dominated commerce in the colonial era and still retain significant properties. Smaller again is the dynastic elite of older Mestiço families, the remnant of a colonial elite whose ownership of significant parcels of now valuable land, including some coffee plantations, survived the Indonesian interregnum. Significant too are the foreign middle class, dominated by Portuguese and Australian expatriates and 'new' Chinese investors from the People's Republic of China, who are strongly visible in Dili and through the course of a decade

of state-building became firmly enmeshed in the local economy, providing an important source of employment for Timorese security firms, domestic workers and nannies. Each of these groups is instrumental to newer forms of consumer culture evident in Dili, exemplified by Timor Plaza, and its projection of an international middle-class lifestyle. Finally, the large group of 40,000 East Timorese public servants form an important national lower middle class, and a main object of aspiration for domestic university graduates, signalling the critical importance of state-based employment on middle-class formation.

Conclusion: Is the Concept of the Middle Class Useful in the Pacific?

Consideration of the role and significance of the middle class in contemporary analysis of political and developmental change in Timor-Leste, PNG and Solomon Islands has been minimal. This reflects the general assumption that the concept of the middle class is largely irrelevant in a region understood through predominantly traditional and subsistence terms. Such an omission fails to engage with the very significant transitions that are discernible across the region over the past decade.

Taking a broad definition of the middle class, using the measures identified above (income; occupation, skills and education; vulnerability; self-identification; urbanisation and political participation), it is possible to discern the basis of an emergent middle class in each of the three country case studies. Significant transitions across the region, including resource (or aid)-driven economic growth, regional integration and the impact of social media, are resulting in significant structural shifts capable of sustaining an emergent middle class. A cursory familiarity with the three case study countries provides ample evidence of significant shifts in consumer habits, education and life strategies for urban-based citizens, which align strongly with expected middle-class aspirations and behaviours.

What is not known is the scale of the emergent middle class in each country. Further empirical research embracing a multidimensional approach to understanding the middle class is required to make more definitive assessments within individual

national contexts. It is clear, however, that the middle class, as an increasingly important social group, is likely to shape processes of political and developmental change and the construction of new political settlements. The different economic and social foundations upon which the emergent middle class may be based are likely to result in quite distinct middle-class formations in each country. In Timor-Leste, oil-based growth and a once strong tradition of elite cooperation in the face of colonial oppression could yet result in a more developmental middle class who exert political influence in ways similar to the East Asian experience, pending the outcome of recently moderating intra-elite tensions. In Solomon Islands, high aid dependence and the importance of state-based employment manifest in a more muted middle class dependent upon prevailing socio-political arrangements. In PNG, rapid increases in resource rents combined with weakening state structures may feed into a decoupled middle class, committed to economic development but with ambiguous connections to a central state.

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Endnotes

- 1 We use the 'broader Pacific region' as a gloss for Timor-Leste, Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands but intend the term to be flexible and potentially inclusive of other Pacific islands countries. Similarly, 'Melanesia' in this paper is shorthand for PNG and Solomon Islands.
- 2 Hildred Geertz (1963), writing of Indonesia, referred to this as the development of a 'metropolitan superculture', which comprised elements of political ideology, consumption patterns, everyday use of national rather than local language, facility with foreign languages and people.
- 3 Dili's population grew from 100,715 in 1999, to 173,541 in 2004; increasing again to 193,563 in 2010 (RDTL 2010) despite the intervening influence of 2006 political–military crisis.
- 4 Khan describes intermediate classes as those 'that are not asset-rich to the extent that their incomes are primarily from rents, profits, interest or other components of the economic surplus, nor are they so asset-poor that their incomes primarily come from labour' (Khan 2006:723).

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