This is my final year of writing my doctoral dissertation, which I plan to submit next month. The title of my Ph.D. thesis is "The Institutional Political Economy of the Middle Class in Developed Countries".

Over the past year I finished to write the first draft of my dissertation, In light of the recommendation of my accompanying committee – I made lots of improvements including an expansion of the theoretical framework, additional statistical tests for sensitivity analysis, etc. I summary my main findings and contribution:

Following the financial crisis of 2007-8, the strength and vulnerabilities of the middle class have come to occupy a central role in the discussion of economic recovery. Despite the interest in the middle class, rigorous scholarship of the subject has been sparse. This neglect may be correlated with the standard method used by most economists to measure the strength of the middle class, almost invariably, by different cut-points of income distributions and by virtually none existing theory to explain the economic imperatives of the middle class as a critical economic engine for economic long term growth.

The approach which I developed guided me to use better statistical tools to study the middle class as a subset of the population that benefits from a bundle of privileges that protect their access to education, housing, pension funds, and other economic assets, forming a set of expectations and values that explain the pattern of behavior. The LCA model which I use has unique advantages as it allows multiple factors to co-define the middle class and tests the importance and the precise effect of each aspect of what it
means to be in the middle class. A social class is an underlying (latent) construct that is not observed directly.

The results of my analysis of the three cases of Israel, the UK, and Italy indicate a significant change in class structure, to more polarized class stratification. I also found that what distinguishes the poor from the middle class, are quality employment, education, real estate, excess pension, and health care. These conclusions notwithstanding, I found significant variance across the cases studied. My approach enabled us to analyze the different class divisions in each country, to understand in more depth the unique characteristics of each group, and thus, allows the tailoring of policies that can specifically help each group. Thus, for example, I found that in Israel, the core middle class does not need more housing, (while the new middle class does), but rather infrastructure that will make the labor market more accessible to members of the middle and lower classes. The lower class in Israel needs more skills adapted to the modern labor market, while in Italy, the lower class, first of all, requires new and unique incentives to enter the labor market. In the UK, it seems to be all about an educational system that has left the middle class desperately behind the educational needs of the current labor markets.

The main objective of my future career trajectory is to study and examine policies aimed at improving global economic and social well-being. My main areas of interest are Welfare Public Policy, Economic Inequality, and Social Mobility.