

# The cultural production of inequality: lessons from the UK.

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# Lecture plan

- The decline of class argument, and its problems
- The importance of cultural aspects of class.
- Findings from the Cultural Capital and Social Exclusion project.

# The decline of class?

Traditionally class is seen as fundamental to British social identities (e.g. Marshall et al 1988) and political mobilisation but recent interventions argue it is of declining significance

- ‘End of class theorists’ (Giddens, Beck, Bauman)
- Emphasis on ethnicity/ religion as the fundamental social marker (e.g. Hall, Gilroy, Modood)
- Government policy, influenced by ‘social exclusion’ discourse
- Even, surprisingly, stratification theorists, e.g. Goldthorpe.

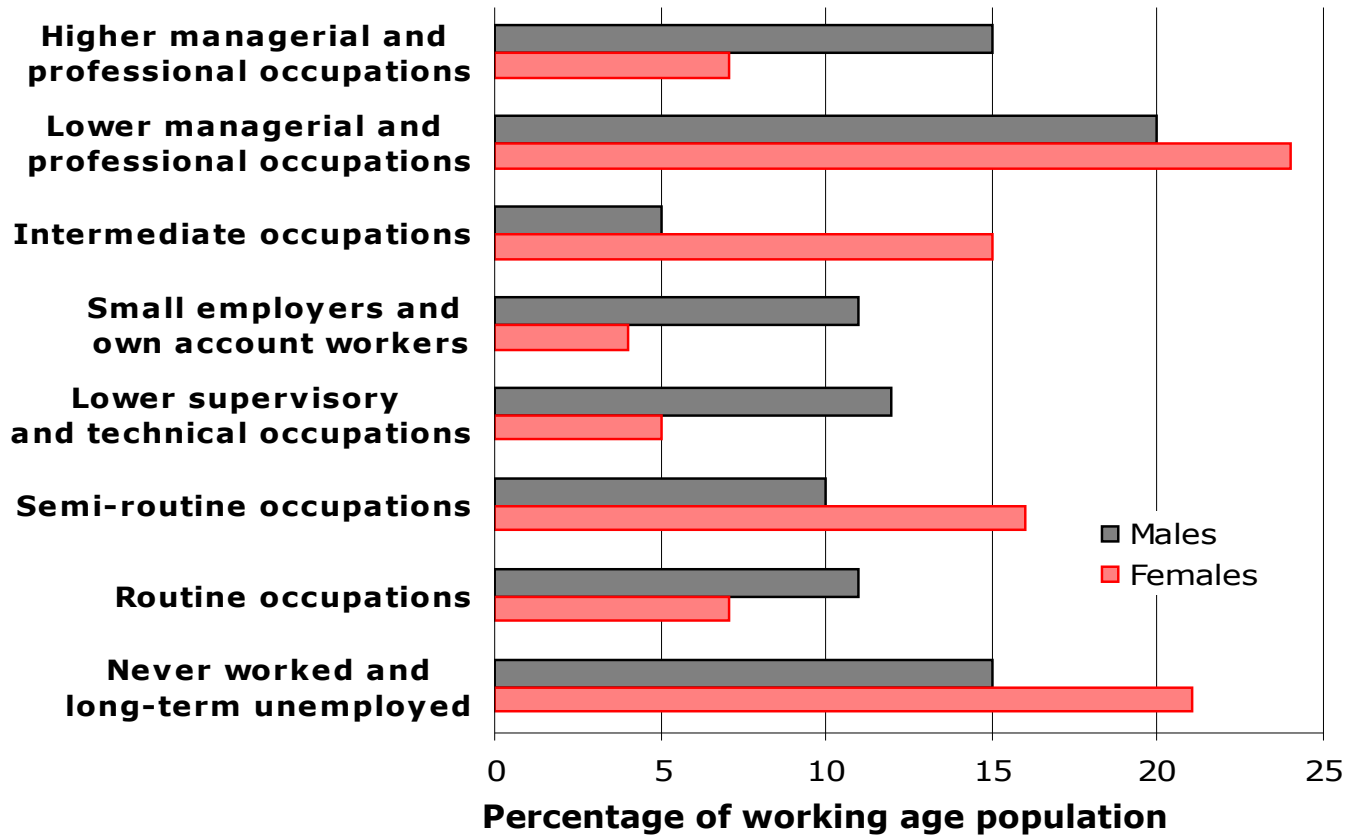
# Or, the 'paradox of class'

- Structural class divisions are hardening, yet culturally, class seems less important to people's identities and values. How can this be?
- Shift from a *class formation* paradigm (Marx, Weber) to a *disorganised class* (Bourdieu) approach. In the latter, the power of class lies in its hidden, latent, character.
- How do we understand the relationship between class structure and class action in these neo-liberal times?

# The power of the 'class structure'

- Since 1980, conducted in the shadow of Goldthorpe's class schema which distinguishes
  - 'Service class' of professionals and managers
  - Intermediate class of supervisors, technicians, self employed and senior white collar
  - Working class employed on a labour contract
- This class schema is validated from the 1980s and in 2001 becomes central to the new, official National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification
- The Nuffield paradigm opposes both 'gradational' (e.g. Cambridge scale) and Bourdieusian (multi-dimensional) approaches to stratification
- This approach has no developed concept of culture, and relies on rational choice (cost/benefit) framing to explain the importance of culture.

# Socio-economic classification: by sex, 2005



Source: Social Trends 36 (2006) Office of National Statistics

# New interests in culture & class

- Since the mid 1990s, there has been a striking revival of class analysis conducted outside the Nuffield paradigm. Key writers include Stephen Ball, Simon Charlesworth, Tim Butler, Fiona Devine, Diane Reay, Andrew Sayer, Bev Skeggs, Valerie Walkerdine, Alan Warde. Indicative work includes
  - *Rethinking Class, culture, identities and lifestyle* (ed Devine, Savage, Scott and Crompton)
  - *Sociology*, special issue on 'class and identities', December 2005.
- Emphasis on fluidity of class relations, their hesitations and avoidances, predominantly using qualitative research.
- A significant impetus is the desire for critical analysis of social change under a Labour government that claimed to be 'progressive' but refused to mention class.
- Bourdieu is the central theoretical reference point of this new work, but his claims about cultural capital have not been explicitly tested in the UK using both quantitative and qualitative research.

# Aspects of the new cultural paradigm

There appear to be major shifts of emphasis

- From occupation to culture, lifestyle and consumption
- From primacy of the working class to that of the middle class
- From class formation to neo-liberal markets
- From the visibilities to the invisibilities of class
- From class centrism to intersectionality
  
- Relates to a broader shift away from a notion of the class structure anchored in the division of labour to a 'capitals, assets, resources model' which focuses on accumulation and convertibility, rather than relationships of exploitation
  
- Shift from an 'structure-consciousness-action' model, to a 'culture as resource/ cultural framing' model.... Or, from 'class' to 'classification'.

*How do we research cultural capital?*



# Researching Cultural capital

The concept of cultural capital has been used since the 1960s, especially by educational sociologists, to explain the success of middle class kids in the educational system through their possession of the dispositions and capacities to outperform their peers.

Most British sociologists have two very different 'takes' on cultural capital

1. 'Old-school' stratification sociologists have generally been critical of Bourdieu though they have not systematically measured cultural capital directly
  - Halsey and educational inequality (parental education taken as surrogate for cultural capital)
  - Goldthorpe and class inequality (premised on RAT approaches)
2. British cultural sociologists have emphasised (some) theoretical aspects and not his methodological and empirical endeavours
  - Featherstone, Lash & Urry on post-modernism and the new petty bourgeoisie
  - the almost exclusive use of qualitative case studies (Charlesworth, Skeggs etc)

Tony Bennett, Elizabeth Silva, Alan Warde & I set out to measure cultural capital through emphasising the need to place habitus and cultural capital within the contexts of cultural *fields*, namely music, reading, film, TV, sports, art, leisure, eating out. (Researchers, Yaojun Li, Modesto Gayo-Cal and Dave Wright)

# But what is cultural capital?

Bourdieu sees cultural capital as implicated in the reproduction of class privilege. It involves a distance from 'everyday life', and some kind of tension between high and low culture, but there are different forms this might take:..

- The 'Kantian aesthetic', distance from the necessary
- 'Snob' culture or 'the leisured aesthetic'
- The institutionalised 'canon' (through familiarity with cultural artefacts legitimised in education curriculum)
- The 'cultural omnivore' (Petersen, Bryson, Erickson)
- 'national cultural capital' (Hage)

These definitions relates to different understandings of the middle class. Is there a divide between 'industrialists' and 'intellectuals', or can we see them united in a broader 'service class'.

# *Cultural Capital and Social Exclusion*

- Funded by UK Economic and Social Research Council, 2003-06 to examine
  - Whether cultural capital can be detected in Britain, and if so, what forms it takes
  - How cultural capital relates to economic and social capital
  - How cultural capital relates to issues of social exclusion and class inequality
- The major British study to use Bourdieusian perspectives in the UK
- Team members are Tony Bennett, Mike Savage, Elizabeth Silva and Alan Warde. Researchers were Modesto Gayo-Cal and Dave Wright.

# Fieldwork

- Project includes 25 focus groups, 60 in depth interviews, and national survey of 1564 respondents, plus ethnic boost of 200.
- Survey questions on 8 cultural subfields, tapping taste, participation and knowledge
  - TV – stations watched, programmes (dis)liked, frequency of viewing
  - Film - genres & directors (dis)liked, frequency of attendance
  - Music - genres & artists (dis)liked, attendance at musical event
  - Reading – genres and writers (dis)liked, books read,
  - Visual arts – genres & artists (dis)liked, works possessed,
  - Eating out – kind of venues (dis)liked
  - Embodiment – sport, body modification, clothes, style
- Also questions on economic and social ‘capital’; domestic division of labour; parents’ cultural interests and background; respondents’ social, cultural and political attitudes

# Geometric Data Analysis (GDA)

- Used by Bourdieu to unravel the organisation of the 'space of lifestyles', but nearly entirely neglected in English language social science
- Is a 'descriptive' form of analysis, rather than a 'hypothesis testing' one (cf Andrew Abbott)
- Adapts a form of principal components analysis to locate responses as coordinates in geometric space according to categorized responses to 165 modalities, (derived from 41 questions) covering taste for, and participation in, music, reading, eating out, sport,
- We can then inductively interpret the axes to empirically assess which cultural practices are related and to consider what forces separate practices out.
- By superimposing socio-demographic variables on this 'space of lifestyles' we can assess how far the cultural patterns revealed appear to socially structured

Aided by Johs Hjellbrekke (Bergen), Brigitte Le Roux, and Henry Rouanet (Paris V).

# Construction of 'space of lifestyles'

- We used 41 questions: 17 of participation, 24 taste, with 161 modalities, and 1529 individuals
  - Television, 2 participation, 3 taste
  - Films, 1 & 2
  - Reading 2 & 7
  - Music 5 & 7
  - Visual Arts 4 & 2
  - Eating out 2 & 2
  - Sport 1 & 2
- We recoded most modalities into three categories,
  - Never (participate) or do not like (taste)
  - Sometimes (participate) or indifferent (taste)
  - Frequently (participate) or like (taste)

# Bourdieu's use of GDA

- Bourdieu argues there are three dominant axes in 1960s France
  - Axis 1: volume of capital, differentiates 'established' from 'popular' culture
  - Axis 2: capital composition: differentiates 'intellectual' from 'luxurious' culture
  - Axis 3: 'trajectory': differentiates old and new practices
- Can we detect similar oppositions in our study?

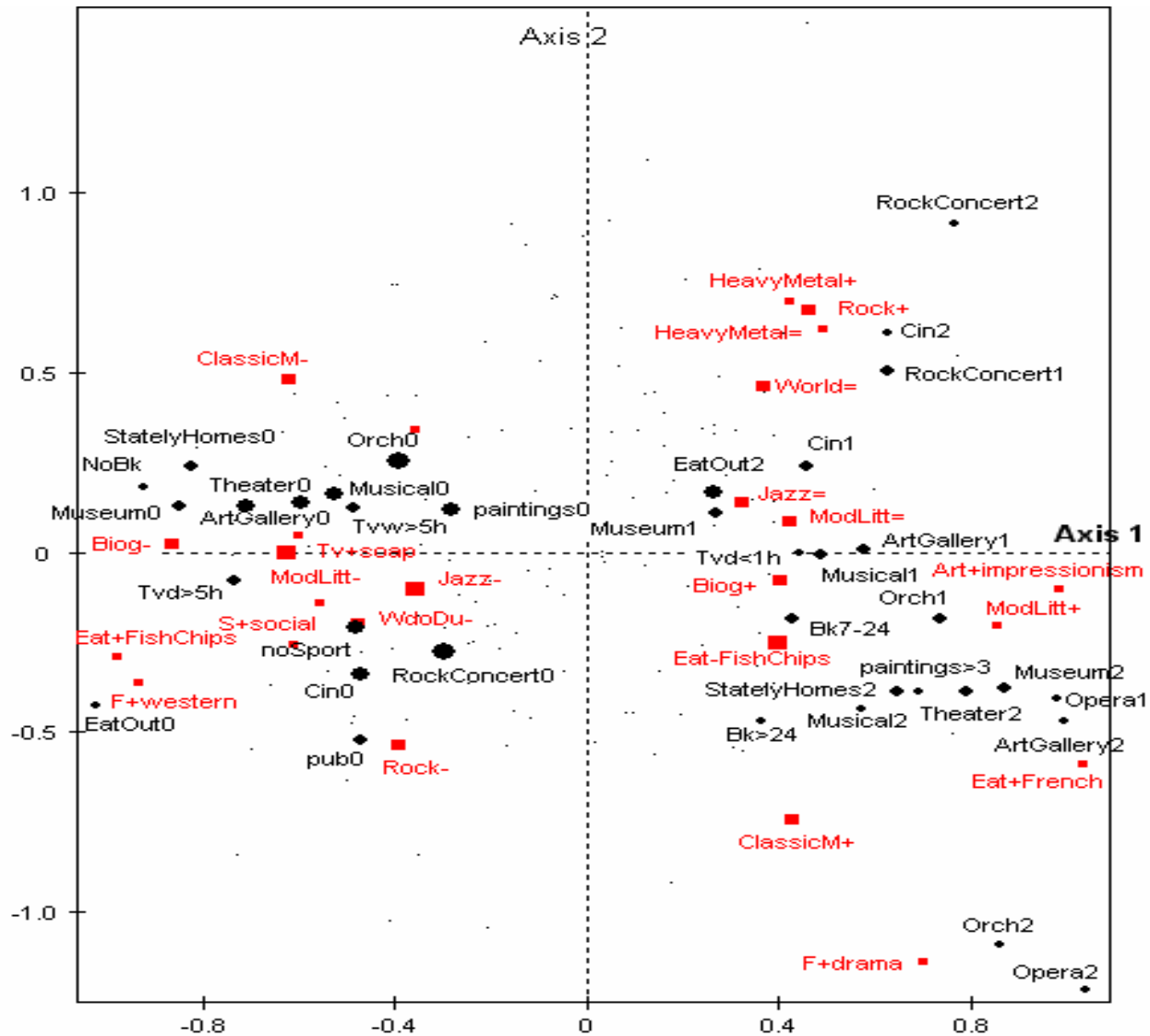
	<i>Axis 1</i>	<i>Axis 2</i>	<i>Axis 3</i>	<i>Axis 4</i>	<i>Axis 5</i>	<i>Axis 6</i>
<i>Eigenvalues</i>	0.16 41	0.11 88	0.07 46	0.06 33	0.05 03	0.0472
<i>Variance rates</i>	5.33 3	3.86 0	2.04 16	2.05 6	1.63 4	1.533
<i>Modified cumulated rates</i>	48.2	70.8	77.6	82.0		

Table 3 Contribution by domain, participation and taste for first four principal axes

	Axis 1			Axis 2			Axis 3			Axis 4		
	Participation	Taste		Participation	Taste		Participation	Taste		Participation	Taste	
TV	4.5	2.9	7.4	0.2	6.5	6.7	0.2	<b>22.1</b>	<b>22.3</b>	9.3	3.2	<b>12.5</b>
Film	3.7	2.1	5.8	2.9	<b>10.2</b>	<b>13.1</b>	1.3	<b>18.0</b>	<b>19.2</b>	2.1	4.5	6.6
Books	9.5	<b>13.5</b>	<b>23.0</b>	2.6	7.0	9.6	0.9	<b>18.3</b>	<b>19.2</b>	6.3	9.0	<b>15.3</b>
Music	<b>14.9</b>	<b>10.3</b>	<b>25.2</b>	<b>19.5</b>	<b>25.9</b>	<b>45.4</b>	2.5	7.5	<b>10.0</b>	<b>10.4</b>	<b>13.0</b>	<b>23.4</b>
V. Art	<b>21.1</b>	2.6	<b>23.7</b>	4.1	4.2	8.2	1.4	6.8	8.2	<b>22.3</b>	10.1	<b>32.4</b>
Eating	3.6	5.7	9.3	4.0	5.4	9.4	3.4	1.4	4.8	4.4	3.1	7.6
Sport	3.0	2.4	5.4	3.7	3.8	7.6	5.3	<b>11.0</b>	<b>16.3</b>	0.8	1.4	2.2
	60.4	39.6	100.0	37.0	63.0	100.0	15.1	84.9	100.0	55.6	44.4	100



# Axis 1 ( $\lambda_1=0.1626$ ): Cultural Engagement: involvement and disengagement



Black: participation modalities

Red: taste modalities

## 12 Class and occupational groups

### SERVICE CLASS

Employers in large establishments and Higher managerial positions (L1/L2)

Higher professional occupations (L3)

Lower professional and higher technical occupations (L4)

Lower managerial occupations (L5)

### INTERMEDIATE CLASS

Higher supervisory occupations (L6)

Intermediate occupations (L7)

Employers in small establishments (L8)

Own account workers (L9)

### WORKING CLASS

Lower supervisory workers (L10)

Lower technical workers (L11)

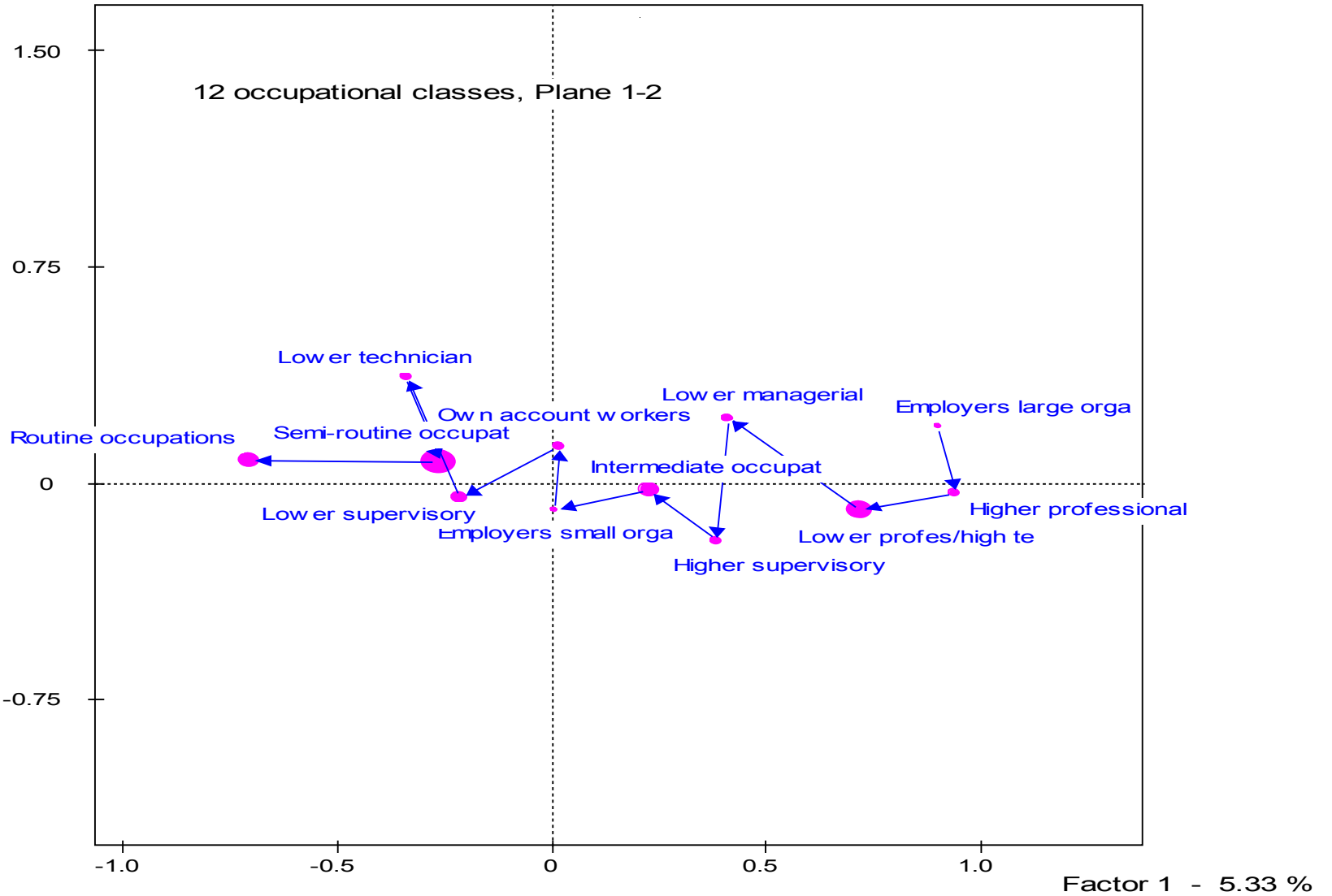
Semi routine occupations (L12)

Routine occupations (L13)

How far do these groupings map onto the first axis?

# 12 Occupational Classes, Plane 1-2

Factor 2 - 3.86 %



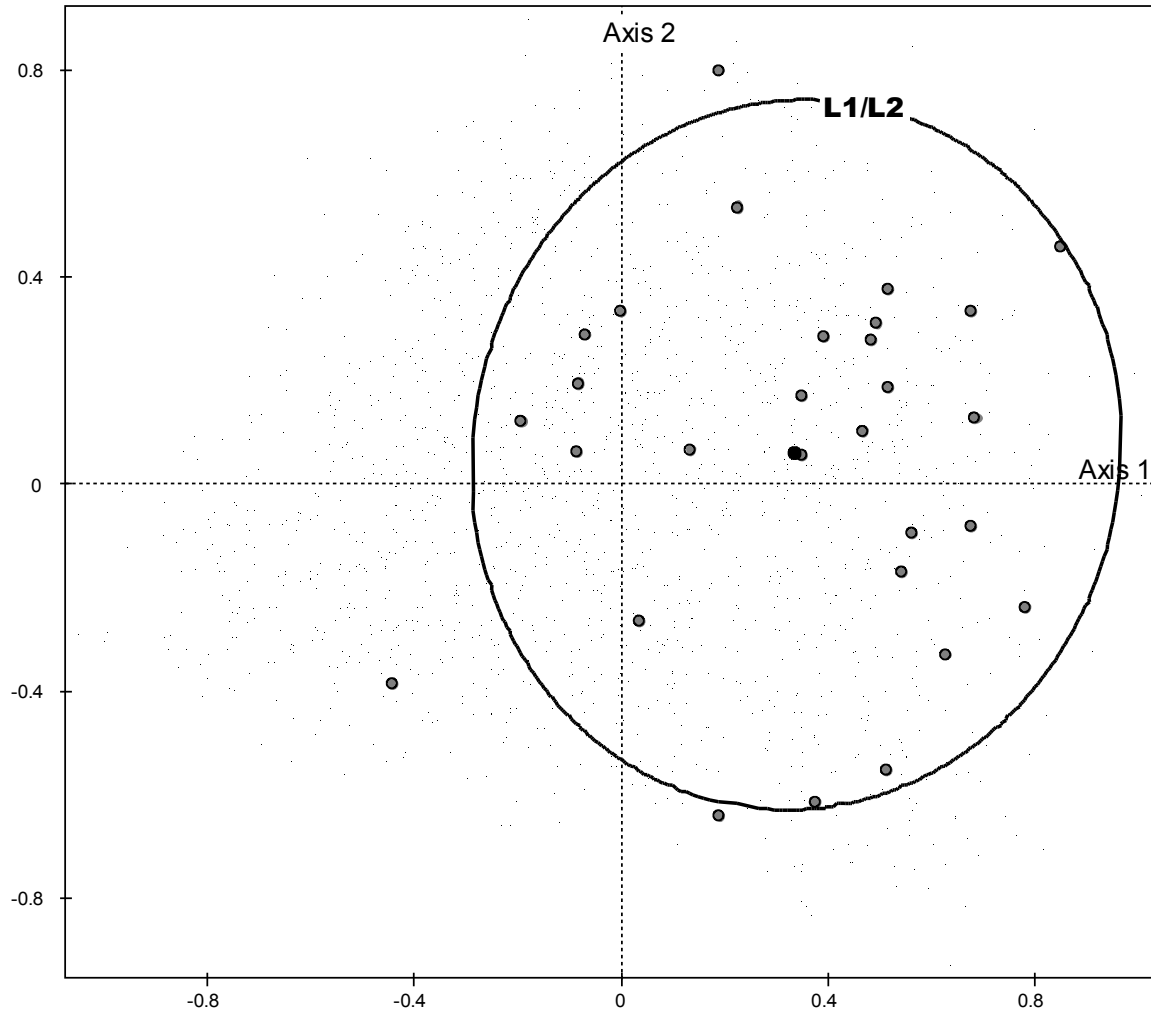


Figure 14 : (plane 1-2), L1/L2-Employers in large establishments and Higher managerial positions (n=29)

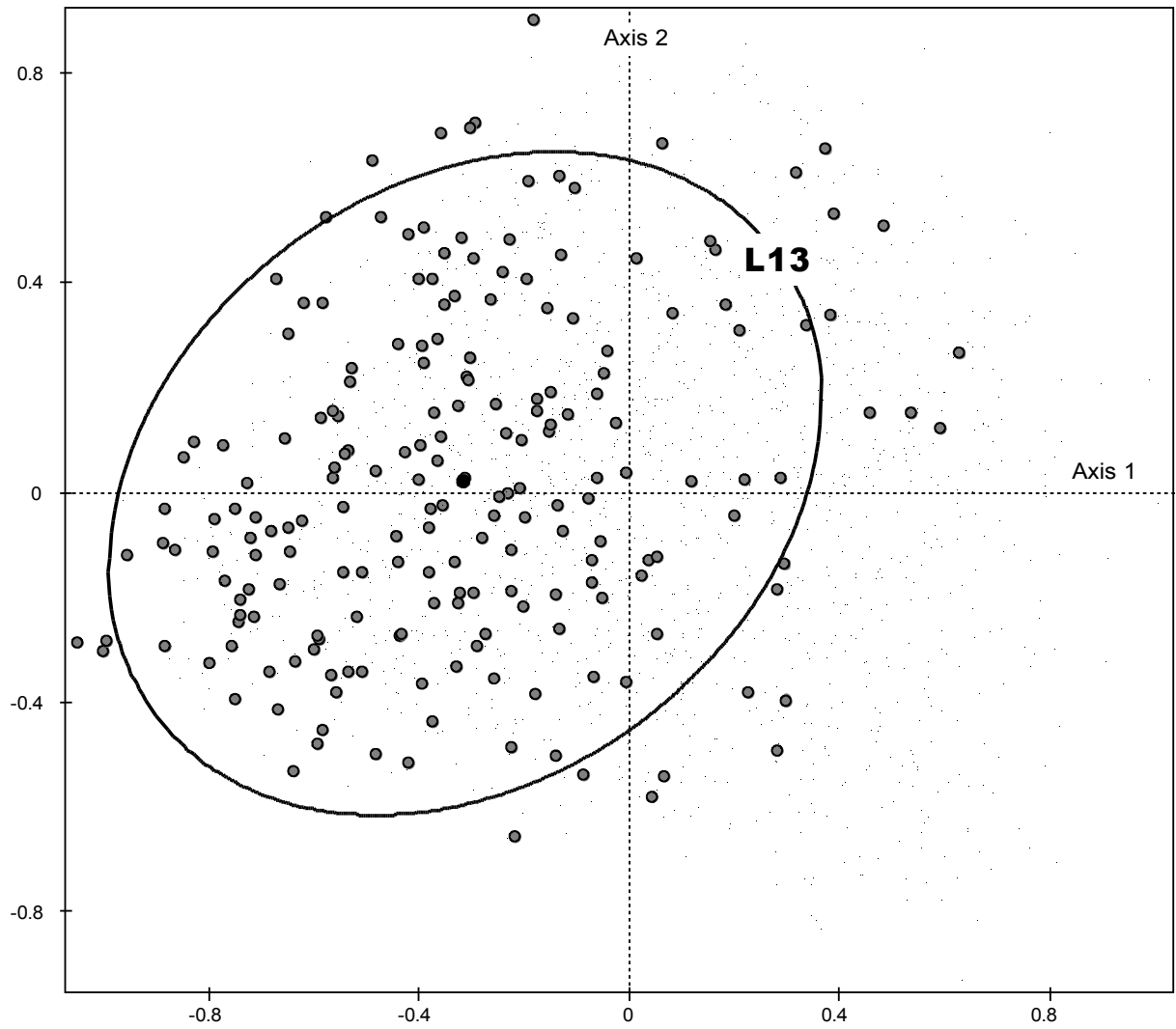
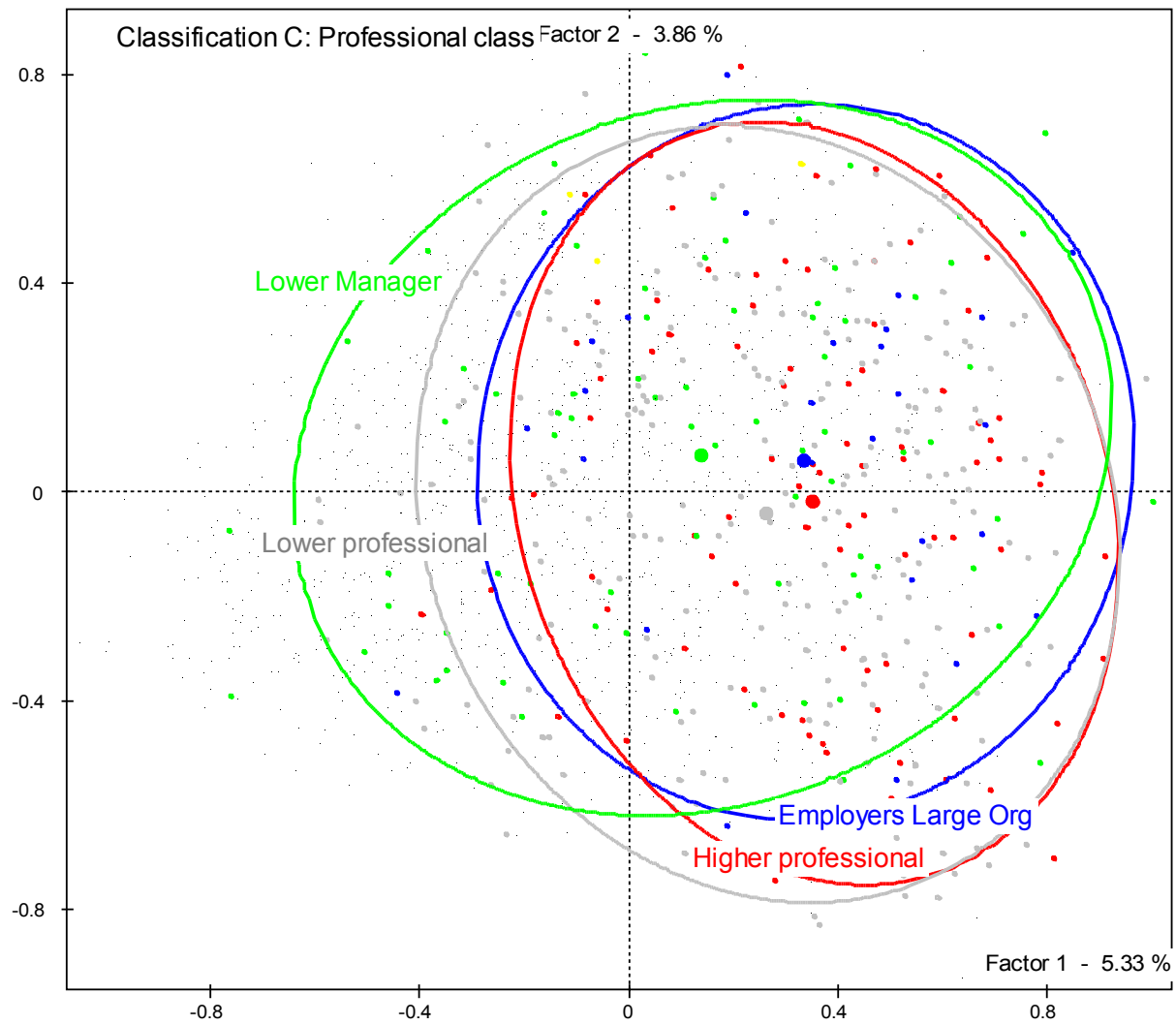
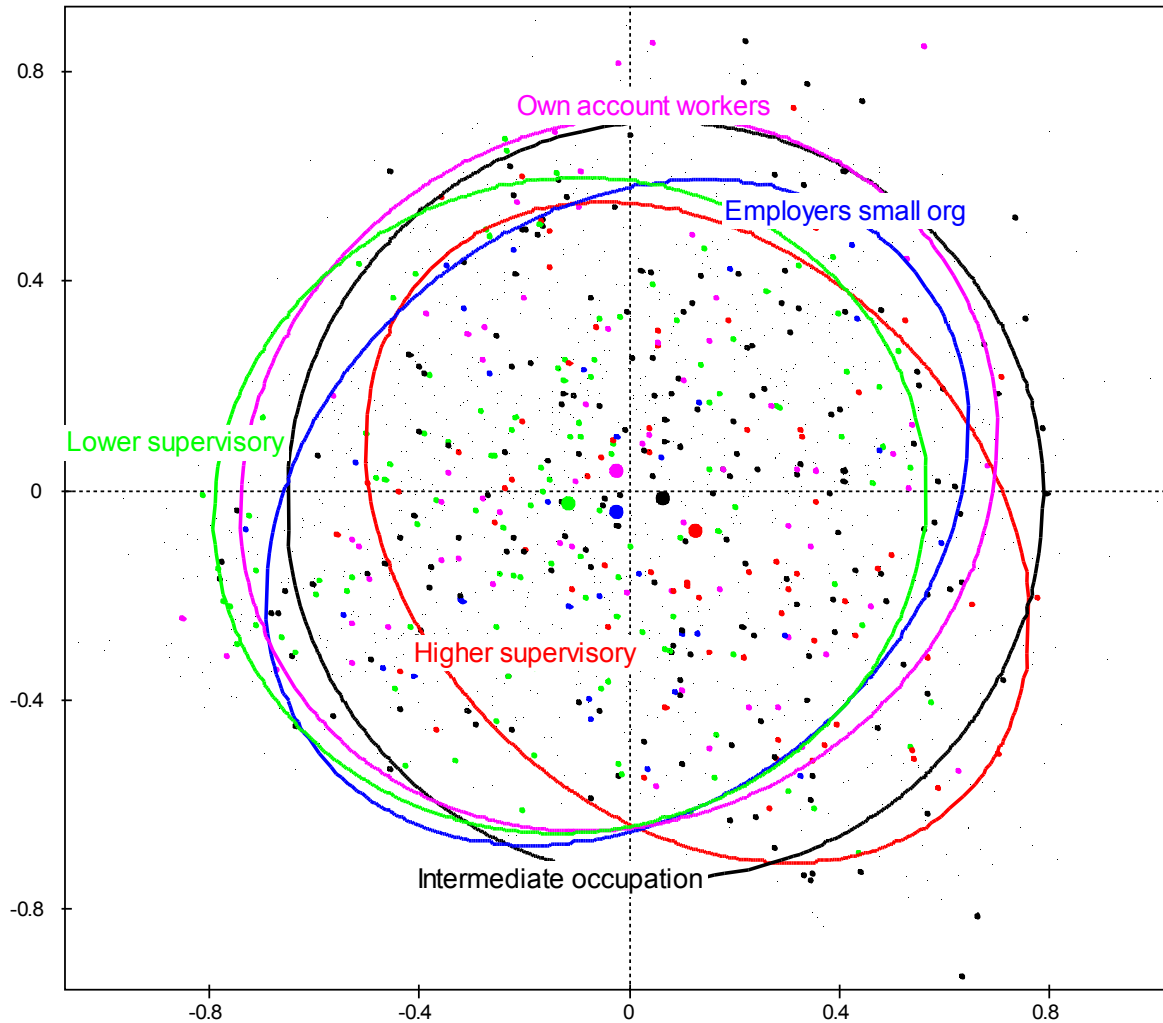


Figure 15 : (plane 1-2): L13-Routine occupations (n=198)



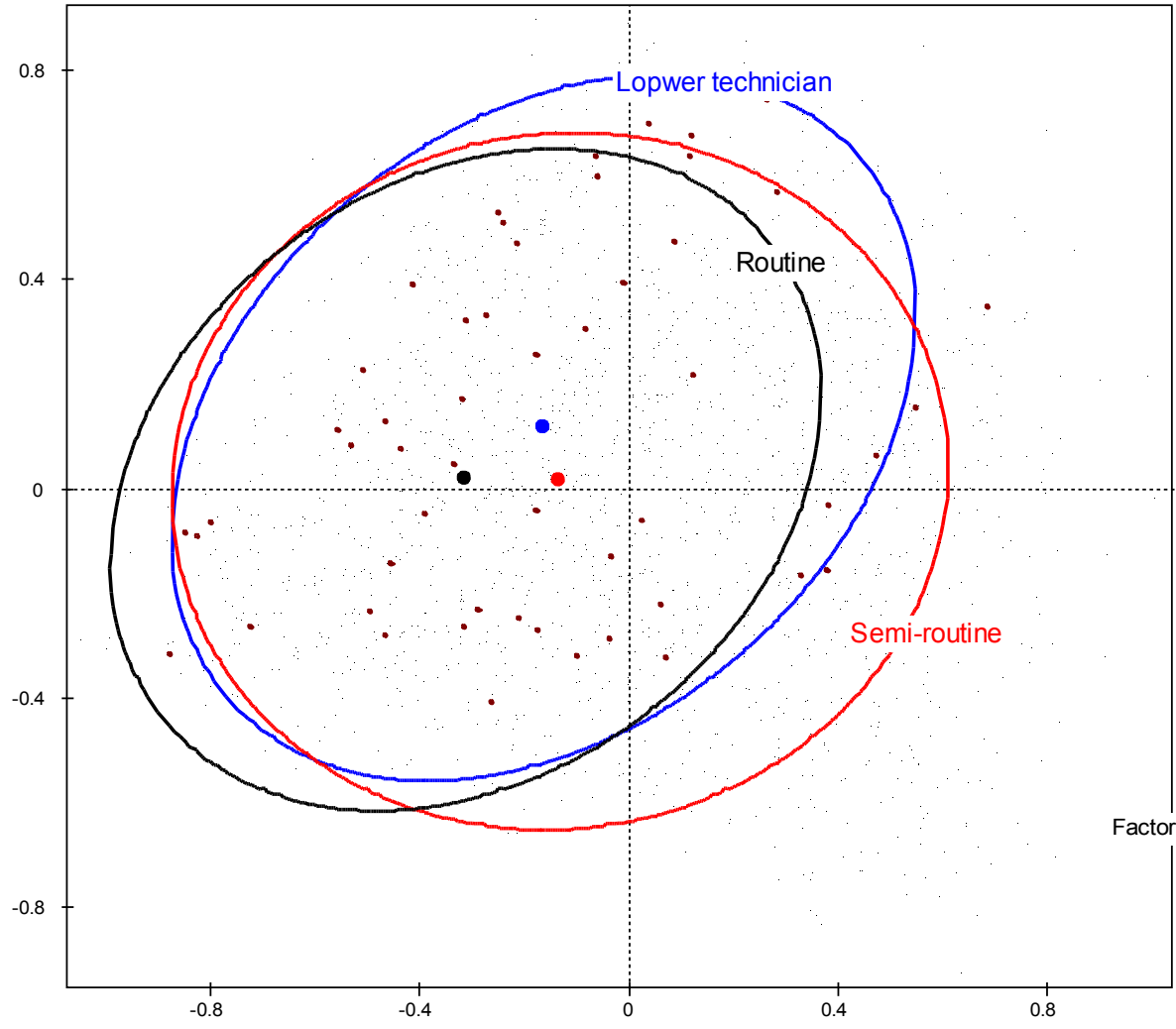
Factor 2 - 3.86 %



SocialClass12		
	count	ecc. area
· Employers large orga	29	
· Higher professional	91	
· Lower profes/high te	237	
· Lower managerial	77	
· Higher supervisory	72	0.66 1.20
· Intermediate occupat	192	0.07 1.64
· Employers small orga	36	0.63 1.30
· Own account workers	68	0.45 1.54
· Lower supervisory	121	0.40 1.33
· Lower technician	53	
· Semi-routine occupat	311	
· Routine occupations	198	
· Never worked	41	
· DK	3	

Factor 1 - 5.33 %

Factor 2 - 3.86 %



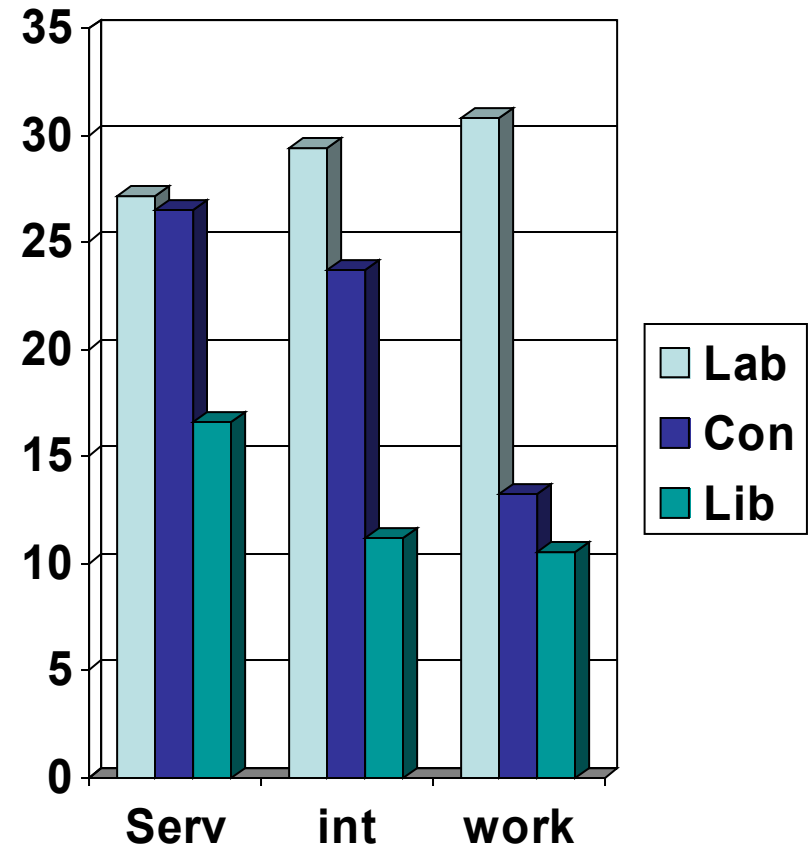
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Factor 1 - 5.33 %



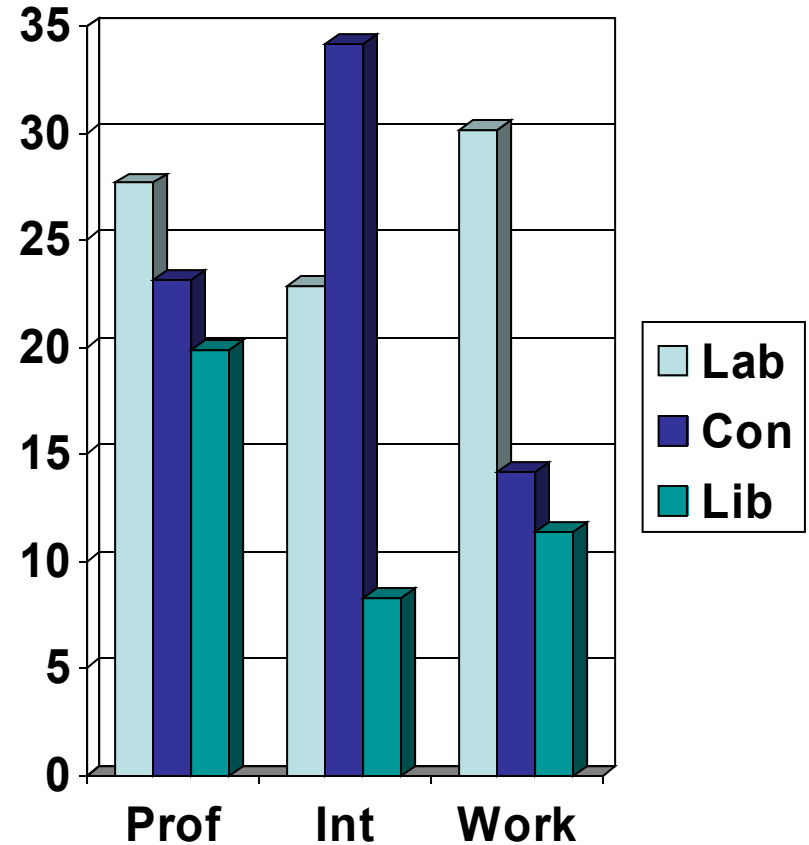
# Class voting 1

- Using NS-SeC voting intention does not seem to be strongly class related

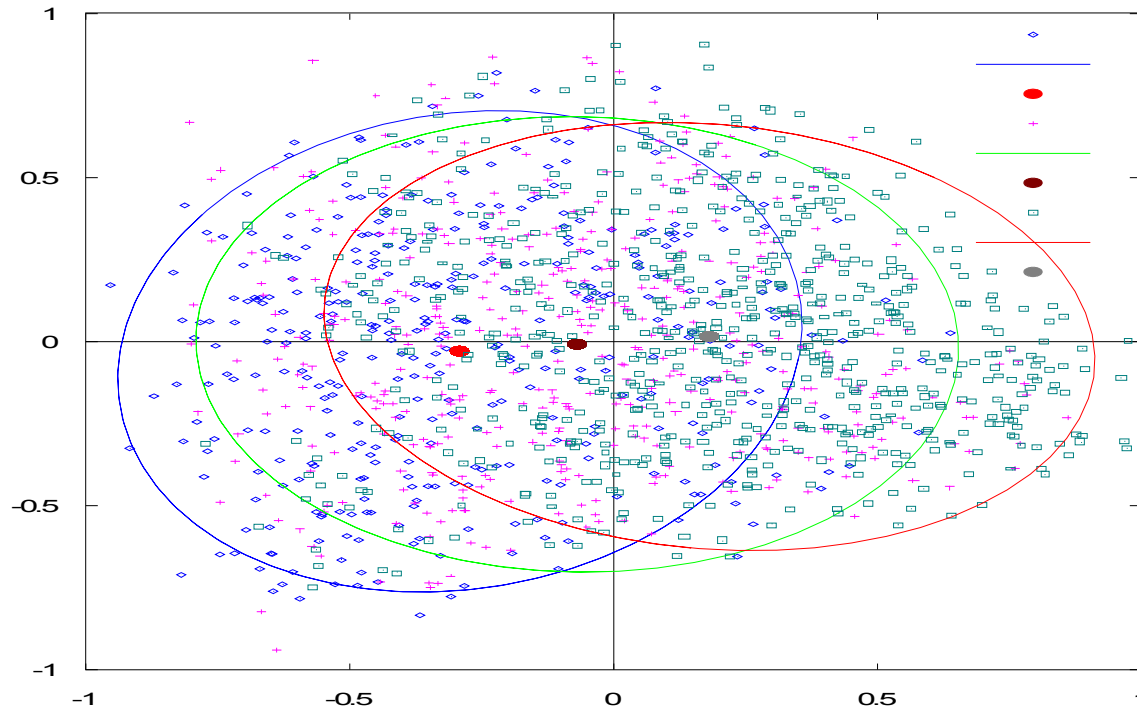


# Class voting 2

- Our class maps differentiates a Liberal professional class from a Conservative intermediate class and a Labour working class



# Plan of axes 1-2 : distribution of individuals by class in the space of lifestyles



## Key

Red ellipse : professional class  
Green ellipse : intermediate class  
Blue ellipse: working class

# Implications

- Class divisions are of prime importance in differentiating cultural practices and tastes.
- We identify a relatively small ‘professional’ class (c 24%) rather than a larger ‘service class’, which is characterised by systematic and omnivorous cultural engagement.
- We see a large working class, 45% of the population, characterised by lower levels of measured participation.
- We see a direct overlap between credentialism and class (cultural and economic capital), rather than tension between them (as in *Distinction*).

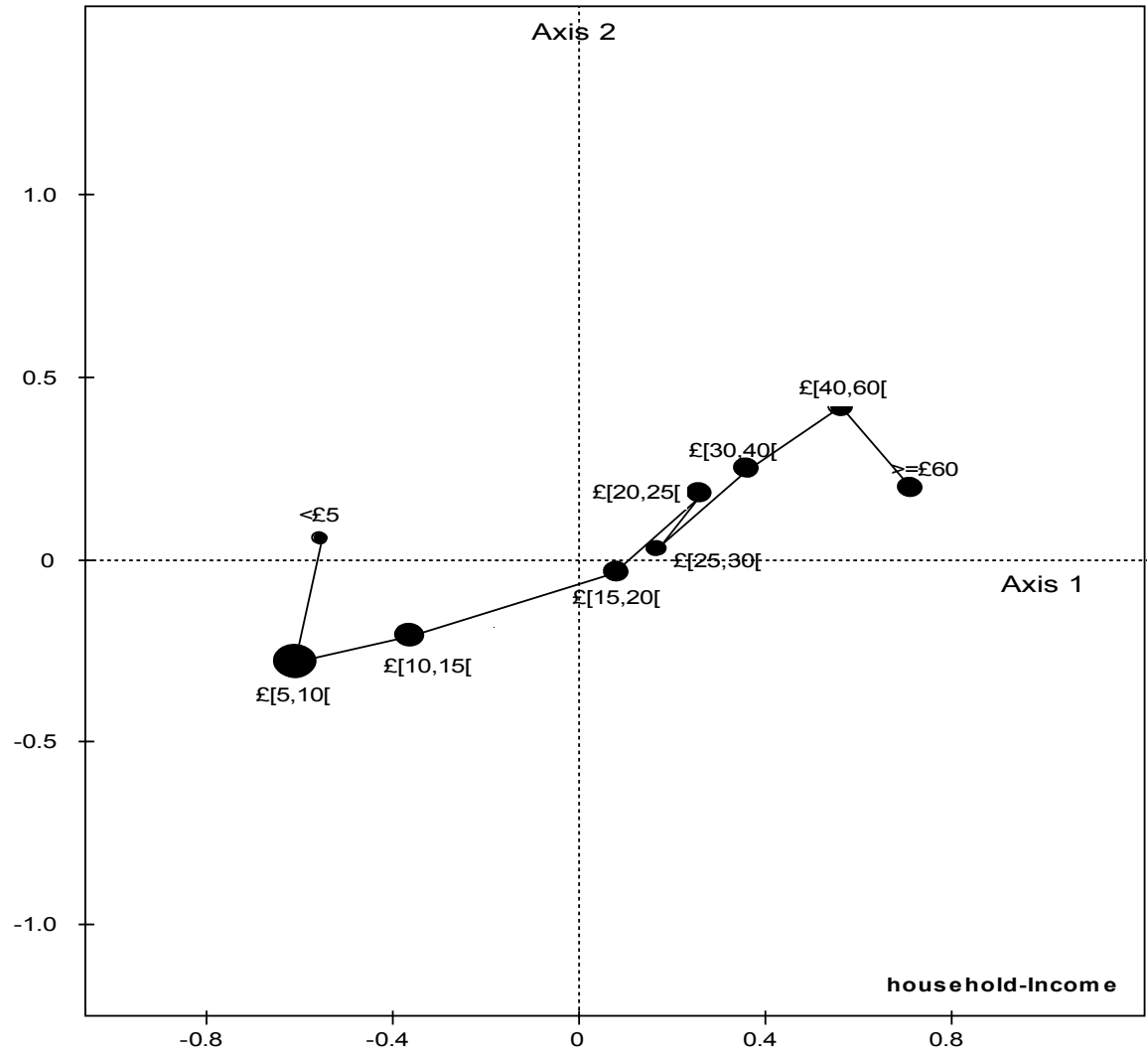
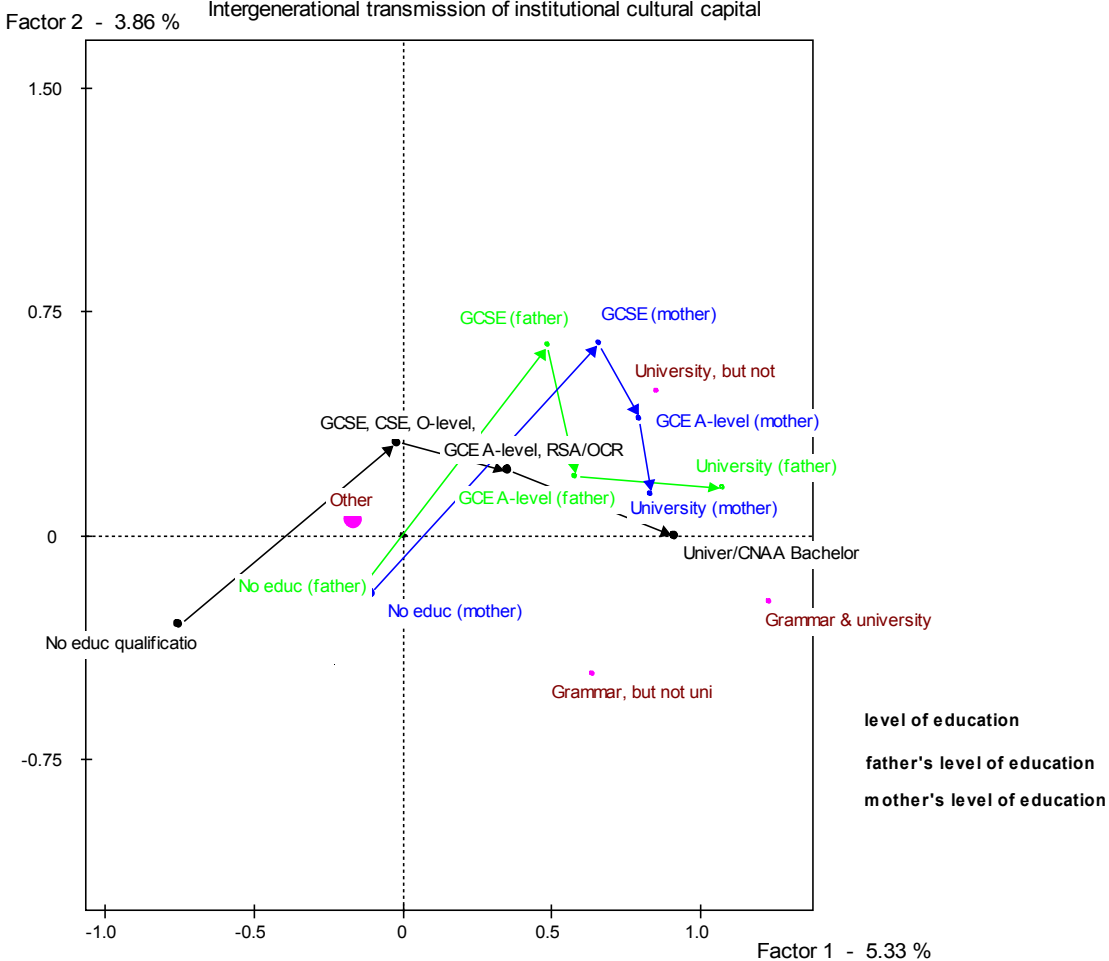
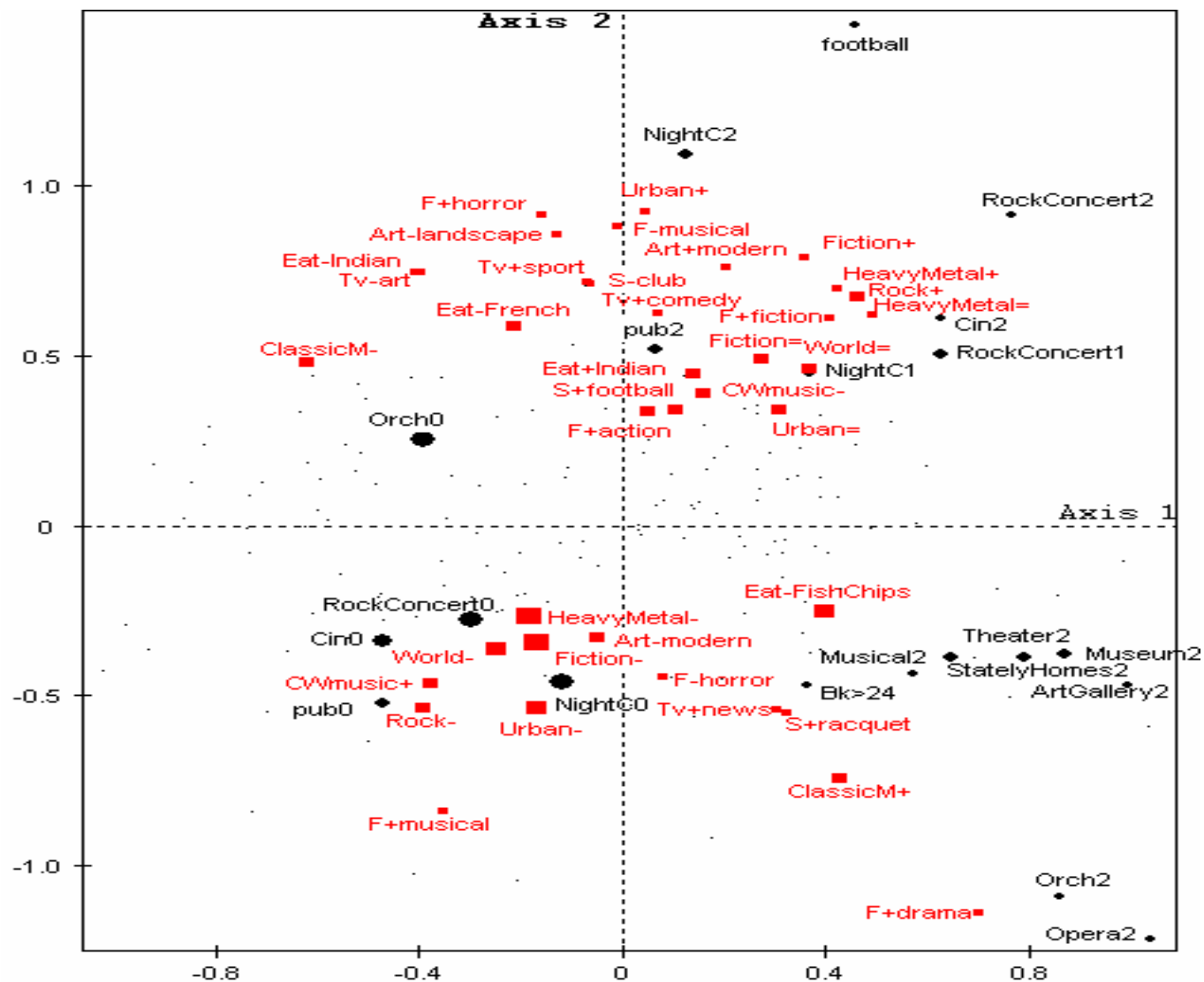


Figure 7 : household income in plane 1-2

# Inter-generational transmission of institutional cultural capital, Planes 1-2

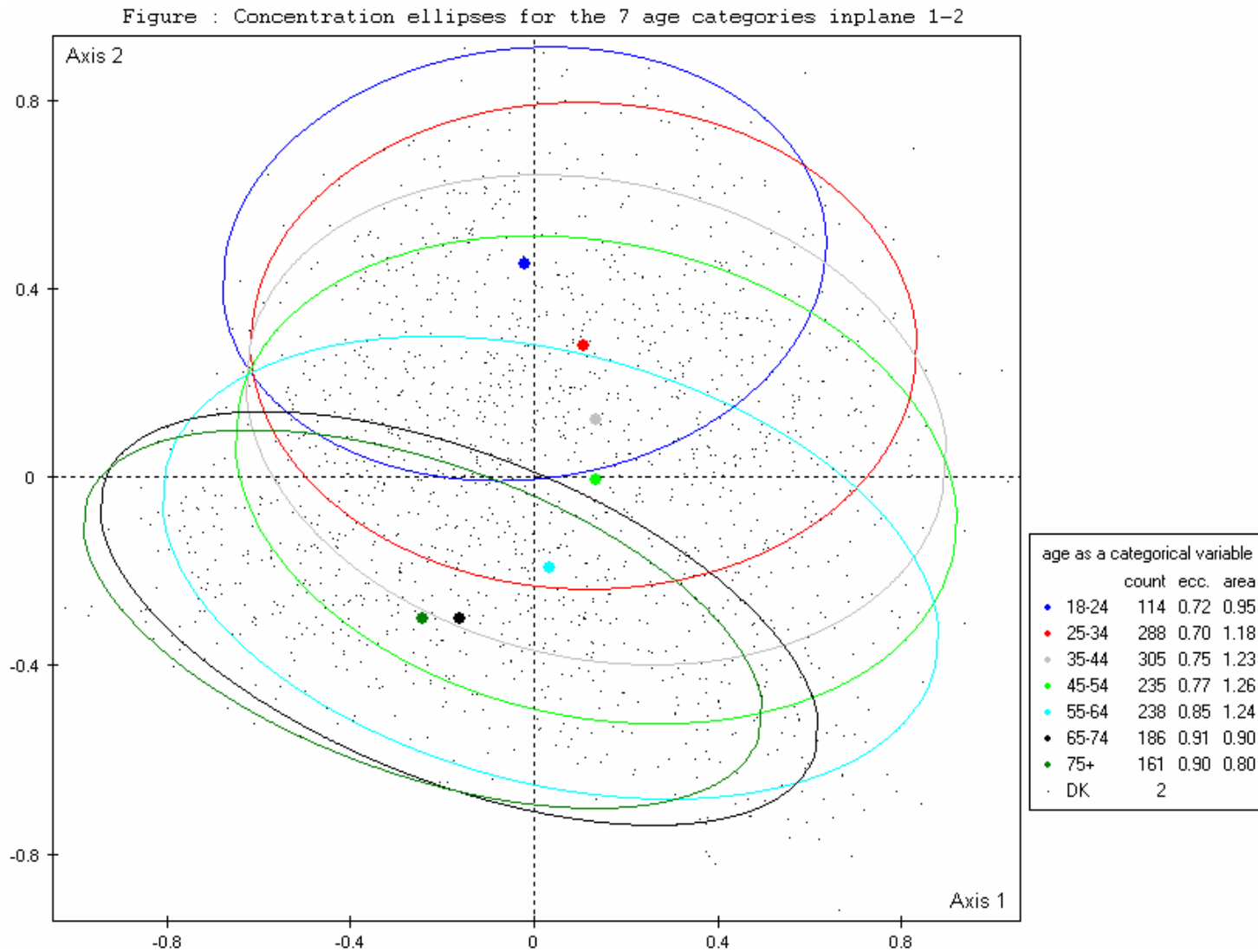


# Axis 2 ( $\lambda_2=0.1180$ ): Contemporary Taste : the established and the emergent



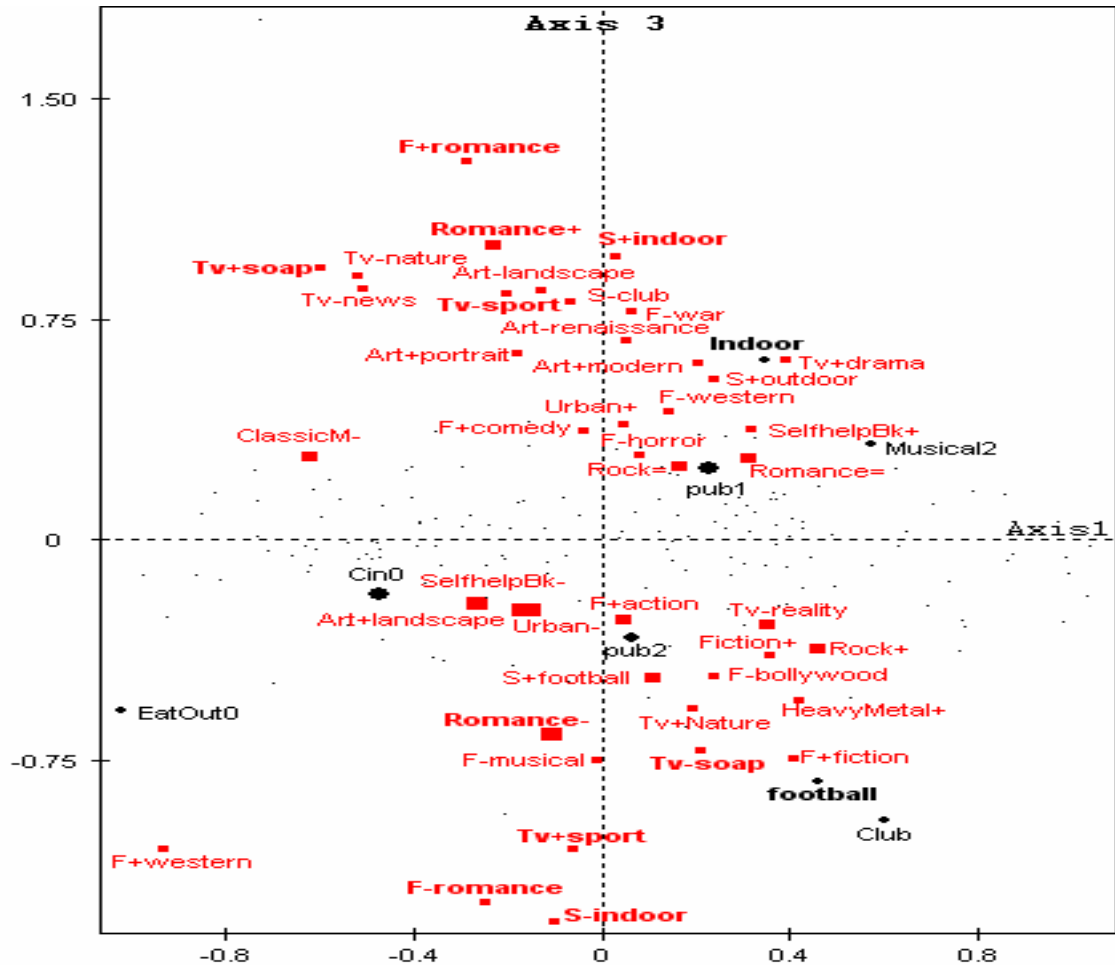
Black: participation modalities  
 Red: taste modalities

**Figure: Deviation and concentration ellipses for age groups in plane 1-3**



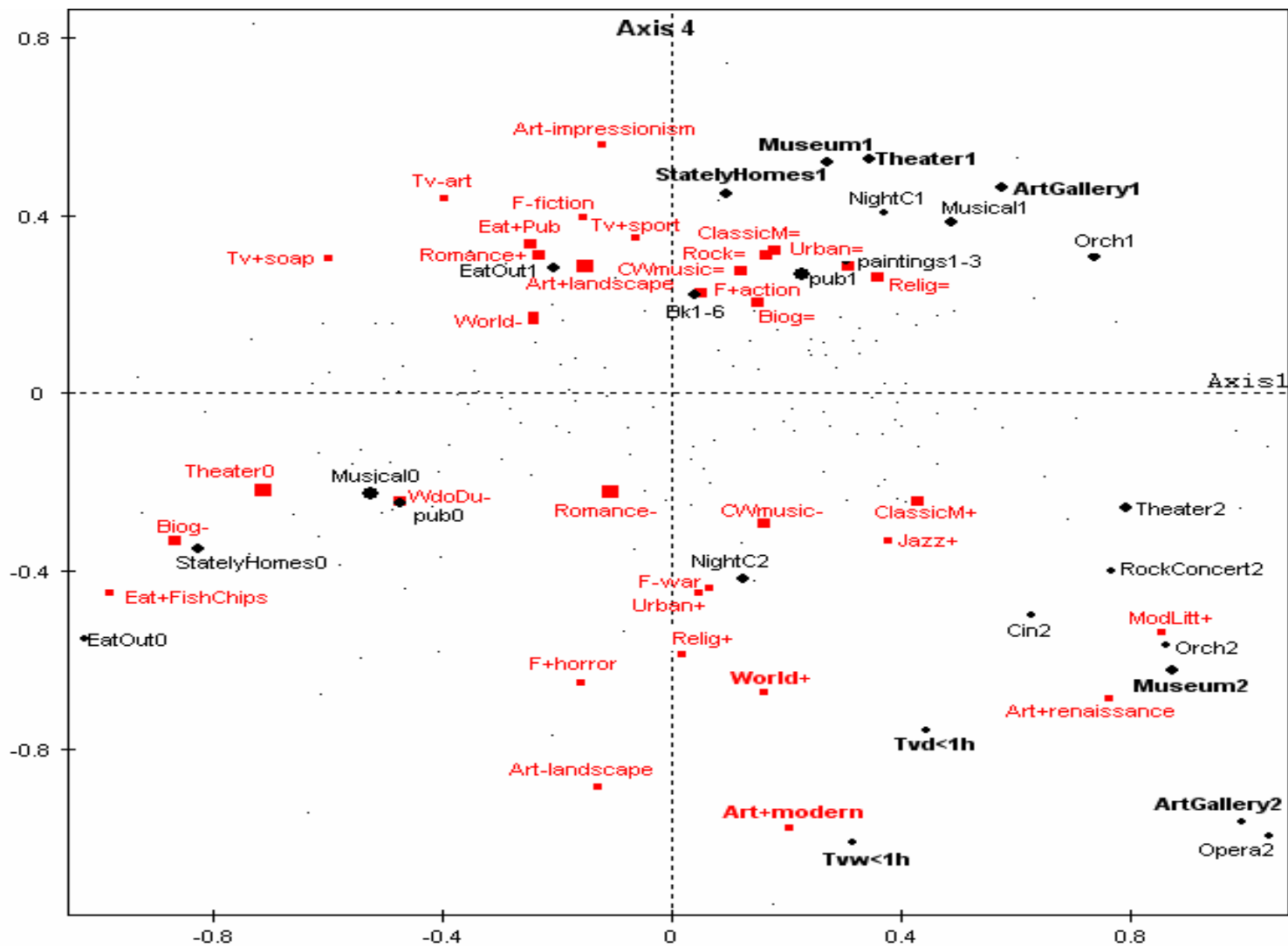


**Axis 3 ( $\lambda_3=0.0727$ ): Vicarious Sympathies : hard and soft**



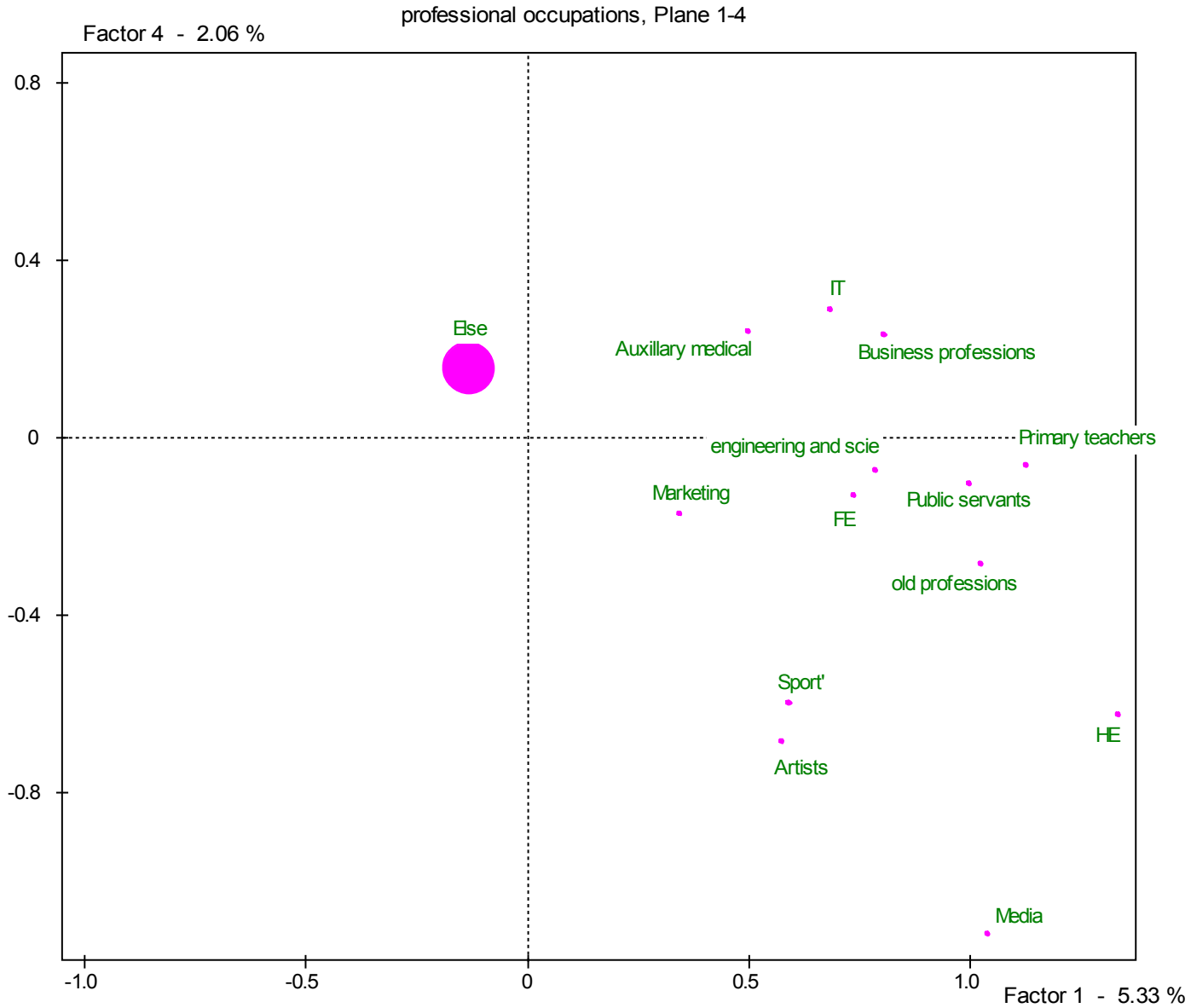
Black: participation modalities  
 Red: taste modalities  
 Bold: modalities contributing most to variance on the axis (>2)

**Axis 4: ( $\lambda_2=0.0629$ ) Cultural Enthusiasm: moderation and voraciousness**



Black: participation modalities  
 Red: taste modalities

# Grouped Professional Occupations, Plane 1-4



# Conclusions 1

- First axis is differentiated by the 'volume of capital', and is associated with class and educational attainment. Strong reproduction processes can be detected. Class remains fundamental to the structuring of culture
- Second axis is differentiated by age and differentiates 'the established' and the 'emergent'.
- Third axis differentiates on the basis of gender and separates 'hard' and 'soft'
- Fourth axis differentiates an 'avant grade' set of enthusiasts, from moderate participators.

## Conclusions 2: we are 'not all middle class' now

- Boundaries have been re-drawn to exclude previously higher status occupations from the 'service class'.
- Working class remains a very large social bloc, but its cultural forms need more examination.
- The overlap between education and class poses huge issues around the legitimation of class dominance.
- Age effects are huge, but we can't be sure whether these are cohort effects.