**W4 Response paper: Reconciling the two approaches**

The readings this week has made me think about the role of identity politics within the context of the two theoretical approaches, phenomenology and political-economic, we apply in this course. The texts illustrate three different levels of thinking about human empowerment within the city – at the individual, the group identity politics and the political-economic level. I suggest that it might be interesting to incorporate all these three aspects when we study political resistance and mobilisation.

Given the domination of identity politics in literature on political mobilisation, it is refreshing to be presented with an alternative set of explanations to political mobilization on a macro level, and personal emancipation on a micro level (Sopranzetti, 2013). *Owners of the Map* illustrates both how, on an individual level, the rural motorcycle taxi drivers create ties with local inhabitants of the city that carry the potential of social mobilisation, as well as their importance at a macro-level during the 2010 Red Shirt political protest. I became curious as to whether it would be possible to look closer at the dynamics and interactions within the networks of drivers, adding what might be seen as a meso-level, to consider the potential for identity politics amongst the taxi drivers.

One should be careful to assume the existence of social and political cohesion within the taxi driver networks, as Sopranzetti highlights the problems AMTT had trying to create political mobilization on the basis of the drivers’ labour union (211). However, given the relatively uniform demographics of the drivers (male, in their 20s-40s, rural, from the poorer north-eastern Isan region), there seems to be a potential for the creation of cohesion around other aspects of their identity than their occupation. This question seems particularly pertinent in the light of the recent political protests in Thailand, in which the demographics of the protesters have changed significantly (Sopranzetti, 2015, min. 5:20). The political protests have gone from being dominated by rural protesters in 2010, to five years later being dominated by middle-class students (ibid.). The demographic of the protesters is important, as it impacts the tactics of resistance they employ (ibid.), and gives us an indication of the representativeness of the movement.

As an account of female contribution to anti-colonial resistance, I find Fannon’s account problematic in that he only refers to the group identity of Algerian women, and hence remove some of their individual agency (1963). He seems to try his best to highlight their importance for the revolution as independent women, but he continuously constructs an image of an assistant, not an independent agent. The ‘Algerian woman assumes all the tasks entrusted to her’ and she is ‘carrying directives’ for the revolution (Fannon: 54, 59). The Algerian woman is certainly not constructed as an owner of the map of the revolution – at the very best she is a faithful reader of it.

**Bibliography**

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