

## Review of bachelor thesis

**Kathrin Khanchanok Kemmler**

### **Identity and self-representation processes of contemporary transnational and diasporic youth**

Regarding the choice of the topic, the author has acquired quite a common and suitable strategy – that is, to research and analyze a world relative to author's own life. Thus, as a biracial individual of Thai and German descent, she is interested in identity construction in the context of transnational youth migration. But author's research strategy goes even one step further towards sort of a thin ice as she decided to study two of her close friends. It is a thin ice for two particular reasons.

First, analyzing good friends is possible but it has pros as well as cons. On one side, Kemmler does not have to face issues of trust leading to interesting and robust empirical material. Besides, Kemmler manages to involve reflexivity when necessary as well as to include some fragments of auto-ethnography. On the other side, is it sufficient to write that „*the research I present in this paper, while striving to maintain a critical and analytical approach, is highly subjective and personal*“? (page 7) With analyzing friends, I would expect a more informed debate and a search of paper's epistemological position.

Second, Kemmler analyses only two persons. Sure, she focuses on deeper biographical case studies which involve repetitive interviews - „*I conducted the interviews with my friends over a course of two to three months with one-week intervals between each call.*“ (page 4) Thus, she has conducted 10 interviews with each person, 20 in total. Besides, data from interviews have been complemented with short ethnographies of person's social media profiles and with information from informal social media chatting with them. Regarding quantity of collected data, Kemmler has done sufficient work. However, a quality of such methodological strategy remains in question. Why to focus just on two persons with 10 interviews with each and not for example to analyze more biographies of students from the Lanna International School in Chiang Mai? As with the first issue, I would welcome a broader discussion of pros and cons of elected and non-elected methodological choices.

Do not get me wrong, the focus on life trajectories of people who were school-mates is excellent and promising (see for example Ortner's New Jersey Dreaming for similar approach), but I'm not sure if following up just two persons was a good choice. After all, hasn't Kemmler faced sort of saturation of information and framings while interviewing all over the very same two persons? What is more, her thesis interpretes materials only from bulk of those interviews (4 out of 10 interviews are mentioned in Ploy's case, 5/6 interviews in Erich's case). Why to do so many interviews with one person when then not even working with them in the paper?

What I do appreciate a lot is Kemmler's work with concepts. She grounds her research in identity research – a topic of high relevance around the millennial turn. Despite being analyzed extensively, she manages to find in combination with migration studies a conceptual blind spot and tries to fill this void by scrutinizing under-researched „*identification processes among contemporary transnational migrant youths as the primary focus of study*“ (page 3). What is more, Kemmler is capable of analyzing and interpreting empirical material in interesting fashion as much as she is capable of (unfortunately except the conclusion) working with concepts in empirical passages as well. Her narrowing down of conceptual apparatus is adequate with one exception. It is a pity that there is not much elaboration on inequalities in migration – especially when her own research

interlocutors reflect their privileged position of cultivating identity in a constant flux (see page 8). Here I mean work of theorists like Z. Baumann who distinguishes between tourists and vagabonds as two opposite types of migration or authors who document divisions between those who experience globalization as internationalists and those who are stuck and glued to their location and cannot even move as Baumann's vagabonds (for situation in northern Thailand see e.g. James Scott's Arts of not being governed or Tomáš Ryška's Prisoners of White God).

Regarding the form, the written English is of high quality. Sometimes the empirical passages in italics are bit confusing as it is not clear who speaks when.

### **Overall evaluation**

Kathrin Khanchanok Kemmler wrote an interesting bachelor thesis with high-quality conceptual, formal and analytical work using methodological strategies which would welcome broader discussion regarding their dis/advantages. Writing that, I recommend her thesis for oral defence and suggest to grade it between 1 and 2.

### **Questions**

Apart from questions written in my peer review and regarding mostly methodological strategies, I would like to ask K. K. Kemmler to explain this sentence from page 3: „*my friends manoeuvre their identities for the sake of achieving political goals (such as gaining the regard of authenticity)*“. Why the adjective „political“ is used in this context? What is meant by politics here?



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