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Thai Habitus in Contemporary Society: Paving the Way for Tackling Inequality

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Abstract
This paper examines the habitus of contemporary Thailand based on the concepts developed by Pierre Bourdieu and their operationalisation to Thai society developed by Boike Rehbein's principles, which explain how contemporary habitus is linked to social inequality and mobilisation participation. Thailand has two key social structures: precapitalist and capitalist. Both create and reproduce different types of habitus. The paper used a mixed-methods research approach to analyse social inequality and challenges in Thailand since 2019. Data collection was conducted during the years between 2021 and 2022 from 400 surveys and fifteen qualitative interviews. The paper proposes eight habitus types rooted in Thai social structures with seven characteristics for explaining contemporary Thai society. The pre-capitalist structure generates the following habitus types: subsistential, traditionalist, and powerful (*phuyai*). The capitalist structure generates the following types: desperate, individualist, aspirant, and content creator. Between these two structures is the conformist. All habitus types share some characteristics. Authoritarianism is the fundamental trait of the predominant habitus types in Thai society, which are interconnected with social structures, thereby reflecting the consequences of social inequality and mobilisations. The demographic most affected by social inequality is the desperate group, but a more significant habitus for mobilisation participation is that of content creator, which is considerably small now but is likely to increase. Traditionalist and conformist groups are less likely to protest and, to a lesser degree, this is true of the subsistential and powerful types. Moreover, rationales of being affected by social inequality and reacting differently are distinct characteristics of each type, and socio-economic positions interplayed with social media influences.

Introduction

December 2019 marked the beginning of a critical period worldwide with the spread of the novel Coronavirus. Thailand was undoubtedly affected by the disruption caused by the pandemic, which was aggravated by the persistence of high social inequality. From 2020 to 2022, issues of social inequality, including privilege and exclusion between elites and other classes in Thai society, were raised to an unprecedented extent. This trend became obvious on online platforms and evolved into protest motivations. Social inequality has now become the prevalent agenda in Thailand and scholars have explored different ways of tackling imbalanced distribution of wealth and resources, including evaluating the concept of class. However, the concept of 'class' consists of one's income, education, and career but neglects other forms of capital such as social and symbolic assets. Moreover, Thai society, where the income gap between the rich and poor has widened enormously, has a very large spectrum of middle classes. If one considers income exclusively, the class concept creates confusion because the income line between the periphery of the lower-middle class and the working class in Thai society is not clearcut. Social class is a broad concept, one that cannot comprehensively explain Thai society because classification requires

other norms and values to co-identify each level. If one explores solely the class concept to examine social inequality and mobilisation patterns in Thailand, only some aspects or specific events can be identified, thereby leaving many critical gaps. One needs to reconsider another way to fill these cracks. Furthermore, there are other critical influences that define Thailand's rapidly changing society, especially in the internet era. These include social media, one's generation, and contemporary values regarding material success. Thus, social inequality in Thai society should be studied while accounting for inequality's possible origins as well as for people's habits and values. Conducting a study on social inequality requires tracing back to the roots that transcend social inequality – both materialist and non-materialist. The concept of habitus offers scholars another lens by which to view individual dispositions through primary and secondary orientations, including other fields of struggle and influences. Habitus refers to a system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, "integrating past experiences, function at every moment of a matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions and make possible the achievement of infinitely diversified tasks"; Bourdieu defined habitus as a type of cultural capital, together with materialised objects and institutionalised capital (Bourdieu, 1993:31–35; 1997:46–75). Habitus is comprised of the characteristics of different groups of people at a micro level integrated under the macro social structure in which habitus acts as the bridge to explicate social actions and rationales of distinct groups in a given society.

This paper is developed from our previous work, titled *Inequality, Sociocultures and Habitus in Thailand* (see Thongsawang, Rehbein, and Chantavanich 2020), in which data was collected via 62 qualitative interviews administered in 2016. Regarding the previous findings, we identified seven habitus types and six characteristics of habitus. The habitus types are the following: (1) *subsistential* –striving mainly to earn a basic leaving; (2) *desperate* – feeling or showing hopelessness; (3) *proletariat* – unskilled work; (4) *conformist* – adopting and behaving in line with prevailing standards or customs; (5) *traditionalist* – upholding established customs; (6) *individualist* – markedly independent in thought and action and stressing the needs of a particular person over a group; and (7) *phuyai/powerful* – generally holding management positions and valuing seniority. These types can be correlated with main six characteristics: (1) *self-confidence* – trust in oneself and one's ability to be successful; (2) *goal-orientation* – pursuing a set ambition; (3) *traditionalism, conformism, discipline* – acting in accordance with orders; and (4) *authoritarianism* – a hierarchical worldview about who should lead and follow. Subsequently, because of Thailand's rapidly changing society, we became aware of the overlapping of the proletariat in the sense of habitus and social class, the shortage of some crucial characteristics, and the absence of social media and digital influences in Thai society. Therefore, we agreed to elaborate upon the original study by focusing on habitus during a challenging time in Thailand covering the years of late 2019 to 2022, with the data collection occurring from 2021 to 2022. In our current work, the proletariat type was removed since it can share explanations of the social class category. A modification also applies to characteristics of goal orientation and discipline as findings, and analysis demonstrates that they are similar; thus, we integrated them into 'goal-orientation'. Most importantly, we present timely and new emerging habitus categories: (1) *aspirant* – attempting to achieve a good standard in life in both material aspects and the middle-class lifestyle; and (2) *content creator/influencer* – regularly using social media for social, economic or symbolic purposes. We also identified additional characteristics: (1) *patience and perseverance* – enduring something tedious; and (2) *social-media driven* – significantly influenced by online platform users, in both attitude and practice. This latest study differs from the previous one in terms of samples; we now include additional elements such as methods extending to quantitative and qualitative techniques with various regions outside Bangkok; implications on social inequality impact and mobilisation; and periods of data collection and analysis entailing time of trifecta of crises from the pandemic, high social inequality, and the sharp rise in mobilisation to over 2000 protests (Horatanakun 2022; Mobdata 2022). In addition, this study modified and integrated some habitus types and characteristics. Although economic and political institutions are part of the social changes in Thai society, this paper explores the Thai habitus in contemporary society where a political issue is only one part of prevailing social changes, values, and behaviours. It does not examine political conflicts, particular uprisings, or specific institutions in relation to Thai political development. Instead, it analyzes characteristics and prevalent habitus traits in Thai society and applies them to explain the correlation of attitudes towards social inequality and participation. This paper, therefore, studies habitus in contemporary Thai society and proposes eight habitus types as another way to understand people and inequality in Thailand.

Thailand's Hierarchical Society and its Transformation

Thailand, as a hierarchical society, has both pre-capitalist and capitalist structures and social classes. Early studies of the *sakdina* system focused on Thai traditional society during the pre-capitalist stage of the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, which divided social classes into a four-level hierarchy. The upper classes were comprised of aristocrats and nobility (*chao* and *nai);* the lower classes included the free people and slaves (*phrai* and *that).* The social link between the upper and the lower classes was based on the patron-client relationship. This arrangement continued well into the capitalist stage as the superior or powerful (*phuyai*) and the inferior (*phunoi*) along with the Chinese immigrants who had been arriving in Thailand since the pre-capitalist period (17–19 centuries). These structures finally reflect the present social classes and inequality in today's hierarchical Thailand (Rabibhadana 1996). In the pre-capitalist era, the salient groups were the nobility and commoners, of which the majorit were farmers.

The transformation, in Thailand, that has affected agrarian society emerged in 1905 (B.E. 2448). King Rama V enacted a law to abolish slavery to enable Thailand to become more civilised in the eyes of the West and avoid being colonised. On the one hand, abolishing slavery allowed people in Thailand to be free and gain upward mobility, which could change the country's social hierarchy. On the other hand, it could lead to greater inequality due to decreased access to resources. For example, former slaves had to become self-reliant without support or protection from those who had previously been their landlords. Slaves relocated to remote areas where their allocated, and small, plots of land were situated and made their living primarily in doing agricultural work independently. Abolishing slavery also weakened the dominance of sakdina (a social hierarchical system that was used in ancient Thailand to classify people's social positions; the higher a person's rank, the more land they were assigned, and this led to following privileges and duties for the individual), which had lasted hundreds of years. However, it emphasised self-reliance and set agrarian living as the main occupation, both of which became the foundation of dominant Thai characteristics and habitus traits. Western influence imported the notion of civilisation and development. Although Thailand was never colonised by any Western country, the West's influence in terms of modernisation has indeed shaped Thai bureaucracy, administration, and urban development, including its railway construction, road building, post office system, commercial trading, and so on. Because of the impacts of modernisation, the sakdina system declined. Later, the coup of 1932 (B.E. 2475) brought sakdina to an official end (Kerr 2021), although its symbolism is still meaningful in Thai society, especially in the Thai bureaucratic system (Chuanpraphan 1967) and rural politics (Laothamatas 2013: 48).

The abolishment of sakdina and the coup of 1932 were important events in Thailand. Afterward, the country followed the development path of many Western countries and the new parliamentary system set a goal of improving education. The major elements of a nation's social structure include a legal system, social norms (e.g., Thai values, beliefs, and morals) and some social forces immersed in social institutions. In this respect, education and government were especially significant in sustaining the pre-capitalist social structure through cultivated norms. This can be seen in Thailand's school curriculum, which at the same time was providing a gradual transition to a capitalist structure to serve the government's modern development agenda. When entering the capitalist era, Thailand was concerned with poverty reduction (Hutaserani and Jitsuchon 1988; Sarntisart 1994: 622–626). To this end, in the 1930s, the Thai government enforced compulsory primary education. People throughout the country could improve their literacy, mathematical skills, and knowledge of national history. Subsequently, during the 1950s and 1960s, given the increase in schooling together with recovering the national economy after World War II and improving infrastructure, rural people – who worked in an agricultural-based economy model – started to travel more to Bangkok and large nearby cities (Keyes 2012). Thailand's national development plans, starting from its first blueprint in 1961, have mainly emphasised economic growth following the principle of modernisation. The role of the market and market relations thus appeared and contributed to transiting Thailand to a market economy along with many other market-based societies (Rigg 2019: 66–67). Then in 1977 the government increased compulsory education from four to six years. A higher educational background was believed to enable people to partake in a technologically based economy. More people in rural areas migrated to the capital, a movement that could be considered the transformation of a peasant society and a mixing of occupations and identities. Thailand as a whole and Bangkok in

particular became urbanised and host to countless villagers. According to Charles Keyes (2012), the rural to urban migration during the 1960s to 1980s was driven by several factors: (1) the expansion of the world market economy where a greater number of rural villagers searched for non-agricultural work; (2) a rural crisis created by the rapid growth in the rural population; (3) the increase in commercial agriculture and the sale of local products as new cash crops required farmers to adjust to these forces; (4) typological challenges, including poor soil, inadequate water supplies (both rain and irrigation) and distancing from major markets; and (5) personal preferences changing, namely from being in the villages to being in urban centres for work and business. Later, individuals' time away from villages increased (Rigg 2019: 98). In addition, using older agricultural technology caused low productivity and inevitably forced farmers to migrate to the cities (Laothamatas 2013: 64–65; Rigg 2019: 93).

The wave of migration has continued. In the 1990s, education, the media (particularly television), and the spread of consumerism created aspirations and consumption preferences in the rural provinces and affected views of migration (Rigg 2019: 69). Migrating became a more general practice among provincial residents, who worked far away from home, at least occasionally for different proposes and mainly for economic incentives. Migration thus reflected spatial inequalities between urban and rural areas in Thailand and became a crucial game changer of Thai social structure in modern times. Migration has thus shaped agricultural society and caused complex identities to emerge among rural villagers. In this way, these driving forces have changed Thailand's traditional peasant society. Previous studies, including Keyes (2012), Walker (2012), and McCargo (2017), identify the multiple statuses of 'villagers' or 'farmers' that link occupation with identity. Looking at farmers' fluid identity, it can be summarised that farmers in Thailand are, for the most part, not economically poor, as they have become middle-income farmers/ villagers with work in and income from sectors other than agriculture. To put it simply: they are not traditional farmers (Keyes 2012: 343–348; Walker 2012: 8 and McCargo 2017: 399). Various descriptions of Thai farmers stress the prevalence of habitus. Status and location can easily change, but not their *inherited* habitus, as they themselves and others still view them to some extent as farmers. Education was a great impetus for development. After implementing the National Education Act in 1999 (B.E. 2542) and the next National Education Act in 2002 (B.E. 2545), Thai citizens had access to an increasing number of opportunities to attain more education, first from six to nine years of compulsory education, then twelve years of free basic education. The transformation of peasant society reflects the connection between and the overlapping nature of pre-capitalist and capitalist structures through global influence – that is, Western influence and modernisation as well as national historical entities and domestic socio-economic and environmental forces. The outcomes of such a transformation occurred not only on structural levels, but they also penetrated into social aspects of individuals' attitudes concerning aspirations and consumptions that have produce values and practices that have become contemporary habitus traits of Thai society.

The association of the macro structure – pre-capitalist and capitalist structures – appeared due to the historical process and changes in agrarian society accelerated by migration, and the global forces that led to urbanisation and high density in Bangkok. On a structural level, it can be seen that the household has changed markedly to become multi-sited because of new activities and required adaptation in working practices (Rigg 2019: 100). Bangkok has become the destination that brings together people with various backgrounds, values, and political preferences. When disagreement erupts, the city becomes the site of clashing political ideology, were settlers with rural, agricultural backgrounds or village migrants are on one side and urban dwellers are on the other. Crucial social and political change arose during the government of Thaksin Shinawatra (2001–2006). Charles Keyes (2012: 784) pointed out the important social transformation in Thailand's political arena is that political power and votes are not merely controlled by people in Bangkok, but by northeastern villagers working in and outside their hometowns with sophisticated understandings of rights and justice. No longer ignorant peasants, they can participate in and shape the Thai political landscape. In fact, the majority of votes come from provinces where urban residents comprise approximately only 23 per cent of the total population (Laothamatas 2013: 26). The emergence of political action among villagers mostly from the northeast and the north reflects T social changes in Thailand. First, the mobilisation of those rooted in rural areas has produced new cultures of inclusion and led to a refusal to follow the old political principle, namely that governments are made in the provinces but unmade in Bangkok (Laothamatas 2013: 12; Walker 2012: 3–5). This means that the

balance of power had shifted towards the provinces. Second, the votes went to the party representing the interests of ordinary voters, rather than to the political forces that served the middle class and elites (Keyes 2012). Two differing opinions later sprung out of the clash and protests where the Thai Rak Thai party began. This opposition reflected the involvement of political institutions in sustaining the status quo and beliefs rooted in pre-capitalist structures. On the one hand, people saw that the former prime minister, Thaksin Shinawatra, and his political parties had successfully increased political engagement and participation among rural residents and urbanised villagers by enacting policies that directly affected these groups. Examples of such policies are the thirty-baht healthcare scheme, farmers' debt relief, and village development funds to promote small-scale enterprises at the local level, putting benefits directly into the hands of ordinary voters (McCargo 2017). This group was pro-Thaksin. In contrast, the opposition argued that the power of former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra and his political parties was grounded in an unsavory blend of money, violence, and patronage, creating populist policies to serve their interests and appeal to voters with limited education in the rural north and northeast (Walker 2012). The anti-Thaksin group participated in the protest against the former prime minister leading to the 2006 coup. The development of the pro-Thaksin Red Shirts explains the rationales of subsequent protests, and the clashes between the Red Shirts and Yellow Shirts of the urban elite and middle class (Keyes 2012). In so doing, the notion of being 'pro-Thaksin' emerged and many people rooted in rural areas became aware of their benefits and later developed into Red Shirt supporters of former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra when the military coup occurred in September 2006 (Walker 2012).

By going through these key social and political events of transformation, Thailand became a capitalist state, which lead to a change in social positions and classification. The former four levels – *chao* and *nai*, and *phrai* and *that* – were grouped into five social classes with some traits inherited from the earlier period. These emerging five social classes were the upper class, the upper-middle class, the lower-middle class, the labouring class, and the marginalized (Thongsawang, Rehbein, and Chantavanich 2020). In recognizing reproduction of social inequalities among classes, one can see the continuation of this stratification in more studies conducted during the twentieth century. For example, in the Thai bureaucratic state, favouritism was more important than merit (e.g., education qualifications and professional skills) in career promotions (Dhiravegin 1978). Supang Chantavanich (1991: 179–95) examined Thai social stratification through analyzing occupations in the 1980s, using an occupational prestige scale to rank 89 occupations. From these scores, Thai social classes based on occupations and their prestige can then be grouped into five strata, namely the upper class (white-collar and technical professions, high administrative and managerial workers, high-ranking military and police officers); the upper-middle class (mid-level military, police officers, and administrators); the lower-middle class (clerical and related work, sales, and services); the working class (agricultural and production work, and wage labourers); and the underclass (e.g., trash collectors, bus ticket collectors, sex workers and beggars). Chantavanich's study observes an emerging 'modern' middle class similar to Evers' strategic group (1973) and finds that both the top and bottom of the social structure remained similar to the *sakdina* system. Along the same line of Chantavanich's (1991) study, the five social classes in this paper are derived from our survey score combining all types of respondents' capital. The five social classes generated also draw from our previous study where this knowledge came from the long-term observation of one of the authors and life course interviews (see Thongsawang, Rehbein, and Chantavanich 2020). The generation shows compatibilities within Thai society, not only the current survey results, and also the fact that *sakdina's* legacy has created a massive gap between the elite and the poor. This makes the middle class loom large. The combination of different kinds of capital to classify social groups enables us to include social factors beyond economic aspects. Another work that studied Thai social stratification draws on both occupational prestige and capital (Pannarunothai et al. 2018). Based on both objective indicators (social origin, standard of living, economic status and level of education) and subjective indicators (occupational prestige, life opportunities and lifestyle), five social strata were identified: (1) the leading class (high-ranking military officers and officials, politicians and CEOs); (2) the professional middle class (managers and professionals); (3) salaried men and women (teachers, specialist technicians, clerical workers and craftsmen); (4) secure hourly workers (lower-rank armed forces and police, sales, technicians and service workers); and (5) the insecure (trash collectors, cleaners and general workers) (Pannarunothai et al. 2018: 39–45). These studies confirm the existence of five social classes in contemporary Thailand.

The justification for social classes varies in different aspects. In the pre-capitalist era, social classes in Thailand depended on social status and duties, and class mobility depended on the court and palace politics. In the capitalist period, occupations became crucial criteria of classification in line with income and education entailing specific values of Thai society. Previous research has concentrated on these class compositions and subsequently applied these class concepts to explicate social phenomena like social inequality and protest patterns. By contrast, habitus, as oriented habits and original sources of values or social structures (Bourdieu 1989) appears less often in the analysis of social inequality and mobilisation. The concept of habitus is generally used to describe people's attributes. Rungnapa Yanyongkasemsuk (2007) discussed how people of different social classes and habitus maintain their socio-economic and political interests. A work by Rungnapa based on Bourdieu's concept of reproduction, argues that the upper class tried to maintain the habitus that allows them to remain the elite class by making use of networking and alliances both within and across groups, including members of the royal family, Chinese businessmen, intellectuals, politicians, and bureaucrats. This strategy enabled elites to sustain their status quo before and after the 1932 revolution (Rungnapa 2007: 188–92).

Although the concept of habitus has been used by Thai scholars for describing specific groups or events due to their selected topic of interests, knowledge of Thai habitus is still undeveloped. The initial attempt to propose the habitus of Thais can be found in the work of Sirima Thongsawang, Boike Rehbein, and Supang Chantavanich (2020). They proposed seven habitus types, initially derived from hypotheses and later confirmed by their collected field data. These fundamental elements of Thai society seen through the lens of habitus should be explored and applied to studying Thai society. To this end, we will thus elaborate on the concept of habitus and our previous findings as implications for social inequality studies in these challenging times, in Thailand, and expand to other habitus types and prevalent characteristics of contemporary Thailand.

Theoretical Approach and Concepts

Habitus as presented by Bourdieu (1992: 18) reflects the distinction of the elite class and its expression in cultural activities and taste as determined by ideology. Habitus exhibits the permanent interplay between the micro- and macro levels as the hinge between a society's macro-structure and the social agency of groups and individuals (Ernst, Weischer and Alikhani 2017: 9–10). Habitus has been cultivated and internalised into an agency's (un)consciousness, meaning it is durable and hard to change. The patterns of behaviours, practices and attitudes are passed from one generation to the next through socialisation and individualisation, where a family unit is a critical institution in transmitting social inheritance. The use of habitus varies because it can be interpreted in a number of ways, including as a generative grammar of thinking, feeling and acting (Krais and Gebauer 2002 cited in Ernst, Weischer and Alikhani 2017: 11). It can be considered a translation of living conditions into cognitive and unconscious structures, it can be applied to the distinct characteristics of groups of social agency, for instance the habitus of hygiene, the erotic habitus or the dot-com habitus (Stam 2009 cited in Wagner and McLaughlin 2015: 203). It can also be a dynamic product of history (Rehbein 2006 cited in Ernst, Weischer and Alikhani 2017: 11). The application of habitus has gone beyond the initial attempt, scope, and space of its origin, yet its contribution in light of the grammar of thinking and the cumulation of history can illuminate the study of other social groups outside Europe, as it pertains to contemporary issues, particularly disparity among groups.

The dynamic function of habitus covers various dimensions of human lives. Bourdieu associated a person's level of habitus with income, occupation, sports, taste for arts and music, food and beverage choices, and political ideology (Bourdieu 1998: 5). Habitus engages with a certain class and creates forms of habitus of permanent and transferable dispositions as structured edifices and to function as such (Bourdieu 1987: 98; Wilterdink 2017: 23–38). Class is associated with the amount of capital in the given field – specific arenas or systems of social positions – where Bourdieu (1984) identifies four types of capital: economic, cultural, social, and symbolic. The first, economic capital, refers to assets like gold, stock, or real estate that can be converted into money. Cultural capital consists of social assets – education, manners, and skills. The third, social capital, refers to valuable networks and connections. Finally, symbolic capital refers to a person's prestige and reputation. Generally, the higher volume of

capital that one holds, the higher class level one will belong to or the better position one will hold in one's field(s). Bourdieu (1987) combined habitus with capital and field to stratify class and social groups. This is because class is related to lifestyles and social structure; demographic factors alone cannot explain class completely. Instead, according to Bourdieu (1987: 7), class should be viewed as "groups made of individuals united by the consciousness and the knowledge of their commonality of condition and ready to mobilise in pursuit of their common interest." In this sense, class can be transformed by the political process of class-making. Class, for Bourdieu, is therefore defined as collectives composed of economic and social bases (Wagner and McLaughlin 2015: 205–6). At the same time, it should be noted that there is some salient criticism on this point, namely that the concept of class has died out, as it fails to explain political actions and consciousness (Clark and Lipset 1991; Pakulski and Waters 1996). There is also the notion of class as having been reduced to a 'zombie category' (Beck and Willms 2004: 16), meaning the concept exists but is losing its importance. However, for Bourdieu, class is still applicable since he included capital and habitus in given fields of individuals into the analysis. In Thailand's case, people's social classes function based on two principal social structures – precapitalist and capitalist – that historically overlapped. These structures intersect and are parallel with one another, which can be considered the consequences of specific Thai historical events. However, this does not mean that all habitus traits emerging from the pre-capitalist era would subsequently evolve to reunite with traits arising in the capitalist structure or disappear altogether. Some patterns of social classes and their prevalent traits have undeniably adapted to new environments, where the key values and patterns of said traits can be traced.

The role of a social base lies in habitus for explicating perception and inequality among classes and groups, which enables the concept of habitus to fulfil the study of group differences in terms of inequality and political actions. Habitus is the critical alternative concept used to study social inequality and related political actions. Nico Wilterdink (2017: 36–7) proposed that the manifestation of habitus changes links to the transformation in the class structure that explains the rise of nationalist populism in Western societies. Additionally, whether a person is leftist or rightist, at the present, may not be as obvious and relevant to the political context as it was in the 1990s, but habitus determines a person's political ideology, mobilisation pattern, and social class (Husu 2013). Regarding the importance of the concept of habitus, this paper analyzes types of habitus and their characteristics in contemporary Thai society in relation to attitudes towards social inequality and participation in social mobilisation.

Material and Methods

All major regions in Thailand are represented in this study. Data were collected from people actually living in Bangkok, as well as in the central region, the east, west, north, northeast, and south. The number of respondents participating in the study in each region varies proportionally to the area's population size. The study used a mixed-method approach, with quantitative research reflecting the large scale of correlations, and qualitative research to facilitate a more in-depth analysis of each type of habitus in relation to the impact of social inequality and mobilisation participation. Qualitative findings are presented first to elaborate types and categories along with details. The questions measuring habitus and characteristics involved respondents' attitudes towards themselves and their family upbringing ranked by a 0 to 10 rating scale. Some questions, such as those regarding social media the impact of social inequality on demonstration participation, used the polar question model, that is, a yes/no answer format. The qualitative interview explored the same set of key questions but invited the respondents to talk freely in their replies.

One concern about working with a small sample pool is reliability. We discern philosophical stances to present the habitus groups. The philosophical bedrocks consist of three elements: epistemology, ontology and methodology. The first, epistemology (theory of knowing), engages positivism; that is, knowledge can be observed and gained through scientific means and interpretivism; knowledge requires interpretation as there is more than one truth. The second, ontology (theory of being), involves objectivism, the idea that knowledge exists independently and can be discovered. It also entails constructionism, knowledge that is constructed by researchers' reflections. The third element, methodology (theory of doing), mainly includes both quantitative and qualitative methods, following the positivist and interpretivist stances, respectively. Yet, there is also a mixed-methods approach that fills the technical gap when

doing data collection and analysis even though it does not follow these two epistemological foundations. The epistemological differences engage with deduction and induction. Deduction refers to the application of established theory coming from confirmed instances or various cases to explain the social world, whereas induction focuses on a process to gradually study each small case or set of data in detail to find a pattern that could subsequently be generalized out to establish a theory (Gilbert 2001). Thus, without induction based on interpretivist and constructionist approaches, there is no theory that positivists look for, and vice versa. With a foundation of social science, our methods follow social science's methodologies. The traditional concern of working with just one or two samples is not relevant here for the following reasons. (1) We elaborate and reaffirm the previous 62 cases. (2) There are not just a few cases for each type, as individuals can possess more than one habitus. Habitus can be dynamic and negotiable. (3) We identify the emerging habitus groups from our cases through surveys and qualitative studies as well as by extracting data from previous work (i.e., from secondary sources) – this is why we use a mixed method approach as we mix data collection and mixed research tools. (4) The aim of analyzing these cases qualitatively is to support a firmly established theory and offer rich descriptive information. Our approach is in the stage of studying minor cases inductively to enhance understanding and allow for unfamiliar or emerging knowledge. This work is a preliminary study to propose the existence of these newly identified habitus groups (i.e., aspirant and content creator) from a small sample number but it is in fact a scientific process of establishing knowledge, facts, and theory in accordance with the epistemological elements.

Population and Samples

The study used data from the National Statistical Office year of 2021, indicating that Thailand has a population of over 50 million aged above fifteen years old. Following the Taro Yamane (1973) formula, this study arrived at the number of 400 samples using a cluster random sample technique. Even though the sample size may be considered small, it adheres to the globally applicable Yamane formula and reduces time-budget constraints. The samples are not highly heterogeneous in terms of income and education level variables, and the number of samples has sufficient statistical power to allow for attaining statistically significant results (see also Fowler and Lapp 2019; Stanley, Doucouliagos and Ioannidis 2022). This pilot study was performed with 30 cases showing Cronbach's alpha of 0.88, indicating the reliability of internal consistency. Carrying out a pilot study out before any large-scale quantitative research is used to check the feasibility and consistency of Likert scale questions through the Cronbach alpha test. Thus, 30 respondents are excluded from the data collection. Even though we were aware of the representativeness and statistical limitations, we nevertheless chose to launch an initiative based on real inductive data and sociological concepts that we believe outweigh the concern over having a small sample size to encourage others to make use of it as well and evolve. For qualitative means, 15 respondents participated and came under the quota sample criteria. This study elaborated on the previous study, Thongsawang, Rehbein, and Chantavanich (2020), in which we explored seven habitus types and six characteristics to perform a quantitative study, and on more focused qualitative studies. In this study, fifteen participants were specifically selected from each habitus type, combining the previous findings of habitus types and the new emerging results from employing both quantitative and qualitative means that also demonstrate core social characteristics. The qualitative case studies offer richer details of each type and associated characteristics; they also serve as the process of initial knowledge construction via induction. However, as we are aware of the limited sample size, we would like to note that the use of fifteen respondents for a qualitative study is not simply the source for proposing the two emerging habitus traits. Rather, we further employ triangulation to support our findings and analysis. First, we use recent data to reaffirm the six habitus traits, and our proposed habitus groups come from interviews and long systematic observation of over fifteen years of fieldwork conducted by one of the authors (Rehbein) who shared it with me (Sirima) over the past six years. Methodologically, the knowledge of six – and, later, eight – habitus groups was developed in line with objectivist ontology in relation to phenomenalism, which is perception of material objects; as such, it counts as simply the perception of sensory data. The salient knowledge already existed, and we discovered the original six groups first. We also explored the interview technique to add additional explanatory power to what we had already observed and countless previous interviews,

that is, the process of induction. Thus, we performed both qualitative and quantitative processes, meaning we employed a mixed-method approach, to overcome these technical limitations. We then arrived at the proposed six habitus groups and elaborated upon them to extend to eight traits. Second, our proposed habitus traits come from the survey results. We can combine these aspects to support the qualitative fifteen cases. Third, we drew on secondary data analysis. There are several studies that have found traces of these habitus types. The analyses performed by Duncan McCargo (2017) and Jonathan Rigg (2019) detailed the aspirant traits of urbanised villagers:

> They are not poor in terms of income or assets; however, they are chronically insecure because their major earnings come from casual labour or informal businesses, such as small-scale vending activities which do not produce steady income. Most of these people are not very radical: they aspire to have a secure middle-class lifestyle. (McCargo 2017: 366)

> The Thai population, not least in the countryside, are seeking to transform their living conditions. They are on a mission to improve themselves, and this improvement is usually couched in terms of the achievement of material prosperity-becoming "modern". This has required that the population of Thailand engage with new work, using new practices, and often, in new places. Better lives for themselves and their families, it is an everyday fact. (Riggs 2019:66)

> In essence, meeting rising needs and growing aspirations that are so much a part of Thailand's development story can, for the great majority of the rural population, only be achieved if households are restructured spatially and occupationally. (Riggs 2019: 100)

Moving now to the content creator:

> The Eleventh National Economic and Social Plan (2012–2016) prioritised the sustainable and resilient economic growth and clearly identified the support of the hi-speed internet coverage aiming to cover 80 per cent of the population. (Secretariat of the Cabinet 2019)

It is an established fact that the cultivation of the content creator trait has evolved from the national development plan. None the less, we do not find other studies proposing this social condition as prevalent habitus traits in Thai society. In this regard, we develop the proposed habitus traits from both positivist and interpretivist stances using surveys and qualitative data.

Data Collection and Analysis

Habitus can be explored as a method for linking explanations for the political dimension and power structures when the narrative account, or the interview, is the key tool (Wagner and McLaughlin 2015: 214). The research team collected more data through in-person interviews, and with some younger participants, through online interviews. Moreover, in interviewing respondents in the northern, northeastern, and southern regions, the interviewers spoke the local dialects of those regions to ensure understanding and clarity. Although the survey was the means for quantitative interviews, our team spent approximately one hour with each respondent to complete a survey. For the qualitative approach, it was necessary to make several prior points of contact with potential respondents to ensure they belonged to the expected habitus types. Qualitative interviews took longer, and some participants needed a second interview, as the respondents tended to share long stories when they felt more relaxed and comfortable with interviewers. After receiving the ethical committee's approval, the data collection started in September 2021 and ended in June 2022.

Qualitative analysis explores personal and socialisation-related information, and it emphasizes the values, habits and attitudes to which people have been oriented. The study endeavors to extract the influence of the primary habitus in connecting to secondary inputs in line with political activities and social inequality. Socialisation, attitudes and orientation from one's primary stage of life and beyond are the central foci for arriving at an interpretation based on the content analysis technique. Regardingd the larger scale data, quantitative data analysis and processing use the Statistic Package for the Social Science (SPSS). The SPSS functions used for managing data include a frequency report of demographic

information, the effects on social inequality and mobilisation participation. Applying the correlation technique is used mainly to present the direction of correlation between habitus types and characteristics, and habitus and social issues, such as inequality and mobilisation. A correlation technique included frequency of measurement to present percentages of occupation, income, address, mobilisation, parents' education, family's occupations and key values to categorise the habitus traits such as aspirant and content creator. This use of the chi-square test is employed to present the strength of association of a person's habitus and occupation, his or her parents' education and family occupation because family backgrounds can determine one's action and attitudes. Thus, it serves as the main method for processing nominal variables, including habitus, characteristics and the implications of social inequality and rallies.

Results and Discussion

Conducing an analysis of habitus today requires an understanding of one's way of life, linking family background with historical significance. This section presents such crucial influences as a source of cultivating personal practices in light of cognitive or primary fashion as well as social aspects of mobilisation and inequality. The previous six habitus types (subsistential, desperate, conformist, traditionalist, individualist and *phuyai* [Thongsawang, Rehbein, and Chantavanich 2020]) continue to be significant in contemporary Thai society. The other two habitus types proposed are aspirant and content creator. There were fifteen respondents for the in-depth interviews together with 400 surveys that reaffirm the previous and additional habitus types.

Types of habitus and their characteristics

The subsistential type, based on James Scott (1976), consists of those who live sufficiently by having enough agricultural products for consumption until the next harvest. Prior to this data collection, our hypothesis regarding the subsistential leaned towards its gradual disappearance because of rapid socio-economic and political developments. However, the subsistence ethic was re-established markedly due to the long disruption of daily life by the COVID-19 pandemic. Subsequently, countless urbanised villagers returned to their hometowns and resumed an agriculturally-based way of life. Regarding the desperate type, this consists of those who have low expectations in life with limited or no resources and are likely to be in debt. The desperate type, in this study, also includes those who have feelings of hopelessness regardless of the number of actual possessions they have. This marks an important difference between the definition employed in the previous study, which focused mainly on the material assets of the desperate type. In this present study, results show that the middle class, especially the younger generation, are apt to experience despair regarding economic and social conditions. As for the conformist: the term refers to people who follow the majority because they do not want to be different or excluded from society. The traditionalist, however, observes customs or norms because they value them. Traditionalists are attached to the past and prefer no changes to take place. The *phuyai* (powerful) type is comprised of those who value hierarchy and seniority, and generally hold positions of management and high capital. Younger people can be *phuyai*, depending on their social positions. Individualists are those who emphasised their own demands and thoughts rather than those of groups, and they act despite such action being different. There is a sharp difference between the individualist and other habitus types, especially with the conformist and traditionalist types. As mentioned earlier, the emerging types are aspirant and content creator. Aspirant refers to those who seek out better lives or to secure middle-class lifestyle; their growing aspirations drive them to work more and try to adapt to new practices or ('good middle-class') lifestyles. Last is the content creator (or influencer), meaning those who create online content for economic and social purposes as well as people who follow online social media that influence the attitudes and behaviours of followers. A person can be both a creator and a follower and can take turns regarding these statuses. The characteristics of each habitus trait are combined with other characteristics and habitus types depending on situations, issues and times. Both types are discussed in more depth, in connection with interviews conducted with participants from each habitus trait in the next section.

The subsistential

The years 2020–2022 marked an important period; while the subsistential habitus type has tended to be less significant in other countries during the capitalist era, in Thailand it has persisted, thus going in the opposite direction. This trend began with the breakdown of the Thai economy in 1997 or the so-called *Tom Yum Kung* disease – the collapse of the Thai currency which led the government to float the Thai baht. Lack of foreign currency to exchange with the U.S. dollar disrupted the growth of capitalism and reintroduced self-reliance in the country. The notions of a sufficiency economy and subsistence were brought back and emphasised from 1997 to 2016, primarily in Thailand's 8th to 11st National Economic and Social Development Plans. The disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic during 2020–2022 also contributed greatly to the re-introduction of subsistence ethics. Thus, the key events affecting this trait include the Thai economy in 1997, the death of King Bhumibol (RAMA IX), and the COVID-19 outbreak. Below is a quotation from one of this study's participants:

> My main job is crop farming as well as collecting wild plants and some animals. I also come to the city for work depending on [whether] I get hired. It's ok for me to live on farming and gathering natural products alone as it is enough for me because I don't spend much. Still, it's fine for me to do a small job in the city as I have free time. I've never calculated how much I earn. Sometimes it is not much, but I want to help. In doing extra work in the city, I can buy a small rice mill and charge my neighbours very little for using it. Well, I think my life is good and I don't feel inequality or think of any protests or politics. Such things are not relevant in my life. (Som, 29 years old)

This interview reflects the subsistential habitus, for which the characteristics are self-confidence, conformist and authoritarian. Even though the respondent possesses a very limited amount of financial capital, she feels positively and care-free about her standard of living. Moreover, she has no interest in mobilisation, implying obedience to the mainstream or the powerful, and less engagement in social media with any politically related agenda. Her peripheral geographical location places this interviewee far away from the governmental resource allocations and an awareness of state responsibility towards citizens. Concern over inequality and mobilisation are not options as this person, participating in this habitus type, is familiar with her living conditions and has no motivation to pursue change.

The desperate

We now move on to another type of Thai habitus: desperate. Previously, the desperate type was comprised of mainly individuals who had limited resources and socio-economic backgrounds, in other words, those of relatively low economic status and a marginal social position, causing feelings of hopelessness and a lack of mobility. However, this habitus type has expanded from including only those with low socio-economic backgrounds to other social classes who consider themselves hopeless regardless of the amount of capital they possess. Below is a quotation from an interview conducted with a participant named Daa:

> I'm confused, as on the one hand, I think I am capable of getting a decent job, but on the other hand I don't know where I should head to. Living in this country [Thailand] makes me doubt myself and my ability. I think I try hard to make a living but life sucks and many times I want to give up on life. Things got worse because of the pandemic as we [my family] lost income. It is hopeless to protest since it won't change anything. (Daa, 24 years old)

Younger people tend to increasingly fall into the desperate group even though they have a higher education or are in the middle class. They feel desperate because of the situation surrounding them in Thailand, and this corresponds to the trend of the overseas migration of younger Thais. The desperate type experiences and feels affected by inequality, yet they do not participate in rallies because, in their view, protests will not result in actual change or improve one's quality of life.

The conformist and traditionalist

Moving now to the conformist and traditionalist types: these two groups share some characteristics. The research results demonstrate that they cling to the past and comply with orders:

> When I got a job as a public-school teacher, I followed every school rule. There are several prohibitions and practices. It is a kind of culture that we should uphold as we are a part of society. (Koi, 26 years old)

> Living in society, I prioritise the seniority system. One should know *phuyai* [senior] and *phunoi* [junior] and behave accordingly. In the past we respected tradition – younger people or children wouldn't argue with *phuyai* or parents so there was no conflict or violence like what happens now. Look at my workplace, for instance, where I was close to retirement. The new employer who has just joined us argued with the boss already. This is not right. The new employee has too big an ego and might think of himself as better or having a higher education than others. This is not good. How can the new and young employee be better than the experienced boss? (Grit, 70 years old)

Koi represents the conformist type, while Grit represents the traditionalist. From the interviews, it was found that they internalise discipline and authority according to subordination norms and perceived merit. Moreover, both types gave similar answers when asked about social media and social movements. Both use social media mainly for communication and entertainment. Traditionalists use it much less, and they disagree with the idea of joining protests or even online mobilisations. Conformists believe that people around them do not protest (in fact a minority do protest), whereas the traditionalist believes that change takes time and that the *phuyai* knows best what to do. Yet other types assert that young people do not understand how things really work and believe that this is why youths protest. The individualist habitus differs from the previous groups in terms of characteristics like self-confidence, having a purpose in life, patience and perseverance.

The individualist and Phu yai

> I changed my Facebook profile picture to one showing my support for the government opposition. My mother saw it, and then showed it to my father. He told me to delete the picture right away. I did so, yet I posted and shared it on other platforms and blocked my parents from seeing my posts. Politics affect my life and I believe it is my duty to contribute to society. Inequality persists even though it doesn't affect me much now; but who knows, in the future it might. I work hard and have a goal in life, but it won't be achieved smoothly if society is disrupted. Online mobilisation can bring awareness and changes. (Naam, 25 years old)

The individualist engages in social media and, in this case, mobilises online for the purpose of improving society. This interviewee negotiates value and action as she respects traditional family norms by not arguing with parents, but she is not submissiveto authority. To put it simply: authoritarianism is not a characteristic of the individualist, but of the *phuyai* type. The *phuyai* habitus can be found generally to possess the key characteristics of authoritarianism and goal-orientation, but the *phuyai* are generally less involved in social media and do not join demonstrations. One interviewee aged 63 described power and charisma as different from each other and he saw himself as having charisma because some people asked for his help. Moreover, this interviewee cares about proper behaviour, especially in politics. He believes that he is *phuyai*-aged and charismatic, so he must be careful not to take any side as it might affect his reputation. The interviewee said that he browsed social media and viewed political content, yet he only read through them and never commented. He felt that *phuyai* should do charity work or donate, as he does, rather than acting out or going against the opposition, as power (im)balances can shift.

The new habitus types: aspirant and the content creator (influencer)

The previous six habitus types have long existed in Thailand (Thongsawang, Rehbein, and Chantavanich 2020). In adding to our understanding based on the findings of this data collection (2020–2022), the

results showed two emerging habitus types (per the survey results) in contemporary Thai society: the aspirant and the content creator (or influencer). Aspirant refers to those who try to achieve a good quality of life by accumulating economic and social assets and symbolic values, for which some struggle to gain as much as they believe society expects or the level they believe they should have. The aspirant's characteristics involve life goals and they follow a pattern of living that is considered successful. For instance, this includes the amount of savings they believe people should have at each age, what property one should possess, the number of trips one should take and so on. This group will work hard and try to search for such forms of capital which they think society values, and they internalize their attitudes and practices. As Yupa, an interviewee, describes:

> My father worked as a janitor and my mom raised pigs. I know how life is hard when one is poor, so I have been working hard to support my family. We live comfortably now, yet I don't think it is enough and I want to do more. People around me have a good life. Today, we use the internet and social media and if you want to engage people in your business networks, credibility is important. The way you live, dress, and consume can build your image. People can see everything we are because we post pictures, videos, or anything on the internet to tell who we are and the more people accept or follow us, the better it is for our business. For example, you can increase online sales or have a chance to have more business partners. That's why I buy or consume the things that a successful person has, and we can't avoid expressing ourselves or interacting with people on the internet. I think it is important to use luxurious brand names, drive European cars, frequently take trips aboard, and eat in well-known restaurants because it presents a good image for doing business and I like to have this kind of lifestyle. I work very hard to get it. (Yupa, 42 years old)

The aspirant group, comprised of people like Yupa, has increased considerably in Thai society with the rise and widespread use of social media. Social media has become part of Thai people's lifestyle as well as a part of businesses and marketplaces. The aspirant is self-confident and goal-oriented in aspiring to a desirable life; moreover, they are largely driven by social media. This type follows norms in Thai society that reflect the obedience and conformity of the majority. The aspirant works incredibly hard to fulfil life goals, and they possess the traits of patience and perseverance. The sample that was categorised as aspirants is comprised of villagers who have moved to cities and adopted new aspirations motivated by the capitalist emphasis on profit and income; this has resulted in forming high life aspirations. When asked about the consequences of inequality and protest engagement, the aspirant is indifferent as they are focused more intensively on their own financial and social status.

The final habitus type is the content creator or influencer, consisting of those who create online content for business, social, and/or symbolic purposes, as well as those who follow the influencer/content creator by emulating or accepting attitudes and behaviours of the content creator. As Jinda reports:

> Today you can't run a market like before, but if you insist on doing it, you won't be rich. The world has changed to being digital – everything can be done online. To promote sales you have to merge a product with your presentation, like a life coach or a marketing guru – teaching people how to sell stuff online – like what I'm doing on YouTube and Facebook and soon will be doing on TikTok. I have to inspire people while advertising the quality of my product in order to convince them to buy for me or invest in me. My video clips increase the number of views my content receives – you know it's sort of more credibility and popularity. Some viewers contact me after watching my live presentation to buy products or engage in further business collaborations. I see it as doing personal branding. (Jinda, 43 years old)

Content creators are generally in the middle class or higher, conforming to online trends and highly driven by social media. This type is alert to current social news and thus is actively engaged in online mobilisation.

Habitus, Inequality and Mobilization

Information collected from the quantitative survey shows the following. Females made up 52.20% of the respondents (males: 47.80%). The youngest group, those under 30, comprised 36.00%; those aged 31–40,

14.50%; 41–50, 15.50%; 51–60, 16.80%; 61–70, 13.00%; and over 70, 4.20%. Samples came from different parts of Thailand: 6.30% from Bangkok; 13.30% from the central region; 5.50% from the east; 18.50% from the north; 8.00% from the west; 13.80% from the south; and 34.60% from the northeast. The number of samples from each location varied in proportion to the country's population. Educational attainment was relatively high, but the income levels seemed to go in the opposite direction. The majority of samples, 51.70%, had bachelor's degrees or higher; 18.80% had a diploma or a secondary level education; and 29.50% had completed primary school or less. None the less, more than half of respondents – 54.30% – made less than 429 USD monthly, with 43.50% earning between 429 and 2285 USD, and only 2.20% earning over 2285 USD per month. The data showed that those with limited income, 87.30% experienced inequality and 62.10% were affected by such inequality, while 37.90% reported perceiving no effects of inequality onthem. This can constitute one of the factors explaining mobilisation participation. While 11.80% had joined a physical protest, 88.20% had not. The percentage joining online mobilisation was higher: 26.80% replied 'yes' and 73.20% 'no.' In total, combining the two types of mobilisation, 28.20% had joined and 71.80% had not. Our 400 surveys also showed that 87.90% engage in social media in many ways – linking them to the content creator/influencer type and the characteristics of being social media-driven. Respondents reported using social media for many purposes: communication, 91.70%; entertainment, 80.40%; news content, 76.6%; online purchases, 57.60%; education, 53.7%; and conducting business, 39.2%. Moreover, we proposed the aspirant type for this group because our findings indicate the existence of relevant traits and characteristics. Responses showed that the average of each value, namely self-progress, money prioritisation, the perceived need of money to be happy and work prioritisation were 8.22, 8.42, 8.64, and 8.24, respectively, out of 10 (the number indicating the highest score). These results also suggest connections with the characteristics of patience and perseverance.

The results present the habitus traits that showed high-ranking according to type. Habitus is formed primarily by family and upbringing. Table 1 demonstrates the relationship between each habitus type and occupational background.

Table 1 showed that Farmers constituted the highest number for the subsistential, desperate and traditionalist types. Students were the more prevalent in the content creator type, at 9.80% and, interestingly, also in the desperate type, at 7.30%. Bureaucratic jobs belonged mostly to the groups of conformist and *phuyai*. By contrast, the content creator, individualist and aspirant types described their occupations as 'employee' by far the most frequently, at 28.80%, 22.70%, and 22.00%, respectively. Specifically, the ratio of entrepreneurs rose to 17.80% and 16.30%, in which individualist and content creator groups share maximumly. Looking at Table 2, over half of all habitus types – except the content creator – earn a low-level income (i.e., less than 429 USD), particularly the traditionalist at 68.90%, and the desperate at 66.70%. In contrast, the majority of the content creator group, nearly 60%, earn between 429 and 2285 USD monthly. This group's income, which is considerably higher than the others', differs in the concentration of occupations; they are also distinguished by residing in Bangkok, at over 10%. The individualist and desperate types are second, with nearly 10% concentrated in Bangkok, whereas just 1% of the traditionalist type and about 2% of *phuyai* report living in Bangkok. Place of residence is associated with participation. The content creator was highest in reporting 'yes' for joining mobilisations, at more than 45%; the desperate, individualist and aspirant types were also at a high level, at over 30%. There are two types of mobilisations: onsite (OS) or physical protests, and virtual (VR) or online. Respondents of all habitus groups reported a higher rate of online engagement, rather than physical. The greatest number of mobilisation participation both onsite and online belongs to the content creator group, at 44.00% online engagement and 19.00% onsite demonstration. The second and third highest are individualist, at 28.90% online and 12.50% onsite, with the aspirant at 28.60% and 13.50% for online and onsite, respectively. The noticeably low rate of involvement in both types of movements belongs to the conformist, at around 1% joining onsite protests and 11.60% participating in virtual ones. As for traditionalists, the data show that 5.80% engage in onsite and 11.70% online. The rates for *phuyai* and subsistential are also relatively low, at less than 9% for joining online mobilisation.

The habitus of those oriented primarily by their family and social backgrounds is highly significant in determining people's actions and social attitudes. The results found the respondents' parents' education and family's occupation as critical factors in cultivating a person's habitus. Parents' educational level was significantly related to the subsistential, conformist, traditionalist and content creator types; their parents'

Table 1. Habitus types and occupational background

Habitus type	Trace Gen.	Occupations (%)						
		Bureaucrat	Employee	Entrepreneur	Farmer	Labourer	Student	Other
Subsistential	1	6.60	1.10	8.20	49.70	10.40	-	24.00
	2	14.80	3.30	15.80	49.20	14.20	-	2.70
	3	16.40	19.40	14.20	22.10	14.40	3.20	10.3
Desperate	1	8.90	0.00	13.80	37.40	8.20	-	31.70
	2	19.50	2.40	17.10	42.30	17.10	-	1.60
	3	14.60	17.10	9.80	26.80	13.80	7.30	10.60
Conformist	1	11.60	0.00	4.30	50.70	8.70	-	24.70
	2	20.30	4.30	14.50	49.30	11.60	-	0.00
	3	21.70	15.90	14.50	21.70	14.50	4.40	7.30
Traditionalist	1	4.90	1.00	6.80	48.50	7.70	-	31.10
	2	13.60	2.90	7.80	59.20	14.60	-	1.90
	3	12.60	12.60	11.70	35.90	11.70	1.90	13.60
Individualist	1	9.90	0.00	14.80	46.10	10.50	-	18.70
	2	21.10	3.60	19.70	40.10	13.20	-	2.30
	3	18.40	22.70	17.80	14.80	10.20	5.30	10.80
Phuyai	1	9.80	2.20	7.60	46.70	7.60	-	26.10
	2	23.90	3.30	10.90	50.00	10.80	-	1.10
	3	25.00	15.20	7.60	27.20	7.60	4.30	13.10
Aspirant	1	8.20	0.00	13.50	48.10	8.20	-	22.00
	2	20.00	3.30	17.20	45.30	11.80	-	2.40
	3	20.00	22.00	11.80	20.00	10.20	4.90	11.10
Content creator	1	14.70	0.50	17.90	39.70	9.80	-	17.40
	2	30.40	4.90	24.50	22.80	14.70	-	2.70
	3	25.00	28.80	16.30	2.70	6.50	9.80	10.90

Remarks: *Gen. = Generation: 1-Grandfather, 2- Father, and 3- Child/Respondent*

Table 2. Habitus types and social background

	Monthly Income	Address	Mobilization mobilisation		Parents' EDU	
	USD (%)	(%)	(%)	Type: Yes (%)	Fa (%)	Mo (%)
Subsistential	>2,285 = 1.60 429-2,285 = 40.40 <429 = 57.90	BKK = 6.00 Other = 94.00	Y = 23.50 N = 76.50	OS = 8.70 VR = 21.30	L 61.20 M 24.60 H 14.20	L 70.50 M 14.80 H 14.70
Desperate	>2,285 = 0.00 429-2,285 = 33.30 <429 = 66.70	BKK = 8.10 Other = 91.90	Y = 32.50 N = 67.50	OS = 16.30 VR = 31.70	L 56.10 M 21.10 H 22.80	L 59.30 M 17.90 H 22.80
Conformist	>2,285 = 1.50 429-2,285 = 42.00 <429 = 56.50	BKK = 5.80 Other = 94.20	Y = 11.60 N = 88.40	OS = 1.40 VR = 11.60	L 63.80 M 20.30 H 15.90	L 75.40 M 8.70 H 15.90
Traditionalist	>2,285 = 3.90 429-2,285 = 27.20 <429 = 68.90	BKK = 1.00 Other = 99.00	Y = 13.60 N = 86.40	OS = 5.80 VR = 11.70	L 74.80 M 12.60 H 12.60	L 80.60 M 5.80 H 13.60
Individualist	>2,285 = 3.00 429-2,285 = 50.30 <429 = 46.70	BKK = 9.50 Other = 90.50	Y = 30.90 N = 69.10	OS = 12.50 VR = 28.90	L 54.60 M 24.00 H 21.40	L 62.20 M 16.80 H 21.10
Phuyai	>2,285 = 1.10 429-2,285 = 42.40 <429 = 56.50	BKK = 2.20 Other = 97.80	Y = 23.90 N = 76.10	OS = 7.60 VR = 23.90	L 58.70 M 21.70 H 19.60	L 67.40 M 13.00 H 19.60
Aspirant	>2,285 = 1.60 429-2,285 = 48.20 <429 = 50.20	BKK = 6.10 Other = 93.90	Y = 30.60 N = 69.40	OS = 13.50 VR = 28.60	L 56.30 M 23.30 H 20.40	L 63.70 M 16.70 H 19.60
Content creator	>2,285 = 2.20 429-2,285 = 59.80 <429 = 38.00	BKK = 10.30 Other = 89.70	Y = 45.70 N = 54.30	OS = 19.00 VR = 44.00	L 33.70 M 32.10 H 34.20	L 42.80 M 23.40 H 33.70

Note. Y = Yes, N = No; OS = Onsite; VR = Virtual; L = Low; M = Medium; H = High. 1 USD = 35 THB (approx.).

educational level is relatively low. The first three groups are clearly the legacy of Thailand's pre-capitalist structure. By contrast, one of the two newly proposed habitus types, the content creator, showed that their parents' education level is by far the highest, with 34.20% of their father having a bachelor's degree or higher and 33.80% for their mothers. The distribution of education for the content creator group showed more balance and tended to be promising, in which both genders achieve education more equally. Only three groups – subsistential, traditionalist and content creator – are significant in terms of parents' education. The strength of association ranked in the middle range, while the content creator presented a high association of chi-square and phi values. Family background follows a patrilineage pattern because this is common in Thai society. Parents of those comprising the content creator group were mostly in the bureaucrat or public servant fields, at 30.40% for the father. Next are the *phuyai* and conformist groups. The ratio of parents' educational level for the content creator group was the highest, contributing to their ability to secure jobs that required degree qualification.

Table 1 shows that entrepreneurs also included small and family business owners. Content creators' parents earned their living mostly from this occupation, at 24.50% of fathers. On the other hand, traditionalists were the least likely to select entrepreneur as their parents' occupation, at 7.80% of fathers. This reflects the occupational values of the past when conducting business was insecure and sometimes carried less prestige compared to public servant positions. Farmers, including those working on agrarian, livestock, fish and aquamarine farms, comprise the great majority of parents of all habitus types, except for the content creator. The groups in which parents were most often described as farmers were traditionalist, *phuyai*, conformist and subsustential. These four groups were formed within pre-capitalist structures. The desperate type reported the highest ratio of labourers as their parents' occupation. These habitus types have some commonalities with other types; therefore, the results showed them as the level of association through the chi-square test and grouped answers by rating the high scale of

each habitus type. The habitus and its transformation and continuity can generally expand out to three or a few more generations (Ernst, Weischer, and Alikha 2017: 10). Historical family background thus reaches back to the grandparent's generation to ascertain the associations between occupations and habitus types. Farming was still the grandparents' primary occupation and was highly significant among the conformist, subsistential and traditionalist types. The content creator group reported the fewest grandparents working as farmers. Other occupations in the grandparents' generation illustrate a general variation in terms of careers. However, the largest transformations were reported among the occupations of 'labourer' and 'others' – including 'not working' and 'don't know'. In the grandparents' generation, the proportion of 'others' selected was much higher, implying that some work might not be considere as an occupation or job, such as landlord, a well-off heir, a member of the elite, and so on. However, 'labourer' was reported by a limited number of participants, particularly amon those in the *phuyai* group, at 7.60% for grandfathers. The direction of occupations had notably shifted. In the parents' generation, there was a marked increase in the 'labourer' group but a decrease in 'others'. This reflects the reality that, in a capitalist society, people must work to survive.

Now, let us consider Table 3, which details the implications of a habitus to explain social issues in contemporary Thailand, focusing on mobilisation participation and effects on social inequality. Thongsawang, Rehbein, and Chantavanich (2020) offered five characteristics, including self-confidence and goal-orientation, that combine with discipline, traditionalism, conformism and authoritarianism. Elaborating further on previous studies, our findings demonstrate two other prevalent characteristics in Thailand today: 'patience and perseverance' and 'social media driven'. Like the habitus types that have commonalities, more than one characteristic can overlap. We used the Bivariate Pearson Correlation technique to test the associations where several variables were significant at 0.05*. Most importantly, there are some variables strongly associated with $p < 0.01$**. The subsistential type demonstrated a positive association with the characteristics of authoritarianism, implying that they agree with dictated actions, or at least that they act in accordance with such dictates. The subsistential group showed a negative relationship with the social media-driven trait and decline to join protests. Similar to the subsistential group, the desperate tend to obey orders. The desperate have low self-confidence and are not influenced by online media or driven by values of patience and perseverance, despite being the most affected by social inequality. The conformist type also has authoritarian characteristics but is negatively related to those that are shaped by social media and protest-joining groups.

The traditionalist group showed a highly positive correlation with authoritarianism, but this type was less likely to be driven by social media and social movements. The individualist type demonstrated a positive association with the characteristics of self-confidence, goal-orientation, traditionalism, patience and perseverance and being social media driven. However, individualism is in an oppositive relationship with authoritarianism. The *phuyai* group possesses the characteristics of goal-orientation and authoritarianism, whereas the features of being social media driven and participating in demonstrations are negatively related to this group. Aspirants are a group that combines a number characteristics; they are significantly self-confident, goal-oriented, authoritarian and social media-driven, showing some degree of conformist traits and patience and perseverance. The content creator type differs. Like the individualist, authoritarianism is not their key characteristic. The content creator agrees with conformity – sometimes with an online community – and is greatly influenced by social media and has a significant potential for joining mobilisations. Authoritarianism is by far the key trait in Thailand today, despite the participants' ages leaning towards younger demographics. The only habitus type that reported being affected by social inequality was the desperate group. The subsistential, conformist and *phuyai* groups do not join protests, and this is especially the case for traditionalists. Mobilisation participation is more likely to be associated with the content creator group, who display significant social media-driven characteristics.

The findings demonstrate the intersection of class, geography and inequality contributing to cleavages in Thai society. The urban and rural division influences classification, and vice versa. Considering the findings from the sampling on the habitus types and people's engagement in social issues, Table 3 indicates that the desperate habitus group is the only one who significantly expresses concern over inequality. As the desperate people are those who have limited or no resources and are likely to be in debt, their poverty confirms that they are from the lower class, who adopt the consciousness of economic and social inequality and are ready to mobilise on inequality issues (Bourdieu 1987: 7). Yet, gaps based on the

Table 3. Associations of habitus, characteristics and social issues

Characteristics	Habitus types							
	Subsistential	Desperate	Conformist	Traditionalist	Individualist	*Phuyai*	Aspirant	Content creator
Self- confidence	+1*	−1**	0	0	+1**	0	+1**	0
Goal-orientation	0	0	0	0	+1**	+1**	+1**	0
Traditionalist	0	+1**	0	+1**	+1**	0	0	0
Conformist	+1*	0	+1*	0	0	0	+1*	+1**
Authoritarianism	+1**	0	+1**	+1**	−1*	+1**	+1**	−1**
Patience and Perseverance	0	−1*	0	0	+1**	0	+1*	+1**
Social media driven	−1**	−1**	−1**	−1**	+1**	−1**	+1**	+1**
Social issues								
Inequality	0	+1**	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mobilizing	−1*	0	−1**	−1**	0	−1*	0	+1**

Notes. +1: Positive Correlation; −1: Negative Correlation; 0: No Correlation; *: Significant at the 0.05 level; **: Significant at the 0.01 level.

urban-rural setting do exist equally. In Table 2, the conformist, traditionalist, powerful (*phuyai*) and the content creator comprise the habitus types who engage in mobilizing. Table 2 shows that the influencer type is clearly urban, with 10% coming from Bangkok, a high level of father's and mother's education (33%–34%), and father's occupation being reported as 'entrepreneur' which is urban-based (24%). As for the *phuyai,* usually they do not join demonstrations. However, in this study, their association with mobilisation is significant, at 0.01, reflecting that they are now engaged in social issues more explicitly. Fifty percent reporting their father working as a farmer, indicating their rural background. We can thus conclude that the habitus types in this study illustrate cleavages in Thai society in terms of both class and urban-rural dimensions. Additionally, several publications identify the characteristics of rural people by looking at social orientation, economic status, educational background and so on, which relate to class positions. Charles Keyes (2012) and Jonathan Riggs (2019) referred to provincial residents in agriculturally-based communities relying heavily on the natural environment, meaning the fluctuating climate negatively affects their farming productivity and therefore their income – factors leading to migration. Regarding socio-economic status, numerous rural residents/ migrants fall within the working class demographic (Riggs, 2019). Therefore, these studies present the overlapping of the urban-rural characteristic and one's class to define fissures in Thai society that align with our findings. Both urban and rural geography and class influence each other and should not be analyzed separately from one another in explaining the habitus groups in Thailand.

Links among habitus types and Thai people's backgrounds

The habitus types relate to Thai people's backgrounds. From the findings we can identity who they are and why they belong to certain types. The wider analysis of the 400 quantitative sampling cases regarding the eight habitus types linked family backgrounds, education and occupation, including parental backgrounds, and enable us to probe the status of Thai people who fit into each habitus type. The results present the habitus traits, as they rated highly according to type. Habitus comes primarily from family and upbringing. Table 1 demonstrates the relationship between each habitus type and the respondents' occupation, along with the occupations of over three generations. Table 2 presents the habitus types and income, residential area, mobility and parental educational attainment and occupation. It was found that the subsistential habitus type is comprised of farmers predominantly, followed by employees and then low-ranking civil servants. They are non-residents of Bangkok who actively participate in social and political protests. The father's education is primary school with a farming background. The desperate group is quite similar in terms of family background, yet their financial status is more critical. The maximum income of members of this group never reaches 2285 USD per month – the lowest of all demographics. Students make up 7.30% of this type, implying an increase in traits and attitudes of the desperate type in the younger generations. The conformist and traditionalist have commonalities, namely they reported the highest ratio of parents with a low education, the highest number of farmers and the least likelihood to mobilise. These are the prime characteristics of conformist and traditionalist which can determine mobilisation participation. The individualist has the highest income range, and over 50% are middle-income earners. They mostly work as employees. Their social background is quite close to the content creator/influencer type. *Phuyai* ranked the highest in terms of the bureaucrat field. Moreover, a substantial percentage have grandparents and parents who are bureaucrats, implying the transmission of values and attitudes within the families of this habitus. The new aspirant habitus type comes equally from a background of bureaucrats, employees and entrepreneurs, which is an interesting mix of people from three different groups, plus students. They are from moderate-income groups, mostly non-Bangkok in origin who have migrated to Bangkok. Their parental income is relatively low with, interestingly, parental occupational backgrounds as farmers and labourers. The content creator/influencer habitus is evidently the product of social media's development. They are emerging employee and bureaucrat groups with high and moderate incomes, and a great percentage are from Bangkok and have mobility. Their parents' education is usually low, but with more participation from bureaucrats, entrepreneurs and those with a farming background. However, this type responded 'Yes' most frequently regarding mobilisation. Above all, the results illustrate a decline in the number of grandparents who are or were farmers of all the

habitus types. This suggests a delinking of agricultural work and the farming lifestyle among younger generations. Most importantly, education attainment increases in every generation.

Is attaining higher degrees of education a sign of reduced inequality in Thailand? The answer is both yes and no. Education policies indeed enabled people to gain upward mobility. In the 1930s the Thai government enforced the compulsory primary education law nationwide and then amended it to increase the number of years of education. The National Education Act in 1999 (B.E. 2542) and the National Education Act in 2002 (B.E. 2545) aimed to support higher educational attainment. These acts provided opportunities to increase the level of education by extending compulsory education from six to nine years, to Thai citizens being entitled to twelve years of free basic education – something guaranteed by the Constitution (Bureau of International 2008). Through gaining access to such foundational schooling, villagers gained some competence in the Standard Thai language, national history and skills vital for engaging in the market economy; suck skills included basic literacy and numeracy, thus enabling both males and females to seek non-agricultural employment (Keyes 2012). Considering potential outcomes, these acts bring about fair competition among people and greater access to a better incomes or occupations which can enable them to enter higher strata. Nonetheless, there are still issues of inequality in terms of school excellence. Although multiple educational reforms have been implemented, resulting in over 50% of the population attaining higher education, inequality remains substantially high in Thailand. Education, income and occupation are insufficient to stymie the reproduction of inequality. Answers to this problem may lie with the function of the habitus underpinning individuals' social classes. The simple question is this: Why does the Thai social hierarchy – or the bureaucratic system – remain undisturbed at the top, despite large numbers of people now engaged in business and professions receiving an academic education? (Brand 1968: 364–365). Gaining upward mobility through education is essentially 'contest mobility', or gained by one's own efforts (Brand 1968; Turner 1960). This contest mobility largely affects the working to middle classes, as seen in Table 1: there is upward mobility in terms of occupations due to the higher level of educational attainment. This group can be considered newcomers to the higher stratum within their class or as attaining a slightly better level, such as moving from the lower to middle class. While many villagers realise they lack sufficient education to compete for the most desirable positions, educational attainment and participation in a technologically based economy began to increase (Keyes 2012: 349). The working and middle classes have limited resources and cannot compete with the one percent who are billionaires or capitalists in Thailand (Chaiwat 2023). In contrast, the upper class can manage to sustain their position and privileges throughout successive generations. This relationship leans towards sponsored mobility – the presence of elite support (Brand 1968; Turner 1960). Therefore, upper class mobility does not move notably from where it has always belonged, and the middle or lower class cannot normally leap beyond their class because they are vulnerable to the differences inherent to a system of social mobility: contest versus sponsored mobility, different forms of capital and habitus traits. Considering politics in Thailand, the elite recruits are selected more by their status through a system of sponsored mobility where education and ability alone are insufficient in the race to the top. Both civilian and military governments could alter such a landscape through policies and their connections. However, the upper class can still find ways to connect or reconnect as well as to adapt to politicians' demands over time, regardless of whether the government is civilian or military. Since most governments in the 1990s were multi-party coalitions comprised of accumulated elite interests (McCargo 2017: 366) – and even the current government (as of 2023), which is a combination of eleven coalition political government parties – the circle of business and political connections could still link to a number of both old and new interest groups. The elite can maintain the status quo by using diverse strategies and four varieties of capital and habitus (values, beliefs and practices such as education, marriage, kinship and business connections) (Yanyongkasemsuk 2007: 441–450).

A glance into Thai society: How habitus types shape inequality and mobilisation

The development of Thai society evolves mainly within two social hierarchies: the pre-capitalist and capitalist structures. In the precapitalist structure, *sakdina* was a key social mechanism that determined social stratification, manifested in the amount of land possession related to rights, social position and obligations. Values, characteristics and practices are inherited and transmitted from one generation to the

next – mainly via family institutions – both intrinsically and symbolically. Geographical efficacy is also a consequence of the *sakdina* arrangement which later gradually formed social inequality and the tendency to participate in mobilisation. Those with high ranking because of their political and social position gained massive land holdings which generally were in desirable locations, close to the political centre or governmental administration, called '*mueang*' or 'city'. Those who had less power or socio-political status occupied no land, or only had land that was distant from the political centre and generally in the periphery; this can be called '*baan*' or 'rural'. People who owned land in the centre and nearby have more access to infrastructure and development and have thus been shaped by modern society. These inheritances impact one's access to resources and their distribution as well as one's family background and socialisation today.

Within this *sakdina* system, there was a hierarchy of people associated with social positions and assets where all these resources could be passed on to descendants to enjoy, both concretely and symbolically. However, inherited land became restricted to descendants to continue securing their land and pass such assets on withing their family line, requiring them to preserve and remain in the agricultural sector, as shown in the data collection on family backgrounds. Socialisation, attitudes and patterns of behaviour are transmitted through generations. Agriculture has been the main occupation in Thailand for generations, yet it has recently been gradually declining. Differences in ways of life and traditional beliefs have led to habits and perceptions causing different habitus types to arise in various fields in Thai society. In this regard, the social structures formed different habity types and specific characteristics aligned with such types. The *phuyai* group initially represented those with high social and political status, as this habitus type emerged from within Thailand's pre-capitalist hierarchy. The *phuyai* group implies those holding power – not necessarily the aged – who believe in a hierarchy in which younger persons or those less powerful or less capable should follow the leader. *Phuyai* can be in any field, but in the pre-capitalist era, they normally were state officials such as nobleman, high-ranking military or community leaders. For *phuyai*, they are clearly uninterested in mobilizing, which can be explained by their social cultivation, socialisation and preference for the status quo; as such, they tend to be unaffected by inequality. Another type is the traditionalist which can be viewed as middle class within the pre-capitalist structure; this type demonstrates values the past and believes in authoritarianism as they are oriented under and influenced by the hierarchical system. The subsistential was the largest group in the pre-capitalist structure because a majority of commoners made their living through agricultural means, particularly rice farming where labourers mainly strove to earn a basic living by working in rice fields using traditional farming means. Despite modernization, globalisation and populist policies, particularly agrarian debt relief and village funds which penetrated Thai society, the subsistential habitus continued and transformed through time and varying contexts. During 2020–2022, in which the pandemic intensively expanded, economic activities such as trade, mobility and others were suspended. People with rural backgrounds living in big cities, especially Bangkok, returned to their hometowns, their agrarian occupations and to their subsistence ethic (Rehbein 2022). The three types of habitus had existed in the pre-capitalist hierarchy and persisted more or less until today as kind of conformist bridge merging pre-capitalist and capitalist structures. To put it simply: *sakdina* identifies duties citizens have towards other citizens, superiors and the country where the accumulation of wealth previously gained by one's ability and dedication to the nation, and acquired capital, can be transferred within their family line. The well-off are small in number, while the majority holds limited resources or none at all – or a number are unable to secure assets. These situations have led to unequal resource and wealth distribution resulting from one's capability and life opportunities which have been sustained through time and have become the root of social inequality in Thai society.

Upon entering the capitalist structure in Thailand, activities turned more concretely to products with a price tag, meaning there is a clear divide between the owners of production and workers, who exchange their labour for wages. Social institutions, particularly educational ones, are important in reshaping social stratification. Most importantly, social relations and hierarchy have changed to become more formal, causing different types of habitus, including desperate, individualist and the newly emerging aspirant and content creator, to emerge. The habitus types that developed from the pre-capitalist structure have persisted in today's capitalist society, and they have also now been transformed and overlap with other types. The capitalist structure has contributed markedly to the visibility of capital measurement

and the segregation of fields. Various types of capital – economic, cultural, social and symbolic – are convertible and are a means to accumulate wealth in which each field prioritises types of capital differently (Ernst, Weischer and Alikhani 2017). The changing social structure has created more habitus types and characteristics. The desperate group can be considered as being comprised of those who have limited capital and who have lost an expectation to achieve mobility in life regardless of the amount of capital they had, implying that they could not adapt well to capitalist society. Those in the middle-class including students, university graduates and freelance workers became 'desperate' because they could not cope well with the rising cost of living and debts incurred during the COVID-19 pandemic (Forrest 2022). Findings show that this desperate group felt inequality the most, yet they did not call for mobilisation because of their predominant characteristics of low self-confidence, limited levels of patience and perseverance and being less driven by social media. Additionally, results revealed that this type is attached to the past or is not fully open to change, in sharp contrast with the key objective of collective action driven by mobilisation, which aims to change society (Jenkins 1983) for the public good (Rogers, Goldstein, and Fox 2018; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993). Those that possess the trait of traditionalism and low self-confidence are less likely to join movements for change. The individualist stands out with characteristics of self-confidence, goal-orientation, traditionalism, having patience and perseverance and being driven by social media. People in this group are influenced by capitalist competitiveness that leads them to be self-reliant, purposive and hard-working, while simultaneously being socialised by Thai traditional beliefs. This type is capable of living life quite well and being goal-oriented, which enables them to survive through rises in inequality. They are also influenced by traditionalism, seeking fewer opportunities to mobilise.

Findings from in-depth interviews demonstrate that all respondents use social media, but report different levels of use and influence. Using social media has become ubiquitous among Thai people and thus is a crucial characteristic of almost everyone. According to Statista 2023, Thais spend an average of more than eight hours daily using the internet and almost three hours on social media. This intensive use of the internet and social media leads people to be influenced by behaviours and values disseminated on social media platforms, including people's views about what constitutes a good quality of life, consumption trends, social inequality, protests and other viral issues. The rise of social media use affects people's perceptions and habits leading them to be more ambitious and competitive as perceived from social media outlets. Habitus types can be viewed as way of acting and as the distinct characteristics of groups of agency for explaining living conditions, such as the habitus of hygiene and the dot-com habitus (Stam 2009 cited in Wagner and McLaughlin 2015: 203). In habitus types the use of social media has become one of the fundamental practices and characteristics of Thai society, thereby causing two particular types of habitus to emerge in contemporary Thailand: the aspirant and the content creator. The aspirant type struggles to reach the goals, wealth, stability and quality of life they believe society expects. The formation of the aspirant type has been accelerated by social media. Before social media's expansive use, the channels to present oneself and inspire ambitions were limited; old aspirants generally focused on financial income. The middle class has thus leaned more towards aspiring characteristics –prioritising success, return and profits, accepting inequality, admiring high-class taste and tolerating the patronage system and dictatorship as long as they are not directly affected by them. (Maninphun and Chunlawong 2017). Later in the digital era the internet allowed people to access information, both true and untrue, through different social media platforms. False images and hyperreal presentations in the virtual space that portray unrealistic living, disseminate materialist values and favour luxurious consumption have induced people to emulate. These images have caused people to fall increasingly into the aspirant type. To follow those who present unrealistic lifestyles or consumption patterns on their social media channels, people consume products or services not only for their genuine uses, but also for their symbolism (Baudrillard 1976). People do not define their social positions from income, career or education, but rather through social media, which draws a line of class where lifestyle and consumption are now the indicators of class (Hakuhodo Institute of Life and Living ASEAN 2015). Simply stated, if they can consume luxurious goods or travel abroad like the middle or upper classes do, they can believe that they also belong to that class. As habitus involves a type of cultural capital in line with materialised objects and capital (Bourdieu 1993, 1997), the aspirant, which is an emerging habitus in Thai society, prioritizes materialist assets or acceptable lifestyles mostly for themselves and their families. Therefore, this group is less likely to participate in issues pertaining to the collective good or to pay attention to social inequality.

The final type is the content creator whose most significant characteristic is that of being driven by social media. This group presents no correlation with the traditionalist and is negatively related to authoritarian characteristics, which are notably opposite to other habitus types in Thai society today. With these distinct traits, the content creator is the only group to quantitatively show a likelihood to join mobilisations. Mobilising in pursuit of the group's interest and political ideology obliges people through habitus in line with social class (Bourdieu 1987; Husu 2013). The term itself, 'content creator', describes people who create content or are influencers that use social media as the channel to communicate with followers, thereby affecting others' attitudes, behaviours and political actions. Types of content creator include both creator and followers, and they often take turns fulfilling each of these roles. This group conforms to trends in online spaces and feel that they must maintain a certain number of followers, meaning they have to present on interesting and timely viral issues. Content creators are therefore active in news and social situations so they can lead and influence people. Reliability and recognition as well as symbolic capital are this group's priorities. They can take on various forms in Thai society such as being internet idols, life coaches, YouTubers, online sellers or those who present their specialisation in certain topics such as travel, entrepreneurship, sales, politics and social issues. This type produces content and presents their ideas and behaviour to an extensive following who then absorb the content creators' views and emulate them. The influence of social media affects patterns of behaviour resulting in cultural changes (Sawyer and Chen 2012; Streator 2020; Tang and Chan 2020). In this regard, social media functions as a stimulus to construct emerging types of habitus and as an on-going process to shape and reshape such habitus through adding, sustaining and silencing some attitudes and behaviours.

The rise of social media use in Thailand has played an important role in cultivating social and political values of the younger generations. The distinction of a content creator type is mobilisation and expressing an awareness of social inequality. In other words, people feel social inequality at different levels at all types of habitus but respond to it differently. The intersectionality of specific social structures, pre-capitalist and capitalist structures and internal and external influences, including education, social media, values and practices has ~~catalyzed~~ catalysed emerging habitus types with characteristics that affect viewpoints of inequality and mobilisation participation. The application of the concept of habitus thus paves a new way to tackle inequality in contemporary Thailand by embracing the existing and newly established groups of habitus, the aspirant and the content creator/influencer. These emerging types, which have not been identified as habitus groups/traits in earlier studies, confirm Thailand's social transformation and fill a vital gap in our understanding of the influence of capitalism and social media. Furthermore, the newly identified typology of habitus acts as a bridge to reflect the permanent interplay between a society's macro-structure and the social agency of groups and individuals, as indicated by Ernst et al. (Ernst, Weischer and Alikhani 2017: 9–10). The habitus types are rooted in the pre-capitalist structures where predominant characteristics of traditionalist and authoritarian are less likely to mobilise. By contrast, the capitalist structure has propagated more distinct habitus types along with the rise of the internet, social media and mobilisation, where being social-media-driven has become a fundamental component of people's lives. Moreover, it has defined actions, such as mobilisation participation, illustrating that the habitus types developed within the capitalist structure possess greater awareness of social inequality and participate in both onsite and online movements.

Conclusion

Both social inequality and mobilisations have intensified to the extent that over 2000 mass mobilisations occurred between 2020 to 2022 (Horatanakun 2022; Mobdata 2022). This paper explored habitus as it provides the interconnectedness of structural relationships and individual characteristics (Wagner and McLaughlin 2015: 214). Habitus types in contemporary Thai society explain the characteristics of each type that gives rise to mobilisations and attitudes towards inequality. Urban and rural geography and class influence each other and contribute to cleavages in Thai society. However, although the characteristics of each type can be adequately classified, people may possess more characteristics as well as habitus types where there are overlapping traits. The habitus types have been reinforced along with historical progress, socio-economic developments and technological advancement.

The habitus of Thai people is a dynamic consequence of historical progress. The realm of specific Thai social hierarchies – pre-capitalist and capitalist – have reproduced characteristics that can be classified within major habitus types that explain social attitudes and political action, including those directed towards inequality and mobilisation, which were crucial social acts during 2019–2022. The key driving force that shaped social characteristics in the pre-capitalist era was *sakdina*. Land allocation defined ways of life and attached valued in Thai society. Findings concerning family backgrounds demonstrate that the most prominent occupation in Thai society by far among both grandparents' and parents' generations was farming. The agricultural way of life and its customs have influenced the habitus types that emerged from the pre-capitalist hierarchies, including subsistential, traditionalist, *phuyai* and conformist. The educational level of parents of these types was low, and research participants of these types reside mostly outside Bangkok. These factors can reflect the characteristics of rural society where social relations are informal, traditional and different from those living in political centres. By contrast, the capitalist structure has transformed the role of farming as an occupation into other careers such as employee and entrepreneur, but it has also elevated the importance of educational attainment.

Capitalist society has fostered materialist values and competitiveness, as shown in the booming aspiring group. Aspirants struggle to access resources and attain a good quality of life, where social media is a tool to create and communicate such demands. The consumption of signs or symbols has shaped views towards class, not simply income, education or occupation. These factors explain why aspirants are eager to be successful or have a good lifestyle, although achieving them can be beyond their financial reach. Other respondents under the capitalist hierarchy – desperate, individualist and content creator – have largely settled down in Bangkok and they reported 'yes' for mobilisation more often than other types. Among the types that evolved within the capitalist structure, that of content creator is the most notable because of the alignment with social media growth worldwide. Although the overall number of mobilisers in Thailand remains relatively small, the increased use of social media increases the number within the content creator type, which can be the predominant group in Thailand's future. This type can re-shape patterns of behaviours and political cultures, implying the proliferation of social inequality awareness and collective actions. In Thai society, this group is growing, potentially becoming a key driving force in mobilizing social agendas and awareness, and demonstrations. An understanding of diverse habitus groups with differences in socialisation and worldview illustrates the consequences of social transformation from the pre-capitalist to the capitalist structure and can pave the way to addressing inequality. The arising aspirant and content creator/influencer habitus types proposed in this study underpin Thailand's social transformation and illustrates the outcomes of capitalism and social media, demonstrating the adaptability between the two macro structures and groups. Structurally, the findings demonstrate that the habitus types that emerged from the pre-capitalist hierarchy which mostly reside in rural areas show no apparent sign of joining mobilisations. In noticeable contrast, the habitus types growing within the capitalist hierarchy – the desperate, individualist and content creator – comprise the large aggregate of Bangkok citizens where the ratio of those joining protests is higher than that of other groups. The divisions in Thai social structure do not merely describe historical developments. Rather, they are an alternative way to explain habitus types among Thai people that express attitudes towards social inequality and political actions and mobilisations in Thai society today.

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