



REVIEW OF DIPLOMA THESIS

Review type: Supervisor's Review

Author of the diploma thesis: Daniela Bonilla Machado

Title: Changes in Asylum-Seeking Policies Through the Lenses of the Structuration Theory: The Case of the 'Salvini Decree' in Italy

Author of the review: PhDr. Marie Jelínková, Ph.D.

Daniela B. Machado has written a quality thesis that is one of the less traditional ones. She looks at the example of the fundamental tightening of Italian asylum policy through the lens of structuration theory. Given that structuration theory does not provide a straightforward methodological approach and is not often applied to migration issues, this is a challenging undertaking. The main contribution of the thesis is that the student decided to take the hard path of applying a relatively difficult and not very used theory and that she succeeded very well in principle. Particularly concerning the complexity of applying the theory, one can have a few comments on the thesis, but in principle, it is an outstanding thesis.

The text is well structured. The author had to repeatedly address what parts of the thesis would be part of the introduction for the problems and what parts are already directly related to the applied theory during the process of writing. Finally, the application of the theory is tied to an approximation of the changes in Italian asylum policy, which proved to be a good choice.

No reservations can be made about the factual accuracy of the text. The author has worked very well with various sources and has demonstrated her ability to think critically and outline the perspectives of different actors. The resulting argumentation is thus convincing.

The author used extensive multilingual literature and extensively researched data related to the subject in writing the text. She has also demonstrated an excellent ability to work with data and findings that are not always clear-cut. It is also necessary to appreciate the nice stylistics, the minimum typos, the ability to cite the literature used correctly, and the text's editing.

As already mentioned, the theoretical background of the thesis is the structuration theory. The author has managed to present the theory clearly and to summarize its criticism and reaction to it. Likewise, she summarizes its use in various fields and examples of its application to migration issues. A far more difficult task, as might be expected, was the application of the theory to a concrete political situation. Given the



lack of a clear methodology and the difficulty of drawing inspiration from other works, this task was not entirely easy to tackle.

The main research question concerns the application of structuration theory to the adoption of the Salvini decree (or more precisely, on application of the following theory elements: agency, structure and power). The following two research sub-questions then focuses on specific events, and the last research sub-question focuses more broadly on applied theory. Although there is some logic behind targeting these questions, linking the research sub-questions directly to the theory would have been a more sensible choice. On the other hand, this might also reflect certain fuzziness or abstraction of the structuration theory, which does not provide/cannot provide a cleared guidance which aspects of tackled issues should be stressed. In the analysis of the results themselves, it is apparent that some theory elements were much easier for the author to grasp and apply than others. In the end, however, this is a successful theory application. And the application of the structuration theory (or at least its parts) "fitted" better than it seemed at the outset of the thesis. Without primarily assuming it, the thesis showed that the Italian government has essentially succeeded in reframing (although the author and the theory do not use this term) the humanitarian aspect of asylum policy with a securitization aspect, which has enabled extensive legislative changes.

The thesis concludes with a critique of structuration theory, which also relates to the limits of the thesis. Among other things, it questions the fact that structural theory assumes that actors are highly rational (or, more precisely, that all actors are moved by rational action). While one can certainly agree that the assumed rationality of actors is a valid criticism, other segments of the theory (such as power) do not account for rationality. Perhaps these other segments implicitly counterbalance the assumption above of the rationality of actors.

The questions for the defense are as follows:

- What might be the reasons that structuration theory is a relatively underused theoretical concept in the social sciences?
- Why did Giddens and followers use structuration theory more as "a sensitizing device"? (see, e.g. Turner,1986)
- In what ways (if any) was the application of structuration theory difficult for the author? From her perspective, did the work yield any "unexpected" findings?

I further declare that I have read the result of the check of the originality of the text of the final thesis in the system: Theses Turnitin Ouriginal (Urkund). Comment on the result of the check: No reservations

For the above reasons, I recommend the diploma thesis for the defense.

My grading is "A".



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Signature: