



To whom it may concern

Faculty for Social Sciences

Univ.-Prof. Dr. Anna Durnová
Professor of Political Sociology
Department of Sociology

Rooseveltplatz 2
A- 1090 Vienna

T +43 (1) 4277-49220
F +43 (1) 4277-849220
anna.durnova@univie.ac.at

<http://www.soz.univie.ac.at/anna-durnova>

**Re: From Neoliberal Restriction To Control Of Roma
Population by Lucie Trlifajová
Review of the PhD Thesis, presented at the Institute of
Sociological Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences Charles
University**

Wien, 2nd February 2023

Dear colleagues,

Thank you for allowing me to discuss Lucie Trlifajová's work on the welfare State and neoliberalism in the context of the racialization of the welfare discourse.

Let me start by emphasizing that this is an exciting and relevant topic, and the candidate captures the overall importance of the scholarly discussion very well. The text is written, well-structured, and anchored in discussions on neoliberalism, welfare aid, and social policies. I particularly like the emphasis put on her positionality. This could be used for an overarching reflection work on organizational ethnography to be published in some public policy theory journals.

I want to discuss below some points related to how the candidate anchors the topic in the current sociological scholarship and research in public policy as well as how the comparison is made between the Czech context and the context of the other countries. These points I outline also build areas for discussion on the critical contributions of the work to scholarship on public policy. These comments refer to (1) the theory and conceptualization of the thesis and (2) the discussion on the nature of data and applied methodology. I also add (3) some minor remarks.

I want to emphasize here that all remarks and points of discussion do not question the overall quality of the thesis but take the opportunity to make this thesis an excellent contribution to the current research field of the welfare state, policy ethnography, and political sociology.

1: Theoretical background, its discussion, and the main conceptual categories

The thesis departs from the current scholarship on Welfare states in the international and Czech contexts. To coin the term social citizenship to describe the dynamic of social policies in her case, the candidate brings forward an innovative way to think about the policies and the discourse surrounding them. In this regard, I would like to know more about how the candidate wants to contribute to citizenship studies with her results. What are the main conceptual overlaps between her insights and the broader idea of citizenship in public policy and sociology? This is highly interesting in the context of current discussions in some European countries about the nature of citizenship and whether this term and this concept should not be overrun by something else.

In this regard, I also find the empowerment aspect very interesting, especially well crafted in the articles, and I applaud the methods used to emphasize how policies are understood by stakeholders and citizens strengthen the argument. I want to take the discussion even further on a broader level to discuss the nature of democratic institutions in (neo)liberal democracies that are included in the notion of citizenship. What are the main challenges and pitfalls for democratic institutions when it comes to empowering citizens instead of governing them in a more paternalistic way? Where do we draw the line between overbearing or even patronizing governing and between an empowerment that can shift to the discourse on deserving, such as the one described in this thesis? For this discussion, I would like to know how the idea of more empowerment was followed or could be followed in the data that the candidate has collected through her ethnographic research and whether the methods chosen are advantageous to follow this dynamic (as opposed to classic approaches to the welfare state and social policies).

2: Methodology

This brings me to the second remark, which concerns immersion in the methods. I like the introduction discussion on the secondary use of survey data. This could have been done more in detail to strengthen the advantage of the candidate's approach to show that despite the great merit of surveys in social policies, ethnography allows an immersion in the dynamic beyond these surveys. I would like to know more about her position in the field and her reflexivity practices employed during ethnographic research. The candidate cites some of the critical work in ethnography that has built her methodological design. I would like to see her link these methodology insights to inform her concept of social citizenship. I would also like to know more about the Geopolitical differences in the discussion. There are sections on the global North welfare discourse and the context of the Czech Republic, more specifically. However, I would like to know more about the specific discursive environments that have allowed some arguments in the Czech Republic or accompanied the surprisingly quick adaptation to neoliberalism. That being said, such a comparison could be fruitfully used for a journal publication that would appeal internationally to the critical social policy community.

3: Minor remarks

The term Global North might have been used to describe the countries as this term usually includes New Zealand because it is no longer used as a strictly geographical term but as one revealing economic disparities also addressed in this thesis.

Let me conclude by reemphasizing the importance of the topic and the strength of the fieldwork done in this research, which makes it an exciting thesis. I recommend it for the viva.



Anna Durnová