

Name of the student:	Niklas Pawelzik
Title of the thesis:	Political Parties as Institutions of a Civil Sphere of Solidarity
Reviewer:	Javier Astudillo Ruiz

1. KNOWLEDGE AND CONNECTION TO THE FIELD

(relevance of the research question, research objective, literature review):

The student has a very good knowledge of the normative literature. The topic is highly interesting both from a theoretical and a practical point of view. The research objective is very clear, although I have some reservations about its actual fulfilment.

2. ANALYSIS

(methodology, argument, theoretical backing, appropriate work with sources):

The theoretical part of the paper is very well written, with enough theoretical backing. The empirical part is still a bit descriptive though. For example I miss a much more detailed study showing how the acceptance of a border between states (in this case the Oder-Neisse border) has a consequence on how the people beyond that border are seen by the people in this side of the border. This topic is of a very high interest as there are many borders in the World that are in dispute (for example between Israel and Palestine, or India and Pakistan).

3. CONCLUSIONS

(persuasiveness, link between data and conclusions, achievement of research objectives):

This study is very persuasive about the idea of the need to incorporate the role of the political parties in the normative theories, and why party may play an important role in the attribution of civil qualities to groups of individuals. But not all parties in the world play that role, and it is unclear when they do it and when they do not do it. For example, do parties in Israel have played the same role towards how the people of the state of Israel see the “Arabs”? And if not, why?
In fact, there is in addition a tension in the author’s argument: is he talking about what (all) parties do (even though they do not intend to do it, a latent function in sociological terms)? Or is he talking about what parties should do according to the moral standards fixed in the first part of the study? And when the author talks about “evaluating parties”: are we going to evaluate what parties do in empirical terms (like we evaluate what type of bike is more suitable for a race)? Or are we going to evaluate them from a moral point of view?

4. FORMAL ASPECTS AND LANGUAGE

(appropriate language, adherence to academic standards, citation style, layout):

From a formal point of view and language the paper is very well written. The student has made a big effort in trying to get understood by a diverse array of readers.

5. SUMMARY ASSESSMENT

(strong and weak point of the dissertation, other issues)

The strongest point of the paper is his argument about the need to incorporate the role of parties in a normative political theory, and how to do it. The weakest point is the empirical case. This part is still a bit descriptive. The author should have “proved” that parties do really contribute to a more inclusive civil sphere, and they are not just a reflection of a more inclusive civil sphere produced by other causes. Claiming that parties do something does not prove that they do it. In the end normative studies do also make empirical causal claims that they are no more than hypotheses to be empirically tested against other possible hypotheses. The mere fact that a result fits with what it is expected according to a hypothesis is not enough to validate that hypothesis if no alternative hypotheses are also tested.

Grade (A-F): A	
Date:	Signature:
4-7-20	