



Diploma Thesis Evaluation Form

Author: Nata Tchipashvili

Title: **The Georgian Case of Neoliberal Transition and its Socioeconomic Dimension**

Programme/year: MAIN/2022

Author of Evaluation (supervisor/second reader): Dr. Ondrej Ditrych

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
Major Criteria			
	Research question, definition of objectives	10	10
	Theoretical/conceptual framework	30	28
	Methodology, analysis, argument	40	30
<i>Total</i>		80	68
Minor Criteria			
	Sources	10	10
	Style	5	3
	Formal requirements	5	1
<i>Total</i>		20	14
TOTAL		100	82



Evaluation

Major criteria:

The thesis seeks to critically assess the premises and materialised outcome of the neoliberal economic transition conducted by the government of Georgia in the period of 2012-2012, and to interrogate, by means of political discourse analysis of the speeches of two key proponents of this reform, Mikheil Saakashvili and Kakha Bendukidze, how this reform was legitimised in public.

The thesis is well structured overall. It starts with a literature review that situates the case study in the literature (including critical) on neoliberalism. The analytical framework chapter that follows relates well to the literature review, and sets clear RQ. (I would only point out that equality is not elided in neoliberal thinking, which however conceives it in terms of opportunities – without taking into considerations asymmetries in various forms of capital – rather than outcomes. Also, a central tent of neoliberalism is that government should be conducted *as a market*, and so, by extension, a small state would diminish the space for corruption. For neoliberals, rather than virtual this constitutes a natural order of things that, from their perspective, is also just.)

The methodological chapter introduces a clear and transparent research design. The CDA is decidedly not performed in the thesis, in contradiction what the author suggests here and in the introduction. However, it is commendable that she sets clear foci for interpretation (“manipulative tools”) though it would be useful to the reader to know how precisely were they chosen.

Following an overview of the historical context, which contains important information, however presented in a somewhat disconnected manner, a rigorous and well-researched analysis of the government’s programmes focusing on key theoretical premises and normative commitments, and of economic policies is performed. These are then subjected to a critical overview using data (and their generally solid interpretation) on the materialised outcomes of those policies, credibly demonstrating significant deviances. I suggest that the author is asked during her defence on the role of shadow economy, to what extent it is reflected in the statistics used and how it can, or cannot impact on the picture produced on their basis.



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The content analysis of Saakashvili and Benukidze's speeches is performed competently and insightfully. The author could clarify during the defence what precisely she means by the notion of manipulation of numbers. Does she suggest that the speakers used manufactured statistics, or rather that numbers as a powerful political technology were used in some other problematic way (selectively etc.) to legitimise the policies they championed?

Minor criteria:

The thesis is competently written, but it suffers from several formal shortcomings. The chapters and subsections are poorly indicated, making orientation in the argument uneasy. There are recurrent issues with punctuation, capital letters and, most significantly, absence of a coherent citation standard.

Assessment of plagiarism:

No plagiarism detected.

Overall evaluation:

The thesis succeeds in conducting a competent critical analysis of the application of neoliberal economic policies in the case of Georgia, and an insightful interpretive analysis of the speeches of its main architects. It is a pity that the conclusions are not more related to the theory of neoliberalism itself (as the thesis is conceived as a case study). The thesis also suffers from formal shortcomings.



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Suggested grade: B/C

Signature:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Antonín D.", written over a horizontal line.