

## **Opponent's opinion on the diploma thesis**

### **Plastics in nature: Understanding plastics and their socio-historical context**

**Ian Francisco Morell**

Ian Francisco Morell's thesis explores the proliferation of plastic in the modern era in relation to nature using the works *The Ecological Rift* by J.B Foster et al. and *Capitalism in the Web of Life* by Jason W. Moore. Unfortunately, the author does not clearly state the research problem, in the form of research questions or research problem, even in the aims and methods subsection (1.2). There he mentions contextualizing and better understanding the plastic industry's inception and modern proliferation of plastics. Such a vaguely stated research problem is not enough, as the subsequent thesis shows.

I consider the work of Foster et al. and Moore, which the author has chosen to use as a theoretical framework through which to analyze the modern proliferation of plastics, to be a good and adequate choice. The author is aware that they represent slightly different approaches and even promises to compare them at the beginning of the paper.

Unfortunately, this does not happen much. The whole of Part 2 of the Literature Review (up to p. 42) is essentially "just" extracts from the readings of the two books that follow each other. First, the author introduces the work *Ecological Rift*, followed by the *Capitalism in the Web of Life*. In this section, he does not compare or discuss the two approaches in any way, except in passages where the author quotes from Moore's book to critique Foster et al. Any criticism of Moore by Foster is absent, although it also exists (e.g., Foster, J. B., & Clark, B. (2016). *Marxism and the Dialectics of Ecology*. *Monthly Review*, 68(5), 1-17.) It is only at the end, on one (!) page, that the author attempts a comparison and synthesis between the two different approaches. On the other hand, the author must be credited with interpreting and retelling Foster et al. and Moore well.

The passage on American Plastic follows, again based on extracts (in a sense of retelling) from two books, without any communication with each other or with the previous part.

It is not until the section entitled Conclusion(!) that the author attempts an actual analysis, trying to use Foster's and Moore's work to discuss plastics in modern society. Mostly,

however, he uses the two approaches side by side without comparing and discussing them, and the author's own analytical contribution does not really appear until somewhere on page 85, when he talks about *transformative rifts*.

Thus, the conclusion is not a conclusion as much as an analytical section, and the actual conclusion where the author summarizes his main findings is missing for me.

### **Overall evaluation**

The thesis lacks a clearly defined research problem and questions; its dominant part is based on the author reproducing the content of four books and there is little of his comparative and analytical material. The analysis and its eventual findings are lost in the lengthy conclusion. The conclusion itself, where the author clearly summarizes his findings, is absent. On the other hand, the author has shown that he can work with the literature and can summarize and reproduce it. However, I do not see it as a better rating than **3**. If defended well, I would not object to a grade of 2.

### **Questions for the defense:**

Could the author briefly summarize in a few sentences the main findings of his work?

Are the approaches of Foster et al. and Moore so different in any way that they could not be synthesized?

V Praze, 31.5. 2023

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