

Review of Simon Selnekovič's BA thesis *Transforming Dialogue into Activism: The Evolution of a Feminist Organisation in Prague*

Simon Selnekovič's thesis on Czech-based and English-language feminist and queer NGO organization with a pseudonym name »Fusion« offers a valuable and informative ethnographic perspective on organization's main values, practices, and organizational features, as well as on its role in the Czech society. The thesis has many positive qualities, but also a few shortcomings.

In relation to the former, I have to foreground a very informative and extensive literature review, and in the analytical section, a good use of ethnographic data such as vignettes and emic perspectives, and the student also provides a valuable critical perspective on certain contradictions within the organization. Also in general, the structure, style, and language of the work are commendable.

In terms of the shortcomings, I have two main critiques, both related to the features of the research design that limit more rigorous and in-depth analysis of the work. The first one relates to the the main goals (or research questions) of the thesis, which are very broad and dispersed. Instead of having one strong focus based on one central research question, the thesis offers three methodologically and theoretically very disparate goals which are consequently not all achieved in equal measure. Usually, each research question requires a specific methodology which needs to be rigorous enough to facilitate strong, ethnographically rich, and analytically convincing results. Having three research questions which would all require quite different methodological approaches results in some of them being better researched and more convincingly analyzed and some less so. Therefore, for example, the first goal of tracing the evolution of Fusion's transformation of its organizational features offers very lean and empirically weak results. The author, for example, claims that the organization retained its »horizontal« structure, and didn't evolve into a more hierarchical model, as it is often the case with similar NGO's. However, this argument is not supported with any empirical data that would, for example, show how decisions are being made in the organization (voting? consensus? other?). In terms of funding (as another organizational aspect), the author shows the organization relies on membership fees, but there is no data offered on other kinds of funding sources (the author indicates there is some connection to corporate funding, see e.g. on page 41, but we don't learn anything specific about it from the analysis, or if the organization secures any governmental funding). The third goal of the thesis, about the alignment of Fusion's values with broader contemporary feminist values is achieved on a very basic descriptive level (mainly confirming that it aligns with the fourth wave feminism), without any analytical insights being offered in this regard, and without following any specific methodology which would enable some scholarly contribution of the work in this way.

The most interesting and valuable findings of the thesis come from the analysis of its second research question, which is about the ethnographic examination of the (mis)alignment between organization's values and their implementation in practice, and of different perspectives on these matters as pertaining to Fusion's organizers vs Fusion's event participants. However, the analysis here is also a bit thin, partially due to not enough space being dedicated to this issue (also because the other two research questions are taking too much space), and partially due to problems with methodology.

This also brings me to my second main critique of the thesis, which relates to methodological approaches. In this relation, I need to first mention a very small sample of interviews, which is 5 (2 with members of the organization and 3 with participants of their events). This necessarily means that there is limited ethnographic richness and complexity of the main issues that are explored in the thesis, including those related to the research question 2 mentioned above (i.e., only 3-4 contradictions as related to discrepancy between organization's values vs their practices are

discussed in the thesis—there would probably be more of them if the student asked more people, plus more related complexities could be revealed in that way). In addition, there is another methodological problem, which relates to very loosely structured evidence from ethnographic observations. While the student offers some relevant ethnographic/emic data coming from interviews (i.e., what people say), there is a lack of more rigorous analysis of data coming from observations (i.e., what people do). We can therefore read about student's assessments from his ethnographic observations of organization's »delayed and rushed communication« which supposedly affects its effectiveness (»lower quality of work«) on page 34, or another observation by the author of supposed »deep connections« of the inner circle of the organization which could potentially affect its exclusiveness (on page 39), but none of this is rigorously measured nor it is described or analyzed in any exact and empirically meaningful way. Student could instead, for example, analyze how many times was there a delay in communication, what kind of delay (in terms of hours or days), and the specific effects it had each time on the effectiveness of the tasks. Or, if the student decided to study the kinds of social connections in the organization (internal/external, »deep«, and other kinds), then he would also need to do some more rigorous and observation-based social network analysis of the organization. Instead, the student usually offers more general assessments coming from his ethnographic observations, which can be informative in some very broad way, but are otherwise very vague and analytically unspecific.

To conclude, while this thesis offers some valuable ethnographic insight into the organizational, social, and cultural aspects of the Czech feminist and queer NGO »Focus«, it also contains some shortcomings (mainly related to research design and methodology) which limit the analytical and ethnographic contribution that this thesis could otherwise make. For this reason, I evaluate the thesis with grade 2.

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