

Name of the student:	Goda Skyiotyte
Title of the thesis:	Geder(ed) Finance in EU Financial Architecture for Development: Transformation or Reproduction of Neoliberal Narratives?
Reviewer:	Joan Miró (UPF)

1. KNOWLEDGE AND CONNECTION TO THE FIELD

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

The two research questions are good (i.e. interesting, original and feasible).

Despite the fact that the amount of literature reviewed is adequate, the review as a whole remains abstract and lacking in focus. The point of a literature review is to identify a gap or puzzle in the literature, and to draw insights on how to address it. In contrast, the literature review of the thesis mainly consists in a critique of some approaches to gender and development policy. In my opinion, this critique suffers from two points: on the one hand, it is rather abstract; on the other, the alternative policy options to the ones criticised as “neoliberal” are never explained (in other words, the paradigms that aim to be problematised by the literature review are not effectively problematised). To put an example, a conclusion in page 15 says: *“The neoliberal capitalist logic of global poverty finance, thus, shifts the burden of impoverishment onto the poor, compelling the microentrepreneur to transcend her class and socioeconomic conditions and reproducing the colonial racialized system that serves the powerful Global North”*. On the one hand, it is not explained why *“transcending her class and socioeconomic conditions”* is problematic, since this would seem the aim of poverty reduction programmes; on the other, concepts such as *“capitalist logic of global poverty”* or *“colonial racialized system”* are reified and remain unpacked.

Given this weak revision of the literature, the relevance of the research objective in relation to the current literature is not clear.

2. ANALYSIS

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

The analytical framework is weak: “gender+” as analytical concept remains abstract, i.e. it is not unpacked in middle-range analytical categories that can guide the empirical analysis. On the other hand, it appears that the second section of the analytical framework is more in the nature of a literature review than an analytical framework.

Given the research questions, selecting discourse analysis as a methodological strategy is a good option. However, the analytical concepts of “narratives”, “discourses”, “framing” and “agenda-setting” that are mentioned in the section, if they are going to be used in the empirical analysis (which is not the case for all), they should be explained/operationalised.

The empirical analysis through NVivo (Figure 3) is poor: the insights drawn through the analysis are of little relevance to the two research questions. On the other hand, the interpretative analysis of the 4 subsections of the “Analysis” section lack methodological and analytical clarity: it is not clear how the narratives are identified and what are the textual manifestations (this is the point of doing discourse analysis) of the different analytical categories.

The empirical analysis is mainly descriptive. In second place, it also provides a normative critique of the EIB’s approach to gender and financing. Given the arguments shown by literature review of the thesis, this normative critique does not seem particularly original, or in any case, it is not explained by the author how much original it is in relation to the existing literature.

### 3. CONCLUSIONS

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

Two research questions are stated in the introduction of the thesis: “*How is gender conceptualised in the EIB’s gender finance programs? What policy implications might result from such approaches for the broader EU financial architecture for development?*”. Only the first question is addressed in the analysis and conclusions. Very little is said on the specific/practical policy implications of the described conceptualisations.

### 4. FORMAL ASPECTS AND LANGUAGE

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

The thesis is well-written and follows the academic standards. Minor point: not clear why copy-pasted Figures 1 and 2 are necessary.

### 5. SUMMARY ASSESSMENT

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

Overall, the empirical analysis is not really a discourse analysis (apart from the NVivo exercise, very little textual analysis is shown); furthermore, the empirical analysis lacks systematicity and methodological rigour (little explanation of how key concepts are applied to the empirical data).

It is not clear how the thesis contributes to the field.

Some key normative critiques advanced by the thesis are not fully unpacked: for instance, a key normative argument of the thesis is that “*simplifying gender issues within a binary framework [...] hinders the advancement of genuine gender equality*”. But it is not explained in which concrete ways this “hindering” takes place, and what would be the alternative policies enacted from a non-binary framework.

Grade (A-F)	D – UPF scale: 6
Date	Signature
27/06/2024	

## Classification scheme

Percentile	Prague		Krakow		Leiden		Barcelona	
	Score Range	%	Score	%	Score Range	%	Score Range	%
A (91-100)	91-100 %	8,5%	5	6,7%	8,5-10	5,3%	9-10	5,5 %
B (81-90)	81-90 %	16,3%	4,5	11,7%	7,5-8,4	16,4%	8-8,9	11,0 %
C (71-80)	71-80 %	16,3%	4	20%	6,5-7,4	36,2%	7-7,9	18,4 %
D (61-70)	61-70 %	24%	3,5	28,3%			6-6,9	35,2 %
E (51-60)	51-60 %	34,9%	3	33,4 %	6-6,4	42,1 %	5-5,9	30,1 %

### Assessment criteria:

Excellent (A): 'Outstanding performance with only minor errors';  
 Very good (B): 'Above the average standard but with some errors';  
 Good (C): 'Generally sound work but with a number of notable errors';  
 Satisfactory (D): 'Fair but with significant shortcomings';  
 Sufficient (E): 'Performance meets the minimum criteria';  
 Fail: 'Some/considerable more work required before the credit can be awarded'.