Master's Thesis Evaluation Form

Student's name: Reyhaneh Hemmati

Thesis title: Examining the Role of New Media in Urban Inequalities: Analyzing the Representations of Tehran's Lowlagar Alley on Instagram

Name of the supervisor: Jan Balon

Name of the opponent:

What are the strengths and weaknesses of the thesis? Please give your reasons for the suggested grade in detail below.

*1.	Does the author show understanding of one or more theories, and use theory to generate a hypothesis or to make the problem area more understandable.*

Comments:

This MA thesis examines the relationship between new media and urban life, focusing on the digital representation of Tehran's Lowlagar Alley on Instagram. By analyzing 48 posts, the study reveals that Instagram portrays the alley through an aesthetic and nostalgic lens, often promoting it as a location tied to luxury consumption and lifestyle construction. The research highlights Instagram's role in commodifying urban spaces, showing how digital platforms sell both physical locations and aspirational lifestyles. The thesis raises important questions about how social media reflects unique urban characteristics and how these representations align with global trends in the commodification of urban spaces.

The thesis is theoretically robust, drawing upon relevant theoretical sources to effectively shape the research questions and hypotheses. The author has demonstrated a commendable and inventive approach to the topic. Drawing inspiration from recent studies, particularly the work on Amsterdam, she has adeptly focused on several key aspects of contemporary urban studies, such as the commodification of space, gentrification, and the consumption of experience. As her supervisor, I was highly impressed with her work. She took my advice to identify and engage with recent studies most relevant to her research, thoroughly analyzing them and creatively adapting their insights to further her own focus. I consider this thesis to be one of the most theoretically innovative among those I have supervised in recent years.

*2.	Is the research question articulated clearly and properly? Is the research question sufficiently answered in the conclusion?*

Comments: There are two main research questions: 1) How is Lowlagar represented on Instagram, and what dominant themes and elements characterize these digital representations?
• Research Question 2) To what extent do the digital representations of Lowlagar on Instagram reflect unique aspects of the city, and how do they align with broader global trends in urban representation on social media? Yes, they are a constant presence and focus

Charles University, Faculty of Social Sciences
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Pekařská 641/16, 155 00 Prague 5 / iss.fsv.cuni.cz / jana.vojanova@fsv.cuni.cz / +420 778 465 054

www.fsv.cuni.cz
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throughout the entire thesis, and the conclusion provides a coherent account and discussion of the findings.

3.   Is the thesis based on relevant research and literature and does it accurately summarize and integrate the information?

Comments: Yes, I consider the selection of the main references to be one of the strongest merits of the thesis.

4.   What is the quality of the data or the other sources? Are the sample method, data collection and data analysis appropriate?

Comments: The research design is well-suited to the objectives of the study and appropriately adjusted to the opportunities and constraints of student research. The research process is described adequately.

5.   Are the findings relevant to the research question? Are the conclusions of the thesis based on strong arguments?

Comments: Yes, I have already pointed out to this in my answer to the Question number 1. The author writes her own text, forms her own arguments and is in control of the whole process.

6.   Are the author's thoughts distinguished unambiguously from the borrowed ideas?

Comments: Yes, I have not identified any issue in this respect.

7.   Is the thesis containing original/innovative research (in terms of topic, approach, and/or findings)?

Comments: I have already expressed my satisfaction with the author's innovative and creative approach. The topic is not only highly original but also timely, and it is examined from very relevant perspectives.

8.   What is the quality of style and other formal requirements?

Comments: The text reads really well. It is evident that it was written with enthusiasm.

9.   Are there any other strengths and weaknesses of the thesis, which are not included in the previous questions? Please list them if any.

Comments: I would like to highlight the undeniable quality of the writing style. It is highly refined, and the author is clearly prepared to advance to a professional level.

10.   What topic do you suggest for the discussion in the thesis defence?

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Comments:

11.   Declaration that the supervisor has read the result of the originality check in the system: [   ]   Theses   [   ]   Turnitin   [   ]   Original   (Urkund)

Supervisor's comment on the originality check result: No issues identified.

Overall assessment of the thesis:

(Please, state clearly whether the thesis is or is not recommended for a defence and write the main reasons for the recommendation).

Proposed grade: I believe this is an outstanding MA thesis, and the author deserves high praise for her achievements. In terms of writing style, clarity of expression, and her ability to execute and realize her research goals, this thesis stands out as a example of an original and innovative student research.

I recommend a grade of A.

(A- B: excellent, C-D: very good, E: good, F: fail)

Date: 12/9/2024   Signature:

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