

Detailed Report

Candidate: Barbora Stehlikova

Title of the dissertation: E-waste between morality and ethics: Waste practices in the Czech Republic

Evaluation: I recommend the granting of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy to the candidate.

CONTRIBUTION AND OVERALL EVALUATION •

In my detailed report of the original submission of the thesis I have criticized the lack of a clear research question and a lack of a clear conclusion in light of a (missing) research question.

The candidate has now rewritten and resubmitted the thesis. There is now a clear research question introduced (p. 24-25) and this allows for a similarly clear answer to be offered in the conclusion (173-174). Overall, the rewrite made the thesis more coherent, the subchapters added serve the reader well in guiding the process of understanding main messages, as well as ethnographic findings and analysis is now connected to the research question. This clearly strengthened the thesis. The sections where the candidate has elaborated on her analysis of her ethnographic findings and the more substantiated theoretical frame also improved the text significantly.

Critique: METHODS AND MATERIALS •

The rewritten thesis now deals specifically with the chosen methodology and why such methodology was chosen (“to discover the practices that are usually kept hidden and silenced” [p. 41]). This said, I would have still liked to have known what is in the ethnographic method that makes it suitable for answering the research question so framed. Tacitly, the answer is there in the conclusion as many of the observations the research has made about the “how” and especially the investigation into the “relations” (which is an important focus and contribution of the thesis) come to the fore through-out the thesis and are explicitly mentioned in relation to the research question in the conclusion, it could have been mentioned – without being overtly pedantic - also in the methods section.

I have also criticized the “fuzzy theoretical framing” – and I am glad to see that, related to the research question, now the framing is much clearer, references to the research question or parts thereof are through-out the thesis in the rewritten text helping the reader see how the argument(s) are built up and developed across chapters, ethnographic locations, and modes of interactions.

Critique: STATE OF THE ART and ANALYSIS•

The candidate has addressed the critique related to various cultural meanings in the relations between research subjects and their discursive-material practices – the example I gave was the interpretative plane of the use of “Austria”. This said, especially in the chapter on “classification freedom” beyond ethnographic observation and interpretation, the author (could have made/could make for preparing the thesis for publication) use of an ethnomethodological analysis of how categories, values, meanings (of e-waste) are constituted by members of the group (those working at the facility) and how doing e-waste are constituted visibly-rational-and-reportable-for-all-practical-purposes, i.e., 'accountable,' as organizations of commonplace everyday activities like valuing and separating (e.g., doing) e-waste value creation. From my perspective, such ethnomethodological analysis would reveal even more than did the ethnography that much of the observable orderliness of e-waste categorising is rather common-sensical and meaningful to members of the group than it is following some fixed normative pattern or economic model/theory.

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TEXT, STYLE AND STRUCTURE •

The candidate has adequately addressed my criticism why she chose a structure that reflects her ethnographic ambitions – thank you for that.

PUBLISHABILITY • In its present form this reviewer still does not recommend the thesis for publication, however, with minor improvements and maybe a more complex methodological repertoire that included ethnomethodological analysis, the thesis could become a relevant and publishable academic contribution.

Date and signature: 12.08.2024.

