



Universiteit
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Thesis evaluation Nicolas Schuierer

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Programme details

Programme: International Relations (Master)

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Thesis details:

Title: Securitisation of the 5G rollout in Germany

Is the thesis in your assessment free of plagiarism?

Yes to my knowledge the thesis is free of plagiarism

The thesis sails very close to a suspicion of plagiarism. Text sequences have been lifted verbatim from their sources without placing these in quotation marks, as academic convention would have required. For example: 'freedom from the unwanted effects...' (p. 11); 'that security is embedded...' (p. 14); 'is the thing that...' (p. 15); 'assessed but its interpretation...' (p. 17); 'to their objective nature...' (p. 17), and a few more. Since the student provided the applicable source, it is a borderline case that did not have to be reported to the Board of Examiners; nevertheless, the infraction of academic convention had to be taken into account for the grading.

Can the thesis be made publicly available in the Leiden University Repository?

by J.S. Oster: it can be made public through the repository.

Summary assessment/comments

The student submitted a thesis on a topical and highly relevant issue. The thesis demonstrates awareness of theory and methodology, and the student has demonstrated his ability to conduct academic research. The thesis is workable in its basic research design, yet this design has not been executed well. Violations of academic convention when lifting quotes from sources have worked to the detriment of the thesis's assessment.

The grade given for this thesis corresponds to a "D" under the grading system of Charles University.

Criteria

Knowledge and insight

The thesis is very well-researched. It demonstrates familiarity with its topic and awareness of theory and methodology.

The thesis is based on a crisp and succinct research question. While the notion of 'securitised' is not immediately clear from the question itself, it is subsequently conceptualised.

The 5G rollout in Germany is a suitable case study (although Bryman does certainly not refer to Germany; see fn. 4 and accompanying text).

The political and economic situation has been succinctly summarised (p. 7). The relevance of the research project has been set out clearly.

Relevant concepts have been explained.

Securitisation theory is a suitable theoretical framework. Yet a theoretical framework is not an independent variable (p. 12). Moreover, it is not always clear whether the thesis uses the theory as an explanation (see p. 5 f.), or whether it intends to test the theory (p. 18).

The thesis demonstrates good knowledge of available literature and debates.

The data on the 5G rollout in Germany has been researched well (Chapter 4). Here the thesis remains largely descriptive, but this is unavoidable. However, it is questionable to what extent these explanations are relevant for the thesis. Here it might have been preferable to blend the description of the facts immediately with the analysis (see also my comments re conclusion).

The 'IT-Security Law 2.0' would have required a reference to the Official Journal (Bundesgesetzblatt). As it currently stands, it is not immediately clear for a non-involved audience to which Act this refers.

Assessment: good

Weighing: n/a

Application knowledge and insight

Discourse analysis is a suitable method for this research project. However, although the notion of a discourse analysis has been described well (p. 30 f.), it fails to capture one important aspect of a discourse analysis that distinguishes it, in particular, from a content analysis: considering what has not been said, and the underrepresentation of marginalised groups.

The thesis demonstrates awareness of the method's limitations (p. 31).

Assessment: good

Weighing: n/a

Reaching conclusions

Unfortunately, it takes the thesis too long to get to its actual analysis. It is only on p. 45 that the analysis begins, and this comes in too little, too late. Although well-researched, large parts of chapters 1 through 4 could have been kept shorter, particularly chapters 2.1 and 2.2. The thesis does at times read more like a textbook than like an academic analysis. In particular, even the analysis itself is preceded by sub-chapters explaining its approach (5.1.1 and 5.1.2). That should have been part of the section on methodology, or better left aside entirely.

The discourse analysis has not been conducted well. First, as has been indicated before (see my comments re 'Knowledge and insight'), it would have been preferable to merge the factual descriptions directly with the analysis. Second, and more importantly, the discourse analysis is not transparent as it currently stands. The thesis leaves it to the reader to search for the discourse material that the thesis actually analyses. For example, what precisely do Telekom's eight-point plan and Vodafone's white paper say? The thesis should at least have provided an annex to make this clearer. The 'Bibliography for Analysis' (p. 64) is insufficient for these purposes; the reader is not in a position to measure and test the thesis's conclusions.

The conclusion addresses the research question.

Assessment: (more than) satisfactory

Weighing: n/a

Communication

In principle, the thesis is well-written, yet it includes a few typing errors. Several sentences are too convoluted and thus make the thesis a not particularly pleasant read. On the violation of academic conventions when quoting from sources, see my comment re plagiarism.

The thesis is well-structured, yet the literature review is not a sub-chapter of the theoretical framework, and the approach to the analysis

(5.1.1 and 5.1.2) should have been part of the chapter on methodology.

Assessment: (more than) satisfactory

Weighing: n/a

Learning skills

The student received the ordinary amount of supervisory guidance. He implemented my feedback diligently.

Assessment: good

Weighing: n/a

Formal requirements

These were met. These were met.

Final assessment

On 19-07-2021 this thesis is graded with a 6.8

Signatures



