

Assessment of the Bachelor's Thesis

Author of thesis: Nikolaj Jessen

Title of thesis: Cities of Individuals

Assessment of the primary advisor

Assessment of the opponent

Author of the assessment (first name, last name, workplace): Tereza Stejskalová, KF FAMU

Evaluation of the content and final form of the thesis (A/excellent – B/very good – C/good – D/good with objections – E/satisfactory – F/unsatisfactory – not recommended for defence)

Suitability of the selected objective and work approach B

Relative completeness of the literature used for the selected topic A

Ability to critically evaluate and use professional literature A

Logicity of the thesis structure, connection of its chapters B/C

Language and stylistic level of the thesis D

Compliance with citation norms (should the text repeatedly contain adopted passages without citing the source, the work cannot be recommended for defence) B

Sufficient extent of image attachments, justifiability and suitability of attachments, graphic layout A

Originality of the thesis, contribution to the development of the field of study B

Overall evaluation of the thesis B

Verbal evaluation of the thesis including questions that the diplomate must address in his/her thesis defense:

The thesis of Nikolaj Essen stems from his sincere and relatable concern over the state of our planet and the resulting questions regarding his own position as an artist in the world plagued by climate change, unsustainable capitalism, and pandemia. Nikolaj is trying to draw contours of a possible answer to the crucial question: What is to be done? This is the question asked by those who, throughout human history, felt the urgency to tackle the crisis they were living. This is of course a very ambitious task for a bachelor thesis but one admires the passion and shares the concern that the thesis communicates. It must be also noted and recognized that Nikolaj covers a lot of material in the thesis. Yet, the risk of trying to tackle such an enormous topic is that while covering a lot of ground, various issues get to be discussed only superficially. Nikolaj diagnoses the current era through the notion of Capitalocene and navigates well the bulk of scientific and theoretical literature regarding climate change, Anthropocene, and

Capitalocene. In the Introduction Nikolaj mentions artworks to argue that art can help us digest our situation affectively but at the same time warns us against the aestheticization of the catastrophe that leaves us in paralyzing awe. I feel this ambivalence is only hinted at while it could be discussed more thoroughly and probably should have more space in the thesis. Later on, Nikolaj discusses art as an important site of reflection, therapy, and experimentation that may hint at paths out of the crisis. However, it remains unclear what role these art examples and these discussions as such play in the thesis. I feel this should be explained more. Another key root of our current problems that Nikolaj identifies is radical individualism as for instance formulated by Adam Curtis. This radical individualism is closely interrelated with our dependence on networked technologies the production and distribution of which is, in turn, intimately interlinked with our ecological crisis. Here is another ambivalence that should be addressed in more depth I feel - the ambivalence between technology as a fatal danger but also as a potentiality and actually the only tool to connect during pandemia (and a tool for the kind of community-building that Nikolaj sees as one of the solutions). Another ambivalence is related to science - on the one hand, Nikolaj is very critical of science and how it is based on a modern understanding of nature and culture and the traditional understanding of man as an autonomous individual ruling over the natural world. On the other, he calls on us to trust scientists with regards to climate change and even praises the scientific community as a model of community to emulate. What Nikolaj in the end proposes is to look for new models of community that would involve also nonhuman and inanimate beings that he tries to sketch via the idea of "a city of tomorrow," an endeavor in which art has a role to play. Yet, this idea - despite that the title of the thesis alludes to it - is sketched only briefly and not elaborated on sufficiently. The ambition of the thesis is admirable, it covers a lot of ground and contains good insights but it falls short to elaborate on the ideas it proposes sufficiently.

Questions:

Can you elaborate on the method behind your use of artistic examples? What role do they play in your thesis?

Can you tackle some of the ambivalences that emerge in your thesis - regarding technology, science, and art?