



Habilitation Thesis Reviewer's Report

Masaryk University	Faculty of Social Studies
Faculty	Sociology
Procedure field	Mgr. Pavel Pospěch, Ph.D.
Applicant	Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University
Applicant's home unit, institution	Uncivil groups and the regulation of public space
Habilitation thesis	Nina Peršák, Visiting Professor (Full Professor)
Reviewer	<i>[name, surname, title]</i>
Reviewer's home unit, institution	Faculty of Law, University of Ljubljana and Institute for Criminal-Law Ethics and Criminology, Ljubljana

I have read the manuscript with great interest and find the thesis overall an important contribution to the literature on incivilities, offering a smooth, thoughtful and fascinating read on a topic of increasing importance, particularly in post-socialist societies, where such regulation of incivilities is fairly new and where the topic remains underexplored. More detailed comments and questions for discussion are provided below.

The importance of the topic

The topic of the thesis addresses the issue the regulation of incivilities in Czech Republic, specifically focussing on three groups of people who are deemed uncivil, namely, the homeless, the Roma and the 'unadaptable'. The regulation of incivilities is undoubtedly a very important topic, socially, sociologically and legally. While the Anglo-American literature on this topic is not scarce, it cannot provide a thorough picture that would be completely applicable to the situation in post-socialist countries, which is why this manuscript is an important contribution to the knowledge in this area, both in a scientific and geographical sense.

Structure, research objectives and literature

The book is well structured. It includes six chapters, in addition to the introductory and the concluding chapter, three of which are empirical. The book/habilitation thesis is marked by a clear language and gripping writing style. The main aim of this book is to examine how frames and representations of incivility (or of uncivil groups) develop and reproduce and how they act

in producing images of uncivil groups. It is also clearly stated in the beginning of the book that it would focus on media as “the privileged means of sharing and communicating meanings in our societies”. Considering the book’s focus on representations, one might perhaps miss Moscovici’s seminal work on social representations among the referenced literature; however, as the latter falls mainly in the domain of social psychology, it is perhaps not as relevant in the sociological field. Overall, the literature is well varied, portraying the author’s awareness of the multidimensional character of incivilities (and their regulation) as well as the effortlessness with which he draws on these sources.

Research methods and presentation

In addition to the thesis being theoretically rich, it includes three empirically-driven chapters, which demonstrate the author’s competence in conducting empirical research as well. The combination of both, theoretical prowess and empirical research proficiency, is often hard to find in a single book/author, which makes this thesis stand out. The used methodology is well described and the balance between breadth and depth of research is well stricken. The inclusion of the graphic images is very helpful in presenting the main results in a reader-friendly manner that is easy to grasp.

The level of analysis and added value of the outcomes

The analytical approach is inductive and deductive. The level of in-depth analysis is commendable and helps to uncover the various subtleties in the regulation of public space against uncivil groups, such as, for example, the “unspoken fact” that it is the actual presence of homeless people, rather than their specific actions, that many municipalities really want to tackle or how the essentialising of the Other happens in the case of Roma, i.e. the building of the “Roma problem” through the media reporting based on the assumption that all Roma are the same. The third empirical chapter on “unadaptables” offers a special added value arising out of its novelty and originality, since it addresses the uncivil group that – at least on the face of it – falls outside “the usual suspects” of incivilities actors. The fine-grained analysis of the societal responses to the said group (which is revealed as a frequent placeholder for other groups, such as the Roma) reveals several interesting linguistic tools that are used to achieve performativity of the word “unadaptable”, which is indispensable in the punitive regulation of such groups.

Importance of the contribution by the candidate

The candidate has certainly made a significant independent contribution to the research on which the thesis is based. The thesis is clearly and coherently written and the new insights, arising from it, undoubtedly importantly add to the literature in the area of incivilities and regulation thereof. In short, this is a thoughtful work, well deserving of a publication and its author of a professorial habilitation.

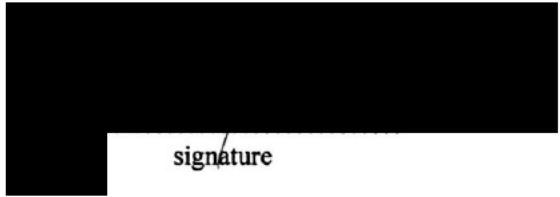
Reviewer's questions for the habilitation thesis defence (number of questions up to the reviewer)

1. In view of the empirical studies you conducted, what is, according to you, the idiosyncrasy or special feature of the Czech regulation of incivilities that is the most distinct from regulation of similar phenomena elsewhere?
2. Could you expand on the mentioned notion of a “good Czech”, against which the binaries of uncivil behaviour are formed. What does this signifier encompass? Could one “achieve” it (and hence remain on the “civil” side of the binary) by behaving as expected without being of Czech nationality? In other words, does it necessarily entail also certain national and racial (fixed) characteristics or is it, according to your observation, primarily or solely based on behaviour? (And if the former – to be a bit provocative – could a non-Czech ever be truly, fully ‘civil’?)

Conclusion

The habilitation thesis entitled “Uncivil groups and the regulation of public space” by Pavel Pospěch *fulfils* requirements expected of a habilitation thesis in the field of Sociology.

In...Ljubljana.... on...20 Jan 2019



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