



Habilitation Board Decision on the Nomination for Appointment to Associate Professor

Masaryk University

Faculty

Faculty of Social Studies

Procedure field

Sociology

Applicant

Mgr. Slavomíra Ferenčuhová, Ph.D.

Applicant's home unit, institution

Faculty of Social Studies of Masaryk University

Habilitation thesis

Sociologie města 20. a 21. století (Urban sociology of the 20th and 21st century)

Board members

Chair

Prof. PhDr. Martin Kreidl, M.A., Ph.D.
Faculty of Social Studies of Masaryk University

Members

Doc. PhDr. Radim Marada, Ph.D.
Faculty of Social Studies of Masaryk University
Doc. Ing. arch. David Tichý, Ph.D.
Faculty of Architecture of CTU in Prague
Doc. RNDr. Martin Ouředníček, Ph.D.
Faculty of Science of Charles University
Univ. - Prof. Yuri Albert Kyrill Kazepov, Ph.D.
Institute of Sociology of Vienna University

Evaluation of the applicant's scholarly/artistic qualifications

Slavomíra Ferenčuhová is an **internationally respected urban sociologist** who has made significant contributions to the profoundly interdisciplinary field of urban studies. Her main research foci are three-fold and include the international history of urban sociology, research on (post-) socialist urban planning and architecture, and investigations of (post-)socialist cities. **Her work – while firmly conceptually and methodologically rooted in sociology – has successfully transversed the boundaries of the discipline** and is published, widely read, and frequently cited also by experts from other fields, including urban history, urban planning, architecture, anthropology, human geography, and cultural studies.

Slavomíra is recognized – on the basis of her research (but also teaching and organizational roles) – as a key person of the community of local urban scholars and it was also due to her efforts that the Department of sociology at MU was recognized as the new center of Czech urban sociology by the late Jiří Musil.

Overall, she has published 14 papers (of which 5 are in journals indexed on the WoS, 2 are chapters in reputable international monographs) and two single-authored monographs. We as a committee do strongly approve of her publication strategy, which clearly favors quality and impact over quantity.

Slavomíra's **most significant publications appeared in the absolutely top journals** such as *Journal of Consumer Culture*, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, and *Eurasian Geography and Economics*. These interdisciplinary outlets are of very high circulation, prestige, and impact – in fact, the *Journal of Consumer Culture* was **ranked as the #1 journal in the field of Cultural Studies and as #4 in Sociology in 2015** according to their impact factor. Similarly, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* is ranked in the top quartile (Q1) in both Urban Studies and in Planning and Development (and is in Q2 in Geography). Whereas Slavomíra has published frequently in co-authorship with highly esteemed international colleagues, she has achieved significant publication success even as a single author, which is a strong testimony of her **research creativity and maturity**.

In addition to these internationally highly visible papers, several of Slavomíra's articles and both of her monographs were written in local languages and published by local journals (such as *Český lid* and *Sociální studia*) as she continues to be instrumental in strengthening the local community of urban scholars and contributes to local scholarly debates.

Slavomíra's **excellent international reputation** is easy to document. Her published work is cited across several disciplines including sociology, history, geography, urban planning, cultural studies, and area studies; **international citations clearly prevail on her list of citations**. Her 2016 article (in *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*) has been **highlighted as a "frequently cited paper" by WoS** – a sign of a rapid citation take-up. She is frequently asked to deliver "keynote"/"invited speeches" at conferences and seminars (to date, she has accepted 17 such engagements; this includes lectures, for instance, in Aachen and Manchester, as well as a keynote speech at the 6th international conference of the *Cities after Transition Network*); when invited lectures are added to her standard conferences appearances, her total number of international presentations exceeds 50. She serves **on the editorial board of one major international journal**, namely *Eurasian Geography and Economics* (Q2 in area studies); she was invited to join to board after she successfully guest-edited a special volume of this journal in 2016.

Slavomíra is very active as an **organizer of conferences and scholarly debates**, both internationally and locally. She has co-organized several sessions at international conferences including conferences of the *European Association of Urban History* and *Cities after Transition Network*. She has been among the principal agents organizing the bi-annual interdisciplinary urban studies conferences (since 2007), which have helped establish MU as a respected center of urban research. She has served as a special/guest editor for 10 thematic proceedings and special issues of academic journals, including a special issue of *Eurasian Geography and Economics* and several issues of local journals (such as *Sociologický časopis*, *Sociální studia* and *Český lid*).

She was awarded the **CEFRES Special platform Prize for the best article of the year** for her paper “Accounts from Behind the Iron Curtain” in 2017.

Slavomíra is/has been the principal investigator of **two grants awarded by the Czech Science Foundation** and participated in several other externally funded projects. Between 2016-2017 she was a member of two projects funded by the Grant agency of Masaryk university (so-called specifický výzkum) and through her own work as well as through supervising participating graduate students significantly contributed to the excellent final evaluation of these grants.

Conclusion: The applicant's scholarly/artistic capabilities *meet* the requirements expected of applicants participating in a habilitation procedure in the field of Sociology.

Evaluation of the applicant's pedagogical experience

Slavomíra has an **outstanding reputation as a lecturer, mentor and supervisor**. She is strongly devoted to her students, their intellectual and professional development, and their academic achievements.

She has taught numerous courses (both lectures and seminars) in various areas of sociology (including theoretical as well as substantively focused courses covering sub-fields of the discipline) at both BA and MA levels. The list includes Introduction to sociology, Theoretical sociology, Urban sociology, Cultural sociology as well as courses in urban development, urban planning/management, urban governance. Her courses are well-attended and popular among students; she has been instrumental in attracting to the sociology major even non-sociologists enrolled in her introductory sociology course. At the MA level, she is a key faculty member responsible for the urban sociology profile within the sociology programme.

Slavomíra has supervised 36 BA theses (33 have already been successfully defended) and a similarly high number of MA theses (28 have been already defended). She has so far very successfully and productively worked (as a primary supervisor) with 2 PhD students, both of whom have outstanding results – in fact, Slavomíra's student Jana Kočková was awarded the Derrida Social and Human Sciences Prize for her research on the post-socialist large housing estates in 2017.

Conclusion: The applicant's pedagogical capabilities *meet* the requirements expected of applicants participating in a habilitation procedure in the field of Sociology.

Habilitation thesis evaluation

The habilitation thesis (a monograph on the history of urban sociology in the 20th and 21st century) is a unique – and in the Czech context particularly needed – **attempt at re-telling and re-interpreting the history of this sub-field of sociology** (the last such interpretive attempt – in Czech language – dates back to 1967, when Jiří Musil's volume was published).

Its main ambition is to offer “a new interpretation of (...) classical works (of urban sociology) and present this discipline in the perspective of the current debates in the field of urban studies” (p. 15). This is accomplished through a strategic and reflective “selection of texts” (p. 20). The book is methodologically guided by current debates demanding higher degree of self-reflection on the part of authors and researchers. The author – a sociologist equipped with the now standard de-constructivist toolkit of her discipline – perceives knowledge production and construction as a “social activity” (p. 15) par excellence; while Park 1915) notices that the city is a *social institution*, Ferenčuhová reminds us that urban sociology is an institution as well! Her monograph understands (with reference to Bourdieu) urban sociology as a “social field”. **It is this principal theoretical standpoint that makes her approach unique**, she is – after all – a sociologist looking at urban studies and it seems inevitable that a history of urban theory written from a different theoretical standpoint (or without one!) would have resulted in a completely different volume. The book can thus be read – to a large extent – as an exercise in the *sociology of science*, showing, for instance, how “schools of thought” are established and what legitimation potential such labels carry. Her viewpoint leads her to subtly elaborate on the interconnections between seemingly distant authors, thus documenting her profound understanding of the subject matter. Overall, Ferenčuhová is inspired by the project of *cosmopolitan urban studies* (Robinson 2006) and takes this idea one step further to **propose a highly innovative paradigm for studying the development of urban theory**, namely that of the *comparative history of urban studies* (esp. ch. 8) that would incorporate also research produced outside of the Anglo-American context. This approach is exemplified in the chapters on urban sociology in Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic, which richly documents how knowledge production is contextual, how it is influenced by local (and other) contexts.

Two reviewers explicitly **praise Ferenčuhová for her innovative approach to the history of urban studies**. For instance, Prof. Bitušiková writes that the author “goes beyond pure descriptions” of theories thus demonstrating her “**erudite views of the topic**”. Whereas she acknowledges that no monograph can “cover all existing literature”, she concludes that Ferenčuhová’s “synthesis is **an excellent attempt to interpret**” the most significant works of the field with “a critical perspective” highlighting that the book “poses important questions about the future of urban sociology”. Similarly, Prof. Buchowski **highlights Ferenčuhová’s perspective of seeing urban studies as a social field** and notices that the main conceptual contribution of the monograph is concentrated in chapter 8, where the idea of the comparative history of urban studies is developed and a “self-reflective critique” of the field is offered. He especially positively comments on her elaboration of the history of urban sociology in Czechoslovakia, which relates “world trends in urban sociology and the intricate trajectories of sociological studies of the city conducted locally”, while also adding critical interpretations of what is missing in her story. **He concludes that this “Czech(o)slovak thread is “the most original contribution of Dr. Slavomíra Ferenčuhová to the history of urban sociology”.**

The last reviewer – Prof. Sýkora - is rather critical of the originality of creativity of the book and its contribution to the field of urban studies. First, he expresses his doubts that one can study “the development of the (sub)field of urban sociology without a deeper reflection of the urban transformations”. Second, he is critical of what he sees as an underrepresentation of the neo-Marxist tradition in urban studies stating that it is “given only a very small amount of space” suggesting that the author might not feel comfortable when interpreting neo-Marxist

thoughts. Similarly, he criticized the author for not paying sufficient attention to poststructuralism. Third, he is critical of Ferenčuhová's approach to Robinson's attempt to establish cosmopolitan urban studies stating that Robinson's work cannot be understood properly without an introduction "to those works, which Robinson criticizes". Fourth, the third reviewer demands that Ferenčuhová should offer her own theoretical standpoint regarding some recent concepts, such as "ordinary cities" or "post-colonial urban theory". In addition, he criticizes Ferenčuhová's monograph for not having the standard structure of a research monograph "with its own methodology" and which would "use concepts and theories for research".

While we do agree with Sýkora's reading of the book and see that indeed some topics receive less attention, we do not believe that this is a major drawback, since the book was not intended as an exhaustive history of urban sociology, but was **based on a purposive and reflective sampling of past works**, which was guided by the main theoretical approach of the book. As such, selective coverage is not necessarily a flaw, but it is a strategic choice that helps the author highlight, contrast, and analyse as is required by her approach to urban sociology as a "social field". It is telling, that the author herself anticipated this criticism of incomplete coverage in the introduction to her book. And persisted nevertheless trusting her analytical approach and sociological instincts.

Committee members believe that Ferenčuhová's positive attitude towards some recent theoretical concepts (such as post-colonial urban theory) is rather clear from the text and do not believe her position needs to be further clarified; yet we see this – to a large extent – as a matter of personal taste and preference.

We fully agree with Sýkora that the book has no explicit section on theory and methodology, which we – as a committee with diverse disciplinary backgrounds and methodological preferences – gather is a more paramount requirement in Sýkora's field of social geography. Yet, especially the more sociologically oriented members of the committee **strongly share the view that some of Ferenčuhová's implicit theoretical and methodological assumptions** (e.g. that theoretical research is an established way of doing sociology, that it does not need to be defined and defended explicitly, that reading and re-interpreting are recognized methods of sociological investigation, that urban sociology can be legitimately seen as a "social field" and science as a social activity) **are so widely accepted in sociology that they would not need to be explicitly introduced in a research monograph**. We regret, though that these assumptions – clearly not shared in other fields – have not been reflected more saliently by the author when the book was written, since this work was clearly also intended for non-sociological audiences and even an author as skilled as Ferenčuhová in reaching out to scholars outside of sociology did not succeed in making her approach more accessible. However, this minor drawback notwithstanding, our assessment of the monograph is mostly positive.

Conclusion: The applicant's habilitation thesis *meets* the requirements expected of habilitation theses in the field of Sociology.

Secret ballot results

Number of board members	5...
Number of votes cast	5...
of which	
in favour	5...
against	0...
invalid	0...

Board decision

Based on the outcome of the secret vote and following an evaluation of the applicant's scholarly or artistic qualifications, pedagogical experience and habilitation thesis, the board hereby submits a proposal to the scientific board of the Faculty of Social Studies of Masaryk University to

appoint the applicant associate professor of Sociology.

terminate the procedure.

In Brno on ⁴ 3/5/2018

Prof. Martin Kreidl, Ph.D. *Martin Kreidl*

signature

Doc. PhDr. Radim Marada, Ph.D. *Radim Marada*

signature

Doc. Ing. arch. David Tichý, Ph.D. *David Tichý*

signature

Doc. RNDr. Martin Ouředníček, Ph.D. *Martin Ouředníček*

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Univ. - Prof. Yuri Albert Kyrill Kazepov, Ph.D. *Yuri Kazepov*

signature