

## HABILITATION THESIS REVIEWER'S REPORT

### Masaryk University

#### Faculty

Faculty of Social Studies

#### Applicant

Dr. rer. pol. Tomáš Imrich Profant

#### Habilitation thesis

Development and Development Cooperation:  
Historical, Theoretical and Empirical Studies

#### Reviewer

doc. PhDr. Šárka Cabadová Waisová, Ph.D.

#### Reviewer's home unit, institution

University of West Bohemia

Dr Profant's habilitation thesis is based on Article 1, paragraph 1, letter b) of the MUNI Directive No. 7/2017 - it is a collection of published scientific papers accompanied by a commentary. The habilitation thesis/file includes five articles; these are texts written and published by the author between 2013 and 2021. Two of the texts are from 2013, one from 2015, one from 2018 and the youngest was published in 2021. All five texts are articles, four of the texts were published in the Slovak language in the Czech Republic or Slovakia, one of the texts was published in English. This descriptive introduction is essential, as I will comment on the structure and selection of the texts below when evaluating the habilitation text.

Thematically, all the articles focus on topics related to development research; some texts focus more on research and debates on approaches to development, post-development and underdevelopment and theorizing "development", "post-development" and "underdevelopment", while two texts deal with development NGOs and Slovakia as a donor. I have no comments or criticisms of the texts themselves. These are texts that have been published in standard scientific journals, for which I have no doubt that the articles have been properly peer-reviewed and that they meet the requirements for academic texts in terms of their focus and the methods used and the representation of research results.

In spite of all the above, I have doubts whether the submitted "collection of published scientific papers" can be understood as a full-fledged habilitation thesis. The author is applying for the rank of associate professor, in the field of political science. As the reviewer, I am asked to comment on whether I believe that the submitted text meets the requirements for a habilitation thesis. Although technically, the text meets the letter of MUNI Directive No. 7/2017, in my opinion the content of the text **does not fulfil the requirements expected of a habilitation thesis in the field of political sciences.**

I will now explain my statements and assessment. On the basis of the provisions of the Directive, in particular the definitions outlining a habilitation thesis (Article 1(1)(a) to (c)), I believe that when the drafters of the Directive defined a habilitation thesis, they had in mind in particular that it would be a text which presents "new scientific knowledge" (points (a) and (c) of the Directive). It is here that I see the first of the problems with the text in question. I will now return to the first paragraph of the introduction; it is clear from this that the youngest text is from 2021, the others are significantly older - 2018, 2015 and two from 2013. Thus, at least two of the five texts are more than a decade old. To consider that in a field that is rapidly evolving (meaning both political science and development studies) a text this old could be considered "bringing new insights" is unacceptable. In my opinion, such texts could be used, but only if the author added appropriate commentary.

As stated in Article 1(b) of the Directive, if it is a body of published scientific work, it must be accompanied by a commentary. "The commentary shall, to the extent appropriate to the standard situation in the field, describe in reasonable detail the state of the art ....." I believe that herein lies the key problem with the paper. The author could have used the commentary to respond to and appropriately supplement his earlier writings based on current knowledge of the field and advances in research on "development", "underdevelopment" and "post-development", or to inform the reader whether any other author(s) have brought anything new to the topic since his writings were published, and if so, why not, and what we might consider to be a major contemporary challenge in the field. However, the author has approached the commentary as a very brief and very technical summary and description of the texts cited. The commentary does not respond to new developments in the field, nor does it comment on where some older topics stand - e.g. Slovakia as a donor and Slovak development organisations.

The text of the commentary is (1) short (9 pages of text), with a significant part of the text consisting of extensive references to existing works (e.g. p. 5 or p. 6), and (2) does not reflect novelty in terms of scientific knowledge as mentioned in Article 1 of the Directive. Looking at the list of sources for the commentary, there are two texts from 2022 (one of these texts is not even referenced in the text of the commentary) and two texts from 2021. The other texts are significantly older. Thus, the author has not taken the opportunity offered by the commentary to reflect on the evolution of research. Specifically, whether new themes, new findings, etc. are emerging in development and post-development research.

Then I have a few more minor observations about the text:

- The commentary is in very poor English, it is a pity that the author did not use e.g. available internet proofreading programs.
- Unfortunately, the text (meaning the commentary) also has several formal weaknesses: e.g. the text is not right aligned, the title of the new chapter is at the bottom of page 3, but the text itself starts on page 4.
- In the commentary, the author has obviously used his older texts (which is appropriate) but has not revised the text. For example, on p. 6 he writes "The article engages in the debate ...".
- A one-page state-of-the-art review does not make sense in the context of all the above - it should reflect new developments in research, but the author rather summarises publications that are significantly older; moreover, he classifies them into thematic groups rather than actually analysing their content. In this part of the commentary, then, I missed the significance of the passage on Eastern European development NGOs?

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

Questions for the habilitation thesis and debate are listed above. Plus  
In 2013 you published two analyses on Slovakia as a donor and Slovak donor development NGOs. Have there been any changes in both of these areas compared to the research results you published then? How do Slovak political leaders and Slovak foreign policy perceive their donor role?

#### **Conclusion**

The habilitation thesis entitled "Development and Development Cooperation: Historical, Theoretical and Empirical Studies" by Dr. rer. pol. Tomáš Imrich Profant **does not fulfil** requirements expected of a habilitation thesis in the field of political science.

Date:

2.5.2024

Signature:

