



## Habilitation Thesis Reviewer's Report

<b>Masaryk University</b>	
<b>Faculty</b>	Faculty of Social Studies
<b>Procedure field</b>	Sociology
<b>Applicant</b>	Mgr. Pavel Pospěch, Ph.D.
<b>Applicant's home unit, institution</b>	Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University
<b>Habilitation thesis</b>	<b>Uncivil groups and the regulation of public space</b>
<b>Reviewer</b>	Doc. Bernadette Nadya Jaworsky
<b>Reviewer's home unit, institution</b>	Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University

This thesis addresses the regulation of uncivil groups in public spaces in the Czech Republic. The three groups in question are homeless people, the Roma minority, and “unadaptable people.” As a theoretical framework, the thesis calls upon existing studies in studies of incivility in urban spaces, Goffman’s formulation of the interaction order, and Jeffrey Alexander’s work on the civil sphere, while also invoking the concepts of the stranger and the Other. It is a mixed methods study, combining a quantitative content analysis and an in-depth, interpretive reading of texts to reveal the underlying discourses and structures of meaning.

Overall, this is a very well-written and strong piece of scholarship, offering a fine-grained analysis of the production and reproduction of uncivil groups in Czech print media. The author demonstrates a deeply nuanced understanding of the relevant literature and theory on the topic, positioning the study nicely within existing work. It fills an important gap by offering a cultural analysis of everyday incivility; most existing studies in criminology and public policy studies try to reveal what is “really” going on, overlooking the symbolic dimension of the construction of uncivil groups and their behaviour. The findings of the study are articulated very well, with excellent use of evidence to support the main points. Further, the argumentation in this thesis is logical and coherent, and the interpretive work is impressive, particularly in Chapter 6 on “unadaptable” people. The end of the chapter elaborates the ways in which this term functions as performative in sorting out the good from the bad in reference to what should and should not be done in public spaces.

There are several (relatively minor) weaknesses, which I will group under three dimensions, theory, methodology, and meta-narrative. The author engages with existing theory and literature extremely well at the beginning of the thesis – Chapter 2 takes the reader on a winding analytical journey through the relevant academic production, beginning in the Greek *Agora* and ending with the “modern” civil sphere, calling upon a plethora of theorists. But I am missing more of the author’s own voice and the construction of a framework for his particular study. The chapter ends abruptly without elaborating what all this literature actually does for the study. It is left implicit for the reader. Moreover, the theory could be better woven through the empirical part of the thesis. There has to be a reason that all the different

authors in Chapter 2 are called upon. Chapter 6 does engage theory much better than Chapters 4 and 5 and the conclusion finally begins to bring together findings and theory in a convincing manner. But it's a bit too little too late.

The data sampling and methods used for the study were well elaborated but I wanted to hear more about the actual methodology, the underlying justification for the type of analysis. I have discussed that further in the question I formulate below.

The thesis presents ample findings that support the author's assertions about the ways in which the three groups under study are constructed and how everyday incivility is portrayed in Czech media as well as in legal and policy documents. But what is the overall story arc or meta-narrative of the study? In the Introduction, the author speaks to the bigger picture, saying, "The study of incivility in public space is specifically located within the dynamics of the global and the local" (page 6). If incivility policies are "globalised products," and the differences between "Western" and "non-Western" contexts are still poorly understood, what does this study offer us in terms of comprehending these dynamics? There are also numerous references to morality throughout the thesis, especially in the concluding paragraph – how is this a part of the take-home message of the study? Finally, if as stated on page 31, the "core of the argument of this book" is that "how uncivil groups are framed in media discourses is related to the public policies targeted at such groups," then what does the author think the potential implications of the study are?

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

1. Please elaborate the methodology, or underlying epistemological premises of the study. What does it mean to offer "a strong, culturally sensitive content analysis of media coverage" (page 29)? The author also states, "I take elements of the critical stance developed by CDA theorists and practitioners and join them with a cultural analysis of the landscape of meanings (Reed 2011)." What is meant by the landscape of meanings? How do elements of a critical stance combine with cultural analysis?
2. For the period from 1990 until 1993, the country was not yet split. Does this affect the analysis?
3. You don't distinguish between tabloid and broadsheet newspapers. I'd like to hear more of a justification for this. Does it really not affect the analysis?
4. What is the overarching take-home message of the thesis?

## **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 Brno on January 30, 2019

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