

HABILITATION THESIS REVIEWER'S REPORT

Masaryk University	
Faculty	Faculty of Social Studies
Procedure field	Social Psychology
Applicant	Mgr. et Mgr. Jan Šerek, Ph.D.
Applicant's home unit, institution	Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University
Habilitation thesis	Youth civic development from the ecological perspective
Reviewer	Prof. Isabel Menezes, Ph.D.
Reviewer's home unit, institution	Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, University of Porto

[Review text]

The habilitation thesis presented by Dr. Jan Šerek focuses on a highly relevant topic in contemporary social sciences: youth civic development. The last decades have witnessed a significant increase of research regarding youth civic development, motivated by concerns with, on one hand, an apparent decline in youth civic and political engagement and participation, especially in relation to conventional formats, and, on the other hand, a recognition of the growing vitality and emergence of new forms of civic and political expression by young people. The thesis deals with these trends by approaching the topic using an ecological perspective, that assumes the central role that adolescents' life contexts – such as families, peers, schools, civic associations, but also the broader socio-historical context – play in youth civic development. This is a major quality of the research presented here, that brings a significant added value to existing research in the field, particularly because it is sustained on rigorous designs using “survey-based longitudinal, cross-national, or cross-cohort data from diverse adolescent samples” (p. 2) analysed with complex data analysis procedures. Another important characteristic of the work presented here is that it is based on collaborations with various colleagues, including international projects. And, finally, the fact that this collection of papers addresses both conventional (voting) and “emergent” (volunteering, protest) forms of civic and political participation, explores changes across time, considers the influences of different life contexts (school, country) and actors (peers, parents, siblings), and approaches both the ‘dark’ (intolerance, social dominance orientation) and ‘bright’ (trust, efficacy, interest) sides of civic development. On the whole, the thesis presents an impressive collection of seven studies that brings the field of youth civic engagement forward with new insights and ideas for future research.

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

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1. What would you state is the most significant advantage of using an ecological perspective to address youth civic development? What does one learn from this approach that is of particular significance?
2. What was the most unexpected or unanticipated result you got from this collection of studies? Why?

3. Many of current studies on youth civic development use adolescents before or around voting age. Given the fact that many studies suggest that youth civic and political engagement and participation increases across adolescence and young adulthood, would you expect many differences (or similarities) if data would come from older youth, especially from young people who are outside universities?
4. In this collection of papers, you use a quantitative approach to youth civic development. Would you consider that qualitative studies can make sense in exploring this topic? In what ways?
5. Given your reflections on the role of formal and non-formal education, together with your findings on the significance of more general socio-economic inequalities, what recommendations would you make to the new European Commission if their goal is to foster European youth civic and political engagement and participation?

Conclusion

The habilitation thesis entitled "Youth civic development from the ecological perspective " by Jan Šerek **fulfils** the requirements expected of a habilitation thesis in the field of Social Psychology.

Date:

Signature:

31.07.2019

