

HABILITATION THESIS REVIEWER'S REPORT

Masaryk University

Applicant

Ing. Michal Jirásek, Ph.D.

Habilitation thesis

Organizational adaptation in the changing environment

Reviewer

Assoc. Prof. Neil Shepherd, PhD

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Department of Entrepreneurship and Strategy
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The habilitation thesis, “Organizational Adaptation to the Changing Environment”, by Michal Jirásek, demonstrates an important and significant scholarly contribution to the field of strategic management. It is characterized by a diverse methodological approach and innovative insights into organizational and strategic dynamics, blending theoretical rigor with practical relevance.

The thesis tackles three main questions: how incumbents adapt, what constrains this process, and how new entrants differ from incumbents. By addressing these interconnected (and important) questions, the research delivers a cohesive narrative that bridges behavioral strategy, industry dynamics, and evolutionary theory. The theoretical framework synthesizes insights from performance feedback theory, organizational ecology, and dynamic capabilities, offering a comprehensive perspective on the complexities of adaptation.

The six peer-reviewed papers underscore the depth of this thesis. Papers such as Corporate Boards' R&D Responses to Performance Feedback highlight novel intersections between board characteristics and adaptive behaviours. The study on Klima DAO examines emerging forms of organizing within the blockchain ecosystem, demonstrating foresight into emerging organizational models. Research on the low-cost airline industry showcases the application of comparative analysis, contributing to both theory and practice in competitive strategy.

The integration of some diverse empirical contexts—ranging from franchising to the voluntary carbon market—reflects a methodological versatility that further strengthens the thesis. The breadth of these contexts adds robustness to the theoretical claims, making them applicable and generalisable across a range of industries.

The thesis demonstrates a robust methodological foundation, employing mixed methods such as regression analysis, case studies, and comparative qualitative techniques. This methodological pluralism is well-justified, aligning with the research objectives to capture nuanced organizational behaviours. For example, the use of performance feedback theory is skilfully paired with empirical models to elucidate organizational responses to both positive and negative feedback.

The quality of this thesis is further evident in the comprehensive theoretical framing. Behavioral strategy and evolutionary perspectives are integrated to explain not only the drivers of change but also the constraint posed by organizational inertia and resource limitations. This dual focus on micro-level decision-making and macro-level industry dynamics is welcome and also ensures a holistic account of adaptation is provided.

A noteworthy feature of the work is its practical implications; often lacking in work in the strategy area (or only superficially done often times). For instance, the behavioral insights paper addresses the disconnect between academic frameworks and business practices, suggesting actionable methodologies for managers. Similarly, the franchising studies offer tools for relationship management and structural decision-making in franchise systems. These practical contributions extend the research's impact beyond academia.

The thesis acknowledges its limitations, such as its predominantly cross-sectional approach and the need for longitudinal studies to explore evolutionary processes like selection and retention. Jirásek outlines a forward-looking research agenda, including an ambitious longitudinal analysis of the U.S. airline industry and further studies on decentralized autonomous organizations (DAOs). This roadmap reinforces the thesis's potential to contribute meaningfully to strategic management theory.

Overall, the habilitation thesis clearly advances understanding of organizational adaptation through rigorous research and innovative theoretical synthesis. It balances academic depth with practical utility, and is impactful. The work will no doubt influence future studies in strategic management and offers a strong foundation for broader applications in policy and practice.

Reviewer's questions for the habilitation thesis defence:

None

Conclusion

The habilitation thesis entitled *Organizational adaptation in the changing environment* by Ing. Michal Jirásek, Ph.D. **fulfils** requirements expected of a habilitation thesis in the field of Business Management.

Date: 20.11.2024

Signature: Neil Shepherd