

HABILITATION THESIS REVIEWER'S REPORT

Masaryk University

Applicant

Ing. Štěpán Mikula, Ph.D.
Faculty of Economics and Administration

Habilitation thesis

Blast from the Past: Essays on the Long-Term Impacts of Historic Events

Reviewer

Prof. Martin Kahanec, PhD

Reviewer's home unit, institution

Central European University

To Whom It May Concern:

I thank the habilitation committee for the invitation to provide a report on the habilitation thesis of Dr. Štěpán Mikula.

I am pleased to report that I find the thesis, and the research studies underlying it, to be scientifically sound, analytically rigorous, and relevant for the broader public policy debate about the studied questions.

The three research studies contribute to forefront research in the respective areas.

The first two studies look at long-term impacts of major historic events on migration and the willingness to migrate. Guzi, Huber, and Mikula (2021) study long-term impacts of the resettlement of the Sudetenland after World War II on migration. Using a regression discontinuity design, the study shows that the residents of the resettled areas have a lower attachment to their locality even presently. The authors suggest that the underlying mechanism behind this finding is the persistent impact of the destruction of local social capital during the resettlement.

Huber and Mikula (2019) study the correlation between social capital and willingness to migrate in 28 post-communist and five western European comparison countries. Using the Life in Transition Survey data, the authors find that memberships in clubs and civil society organisations is substantially lower in post-communist countries than in Western Europe, explaining around 2.5 percentage points of the 9–11 percentage point difference in willingness to migrate between the post-communist and Western European countries.

The third study investigates the long-term impact of post-war resettlement in the Sudetenland on voting behaviour. Guzi and Mikula (2021) exploit a quasi-natural experiment that emerged to identify the impact of an inaccurate and misleading information about a political opponent on electoral outcomes. Using a difference-in-differences approach

the authors find that the manipulated information campaign affected the electoral outcomes and increased voter turnout in municipalities with higher proportions of voters at risk of the supposed threat implied by the manipulated information.

Each of these studies provides substantive value added to the respective stream of the literature and each has been published in an impactful, internationally highly regarded scientific journal. The Journal of Urban Economics is ranked as A* journal (the highest possible ranking, similar to Econometrica, JPE, AER) in the highly regarded ABDC Australian Dean's journal ranking; Economic Letters is ranked as an A journal, and Empirica is a very solid C.

These are of course not the only highly-published research articles co-authored by Dr. Mikula: there also are two articles in the Journal of Economic Behaviour and Organization, one in the Review of Economic Perspectives, and two in Economica. These papers demonstrate a well-defined research agenda well-beyond Dr. Mikula's doctoral thesis, both in its scope and depth.

Dr. Mikula's work has been cited 157 times in Scholar and 22 times in Scopus. These are moderate numbers at the respective level of seniority, but the trendline is very steep in the past 2 years and I am entirely confident that citation numbers will grow steadily in the coming years. In addition to the studies mentioned above, two papers co-authored by Dr. Mikula have already been well published in 2022, and I also see several interesting discussion papers published recently, demonstrating a significant publication potential.

I highly value the productive international collaboration of Dr. Mikula with renowned international as well as up-and-coming regional researchers.

Overall, I evaluate the scholarly merits of Dr. Mikula's habilitation thesis as excellent and I evaluate Dr. Mikula's academic standing as very high and with much potential to make continued scientific impact in the future. In fact, according to the RePEc Ranking based on publications over the past 10 years, among 528 authors in Czechia Dr. Mikula ranks #42 as of May 2022

Based on all this, Dr. Mikula's habilitation thesis amply meets the quality criteria required of a habilitation thesis in his field and I strongly recommend his successful habilitation to "docent".

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

My first question is about Guzi and Mikula (2021): Please explain the arguments why the manipulative information about Mr. Schwarzenberg – and not some other concurrent events – can be seen as the trigger of the change in voting preferences. How can you defend this, and what weaknesses of this argumentation do you see?

My second and last question is about Huber and Mikula (2019): Please elaborate what data/variable (and the corresponding method) would be needed to convincingly identify the studied relationship as causal.

Conclusion

The habilitation thesis entitled *Blast from the Past: Essays on the Long-Term Impacts of Historic Events* by Štěpán Mikula **fulfils** the requirements expected of a habilitation thesis in the field of *Economics*.

Date: 7.7.2022

Signature: Martin Kahanec