

## HABILITATION THESIS REVIEWER'S REPORT

### **Masaryk University**

#### **Faculty**

Faculty of Social Studies

#### **Applicant**

Hedvika Koďousková, Ph.D.

#### **Habilitation thesis**

Energy poverty: Causes, effects and policy solutions

#### **Reviewer**

Dr. Ana Stojilovska

#### **Reviewer's home unit, institution**

HUN-REN Centre for Social Sciences, Institute for  
Political Science, Budapest

Dr Koďousková's habilitation thesis titled Energy poverty: Causes, effects and policy solutions, composed of five peer-reviewed academic publications, including a complementary introduction, a summary of theoretical underpinnings, methods, individual contributions of the publications, and overall findings, policy implications, and future research avenues, is a complete, comprehensive, empirically-rich, and policy-relevant contribution to the field of energy poverty, and related energy and social policies. Energy poverty is a crucial topic that has gained increased policy and political attention in Europe, especially as a result of the 2021 energy crisis. By using Czechia, and at one instance Slovakia as a case study, the five individual contributions explore relevant and under-explored policy issues related to experiencing and alleviating energy poverty. As a habilitation thesis, the complete contribution illustrates a nuanced understanding of energy poverty at a scale, in geographical and political space, by identifying vulnerable groups, showcasing their lived experience, understanding the bureaucrats' narratives on energy poverty, and exploring the effectiveness of policies to reduce energy poverty.

The work of Dr Koďousková puts Czechia on a map of energy poverty studied countries, as previous work has only been done by Buzar in 2007. The use of qualitative methods enriches the understanding of the multidimensional character of energy poverty and informs the need for comprehensive and cohesive policies to identify and alleviate the situation of energy poverty. The interview excerpts were very informative to read, uncovering many new insights -such as the compassion of landlords during the crisis. The use of mixed methods in the last publication also gives measurable and qualitative findings, and I agree with the candidate that such an approach should be further used. The use of various concepts and theoretical approaches including an extensive understanding of energy justice and a strong interpretive perspective allow for a multi-angled exploration of energy poverty. The candidate is rather modest when describing that their conceptual contribution is secondary because many interesting conceptual novelties arise which might be explored additionally in future research opportunities, for instance, the concept of poverty entrepreneurship, the description of hidden energy poverty, or that energy vulnerability is understood as a subset of energy poverty – to name a few.

In my view, one of the most relevant contributions of the thesis is its aim to understand energy poverty grounded in policy reality – how it is (mis)represented in policies, and understood by relevant stakeholders. The practical implications and policy advance steaming from the research are relevant to improving existing and creating new policies on defining and

alleviating energy poverty in Czechia and beyond. This also highlights – as discussed across the publications, the role of the state (and its functions of social welfare protection, managing the energy – also district heating, and housing policies as well as other emerging areas) in preventing and reducing energy poverty. In this discussion, it's interesting to analyze the external agenda-setting – mostly by the EU – which has not yet been sufficiently domesticated to address the needs of the energy poor. Another key contribution results from exploring the lived experience of individuals in energy poverty – their needs and practices and their knowledge which have been often disregarded - and contrasting these views with policies and understanding of the issue by decision-makers. It also applies a rights-based perspective to illustrate (the shaming/stigmatizing) of the burden of imposed individual responsibility to deal with energy vulnerability.

Although not a weakness of the thesis, it would be interesting to see future research outputs going beyond the geographical scope of Czechia/Slovakia.

Last, but not least, the thesis is composed of five remarkable contributions, each published in a reputable journal or book publisher, with Dr Kodůusková taking a leading author role in collaboration with colleagues whose contributions are highly regarded and acknowledged.

Finally, I would like to congratulate Mgr. Hedvika Kodůusková, Ph.D. on her exceptional work and wish her lots of success in her future professional endeavors.

Inspired by the impressive presentation of the thesis, I have the following questions to contribute to a further lively discussion on the academic achievements of Mgr. Hedvika Kodůusková, Ph.D.:

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

1. Given your extensive knowledge of the situation of energy poverty in Czechia and Slovakia, and the literature on energy poverty across the EU, how would you conceptualize energy poverty in Czechia within the EU – what is distinctive about it, and what is similar to other EU countries? It shares a post-socialist legacy with Eastern countries, but it is closer to Western and Northern countries in terms of energy poverty share. What lies behind the numbers/indicators/legacies in terms of understanding energy poverty in Czechia as part of an overall picture of energy poverty in the EU?
2. Alleviating energy poverty is often placed within the context of furthering the energy transition and mitigating the climate emergency. Please summarize the main findings/contributions from your research that are relevant for achieving a just transition in Czechia.
3. Some of your future research avenues point out the need to stress gender, the inclusion of energy poor in the design of policies, and the idea to explore energy poverty governance. Please explain which pieces of research or insights have given birth to these ideas, and how you plan to approach them in your future work.

## **Conclusion**

The habilitation thesis entitled “Energy poverty: Causes, effects and policy solutions” by Mgr. Hedvika Kodůusková, Ph.D. **fulfils** the requirements expected of a habilitation thesis in the field of Political Science.

Date: 15<sup>th</sup> of January 2024

Signature: