

HABILITATION THESIS REVIEWER'S REPORT

Masaryk University	
Faculty	Faculty of Social Studies
Procedure field	Political Science
Applicant	Mgr. Hedvika Koďousková, Ph.D.
Applicant's home unit, institution	Masaryk University
Habilitation thesis	Energy poverty: Causes, effects and policy solutions
Reviewer	Dr. Marielle Feenstra
Reviewer's home unit, institution	Delft University of Technology, the Netherlands

The work of dr. Koďousková is both politically timely as well as academically influential as demonstrated in the uptake of energy poverty at the political agenda in Europe and the increase of researchers engaged in this topic. The involvement of dr. Koďousková in energy policy research is demonstrated in a solid body of research, publications and collaborations over years, disciplines and geographical contexts. Her solid contextual focus on the Czech Republic created a well-cited volume of publications and longitudinal data on energy poverty in Czechia to be used in cross-case study analysis. More impactful is the evidence-based policy impact of her work, both in assessing existing policies as well as publishing recommendations for future energy poverty mitigation interventions.

Her holistic approach is demonstrated in her conceptual, methodological, and societal contributions.

Conceptual contribution

Although the empirical focus of her work, the conceptual development of the energy poverty discourse is enriched by her publications and engagement with more theoretical-focused researchers. In the commentary of Koďousková's habilitation thesis, she presents Figure 1 on theoretical clusters in the field of energy poverty and dialogue. This figure and the text in the section on her theoretical foundation demonstrate her deep engagement with a variety of concepts stemming from multiple disciplines. How she links the assemblage approaches as derived from geography with vulnerability concepts more rooted in anthropology, proofs her holistic approach to deepen the conceptualisation of energy poverty. As she states herself: "*all of the theoretical perspectives mentioned above understand energy poverty as a multidimensional phenomenon that cuts across multiple domains*" (commentary of Koďousková's habilitation thesis, p. 12).

She mentions in the future directions to contribute to the energy governance discourse. I would highly recommend her doing so, since she brings valuable empirical evidence demonstrating the challenges of multilevel governance in the energy poverty discourse.

Methodological contribution

Kodousková's methodological contribution lies in her multidisciplinary approach focused on a single case study Czech Republic. Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), including the Czech Republic, has been under-represented in qualitative energy poverty analyses. The evidence of the lived experiences of people vulnerable to energy poverty combined with quantitative and longitudinal data, provides a holistic understanding of the phenomenon of energy poverty. Through her consistency in the case study and being from the country herself, she has a thorough insight into contextual factors like culture, politics, economics, and history. Her Czech background strengthen her positionality as a researcher by revealing the lived experiences and the sharing of the voices of the unheard people exposed to energy deprivation.

With her publications, she shines a light on the energy poverty situation in Czech Republic, both in urban and rural settings understanding the socio-spatial distribution of energy services. Also, her use of the knowledge of the wide variety of actors involved in the energy system demonstrates that a multi-actor approach is crucial to shaping the overall picture of energy poverty and the potential of the successful implementation of energy poverty mitigation interventions.

I applaud her for her contribution to gender just energy policy research. She is one of the few energy policy scholars who acknowledge the heterogeneity of energy users by applying an intersectional approach when describing energy users. She recognises and demonstrates with data the gendered face of energy poverty, particularly among elderly individuals living alone or single parents, who are predominantly women. My invitation for future research is to dive deeper into this intersectionality of the actors in the energy system and share their knowledge, experiences and solutions through transdisciplinary research.

Societal and policy contribution

With her work, she joins influential energy poverty scholars like Buzar, Bouzarovski, Petrova and Stojilovska, that reveals the often hidden face of energy poverty as experiences in the eastern part of the European Union and is set in a post-socialist state political context. Her work is not only used to recommend, implement and assess energy poverty mitigation policy in the Czech Republic but also to inform other European countries and the European Union's institutions. She was an active member of the ENGAGER Network in which a broad network of energy scientists coming from different methodological and conceptual backgrounds, using case study data from different countries and contexts, informed European and National policymakers on how to respond to the emerging energy crisis and mitigate the impact of energy poverty. With her multi-governance level approach, she refined policy pathways by engaging other groups and communities in the energy system.

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

1. You use existing conceptual frameworks and combine them to create a holistic approach to understand energy poverty. Could you combine these concepts to develop an energy poverty governance conceptual framework?
2. Your methodological approach to energy poverty is through case study analysis using mixed-methods. What would you teach researchers and students who want to learn from your methodological skills and experiences?
3. When researching the lived experiences of people living in energy poverty, you observed that feelings of shame and stigma were combined with a lack of trust in government institutions. Would you consider municipalities the appropriate actor to implement energy poverty mitigation interventions or should that be another actor and if so which one?

Conclusion

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

Date:
2nd February 2024

Signature: