

## HABILITATION THESIS REVIEWER'S REPORT

### **Masaryk University**

#### **Faculty**

Faculty of Social Studies

#### **Applicant**

PhDr. Lenka Vochocová, Ph.D.

#### **Habilitation thesis**

Gender aspects of online political expression and exclusion in the perspective of media studies and intersectionality

#### **Reviewer**

doc. Mgr. Alena Kluknavská, PhD.

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

Masaryk University, Faculty of Social Studies,  
Department of Media Studies and Journalism

Dr. Lenka Vochocová's habilitation thesis presents a carefully constructed and coherent body of work that addresses one of the most pressing questions in contemporary media and political communication research by focusing on the persistence of gendered exclusion in online political participation. It takes as its central concern the promise and the limitations of digital communication for emancipation and equality, with a particular focus on expressive forms of political participation. The thesis engages with the high expectations once placed on digital communication as a means of overcoming long-standing inequalities, and convincingly demonstrates that, rather than dissolving, many of these inequalities are rearticulated in new forms within online environments. Dr. Vochocová situates the work at the intersection of media studies, political communication, and gender studies, thereby bringing together perspectives that are often treated separately.

The thesis clearly delineates theoretical debates (gender media studies, political communication, digital democracy) and spans both qualitative and quantitative approaches by combining textual analyses with interviews and survey data. This interdisciplinary and multi-methodological orientation enhances the originality and societal relevance of the thesis and demonstrates Dr. Vochocová's versatility as a researcher, as well as her ability to move confidently between disciplinary traditions.

The habilitation thesis offers several important contributions to the field. It helps us to understand the gendered digital divide by analyzing the structural and discursive barriers women face in online political spaces, thus adding important insights into ongoing debates in feminist political communication and digital democracy. At the same time, the thesis offers insights that are of wider relevance to political communication scholars concerned with polarization, exclusion, and the quality of democratic debate. Further, it shows convincingly how gender functions not simply as a demographic variable but as a structuring factor that shapes who speaks, who is heard, and who feels welcome in online spaces.

The thesis highlights the role of online toxicity and incivility as exclusionary practices that not only discourage participation but also contribute to the reproduction of gendered hierarchies.

Importantly, it extends this line of inquiry by investigating strategies of resilience and adaptation, as well as the potential of alternative, female-dominated spaces, exploring the possibilities for more inclusive digital participation. Moreover, Dr. Vochocová advances a conceptualization of gender as an exclusionary “anti-discourse,” highlighting its function as a mechanism which reinforces specific cultural identities and political worldviews.

The habilitation combines seven published studies. The thesis is well-structured and addresses both empirical and theoretical gaps, offering a synthesis of the existing literature and a clear articulation of own contributions. While the individual studies are diverse in scope and design, the thesis succeeds in presenting them as a coherent research trajectory. Dr. Vochocová demonstrates command of both qualitative and quantitative methods, and the methodological choices are well justified and fit the research questions. The interdisciplinary design, while challenging, is convincingly executed.

Taken as a whole, the thesis presents a substantial and original body of research. Dr. Vochocová demonstrates a clear and sustained research profile situated at the intersection of gender studies, media studies, and political communication, a research agenda that is both timely and of lasting scholarly relevance, and the ability to produce high-quality, peer-reviewed publications across a range of methods and topics.

#### **Reviewer's questions for the habilitation thesis defence**

1. Your thesis highlights the exclusionary dynamics of online incivility and anti-gender discourse. Looking ahead, how do you see these dynamics evolving with the rise of new platforms (e.g., AI-driven communication spaces), and what methodological approaches would you consider most promising for capturing these changes?
2. Your work convincingly demonstrates the persistence of gender as an exclusionary factor in online political expression. How do you envision translating these scholarly insights into interventions, whether through platform design or policy, that could help foster more inclusive digital political participation?

#### **Conclusion**

The habilitation thesis entitled “Gender aspects of online political expression and exclusion in the perspective of media studies and intersectionality” by PhDr. Lenka Vochocová, Ph.D. **fulfils** requirements expected of a habilitation thesis in the field of Media Studies and Journalism.

Date:

1-9-2025

Signature:

