

Opponent's Report on Dissertation Thesis

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Title of the Thesis:	Economic History of Authors' Rights and Creative Industries in Czechoslovakia
Type of Defense:	DEFENSE
Date of Pre-Defense	May 13, 2020
Opponent:	Prof. Peter Miskell

Address the following questions in your report, please:

- a) Can you recognize an original contribution of the author?
- b) Is the thesis based on relevant references?
- c) Is the thesis defensible at your home institution or another respected institution where you gave lectures?
- d) Do the results of the thesis allow their publication in a respected economic journal?
- e) Are there any additional major comments on what should be improved?
- f) What is your overall assessment of the thesis? (a) I recommend the thesis for defense without substantial changes, (b) the thesis can be defended after revision indicated in my comments, (c) not-defensible in this form.

I have been very happy to be involved in the assessment of this PhD thesis. As I said in my original report, it has a number of very considerable strengths. While a number of the questions I raised in my original report still remain, I can also see that many of the points raised by the Committee members have been addressed in this revised version of the thesis.

Rather than repeating the comments I made in my original report, I will instead run through each of the six questions highlighted above.

Can you recognize an original contribution of the author?

The answer to this is yes. This is the first detailed historical study of authors' rights in Czechoslovakia that I am aware of. As well as being an original topic for doctoral research, the study can also lay claim to originality in other ways.

At a theoretical level, the study takes a very critical approach to the literature, and seeks to develop new concepts to revise and refine existing theoretical constructs. The discussions about 'text + medium' pairs, and more significantly, the development of a 'rate of marketability' measure are original contributions.

At an empirical level, the thesis draws on some unpublished archival materials (in chapter 2) and also constructs an original dataset (chapter 3) which provide an evidence base on which to build a thesis. The level of original work undertaken here, and the novelty of the ideas generated as a result of the research, are in keeping with the expectations of doctoral level work.

Is the thesis based on relevant references?

Yes. The breadth and depth of the literature review, and the critical approach adopted, is a key strength. The thesis does a good job of combining ideas and concepts from economic history with the literature on intangible property rights

Is the thesis defensible at your home institution or another respected institution where you gave lectures?

Yes, I would agree that this thesis would be defensible at my own institution (or at other institutions where I have acted as an external examiner). It is thoroughly grounded in relevant literature and the questions it poses are well formulated. It is based on original sources of evidence (both qualitative and quantitative in nature). It recognizes (to a greater extent than the original version of the thesis) the limitations of the available evidence. It seeks to develop original ideas and arguments. For these reasons I think the work submitted is of a standard commensurate with the award of a PhD.

Do the results of the thesis allow their publication in a respected economic journal?

Hana has already published (with her supervisor) in a relevant and highly respected journal (*Business History*). The quality and originality of the work certainly has potential for further publication. While I'm sure that peer reviewers will have many comments about different aspects of this work, I think that Hana has demonstrated that she is capable of contributing positively to academic debate in this area.

Are there any additional major comments on what should be improved?

As noted above, I feel that many of the questions I raised in my original report still remain. For example, the 'methodological mistakes' identified in the original thesis are now called 'methodological errors.' I don't think this really addresses my point, but I would not say this is a major issue. I understand the argument that Hana is making here, I just think that it could be presented slightly differently.

Similarly, I remain somewhat skeptical of the argument developed around uncertainty and volatility of creative sectors in the first half of chapter 3. I'm not sure the data fully supports the argument here – though I can see that there now seems to be more emphasis on 'volatility' rather than uncertainty of demand per se. Again, I see this as a relatively minor issue in the context of the wider thesis.

The main empirical study, in the second half of chapter 3, is now more cautious in the claims it makes. There is a stronger and more explicit discussion about data limitations and about alternative possible explanations for the positive relationship between subsidies and public ratings of films on modern day websites. I still feel that the argument here could be presented somewhat differently (i.e. in terms of the relationship between subsidies and the critical durability of films, rather than the relationship between subsidies and popularity). Indeed, it could be possible to make a positive feature of this. Rather than seeing the lack of data on

contemporary film popularity as a problem, to which the website review data is an imperfect solution, it could be argued that film popularity is not actually the best metric against which to judge the impact of the subsidy policy. The purpose of the subsidy was to promote the production of films of artistic merit. This is arguably better measured by looking at how well they have ‘stood the test of time’ than by measuring their immediate popularity.

Overall, I would say that the points I am raising here are mainly concerned with the way that the arguments within the thesis are framed. While I would personally present some of these arguments in a different way, it is not my thesis. The important question is whether the arguments being developed here are original and whether they are grounded in a firm understanding of the literature and of the evidence. I am satisfied that they are and that the thesis meets the required standard for a PhD.

What is your overall assessment of the thesis? (a) I recommend the thesis for defense without substantial changes, (b) the thesis can be defended after revision indicated in my comments, (c) not-defendable in this form.

I recommend the thesis for defense without substantial changes

Date:	16 September 2020
Opponent's Signature:	
Opponent's Affiliation:	Prof. Peter Miskell Henley Business School