

Report on Bachelor / Master Thesis

Institute of Economic Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University

Student:	Ivan Novak
Advisor:	Lukas Recka
Title of the thesis:	Poverty, Population, and Energetical Progress in European Union

OVERALL ASSESSMENT (provided in English, Czech, or Slovak):

Please provide a short summary of the thesis, your assessment of each of the four key categories, and an overall evaluation and suggested questions for the discussion. The minimum length of the report is 300 words.

Short summary This is a very complex thesis on the topic of energy poverty with many social, economic and ethical considerations attached. Both by its coverage, deep analysis and extent (size) of the thesis, this thesis could be easily split into 2 separate theses, both easily defensible at the Faculty of Social Sciences at Charles University. The thesis is successfully dealing with very important issues of human values and civilization development problems united under the topic of energy poverty. While the core economic content of this thesis clearly belongs to standard sustainable development and natural resource economics literature, the breath of the treatment easily covers also the areas of complex analysis of social ethics and economic systems. Over the many hours which I devoted to reading and enjoying this extremely interesting and informative thesis, I was constantly reminded about the best books written by Tomas Sedlacek. The writing of Ivan Novak is Sedlacek like in the way, that it is very thoughtful and interesting reading, well and interestingly written and above all that it draws on interesting and human capital of the reader enhancing knowledge and information from a wide array of social sciences, sciences, humanities, engineering, philosophy, theology and other areas. This is really an interesting thesis covering a relevant social and natural system as a holistic system with a target behaviour in energy economics. Simply, like Tomas Sedlacek at his best.

Contribution The author presents original ideas on the topic demonstrating critical thinking and ability to draw conclusions based on the knowledge of relevant theory and empirics. Strong feature of this thesis is an ability of the author to draw on different areas of human knowledge and to connect them in a holistic way. In the analytical part the author brings his original empirical contribution in the analysis of energy poverty related policies and programmes over all the member states of EU.

Methods The tools used are relevant to the research question being investigated, and adequate to the author's level of studies. The thesis topic is comprehensively analyzed. While the used analytical techniques are more of the verbal reasoning nature (however done quite well, very much in excellent Tomas Sedlacek style), there is enough quantitative techniques used as well. For example the used graph theory technique of MST and the clustering techniques could actually work as a core section of a good master thesis on their own. A little more rigor in using quantitative methods would not hurt. For example when running regressions or doing Minimum (or minimal, I never remember what is the correct term) Spanning Trees (MST) the underlying assumptions like stationarity should be checked and the results of appropriate tests reported and commented upon.

Literature The thesis demonstrates author's full understanding and command of recent literature in a very diverse array of the topic and approaches to his very complex and thoroughly investigated subject of energy poverty in a wide sense. The author quotes relevant literature in a proper way.

Manuscript form

There are some mistakes like on page 137: Table 21, should be Cluster 4, not Cluster 2, but there is not too many of them and the paper is generally well written and very readable.

Overall evaluation and suggested questions for the discussion during the defense

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This is definitely not a standard mainstream master thesis of a representative IES student. Frankly, when I started to read the thesis, I expected something else – more closely related to energy poverty policies. I did not expect such a broad and wide coverage, going so far into history. But the resulting product is good and interesting reading. Slight deficiency of this comprehensive approach is that sometimes the analysis is somehow shallow and author spends a little too much time to cover and explain obvious things. However it is written in such a good way that even reading some rather trivial parts is still enjoyable and valuable reading.

While I would definitely never write in such a style and I would not recommend my students to write in this way, which is close to writing of authors like Tomas Sedlacek than to writing in an economic mainstream, I strongly support the right of the IES student to write in this way. I also have to emphasise that in the about 200 pages of this thesis there is hidden enough mainstream economics original content and modelling which would be enough for a good very mainstream IES thesis.

During the defence, the author should focus on the key issues of energy poverty as experienced nowadays in EU member countries. He should elaborate and clearly document his major finding that „National Energy and Climate Plans are poorly specified for most European Union Member States. Only fifteen countries address energy poverty effectively, and only nine countries have appropriate measures and tools to tackle energy poverty“.

Also I expect that discussion of the original agent based model of two energy resources will be interesting to the committee members during the defense. Elaboration of the results of this model and detailed explanation of the relevance of this model to the central energy poverty topic of the thesis would be an interesting topic for a discussion during the defense.

I think that this thesis would be a good candidate for several prizes for original student's writing in the areas of energy economics, social sciences, economic development and general social system analysis.

In my view, the thesis fulfills the requirements for a master thesis at IES, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University, I recommend it for the defense and suggest a grade A. The results of the Turnitin analysis do not indicate significant text similarity with other available sources.

SUMMARY OF POINTS AWARDED (for details, see below):

CATEGORY	POINTS
<i>Contribution (max. 30 points)</i>	26
<i>Methods (max. 30 points)</i>	27
<i>Literature (max. 20 points)</i>	19
<i>Manuscript Form (max. 20 points)</i>	19
TOTAL POINTS (max. 100 points)	91
GRADE (A – B – C – D – E – F)	A

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NAME OF THE REFEREE: Karel Janda

DATE OF EVALUATION: August 24, 2023

Digitally signed (August 24, 2023) Karel Janda

Referee Signature

EXPLANATION OF CATEGORIES AND SCALE:

CONTRIBUTION: *The author presents original ideas on the topic demonstrating critical thinking and ability to draw conclusions based on the knowledge of relevant theory and empirics. There is a distinct value added of the thesis.*

METHODS: *The tools used are relevant to the research question being investigated, and adequate to the author's level of studies. The thesis topic is comprehensively analyzed.*

LITERATURE REVIEW: *The thesis demonstrates author's full understanding and command of recent literature. The author quotes relevant literature in a proper way.*

MANUSCRIPT FORM: *The thesis is well structured. The student uses appropriate language and style, including academic format for graphs and tables. The text effectively refers to graphs and tables and disposes with a complete bibliography.*

Overall grading:

TOTAL	GRADE
91 – 100	A
81 - 90	B

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71 - 80	C
61 - 70	D
51 - 60	E
0 - 50	F