

MASTER'S THESIS REPORT

International Economic and Political Studies (IEPS)
Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University

Thesis title:	Brexit's Impact on the United Kingdom's Service Specializations in the EU-UK Value-Added Trade Network
Student's name:	Taylor Del Brocco
Supervisor's name:	Vilém Semerák

Criteria	Maximum	Points
Contribution and argument (originality, justifiable research question and hypotheses, argumentation)	25	24
Theoretical framework (situating research into the existing knowledge)	25	24
Methodology (methods and data relevant to the research question and appropriately used)	20	19
Referencing to sources	15	15
Formal aspects (structure, logical coherence, layout, tables, figures)	10	9
Presentation (language, style, cohesion)	5	4
Total	100	95

Plagiarism-check (URKUND) match score: 21%

Although the score might appear slightly higher at first sight, a more detailed analysis reveals that there is no significant similarity with individual texts. The score is related to the presence of frequently used terms, names of indicators and even terminology used in the statistics used in the thesis. This result is supported by my experience of communication with the author and the gradual development of the thesis text.

Reviewer's commentary according to the above criteria:

The thesis focuses on a relevant topic (actual effects of Brexit on British economy) and analyses it with the use of adequate and appropriate methodology. The research question was specified very logically – noting the specific economic history of the UK and its position in the international division of labour, the author decided to focus on the effects of Brexit on selected service sectors. Although not based on traditional econometrics, the thesis is empirically oriented and provides new, useful and policy-relevant results.

The theoretical framework and methodology are very well matched with the objective of the thesis; the author uses similar methods and definitely the same data that other researchers would have used for the topic. The methodology does not make it possible to test the causality of effects or their statistical significance, but it provides a detailed enough and convincing description of the development of British trade and production patterns in the wake of Brexit referendum.

The amount of time and energy that the author had to dedicate to learning the methods and implementing them might not be fully appreciated by a casual reader of the text, and the author does not fully sell how much work was done here. The author had to master and apply the basics of input-output methodology, modern GVC indicators (and their implementation in Stata software), network analysis (the theory, main indicators, and

practical implementation in Gephi), and calculation of traditional trade indicators (RCA, Finger-Kreinin similarity index), but on data on trade in value added. She also worked not with one source of IO data (OECD ICIO), but extended her analysis with the use of the EU Figaro database.

The author references the literature adequately and provides a decent overview (relative to the length of the text) of the most important texts relevant to the topic. Some additional papers worth citing for some of the subtopics might be found, but the list of references is already impressively long for a standard thesis.

As far as formal aspects are concerned, the thesis has a logical structure, and it is written in an appropriate style and tone without disturbing typos or language issues. The author occasionally prefers the language quality (she wants the text to sound novel and sophisticated) to clarity and simplicity - e.g. when describing Ricardo's comparative advantage of a "significant axiom" (p. 18). The introduction is a bit less usually divided into two sections (one called "introduction", the other "research context"), where the latter one includes what some readers might be trying to find in the introduction (a clear formulation of the hypothesis/research questions and a brief outline of the structure of the paper).

The thesis has adequate formatting and appearance, and the author also provides quite interesting and original graphical output – she had to learn how to work with the Gephi software that was used both to calculate some of the indicators used as well as to create the actual charts (e.g. Figures 10 and 12). I appreciate that the author provided additional legend (and explanation) for the aggregations (with tables outlining the correspondences) in the appendix (Tables 2 & 3).

A few minor issues identified in the text:

- p. 36-37 - the use of inequality signs in the description of ranges looks rather unusual.
- Centrality measures (section 4.2.2) - explained on the simpler case of non-weighted networks, although they might be more interesting (and also more relevant for IO-tables) for weighted ones.
- p. 60 – it seems that the author puts general equilibrium (CGE) models into the category of econometric models, which is not quite true.

I would describe Taylor's attitude as very responsible and hardworking. I am quite impressed with the progress that she made during the work on the thesis. I believe that the thesis fully meets or exceeds standards required for theses within the IEPS program.

I recommend the thesis for the final defence.

Proposed grade: A

Suggested questions for the defence:

1. Can you explain the claim made on p. 33, i.e. that "For the United Kingdom, a central position in its global value network would provide an even greater incentive to pursue a break from the EU...". The placement of the claim suggests that it might have been intended to be related mainly to the closeness centrality. Is it relevant for all the types of centrality measures that you discuss in your paper?
2. Can you explain the structure and the procedure (algorithm) that led to Figures 10a/b and 12 a/b, respectively?

3. Do you think that the risks that the UK would be losing its position would have been higher if the world had not become more scared of depending on potentially troublesome markets (e.g. China) in the meantime?
4. Brexit also brought negative implications for the research collaboration between British and EU institutions (including universities). If the negative effects on British universities continue, would you expect them to influence the British ability to maintain their positions in high value-added services?

Digitally signed (September 5th, 2024)
Vilém Semerák

Signature

Overall grading scheme at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University:

Total Points	Grade	Quality standard
91–100	A	= outstanding (high honour)
81–90	B	= superior (honour)
71–80	C	= good
61–70	D	= satisfactory
51–60	E	= low pass at a margin of failure
0–50	F	= failing, the thesis is not recommended for defence