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Report on the dissertation of Jan Brůha

This dissertation contains a brief introduction and then four papers, one on environmental issues and three on aspects of convergence for the Visegrad countries.

The first paper is the one which I am least able to evaluate, given its focus on environmental issues. However, it appears to provide a sound and sensible analysis of an interesting and important question, and I found it well presented and explained. This paper is sole-authored by Brůha, though it apparently extends work done in a previous, unpublished, joint paper.

The other three papers are all co-authored with Jiří Podpiera (and the last one also with Stanislav Polák), and they have a common core model which is applied in different contexts. The third of these three has already been published in *Economic Modelling*, the first of the three has been accepted for publication in *Economics of Transition*, and the second has been resubmitted to *Journal of Economic Dynamics and Control*. The core model for the three papers is a model in which firms invest in the quality of their products (as well as in the ability to export and other things). The third paper uses the model to examine macroeconomic convergence of the Czech Republic's economy on those of the EU15, the second uses it to discuss five stylised facts of the macrodynamics of the Visegrad countries (including real exchange rate appreciation), and the first uses it to focus in more detail on the issue of real exchange rate appreciation.

These papers are well-written, with a high technical level and sound economic intuition. I believe they make a significant and useful contribution to the literature on real exchange rate appreciation in Visegrad-type countries, in particular (where it is obviously correct that the Harrod-Balassa-Samuelson effect is an insufficient explanation of the trends). More generally, I am sure that the economics displayed in these papers is above the standard required for the award of a doctorate.

In addition, the fact that the second and fourth papers of the four papers of the dissertation have been published or accepted for publication in leading peer-reviewed journals, and the third has been revised and resubmitted to another such journal, provides significant external evidence of their quality. In the UK, for example, there is no doubt that a PhD thesis which contained three papers in this position would be very highly regarded.

However, before the dissertation is defended I would like to make two suggestions. First, the candidate could and should re-order the three macro papers, in what would seem to be both their logical and their chronological order: convergence (the third), followed by dynamics (the second), followed by real exchange rate appreciation (the first); the introduction should then explain more carefully both the similarities (i.e. the common core model) and the differences (in focus and application) between the three papers, in a way that makes clear the specific 'value-added' of each paper. Second, given that these three papers are all co-authored, I think it is essential that the candidate should give some clear indication of the magnitude of his own contributions (possibly backed up by statements from his co-authors) to each of the papers.

If the dissertation is re-ordered in the way I have suggested, the introduction is revised, and the candidate is able to show that he has made major rather than minor contributions to the three macro papers, I believe the dissertation would be ready to be defended and of the standard required for the award of a doctorate.

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