

## **SUPERVISOR'S REVIEW**

**Thesis title:** *Utilizing the Complexity Paradigm in Sociology*

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Current expansion of new technologies - with the Internet in the forefront - brings many important challenges. Not only on the societal level but also in the sphere of their scientific reflection. Social sciences are confronted with significant changes in human behaviour and thinking as well as with a supply of increasing amounts of data (including new types of data) and new technological tools for their processing and analysis.

It was this challenge that was taken up by Peter Fronček in his master thesis. It gave him an opportunity to make good use of his dual competence of a sociologist and a mathematician (apart from his Master studies in sociology at the FSS MU he is also a Ph.D. student in Computational Social Science at George Mason University, Fairfax). His goal was to introduce the *complexity paradigm* and to outline the potential for its practical application in sociological analysis, primarily by the employment of procedures of Social Network Analysis. The topic is framed in the context of recurrent (or permanent?) crises in sociology. Inspired by the text by M. Savage and R. Burrows, he develops an argument on the coming crisis of empirical sociology, arising from (mainstream) sociology's inability to cope with the rise of "knowing capitalism" and the massive influx of (new) data.

The thesis consists of two parts: 1) a reflection of the current state of sociological theory and methodology and its confrontation with the complexity paradigm, developed mainly outside the field of social sciences; 2) a pilot study indicating the potential of Social Network Analysis in sociological studies (here: in the study of social groups and communities). I can imagine each part as a separate, independent text; their treatment in one text is, however, meaningful, even at the cost of a limited space for both of them.

I appreciate that the author has reflected the relationship between techniques, methods and theory, and anticipated some of the objections that could be raised against the employment of the new "complex" procedures in sociological analysis, seeing it just as another version of "abstracted empiricism" (Mills). Yet, I would welcome if Peter has (especially in the concluding part) spent more time and dealt in more detail with the theoretical implications of applying the complexity paradigm in sociology, and with the motif of sociological imagination that is absent in the majority of non-sociological studies embedded in the paradigm. His argumentation for the acceptance of the complexity paradigm (including the employment of Social Network Analysis) by sociology would then be more convincing.

The thesis represents a welcome and important contribution to the debate about the future course of sociology and its “competitive ability” under “knowing capitalism”. I hope that other texts will follow, elaborating both on the theoretical analysis of new data and the methodological challenges, and on analyses that are based on the parameters of the complexity paradigm. As such, they will help to maintain the reputation of sociology as a discipline that has much to say about the contemporary social issues.

My collaboration with Peter was satisfactory; due to his current location, however, mainly “trans-Atlantic” and via the “Network”. The thesis meets the basic academic requirements and corresponds with the assignment. I recommend a grade of **B**.

Brno, January 20, 2015