

BACHELOR'S THESIS EXAMINER REPORT
PPE – Bachelor's in Politics, Philosophy and Economics
Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University

Thesis title:	Social Networks, Social Capital, Network Corruption, Process Tracing, Corruption, Mexico, Veracruz
Student's name:	Mauricio Samuel Isrrade Huicochea
Referee's name:	Petr Špecián

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
Major Criteria			
	Contribution and argument (quality of research and analysis, originality)	50	35
	Research question (definition of objectives, plausibility of hypotheses)	15	12
	Theoretical framework (methods relevant to the research question)	15	12
Total		80	59
Minor Criteria			
	Sources, literature	10	6
	Presentation (language, style, cohesion)	5	3
	Manuscript form (structure, logical coherence, layout, tables, figures)	5	3
Total		20	12
TOTAL		100	71

Plagiarism-check (URKUND) match score: 17 %

[NB:] If the plagiarism-check (URKUND) match score is above 15%, the reviewer has to include his/her assessment of the originality of the reviewed thesis in his/her review.

The similarity score appears triggered mostly by the relatively large amount of properly referenced direct quotations. Visual inspection of the results revealed no problematic cases.

Reviewer's commentary according to the above criteria (min. 1800 characters including spaces when recommending a passing grade, min. 2500 characters including spaces when recommending a failing grade):

Mauricio Samuel Isrrade Huicochea thesis "Social Networks, Social Capital, Network Corruption, Process Tracing, Corruption, Mexico, Veracruz" is an interesting and timely read presenting a bold attempt to elaborate the theory of "network corruption" and analyze a salient case study thereof. Let me summarize my impressions of the thesis, starting with its positives and later proceeding to my critical remarks.

Strengths:

1. The thesis addresses an important and relevant topic of the institutional and cultural embeddedness of corruption. It is also clear that the author is passionate about his topic.
2. The thesis is quite well-structured and offers a logical flow of ideas and arguments.
3. The author utilizes a wide range of relevant sources throughout the work, weaving together distinct strains of literature to support his own analysis.
4. The thesis makes a solid theoretical contribution by synthesizing and applying concepts from network theory, social capital, and organizational behavior to analyze corruption in a novel way, offering a fresh perspective on the persistence and adaptability of corrupt practices.
5. The analysis—or perhaps a case study (see below)—in ch. 3 represents a commendable attempt at independent analysis of complex social phenomena that is quite well rooted in the preceding theoretical exposition.

Weaknesses and Critical Remarks:

1. The thesis would significantly benefit from thorough proofreading. The current version contains numerous typos, grammatical errors, and instances of incorrect word usage, which occasionally obscure the intended meaning and hinder comprehension.
2. References to literature would require a substantial improvement to comply with the academic norms:
 - a) The placement of the reference list at the beginning of the thesis is unconventional to say the least.
 - b) The inconsistent use of multiple referencing styles throughout the document creates confusion and makes it hard for the reader to orient themselves in the sources used by the author.
3. The author relies too often on direct quotes. This problem is present in many parts of the thesis, but especially annoying in the methodological section (2.4). Here, the excessive quotes prevent an assessment of the degree of the author's own understanding of the methods employed.
4. Some chapters, particularly 1.3 and 1.4, contain extensive summaries of individual sources (esp. Ashforth and Anand, 2003; Slingerland, 2019). While these sources may be valuable, the author needs to do more than merely recapitulate and work toward more synthetic approach.
5. The hypotheses are not always clearly stated, particularly on page 19. Additionally, after their introduction, the hypotheses are not explicitly revisited. I would have hoped for a structured summary of how each hypothesis fared in light of the analysis, but it is absent from the thesis.
6. The author presents a network view of corruption in contrast to an individual-based “bad apple” approach. However, no proponent of the “bad apple” approach is ever referenced. Does the approach really have any defenders within the scholarly literature?
7. While the case study is interesting, the narrative analysis employed by the author appears insufficient to support any strong conclusions or really test the hypotheses. A more robust analytical framework would likely be necessary to draw persuasive insights.
8. While its case study is relatively unproblematic in that regard, the thesis would still benefit from discussing a definition of corruption, given the concept's contested nature and the existence of borderline cases. This would provide a stronger foundation for the analysis.
9. The thesis assumes that institutions begin in an uncorrupt state and gradually become subverted. However, it might be valuable to consider alternative perspectives, such as institutions established with rent-seeking intent or socio-economic contexts where practices considered corrupt in Western democracies might be normalized or inevitable from the outset.

10. The version of the thesis uploaded to SIS contains unresolved comments, suggesting it may not be the final version intended for submission. This raises concerns about the completeness and polish of the work being evaluated.

Overall, I consider the thesis a solid demonstration of its authors competence in an independent treatment of a complex social scientific topic. Nonetheless, my concerns about various aspects of the work are also quite extensive. In their light, I recommend the thesis to be graded with a C.

Proposed grade (A-B-C-D-E-F): C

Suggested questions for the defence are:

Your analysis suggests that the unpredictability and complexity of networks may be key to their resilience. Can you elaborate on how this insight might inform the design of anti-corruption strategies, particularly in addressing the adaptability of corrupt networks?

Your work touches on the idea of collective responsibility in corruption networks. How might this concept be operationalized in legal or policy frameworks, and what challenges do you foresee in its practical application?

I recommend the thesis for final defence.

Referee Signature

Overall grading scheme at FSV UK:

TOTAL POINTS	GRADE	Quality standard
91 – 100	A	= outstanding (high honor)
81 – 90	B	= superior (honor)
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.