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External Examiner's Report on the Dissertation of **Iva Dodevska**

**'Europe and Its Others: Migrant Integration in Research and Policy'**

Submitted in 2023 at the Charles University, Faculty of Arts (Department of Anglophone Literatures and Cultures) and the Université Paul-Valéry Montpellier 3 (Institut de recherche sur la Renaissance, l'âge Classique et les Lumières).

**I. Brief summary and overall evaluation of the dissertation**

The paradigm of 'migrant integration' that has shaped political and public debates in North-West Europe (and beyond) for roughly the last two decades is surprisingly uncontroversial. *In contrario*, that migrantized and racialized individuals, bodies and 'groups' of people should 'naturally' be the target and object of 'integration measures' became a hegemonic idea and practice in and across Europe. However, there is a growing body of scholarly literature that critically engages with this idea, demonstrating for example, among other things, that 'migrant integration' is an intrinsic element of nation-building and the reproduction of global inequalities (Basch et al. 1994, Dahinden 2011, Favell 2022, Sharma 2020, Wimmer 2002), a neo-colonial project (Grosfoguel et al. 2015, Schinkel 2018) or part of border regimes (Korteweg 2017, Tazzioli 2019). Iva Dodevska's thesis makes a significant contribution to this theoretical stand and is at the same time complementary. In a nutshell, her monograph presents a comprehensive and highly insightful analysis of what she calls '(boundary) integrationism', which she theorizes as a technology of power. Iva Dodevska shows how integration politics and its scientific claims in an 'evidence-based' policy intertwine and produce 'migrant integration' as a hegemonic form of governance which has become normalized in the European context. By tackling, in innovative ways, the EU level, its policy, scientific knowledge infrastructure and its relation to the scientific epistemic community, this thesis fills an important gap: Namely, it demonstrates the crucial role of the European Union as a key agenda-setting actor with respect to 'immigrant integration'. Iva Dodevska argues that although the EU has limited competences in regulating migrant integration, EU discourse has strongly shaped national policies in European nation-states.

The main research question that runs through this thesis is therefore as follows: How do the politics of integration research and scientific claims in 'evidence-based' policy intersect in debates on governing migration-related diversity in Europe? (p. 24). To find answers, Iva Dodevska turns her gaze to the European Union, concretely investigating three sites: the EU-level policy discourse on integration; knowledge on integration produced within the network of knowledge infrastructures enabled by EU institutions; and the discourse on integration in academic social research. The thesis follows a Foucauldian-inspired discourse analysis, including a wide range of different types of documents such as research publications, policy documents, media statements, as well as an analysis of the EU's science-for-policy community through its websites, platforms and data depositories.

**II. Detailed evaluation of the dissertation and its contribution to research**

The manuscript (253 pages, including appendix) is very well structured and consists of nine chapters. It is well written and a pleasure to read. With the exception of Chapter IV (see below), all chapters

are equally strong, each in its own way. In addition, the manuscript meets all the usual international scientific standards, both in terms of formal aspects and the use of sources and data analysis. Furthermore, the results are highly relevant for various fields in the social sciences, for theories of knowledge production and for migration studies. The following points deserve particular emphasis.

First, the candidate's empirical and theoretical capacities, the strong argument and the masterful mobilization of theoretical concepts from different disciplinary fields are impressive. Second, the thesis makes undoubtedly significant *empirical* contributions to research by establishing the crucial role of the EU in strengthening 'integrationism' as a normalized paradigm of governance of migrantized and racialized people. It does so in a number of ways: In Ch. VI, for instance, Iva Dodevska introduces a compelling typology of the various (sometimes conflicting) discourses that exist in EU policy. She demonstrates that the recent reformulation of the EU's integrationist strategy represents a rupture with earlier universalist ideas of a 'European Community' by adopting a more nationalist, nativist and securitarian discourse. There is 'a process of nationalization of EU-level integration policy where the interests of the "old" member states set the agenda for how the issue is framed and regulated at the EU level' (p. 149). This is a strong counter-argument to previous work that has theorized the EU as a post-national and cosmopolitan space or project. Moreover, Iva Dodevska demonstrates convincingly that both EU institutions and social scientists involved in integration measurement play an important role, through scientification and datafication, in 'cementing integrationism' (p. 162) in the European context. Finally, I very much appreciated the vignettes that Iva Dodevska included in Ch. VII: They give a very good insight into the material on which the analysis is based and also give us an idea of how she handled her material in relation to the analysis. Thirdly, the *theoretical* contributions of this dissertation need to be highlighted. The conclusion clearly states its contribution to various theoretical fields. Moreover, the concept of 'boundary integrationism' introduced by Iva Dodevska (e.g. on p. 216) testifies to her strong theoretical skills. I have no doubt that this concept will soon be taken up by other scholars.

On a more critical note, Ch. IV stands out as being rather weak: It seeks to offer a genealogical account of integrationism as an idea that moved back and forth across the Atlantic between Europe and North America. This endeavour is, in my view, overambitious and would require an entire dissertation. My main criticism is that this chapter does not do a careful enough *historical* job, both in terms of social theory and of considering the differences between historically grown national contexts within Europe. The chapter relies mostly on secondary English-language (re)sources and thus – in its present form – runs the risk of reproducing a hegemonic (North-Western) English-language framing of the history of integration in Europe. There are significant variations in how and when the idea of integration emerged in the different national contexts across Europe, and with which meanings of race, culture or 'the other' it became imbued. This depends on the historical specificities of each nation-building process, on the varied historical legacies (colonial, imperial, etc.) or on different models of immigration such as those based on the idea of 'guest workers' or immigration from former colonies, or 'new immigrants'. Such nuances and differentiations are absent in the analysis in Ch. IV, which is actually surprising, since Iva Dodevska states later in the thesis that 'the integrationism that I analyse in this dissertation is hardly a universal, European or EU idea, but essentially a Northwestern European idea that has been successfully escalated to EU level since the 1990' (p. 184). However, this chapter can easily be omitted in a future book project: apart from a few paragraphs in the introduction, it is not needed for the argument.

### III. Questions for the candidate

My questions concern three different aspects:

1. *The discursive (and political) 'diffusion' of integrationism within Europe*: First, I would like to give Iva Dodevska the opportunity to respond to my critical reading of Ch. IV. For example, I would

be interested to know how the candidate sees the role of Eastern European and Southern European nation-states, historically and currently, in relation to EU 'integrationism'. Would it be possible to identify different models/types in how 'integrationism' has developed across Europe, and what are the differences? How do internal hierarchies within Europe (e.g. as shown by the work of Manuela Boatcă) play out in view of integrationism? What are the consequences of the hegemonic power of North-West Europe at EU level (i.e. for Southern or Eastern Europe)? Does the candidate have any ideas how this 'spread' will continue? In short, I would like Iva Dodevska to make these ideas of 'discursive diffusion' more complex and situate them.

2. *Theoretical concepts*: Iva Dodevska brilliantly outlines the concept of 'boundary integrationism'. While she delves in detail into a definition of 'integrationism', the concept of *boundary* itself, although central to her work and repeatedly re-theorized since the seminal work of Frederik Barth in 1969 is not theorized in the dissertation. Hence, how does the candidate position herself theoretically in view of the boundary paradigm? Similarly, the concept of racialization, although crucial in this thesis, is not defined and therefore could Iva Dodevska briefly tell us how she uses and theorizes it?
3. Finally, I have two questions regarding *methodology*: In terms of data, the first case study relies on a very specific selection of integration-related articles and books. I would like the candidate to discuss, briefly, the consequences of this very specific selection for the results: What are these publications representative of (or, how was 'migration studies' defined) and vice versa, and what is missed out by making this selection? How would the argument be altered, if, for instance, disciplinary journals (in other languages than English) were included in the analyses, or journals where people write on integration but without labelling themselves migration scholars? Furthermore, are there any 'turbulences' or did the author come across 'negative cases' (Flick 2023) – an alternative storyline that emerged during the data analysis process – which would have challenged your analysis of the dominant 'integrationism' model? Specifically, the entanglement between social science and EU policy in view of migrant integration appears very 'smooth' in this thesis. Are there any critical epistemic communities, and how are they entangled with the EU (if at all)? Is there any commissioned research that does not naturalize 'integration' or 'migration' and how are such results dealt with at the EU level? Also, Iva Dodevska hardly mentions 'non-mainstream' platforms, research bodies, knowledge policy events, which do, however, exist within Europe (on p. 179 the Platform on Undocumented Migration and Statewatch is mentioned): Are they not mingling in EU policy circles and, if not, how do you explain this?

#### **IV. Conclusion**

In summary, this is a cutting-edge thesis that stands out for its originality and its contribution to research and I hope to see this published as a book soon.

I therefore classify the submitted thesis without any reservations as *passed*.

Janine Dahinden, Professor of Transnational Studies

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