



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 of the dissertation

Iva Dodevska locates her interdisciplinary dissertation in the intersection of migration studies, European studies and the social sciences. The dissertation examines the role of scientific research, EU policy and knowledge infrastructures in shaping the political paradigm of 'immigrant integration' in Europe. She is applying the conceptual perspective of 'integrationism' as a technique of power, taking a de-colonial and genealogical approach that situates integrationist discourses in the context of European Union (Foucault, 1984; Carabine 2001, Hook 2007 and Dombos et al. 2012).

II. Brief overall evaluation of the dissertation

In her dissertation, Iva Dodevska shows, that she is well versed in the complex mechanisms of the European Union's integration apparatus and in contemporary migration and integration theories. Moreover, she is also highly skilled in

empirical work with her data “from the field” of migration industry (Andersson 2014).

Iva Dodevska’s dissertation makes a great and original contribution to the critical migration studies field (reflexive migration studies) in showing how the emerging role of the EU in debates on migrant integration, and the EU related science-for-policy structures reinforce, justify and sustain integration as the only imaginable, but also glorified model “for reconciling the conflicts and dilemmas that immigration allegedly poses” (Dodevska p. 220). Iva Dodevska argues that the politics of integration research and the scientific demands of evidence-based policy (what she calls “migration knowledge hype”) are intertwined to create a hegemonic paradigm in the management of diversity related to migration in Europe

Moreover, we are observing the invisible alliance that is forming between migrations studies and anti-immigration politics in the current geopolitical situation. Under the guise of an ontological turn, there is a renewed cultural essentialism which, although it has a pluralist claim, becomes a tool for drawing strict lines between “us” and “others” and is at the service of nationalism (De Genova 2018, 2019). Nativism consists in the priority of the self over the other. It postulates the existence of irreducibly different groups whose identities are incomparable and absolutely exclusive. It produces an identitarian self that is superior to the “other” in all circumstances, thereby drawing an impenetrable boundary between the “self” and the “other.” So we can ask together with Nicholas De Genova (2018): Isn't all discourse on “immigration” therefore based on the assumption of nativism? “

In her dissertation, Iva Dodevska makes a strong (and empirically based) final argument on “boundary interactionism”: „Thinking through Brown’s (2016) concept of “boundary liberalism” - the practice of subjecting candidates for naturalization to the requirement of respecting liberal values - this is a discourse I dubbed boundary integrationism. Boundary integrationism serves to mark those who belong, by excluding, in turn, those identified as un-integrated. Rather than strictly the adherence to liberal values, it is the subjection to integration that

marks the boundary between those who belong, and those who do not.“
(Dodevska p. 216)

III. Detailed evaluation of the dissertation and its individual aspects

The dissertation adheres to all the requirements for academic integrity (ethics of research) and is formally consistent. The selected genre of academic writing is rigorous, precise, and yet accessible to a wider audience.

Iva Dodevska has brilliantly managed the reflection of her own complex positionality towards the research problem -which develops around her ethnic identity, age, gender and position (i.e. intersectionally): *“My loyalty to the modern, liberal-democratic European. Even though the Czech Republic is not a country strongly marked by integration debates – having a low proportion of non-citizens and lower still of non-Europeans and Muslims – it did not remain untouched by the civic integration “turn”. Beyond the “adaptation and integration test”, there is the requirement to pass A2 level of proficiency in Czech for being granted permanent residence, while in the case of naturalization, one must also pass “Czech Life and Institutions Exam”. The latter is composed, similarly to other countries, of 30 questions on the topics “Life and institutions”, “Basic geographical information”, and “Basic historical and cultural information”. The project is rarely questioned (even if this means that I am sometimes seen as an outlier among the “typical” Balkanites, while still always oscillating around the threshold of suspicion, especially as part of Western Academia). I am a working woman with no children and with academic career aspirations – the perfect picture of the modern, emancipated, (neo)liberal subject. In the terminology of US assimilation scholars, I am – if anything – a “model” immigrant, nearly indistinguishable from the “mainstream”. Or, paradoxically, a subject of integration (courses) who has been integrated into Europeanness from before she ever arrived. Hence, **I am a borderline subject**. Clearly, in many ways, I am a subject of integration. Yet I doubt that the image that pops in anyone’s mind when “immigrant integration” is invoked looks much like me.....“*(Dodevska pp.82-

83)

Iva Dodevska had to limit her research methods due to the COVID19 pandemic to desk and online research. Why did she not use, for example, the method of online expert interviews with selected stakeholders, representatives of relevant EU institutions, etc.? Why wasn't she also interested in the analysis of political discourses (from records of public debates) at the European institutional level, which would have complemented the analysis of policy-relevant materials (as Feldman (2011) shows, for example, in his solid ethnography of the EU migration apparatus)?

Overall, however, the text as a whole is very comprehensive and reflexive, not only in the methodological part. The author clearly and systematically guides us along the paths of her analytical and interpretative work.

The author focuses her work mainly on the integration of non-EU migrants, but she also shows that there are also internal (political and socio-cultural) hierarchies that can exclude EU citizens themselves (chapter 5. The subject of intersections).

I would also like to acknowledge the author's specific focus on the marginalised group of Romani migrants, who are often invisible in mainstream migration studies. I also highly appreciate a critical deconstruction of the category of the "second generation" as a completely essentialized concept of EU citizenship, strongly influenced by methodological nationalism which is even often reproduced in the field of migration studies.

IV. Questions for the author

a.) In her work, the author deals (albeit rather marginally) with the institution of family reunification as one of the selective and disciplinary practices of the EU apparatus towards "others" incorporating the so-called feminist bureaucratism (Maskens 2015). These integrationist policies do not exist in a structural vacuum;

they also speak to a specific imagination of the reproduction of the "body of EU nation" (Yuval –Davis 1997). *Where is a category of age/old age (senior migrants), disability and LGBTQ+ situated within it?*

b.) In global capitalism, the political economy of migration requires borders, but it also requires those borders to be porous. As Nicholas De Genova (2018) argues, borders mediate the subordinate inclusion of the disposable labour force that migrants represent. Borders are selectively opened in order to secure the 'supply' of migrant care workers. At the same time, economic inequalities among countries and the ways in which they are integrated into the global economy serve to maintain the everyday power of borders to categorise people and reproduce the existing geopolitical hierarchy. Many ethnographic studies show (Feldman 2011, Andersson 2014) that European migration policies have been very effective also in working with *the temporality of migrants* (in terms of their migration status) as a kind of false win-win ideal of labour migration. But how does this policy strategy interfere with integration policies, is it in line with them, in conflict with them or is it an integral part of them?

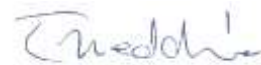
c.) In the selection of the analysis of scientifically oriented policy papers, the citation rate of the texts was (among other things) used, but these were reduced to only one of the EU languages-English. I would therefore ask whether she also took into account structural inequalities within the problematic academic production from the "centres" and "peripheries" of the academic "industry", i.e. for example texts by colleagues from the CEE region? They work in a permanently underfunded field of science, which is unfortunately also reproduced by European research schemes and thus directly influences who does „excellent“ science (and who is excluded). *How did this selection of the data material influence her final research findings?*

V. Conclusion

The dissertation under review is a well-rounded academic work with an original contribution to the corpus of critical migration studies. I hope that this dissertation will be published as a monograph or series of scholarly studies.

I classify the submitted dissertation as passed.

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