Abstract (EN)

This dissertation examines host community perspectives on the integration of labour migrants in two European Union Member States, Greece and Poland. A comparative focus that has been largely absent from the body of literature, which predominantly focuses on migrant-centered narratives or migration and integration policymaking. By foregrounding the perspectives of host communities, this research addresses a critical gap in the literature. It expands theoretical and empirical understandings of Multi-Level Governance and the Local Turn, post-crisis migration politics, and the role of local contexts in integration processes. The research is conducted with a comparative qualitative analysis. Employing a multi-method design, the study incorporates semi-structured interviews (n=70), and participant and non-participant observations across four localities, two urban settings (Athens, Warsaw) and two suburban/rural settings (Rethymno, Jelcz-Laskowice). For the comparative analysis, four metrics have been taken into consideration: labour markets in each country, educational systems, institutional governance, and political discourse. The concept of integration aligns with that of the IOM (2019), considering it a two-way process that entails four dimensions: economic, social, cultural, and political. For this research, the host community is defined as comprising nation-born citizens. The study is scrutinized under the theoretical frameworks of two studies: Multi-level Governance by Hooghe and Marks (2001) and the Local Turn in MLG by Barberis (2010). For the case study of Greece, findings show high levels of social and economic acceptance of Albanian migrants among the host community, with negligible variance between urban and rural settings. However, political integration remains a challenge, reflecting a persistent boundary between socio-economic inclusion and formal civic participation. In contrast, for the Polish case study, host communities are observing progress in the economic integration of Ukrainians, with cultural, social, and political inclusion remaining in its initial stage. The Polish case exhibits spatial variance, with each locality having its own unique needs and different migration waves. The Greek host community acknowledges centralised integration, while Poles recognize the impact of the MLG and the Local Turn in their daily lives. The cross-country comparison provides an original contribution to migration studies. It suggests that Poland is undergoing a trajectory comparable to Greece's earlier labour migration phase, including tensions as integration deepens and progresses, similar to the frictions observed in the Greek context post-2000. This dissertation recommends that future research adopts the Framework for Legitimacy and Integration Preparedness (FLIP) and apply it in participatory methodologies, particularly migrant-host community focus groups, to explore intersubjective understandings of integration and identify grassroots-level policy implications.

Key words: labour migration, integration, host communities, Greece, Poland